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A Close Relationship Reflected in the Translations from Polish Poetry by Young Belarusian Writers

Bliski związek odzwierciedlony w przekładach z polskiej poezji przez młodych pisarzy białoruskich

Блізкія дачыненні, адлюстраваныя ў перакладах маладых беларускіх пісьменнікаў з польскай паэзіі

It is no secret that Belarus is in turmoil, and is widely seen as a tragic disgrace, whilst Poland, as a safe country within the European Union, has been both a refuge and support for Belarusian free thinkers since the beginning of the present repressive regime.

In the past relations between the two countries were close although sometimes difficult, but the experience of some Belarusian writers (like, for instance, Maksim Tank [1912–1995]) in Polish prisons between the wars was nothing as compared to what Źmitrok Kuźmienka (b. 1980) writes about in a poem *Скрозь і заўжды беларус вінаваты...* (*The Belarusian is always thoroughly to blame...*):

Толькі хто мог бы такое прадбачыць,
Што даўдзецца сядзець яму хутка
За Беларусь у турме беларускай.

[Kuźmienka 2012: 91]

More positively, Belarusians are keen translators and feel a particular affinity to some Polish writers, especially Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855) and Czesław Miłosz (1911–2004) on emotional as well as aesthetic and rational grounds. The present paper does not intend to discuss the translations of Polish poetry by such central figures as Ryhor Baradulin (1935–2014) and Kastuś Ćvirka (b. 1934) but, rather, to look at the work of younger poets and their choices from the riches of Polish literature. Sometimes a clear affinity may be evident, but more often the attraction is purely literary, although it is notable that for this contingent, translations from Ukrainian

and Anglophone poets outnumber those from their Western neighbour. That said, it is not always the most obvious choices from Polish literature that seem to attract young Belarusians, although the number of them is too small to make a worthwhile numerical analysis. There are about the same number of young Belarusians as of the Polish poets they translate, although the latter are, without exception, of an older generation.

This article has no pretention to comprehensiveness of coverage. In 2002 the American Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, famously produced four forms of knowing or not knowing (in his case, with reference to terrorists). Two of them are relevant here: ‘unknown unknowns’ are, doubtless, legion in most pieces of writing including the present one, whilst ‘known unknowns’ have some relevance to two translations of Polish poems, of which it has simply not been possible to find the originals: they are by Maryja Martysievič of Gałčynski, *Ajčynaj mnie – muzyka (Music is my fatherland)* [Martysievič 2011: 8], and Vital Ryžkoŭ (b. 1986) of Ryszard Krynicki (b. 1943), *Tryccacihadovaja žančyna (The thirty-year-old woman)*. The second of these is more serious, as it is the only version by a young Belarusian of any work by Krynicki, and, moreover, the only example of a very talented poet’s skill in translating from Polish [Ryžkoŭ 2010: 63–64].

Before proceeding further, it may be hardly necessary to mention that two Belarusian translations of *Pan Tadeusz* were made in the 19th century; the first into any Slavonic language in 1859 was by Vikienci Dunin-Marcinkievič (1808–1884), only the first two parts of which survived, however, after confiscation by the tsarist government; the second was of the opening chapter by Dunin’s friend Alaksandr Jełski (1834–1916). Many have written about Mickiewicz’s influence on Belarusian literature and vice versa. Some advocated panslavism, or, even worse, the concept of Greater Russia (the ultimate in unwanted close relationships for most Belarusians), which was propagated by nationalists like Mikhail Koialovich (1826–1891), not to mention Vladimir Putin in our time. One of the best of the more academic and less inflammatory early studies was that by Symon Braha (pen-name of Vitaŭt Tumaš, 1910–1998). Also worth mentioning here is the rather charming comment of Baradulin in his short verse ‘In memoria’:

Над Беларуссю
Сонца марудна ўстае,
І спяшаецца за навалай навала
Адам Міцкевіч паліць
Беларускія вершы свае,
Каб напісаў іх Янка Купала.
[Skobla 2003: 454]

Throughout the ages many have expressed doubts about the worth of any translation: most famous is the Italian expression traductor – traditore

(the translator is a traitor); the English poet George Borrow (1803–1881) opined that ‘translation is at best an echo’ (Borrow 1851, p. 160), but my favourite comment is by South African poet Roy Campbell (1901–1957), ‘Translations (like wives) are seldom faithful if they are in the least attractive’ (*The Poetry Review*, 1949, p. 201). Most relevant to this paper, however, is the witty poem by Zbigniew Herbert (1924–1998), *O tłumaczeniu wierszy* (*On translating poetry*), which compares a translator to a vainglorious bee; the verse was skilfully put into Belarusian by Serge Minskievič (b. 1969) as *Pra pieraklad vieršaŭ*. In view of its relevance to the central theme of this article, here is the original, followed by the translation:

