

Poetry as a continuous struggle between joy and hopelessness: On the Spanish and Galician translations of Adam Zagajewski's selected poems

La poesía como lucha continua entre la alegría y la desesperanza: sobre las traducciones al español y al gallego de los poemas seleccionados de Adam Zagajewski

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Abstract: The purpose of the essay is to reflect on the role of creativity in the translation of Adam Zagajewski's poetry. We intend to carry out a contrastive analysis between two original poems ("Walizka" and "Ziemia") and their Spanish and Galician translations – by Xavier Farré and Bartosz Dondelewski and Lidia López Teixeira, respectively – to determine whether the interpretation stimulates creative thinking in translators, and whether the impact of poetry on creativity varies according to the work we read and then subject to linguistic and aesthetic negotiations. Due to the language of the article, we also use English translations by Clare Cavanagh for our study. As a starting point we take the notion of "lateral thinking", proposed by Edward de Bono and recognized by Albrecht Neubert as very useful in the process of discovering new possibilities in translation. This approach will make it possible to recognize that recreational potential can be revealed in both a literal and free translation. We will also consider whether the Polish lines can be a part of the target poetic contexts with an analogous expressiveness.

Keywords: Poetry; translation; Spanish; Galician; Adam Zagajewski.

Resumen: El objetivo del artículo es reflexionar sobre el papel de la creatividad en la traducción de la poesía de Adam Zagajewski. Pretendemos realizar un análisis contrastivo entre dos poemas originales («Walizka» and «Ziemia») y sus traducciones al español y al gallego –de Xavier Farré y Bartosz Dondelewski y Lidia López Teixeira, respectivamente– para determinar si la interpretación estimula el pensamiento creativo en los traductores, y si el impacto de la poesía en la creatividad varía según la obra que leemos y luego sometemos a negociaciones lingüísticas y estéticas. Debido al idioma del artículo, también utilizamos para nuestro estudio las traducciones al inglés de Clare Cavanagh. Como punto de partida tomamos la noción de «pensamiento lateral», propuesta por Edward de Bono y reconocida por Albrecht Neubert como muy útil en el proceso de descubrimiento de nuevas posibilidades en la traducción. Tal enfoque permitirá reconocer que el potencial recreativo puede revelarse tanto en una traducción literal como libre. También consideraremos si los versos polacos pueden formar parte de los contextos poéticos de destino con una expresividad análoga.

Palabras clave: Poesía; traducción; español; gallego; Adam Zagajewski.

Summary: Introduction; 1. Methodology; 2. Contrastive analysis between the original poems and their translations, 2.1. “Walizka”, 2.2. “Ziemia”; Conclusions; References.

Sumario: Introducción; 1. Metodología; 2. Análisis contrastivo entre los poemas originales y sus traducciones, 2.1. “Walizka”, 2.2. “Ziemia”; Conclusiones; Referencias bibliográficas.

INTRODUCTION

The poet Adam Zagajewski, who died in 2021, was considered one of the most distinguished voices of contemporary poetry. His poems are characterized by an infiltration of philosophy, ethics, as well as irony and a sense of humor (Farré, as cited in “Zagajewski visto”, 2021). Zagajewski was a central figure in Poland’s so-called *Nowa Fala* [New Wave] or Generation of ’68 (Cavanagh, 2000, p. 4) – opposed to the Communist government – and a candidate for the Nobel Prize in Literature. His best works have succeeded “in making the space of the imagination connect with experience; things seen and heard and remembered in all their limits and sorrow and relished joy have the same power as things conjured” (Tóibín, 2004). Zagajewski’s sensibility is universal, but unique and committed at the same time. In his lines we observe “the search for beauty as an antidote to the horrors that have arisen throughout the twentieth century, without forgetting those moments of affliction, destruction, and defeat of a humanism” (Farré, as cited in “Zagajewski visto”, 2021).¹ The seriousness of his lines and the beauty of his tone, revealed in the use of traditional free verse and the avoidance of poetic experimentations, demand that the reader see both the tragedies and the beauty of the world.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all translations into English are my own.

Clare Cavanagh (2000, p. 13) observes that in Zagajewski's lyrics, "one meets reminiscences and reveries, childhood memories, paeans to nature and to the imagination, to art, to love, moments of ecstatic revelation". At the same time, the poet's "nature is steeped in history; through his poetry, he reminds us that the landscapes we see have been inescapably shaped, for better and for worse, by human hands and minds" (Cavanagh, 2000, pp. 13-14). The idea of mixing these dichotomies is quintessential for Zagajewski, whose verse, even in translation, "remains oddly affecting in its calm mystery, wry acceptance and slow, sly shrug" (Tóibín, 2004).

Zagajewski, as one of the most widely known and respected poets outside his home country of Poland, has "deepened American poetry" (Hirsch, 2021), especially after the *New Yorker*, shortly after the 9/11 attacks, published his poem "Spróbuj opiewać okaleczony świat" ("Try to Praise the Mutilated World"; trans. C. Cavanagh). As a laureate of the 2017 Princess of Asturias Award for Literature, he has also been appreciated by Hispanic readers. Although the works that have been published so far reinforce the warm reception that Zagajewski's work has had from Spanish-speaking critics and audiences (see Bortkiewicz, 2004; Farré, 2007 and 2015; López Rodríguez and Díaz-Pintado Hilario, 2017-18; Rica Aranguren, 2009), none of these scholars offer a comparative translation analysis. Another contributing circumstance for our inquiry is the lack of a similar study in the field of the Galician language.² Consequently, this analysis is crucial for filling the research gap regarding his translations into the aforementioned languages.

