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Linguistic aspects of subjectivity in song translation (in the light of Wojciech Młynarski's works and self-referential remarks)

ABSTRACT

Linguistic aspects of subjectivity in song translation
(in the light of Wojciech Młynarski's works and self-referential remarks)

The article discusses the manifestations of subjectivity in the translation of songs created by Wojciech Młynarski, one of the best-known Polish songwriters of the second half of the 20th century. His personalized translation strategies have been presented on examples of Polish translations of the lyrics written by Irving Berlin, Vladimir Vysotsky and Bobby McFerrin. The analyses have shown that Młynarski gave absolute priority to three aspects of translation: prosodic equivalence; equivalence of intentional meaning (pragmatic equivalence) and comparability of the recipients' aesthetic experiences. Wherever possible, the translator sought equivalence at the lexical-semantic level or at the imaging level, for example, he searched for lexemes or idioms that would evoke a picture similar to the original. However, if it was impossible to reproduce literal meanings or images in the target language, he focused on the three priorities listed above, leaving the other aspects of the original song in the far background.

Keywords: subjectivity of translation, song translation, translator's individual style, Wojciech Młynarski as a translator, equivalence levels' hierarchy in translation

Introduction

Songs as a genre are regarded as difficult, if not impossible, to translate properly, and they are relatively seldom translated. Some even say that "if the purpose of such translation is to be a singable text, then of course any *cultural immersion* becomes an impassable barrier" (Hejwowski 2004: 123). Nevertheless, there are

situations in which lyrics must be rendered into a foreign language, for example, when a song is a part of a performance, such as a musical, which is to be adapted as a whole to be staged in another country. Song translation requires not only very good language skills and musical competence, but also some kind of intuition, which enables the translator to figure out what could work well on stage. Wojciech Młynarski was the artist who had all these competences developed to a high degree. In interviews, he admitted that what counted for him was not to achieve fidelity, or what philologists call equivalence (for a critical discussion of this category, see: Tabakowska 2001; Panou 2013; Lewicki 2017: 127–143), but to remain true to the widely understood spirit of the original and, at the same time, to create a Polish version that would have a comparable artistic value¹. Młynarski was a Polish philologist himself, but his competence went far beyond that of a philologist: he had been born into a family with musical traditions and had performed on stage, mainly in cabarets, since he had been a student. His philological background made it easier for him to search for means of expression² and his stage experience taught him to anticipate what impression a particular wording would make on the audience. He was well aware of the fact that a stage performance was a demanding communicative situation, which excluded the use of some stylistic – or even semantic³ – solutions that in other circumstances might be considered appropriate. Looking through the typescripts of his translations (with handwritten corrections), which are collected in the Museum of Literature in Warsaw, one can conclude that he tackled some of the texts primarily for his own satisfaction and the joy of co-creating⁴. Regardless of the reason why

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- 1| A. Bednarczyk (1995) stated, that, in general, Vysotsky's songs were translated into Polish too creatively and as a result some important semantic and even stylistic qualities of the originals had been lost; e.g. in the Polish version of the song "Moscow–Odessa", Młynarski used the swear word *po cholere* „why the hell”, while there were no swear words in the Russian version. Indeed, vulgarization is, according to Bednarczyk, a frequent sin committed by translators of Vysotsky's songs. One could argue whether „po cholere” is still a vulgarism or just a colloquialism, but there is no doubt that owing to the use of this phrase the stylistic register was lowered.
 - 2| Sometimes Młynarski translated the texts from scratch, and sometimes he worked on someone else's philological translation. He used philological translations, i.e. translations oriented towards semantic equivalence, as raw material to be interpreted and processed, sometimes quite freely, to achieve certain artistic results.
 - 3| Due to the special character of the communicative situation of a stage performance, both the author and the translator need to “avoid densifying” the text (Barańczak 1983: 98), so they should use words that do not have a very specific meaning, preferably basic level terms, as well as uncomplicated syntax and other solutions that help one ensure the message is as structurally transparent as possible. The recipient of a song should be able to make out its structure from the very first bars and anticipate the elements that will follow” (Barańczak 1983: 83).
 - 4| The translations of English songs discussed here are in the form of typescripts in the Wojciech Młynarski Archive at the Museum of Literature in Warsaw, while translations

he translated a particular song – whether it was at someone’s request or on his own initiative – he always seemed to have a highly individual and goal-oriented attitude to the task. The subjectivity⁵ of his translations, understood here as the clear presence of „ego” which directs its message to a specific „you” (Benveniste 2008/1966), other than the addressee of the original, can be observed on different levels of linguistic organization of texts and in various planes of correlation of “text phrases” (Sierosławska 2008) with the melodic line.