O tłumaczeniu wierszy

Jak trzmiel niezgrabny
siadł na kwiecie
aż zgięła się łodyga wiotka
przeciska się przez rzędy płatków
podobnych słownikowym kartkom
do środka dąży
gdzie aromat i słodycz jest
i choć ma katar
i brak mu smaku
jednak dąży
aż bije głową
w żółty słupek

i tu już koniec
trudno wniknąć
przez kielich kwiatów
do korzeni
więc trzmiel wychodzi
bardzo dumny
i głośno brzęczy:
byłem w środku
tym zaś
co mu nie całkiem wierzą
nos pokazuje
z żółtym pyłem

[Herbert 1998: 125]

Пра пераклад вершаў

Як чмель нязграбны
сеў не кветку
прынікла хісткая цявіна
а ён сунецца праз палёсткі
нібы скрозь слоўнікаў старонкі
да цэнтру мкне
дзе водар і салодкасць
хоць нос закладзены

й чуцця бракуе
аднак чмель мкне
аж б'е чалом
у жоўты песцік.

і вось канец
пранікнуць цяжка
праз келіх кветкі
ў самы карань
а чмель выходзіць
ганарыцца
ўзахоп гудзе
што быў у цэнтры
а тым

хто веры не захочуць даць
пакажа нос
у жоўтым пыле

[Skobla 2008: 775]

First to be considered here are Mickiewicz and Miłosz, the two poets who have a particular affinity with Belarus and its culture, not least by birth. Mickiewicz's poetry has been tackled by both Skobla and Minskievič. The latter has written extensive translations from his work, including an acting version and translation of *Dziady* (*Forefathers' eve*), which preceded that by Ćvirka, and a response to the Polish exile's celebrated *Sonety krymskie* (*Crimean sonnets*), in *Minskija / Mienskija sanety* (*Minsk/Miensk sonnets*, 2002) as well as a handful of lyrics. Unsurprisingly, he has also made several translations from the *Sonety krymskie* which had inspired him to write in that poetic form about his own capital. He has also written analytically on the topic of sonnets generally [Minskievič 2017]. From his versions of Mickiewicz may be mentioned *Bakczysaraj* (*Bachčysaraj*), *Mogily haremu: Mirza do Pielgrzyma* (*Mahily haremu: Mirza da Pilihryma, The tombs of the harem: Mirza to the pilgrim*), *Czatyrdah: Mirza* (*Čatyrdah: Mirza*) and *Alushta w dzień* (*Alušta ũdzień, Alušto by day*). According to Skobla, another relatively young translator of the Polish national poet [Skobla 2008: 772], Minskievič tends to be critical of earlier translations. Be that as it may, the two Belarusians have chosen different works to tackle. *Bachčysaraj* is a good example of the translator's skill in following the rhyming scheme throughout. Here are the last three lines of the original 6th sonnet and the translation by Minskievič:

Gdzież jesteś, o miłości, potęgo i chwało!
Wy macie trwać na wieki, źródło szybko płynie,
O hańbo! Wyście przeszły, a źródło zostało.

[Mickiewicz 1993–2001, I: 240]

Дзе ж вы, мілосць, магута, слава! Вы ж павінны
Былі трываць стагоддзі; кроплям жыць імгненне,
О, ганьба! Вы ўжо зніклі, а выток няспынны.

[Skobla 2008: 773]

Before going on, it is worth mentioning that for Anglophone readers the new translations of Mickiewicz's *Sonety krymskie* by Christopher Adam provide useful notes on specific aspects of the Muslim Crimea (Adam 1998), although some of his versions are, perhaps inevitably, further from the originals than those of Minskievič, recalling the remarks about translation and fidelity adduced earlier. To the same readers may also be recommended an excellent reading of the sonnets by Olga Lenczewska in an online journal, *Readings* [Lenczewska 2015].

Slightly freer but none the less musical is the 9th sonnet, which will serve as further witness to the skill of the Belarusian master of this form in this response to his Polish hero:

Mogily haremu

Mirza do Piętrzymy

Tu z winnicy miłości niedojrzałe grona
Wzięto na stół Allacha; tu perełki Wschodu,
Z morza uciech i szczęścia, porwała za młodu
Truna, koncha wieczności, do mrocznego łona.

