

PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS ABOUT THE TRANSLATION STRATEGIES  
IN POLISH TRANSLATIONS OF ANCIENT GREEK TRAGEDIES

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Since the ‘cultural turn’ in translation studies, the great importance is attached to the role of culture and the influence of cultural tradition, to the social background, to the subjectivity of a translator in the process of translating. Thus a shift in the research was made from linguistic (interlingual and intertextual) issues, in which the faithfulness towards the original (source text) prevailed, to the role of culture in translation. Current studies resign from the prescriptive and normative rules in order to analyse every translation in the perspective of target culture, by which every translation is conditioned and for which it is given. Such an approach expanded the scope of translation studies remarkably and opened new fields of research.<sup>1</sup>

This was also my approach, when I was studying selected Polish translations of Aeschylus’s *Oresteia*.<sup>2</sup> My research proved how a relevant issue in the analyses of any translation of a drama (and nowadays there is no question that any drama belongs both to the realm of literature and to the realm of theatre)<sup>3</sup> is the cultural, literary and theatrical context of such a translation.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. M. Heydel, *Zwrot kulturowy w badaniach nad przekładem*, “Teksty Drugie”, 6 (2009), pp. 21-33; *Współczesne teorie przekładu. Antologia*, ed. P. Bukowski, M. Heydel, Kraków, Znak, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> My book titled *Translatoris vestigia: ancient tragedy on the stage of a translator’s mind* was published by the Nicolaus Copernicus University Press (2016).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. D. Ratajczakowa, *Sługa dwóch panów: dwoisty żywot dramatu*, in Ead., *W kryształach i płomieniu. Studia i szkice o dramacie i teatrze*, vol. 1, Wrocław, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2006, pp. 80-89; J. Zawieyski, *O przekładach dramatu*, in *O sztuce tłumaczenia*, ed. M. Rusinek, Wrocław, Zakład im. Ossolińskich, 1955, p. 418; A. Cetera, *Enter Lear. The translator’s part in performance*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2008, p. 45; A. Romanowska, “Hamlet” po polsku. *Teatralność szekspirowskiego tekstu dramatycznego jako zagadnienie przekładoznawcze*, Kraków, Księgarnia Akadamycka, 2005, p. 9; D. Ratajczakowa, *Teatrologia i dramatologia*, in *Problemy teorii dramatu i teatru*, vol. 1, ed. J. Degler, Wrocław, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2003, pp. 45-51;

In fact, such relevant issues are all factors that may have the impact on any translator, such as the historical, political and social circumstances, the linguistic skills of a translator, his/her personality, cultural and theatrical preferences, intuition, also the preceding translations of a play picked by a translator. All those factors may be referred to as 'the horizon of a translator', to borrow a phrase from Antoine Berman's (1942-1991), French translator's, philosopher's, historian and theorist's of translation, posthumous book titled *Toward a Translation Criticism: John Donne* published in 1995,<sup>4</sup> which brought many important remarks to the theory of translation. Apart those abovementioned factors, while analysing translations of ancient Greek tragedies, we should also take into account the knowledge about ancient Greek theatre and Greek drama in translator's time as well as the theatre stage of his/her days.

Although translation studies are developing increasingly, issues concerning drama translation rarely find the interest of scholars of the main current, as some scholars write;<sup>5</sup> and those concerning translation of ancient dramas are raised even less often. Thus, they are one of the neglected fields of translation studies. In Polish academic literature those issues were very rarely raised by scholars to mention only few papers: my work about translations of Sophocles', Horace's, Lope de Vega's, Calderon's and Goethe's plays<sup>6</sup> by Ludwik Hieronim Morstin, *Refleksje tłumacza poezji antycznej* by Zygmunt Kubiak, *Troski tłumacza*<sup>7</sup> and *Żle o poprzednikach*<sup>8</sup> by Artur Sandauer, *Przekłady dramatu antycznego. Z doświadczeń tłumacza*<sup>9</sup> by Jerzy Łanowski,

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J. Ziomek, *Projekt wykonawcy w dziele literackim a problemy genologiczne*, in Id., *Powinowactwa literatury. Studia i szkice*, Warszawa, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1980, pp. 102-132; R. Niziołek, *Cztery razy Don Juan: polskie dwudziestowieczne przekłady dramatu Moliera*, Kraków, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Pedagogicznego, 2014, p. 21; J. Degler, *Pomiędzy literaturą a teatrem (o kłopotach z dramatem)*, in *Problemy teorii dramatu i teatru*, cit., pp. 52-66; J. M. Walton, *Translation or Transubstantiation*, in *Agamemnon in Performance 458 BC to AD 2004*, ed. F. Macintosh, P. Michelakis, E. Hall, O. Taplin, Oxford, Oxford Univ. Press, 2005, p. 190.

