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“Hejwo”

Professor Krzysztof Hejwowski as a Translation Theorist and Practitioner

I met Krzysztof Hejwowski in 1989. By then, he was already a long-standing and respected lecturer at the University of Warsaw’s Institute of Applied Linguistics, and a sought-after translator of specialist texts from and into English. He was also hugely respected by his students, who abbreviated his name and called him “Hejwo”. He never shunned them and was always at their disposal in room 214 in the now defunct institute in Browarna Street, which he occupied as a lecturer. Later, after the smoking ban was introduced in most of the building, he would also meet them in the basement smoking room, where everyone could find him, and then, after the ban was extended to the whole building, on the huge steps in front of the building.

The year 1989 was a turning point in the history of Poland (and other Eastern European countries), as well as in Hejwowski’s personal history, as he not only became involved in the university’s Solidarity movement, but also began to reflect on literary translation, drawing on his many years of experience in translating various kinds of texts. This led first to his doctoral thesis, entitled *Psychologiczny model tłumaczenia (Psychological Model of Translation)*, which he defended in 1992, and then to the translation of a book for older children by Penelope Lively entitled *Dom od podszewki (A House Inside Out, see Pict. 1)*. To publish it, the Hejwowskis set up the Topos Publishing House and, of course, bought the copyright to the book.

The book came out in 1995 and did not become a hit. On the one hand, the market was already saturated with books translated mostly from English, and on the other hand, the Hejwowskis did not have the contacts and resources to be able to give it proper distribution. And even today some copies of this book are in the basement of their house.

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However, the publishing house functioned for several years and published several valuable items, some thanks to the support of various institutions. One of these was *Raptularz 1843-1849* by Juliusz Słowacki, edited by Marek Troszyński, which came out in 1996 (see Pict. 2).

At the same time, Hejwowski, having already made his literary translation debut, was able to develop independent translation activity. He started with how-to and popular science books at the Świat Książki Publishing House, which was then owned by Bertelsmann, and gained such enormous recognition there that, as it turned out, editors transposed his completely informal comments on the margins of the books directly into his translations.

However, he was keen on worthwhile literary books, and it was these that he primarily opted for. One of them was undoubtedly *Ingenious Pain* by Andrew Miller, which was published by Prószyński in 1999 as *Przemysłny ból* (see Pict. 3). Hejwowski, who always stipulated that he did not translate poetry, translated for this novel the popular folk song “John Barleycorn Must Die”. Later, he still happened to render into Polish the short poetic texts that were part of the books he translated, but he actually did this rarely and not very willingly.

Another important translation by Hejwowski was *The Rage and the Pride* (see Pict. 4), which Oriana Fallaci, who lived in New York, wrote after the attack on the World Trade Center. The book was originally written in Italian, but Fallaci wished the translation to be made from its English translation. Similar situations happen on the publishing market, but usually when we are dealing with a language that is not very popular, as in the case of Isaac Bashevis Singer, who himself translated or supervised the translation of his books from Yiddish, or when the translation itself deserves special attention, such as *Księga Drogi i Dobra* (*Tao Te Ching: A Book About The Way And The Power Of The Way*) by Lao Tzu, recently translated by Justyna Bargielska and Jerzy Jarniewicz from the translation made by Ursula K. LeGuin. It is difficult to say why it was English in this case, probably above all the author’s own confidence in this translation. Apart from that, this was already after the *fatwa* condemning Salman Rushdie had been issued and there were fears that the translator of this ‘anti-Islamic’ book might also be at risk, but Hejwowski did not want to use a pseudonym.

Hejwowski was becoming increasingly well-known on the market as an excellent translator of all sorts of texts that required not only good Polish, but also expertise. He owed this to such items as Penelope Ody’s *Zioła w domu* (*Home Herbal*), for example, which came out in 1996, at a time when you couldn’t look everything up on the Internet and had to do a lot of research to be able to work out all the relevant, nitty-gritty details. Another such book was, for example, *Twoje ciało* by Kate Barnes, also translated for Świat Książki and published the following year. The same was also true of the last book translated by Hejwowski, which was about artificial intelligence.