1. METHODOLOGY

In this paper, our aims are to examine the popularity of some of Zagajewski's poems in Spanish and Galician, in order to determine whether their interpretation –understood in a hermeneutic way– stimulates creative thinking in their translators, and whether the impact of poetry on creativity varies according to the work being read and negotiated for linguistic, aesthetic, and cultural purposes. Reflection on the concrete solutions adopted in the translation process will also cover the question of whether this supposed "recreational" potential can be revealed in both a literal and a free translation of the original texts. Finally, we will try to

² The first and so far the only critical analysis of the Spanish and Galician translations of Zagajewski's poetry is found in Jackiewicz and Szejko (2022).

verify the extent to which the Polish lines –characterized by the continuous contradictions through which Zagajewski sees the world– can be a part of the Spanish and Galician poetic contexts. The texts we discuss include two poems from the collection *Asymetria* (Span. *Asimetría*; Eng. *Asymmetry*), published in 2014: “Walizka” (Span. “Maleta”; Gl. “Maleta”; Eng. “Suitcase”) and “Ziemia” (Span. “Tierra”; Gl. “A terra”; Eng. “The earth”). We likewise examine their Spanish translations by Xavier Farré, as well as their Galician translations provided by Bartosz Dondelewski and Lidia López Teixeira.³ The Galician versions were originally published in the 2018 paper, “Adam Zagajewski: poemas escollidos”, in *Madrygal. Revista de Estudios Gallegos*, which contains translations of selected poems from the aforementioned book.⁴ What these two works have in common – the reason for our choice – is precisely the mixture of “the deeply playful with the highly grave” imagery (Tóibín, 2004), the ways in which they link the past with the present, as well as the way they present the figure of the tourist.

As the basis of our study of the Spanish and Galician versions of Zagajewski’s verses, we use the notion of “creativity”, which we detect in these translations with increasing frequency, demonstrating one sign of the translator’s “originality of thought, intellectual curiosity, imagination, decision-making capacity, and critical reasoning” (García Álvarez, 2018, p. 13). This observation is also closely related to the concept of “lateral thinking” proposed by Edward de Bono and recognized by Albrecht Neubert as effecting the process of discovering new possibilities of works in translation (2009, pp. 138-139). According to the psychologist Bono, lateral thinking involves restructuring and generating new ideas, especially in the artistic fields, and it is represented in our case by the translator of a poetic text:

It might be wondered where the artist comes in. In his search for new ways of looking at things, in his dedication to breaking down the old conventions of perception, is not the artist the supreme user of lateral thinking? In the world of art, it would seem that lateral thinking is going on

³ Due to the language of the article, the study also uses English translations by Clare Cavanagh (Zagajewski, 2018).

⁴ The poems translated into Galician that are also presented in this selection but not included in the present essay are: “Dzieciństwo” (Gl. “Infancia”), “Północne morze” (Gl. “Mar ao norte”), “Wiemy, czym jest sztuka” (Gl. “Sabemos o que é a arte”) (Dondelewski and López Teixeira, 2018, pp. 449-451).

all the time under the more self-satisfying name of creative thinking. The artist is open to ideas, influences and chance. The artist seeks to develop an intense awareness. The artist tries to escape from the accepted vision of things often by deliberate use of unreason.... The true purpose of lateral thinking is not to wallow in formless chaos but to emerge from it with an effective new idea. The new idea is likely to have a classic simplicity of form; it is likely to have an orderliness which is far from the formlessness of the chaos from which it emerged. The ideal aimed at in lateral thinking is the simplicity of extreme sophistication, the simplicity of an idea that is very effective in action and yet elemental in its form (1971, pp. 124-125).

This claim is similarly made by Richard J. Caselli, who developed his own scheme of creative organization and who has defined creativity as “the attempt to bridge the gap between what is and what should be. It emerges from the interplay of 5 commonly shared factors: motivation, perception, action, temperament, and social interaction” (2009, p. 143). From this perspective, the translation process, which is always based on the source text, cannot in itself be limited to a servile copy of the original. It needs to be regarded as a creative act that takes place under a series of constraints which frequently make the translator visible, but do not necessarily distance them from the original author.

Looking at these observations from a purely translational point of view and taking into account the translator’s actions, creativity discourages the adoption of hasty solutions, which are often those most similar to the solutions present in the original text, and instead urge translators to opt for other equally effective solutions, even though they are perhaps different from the author’s original ideas. In other words, it is “necessary to temporarily abandon the logical and rational thinking that limits the perceptual and imaginistic deployment of thought and prevents the formulation of new solutions” (García Álvarez, 2018, p. 16).

When it comes to literary translation, and especially to poetry translation, creativity is often the central axis of the whole process of reworking and rewriting the source text. Moreover, a translator does not have to suppress his own linguistic initiative or fear that in his artistic sovereignty he will deviate too far from the translated work (Jarniewicz, 2016, p. 280). The search for new ideas and the reflection on lines from the original context, and not only from their dictionary meaning, should be an inherent part of every translation. Zagajewski claimed that:

Writing poems is fascinating because it starts with something that is so nebulous, with something that is inside.... It is absolutely absorbing. The translation operation, on the other hand, is a purely linguistic operation. There is nothing existential about it (as cited in Rosé, 2014, online).