<sup>4</sup> A. Berman, *Pour une critique des traductions: John Donne*, Paris, 1995.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. A. Romanowska, "Hamlet" po polsku, cit., p. 10; R. Niziołek, *Cztery razy Don Juan*, cit., p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> *O sztuce tłumaczenia*, cit., pp. 279-298.

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem, pp. 343-346.

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem, pp. 343-346.

<sup>9</sup> *Siew Dionizosa. Inspiracje Grecji antycznej w teatrze i dramacie XX wieku w Europie Środkowej i Wschodniej*, ed. J. Axer, Z. Osiński, Warszawa, OBTA, 1997, pp. 179-185.

*O tłumaczeniach Plauta*.<sup>10</sup> *Skąd się biorą didaskalia w przekładach dramatów antycznych? Exemplum: Asinaria Plauta w tłumaczeniu Ewy Skwary*<sup>11</sup> *czy Spektakl zaklęty w tekście. Wizja antycznego przedstawienia Captivi Plauta*<sup>12</sup> by Ewa Skwara and one book written by Radosław Rusnak and titled *Seneca noster*.<sup>13</sup> Issues concerning other ancient works are in a slightly better situation.

While performing my studies on the cultural context of Polish translations of Oresteia, I came to some general conclusions about the translation strategies used by different Polish translators of ancient Greek tragedies. And, unsurprisingly, it appeared that those strategies depend on the literary or theatrical context.

As opposed to the antiquity of ancient Greek plays as texts, the history and tradition of Polish translations of ancient Greek tragedies written by Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides is relatively new. Omitting first two translations, glorious for Polish literature, of Euripides's *Alcestis* by Jan Kochanowski (1530-1584) (only the prologue of the play) and Sophocles's *Antigone*<sup>14</sup> by Walenty Jakubowski (who died in 1582) in 16<sup>th</sup> century, this history did not start until the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, since then we may count over one hundred translations of ancient Greek tragedies made by dozens of translators,<sup>15</sup> according to the information given in the prefaces to some trans-

<sup>10</sup> "Eos", 84 (1996), pp. 335-343.

<sup>11</sup> "Symbolae Philologorum Posnaniensium Graecae et Latinae", 16 (2004), pp. 67-76.

<sup>12</sup> *Obrzęd, teatr, ceremoniał w dawnych kulturach*, ed. J. Olko, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo DiG, Ośrodek Badań Interdyscyplinarnych "Artes Liberales", 2008, pp. 243-260.

<sup>13</sup> E. Skwara, *Seneca noster*, Warszawa, 2009.

<sup>14</sup> By 19<sup>th</sup> century this translation, due to the difficulties in obtaining it, was considered legendary and Karol Estreicher, Polish librarian and bibliographer, omitted it in his *Bibliografia Polska* (P. Chmielowski, *Tragedye Sofoklesa*, Przekład Z. Węclewskiego. Poznań. Nakładem Biblioteki Kórnickiej 1875 str. XXVII, 589, "Ateneum" 1876, vol. 3, fasc. 9, p. 659).

<sup>15</sup> To mention them, from 19<sup>th</sup> century: Jan Mihałowicz, Alfons Walicki, Antoni Małcki, Józef Korzeniowski, Franciszek Wężyk, Euzebiusz Słowacki, J. G. Biernacki, Tadeusz Eliażewicz, Wincenty Smaczniński, Lucjan Siemieński, Kazimierz Kaszewski, Zygmunt Węclewski, F. H. Lewestam, Józef Szujski, Hugo Wróblewski, Jan Czubek, Stanisław Grabowski, Antoni Mierzyński, Kazimierz Morawski; and from 20<sup>th</sup> century: Ludwik Eminowicz, Jan Kasprowicz, Bogusław Butrymowicz, Stanisław Karpiński, Tadeusz Węclewski, Ludwik Hieronim Morstin, Juliusz Osterwa, Mieczysław Brożek, Stefan Srebrny, Artur Sandauer, Helmut Kajzar, Stanisław Dygat, Jerzy Łanowski, Stanisław Hebanowski, Józef Jasielski, Maciej Słomczyński, Mirosław Kocur, Antoni Libera, Janusz Szpotański, Nikos Chadzinikolau, Zygmunt Kubiak, Robert Chodkowski, Marcin Sosnowski, Maciej Wojtyszko, Michał Walczak, Robert Chodkowski.

lations and in the reviews written in the literary journals. I am pretty sure that generally we are aware of only part of them as some were never published and were only mentioned in the literary journals. There are translations of all extant tragedies of one playwright (translated by one author) or translations of singular plays, sometimes only parts of a play. Some of them were translated only for the use of theatre or radio. There are also revised editions of the translations already published some time before (and it is a regular practice of translators who at first publish singular translations and then, some time afterwards, often after having made some changes, they publish the whole collection, like Zygmunt Węclewski, Kazimierz Kaszewski or Robert Chodkowski). Among the Polish translators there were (and are) classicists (e.g. Zygmunt Węclewski, Stefan Srebrny, Kazimierz Morawski, Robert Chodkowski, Mieczysław Brożek, Artur Sandauer, Jerzy Łanowski), writers, literary and theatre critics, translators (like Kazimierz Kaszewski, Maciej Słomczyński or Antoni Libera), poets (like Jan Kasproicz or Bogusław Butrymowicz), historians (like Józef Szujski), scholars (like Jan Czubek), theatre directors (like Stanisław Hebanowski), playwrights (like Jerzy Jasielski) that worked/work in different historical and cultural periods, that knew/know ancient Greek language on a better or worse level (and thus use in their work other translations into European languages more or less often).

