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The Translator in the Spotlight

Personal Remarks in Translators' Footnotes

Elżbieta Skibińska [2009: 13] described three approaches towards translators' footnotes. Those who take the negative approach are inclined to evaluate them disapprovingly and are reluctant to add such information themselves. In the moderate approach, the footnote is viewed as a helpful tool allowing one to overcome untranslatability caused by linguistic or cultural differences. Finally, the positive approach appreciates the role played by footnotes in translation and highlights the translator's erudition.

Regardless of how particular footnotes are perceived and evaluated, it appears worthwhile to examine their content. Theoretically, they should provide information necessary for the target reader to understand the given fragment of a literary work well [cf. e.g. Nida 1975: 148, Skibińska 2009: 13-14, Krajewska 2017: 43]: their main function is to inform, to make up for a cultural gap between the source and the target audience, not to entertain, share one's feelings or influence the reader. Nonetheless, it turns out that translators actually do all of these things. The focus in this article will be not so much on whether the selected footnotes were really necessary, nor on how informative they

are; instead, it aims at finding and studying the information they provide about the translator as a person. The examples were selected from literary works translated from English into Polish and published within the past 30 years.

One of the arguments put forward by those who do not approve of this translation technique concerns the so-called “moral contract” between the translator and the author. As Jacqueline Henry [2000: 239] puts it, the translator is obliged to remain invisible and transparent for the original author’s voice to be appropriately rendered for the target reader. This can be associated with the popular vision of the translator as a servant, subordinate to the author, or as an invisible intermediary between the author and the reader. Each footnote is a violation of this contract, for a new voice is added – that of the translator. However, this new voice is not always equally clear and distinct, and translators may sometimes wish to speak as silently as possible.

One of the ways to make a footnote pass unnoticed is to shape it as an interjection in a selected sentence of the main text [Paprocka 2009]. Even if they sometimes begin with a capital letter, such notes do not constitute separate sentences: in a sense, they parasitize the original author’s utterance, just adding one more element, and a non-obligatory one, to it.

Another option is to articulate the footnote in such a way that it imitates the author’s style. This was the case in the Polish translation of Gustave Flaubert’s *Le Dictionnaire des idées reçues* by Jan Gondowicz. The footnotes were studied by Małgorzata Tomicka, who noticed a “similarity between the style of the footnotes and the author’s style” [2009: 219, my own translation] and interpreted them as acting as an “intensifier or catalyzer of the senses included in the original text” [2009: 225, my own translation]. Admittedly, the style of that French work itself was bold and colourful, which probably encouraged Gondowicz’s creativity.

To give just one example, one of Flaubert’s and Gondowicz’s favourite linguistic tools is word play. When the former quotes the French idiom *courir comme un dératé* (lit. ‘run like one without a spleen’, fig. ‘run very fast’), Gondowicz adds: “In the original, the spleen. In France, the cat runs with the bladder as if it did not have a spleen”, referring to the Polish idiom of the same meaning, which literally reads ‘to run like a cat with a bladder’ [the example quoted after Tomicka 2009: 221-222, my own translation].

It appears that there is a third solution allowing the translator to deal with the problem of adding a new voice in the footnote. Instead of hiding their voice, they openly make it clear and distinct, even garish, and thus make sure it is well-heard.

The use of footnotes as a space for a new voice is nothing new in literature, however. A case in point is clearly Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, wherein the main text is a poem written by a fictional poet, John Shade, and the footnotes are taken over by his fictional friend, admirer, editor, and critic Charles Kinbote, who prepares the work for publication after the poet's death. He also uses this occasion to push through his own interpretation. Jolanta Frużyńska [2012: 69], pondering on the issues of authorship and power, asks what gives the commentator the right to tell his own story on the margins of somebody else's; she concludes that what gives Kinbote power to speak with his own voice is the fact that the original author lost his voice at the moment of death (alluding to Roland Barthes's concept of the death of the author).

Another example is Jasper Fforde's novel *Lost in a Good Book*, wherein footnotes are the channel for communication between characters coming from different worlds, who could not talk with each other openly in the main text.

Finally, in John Barth's *Sabbatical*, it is not sure who speaks in the footnotes: it might be a puzzle for the reader. One hypothesis is that they are provided by one of the characters, Susan, but even if so, she speaks using different grammatical persons, confusing the reader quite efficiently. Anyway, it seems that she needs the space at the bottom of the page to add one more voice to the story, because her own voice in the main text does not suffice to tell it adequately.

It appears that some translators' footnotes bear features similar to the abovementioned literary paratexts. First of all, the translator has a unique chance to modify the text as soon as the author has finished working on it. Not often does the latter have an opportunity to look at the final translated version (let alone the fact that usually original authors only know a limited number of languages, so any kind of editing would be impossible anyway). This gives the translator a certain power which may be manifested in adding their own voice to the work – just like Kinbote speaks with his own voice because Shade no longer has absolute power over his own creation.

Second, if we agree that in the main text the author communicates with the reader with the help of the translator (who is supposed to act loyally, to make this communication as successful and undisturbed as possible – cf. e.g. Nord 2007), we should probably say that in the footnote it is the translator who is allowed to communicate directly with the reader. Again, this further strengthens the translator's position because they thus become the only speaker talking to the reader, without anybody else's mediation.

Last but not least, by adding footnotes, the translator seems to be stating that the voice in the main text is insufficient. If we examine translators' footnotes, it can also be observed that they are formulated in different ways, also with the use of different grammatical persons (even within the same book); some of them try to be neutral (then, finite verb forms are avoided and if the translator is mentioned, it is in third person singular), while in others the translator is the one in the spotlight (first person singular). So, let us take a closer look at how translators use their power and what they do with the readers' attention.