Our claim is that translation can indeed be a prolific act, as engaging as the act of writing. As we attempt to demonstrate in the next part of the present essay, this claim is confirmed by the decisions by the translators of the two selected poems, in which the images presented –frequently simple in their form and seemingly lacking in translational difficulties– turn out to be an inspiration, although these interpretations themselves are not always reflected in the resulting, translated verse.

2. CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS BETWEEN THE ORIGINAL POEMS AND THEIR TRANSLATIONS

2. 1. “Walizka”

To begin with, our attention will focus on the poem “Walizka” (Span. “Maleta”; Gl. “Maleta”; Eng. “Suitcase”):

Rano Kraków był pochmurny, dymiły wzgórza.
W Monachium padał deszcz, Alpy niewidoczne
i ciężkie leżały w dolinach jak kamienie.

Dopiero w Atenach zobaczyłem słońce, które
sprawiło, że powietrze, całe powietrze,
cała ogromna flotylla powietrza,
zamieniło się w drżące złoto.

Jak mówią pisarze religijni: nagle
stałem się innym człowiekiem.

Jestem tylko turystą w widzialnym świecie,
jednym z tysiąca cieni, które
snują się w ogromnych halach lotnisk –

a za mną jak wierny pies jedzie na małych kółkach
moja zielona walizka.

Jestem tylko nieuważnym turystą,

ale kocham światło.

(Zagajewski, 2014, p. 12)

Cracovia nublada por la mañana, las colinas humeaban.
En Múnich llovía, los Alpes, invisibles
y pesados, descansaban en los valles como piedras.

Hasta Atenas no vimos el sol que
provocó que el aire, todo el aire,
toda una inmensa flota de aire
se transformara en oro tembloroso.

Como dicen los escritores religiosos: de repente
me convertí en otra persona.

Soy tan sólo un turista en el mundo visible,
una de entre esas miles de sombras que
deambulan por las salas inmensas de los aeropuertos,

y detrás de mí como un perro fiel con sus pequeñas ruedas
tengo a mi maleta verde.

Soy tan sólo un turista distraído,
pero amo la luz.

(Zagajewski, 2017, p. 16)

Cracovia amencía nubrada, os outeiros botaban fume.
En Múnich chovía, uns Alpes invisibles
e pesados xacían nos vales como pedras.

Só en Atenas vin o sol, que
fixo o ar, todo o ar,
toda a armada imensa do ar,
volverse en ouro vibrante.

Os escritores relixiosos dirían: de súpeto
convertínme noutra persoa.

Son apenas un turista no mundo visible,

unha das mil sombras que
vagan polas naves xigantes dos aeroportos –

e detrás de min, como un can fiel, vai con rodas pequenas
a miña maleta verde.

Son apenas un turista distraído,
pero amo a luz.

(Dondelewski and López Teixeira, 2018, p. 449)

Krakov was overcast that morning, the hills steamed.
It was raining in Munich, in valleys the Alps
lay hidden and heavy as stones.

Only in Athens did I glimpse the sun, it
turned the air, the whole air,
the whole immense flotilla of the air
to trembling gold.

As the religious writers say: I suddenly
became a new man.

I'm just a tourist in the visible world,
one of a thousand shadows
drifting through airports' vast halls–

and my green suitcase, like a faithful dog, follows me
on little wheels.

I'm just an absentminded tourist
but I love the light.

(Zagajewski, 2018, p. 13)

From a formal point of view, the verses in both translations are slightly longer than in the original, which is a result of a strict reflection of the images created by the poet. The morphological and syntactic norms of the Spanish and Galician languages have made the target stanzas more extensive. However, in the Spanish version, individual verses have become longer as a consequence of the translator's addition of elements

absent in the original. For example, the passage “jednym z tysiąca cieni” [one of a thousand shadows] is replaced by “una de entre esas miles de sombras” [one of those thousands of shadows]. In the Galician translation, it can be helpful to examine the contractions of prepositions and the use of determiners and pronouns.⁵ Consider, for example, “nos vales” [in valleys], “no mundo” [in the world], “unha das mil” [one of a thousand] or “polas naves” [through halls]. However, in the Spanish version we observe expressions such as “en los valles”, “en el mundo”, “una de entre esas miles” and “por las salas”, the length of which affects the rhythm of the text.

Zagajewski’s use of enjambments are another equally significant issue related to the rhythmic structure of the poem. The poet’s work abounds in so-called antisyntactic poems, characteristic of Poland’s New Wave authors, in which the boundaries of the verses fall within coherent syntactic relationships, while the strongest syntactic boundaries fall within the verses. Thus, one statement is sometimes broken up by several very strong syntax boundaries that do not coincide with verse clauses. This antisyntactic construction is one of the basic methods for organizing the semantic level of a poetic text; it allows the revival of common phraseology, the multiplication of meanings, thanks to a reinterpretation of words included in metaphorical expressions, as well as for the rupture of linguistic schemes (Pszczółowska, 1997, pp. 367-368). An example occurs in the distich, “Jak mówią pisarze religijni: nagle/ stałem się innym człowiekiem” (“As the religious writers say: I suddenly/ became a new man”; trans. C. Cavanagh). As we can see in both versions, in translations of this poem these elements have been consistently preserved –with only one exception in the Spanish translation of the passage “a za mną jak wierny pies jedzie na małych kółkach / moja zielona walizka” (“and my green suitcase, like a faithful dog, follows me/ on little wheels”; trans. C. Cavanagh). The verb “jedzie” [goes] is replaced with a form of “tengo” [I have] and appears at the beginning of the following line “tengo a mi maleta verde” [I have my green suitcase]; in the Polish original, we just have “moja zielona walizka” [my green suitcase]. The *rationalization* (Berman, 2004, pp. 288-289) of the verse by changing the original verb’s place and replacing it with another, more realistic verb, may weaken the original