Skryła je niepamięci i czasu zasłona,
Nad nimi turban zimny błyszczący wśród ogrodu
Jak buńczuk wojska cieniów, i ledwie u spodu
Zostały dłonią giaura wyryte imiona.

O wy, róże edeńskie! U czystości stoku
Odkwitnęły dni wasze pod wstydu liśćmi,
Na wieki zatajone niewiernemu oku.

Teraz grób wasz spójrzanie cudzoziemca plami,
Pózwalam mu – darujesz, o wielki Proroku!
On jeden z cudzoziemców poglądał ze łzami.

[Mickiewicz 1993–2001, I: 243]

Магілы гарэму

Мірза да Пілігрыма

З лазы кахання гронкі раннія сарваны
На стол Алаху з мора ўцех і захапленняў,
Пярлінкі ўсходу ўзяты ў юны час зіхцення
І ў труны-ракавіны ад святла схаваны,

Каменныя над імі паўстаюць турбаны,
Як бунчукі у войска доўгіх змрочных ценняў,
І крые ўжо заслона забыцця й збуцвення
Імёны, што гяурам колісь напісаны.

О ружы раю! Блізка чысціні вытоку
Пад лісцем сорама дні вашы адквітнелі,
Навекі ўтоення ад няверных вока.

Крануў пагляд чужынца вашыя пасцелі,
Яму дазволіў я, – о, мне даруй, Прароку!
Ён з прышлых першы, у каго тут слёзы заблішчалі.
[Skobla 2008: 773]

The other sonnets are equally well rendered, but it is worth mentioning two more poems, *Rozmowa (Conversation)* from Mickiewicz's 'Period of Russia' cycle, in which Minskievič follows the rhythmic pattern, albeit not without a few loose rhymes, and *Exegi monumentum aere perennius*, a poem based on Horace's famous words but with a local context, written at the time of the poet's emigration, with at the bottom a note dated Paris 12 March 1833, saying that this poem was inspired by the visit of Frau Grzymała. It may be worth quoting for its local colour, although Mickiewicz's Wirttemberg (Württemberg) in Minskievič's translation becomes the ski resort Winterberg:

Exegi monumentum aere perennius...

Z Horacjusza

Świeci się pomnik mój nad szklany Puław dach,
Przetrwa Kościuszki grób i Paców w Wilnie gmach,
Ni go łotr Wirttemberg bombami mocen zbić,
Ni świnią Austryjak niemiecką sztuką zryć,
Bo od ponarskich gór i bliźnich Kowna wód
Szerzę się sławą mą aż za Prypeci bród.
Mnie w Nowogródku, mnie w Mińsku czytuje młodź
I nieleniwa jest przepisać wiele-kroć.
W folwarkach łaskę mam u ochmistrzyni cór,
A w braku lepszych pism czyta mię nawet dwór!
Stąd mimo carskich groźb, na złość strażnikom ceł,
Przemysca w Litwę Żyd tomiki moich dzieł.

[Mickiewicz 1933–2001, I: 374–375]

Exegi monumentum aere perennius

Помнік мой перажыць мае красу Пулаў.
Склеп Касцюшкі і гмах, што ў Вільні Пац узняў,
І не змогуць яго Вінтэрберг разбамбіць
І свіння аўстрыяк штукай нямецкай зрыць.
Ад Панарскіх вяршынь ды блізкіх Коўну вод
Славай перасягну Прыпяцкі мост і брод.
Навагародак і Менск рады чытаць верш мой,
Перапіша радкі моладзь сваёй парой,
І ў дачок ахмістрынь мой будзе ў ласцы твор.
З браку лепшых мяне нават чытацьме двор!
Але ж паўз царскі гнеў, турмы й ляскат дзвярэй
Возіць тайна ў Літву кнігі мае габрэй.

[Skobla 2008: 774]

Michaś Skobla is a man of many parts, whose second (2008) anthology has already been cited several times here; he has also done remarkable work in re-publishing neglected or forgotten figures of the Belarusian cultural past as well as translating and writing original verse [see McMillin 2020]. On a purely personal note, his excellent book of parodies [Skobla 1993] inspired the present writer during the pandemic to embark on his own comparative study of British and Belarusian verse parodies (McMillin 2021). To Skobla belong translations of two longer poems by Mickiewicz: *Trzech budrysów* (*Try budrysy, Three Budryses*) and *Czaty* (*Vajavoda, Ambush / Warrior*). The first of them was written in 1827–1828, and five years later given a free translation by Aleksandr Pushkin [Pushkin 1959–1962, II: 372–373] so that Skobla had, perhaps, something to look up to. In fact, although it is worthless to compare apples and pears, it seems to the present writer that the Belarusian version, also rather free, matches the Russian in quality, although this is probably sacrilegious to many in Belarus's dominant Eastern neighbour. Here is the last stanza of this Lithuanian ballad, first in the original, secondly in Skobla's version and last in Pushkin's:

Po śnieżystej zamieci do wsi jedzie mąż trzeci,
 Burka pełna, zdobyczy tam wiele.
 Lecz nim zdobycz pokazał, stary Budrys już kazał
 Prosić gości na trzecie wesele
 [Mickiewicz 1993–2001, I: 294]

Ясным сонечным ранкам трэці вершнік пад ганкам.
 Сціхла дворня каля пералазу.
 Будрыс больш не пытае, а радзіну склікае,
 Каб гуляць тры вяселлі адразу.
 [Skobla 2008: 758]

Снег на землю валится, третий с ношею мчится,
 Черной буркой ее прикрывает.
 Старый Будрыс хлопочет и спросить уж не хочет.
 А гостей на три свадьбы сзывает.
 [Pushkin 1959–1962, II: 373]

Skobla's second longer translation, a Ukrainian ballad, *Vajavoda*, is unusual in that its title is different from that of the poem he translated, *Czaty*, which means 'ambush' rather than 'warrior'. The rhyme schemes are also different: Mickiewicz's poem has four-line stanzas with abab, whilst Skobla writes in six-line stanzas with a rhyming couplet before the scheme of the original: aabccb. As with the other ballad, however, the translator succeeds in creating the atmosphere and historical background as well as the sense of the original. It may also be argued that keeping to a rhyme scheme in places like this is not nearly so important as retaining, for example, the 'Onegin stanza', let alone the form of the sonnet.

The young Belarusian writers have given far more attention to Mickiewicz than to the other Polish poet who seems particularly close to their country, Czesław Miłosz. He has received three verse translations by Juraś Bušliakou (b. 1973) in collaboration with Andrej Chadanovič (b. 1973); the latter, according to Skobla [Skobla 2008: 794], first acquired his enthusiasm for Belarusian from his coeval, a true master of the history and practice of this much neglected language. The three poems are: *Nie więcej* (*Nie bołś, Not more*), *Campo di Fiori*, and *Moja wierna mowa* (*Maja viernaja mova', My faithful language*). *Nie więcej* is a witty philosophical poem about writing verse, admirably conveyed in the Belarusian version, which catches well Miłosz's distinctive style. Here are the last four lines of them in turn:

Tobym nie zwątpił. Z odpornej materii
Co da się zebrać? Nic, najwyżej piękno.
A wtedy nam wystarczyć muszą kwiaty wiśni
I chryzantemy, i pełnia księżycy.
[Miłosz II, 2001–2003: 274]

Не суміўся б тады. Што з матэрыі непадаткой
Пазбіраеш? Нічога, мо толькі красу.
А тады нам павінна хапіць кветак вішні,
Хрызантэмаў і месячнай поўні.
[Skobla 2008: 796]

Campo di Fiori is a strong poem about the martyrdom for heresy of the pioneering Italian thinker Giordano Bruno, who was burned at the stake in 1600, loosely relating this event to the dire position of Poland in 1943 shortly before the Uprising. Ironically, as he had also written about memory, the Italian was seemingly soon forgotten by his countrymen. Here are two stanzas pointing the poem's morals and the closing stanza, first in the original and then in the admirable version by the translator(s):

Morał ktoś może wyczyta,
Że lud warszawski czy rzymski
Handluje, bawi się, kocha
Mijając męczeńskie stosy.
Inny ktoś morał wyczyta
O rzeczy ludzkich mijaniu,
O zapomnieniu, co rośnie,
Nim jeszcze płomień przygasnął.

Ja jednak wtedy myślałem
O samotności ginących.
O tym, że kiedy Giordano
Wstępował na rusztowanie,
Nie znalazł w ludzkim języku
Ani jednego wyrazu,
Aby nim ludzkość pożegnać,

Tę ludzkość, która zostaje.
 <...>
 I ci ginący, samotni,
 Już zapomniani od świata,
 Język nasz stał się im obcy
 Jak język dawnej planety.
 Aż wszystko będzie legendą
 I wtedy po wielu latach
 Na nowym Campo di Fiori
 Bunt wzniesi słowo poety.
 (Warszawa – Wielkanoc, 1943)
 [Miłosz 1993–2001, I, 191–193]

Мараль можа вычытаць нехта,
 Што люд варшаўскі ці рымскі
 За гандлем, забавай, каханнем
 Не бачыць вогнішчаў смерці.
 Іншы мараль заўважыць
 Пра справаў людскіх мінанне,
 Пра забыцця наступленне,
 Перш як агонь дапалае.