Linguists generally agree that the difficulty of translating songs mainly results from the fact that songs are polysemiotic (or, in Pisarkowa’s terms, “intersemiotic” (Pisarkowa 1998), which means that their content is conveyed via more than one type of sign. The meaning is inferred mainly from “text phrases” (Sierosławska 2008), so the language code is still the main carrier of conceptual meaning, but understanding is also influenced by the accompanying “musical phrases” (Sierosławska 2008)⁶. The melody not only significantly limits the choice of lexical and syntactic structures, but also has a role in interpretation, because it “plays up” the accompanying words (Zagórski 1975: 361), arouses emotions⁷ and sometimes evokes specific images; for example the march rhythm in Vysotsky’s song *Вершина* (lit. *Peak*) (translated by Młynarski as *W górach* (lit. *In the Mountains*)) (Wysocki 1983: 9–10) makes listeners imagine a scene of a hike⁸. Sometimes, especially in the case of songs that are part of a stage performance, semiotic value can also be ascribed to performers’ movements – the way they walk and dance, their gestures and facial expressions, which are sometimes detailed in the stage directions.

from the Russian language were published in the „Akcent” quarterly (No. 4, 1983), currently available online: <http://akcentpismo.pl/archiwum/>.

- 5| When it comes to subjectivity of the text, important are not only egocentric expressions, but also a variety of other linguistic means of communicating “intentions, attitudes and convictions” (Pajdzińska 2008: 239), such as “exponents of illocutions, modality, valuation and emotions” (Pajdzińska 2008: 239), including lexical and syntactic means of “construing the scene” which serve to create a subjectified textual interpretation of the world (Tabakowska 2008: 122).
- 6| “Periodic structure – in most general terms – is one in which a musical work is divided into more or less symmetrical sections. It regulates, to some extent, the dependencies and similarities between motifs. In this way, it creates a framework for an arrangement of parallel phrases. This type of structure of a musical text requires that the poetic text be fragmented in an analogous way” (Barańczak 1983: 68).
- 7| Taking this into account, the translator at least needs to “make sure that the meanings associated with the music of a given phrase, written to emphasize a certain mood, say – sunny or gloomy, are not shifted in the translation. For example, when the sun shines under the given notes, then the translation may picture the sun or brightness, or a ray of sunshine, but not a gloomy night or rain, and vice versa” (Zagórski 1975: 361).
- 8| Self-referential remarks about the ways of including in the translation the “chanting structure” of this work see: Młynarski 1983: 40.

Analysis

Since the original version of a song is a coherent whole composed of heterogeneous components, the biggest challenge for a translator is to preserve the correlation between the parts and the whole in the target language. When it comes to text and music, there are three main aspects of this correlation: rhythm, the melody of speech and the phonetic properties of the consecutive vowels and consonants.⁹ The level of difficulty of the task of re-creating the whole structure in the target language differs from one song to another. Let us begin with an example that seems relatively simple.

Table 1: Irving Berlin's song *Cheek to Cheek* – original language version and its translation into Polish by Wojciech Młynarski – fragment

Heaven, I'm in heaven, And my heart beats so that I can hardly speak And I seem to find the happiness I seek When we're out together dancing, cheek to cheek.	W niebie / Jestem w niebie Gdy muzyki rytm do tańca daje znak. Widzę szczęścia blask / I tchu mi w piersiach brak, Gdy policzek przy policzku / Tańczę tak.
Heaven, I'm in heaven, And the cares that hang around me through the week Seem to vanish like a gambler's lucky streak When we're out together dancing, cheek to cheek.	W niebie / Jestem w niebie Czuję się jak gracz / Gdy mija passa zła, Gdy tańczymy przytuleni / Aż do dnia Tak policzek przy policzku / Ty i ja.