Hejwowski’s could feel more fulfilled as a literary translator when he cooperated with *Literatura na Świecie*. He started in the early 1990s and translated for this monthly texts by Namba Roy, Alexander Trocchi, Martin Amis, whom Hejwowski valued above all for his book *Money*, as well as the very witty Dallas Wiebe, Robert Coover and Chester Himes. The translation of the

latter author, which appeared in issues 4-5-6 of the magazine in 2002, ended his collaboration with *Literatura na Świecie*. As usual, the meticulous Hejwowski rendered all the imperfections of the prose of the author he translated:

After much deliberation, however, I decided not to revise parts of the autobiography of the well-known African-American writer Ch. Himes. I decided that a writer with such an oeuvre should be able to write in English, and if he cannot, the Polish reader has a right to know. So I painstakingly recreated the awkwardness of his style in Polish (...) I also tried to 'translate' the syntactical errors appearing in the text, but these intentional lapses in relation to grammar were corrected by the editors. (*Kognitywno-komunikacyjna teoria* 146–147)

It was these corrections that caused the very principled Hejwowski to resign from his collaboration with *Literatura na Świecie*. As an aside, it is worth noting here that Hejwowski never became rigid when it came to the translation itself, and was able to state, for example, that a book written by an unprofessional author deserved to be corrected in translation (2004a: 146). He also never mocked anyone's views on translation in advance. For example he disliked the issue of foreignization, as presented in a rather extreme form by Venuti (1995), but at the same time greatly appreciated his reflection on cultural appropriation precisely through domestication, and he himself stated that after reading Venuti he would not have chosen to translate the anthroponym John Barleycorn into Jan Żytko.

Hejwowski excelled as a translator, which allowed him to gain further experience, which he was able to 'translate' into theory. For some time, his career developed in two directions: he was a highly regarded lecturer and TS scholar, and at the same time an excellent translator. It is also worth mentioning that he also did (increasingly less) consecutive interpreting, but always claimed to be too apprehensive when doing so. I only saw him in action once. He performed really well and there was no sign of nervousness at all.

This order of things was shattered at the end of the last century, when Hejwowski was given a book to translate about heaven and its different depictions in various cultures. As he claimed, this was his biggest and most difficult translation. He also devoted masses of time and effort to it, putting less emphasis on his scholarly activities and hoping for a solid, contractual fee. He translated this book for Marabut Publishing House, which had previously published a book about hell translated by Jerzy Jarniewicz. Unfortunately, in 1997 the publishing house decided to close down, and the break lasted until 2001. According to the contract, Hejwowski received only part of the remuneration for the finished translation, which significantly undermined the budget of his family of six. This event arguably marks a turning point in his business. Hejwowski never stopped translating and did so with real passion, but from the beginning of the new century he was first and foremost an academic. The publishing house Marabut has not returned to the project of publishing *O niebie*, as Hejwowski's translation was titled. The book itself is now only available on floppy disk and is in possession of the family.

In the following years, three of Hejwowski's most important scientific works were produced in which he drew from many different theoreticians, but he always emphasized the role of Olgierd Wojtasiewicz's monograph (1957) in his own thinking about Translation Studies in general: *Kognitywno-komunikacyjna teoria przekładu* (2004), *Translation: A Cognitive-Communicative Approach* (2004), *Iluzja przekładu* (2015) – the title was the term used by Jiri Levý in his book *The Art of Translation*. In the latter we find the following passage, when Hejwowski described various linguistic allusions, including archaization: “It seems that archaization is such a complex issue that it deserves a separate study” (*Translation* 244).