Я ж думаў пра адзіноту
 Асуджаных на загубу,
 Аб тым, што калі Джардана
 Ёступаў на памост да катаў.
 У мове людской не здолеў
 Знайсці ніводнага слова,
 Каб развітацца з народам,
 З тым людам, які застаўся.

<...>
 Тыя, самотныя, гінуць,
 Пазабываныя светам,
 Іх мова цяпер нам чужая,
 Як мова даўняй планеты.
 І ўсё гэта стане легендай,
 Пройдуць гады, і за гэтым
 На новым Кампа дзі Ф'еры
 Падыме бунт слова паэта.
 [Skobla 2008: 796–798]

The third poem by Miłosz is *Moja wierna mowa* (*Maja viernaja mova*, *My faithful language*), about the significance of preserving one's local tongue. Written in Berkeley CA in 1968, it is unusual in that the word used is a Polonized version of the standard Belarusian word for 'language'; notably, however, in his *Traktat poeticki* Miłosz spells the word as 'mowa' [Kryszak 1981: 6]. The translation is also unusual in that it introduces a number of old words that Bušliakou had no doubt found in his work on early Belarusian

dictionaries, such as *dakaznikaŭ* and *chvarbitoŭ*. The original is a rich and strange poem, clearly relevant to the neglected Belarusian language.

Next to be considered is Bolesław Leśmian (1877–1937) of whom three verses have been translated by a young Belarusian poet, Maryja Martysievič (b. 1982), an ebullient writer of prose and verse, with a strong sense of humour and fun. The verses chosen by her are the ballad *Róże* (*Ruży, Roses*, 1920), *Trzy róże* (*Try ruży, Three roses*, 1920), and *Głuchoniema* (*Hluchanie-maja, The deaf and dumb woman*, 1912). In the first, the translator maintains the rhyming couplets successfully, although, perhaps inevitably, her rhymes are not always as firm as those in the original, but the result is none the less true to the spirit of the poem. Also faithful to the form of the original is the second verse, which, like many of Miłosz's poems, combines dream and light eroticism; it has an abbaa rhyme scheme, where the rhymes are again at times approximate, although the translator succeeds in conveying the atmosphere and many of Leśmian's themes. The third of his poems, written considerably earlier, is quite different. A mysterious verse that reflects what one critic relates to the general influence of French and Russian Symbolism [Stone 1976: 207–208]. Martysievič rises to the challenge of reproducing the dream-like mood and the mysterious, partially grotesque, phenomena, sharing with Belarusian readers something of a kind of poetry that is rare in their native tradition. Another important part of Leśmian's relationship to Belarusian literature is a book by the outstanding writer and philosopher, Ihar Babkoŭ (b. 1964). In his novella, *Chvilinka* (*Moment* 2003) he takes as a central theme one of the Pole's best-known philosophical ballads, *Dziewczyna* (*The maiden*, 1936), which implies that only myth is immortal, 'although if myth is also an illusion, then at least the creative effort justifies human existence' [Stone 1976: 143]. In the middle of his story Babkoŭ suggests reading it as an extended commentary on this ballad, even wishing that, were he a poet, he could write a continuation of it [Babkoŭ 2013: 96–10]; see also the excellent essay on this theme by Karalina Matskevich [Matskevich 2018: 37–40]. Finally, it has been noted by translator Marta Kaźmierczak that Leśmian's work is extraordinarily difficult to put into English, not only because of the extensive references to Slav mythology, but also on account of his frequent use of the suffix *-ość*, which is, of course, no problem for the East Slavs but, according to her, very awkward to render in English [Gliński 2017].

Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński (1905–1953), a clearly very musical poet, attracted young Belarusians to at least half a dozen of his verses; five were set by Skobla and at least two by Martysievič. One of the latter is *Wielkanoc Jana Sebastiana Bacha* (*Vialikdzień Johana Siebaściana Bacha, Johann Sebastian Bach's Easter Sunday*, 1950). It is a longish poem, from which are taken three stanzas in the middle that show the translator emphasising still more,

by an additional 'O' the already very emotional tone of the work; it may also be noted that she does not continue Gałczyński's repetition of the word 'żeby', which conceivably might have been intended to hint at the very controlled repetition in Bach's music:

W starych szufladach są stare listy,
a w książkach zasuszone kwiaty;
jak to miło plądrować wśród starych papierów...
O, świąteczne godziny pełne złotych szmerów!
o, natchnienia jak kolumny złote! o kantaty!