I have not managed to study all the abovementioned translations yet, so my following remarks are the preliminary ones on the tradition of Polish translation of ancient Greek tragedies.

It is worth mentioning that the only person (up today) who translated all extant tragedies written by all great Greek playwrights (Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides) was Zygmunt Węclewski (1824-1887), who was one of the pioneering translators of ancient plays in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In a way, he laid the groundwork for Polish translations of ancient tragedies and his translations later became a point of reference to most of the successive translators, whether they agreed with Węclewski's views or not. Węclewski was also greatly renowned for his outstanding academic stature and was numbered among the most distinguished Polish classicists at the time. His role in bringing ancient Greek playwrights to the stock of Polish culture was indeed fundamental. Not only did he translate their tragedies, but also published numerous studies dedicated to them and to the ancient Greek theatre, which sparked the interest of other scholars and poets.

When it comes to translating any ancient Greek tragedy, every translator has to deal with at least few problems I would like to briefly describe in this article. At first, there is a question of a great time span between the source and target culture. Then, there is a great difficulty in dealing with ancient prosody with which Polish language is usually unfamiliar. And, last but not

least, there is a very relevant question of a stage – the one for which those plays were written and the ones for which translations were/are given. Therefore, translation of a drama is always an interdisciplinary issue that requires many qualifications from any translator. I am strongly convinced that the question of translating ancient Greek tragedies is a very interesting issue to study as every translator of a drama finds himself/herself not only between languages and cultures, but also between different theatre stages.<sup>16</sup>

The great time span between the source and target culture raises the question of the language any translator should choose for his / her translation, namely between two translation strategies: familiarization or exteriorization. From one point of view ancient Greek tragedies are a part of the very distant, sometimes incomprehensible world (do we still have the key to this world?), but from another those extant ones are still a part of the European literary canon, they include many ideas that are still relevant for the modern public and are being constantly performed on European (and Polish) theatre stages. Therefore, the decision of a translator what kind of language he/she should pick for a translation is very significant. But there is no consensus among the scholars whether ancient Greek playwrights wrote their plays in a language that was contemporary for the public or in a language that was older, more sophisticated than the one the public of their time used. According to some, as J. Michael Walton,<sup>17</sup> ancient playwrights like Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides were an avant-garde at their times and they showed new paths for the literature and theatre, they even transgressed the boundaries given by that theatre (and its technical possibilities). The others, like Polish classicist Stefan Srebrny,<sup>18</sup> believe that language used by the ancient playwrights was not the contemporary, but an archaized one. But even if we accept the idea that the language was contemporary for the public, we have to admit that the language on stage is never exactly the same as the one people are speaking, it is always different, at least in some points, the scenic dialogues are never the same as the regular conversation, it is always artificial, and thus, there is still one question any translator has to answer: does he/she have the right to translate the source language as the contemporary language? Some of Polish translators of ancient Greek tragedies choose the strategy of translating those

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<sup>16</sup> A. Cetera, *Enter Lear*, cit., p. 60; P. Zatlin, *Theatrical Translation and Film Adaptation. A Practitioner's view*, Clevedon, Buffalo, Toronto, Multilingual Matters Ltd., 2005, p. 77.

<sup>17</sup> J. M. Walton, *Found in Translation, Greek Drama in English*, Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 2006, p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> S. Srebrny, *Odpowiedź na przemówienie prezesa P.E.N. Clubu polskiego Jana Parandowskiego z dnia 5-go września 1949 roku*, "Meander", 4 (1949), fasc. 8, pp. 360-362.

plays in an archaized language (like Węclewski and Srebrny), but those who believe that only translation into a contemporary language will bring those plays to new life (like Kasproicz, Sandauer, Łanowski or Libera) resign from that strategy to translate those pieces into modern Polish language.