This one sentence was a marker of Hejwowski's further interests: he got interested in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, in which John the Savage speaks in Shakespeare's language, and therefore sounds very archaic, even against the background of pre-war English. Hejwowski went on to criticise Bogdan Baran's existing translation, who did not take the trouble to recognise all the quotations John used and translated them all by himself. We can find these objections in the book he wrote with Grzegorz Moroz, entitled *Nowe wspaniałe światy Aldousa Huxleya*, published in 2019 by Warsaw University Publishers. Aware of the previous translator's negligence, Hejwowski began to translate Huxley himself, assuming that someone would publish it. In doing so, he used the oldest translations of Shakespeare into Polish, which was another unusual thing.

Translators are usually aware that their work has a limited time span and that, according to Edward Balcerzan's “series theory”: a translation is followed by another one that uses a new language which better suits the needs of contemporary readers. However, Hejwowski has proved that old translations can be useful and have value beyond the historical one. For they can certainly be used – like the original old texts in Polish – for archaization. And that there are situations (e.g. Huxley's *Brave New World*) in which they will work better than the new, modernised translations by Barańczak or Kamiński.

The finished translation of this novel was sent to Ossolineum, where it met with a warm, if somewhat delayed, reception, and it seemed that Hejwowski would return to the arena of literary translation with an important and interesting proposal, but at some point the publishing house received information that the copyright to publish Huxley's books in Polish was held by Muza, which had just released *Brave New World*. In the old translation, of course, which means that Hejwowski's translation has not been published yet. Fortunately, at least it became known to the general public, as the Juliusz Osterwa Theatre in Lublin used this translation to stage Huxley, directed by Piotr Ratajczak and adapted by him and Magdalena Drab. There is also a book *On Heaven* waiting to be published, although we don't know if it survived on floppy disk. Unfortunately, we will no longer be able to put another original book authored by Krzysztof Hejwowski on our shelves.

On 19 March 2019, I defended my PhD, for which he was the supervisor. A little later, Professor Hejwowski had already signed my diploma with his left hand and then did not attend the graduation ceremony. I phoned him in May of that year with an offer to take part in a discussion on the translation of song lyrics, for it must be remembered that he was a true expert on rock

music and probably the whole counterculture. Unfortunately, he declined; he was already seriously ill. He died on 28 September of the same year.

The grief remains.

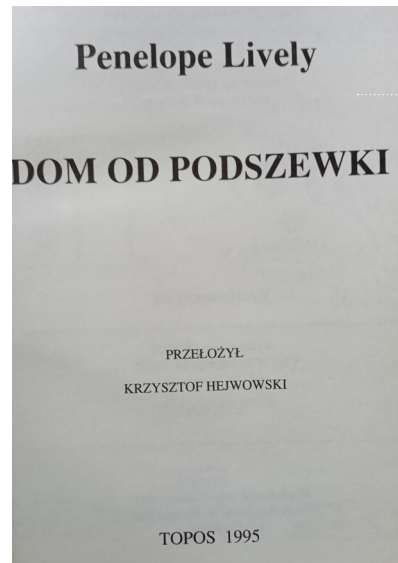
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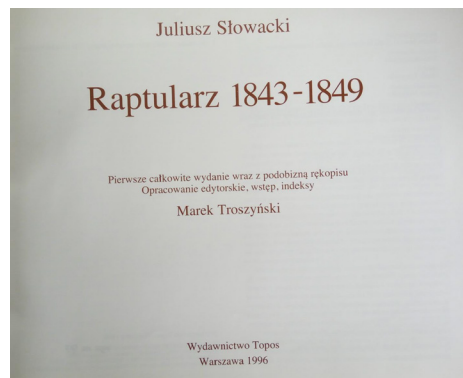
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Krzysztof Puławski is an English philologist, translator and a research assistant at the University of Białystok, Poland. He obtained his PhD from the University of Warsaw. His publications concern broadly defined literary translations (mainly poetry and songs) and include many articles and a monograph on Polish translations of the books in Hiberno-English: *Przetłumaczyć Irlandię* (Białystok, 2020). Apart from that, he translated over a hundred books from English by authors such as David Lodge, Tracy Chevalier, Raymond Carver, Flann O'Brien, Michael Ondaatje, Bruce Chatwin, E. L. Doctorow or Joe Biden, and poems by William Blake and William Butler Yeats, as well as dozens of plays including those by Andrew Bovell, Jordan Tannahill, Max Posner and Jez Butterworth, and songs by Michael Flanders and Tom Lehrer, among others. Puławski is also the author of plays, a volume of poems entitled *Martwiątka* (Deadlings) (Białostocka Filologiczna Kolekcja, 2017), a book of short-stories *Mikołajek w szkole Dobrej zmiany* (Little Nicholas in Present-Day Polish School, Kielce 2019), and a novel *Pan Walczyk w mieście B* (Mr Waltz in the city of B).