Ubrany w zielony aksamit
brodzę, błędę tymi pokojami,
i po galeriach, i po schodach;
o, jeszcze tyle do wieczora godzin,
żeby mrużyć, żeby nucić, żeby chodzić,
żeby płynąć jak zaczarowana woda!
[Gałczyński 1992: 347–348]

У старых шуфлядах старыя ноты,
у кніжках – гербарыяў дотык шурпаты.
О, як прыемна гартаць старыя паперы!
О вы, велікодных гадзін залатыя хімеры,
о, вы, залатыя калоны натхнення майго, о кантаты!

Апрануты ў аksamіт зялёны,
праз пакоі, галерэі і салоны
тупачу я, грукачу хадою;
столькі, яшчэ столькі часу да святочнай ночы,
каб спяваць і буркатаць, брысці і крочыць,
каб цячы зачараваную вадою!

[Martysievič 2011: 45–46]

At least five more of Gałczyński's verses have been translated by Skobla. They are mostly nature poems, including the longest of them *Księżyc* (*Mesiac, The moon*), which, although it is a fine poem and translation, will here give way to two humorous verses, since the latter genre has not always attracted young Belarusian translators. First, 'Włożę spodnie czarne, cmentarne' (Nadzienu čornyja portki, I will put on black graveyard pants). The translation is rather free, but catches the mood of the poem well:

Włożę spodnie czarne, cmentarne

Włożę spodnie czarne, cmentarne
i pójdę w siną dal,
i nic nie zostanie tu po mnie,
jeno ten cichy żal,

jeno te białe modrzewie,
jeno ten czarny frasunek
i gdzieś tam w knajpce z miastem
niezapłacony rachunek.

Gdy skonam, o moi najdrożsi,
a skonam wieczorem niebieskim,
napiszcie list, przyjaciele,
do panny Felicji Kruszeńskiej.

Felicja, słodka poetka,
napisze mi epitafium:
JAKA SZKODA, PANOWIE I PANIE,
ŻE ZNOWU POETĘ SZLAG TRAFIŁ!
[Gałczyński 1992: 7]

Надзёну чорныя порткі

Надзёну чорныя порткі,
набытыя для паховін,
і сяду ў човен Харона,
у чорны пануры човен.

А з чоўна пашлю сяброўкам
паветраны пацалунак.
Бывай, мой шынок любімы,
дзе я не сплаціў рахунак.

Памёр я парой вячэрняй.
Вярнуўшыся з пахавання,
пашліце, сябры, дэпешу
Крушэўскай Феліцыі, пані.

Феліцыя піша вершы,
няхай жа засведчыць кпліва:
“На жаль, і паэт Галчынскі
пайшоў да Абрама на піва”.
[Skobla 2016: 175]

The second translation takes us back to Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz: Ofiara świerzopa* (*Achwiary świrepy, A victim of scabies* [1934]), is about a beautiful but obscure line of that epic poem: 'Gdzie bursztynowy świerzop, gryka jak śnieg biała...', whose meaning, Gałczyński tells us, has defied many professors. The translation rises to the challenge of the poem's merry tone.

Ofiara świerzopa

Jest w I Księdze *Pana Tadeusza*
taki ustęp, panie doktorze:
„Gdzie bursztynowy świerzop, gryka jak śnieg biała...”
I właśnie przez ten świerzop neurastenii cała...
O Boże, Boże...

Bo gdy spytałem Kridla, co to takiego świerzop,
Kridl odpowiedział: – Hm, może to jaki przyrząd?
Potem pytałem Pigoń,
a Pigoń podniósł ramiona.

Potem ryłem w cyklopediach,
w katalogach i w słownikach,
i w staropolskich tragediach,
i w herbarzach, i w zielnikach...

Idzie jesień i zima.
Ale świerzopa ni ma.

Już szepcą naokół panie:
– Cóż się zrobiło z chłopca!
Dziękuję, panie Adamie!!!
Jestem ofiara, świerzopa.

[Gałczyński 1957, I: 315]

Ахвяры свірэпы

Знайшлі ў паэме *Пан Тадэвуш* вобраз гожа:
“Свірэпа ў белай грэчцы бурштынам залачае...”
З-за той свірэпы ўсе прафесары ў адчаі.
О, мілы Божа...

Спыталі ў пана Крыдла:
– А што гэта – свірэпа?

Крыдл адказаў:
– Магчыма,
кабета-незачэпа?