Another issue is the question of ancient prosody, because, as Jan Parandowski wrote, “hexameter is a strange verse for us as any other based on quantity”.<sup>19</sup> The choir’s songs (so called stasimona) written in many different ancient metres are especially at stake. Simon Goldhill once noticed:

the choice of a style of choral translation will inevitably affect the style of choral performance profoundly. Ideal criteria are easy to suggest: a passionate lyric intensity which can handle the change of expressiveness as a chorus enters a choral ode; which is comprehensible without sacrificing the poetical density or emotional complexity of the verse; which is open to performance and the creativity of a director. Easy to suggest such a translation – but hard to find.<sup>20</sup>

Among Polish scholars, as far as this point is concerned, there is also no agreement, whether a translator should imitate the ancient metres or not, whether the verses should be rhymed or not. Only one thing seems to be certain – that such a translation should be given in verses and not in prose (as it often happens in French culture). Since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there is only one translation of ancient Greek tragedies given in prose and this is the translation of a part of Aeschylus’s *Agamemnon* by Lucjan Siemieński published in 1851 in ”Biblioteka Warszawska”.<sup>21</sup> All the others we know about are given in verses – in different metres, some are rhymed, while others are not.

But not only do the translators’ preferences have the impact on the way they decide to translate ancient poetry, but also literary tendencies of their times have one. It is particularly noticeable in those times when only rhymed poetry is considered a good one. We know that ancient poetry was not rhymed, but in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and then in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century scholars, reviewers and the public demanded both from the poets and from the translators that they would rhyme their works. The case of Węclewski’s translations is a good example. When translating Aeschylus’s tragedies he decided not to rhyme all the verses (he rhymed the choir’s songs, but he left the dialogic parts unrhymed). After having published those translations

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<sup>19</sup> J. Parandowski, *Homeryckie boje*, in *O sztuce tłumaczenia*, cit., p. 302.

<sup>20</sup> S. Goldhill, *How to stage Greek Tragedy today*, Chicago, London, University Of Chicago Press, 2007, p. 178.

<sup>21</sup> Vol. 3, pp. 254-267.

he had to face the severe criticism of the reviewers for not rhyming ancient poetry.<sup>22</sup> And it seems that at first he gave in to those critics as his first translations of Sophocles's plays were fully rhymed (this is the case of Sophocles's *The Women of Trachis* and *Ajax*).<sup>23</sup> But, when it came to publish all extant Sophocles's plays, as we may see in his translations,<sup>24</sup> he had the courage to resist that sort of criticism. As far as rhyming is concerned, not only reviewers, but also some of the translators, like Morstin,<sup>25</sup> even appreciated this way of translating ancient poetry. Therefore, since the 19<sup>th</sup> until the, more or less, half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Polish translations of ancient Greek tragedies are rhymed (in different metres and verses), to quote some examples (of the beginning of *Agamemnon*'s parodos by Aeschylus, vv. 40-46):

(a) in Zygmunt Węclewski's translation (1873),<sup>26</sup> rhymes – abab abab:

Lat dzisiaj temu, jak dzielny wróg  
 Pryama, księżę Menelej,  
 I Agamemnona z nim, których bóg  
 By zaszczycił w udziale  
 Dając udzielne berł i tron –  
 Atrydów stadło potężne  
 Z tysiącem naw tych odbiegli stron,  
 Posiłki wiodąc potężne.

(b) in Kazimierz Kaszewski's translation (1895),<sup>27</sup> rhymes – aabcbddc:

Król Menelaj, dziesięć lat upływa,

<sup>22</sup> Cf. R. Zawiliński, *O polskich przekładach tragedji Sofoklesowych*, "Biblioteka Warszawska", 1881, vol. 4, p. 98; P. Chmielowski, *Tragedye Sofoklesa*, Przekład Z. Węclewskiego, cit., pp. 663, 671; M. Kawczyński, *O rytmice*, "Ateneum", 1892, vol. 1, fasc. 3, p. 500. It is significant that the first translation of Shakespeare's *King Richard the Second* by Józef Korzeniowski (published in "Biblioteka Warszawska", 1860, vol. 1, pp. 505-528) was also criticized by the reviewers for the lack of rhymes, especially as they were considered a necessary ornament of any piece of poetry at that time, as one of the reviewers remarked, writing that when the poetry was written without rhymes it was hard to distinguish it from any piece of prose (M. Rowiński, *Uwagi o wersyfikacji polskiej jako przyczynek do metryki porównawczej*, Warszawa, Druk Józefa Jeżyńskiego, 1891, p. 149).

<sup>23</sup> Supplement to "Czas", 1859, vol. 14, pp. 94-113, 260-276, 447-472; "Biblioteka Warszawska", 1865, vol. 1, pp. 23-54, 400-423.

<sup>24</sup> Poznań, Biblioteka Kórnicka, 1875.

<sup>25</sup> L. H. Morstin, *Przedmowa tłumacza in Sofokles, Król Edyp, Edyp w Kolonie, Antygona*, Warszawa, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1956, pp. 25-26.

<sup>26</sup> *Tragedye Eschylosa*, transl. Z. Węclewski, Poznań, Biblioteka Kórnicka, 1873, p. 46.