Despite some differences in the composition and syntax between the original written by Irving Berlin and the translation, the main aspects of the organization of the two texts – such as rhyme and rhythm, semantics, imagery, and even word choice show a high level of equivalence, except for two details. We notice here that in the Polish version the loving couple dances “aż do dnia” (en. “until the morning light”), which is consistent with the Polish stereotype of good fun (pl. „zabawa do białego rana”, en. “partying till the break of dawn”). In the original, however, there is no information about the time at which the scene takes place. The expression “aż do dnia”, which conveys this detail, may have been chosen by Młynarski for prosodic reasons – presumably he wanted to find a masculine rhyme¹⁰. It was

9| According to Maliszewski, the key factors are: “a) rhythm, which is a strict algorithm, the violation of which destroys the artistic unity of a work, b) the melodic line, characterized by a specific syntactic, versification and metrical arrangement, which can be called a ‘macrotonal’ system, c) a characteristic alliterative system consisting of a sequence of consonants and vowels implied by the melody of the song, [...], which is a ‘microtonal’ system” (Maliszewski 2004: 113).

10| An important problem when translating songs from English to Polish (Barczewska-Skarboń 2004: 178), as well as when writing songs in Polish (see: Barańczak 1995), is the relatively small number of monosyllabic words in the target language, which is an obstacle especially when one tries to find masculine rhymes.

probably for the same reason that the translator chose the expression “tchu mi w piersiach brak” (en. “I am breathless”). The predicative “brak” rhymes with the particle “tak”: they are one-syllable words, not very common in Polish. At the same time, they form a masculine rhyme, which is especially desirable in the song genre. The expression itself is a somatic metaphor, and in this respect it resembles the expression “my heart beats so that I can hardly speak”. However, the two differ both in their semantics and imagery.

The intriguing change Młynarski made to the text regards the verses in which the dancing man is compared to a gambler. The simile is found in both the original and the translation, but the English and Polish versions of the text depict different situations in which the gambler finds himself: while in the English lyrics “the cares [...] seem to vanish like a gambler’s lucky streak”, in the Polish text the man dancing with his beloved woman “feels like a gambler, whose *unlucky* streak is coming to an end”, which, by the way, intuitively seems to be a more accurate illustration of the feeling of relief and joy. This makes one wonder whether we might be dealing here with the translator’s attempt to improve the original.

Unlike *Cheek to Cheek*, most songs do not lend themselves easily to translation and do not allow a translator to achieve such a high level of equivalence. Problems can appear in different text dimensions, especially prosody, wording and imaging. A good illustration of how Młynarski tried to reconcile the question of prosodic equivalence with an attempt to maintain the intentional meaning of the text is his translation of Vladimir Vysotsky’s *Song of the Sentimental Boxer*¹¹. Młynarski wrote about the challenges he had had to face in a letter to the editor-in-chief of the quarterly *Akcent*. The letter gives us a unique insight into the process of translation:

Each refrain ends with the phrase: «И жизнь хороша, и жить хорошо». This phrase, a well-known quote from the poem “Хорошо” by V. Mayakovsky must be translated so that it fits in a phrase composed of ten syllables, specifically accented by music (Młynarski 1983: 42–43).^{12,13}

Młynarski did not want to make any compromises when it came to the melody of speech. Because, in his opinion, the quotation from Mayakovsky “did not lend itself to any treatment” in Polish (Młynarski 1983: 42–43), he decided to

11| We can find an online video recording of Marek Kondrat’s performance, which brilliantly shows the polisemioticity of the song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rVKqmWe1xrl>, accessed: 17.09.2020.

12| Я / земной шар / чуть не весь / обошёл, — / И жизнь / хороша, / и жить / хорошо”. (Владимирович Маяковский: Хорошо, <https://ru.wikisource.org>, accessed 17.09.2020).

13| Unless mentioned otherwise, the quotes were translated by the author.

use a very bold and controversial trick: he replaced the problematic quote with another one that was easily recognizable to Polish recipients:

It must be a quote in a similar spirit; after all, the idea of the original is that the attacker landing a blow justifies it with a quote. I decided to use the quote: „Człowiek brzmi dumnie” (en. “Man! – that has a proud ring”). And then I was still trying to answer the question why Vysotsky cuts the last phrase of the refrain with two accents? Ah, yes, these are the blows that the “brave son of Krasnodar” is dealing. These blows cut the phrase, so I decided to use a similar device – I clipped the quotation. So the last verse of the refrain went like this: „I życie jest pięk! I człowiek brzmi dum!” (Młynarski 1983: 42–43).