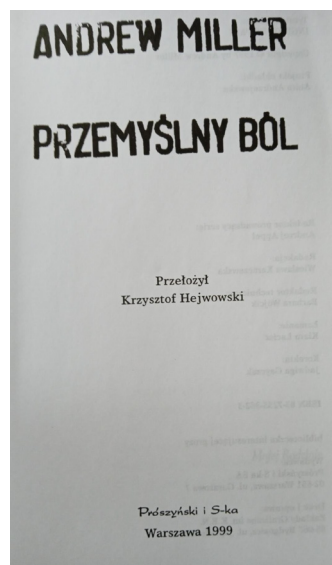
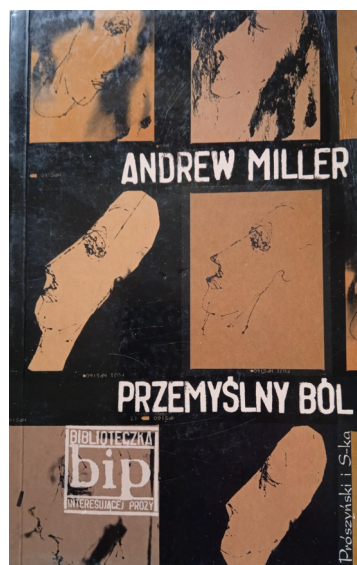
Prof. Hejwowski's translations: From the Photo Archive of the Hejwowski Family



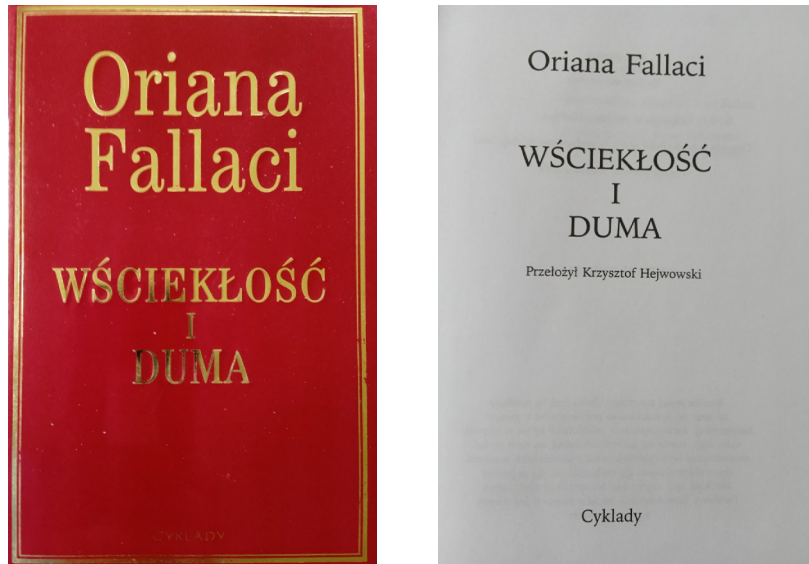
Picture 1 Dom od Podszewki



Picture 2 Raptularz



Picture 3 Przemysłny ból



Picture 4 The Rage and Pride