One of the things translators are willing to reveal about themselves is a variety of opinions and judgments. These can be expressed by using specific vocabulary, stressing or evaluating specific aspects of the notion that is explained in the given footnote. The contrasts between different translators' perspectives become especially striking when a translation series is examined in order to compare notes written not only on the same subject, but also in exactly the same context. This will be the case with the first two commentaries on Anne Askew, coming from two Polish translations of Mark Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper*, added to the fragment wherein Askew is burnt at the stake in Smithfield. They were made by Ireneusz Jasiński in 1991 and Anna Bańkowska in 1998. While the latter only provides the basic facts: "a Protestant sentenced to death for her convictions in the year 1546"¹ (all the footnotes are rendered in my own translation into English), the former does reveal what he thinks of Askew's death: "a Protestant martyr burnt at the stake,"² apparently glorifying Askew's death and questioning her guilt.

¹ "Anna Askew – protestantka skazana na śmierć za swe przekonania w roku 1546". Mark Twain (1998), *Księżę i żebrak*, transl. Anna Bańkowska, Iskry, Warszawa. 11.

² "Protestancka męczennica spalona na stosie". Mark Twain (1991) *Królewicz i żebrak*, transl. Ireneusz Jasiński, Tenten, Warszawa. 13.

The discrepancies between different translators' points of view is also clearly seen on the example of a series of commentaries coming from various books but concerning the same topic. For the purposes of this article, a triad of footnotes about the same literary character, Micawber from Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield*, was selected. In all the quoted works, the context was similar and involved mentioning Micawber's poor financial condition.

In his translation of Nick Hornby's *A Long Way Down*, Paweł Łopatka remarks that Micawber is "always penniless and up to his ears in debt", but full of optimism and hopes for a better future,³ just stating his situation in a light, funny way. A slightly different perspective was adopted by Robert Sudół in his translation of Mordecai Richler's *Joshua Then and Now*. He views Wilkins Micawber as "an incurable optimist and a crazy inventor".⁴ Maria M. Piechaczek, the translator of *Unquiet World: The Life of Count Geoffrey Potocki de Montalk* by Stephanie de Montalk, calls Micawber "a nice character, an unshakeable optimist, many times kept in prison",⁵ thus not only speaking clearly in favour of his optimism (the Polish adjective *nieugięty* being typically associated with such features as virtue and bravery), but also disapproving of the bad people who imprisoned Micawber. Therefore, the opinions concern both the literary character (i.e. the culture-bound item which is being explained for the reader) and a wider context of his life.

Sometimes the degree of translators' boldness in showing their opinions, also in a jocular way, seems to be influenced by the tone of the literary work or its particular fragment. Let us take a closer look at two

³ The whole footnote in Polish: "Bohater powieści Charlesa Dickensa. Wciąż nie bez pieniędzy i po uszy w długach, ale pogodny, pełen optymizmu i wiary w lepszą przyszłość". Nick Hornby (2005), *Długa droga w dół*, transl. Paweł Łopatka, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków. 307.

⁴ "Wilkins Micawber – nieuleczalny optymista, szalony wynalazca z powieści Karola Dickensa pod tytułem *Dawid Copperfield*". Mordecai Richler (1996), *Niegdyś i dziś*, transl. Robert Sudół, PIW, Warszawa. 352.

⁵ "Micawber – bohater powieści Charlesa Dickensa *Dawid Copperfield*, postać sympatyczna, nieugięty optymista, wielokrotnie przetrzymywany w więzieniu i bezskutecznie (choć uparcie) ścigany przez dłużników". Stephanie de Montalk (2003), *Niespokojny świat. Życie hrabiego Geoffreya Potockiego de Montalk*, transl. Maria M. Piechaczek, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków. 150.

footnotes on Rip van Winkle that appeared in a similar context, namely when one of the characters of a novel compared another to this classical literary figure because they loved sleeping or fell asleep very easily.

In Susan Madison's *Touching the Sky*, the tone is rather balanced, neither too formal nor too light; one of the women simply states she would have nothing against sleeping for a hundred years just like Rip, to which her interlocutor remarks that she should also have a handsome prince to wake her up with a kiss (a quite obvious and safe answer to such a dictum). Zdzisława Lewikowa simply adds that Rip van Winkle is "the eponymous figure from a story by American writer Washington Irving (1783-1859)",⁶ which is perfectly objective and stylistically unmarked (admittedly, the footnote does not really provide relevant information explaining the connection between Irving's figure and sleeping).

The context is significantly different in Gene Brewer's *On a Beam of Light*, where the narrator talks about his former patient whom he nicknamed Rip van Winkle because he was likely to fall asleep even during sexual intercourse. This time, the tone is much lighter, even ribald, which apparently encourages the translators, Maria and Andrzej Gardziel, to add that van Winkle is "a character from a tiny story written by Washington Irving, published in 1819, an idler and a rascal, who falls asleep for twenty years, and having woken up, is stunned by how much the world has changed."⁷ The Polish words *nicpoń* and *ladaco* are colloquial, funny and slightly obsolete sounding, and the collocation *nie móc się nadziwić* is rather familiar and perhaps even mocking, which goes in line with the tone of the passage being annotated.