⁵ According to González González *et al.* (2008, p. 17), “This phenomenon contrasts enormously with Spanish, in which only the contractions ‘al’ (‘a’ + ‘el’) and ‘del’ (‘de’ + ‘el’) exist, both of the type preposition + article”.

emphasis placed by the poet on the word “suitcase”, which appears in the poem’s title. On the other hand, the above *impoverishment* can be regarded as insignificant if we take into account the use of the preposition “a” in the Spanish phrase. What is more, it seems to be an excellent example of creativity in the translation process because it introduces the form “tengo a” before an inanimate object (“maleta”)—which is not a common structure in Spanish— a move that strengthens the simile and renders the affection that the lyrical subject (the poem’s speaker) feels for his companion. Paradoxically, the more realistic verb “tener” [to have] in the Spanish case opens up new possibilities for interpreting Zagajewski’s idea, thus emphasizing the suitcase’s comparison to the “faithful dog” present in the preceding verse.

The last peculiarity is closely related to the rhythmic structure of the poem and deserves attention: the pause in the twelfth verse clause: “snują się w ogromnych halach lotnisk –” (“drifting through airports’ vast halls—”; trans. C. Cavanagh). A dash can be an announcement of the unexpected, a sign of suspension of utterance, and a sign of a semantic and compositional division (Jaskuła, 1982, p. 74). In this particular case, the dash phonically suspends the statement, strengthens the initial clause, and at the same time announces an unexpected poetic solution, i.e., comparing the suitcase to a faithful dog. In the above interpretations, the pause appears only in the Galician translation, and in Farré’s version it is replaced by a comma, which could be considered destructive to the poem’s rhythm, and likewise to its linguistic patterning (Berman, 2004, pp. 292-294). As a consequence, “the translated text is more ‘homogeneous’ than the original (possessing more ‘style’ in the ordinary sense)” (Berman, 2004, p. 293).

On the semantic layer of the poem—inextricably linked to its structure—readers cannot fail to notice the various dichotomies with which Zagajewski counteracts the observed reality. For example, in the first two stanzas he juxtaposes the different auras that accompany his journey: the cloudiness and fogginess of Krakow, features that indeed effectively hinder traveling by air in this part of Poland; the rain falling in Munich and the stone-heavy Alps oppose the Athenian sun, the perception of which is a true moment of dazzlement and joy for the lyrical subject. The translations of these characteristics are mostly literal, although some minor changes have occurred which, in line with the intention of the translators, have been used to intensify individual ideas. Thus, the adverb “rano” [in the morning] in the Galician version is replaced by the verb “amencer” [to

dawn], which renders the target verse more poetic. For example, the Alps, which in the original text “leżały” [laid], in the Spanish version “descansaban” [rested]. It is also worth mentioning here that the verb “descansar”, as used by Farré, can be regarded as another example of lateral thinking applied in the translation process, since –although it seems to deviate from the source text– it actually accentuates the subtle play on words one can see in Zagajewski’s original poem. The verb “leżeć” means “to be situated”, but it can also be understood as a synonym for “to be in a horizontal position, to sleep”. Therefore, the wording can make one think of the Polish phrase “spać jak kamień” [to sleep like a log], which harmonizes perfectly with the noun “kamienie” [stones]. Thanks to this solution, one of the basic meanings of the Spanish verb –“to rest, to sleep” (“reposar, dormir”; Real Academia Española y la Asociación de Academias de la Lengua Española, n.d.)– deepens the expressiveness of the comparison proposed by Zagajewski. Finally, the sun in Athens shone not only for the lyrical subject, but also for his companions, becoming a shared observation, as indicated by the Spanish verb form “vimos” [we saw], instead of the original “zobaczyłem” [I saw]. This last transformation –although it does not raise any grammatical nor syntactical doubts within this stanza– remains in contention with other verb forms used by the translator, directly indicating the *loneliness* of the lyrical hero: “me convertí” [I became], “soy” [I am], “detrás de mí” [behind me], “mi maleta” [my suitcase], “amo” [I love]. There is, therefore, an indubitable inconsistency with the original, and the translator’s change should be considered nonessential and beyond the intention of the original author. In this case, we are not necessarily dealing with a direct manifestation of the translator’s *creativity*, but readers can acknowledge that this solution provides new interpretative possibilities. Consequently, we assume the translator’s lateral thinking is revealed here in an *interpretive* way, and not in a strictly translational one. The resulting inconsistency might lead the readers of the translation to start asking themselves questions about issues that readers of the original text would not likely ask. Is the lyrical subject accompanied by others? Or is the plural verb simply a reference to the surrounding objects and circumstances –or perhaps to the alter ego of the narrator? As we can see, questions of this nature, although they may disrupt the reading of the original poem, at the same time arouse our curiosity, sharpen our senses, and cause us to reexamine the remaining fragments of the text, those which had perhaps been previously overlooked. In this way, surprisingly, there is a chance to see what