Спыталіся ў Пігоня –
той думае і сёння.

Шукалі ў энцыклапедыях,
у каталогах і слоўніках,
у старапольскіх трагедыях,
у статутах і гербоўніках,

гарышчы прайшлі і склепы –
нідзе не знайшлі свірэпы.

І ўжо прадавачкі ў краме,
кіроўцы і гаршкалепы
гавораць: “Дзякуй, Адаме,
мы ўсе – ахвяры свірэпы!”

[Skobla 2016: 176–177]

Tadeusz Różewicz (1921–2014), has been described as ‘a poet of chaos with a nostalgia for order’ [Miłosz 1983: 464]. Many of his poems on cultural themes do, indeed, contain reversals of accepted themes, and it is one such poem of 1962, *Nic w płaszczu Prospera* (*Ništo ў plaščy Praspera, There is nothing under Prospero’s cloak*), that attracted the young Belarusian poet and translator Maryja Kazloŭskaja (b. 1982).

Nic w płaszczu Prospera

Kaliban niewolnik
nauczony ludzkiej mowy
czeka

z pyskiem w gnoju
z nogami w raju
obwąchuje człowieka
czeka

nie nachodzi
nic w czarodziejskim płaszczu
Prospera
nic z ulic i ust
z ambon i wież
nic z głośników
mówi do niczego
o niczym

nic płodzi nic
nic wychowuje nic
nic czeka na nic
nic grozi
nic skazuje
nic ułaskawia

[Różewicz 1971: 575]

Нішто ў плашчы Праспера

Калібан нявольнік
Навучаны людской мове
чакае

з пысай у гнаі
з нагамі ў раі
абнюхвае чалавека
чакае

нішто падыходзіць
нішто ў плашчы чарадзейным
Праспера
нішто з вуліц і вуснаў
з амбона і вежаў
нішто з рэпрадуктараў
кажа яму
пра нішто

нішто родзіць нішто
нішто выхоўвае нішто
нішто на нішто чакае
нішто пагражае
нішто асуджае
нішто літуе

[Skobla 2008: 862–863]

Zbigniew Herbert was a late starter who quickly made a reputation for classical clarity. His verse on the translation of poetry, as well as Minskievič's

version, have already been quoted. He also attracted Bušliakoŭ, who set one of Herbert's four poems all called *Brewiarz* (*Trebnik, Breviary*), in this case the one beginning, 'Panie, wiem że dni moje są policzone...' (Hospadzie, ja wiedaju paličonyja dni maje..., Lord, I know that my days are numbered...). One surprising discrepancy occurs in the translation of the third stanza, where the poet compares his life to a sonata, 'dobrze skomponowana sonata' appears as (the opposite) 'нядобра ўскладзеная саната', thus destroying the sense of 'але' (but), at the start of the following line. The other poem translated is *W pracowni* (*U majstroŭni, In the studio*), which suggests that the world, as created, is too perfect to live in, but the imperfect artist by his many mistakes puts it right. Incidentally, nobody in Belarus could possibly believe that they lived in a perfect world, nor that it was for poets to solve its problems. Here is the second half of this intriguing verse, first in the original and second as excellently rendered by Bušliakoŭ:

za to
 świat malarza
 jest dobry
 i pełen pomyłek

oko chodzi sobie
 od plamy do plamy
 od owocu do owocu

oko mruczy
 oko uśmiecha się
 oko wspomina

oko mówi można wytrzymać
 gdyby tylko udało się wejść
 do środka
 tam gdzie był ten malarz
 bez skrzydeł
 w opadających pantoflach
 bez Wergiliusza
 z kotem w kieszeni
 fantazją dobroduszną
 i nieświadomą ręką
 która poprawia świat
 [Herbert 1998: 235–236]

затое
 маляроў свет добры
 добры
 і поўны абмылаў

вока ходзіць сабе
 ад плямы да плямы
 ад плёну да плёну

вока мармыча
 вока ўсміхаецца
 вока згадвае
 вока гаворыць можна вытрымаць
 калі б толькі ўдалося ўвайсьці
 унутр
 туды дзе быў гэты маляр
 без крылаў
 у пантофлях што спадаюць
 без Віргілія
 з катом у кішэні
 фантазіяй дабрадушнаю
 і нясведамаю рукой
 якая папраўляе свет
 [Skobla 2008: 800]