Finally, let us examine a pair of footnotes introducing Li'l Abner in different contexts. In Gene Brewer's *K-Pax*, the author just casually mentions the Broadway musical called *Li'l Abner*, so the translators (incidentally, Maria and Andrzej Gardziel again) added the basic facts, allowing themselves a short commentary on Abner's origins: "primarily a comic book figure, a villager living in the sticks. Later, a musical was created on

⁶ "Rip van Winkle – tytułowa postać opowiadania amerykańskiego pisarza Washingtona Irvinga (1783-1859)". Susan Madison (2005), *Czekam na prawdziwą miłość*, transl. Zdzisława Lewikowa, Świat Książki, Warszawa. 80.

⁷ "Rip van Winkle – bohater historyjki napisanej przez Washingtona Irvinga, wydanej w 1819 roku, nicpoń i ladaco, który zasypia na dwadzieścia lat, a obudziwszy się, nie może się nadziwić, że świat tak się zmienił". Gene Brewer (2002), *Na promieniu światła*, transl. Maria and Andrzej Gardziel, Znak, Kraków. 145.

the basis of the comic.”⁸ To contrast, Lawrence Block uses Li'l Abner's image to characterize a building, which looked like a very old outhouse from the eponymous comic book: the whole context is rather playful and sarcastic and the reader needs to find out the set of associations connected with Abner rather than the facts. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why Łukasz Nicpan's tone is far from neutral when he calls Li'l Abner “a country bumpkin from the Ozark mountains.”⁹ Indeed, it could be ascertained that the wording in the main text and in the footnote, *przedpoto-powa wygodka* and *wiejski prostaczyna* respectively, are stylistically very close to each other.

The use of specific wording is probably the most popular way for translators to state their views. They are inclined to use lexical items that suggest positive or negative evaluation, stylistically marked words (sometimes even offensive), or else jocular idiomatic expressions, and show great creativity. Let us browse through several more examples to get a broader view. When informing the readers about Mary Garden, Magdalena Słysz assesses her as unrivalled (Polish: *niezrównana*) in coloratura roles (A.E. Hotchner, *Papa Hemingway. A Personal Memoir*);¹⁰ on the margin of the protagonist's rising interest in Katherine Mansfield's books, Anna Bańkowska appreciates her masterly (Polish: *mistrzowskich*) psychological novellas (Daphne du Maurier, *Myself When Young*),¹¹ although, in another footnote in a different book, she approves much less of Joanna Southcott, whom she calls a religious fanatic (*fanatyczka religijna*;

⁸ “Li'l Abner – pierwotnie bohater komiksu, wieśniak z głębokiej prowincji. Później na podstawie komiksu powstał musical”. Gene Brewer (2002), *K-Pax*, transl. Maria and Andrzej Gardziel, Znak, Kraków. 77.

⁹ “Bohater komiksu Ala Cappa (1909-1980), wiejski prostaczyna z gór Ozark”. Lawrence Block (1998), *Każdy umiera*, transl. Łukasz Nicpan, Libros, Warszawa. 12.

¹⁰ “Śpiewaczka urodzona w Szkocji, związana od 1910 roku z operą w Chicago, gdzie była wiodącą sopranistką przez dwadzieścia lat, zajmowała się także reżyserią. Występowała w repertuarze lirycznym, była niezrównana w rolach koloraturowych, wszystkie wykonywała po francusku”. Aaron Edward Hotchner (2005), *Papa Hemingway. Wspomnienia*, transl. Magdalena Słysz, Wydawnictwo Książkowe Twój Styl, Warszawa. 144.

¹¹ “Katherine Mansfield, właśc. Kathleen Beauchamp (1888-1923) – pisarka angielska pochodzenia nowozelandzkiego, autorka mistrzowskich nowel psychologicznych, wielbicielka twórczości Czechowa”. Daphne du Maurier (2000), *Moje młode lata. Autobiografia*, transl. Anna Bańkowska, Prószyński i S-ka, Warszawa. 65.

Agatha Christie, *By the Pricking of my Thumbs*);¹² Agnieszka Jagodzińska informs the reader that macaroons (the culture-bound element she is explaining) are layered with delicious (Polish: *smakowitym*) cream (Carola Dunn, *The Case of the Murdered Muckraker*);¹³ Małgorzata Bortnowska is inclined to view Henry VIII as both excellent (Polish: *wybitny*) and brutal, conceited, and ruthless (Polish: *brutalny, pyszny, bezwzględny*; Mark Twain, *The Prince and the Pauper*);¹⁴ Waldemar Łyś introduces Barbara Cartland as the author of innumerable slushy love stories (*niezliczonej liczby cikliwych romansów*), thus suggesting the poor quality of the mass-produced, excessively sentimental books (John Fowles, *Mantissa*);¹⁵ Joanna Urban states Andrew Dice Clay was “foul-mouthed” (*o niewyparzonym języku*; Elizabeth Bard, *Lunch in Paris*);¹⁶ Jarosław Cieśla presents himself as a connoisseur of British soft drinks, openly disregarding ginger ale (apparently making up for the literary characters’ lack of taste), which he calls “lousy” (*podła*) lemonade having nothing to do with beer apart from its name (Paul Levinson, *The Silk Code*);¹⁷ Anna Boryna calls the name of Peacemaker revolvers “meaningful” (*Dość wymowna nazwa*;

¹² “Joanna Southcott (1750-1814) fanatyczka religijna z hrabstwa Devon; zostawiła po sobie szkatułkę, która miała zawierać wskazówki, jak osiągnąć szczęście”. Agatha Christie (2009), *Dom nad kanałem*, transl. Anna Bańkowska, Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, Wrocław. 23.

¹³ “Makaroniki – ciasteczka z białek, w których zamiast mąki występują mielone migdały, a przekładane są smakowitym kremem”. Carola Dunn (2013), *Strzały w hotelu Chelsea*, transl. Agnieszka Jagodzińska, Edipresse, Warszawa. 169.