originally went unnoticed, and what Zagajewski himself might have drawn attention to. Moreover, the ubiquitous loneliness of the lyrical subject, directly disturbed by the translator's introduction of a plural verb form, becomes paradoxically and accidentally even more tangible. Take, for example, the increased emphasis on the important role played by the previously discussed "green suitcase". Bearing in mind the plural verb form "vimos", we cannot leave the poem without commenting on the way the verb transforms the entire translated verse in which it appears: that is, "Dopiero w Atenach zobaczyłem słońce, które" ("Only in Athens did I glimpse the sun, it"; trans. C. Cavanagh). If we look at the proposed solutions, our attention is drawn to one more detail present in the Spanish version. Farré's translation, "Hasta Atenas no vimos el sol", focuses on not seeing the sun until arriving in Athens. On the contrary, the original—as in the Galician and English translations—focuses on seeing the sun when arriving in the city, which should be understood as a positive, breakthrough moment for the entire poem. The attention of the Spanish-speaking reader is directed, rather, to the *negative* event, which is the lack of sun accompanying the lyrical subject during the entire trip to the Grecian capital. As a consequence, the figure of the tourist is undeniably weakened and distorted, and in the subsequent verses experiences a spiritual, but no less important (and literal) dazzlement. In this way, we are again dealing with a new interpretive opportunity, but in this case, it should be considered as too distant an interference in the essence of the original, and thus not as an example of creativity in translation. Of course, the proposed translation of this verse does not destroy the expressiveness of the original work as a whole, and perhaps these subtle alterations even remain something unrecognized by the reader. Nevertheless, we find no translational or linguistic justification for this kind of decision. From both a linguistic and non-linguistic point of view, nothing stood in the way of presenting the moment of seeing the sun as something positive—for example, through the literal translation: "Fue solo en Atenas que vi el sol que".

Another poetic strategy adopted by Zagajewski is gradation. The use of a sequence of the noun "powietrze" [air] in the second stanza gradually intensifies the crucial moment for the poem's speaker: "sprawiło, że powietrze, całe powietrze,/ cała ogromna flotylla powietrza" ("turned the air, the whole air,/ the whole immense flotilla of the air"; trans. C. Cavanagh). In the target texts, we see the keyword repeated ("aire" and "ar", respectively), and the idea reaches its climax in the expressions: "una

inmensa flota de aire” [an immense flotilla of the air] and, “a armada inmensa do ar” [the immense navy of the air], both of which are literal reflections of the original. The only difference is the use of the noun “armada” in the Galician version, a word with the synonymous meaning: “a large group of armed ships that fight wars at sea” (Cambridge University Press, n.d.).

The following observation concerns the figure of the tourist with whom the lyrical subject is identified. Before we proceed to the comments on the translation itself, it is worth considering why the choice fell on the tourist, ignoring the poem’s obvious associations with its speaker: their inattentiveness, the airports’ halls, and the suitcase. According to Bauman, who describes postmodern personal models:

A tourist leaves the house in search of impressions. Impressions, and stories about impressions, are the only loot he returns with and the only one he cares about.... Nothing drives him out of his house, except an unquenchable desire for adventure. What a tourist does, he does of his own free will.... In our postmodern times, we are all a bit of a tourist.... The world is meant to be used by us to collect impressions; and as much it is worth as it delivers. Wherever we are, we are passing through; the next life stops are hotels (2011, pp. 452-453).⁶

In Zagajewski’s poem, the tourist looks for impressions, but at the same time is “one of a thousand shadows”, someone “inattentive” in the “visible world”. It is all the more surprising that the character ultimately experiences transformation, since they initially lack “humility to the capricious and unfathomable rules of the world, this resignation to a fate full of surprises” (Bauman, 2011, p. 452). Hence, the world depicted in these stanzas –revealed in the Athenian sun and in the seemingly soulless hall of the airport– meets the expectations of a tourist, in Bauman’s understanding of the term, and exerts itself enough to remain worth visiting (2011, p. 452). Evidence for this comes in an unexpected punch line, in which the tourist emerges as someone extremely attentive, someone who “loves the light”, and thus perceives what is apparently imperceptible. Indeed, this speaker experiences “trembling gold”, not just air heated by the sun. We also note that the passage “Jestem ... jednym z tysiąca cieni” [I’m ... one of a thousand shadows] brings to mind Rosenberg’s (2018)

⁶ In his article, Bauman devotes attention to three other personal patterns in addition to the “tourist”: the stroller, the vagabond, and the player (see Bauman, 2011, pp. 445-456).

definition of the term *sonder*, referring to “the awareness that everyone has a story”:

An epic story that continues invisibly around you like an anthill sprawling deep underground, with elaborate passageways to thousands of other lives that you’ll never know existed, in which you might appear only once, as an extra sipping coffee in the background, as a blur of traffic passing on the highway, as a lighted window at dusk (Koenig, n.d.).