<sup>27</sup> *Tragedye Eschilosa*, transl. K. Kaszewski, Warszawa, Nakład i druk S. Lewentala, 1895, p. 226-227.

Gdy go zdjęła chęć mściwa,  
 Pryama wielki wróg,  
 Wraz z bratem Agamemnonem,  
 Atrydzi, których uczcił bóg  
 Podwójnem berłem i tronem,  
 Ściągnęli zbrojnych z argiwskiej ziemi  
 I na tysiącu naw z niemi  
 Mkną sprzymierzonym zagonem.

(c) in Jan Kasprowicz's translation (1908);<sup>28</sup> rhymes – abbcadedec:

Dziesięć upływa lat,  
 Gdy dwa wrogowie Pryama,  
 Których zrodziła ta sama  
 Boska Atrydów krew,  
 Król Menelaos i brat,  
 Król Agamemnon, na czele  
 Tysięcznych argiwskich okrętów  
 Jęli przecinać topiele  
 Morskich odmętów  
 Zemsty poganiał ich gniew.

In the half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the situation changed, because the attitude towards rhyming the poetry had changed, and since then usually there are no rhymes and translations are written in free verses, to quote one example of the same part:

(a) in Maciej Słomczyński's translation (1982).<sup>29</sup>

Mija dziesiąty już rok  
 Odkąd wielcy Priama wrogowie,  
 Menelaus a z nim Agamemnon,  
 Mężny Atrydów zaprząg  
 Z łaski Zeusa otoczony majestatem  
 Bereł dwu i dwu tronów,  
 Wywiódł z krainy tej  
 Tysiąc argiwskich okrętów.

One of the most ardent opponents of rhyming ancient poetry was Stefan Srebrny. He was the translator of all extant works written by Aeschylus, almost all written by Aristophanes, of *Oedipus the King* by Sophocles and of

<sup>28</sup> Ajschylos, *Dzieje Orestesa*, transl. J. Kasprowicz, Lwów, Nakładem Towarzystwa Wydawniczego, Warszawa- Lwów, E. Wende-H. Altenberg, 1908, p. 6-7.

<sup>29</sup> This translation (paraphrase) was not published, but was adapted on stage first in 1982 and it is still in use in Polish theatre.



many pieces of ancient poetry. He was a great supporter of the idea that any translator should imitate the ancient metres and especially the rhythm of ancient poetry as long as it is possible and acceptable in Polish language.<sup>30</sup> It was the rhythm he considered the core and the soul of any piece of ancient poetry. Therefore, if a translator wants to be faithful to the original play, in Srebrny's opinion, he/she should follow the rhythm of that work.<sup>31</sup> I will quote one example of Srebrny's translation (of the same part as above):<sup>32</sup>

Oto rok już dziesiąty, jak krzywdy się mszcząc –  
Przeciw miastu Priama – Menelaj i z nim  
Agamemnon, królowie, dwu tronów, dwu berł  
Dzierżyciele w tej ziemi, Atrydzi (sam Zeus  
Udarował ich władzą) – od brzegów tych w dal,  
Z tysięcznymi Argiwów zastępy, na bój  
Popłynęli, na sądy orężne.<sup>33</sup>

Unfortunately, the public did not correspond the requirements he posed them expecting that they would understand his idea. He was aware that he was alone in his idea and in fact not even one translator of the succeeding ones followed this way.<sup>34</sup> But still his proposition remains as one of the possibilities and strategies to translate ancient poetry, and ancient tragedy as well, into Polish.

Another problem raised by ancient Greek tragedies for any translator is the

<sup>30</sup> Cf. S. Srebrny, *Zagadnienie przekładów z poezji starożytnej*, in Id., *Teatr grecki i polski*, ed. S. Gąsowski, Introduction J. Łanowski, Warszawa, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1984, pp. 184-201.

<sup>31</sup> In this point his ideas were in line with Russian formalism, cf. T. Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz, *Wczesnomodernistyczna krytyka przekładu (w Polsce)*, in *Historyczne oblicza przekładu*, ed. P. Fast, A. Car, W. M. Osadnik, Katowice, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Śląsk, 2011, pp. 35-49.

<sup>32</sup> Aischylos, *Tragedie*, transl., opr. S. Srebrny, Kraków, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1952.

<sup>33</sup> The source text according to the edition of Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (*Aeschyli Tragoediae*, ed. U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, Berlin 1914) Srebrny used as a basis for his translation goes: δέκατον μὲν ἔτος τόδ' ἐπεὶ Πριάμου / μέγας ἀντίδικος Μενέλαος ἄναξ / ἢ δ' Ἀγαμέμνον, διθρόνου Διόθεν / καὶ δισκίπτρου τιμῆς ὄχυρόν / ζεῦχος Ἀτρείδαιν, στόλον Ἀργείων / χιλιοναύτην, τῆσδ' ἀπὸ χώρας / ἦραν, στρατιῶτιν ἄρωγῆν.