¹⁴ The relevant fragments of this lengthy footnote: “Henryk VIII Tudor (1491-1547) – wybitny król Anglii. (...) Brutalny, pyszny, bezwzględny monarcha”. Mark Twain (2010) *Księżę i żebrak*, transl. Małgorzata Bortnowska, Zielona Sowa, Kraków. 61.

¹⁵ “Barbara Cartland – autorka niezliczonej liczby cikliwych romansów”. John Fowles (1997), *Mantissa*, transl. Waldemar Łyś, Rebis, Poznań. 192.

¹⁶ “Andrew Dice Clay – kontrowersyjny komik nowojorski o niewyparzonym języku, popularny w latach 90.” Elizabeth Bard (2010), *Lunch w Paryżu*, transl. Joanna Urban, Bukowy Las. Wrocław. 265.

¹⁷ “Ginger ale – czyli «piwo imbirowe» – tak naprawdę jest to dość zwyczajna (i podła...) lemoniada, z piwem mająca wspólną tylko nazwę i nic więcej...”. Paul Levinson (2003), *Kod jedwabiu*, transl. Jarosław Cieśla, Solaria, Olsztyn. 270.

Lisa Bingham, *Distant Thunder*),¹⁸ and finally Konrad Majchrzak says Liberace used to parade (*paradował*) in extravagant costumes, which seems to be a kind of evaluation of the artist's clothing style, whereas the main text did not include any mention thereof (Ann Patchett, *The Magician's Assistant*).¹⁹ Even if in several of these cases the mention of some specific aspect of the explained element was indeed required by the context, the personal opinions are the translators' individual contributions, which do not seem to be aimed at facilitating communication between author and reader.

An interesting way in which translators state their opinions, admittedly indirectly, is the use of diminutives. In this respect, the Polish language offers much more than English. The numerous diminutive suffixes used in Polish are highly productive, and they can be used both to express caring and tenderness and to mock or undermine the importance of somebody or something.

This is the case of Irena Wyrzykowska's commentary on Betty Grable, who is mentioned in Joan Lingard's *Sisters by Rite*. One character sings a song from whose lyrics the reader learns she has curly hair, but still she cannot play Betty Grable. When explaining the name, the translator calls Grable "a famous Hollywood film star",²⁰ but she uses the diminutive term *gwiazdeczka* (literally: 'starlet') instead of the neutral word *gwiazda* ('star'). Interestingly enough, while the latter can be used when referring to both male and female actors, even though grammatically it is feminine, the former is only used when speaking derisively about female celebrities. Therefore, it could be concluded that the commentary is not only critical of the actress, but also slightly sexist.

A much more serious matter happens in Katarzyna Piwowarska's commentary on Fatty Arbuckle, who is mentioned in *Die a Little* by Megan Abbott. The context in which his name appears is specific: the characters

¹⁸ "Dość wymowna nazwa: «Uciszacz»". Lisa Bingham (2001), *Złowrogie echo*, transl. Anna Boryna, Pol-Nordica, Otwock. 18.

¹⁹ "Pianista i artysta estradowy z Las Vegas, słynny ze swoich strojów; przez większą część występu paradował w ekstrawaganckich kostiumach, wywołując zachwyt żeńskiej na ogół widowni". Ann Patchett (2004), *Asystentka magika*, transl. Konrad Majchrzak, Rebis, Poznań. 230.

²⁰ "Betty Grable – słynna hollywoodzka gwiazdeczka filmowa". Joan Lingard (1998), *Siostry krwi*, transl. Irena Wyrzykowska, Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, Warszawa. 45.

talk about stories which would make even Fatty Arbuckle blush. Therefore, the reader needs some explanation about the history of Arbuckle's relations with women. Therefore, apart from providing basic facts, e.g. about Fatty's real name, the translator focuses on the charges of rape and murder of the actress Virginia Rappe (whereof he was finally cleared).²¹ The problem is that instead of using the stylistically unmarked word *aktorka* ('actress'), Piwowska chooses the diminutive *aktoreczka* (incidentally, the analogous masculine diminutive *aktorek* is virtually never used to speak about male actors), which looks as though the translator is mocking the tragedy of Rappe and trying to discredit the gravity of the whole criminal case.

An interesting tool of indirectly expressed judgments appears to be irony, which I will understand as saying one thing while really meaning something different. This is what Marta Lewandowska does in Francis Paul Wilson's *Select*, when she ascertains Ted Baxter is "not characterized with bright intelligence" (*nieodznaczający się błyskotliwą inteligencją*)²² and, as it can be surmised, she really means much more, namely that he can hardly boast any kind of intelligence at all (let it be stressed that all was mentioned about Baxter in this context was his low voice, so this piece was apparently added out of the translator's own initiative). A similar thing happens in Grobel Lawrence's *Conversation with Capote* when Waldemar Łyś says that Billy Graham peregrinates (*peregrynuje*) all over the world in his crusades (*krucjatach*),²³ thus actually suggesting that whatever the American preacher and his followers may think, his travels

²¹ The relevant fragment of this quite long note in Polish: "Fatty („Grubasek”) Arbuckle, właśc. Roscoe Conklin Arbuckle (1887-1933), aktor, scenarzysta i reżyser, jedna z największych gwiazd kina niemego. W 1921 r. oskarżony o zgwałcenie i zabójstwo aktoreczki Wirginii Rappe, został uniewinniony przez sąd, ale pod naciskiem opinii publicznej musiał przerwać karierę, a jego filmy zostały wycofane z kin przez wytwórnię." Megan Abbott (2009), *Szczypta śmierci*, transl. Katarzyna Piwowska, Świat Książki, Warszawa. 64.