Consequently, “the word connotes a sense of melancholy.... A sadness that comes with the realization that we are extras in other peoples’ lives” (Rosenberg, 2018). The lyrical voice embodies a tourist inclined to melancholy –like Zagajewski himself (Hirsch, 2021)– who does not want to remain just a “shadow” drifting “in the halls of airports”. He seems not to pay attention to the details, but in fact he creates his own story and hopes that within it, the circumstances surrounding his journey are not accidental. When analyzing both translations, we see that they reflect the features of the narrator in a similar way. In the Spanish interpretation, the tourist is even “una de entre esas miles de sombras” [one of those thousands of shadows], which intensifies the feeling of being lost among the crowd, of being an unnoticeable part of it. Likewise, the repetitions “jestem tylko turystą” [I’m just a tourist] retain a uniform structure and are consistently translated into the Spanish and Galician languages: “tan sólo” [just] and “apenas” [barely], respectively. Interestingly, the Polish adjective “nieuważny” [inattentive] is replaced in both versions with the form “distráido” [distracted], which may indicate the protagonist’s nervousness or confusion. In turn, the English translation introduces the term “absentminded” (“I’m just an absentminded tourist”; trans. C. Cavanagh), which –although it belongs to the same semantic field– in our opinion, is even more eloquent because it emphasizes the characteristics of someone who “forgets things or does not pay attention to what is happening near him” (Cambridge University Press, n.d.), which contrasts perfectly with the break in the poem’s final stanza.

2. 2. “Ziemia”

The second part of our comparative study is devoted to the poem “Ziemia” (Span. “Tierra”; Gl. “A terra”; Eng. “The earth”):

Jedni mówili po polsku, inni po niemiecku,
tylko płacz był kosmopolityczny.
Rany nie goiły się, długo pamiętały.
Węgiel błyszczał jak zawsze.

Nikt nie chciał umierać, ale życie było trudniejsze.
Było dużo obcości; obcość milczała.

Przyjechaliśmy jak turyści, z walizkami –
zostaliśmy dłużej.

Nie należeliśmy do tej ziemi,
ale wspaniałomyślnie przyjęła nas –
przyjęła was oboje.

(Zagajewski, 2014, p. 16)

Unos hablaban en polaco; otros, en alemán,
solo el llanto era cosmopolita.
Las heridas no se curaban, recordaban durante largo tiempo.
El carbón brillaba como siempre.

Nadie quería morir, pero la vida era más difícil.
Había mucha extrañeza; la extrañeza callaba.

Llegamos como turistas, con maletas –
nos quedamos por más tiempo.

No pertenecíamos a esta tierra,
pero ella nos acogió generosa;
os acogió a unos y a otros.

(Zagajewski, 2017, p. 20)

Uns falaban en polaco, outros en alemán,
só o pranto era cosmopolita.
As feridas non curaban, lembrábanse moito.
O carbón relucía coma sempre.

Ninguén quería morrer, pero a vida era máis difícil.

Había moita distancia; a distancia calaba.

Viñemos como os turistas, con maletas –
 quedámonos máis tempo.

Non pertenciamos a esta terra,
 pero recibíunos xenerosamente –
 recibíuvos ós dous.

(Dondelewski and López Teixeira, 2018, p. 450)

Some spoke Polish, others German,
 only tears were cosmopolitan.
 Wounds didn't heal, they had long memories.
 Coal shone as always.

No one wanted to die, but life was harder.
 Much strangeness, strangeness didn't speak.

We arrived like tourists, with suitcases–
 we stayed on.

We didn't belong to that earth,
 but it received us openheartedly–
 it received you both.

(Zagajewski, 2018, p. 17)

In this case, we see once again that some lines, especially in the Spanish translation, are more extensive relative to the source text. Their added length is a consequence of clarifications introduced by the translator. For example, the original expression “*długo pamiętały*” (“they had long memories”; trans. C. Cavanagh) takes the form of “*recordaban durante largo tiempo*” [they remembered for a long time], where the short adverb “*długo*” [long] is described as “*durante largo tiempo*” [for a long time]. Interestingly, the authors of the Galician translation propose the phrase “*lembrábanse moito*” [they remembered a lot], in which the form “*moito*” [a lot] is used in place of the aforementioned adverb, but at the same time, this alteration does not affect the meaning of the stanza. A similar procedure takes place in the line “*zostaliśmy dłużej*” (“we stayed

on”; trans. C. Cavanagh), replaced by “nos quedamos por más tiempo” [we stayed longer]. The Spanish translation is perfectly correct and dictated by the norms of the target language, but it could be more concise if the preposition “por” [for] were omitted, as it is in the Galician version: “quedámonos máis tempo” [we stayed longer].

From a formal point of view, the pauses introduced by Zagajewski in the clauses of the seventh and tenth lines are preserved only in the Galician translation, an absence that careful readers will also find impossible to ignore. As with the previous poem, the Spanish translator keeps only one of them, while the other is replaced by a semicolon. The resulting lack of consistency is crucial, as it may weaken the line’s expressiveness, especially that of the last verse, in which the poet wants to surprise us again and bring us into a moment of suspension.