A poet who, like Różewicz, is represented by just one poem at the hands of a young Belarusian is Wisława Szymborska (1923–2012), who is, perhaps surprisingly, taken up by the rather wild Siarhiej Prylucki (b. 1980), author of *Dziewianostyja forever* (*The nineties forever*, 2008), in which he seems prone to swearing and drugs. The verse selected is *Muzeum* (*The Museum*) in which the poet reflects on the passing of time, beginning with wedding rings without love, and ending with a will to outlast her stubborn dress:

Muzeum

Są talerze, ale nie ma apetytu
 Są obrączki, ale nie ma wzajemności
 od co najmniej trzystu lat.
 Jest wachlarz – gdzie rumieńce?
 Są miecze – gdzie gniew?
 I lutnia ani brzęknie o szarej godzinie.
 Z braku wieczności zgromadzono
 dziesięć tysięcy starych rzeczy.
 Omszały woźny drzemie słodko
 zwiesiwszy wąsy nad gablotką.
 Metale, glina, piórko ptasie
 cichutko tryumfują w czasie.
 Chichocze tylko szpilka po śmieszce z Egiptu.
 Korona przeczekwała głowę.
 Przegrała dłoń do rękawicy.
 Zwyciężył prawy but nad nogą.
 Co do mnie, żyję, proszę wierzyć.
 Mój wyścig z suknią nadal trwa.
 A jaki ona upór ma!
 A jak by ona chciała przeżyć!
 [Szymborska 1981: 36]

Музей

Ёсць талеркі, але няма апетыту,
Ёсць пярсцёнкі на заручыны, але няма ўзаемнасці
Як мінімум трыста гадоў.

Ёсць веер – дзе румянак?
Ёсць мячы – дзе гнеў?
І лютня ані брыкне а шарай гадзіне.

З-за недахопу вечнасці тут награвашчана
Дзесяць тысячаў старых рэчаў.
Заімшэлы рамізнік дрэмле салодка,
Звесіўшы вусы над кашуляй.

Металь, гліна, пёрка птаха
Ціхенька трыумфуюць у часе.
Хіхікае толькі шпілька аднекуль з Егіпта.

Карона ператрывала галаву.
Прайграла рукавіцы далонь.
Правы бот атрымаў перамогу над нагой.

Што да мяне, дык жыву, паверце.
Маё спаборніцтва з сукенкай цягнецца дагэтуль.
І якая ж яна ўпартая!
Як бы яна хацела мяне перажыць!

[Skobla 2008: 843]

Szyborska is the last of the Polish poets translated by young Belarusians, who have on the whole shown great initiative and skill in choosing and coping with the varying levels of difficulty presented by their originals.

Conclusion: Despite the well-recognized difficulties of translating verse generally, the overall quality of the young Belarusian writers' versions of Polish poetry is, apart from a few slips, excellent both in its variety and quality. Translation may be regarded as an indication of the genuine closeness of two neighbouring cultures and literary traditions, and an important addition to the existential help Poland gives to its beleaguered neighbour.

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ABSTRACT: The article presents and analyses the translations by young Belarusian writers of Polish poetry, emphasising the variety of the some half dozen Belarusian

translators, and also the nature of the poets they selected. Attention is paid, where appropriate, to Poland and its literature's particular relevance to Belarusian culture, and, more generally, to the close relationship between the two countries, both historically and at the present difficult time.

KEYWORDS: Belarus, Poland, relationship, translations, national features.

STRESZCZENIE: W artykule przedstawione i przeanalizowane zostały przekłady polskiej poezji, wykonane przez młodych białoruskich poetów; omówienie odnosi się tak do różnorodności strategii przekładów stosowanych przez sześciu białoruskich literatów, jak też do twórczego zróżnicowania w stosunku do polskich poetów. Szczególną uwagę zwrócono, gdy zaszła taka potrzeba, na bliskie związki pomiędzy Polską i Białorusią, perspektywę historyczną i skomplikowaną sytuację w obecnych czasach.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Białoruś, Polska, związki, przekłady, cechy narodowe.

РЭЗЮМЭ: У артыкуле прадстаўлены і прааналізаваны пераклады з польскай паэзіі, выкананыя маладымі беларускімі аўтарамі; гаворка ідзе пра разнастайнасць перакладчыцкіх стратэгіі паўдзясятка беларускіх літаратараў, а таксама пра творчую адметнасць абраных імі польскіх паэтаў. Звяртаецца асабліва ўвага, дзе гэта патрэбна, на блізкія дачыненні паміж Польшчай і Беларуссю, і з гістарычнай перспектывы, і ў складаны цяперашні час.

КЛЮЧАВЫЯ СЛОВЫ; Беларусь, Польшча, адносіны, пераклады, нацыянальныя асаблівасці.

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