²² "Prezenter telewizyjnych prognoz meteorologicznych nieodznaczający się błyskotliwą inteligencją". Francis Paul Wilson (1995), *Wybrańcy Hipokratesa*, transl. Marta Lewandowska, Prima, Warszawa. 21.

²³ "B. Graham (ur. 1918) – znany protestancki kaznodzieja amerykański. Autor licznych książek, w swych krucjatach wykorzystuje telewizję; peregrynuje po całym świecie." Grobel Lawrence (1997), *Rozmowy z Capote'em*, transl. Waldemar Łyś, Rebis, Poznań. 185.

are far less important and far less serious than real crusades. Admittedly, this time such criticism was more justified than in the previous case since Graham was mentioned in the main text among Capote's antipathies (so the reader might be interested to find out what can possibly be disliked about this person). Nonetheless, the light style this commentary was formulated in is the translator's individual contribution.

In Terry Deary's books, history is presented in a light and appealing way for children and young teenagers, as in *Frightful First World War and Woeful Second World War*, wherein he quotes a song of soldiers hiding in the trenches, including a mention of shrapnel. The notion might be judged as unfamiliar to the young reader and therefore, the translator explains it – but she does so jokingly, defining shrapnel as a “very unpleasant projectile” (shrapnel being actually much more than just “unpleasant”).²⁴ This time the style of the footnote corresponds not so much with the attitude presented in the main text as with the tone of the whole book, aimed at piquing the interest of schoolchildren.

As it turns out, evaluation may also be expressed by means of a biased selection of sources. By this I do not only mean the choice of sources which can be expected to view the problem from a specific perspective and judge it positively or negatively, but also the use of sources which are not regarded as serious encyclopaedic or academic works. A case in point is Sławomir Kędzierski's footnote concerning the so-called emo culture. In Rod Resse's *Demi-Monde: Winter*, one of the figures accuses another of wasting her intelligence and time complaining, loathing herself and cultivating her image of an emo fighting against the establishment. The translator begins with stating that *emo* is a contemporary subculture and a philosophical current (which might be perceived as ironic), but later he proceeds to provide a detailed description based on *Nonsensopedia* (the Polish counterpart of *Uncyclopaedia*, a parody of *Wikipedia* providing jocular, often snide definitions). Apparently, for Kędzierski the emo culture is not worth being looked up in any more sophisticated or prestigious source than a mock encyclopaedia. Such a reference implies that he does not treat the emo culture seriously – which appears to coincide with the attitude of the person speaking in the annotated fragment. In a sense, the

²⁴ “Szrapnel – bardzo nieprzyjemny pocisk, który, wybuchając, sieje zabójcze odłamki”. Terry Deary (2004), *Straszna I wojna światowa i totalnie straszna II wojna światowa*, transl. Małgorzata Fabianowska, Egmont Polska, Warszawa. 61.

translator explains the notion in a way that we could expect the literary character herself to do it. The description includes such phrases as “od dobrobytu poprzewracało się w... głowach” – the Polish equivalent of *they have swollen heads*, but the ellipsis suggests that the primary intention of the speaker was to use a similar but much more up-front saying instead of this version. “They are not grim enough to be goths, and are too vulnerable to cheap wine to become punks” is far from a neutral, objective explanation; it serves to entertain and satirize rather than to educate.²⁵

It occurs much more rarely that a translator states their opinions openly, but still it does happen, and a good example can be found in Patrick McCabe’s *The Butcher Boy*. When the narrator speaks about soda bread (the context being very serious, connected with dire poverty), the translator, Maria Müller, does not only explain that it is “white bread with the addition of soda”, but also adds “in Ireland, it is rather difficult to get other bread and I swear – it’s unpalatable.”²⁶ This time the translator herself has dared enter the stage to express her preferences, which could serve in establishing a closer relationship with the reader. This digression diverts the reader’s attention both from the author and from the sad historical events reported in the main text.

There is also a category of footnotes wherein the translator takes a stand in some political or social debate, or else they seem to attempt to shape the readers’ attitudes. One of the ways to do so is the use of a specific and sometimes controversial word form, criticized by some and promoted by others. This is the case of Polish names of professions with feminine endings like *-ka*, which are – very generally speaking – eagerly used by people identifying with the feminist movement on the one hand, and censured, even ridiculed for being artificial, disrespectful, and awkward sounding on the other. One such lexical item, *profesorka* (‘female professor’), is used by Katarzyna Janusik in her footnote about Donna

²⁵ “Współczesna subkultura i nurt filozoficzny. Według nonsensopedii «emo» to młodzi ludzie, tzw. złota młodzież, którym od dobrobytu poprzewracało się w... głowach. Nie są wystarczająco mroczni, żeby być gotami, i są zbyt nieodporni na tanie wino, aby zostać punkami. Użalają się nad swoim żywotem i twierdzą, że są inni niż wszyscy”. Rod Ress (2011), *Demi-Monde*. Zima, transl. Sławomir Kędzierski, Amber, Warszawa. 246.

²⁶ “Chleb sodowy – biały chleb z dodatkiem sody oczyszczonej. W Irlandii właściwie trudno o inne pieczywo, a słowo daję – jest niejadalne”. Patrick McCabe (2000), *Chłopak rzeźnika*, transl. Maria Müller, Zysk i S-ka, Poznań. 81.

Brazil added to Ayelet Walkman's *Bad Mother*²⁷ as well as by Urszula Szczepańska in her footnote about Judith Butler to Adam Davies's *Good-bye Lemon*.²⁸ Both translators might have been encouraged to take a stand in the discussion about feminine names of professions by the context: *Bad Mother* tackles the issue of femininity and motherhood, and Judith Butler is a famous feminist philosopher (which is also mentioned in the footnote).