<sup>34</sup> One may wonder why it happened, because, as Tomasz Bilczewski notices, the more grounded is the position of any work of any author in the target culture, the more open the public is towards newer and even more sophisticated translations of that work, cf. T. Bilczewski, *Komparatystyka i interpretacja. Nowoczesne badania porównawcze wobec translatoologii*, Kraków, Universitas, 2010, p. 164.

translation of the spoken parts, especially the so-called *stichomythia*<sup>35</sup> written in iambic trimeters. Stichomythia is a technique of usually single alternating lines given to alternating characters, used especially at a particularly dramatic point in the action when characters are in violent dispute to give the dialogue its powerful effect of quick responses. Therefore, it often gives play its tempo, it presents the characters of a play and pushes the plot further. In Greek drama we do not get anything but words. Everything that is needed is given in them. That's why those parts are really precise and there are no useless words. But languages differ. Thus a translator has to ask himself/herself in what way he/she should present such a dialogue in Polish language. And, if he/she wants to translate every little detail, every nuance of a character's speech, his/her translation may be too long (in comparison with the Greek original), thus may lose its tempo and also may add some information to the image of the characters. But if he/she wants to be concise (as the Greek original), it may appear that the translation is incomprehensible for the readers or the audience. Probably he/she has to choose some way between. In Polish tradition of translating ancient Greek tragedies there are two ways of translating iambic trimeter itself. The first way is to translate it into non-rhymed hendecasyllable (Polish: jedenastozgłoskowiec), which was very popular in Polish poetry, especially in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, and was used f.e. by Jan Kochanowski and Piotr Kochanowski; to quote one example (of Sophocles's *Antigone*, v. 521 in Kazimierz Morawski's translation):<sup>36</sup> Współkochać przyszłam, nie współnienawidzić.

The second way is to translate it into Polish alexandrine (Polish: trzynastozgłoskowiec), which is a commonly used type of metrical line in traditional Polish poetry and verse drama, to quote the beginning of *Agamemnon* by Aeschylus in Jan Kasprowicz's translation:

Ach! skończcie raz już, proszę, bogowie, tę nędzę  
przez cały rok na dachu Atrydowym pędzę.

There is no doubt nowadays that ancient Greek tragedies were created to be performed on stage – on the Athenian stage with its technical devices borne in mind by an author. Scholars agree that every author, when writing a drama has a stage in mind for which he/she designs this drama. Thus, we may assume that also a translator, if he/she is aware of the theatre perspective and theatrical values of a drama (and it was not the regular attitude towards drama,

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. P. Pavis, *Dictionary of the Theatre. Terms, Concepts and Analysis*, University of Toronto Press 1998; entry: *stichomythia*.

<sup>36</sup> Sofokles, *Antygona*, transl. K. Morawski, ed. S. Srebrny and J. Łanowski, Wrocław, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1999, p. 27.

especially in times when any drama was regarded to belong to the realm of literature rather than theatre) and assumes that this play is to be performed on stage, bears a stage in mind for which he/she designs the translation. Thus a translator finds himself/herself between the stages – the one for which the Greek original was created and the other for which a translation is created. It appears then that not only should any translator take into consideration the literary perspective, but he/she should also bear the theatre perspective in mind. But, as we all know, the ancient Greek theatre was different than ours and the one to which the translators since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were accustomed. The knowledge about ancient Greek theatre also has changed and now we know much more than the scholars in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. All those things may have their impact on a translator.

One way of respecting theatrical values/ theatre perspective of a drama is to insert the stage directions, “to clarify the understanding or mode of presentation of the play for the reader”.<sup>37</sup> But as far as ancient Greek tragedies are concerned, there is still an unsolved question whether a translator should or should not supply the translation with such stage directions, because ancient plays did not have ones.<sup>38</sup> Ancient playwrights were the stage directors and stage managers of their works themselves, they played a vivid and relevant role in the stage presentations of that works, therefore they did not need to insert any stage directions. But it does not mean that there is no stage instruction included in the words of characters of a play. When any translator decides to add some stage directions, he/she has to answer to the following questions: which theatre production he/she is supposed (or wants) to present in his/her stage directions: does he/she want to reconstruct the original Greek premiere or, maybe, his/her aim is to ‘open’ the translation for future performance that is possible to be performed on a modern stage. Each decision has its consequences. The first one may direct the translator towards the theatre archeology that would present the stage and the theatre that no longer exists. However, the second one may damage the intrinsic values of a play, when a translator would present it as another contemporary play without any hint for the public that they deal with a piece of literature and theatre from a distant world. Although absent in the Greek originals, in fact the stage directions are present in almost every Polish (and not only Polish) translation.