Table 2: Vladimir Vysotsky’s *Песня о сентиментальном боксере* (en. Song of the Sentimental Boxer) – original language version and its translation into Polish by Wojciech Młynarski – fragments

И думал Буткеев, мне челюсть кроша: И жить хорошо, и жизнь хороша!	I myślał sięgając pięściami mych szczęk, Że człowiek brzmi dum... i życie jest pięk...
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The scene in the boxing ring is clearly metaphorical, just like Vysotsky’s other sport songs. The sentimental boxer keeps receiving blows from the opponent, but does not punch back, because “He’d never hit a human’s face”. The song can be interpreted as a manifesto against violence and a reminder of the individual’s right to follow his/her own convictions. The idea, strongly implied in the song, was in stark contrast to the communist doctrine of the supremacy of collective interests over those of the individual. Mayakovsky was the victim of the communist system he had previously championed, so Vysotsky quoted him to achieve the effect of bitter irony. Mayakovsky’s early poem, however, is recognizable to a relatively small group of Polish recipients, unlike the quotations used by Młynarski in its place. The first phrase “Człowiek! [...] to brzmi dumnie”¹⁴ functions as a winged word and comes from another Soviet author – Maxim Gorky, who is known for supporting Stalin’s cultural policy¹⁵. However, the irony, which rests on the contrast between the lofty content of the quotation and the context of the brutal fight scene, remains clear regardless of whether the recipient recognizes Gorky’s work or not.

14| A line (Человек [...] это звучит ... гордо!) from Maxim Gorky’s drama «The Lower Depths»(Markiewicz/ Romanowski 1990: 242).

15| There are some analogies between Gorky and Mayakovsky, however, the latter had sympathized with the Bolsheviks long before Stalin took power, and then he had the courage to criticize socialist realists and, as a result, became enemy and victim of the system. Historical details are nonetheless less important here than the whole context, which gives both quotations an ironic tone.

A *High-jumper's Song* (ru. *Песенка про прыгуна в высоту*), another of Vysotsky's sport songs translated by Młynarski, provides a vivid example of the limited possibilities available to overcome the problem of the lack of lexical and conceptual equivalence in the target language:

Here, I believe, the whole difficulty lay in translating the term referring to the “jumper's take-off leg”, which was “толчковая”. One cannot translate that into Polish literally. [...] So I decided to create a naive neologism and describe the process of creating it in the translation (Młynarski 1983: 42–43).

Table 3: Vladimir Vysotsky's *Песенка про прыгуна в высоту* (A High-jumper's Song) – original language version and its translation into Polish by Wojciech Młynarski – fragments

<p>Но съем плоды запретные с древа я, И за хвост подёргаю славу я. У кого толчковая — левая, А у меня толчковая — правая!</p>	<p>Neologizmy kwitną w naszym klubie, gdyż tę nogę zwa' wybitną, co wybija wzwyż. I niech tam kto wybitną lewą sobie ma, Ja mam wybitną prawą, z prawej skacze' ja!</p>
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The adjective “wybitny” in the expression “noga wybitna” means ‘used to generate the power needed to jump up from the ground’. This particular meaning is limited only to the context of the song, because in conventional usage “wybitny” means “outstanding”. Młynarski revived here a frozen metaphor based on a spatial image schema, in which GOING UP is identified with IMPROVING. Nevertheless, the wordplay “noga wybitna” – “wybitny skoczek” (en. ‘outstanding jumper’) is not particularly easy to process mentally when one listens to the song. In this genre, maximum clarity of the text is required, because “if there is any dimness in it and the recipient pauses to wonder what it is all about, they will get lost completely” (Młynarski 2018: 198–199). In order to avoid any misunderstanding, Młynarski included in his version a metalinguistic comment about neologisms and as a result added to it an entire new text phrase. In an effort to retain the correlation between the textual and the musical phrases, he removed a fragment of the original. The replaced verse featured the motif of the forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge – the athlete acted contrary to his trainer's instructions, well aware of the punishment, but the temptation was too great and he “ate a forbidden fruit from a tree”. This biblical association, however, is absent in the translation. It seems that lexical-semantic equivalence was achieved here at too high a cost.¹⁶

16| Unlike the song about the sentimental boxer, which is willingly sung by various performers, Młynarski's translation of *A High-jumpers Song* with the metalinguistic component has met with a rather poor reception.