Political sympathies may be signaled by words that express emotions, e.g. regret, like the Polish particle *niestety* ('unfortunately')²⁹ used by Maria Müller (already mentioned above) in Patrick McCabe's *The Butcher Boy* to comment on the failure of the Easter Uprising in Dublin (1916). Similar footnotes wherein the translator takes sides are described by Justyna Ziarkowska [2009: 105]. She compares two footnotes explaining the same culture-bound element – the protests of Mexican Catholics against anti-Catholic changes to the Constitution that President Plutarco Elías Calles wanted to introduce – by two translators: Anna Grodzicka and Helena Czajka. The former judged those changes were "inspired by the Catholic clergy and aimed at abolishing the progressive constitution from 1917" [after Ziarkowska 2009: 105, my own translation], whereas the latter calls them "a movement of religious fanatics" [idem, my own translation]. As the scholar concludes, "such remarks result rather from the translator's will to share their interests and present their standpoint (if not to impose it on the reader) than from the concern for the reader's understanding of the text".

²⁷ "Profesorka i pisarka związana z Partią Demokratyczną". Ayelet Walkman (2011), *Zła matka*, transl. Katarzyna Janusik, Znak, Kraków. 226.

²⁸ "Profesorka literatury porównawczej i retoryki Uniwersytetu Kalifornijskiego, zajmuje się teoriami władzy, seksualności, tożsamości i płci. Autorka znanej książki *Gender Trouble. Feminism and The Subversion of Identity* (polski przekład Karoliny Krasuckiej *Kłopot z gender* zapowiada wydawnictwo Korporacja Ha!art)". Adam Davies (2008), *Żegnaj, Cytrusku*, transl. Urszula Szczepańska, Inna strona, Warszawa. 166.

²⁹ "Główny Urząd Pocztowy – jako największy gmach przy O'Connell Street w Dublinie został wybrany na siedzibę powstańców w 1916 roku. Niestety, do walki zgłosiło się tylko dwa i pół tysiąca uzbrojonych ochotników. Powstanie upadło po sześciu dniach", Patrick McCabe (2000), *Chłopak rzeźnika*, transl. Maria Müller, Zysk i S-ka, Poznań. 95.

The translator may also encourage readers to take specific action by promoting particular institutions such as charities. This happens in Linda Green's *And Then It Happened*. The author supplemented her book with information about a British rehabilitation trust helping patients suffering from brain injuries, to which the translator adds a footnote with the e-mail addresses of two Polish foundations helping people with such conditions.³⁰ While it is justifiable to inform the audience about the existence of Polish counterparts of the British institution mentioned in the original, the selection of specific ones appears subjective and rather risky a thing to do.

In addition to expressing opinions and sympathies, translators also boast their expertise and share their passions – usually in the domains connected with the subject of the book. A case in point is Janusz Szczepański, who eagerly entertains the readers of Patrick Robinson's *Tsunami* with commentaries on navigation. When one of the characters expresses disdain for “civilian navigators” who could not do without the GPS, the translator, a self-declared “civilian navigator” and the captain of a large container ship, cannot help (in Polish: *nie zdzierzył*, which suggests being in violent emotions) intervening to question this view, arguing that the GPS was only introduced in the 1990s and deck officers are still required to be able to work without electronics. “Dear reader, sleep calmly, super container ships will not suddenly start running into reefs. And in the environment of ‘civilian navigators’, it is those who come from the Navy that are ill-famed...”³¹

³⁰ “W Polsce działa prężnie fundacja Ewy Błaszczyk „Akogo” www.akogo.pl – która pomaga dzieciom. Jeśli chodzi o dorosłych, na przykład jedna z inicjatyw fundacji „Światło” <http://fundacja.swiatlo.org> jest poświęcona pacjentom w śpiączce: <http://fundacja.swiatlo.org/index.php?modul=page&id=281>”. Linda Green (2014), *I wtedy to się stało*, transl. Wojciech Nerkowski, Świat Książki, Warszawa. 428.

³¹ “Tłumacz, na co dzień «cywilny nawigator», kapitan sporego kontenerowca, choć spokojny, nie zdzierzył i musi wtrącić swoje trzy grosze. Bardzo wygodny i dobry, przyznaję, system GPS wszedł do powszechnego użytku dopiero z początkiem lat dziewięćdziesiątych, a do tej pory wszak jakoś udawało się nam trafiać z A do B. Międzynarodowe konwencje narzucają rygorystyczne standardy wyszkolenia nawigatorów i oficerowie pokładowi potrafią sobie radzić bez elektroniki. Czytelniku, śpij spokojnie, superzbiornikowce nie zaczną z byle powodu nagle wpadać na rafy. A w środowisku «cywilnych nawigatorów» to ci trafiający do nas z marwoju cieszą się raczej kiepską opinią...”. Patrick Robinson (2006) *Tsunami*, transl. Janusz Szczepański, Rebis, Poznań. 266-267.

A very interesting thing translators do in footnotes proves to be teaching good manners and proper behaviour. Such remarks could be expected to appear in books for young readers and indeed they do. Karen Farrington and Lewis Constable's *The Potter Pensieve: Trivial Delights from the World of "Harry Potter"* is a kind of encyclopaedia dedicated to the fictional world of *Harry Potter*. In the entry *Durmstrang* (the name of a school of magic), the authors explain the allusion to the Sturm und Drang movement, associating it with the origins of German nationalism, and state that Durmstrang students, who thought themselves better than other ethnic groups, had a bad attitude. The translator, Joanna Studzińska, specifies that admittedly the Sturm und Drang artistic current was not strictly connected with nationalism in the sense of ethnic purity, but adds that "it is true that racism and nationalism are bad"³² (a rather trite, but undoubtedly true thing to say), thus helping the authors shape the readers' attitude.