The analyses of Polish translations of ancient Greek tragedies prove that such issues as: the current (to a translator) knowledge about ancient Greek theatre, the current theatre as well as the current theatrical and literary tenden-

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. P. Pavis, *Dictionary of the Theatre*, cit.: entry: *Stage directions*.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. O. Taplin, *Did Greek dramatists write stage instructions?*, “Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society”, 23 (1977), pp. 121-132.

cies, have their great influence on the practice of translating. Thus translations given in different times, in different literary and theatrical contexts have to differ one from another.

Significant examples of how the current cultural context influences the work of any translator are the translations of Aeschylus's *Oresteia* given by Zygmunt Węclewski (1873) and by Jan Kasprowicz (1908). It may seem that there is only a thirty years time span between them, but in fact many things – in literature, scholarship and theatre – changed at that time that, in a way, 'forced' the translators to render their works as they are.<sup>39</sup>

When Zygmunt Węclewski was translating *Oresteia*, the dominant theatre tendency of the time was the one which was particularly intent on producing a sense of (theatrical) illusion. This tendency together with the state of knowledge about ancient Greek theatre, which was based primarily on its image presented by Vitruvius in his work titled *De architectura* (a view characteristic of pre-1900 scholarship),<sup>40</sup> made him believe that Aeschylus, while staging his tragedies, made use of many props and stage machines, that made his tragedies really spectacular. Therefore among the stage directions supplied by the translator we find many references to such spectacular solutions of some scenes of the *Oresteia*, e. g. when Agamemnon enters the stage with all the troops and war spoils, when Athena appears on stage flying, or when Clytaimnestra as a ghost appears from the underworld; also descriptions of the backstage are given with all the details. We know today that theatre in Aeschylus's time was much simpler than Węclewski assumed, and thus all such information give us a hint about the imagination of the translator in-

<sup>39</sup> More details the reader will find in: B. Bibik, *Didaskalia w przekładzie tekstu dramatycznego (na przykładzie Oresteji Ajschylosa)*, "Między Oryginałem a Przekładem", 19 (2013), pp. 57-75; Ead., *Didaskalia w "Oresteji" Ajschylosa jako projekt inscenizacji tłumacza (na przykładzie "Agamemnona")*, "Symbolae Philologorum Posnaniensium Graecae et Latinae", 26 (2016), fasc. 1, pp. 53-75; Ead., *Didaskalia w "Oresteji" Ajschylosa jako projekt inscenizacji tłumacza (na przykładzie "Ofiarnic")*, "Przekładaniec", 31 (2016), pp. 75-89.

<sup>40</sup> This well-grounded knowledge started to change in last years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century because of the publication of a paper by Julius Höpken and the excavations performed by Wilhelm Dörpfeld. Höpken and then Dörpfeld, they questioned the raised stage in the ancient theatre as it was presented by Vitruvius in his work *De architectura*. At the beginning scholars tended to neglect those researches, but finally they had to agree with the views of Höpken and Dörpfeld and the Vitruvius's presentation of the Greek theatre was rejected. Since then scholars had to deal with many controversies concerning ancient Greek stage and its devices; some of them are still in question (cf. P. Arnott, *Greek scenic conventions in the fifth century B.C.*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1962, p. 3; O. Taplin, *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus. The Dramatic Use of Exits and Entrances in Greek Tragedy*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1977 (repr. 2001), p. 441).

fluenced by his own culture and knowledge. Arthur Wallace Pickard-Cambridge rightly noticed that:

Unfortunately scholars are far from being agreed as to the interferences to be drawn from the plays, and there may always remain differences of opinion on the fundamental question of the amount of illusion which an Athenian audience expected. Did they require a considerable degree of realism in the representation, or were they content to take a good deal for granted, and to see only with the mind's eye much of what poet described or hinted at, just as in vase-painting and sculpture a very few figures might stand for many, and much might be conveyed by very simple symbols? This question must inevitably complicate the discussion at many points.<sup>41</sup>

It is worth mentioning that all instructions given by Węclewski in his translation, although probably supplied with a deep belief that they presented the Greek stage, were possible to realize on a contemporary theatre (mainly opera stage) and amazingly corresponded with the current tendencies. This may mean that, even if unconsciously, Węclewski was adapting the translation to the current stage (with this stage in mind) to render a translation possible to be performed on stage as it was in ancient Greece.

Jan Kasprowicz (1860-1926) was widely acknowledged as one of the greatest Polish poets of his day. He was also a talented translator: he translated an astonishing number of works from Greek, English, German, Italian, French and Latin. And his translations illustrate the ways and the extent to which a personality of such stature, who was far from being only a secondary author or a mere translator, leaves his traces on someone else's work. However, this attitude was not exclusively characteristic of him, as it was also in line with the contemporary conventions of translating. It was at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when translators came to be regarded as artists who were entitled to leave their own mark on the translated work, a signature of their own personality, aesthetic sense, and ideas.<sup>42</sup> And Kasprowicz's idea was, as he writes in the introduction to *Oresteia*,<sup>43</sup> to render the ancient play as a contemporary one and to bring Aeschylus to the stock of the contemporary Polish playwrights. Therefore, in his translation, there is not even one mention about the ancient stage, the whole action is designed to take place on a current one. He resigned from using the archaisms as well. Kasprowicz also wrote his own

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<sup>41</sup> A. W. Pickard-Cambridge, *The Theatre of Dionysos in Athens*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1946, p. 31.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. E. Balcerzan, *Strategie znawców*, in Id., *Literatura z literatury (strategie tłumaczy)*, Katowice, Śląsk, 1998, p. 200; M. Heydel, *Gorliwość tłumacza. Przekład poetycki w twórczości Czesława Miłosza*, Kraków, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2013, p. 103.