The versification and rhythmic structure of the poem is once more inextricably linked to the reality depicted within it. Childhood memories and moments spent in the shadow of atrocities remain in the memory, and they come alive again within the lyrical subject. The revived memories become all the more tangible as they are juxtaposed with non-obvious elements. The familiar “tourist”, “suitcase”, and “cosmopolitanism” return, but in a different environment. Instead of “airports’ halls” and “the sun in Athens” there is a “cry”, a “wound”, a “death”, and a “strangeness”. The following lines reference the poet’s own family history:⁷ “Jedni mówili po polsku, inni po niemiecku” (“Some spoke Polish, others German”; trans. C. Cavanagh), “Węgiel błyszczał jak zawsze” (“Coal shone as always”; trans. C. Cavanagh), “Przyjechaliśmy jak turyści, z walizkami –” (“We arrived like tourists, with suitcases–”; trans. C. Cavanagh), “Nie należeliśmy do tej ziemi” (“We didn’t belong to that earth”; trans. C. Cavanagh). These reminiscences are not only a sense of irreparable loss but constitute an opportunity for a new opening. As Zagajewski emphasizes, “Joy often wins. Even the theme of exile, which for me is over, because I am no longer an ‘exiled poet’, is ambivalent, because there are certain pleasures in it” (Álvarez, 2017). This hope for a better tomorrow is reflected in the passages “zostaliśmy dłużej” (“we stayed on”; trans. C. Cavanagh) or “ale wspaniałomyślnie przyjęła nas –” (“but it received us openheartedly–”; trans. C. Cavanagh).

⁷ Zagajewski’s parents and elder sister were expelled from beloved and stunning Lwów when the city became part of The Soviet Union, and moved to Gliwice, “the ugly, industrial city” (Tóibín, 2004) in Silesia, which had been part of Germany.

Upon analysis, the peculiarities above arise from the translation into the Spanish and the Galician languages, revealing first that the poet's ideas are universally understood across language barriers, and second, that they are able to evoke similar emotions in the reader as those evoked in readers of the original work. Surprising word combinations, devices aimed at *keeping* the recipient –and perhaps making them smile– are mostly consistently rendered in both translations. For example, the phrase “*placz był kosmopolityczny*” [crying was cosmopolitan] –intended to indicate the linguistic and cultural diversity of the expelled families, as well as the non-verbal communication between them– is translated literally into both languages. Nevertheless, the Galician version even increases the expressiveness of the original by using the noun “*pranto*” [sob], meaning “a cry with moans and convulsive gasps” (“*choro con xemidos e salaios*”; Real Academia Galega, n.d.). Another example occurs in the line, “*Było dużo obcości; obcość milczała*” (“Much strangeness, strangeness didn't speak”; trans. C. Cavanagh). Here, repetition, personification, and even punctuation have been preserved. Solutions that maintain the meaning of the Polish lines include: “*Había mucha extrañeza; la extrañeza callaba*” [There was a lot of strangeness; the strangeness was silent] and “*Había moita distancia; a distancia calaba*” [There was a lot of distance; the distance was silent]. An interesting move is the translators' replacement of the original noun “*obcość*” [strangeness] with the Galician term “*distancia*” [distance], which can refer to either the “amount of space that mediates between two things or places” or the “amount of time between two facts” (“*porción de espazo que media entre dúas cousas*”; “*porción de tempo entre dous feitos*”; Real Academia Galega, n.d.). Unlike the original, this term is not used in the sense of “the quality of being unusual, unexpected, or not being familiar” (Cambridge University Press, n.d.), but still gives a new dimension to the stanza while not diverging too much from Zagajewski's intention.

In the second part of the poem, the figure of the tourist returns, but this time embodies a displaced person: “*Przyjechaliśmy jak turyści, z walizkami –*” (“We arrived like tourists, with suitcases–”; trans. C. Cavanagh). In this context, the tourist is closer to a vagabond (Bauman, 2011, pp. 449-451); he does not go on a journey of his own free will but is driven out of his place of residence. He leaves not to enrich the treasury of his impressions, but to save his life. Most importantly, unlike a typical tourist, this time he has to make himself *at home*, to put down roots in a new place (Bauman, 2011, p. 452), as Zagajewski clearly indicates with

the line “zostaliśmy dłużej” (“we stayed on”; trans. C. Cavanagh). Thus, Zagajewski again resorts to non-obvious juxtapositions and ironizes the existing reality. In both translations, all these features are preserved: “Llegamos como turistas, con maletas –/ nos quedamos por más tiempo” [We arrived as tourists, with suitcases –/ we stayed longer] and “Viñemos como os turistas, con maletas –/ quedámonos máis tempo” [We came like tourists, with suitcases –/ we stayed longer]. Both in Spanish and in Galician, the aforementioned “tourist” appears as an exile, but also as a character who has found himself in a new place and has started life anew. The last stanza, and especially its distich, are both elements affirming this belief, and at the same time they constitute the culmination of the whole poem: “Nie należeliśmy do tej ziemi,/ ale wspomniałomyślnie przyjęła nas –” (“We didn’t belong to that earth,/ but it received us openheartedly–”; trans. C. Cavanagh). It is worth pointing out that the twice-repeated verb “przyjmować” [to receive] in this and the following verses is preserved in both translations: “nos acogió” [received us] and “os acogió” [received you], and “recibimos” [received us] and “recibiuvos” [received you], respectively. On the other hand, the paramount element of these lines comes in the adjective “wspomniałomyślnie” [generously] and is reflected in both the Spanish feminine adjective “generosa” [generous] and the Galician adverb “xenerosamente” [generously]. The introduction of a different part of the speech here does not modify the original text’s meaning, but it certainly has the effect of enhancing the personification of “earth”. Earth’s “mercy” and “good-naturedness” –contrary to the previously discussed “strangeness”– are spoken directly in the Spanish line and become indispensable features of the eponymous figure’s character. Perhaps the line also intensifies the impression of gratitude the lyrical subject has for the earth? Finally, we come to the equally surprising last line, “przyjęła was oboje” (“it received you both”; trans. C. Cavanagh), which again is a reference to the poet’s family history. The phrase “was oboje” [both of you] probably points directly to Zagajewski’s parents who, despite adversities, created a new place to live for themselves and their two children.⁸ It is worth noting that only the Galician translation is literal and retains the meaning of the original verse: “recibiuvos ós dous” [received