However, surprising as it may be, this happens not only in books for children. In Lucy Irvine's *Castaway*, for instance, there is a footnote on the notion of *pidgin*, wherein, apart from defining the term, Barbara Kopeć teaches the audience that "one should not consider it simply as incorrect English; it is a separate language",³³ thus preventing Irvine's readers from forming an unfair opinion.

Teaching good manners may be just a pretext for ostentatiously showing the power the translator has over the text. For instance, Paweł Wiczorek, acting as an expert on British culture, comments on a mention of

³² "Zgadza się, że rasizm i nacjonalizm jest zły, ale w przypadku prądu artystycznego Sturm und Drang (1767-85) nie chodziło o nacjonalizm [sic!] w sensie „czystości etnicznej”, ale rozbudzenia ducha niemieckiej twórczości oraz odkrycia bogactwa niemieckiej sztuki ludowej i przeciwstawienie jej świeżości skostniałym kanonom literatury klasycyzmu (zdominowanego przez kulturę francuską). Nurt Sturm und Drang nie miał nic wspólnego z rasizmem i nacjonalizmem NSDAP Hitlera, jak implikują autorzy". Karen Farrington, Lewis Konstale (2006), *Potterowa myślośdiewnia. Tajemnice świata magii Harry'ego Pottera*, transl. Joanna Studzińska, In Rock, Poznań. 140.

³³ "Pidgin lub pidgin English – skrajnie uproszczony i pełen miejscowych naleciałości dialekt angielszczyzny, rozpowszechniony na terenach skolonizowanych przez Anglię. Nie należy sądzić, że jest to po prostu niepoprawny angielski; to odrębny język, rządzący się swoimi prawidłami, nauczany często jako jeden z języków miejscowych". Lucy Irvine (1995), *Rozbitkowie*, transl. Barbara Kopeć, Prószyński i S-ka. 169.

pouring tea to a cup with a small amount of milk in Douglas Adams's *The Salmon of Doubt: Hitchhiking the Galaxy One Last Time*:

It is socially incorrect. A socially correct way to pour tea is to pour milk after tea. Social correctness traditionally has nothing to do with common sense, logic, or physics. In England, for instance, generally expertise in something or thinking about something are considered socially incorrect. It is worth remembering when in England.³⁴

Disguised as a lesson on British customs, the whole commentary is a joke told by the translator to the reader; it might even be considered a taunt against the British author. Indeed, Wiczorek uses the footnote to communicate with the reader indirectly, so that the author does not hear this mockery and cannot defend himself.

Apart from their opinions, translators are also not afraid of showing involvement and violent emotions, sometimes creating the impression that they are working on the text spontaneously, in full view of the reader. In W.H. Auden's *Lectures on Shakespeare*, Piotr Nowak corrects the typo *leap into fate*, giving vent to his indignation: "What nonsense! Obviously the type-setter's mistake!"³⁵ If the error was so obvious, it could just as well be corrected without any commentary; by means of this footnote, Nowak stresses his competence and perceptiveness... and lets the reader take a breath in the middle of Auden's lecture, therefore not only introducing a new voice into the text, but also disturbing its original rhythm.

Finally, translators are not afraid of sharing stories from their private lives. One of the most picturesque examples is certainly Bogdan Drozdowski's footnote to J.G. Ballard's *Cloud Sculpting*, which explains nothing at all, but provides excellent entertainment. When the narrator feels bad about having wished death to somebody who has actually died, the

³⁴ "Jest to towarzysko nieprawidłowe. Towarzysko poprawnym sposobem nalewania herbaty jest wlanie mleka po herbacie. Poprawność towarzyska tradycyjnie nie ma nic wspólnego z rozsądkiem, logiką ani fizyką. W Anglii na przykład za towarzysko niepoprawne uważa się generalnie znanie się na czymś albo myślenie o czymś. Przy pobycie w Anglii warto o tym pamiętać". Douglas Adams (2003), *Łosoś zwątpienia. Autostopem przez galaktykę po raz ostatni*, transl. Paweł Wiczorek, Zys i S-ka, Poznań. 89-90.

³⁵ "W oryginale leap into fate. Co za nonsense! Ewidentny błąd zecera! Poprawiam na leap into faith". Wystan Hugh Auden (2015), *Wykłady o literaturze*, transl. Piotr Nowak, Fundacja Augusta hrabiego Cieszkowskiego, Warszawa.

translator interrupts him just in order to tell his own story (and a quite lengthy one) about a similar situation, justifying this digression simply: “Nothing bad happened, I only thought the same thing as the narrator of this story!”.³⁶ In addition to becoming the author’s rival in getting the readers’ attention, the translator brutally breaks the illusion of fiction, reminding that all we read is but a *story* told by the *narrator*.³⁷

Such personal commentaries, especially revealing opinions, did not appear only in the 1990s; very interesting examples can be found in earlier published translations, a case in point being Marta Wańkowicz-Erdmanowa’s endnotes to Betty MacDonald’s *The Egg and I*, released in the Polish version as early as in 1949. According to the translator, the poet Elizabeth Barrett-Browning “could not be concise even in sonnets” and she was the object of Robert Browning’s legendary love, “despite being lame”; *Bambi* was a “slushy tale about a deer”, E.M. Hull’s books were “devoid of value, but also of inappropriateness”, William Lyon Phelps was a literary and theatre critic and “what is worse, an indefatigable reviewer”, and, finally, eggnog is “worth recommending”.³⁸ Nonetheless, it appears that in the past few decades, translators have become bolder and more creative in adding personal remarks, their commentaries being more varied both in the form and in the scope of the topics tackled.