<sup>43</sup> Ajschylos, *Dzieje Orestesa*, transl. J. Kasprowicz, cit., pp. 10-11.

dramas, which means that he knew very well how theatre worked. But in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, as we learn from the numerous reviews of that time, all the theatrical devices known to Węclewski, which had had such spectacular and attractive effects earlier, were by then usually considered outdated. Moreover, at that time, drama was considered to belong to the realm of literature rather than theatre and for this reason the whole theatrical arrangements were rarely considered to be of great importance. Reviewers were definitely interested in drama as a piece of literature and usually their criticism followed this perspective; they were also focused on the play of actors, who were their main point of interest.<sup>44</sup> As a result, the translation of Kasprowicz is less spectacular than that of Węclewski, especially as far as the supplied stage directions are concerned, but from the other part, unsurprisingly, it includes more information about the appearance and costumes of the characters.

Every translator should be aware that any ancient play is not only a beautiful piece of literature, but it is also a beautiful piece of theatre. At the same time he/she should be aware that any translation belongs both to the source culture and to the target culture as well. Now it is a commonly accepted statement that every translation is an interpretation. Recently also much approved of in the field of translation studies is the elevated position of a translator to the position of an author or, as translation scholars would have it, the second author of the translated work; but such a position, which grants him/her the rights generally attributed to the author, does not appear to be obvious enough, since the public usually regards the work of translator as something devoid of artistic or creative value. But there are numerous factors at play when one considers the many questions resulting from any ancient text of a theatre play I discussed above. Any translator facing these questions is influenced by different factors, which have changed over the last two hundred years since the publication of the first translations of Greek tragedies into Polish. As a result, translations of the same literary work translated in different historical periods must differ, because the historical, political, social and cultural circumstances and conditions are different. And they have their significant impact on the translators' work and the way they fashion the original play. For every translation makes use of the possibilities that are included in the original work, such as words, meanings, metaphors etc. Translators are not restrained in their choices. Thus, as Jerzy Jarniewicz<sup>45</sup> writes, any translator as the

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. A. Marszałek, *Prowincjonalny teatr stołeczny (trzy spojrzenia na scenę lwowską lat 1864-1887)*, "Polskie piśmiennictwo teatralne XIX w.", vol. 3, Kraków, Towarzystwo Naukowe Societas Vistulana, 2011, pp. 110, 270.

<sup>45</sup> J. Jarniewicz, *Horror vacui, czyli poetyka nadmiaru w przekładzie literackim*, in Id., *Gościnność słowa. Szkice o przekładzie literackim*, Kraków, Znak, 2012, p. 55.

reader and interpreter of the original play co-creates its meanings for his/her public. But as some factors influenced the authors in their times (of which any good translator should be aware), other factors influence the translator during his/her work. Those different factors that have the impact on any translator create the 'the horizon of a translator' I discussed at the beginning of this paper.

When analysing those factors we may try to follow the work of a translator, and try to understand his/her decisions and interpretation of a play as well as the staging potential designed in the final translation. It is absolutely natural for all translations that they become outdated. But even then they are still snapshots of the language, culture, and imagination at some particular moment in history and of some people – translators, so often underestimated and even neglected, who worked for their fellow citizens to give them the possibility of becoming acquainted with some of Europe's most important and influential literary works. Every translator leaves a trace of himself / herself and of his/her time in a translation. No translation, as it cannot be, is perfect, but every one emerges from the desire of translation. Therefore, every translation has its value and is precious.<sup>46</sup>

#### Abstract

The main objective of the article is to outline the (changing) strategies used by Polish translators when rendering ancient Greek tragedies into Polish. The tradition of Polish translations of these pieces started in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Since then there are over one hundred translations made by dozen of Polish translators. But since then many attitudes have changed: towards writing (and translating) poetry, towards drama. The knowledge about ancient Greek theatre and ancient playwrights as well as the ways of performing theatre plays also have changed. Briefly saying, many cultural, literary, theatrical as well as social and historical circumstances have changed which are of great importance and have their relevant impact on any translator.

Key words: Translation, Greek tragedy.

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<sup>46</sup> R. Niziołek, *Cztery razy Don Juan*, cit., p. 182.