Finally, let us take a look at Młynarski's version of an English-language song, which maintains full sound equivalence but at the same time is so semantically distant from the original that it can hardly be called a translation:

Table 4: Bobby McFerrin's song *Don't Worry, Be Happy* – original language version and its reworking into Polish by Wojciech Młynarski – fragments

Here's a little song I wrote You might want to sing it note for note Don't worry, be happy In every life we have some trouble But when you worry you make it double Don't worry, be happy	Amerykański pewien kmieć Raz rzucił myśl, co będzie brzmieć Dość łory-ginalnie Kłopoty wszelkie z głowy strąć Nie przejmuj się, szczęśliwy bądź Bądź łory-ginalny
Ain't got no place to lay your head Somebody came and took your bed Don't worry, be happy	Gdy wszyscy czarno widzą wkrąg Ty jeden nie załamuj rąk Bądź łory-ginalny
The landlord say your rent is late He may have to litigate Don't worry, be happy...	Wiemy, że masz kłopoty swe Lecz martwiąc się, podwajasz je Bądź łory-ginalny...

In this (let us call it) reworking of Bobby McFerrin's song, the translator was concentrated on the refrain, which had already been widely known to Polish recipients and could therefore be used as a basis for a play on words. To imitate the phrase with the verb "worry", Młynarski created a phrase containing the adjective "oryginalny" 'original', pronounced in a manner characteristic of certain dialects "łoryginalny": pronunciation of a vowel "o" as "ło", for example "łojciec" instead of "ojciec" (en. 'father'), marks rural speech, and here it constitutes an additional source of comic effect. As a result of this device, in the Polish version, we are encouraged not to be happy, but to be original. One could ask what being happy has to do with originality. In Western cultures, it could be hard to find a direct connection between the two, but in the East, and particularly in Poland, both concepts have a lot in common with each other. According to social psychologists and ethnolinguists (Wojciszke/ Baryła 2002; Wierzbicka 1999), our culture promotes the habit of manifesting dissatisfaction and hiding the fact that we feel good, so much that Polish culture is sometimes called the "culture of complaining". In our tradition, a non-complaining and openly happy attitude in everyday life can be perceived as being inappropriate. This is the opposite of the "keep smiling" attitude favored by American culture, from which the song originates. The refusal to participate in the social "game of grumbling" may be therefore considered unusual or, in other words, original. The awareness of this cultural phenomenon is necessary to understand the specific goal Młynarski wanted to achieve. Instead of translating the American hit song, he created a satirical portrait of the Poles, whose tradition differs significantly from the Western one in terms of their approach to showing satisfaction.

Conclusions

The presented above brief analysis of Wojciech Młynarski's song translations allows to make some cautious generalizations about translation of songs as a genre and the individual attitude to the task showed by this particular translator. Observations made here lead to the conclusion that, unlike translators of non-artistic texts, who are expected to be as literal and accurate as possible in their renditions, translators of literature do not necessarily set semantic equivalence at the top of their priority list. This particularly refers to the translation of songs. In fact, the translator is forced to reconcile differences and conflicting interests, coping, in the process, with various determinants of the source language and the target language, different cultural factors (including linguistic images of the world with different scripts and scenarios of how things work), as well as the ephemeral quality of the text that is contingent on the individual characteristics of its creator. The negotiating is at its most complex when it comes to translating polysemiotic texts, such as songs. A song translator has to make far-reaching compromises, to the extent of becoming a co-creator rather than a mere 'renderer' of the text.

It follows from Młynarski's self-referential remarks that the musical layer was a guiding light in his translation work, and that he focused his efforts on maintaining the coherence between "musical phrases" and the Polish "text phrases", trying, at the same time, to preserve the "general message" of the original (Młynarski 1983: 40). He did not tolerate any compromise in this respect, which is not surprising as any disruptions to this coherence could have an impact on the recipients, for example shifts in word accents can, in Pisarkowa's words: "shock (listeners), as if someone [...] were choking on a bone" (Pisarkowa 1998: 105). The works of Wojciech Młynarski show clearly, that in the case of translation of songs, especially when they are to be performed on stage, melody inevitably takes supremacy over text¹⁷. The whole process of translation boils down to subordinating the component that needs to be changed – that is "text phrases", to that part of the whole structure that remains unaltered – the music. In this context, it is worth mentioning that Młynarski often re-translated works that already had a Polish language version (sometimes more than one, as in the case of Vysocky's songs) and he did so precisely because the versions developed by his predecessors – even though semantically equivalent and often artistically valuable – were, in his opinion, "useless" for the stage, as they did not maintain the required prosodic equivalence¹⁸.

17| "I am not interested in translations in which the rhythm of the original is strained or changed for convenience, or, for example, a feminine rhyme is put in place of the original masculine rhyme; they have nothing to do with solid craftsmanship and the trade (of a translator)" (Młynarski 1983: 40).