³⁶ James Graham Ballard (2010), *Rzeźbiarze chmur*, transl. B. Drozdowski, L. Jęczynek, R. Stiller, vis-à-vis/Etiuda, Kraków. 26.

³⁷ Another interesting footnote in the same book – also very loosely bound with the main text and not explaining anything at all – tells about imaginary adventures the translator’s mother has, including fighting in the Russo-Japanese War and smuggling food for Germans [c.f. Sztorc 2019b].

³⁸ “Elizabeth Barrett-Browning (1806-1861), angielska poetka, która nawet w sonetach nie umiała być zwięzła, żona i obiekt legendarnej miłości wybitnego poety Roberta Browninga, aczkolwiek była kulawa. (...) *Bambi* – łzawa opowieść o jelenku (...). *Szejk i Synowie szejka* E. M. Hulla znikli wraz z autorem bez śladu z encyklopedii i filmografii (...). Tylko niezawodny ks. Pirożyński uspokaja: powieści bez wartości, ale i bez niestosowności. (...) William Lyon Phelps (1865-1943) – profesor literatury angielskiej na uniwersytecie Yale, krytyk literacki i teatralny o bezbłędnym wyczuciu tego, co wypada, a co gorsza niestrużony recenzent. (...) Eggnog – godny polecenia trunk z żółtek, mleka, cukru i rumu (...)”. Betty MacDonald, *Jajko i ja*, transl. Marta Wańkowicz-Erdmanowa, CiS, Warszawa 2009.

Final remarks. What do translators say about themselves?

It may be expected that when formulating footnotes, translators may include information about their professional lives and technique. Elżbieta Skibińska even places explanations of translation difficulties and decisions among the major functions of translators' footnotes [2009: 13].³⁹ The material discussed above proves that translators are also eager to give the readership an insight into their private lives, as well as into their personal opinions on the things and people they are commenting on. In an attempt to sketch a picture of the translator on the basis of all these footnotes and to show how great a variety of information is provided and how many spheres of life are commented on, the following description could be created. Translators have their passions and are experts in diverse fields; they have exciting adventures (equally interesting as those of the literary characters) and they have families, who also have their stories to tell; they sometimes feel intense emotions (especially, but not only, when working on a translation); they have specific opinions on historical and literary figures; they speak their mind in public disputes on a variety of subjects (from feminine endings of names of professions to political questions); they may approve of Mary Garden's singing talent much more than they do of Betty Grable's, Virginia Rappe's, or Fatty Arbuckle's gift for acting; they may be fond of macaroons, but prefer eggnog to ginger beer; they support their favourite charitable institutions; they are well-mannered and thus they can educate the readers about how to behave... and they are gifted storytellers.

This boldness in making confessions might be associated with the translator's privileged position of one who can shape the text when the author has already finished working on it (and can rarely question its versions in other languages). This phenomenon might also be associated with the rising interest in the translator as a person. Suffice it to mention the increasing popularity of such events as International Translation Day or the number of recently published collections of interviews with translators, e.g. *Przejęzyczenie. Rozmowy o przekładzie* by Zofia Zaleska

³⁹ As it turns out, the thematic scope of translators' footnotes on professional issues is very broad: they write of the difficulties they encounter, put forward multiple versions of one passage, reveal their sources (both books and people who help them), tell detailed stories of how they were searching for equivalents... and share their frustrations (see Sztorc 2019a).

or *Wte i wewte. Z tłumaczami o przekładach* by Adam Pluszka, wherein (contrary to what might be suggested by the titles) translators talk about many more things than just their jobs. It might be concluded that translators are no longer content to stand in the shadows of “their” authors, but openly demand a place in the spotlight.

On the other hand, it should be stressed that the lion’s share (but still not all) of the books quoted above offer much entertainment to the reader; therefore, those non-conventional footnotes go in line with the overall style and tone. Perhaps adding simple, regular, generic notes would actually mean being disloyal towards the author who, after all, did their best to make the text surprising and enjoyable. It might in fact turn out that in some cases, ostentatiously adding a completely new voice, seemingly disturbing the author and distracting the reader, translators actually contribute to successful communication between the two. It could be said that the translator acts like a good friend who entertains the invited guests during a party while the organizer and the host had to leave the room for a while. When the author mocks something and the translator needs to explain an unknown term in an aside, they have no choice but mock it as well. When the main text makes readers laugh, the footnote makes them laugh again. Is it not what the shadow does...?

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ABSTRACT

It is often said that the translator ought to remain in the shadow of the author and limit themselves to enabling successful and undisturbed communication between author and reader. The translator is not allowed to add their own voice to a literary work. However, it turns out they actually do. The aim of the article is to examine unconventional footnotes where the translator overtly speaks with their own voice. First, a few examples of literary works making interesting use of footnotes are presented. The similarities among the translators' footnotes are highlighted, with a special focus on the issue of the translator's power. Then, particular categories of translators' footnotes are discussed, wherein translators express their opinions, show their emotional involvement or share stories from

their private lives. It turns out that the footnote becomes a unique channel of direct communication between the translator and the reader, sometimes even involving competition with the author. A question is asked as to what may possibly encourage translators to assert their presence in the text in this way.

Keywords: footnotes, invisibility, literary translation, paratext, translator's power