⁸ Zagajewski spent only the first four months of his life in Lwów and then the family moved to Gliwice, where he spent his childhood and adolescence. Subsequently, he studied in Krakow, then emigrated to Paris, and returned to Poland in 2002 (see Czajkowska, 2020, p. 235).

you both]. In turn, in the Spanish text we observe a solution “os acogió a unos y a otros” [received the ones and the others], which no longer refers to the narrator’s closest friends, but still illustrates a successful attempt to get out of a situation initially devoid of any hope. It is to some extent a universalization of the reality presented by the poet, a generalization of personal experiences, which does not differ from the characteristics frequently attributed to Zagajewski’s work.⁹ Nonetheless, there is no doubt that this translational change is excessively distant from the original text and appears inconsistent with the author’s overall poetic strategy. As a consequence of the translator’s shift, the image of the lyrical subject’s unimaginable, and at the same time *intimate* tragedy is blurred. This modification is even more important given the eventual circumstances which later irretrievably changed the fate of Zagajewski’s own family.

Another seemingly unnecessary change to the original text occurs in the translation process of these same lines, revealing further possible interpretations. The essence of creative thinking again passes from translator to reader. Zagajewski invites readers to identify with and even co-create ideas with the speaker, to show, as Kuchta says, a “readiness to undertake independent reflections on difficult topics appearing in his poems” (2015, p. 172). As a result, Farré’s translational disparity makes the Spanish version *closer* to readers, who in this version have a chance to transfer their own experiences to the poem’s speaker. The verse offers its readers the opportunity to identify with victims and witnesses of the resettlement, a daily news reality for readers worldwide today as well. Farré’s proposed solution seems correct, given the added scope of interpretive range it offers the reader of the translated poem.

CONCLUSIONS

In the context of our observations and analysis here, readers might well agree with Jerzy Jarniewicz’s statement that,

the awareness of the servile role towards the source text, which is partially fulfilled by each, even the most literal translation, does not

⁹ According to James (2013, pp. 86-87), “The experience of an exile and the fact that Zagajewski has lived through the period of the post-communist transformations of the former Eastern block ... permits the Polish poet not only to seize the universal from the Western cultural tradition but to explore more in detail the specific features related to the East European fate”.

extinguish in the translator his own linguistic initiative, which ... harmonize[s] with the linguistic imagination of the author of the original (2016, p. 280).

Reading these poems in the context of their translations confirms that linguistic deviations from the original lines need not conflict with the original poems' intention, meaning, or expressiveness. The individual skills of the translators, as well as their ability to modify selected elements in the target texts using the individual solutions examined here, show that creativity need not be equated with a frivolous interpretation of the original. At the same time, both translations result in poetic texts *par excellence* as they make the most creative use of the language. Poets such as Zagajewski construct their artistic reality through expressions and structures that often escape established linguistic norms. Hence, in this case, the literal or philological translation must be understood in itself as a recreational interpretive method, or something like a free, paraphrastic or communicative translation. In poetry translation, however, creative thinking occurs not so much at the level of lexical-semantic or formal modifications, but at the level of linguistic transcoding, which aims to produce a target text that is as close to the original as possible. In other words, "labor on the letter in translation is more originary than restitution of meaning" (Berman, 2004, p. 297). Consequently, creativity can also be considered from the perspective of the emphasis on the reception and appreciation of the text by the reader, on the effect of surprise experienced when encountering an element that, although it is translated literally from the original, is simultaneously *unexpected* by readers of the translation. Any interpretation of a work –also understood as a translation– is an "invitation to *make the work* together with the author and ... to open to a virtually unlimited range of possible readings, each of which causes the work to acquire new vitality in terms of one particular taste, or perspective, or personal *performance*" (Eco, 1989, p. 21).

The translations we have discussed concern the *fabric* of the original text. According to Osowiecka and Kolańczyk, the "reading of poetry improve[s] two creativity indicators (fluency and flexibility)" (2018, p. 4), reaffirming that the reception of poetry "broadens activation of the semantic network and allows for flexible switching between remote categories" (p. 4). Unquestionably, an analogous process takes place in the translator's mind, since they are, first and foremost, *readers* of a work, and their primary concern is finding out why the original text causes a certain

sensation. Furthermore, the process becomes visible when one examines whether a similar experience occurs with the translator's participation as a reader who recreates the original poem in another linguistic system (Barańczak, 2004, p. 16). Therefore, such a perspective intrinsically entails a kind of translational *creativity* and, without a doubt, stimulates the *creative potential* of the translator. The expressiveness of Zagajewski's dichotomies, the transition from hopelessness and helplessness to moments of peace, dazzlement, and joy are analogous in both the Spanish and the Galician verses. Images that might seem to be reserved for a reader who belongs to a particular historical and cultural context become universal in translation. Both languages have embraced Zagajewski's lines with analogous admiration and emotion, transforming the target texts into individual poetic works that once again –as Cavanagh concludes– will not let us “take our eyes from the multitudes of ‘unusual, singular, exceptional’ things and people of which our everyday reality is made” (2000, p. 15).

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