18| "I know several translations of this song. For example, K. Sieniawski [...] translated it as: „I życie jest dobre i dobrze nam żyć" (literally: "And life is good and we live well"), so,

Prominent singers and actors who have sung songs translated by Młynarski seem to share his opinion on this matter. Experiences of stage performers, therefore, completely contradict Bryll's theory, according to which in translation of polysemiotic texts "any supremacy of one of the codes always leads to the degradation of the translated text in relation to the original" (Bryll: 160; similarly Maliszewski 2004: 142–143 and 147).

Moreover, excessive pursuit of lexical-semantic equivalence, which in theory might seem more important than prosodic equivalence, can lead a translator astray, as shown by the case of Młynarski's translation of *A High-jumper's Song*: the use of the neosemantism "noga wybitna" as a lexical-semantic equivalent of "нога толчковая" came across as being awkward to many listeners, among others the actor and singer Marian Opania, who in his latest compilation of Polish versions of Wysocky's songs included Młynarski's translation of *Song of the Sentimental Boxer* but chose a different author's version of *A High-jumper's Song*. It should be noted that the translator also made far-reaching changes to the semantics and imagery of the refrain of *Song of the Sentimental Boxer*, which is a particularly important component of this piece. However, these profound changes have been accepted by stage artists. Despite the fact that alternative translations are available, Młynarski's version has gained by far the most popularity. It seems that the decisions taken by Młynarski as a translator in most cases met the expectations of both the singers and the recipients although they were not necessarily accepted by philologists (like Bednarczyk 1995). Listeners seem to be aware that modifications are unavoidable in translations of this particular genre. Of course, a rendering that makes dramatic changes to the original text, as is the case with the song *Don't Worry, Be Happy*, cannot pretend to be a translation. That is why Młynarski's version, inspired by the well-known American hit song, could only be used on stage in a cabaret performance, as the author's satire on Polish society. Be that as it may, I mentioned here the example of this song for a reason: it prompts one to ask the question of the limits of the creative freedom of a song translator.

Młynarski had asked himself this question, and the answer he gave was typical of an artist rather than a philologist. He clearly stated in an article for *Akcent* that he always started translating another author's songs with "all the awareness of the destruction that translation involved", and he believed that reorganization of the structure of the text could not be avoided. The most important quasi-theoretical

firstly, he adds a syllable, and, secondly, „dobrze nam żyć” is very inept. I've also consulted the well-known translation of the poem *Xopoшо* by St. J. Lec. Lec translates this passage in the following way: „Jam ziemi obręb prawie cały obszedł / I życie jest dobre i żyć jest dobrze”. This is a fantastic translation, but there's no way it can be used (on stage), because when fitted into the melodic phrase of this song, it has a displaced accent that is unbearable in Polish: „i życie dob-re i żyć jest dob-rze”, with the stress on the fifth and tenth syllables” (Młynarski 1983: 42–43).

category that appears in his self-reflections on translation is the concept of the “key idea”, without which one should not proceed with a translation at all, because “to translate wrongly [...], to translate without an idea, is to do great harm” (Młynarski 1983: 42–43):

What is this key idea? Unfortunately, I can't give any abstract definition here, but I'd like to use an example: Ziemowit Feddecki translates the chorus of the charming “Song of Notes” as follows: “Nuty wolą tańczyć solo / ale wiedzą do-re-mi-fa-sol-la-si, / że to pachnie samowolą / i że chór najlepiej brzmi!” (Notes prefer to dance solo / but they know do-re-mi-fa-sol-la-si / that it smells of anarchy / and that the choir sounds the best!). This repetitive quatrain is perfectly built into the chorus structure of the song, it “sits” flawlessly in Polish, it is precisely the “idea” in question. These choruses are the pillars of a bridge which the translator uses to span the strophes (Młynarski 1983: 41–42).

Młynarski commented on his own “key ideas” as follows: “Is it good or bad? [...] Let the recipients think. It seemed funny to me to reflect on the spirit and intention of the original” (Młynarski 1983: 42–43).

To sum up briefly, Młynarski's subjectified attitude to song translation manifests itself mainly through giving absolute priority to three aspects of translation: 1) prosodic equivalence; 2) equivalence of intentional meaning; and 3) comparability of the recipients' aesthetic experiences. My analyses have shown that wherever possible, the translator sought equivalence at the lexical-semantic level or at the imaging level, for example, he searched for lexemes or idioms that would evoke a picture similar to the original. However, if it was impossible to reproduce literal meanings or images in the target language, he was focused on the three priorities listed above, leaving the other aspects of the original song in the far background.

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