


Józefina Inesa Piątkowska 
University of Warsaw
j.i.piatkowska@uw.edu.pl

The Function of Bounding and the Construal of Imagery in Zuzanna Ginczanka's Poem *Dziewictwo (Virginity)* and its Ukrainian Translation

Introduction

Zuzanna Ginczanka (born in 1917 as Zuzanna Polina Gincburg) was a Polish poet of Jewish origin who disclosed her great talent in the difficult and turbulent times of the 1930s. She was only seventeen when she arrived in Warsaw from her hometown of Rivne (then Równe). Ginczanka quickly managed to establish a reputation as a poet, becoming a charismatic figure in the vibrant life of the local avant-garde. At the age of nineteen she had her first (and only) volume of poems printed, by the prestigious publishing house Wydawnictwo J. Przeworskiego. In 1944 she was murdered by the Nazis in a concentration camp near Cracow. She was almost forgotten until the mid-1990s, when collections of her poems started to be published more frequently.¹ Now Ginczanka is winning the attention of a new generation of readers.

¹ The first biographical work about Z. Ginczanka, including important literary insights, was written by Polish scholar Izolda Kiec [Kiec 1994]. In Anglo-Saxon

Ginczanka's poetry is a lyric space where natural genius meets consciously mastered linguistic craft. Much of her work is metapoetic, particularly poems like *Konjugacja* (*Conjugation*) or *Gramatyka* (*Grammar*). She maximally exploited the possibilities of Polish grammar and lexis to express her emotions and to share her observations of social life, usually with a sharp sense of humour and irony. In this article, I will provide a linguistic analysis of the poem *Dziewictwo* (*Virginity*²). The study itself will focus on a single aspect of the text in question – a restriction necessary for a work of limited scope. I will rely on the concept of “bounding”, developed within cognitive grammar as established by Ronald Langacker (1983). The aim is to reveal how the arrangement of nouns denoting bounded and unbounded entities relates to the poet's main idea. An adequate rendition of the original organization of bounded/unbounded nominal referents will be used as the criterion to evaluate the Ukrainian translation of the poem by Yaroslav Polishchuk.³ His version of *Virginity* (*Divoctvo* in Ukrainian) belongs to the volume *Zuzanna Ginczanka. Wiersze. Zuzanna Ginchanka. Virshi* which was published in Lviv in late 2017. This edition is, at the time of writing this, the most recent translation of Ginczanka's poetry into a foreign language.

1. Bounding

“The act of categorisation is one the most basic human cognitive activities” [Croft and Cruse 2004: 74]. In European grammars the most basic division of nouns is into “mass” and “count” nouns. The typical referents of count nouns are physical objects (e.g. *ball, apple, book*), and of mass nouns, physical substances (e.g. *water, gold, juice*). Yet, count nouns can also designate something abstract (*idea, emotion*) and mass nouns can label some entities which are tenuous (*air, electricity*) or nonphysical (*nonsense, righteousness*). Langacker [1983: 129] notices that generally “the count/mass distinction can only be established and characterised in terms of grammatical behaviour”. At the same time, grammatical differences reflect conceptual differences. According to Langacker, the division

academic literature, Bozena Shallcross offers a chapter on Ginczanka's life and works in her book *The Holocaust Object in Polish and Polish-Jewish Culture* [Shallcross 2011].

² The English title is given as translated by Marek Kazmierski [Ginczanka 2016].

³ Ginczanka, Z. 2017. *Wiersze. Virshi*, Lviv: GO „Forum vidavciv”.

of nouns into the two basic subclasses “mass” and “count” is most of all a matter of whether the nominal referent is “discretely bounded in some fashion” or else “amorphous and not inherently limited” [Langacker 1983: 132].

Mass nouns “foreground the perceived continuity of the mass at the expense of constitutive entities” (e.g. *sand*), whereas a plural count noun “is based on the term for an individual particle” (e.g. *grains*). While a mass noun can be bounded (*a bowl of sand*), this is not required for its identification; a mass noun does not itself invoke a boundary as an onstage element to be attended to. Many count nouns – on the contrary – designate things that have a discernible boundary and, thus are bounded in the usual sense. *An island*, for example, is a piece of land bounded in all directions by water. Boundedness, however, is not just a spatial or material property. Non-spatial entities such as *an hour* or *a beep* have a beginning and an end, but it is less natural to say that they have boundaries. A general definition of bounding thus needs to be rather abstract. As Langacker [1983: 136] puts it: “a thing is bounded when there is **some limit to the set of constitutive entities**”. He further explains this definition as follows:

Recall that a thing is characterised schematically as a set of interconnected entities, grouped and reified to form a unitary entity for higher-level cognitive purposes. Let us imagine the process of mentally scanning through the set of constitutive entities – accessing them in some natural sequence – in building up to the full conception of an instance of the type in question. A thing is bounded if, in carrying out this scanning operation, the requisite set of entities is eventually exhausted. The instance conception is then complete, in the sense that further scanning through constitutive entities amounts to conceptualizing another instance of the same type. In short, there is some notion of reaching the limits of a single instance, making it possible to begin the conception of another, distinct instance. [Langacker 1983: 137]

Langacker [1983: 137] mentions three main aspects that affect bounding. The most obvious basis for bounding is **contrast with surroundings**, e.g. a *beep* is the occurrence of a certain kind of noise bounded by silence on either end. Bounding can also be affected on the basis of **internal configuration**, e.g. to recognize a bicycle it is sufficient to observe the requisite parts in the appropriate configuration. A third basis for bounding is the **function** served by a count noun referent: there is, for example, no obvious boundary between a bat’s *handle* and its *barrel*, so the demarcation

depends primarily on their function: the *handle* is where we grip the bat, and the *barrel* is the part that hits the ball.

Because of our conceptual dexterity, the count/mass distinction is quite fluid. A count noun can function as a mass noun when we focus our attention on the qualitative properties of the constitutive substance:

Diamond is a very hard substance.

Mass nouns, conversely, can function as count nouns when we refer to a kind of entity:

I am looking for a gold that is just the right colour for a ring.

Langacker [1983: 132] notices: “Indeed, general patterns for extending count nouns to mass noun use, and also the reverse, ensure that most every noun can in principle be employed in either manner”. Everything depends on what concept the speaker decides to grammaticalize.

2. Zuzanna Ginczanka’s imposition of bounding and unbounding in *Virginity*

The central stylistic characteristic of Ginczanka’s poetry is dynamics: everything is constantly moving and evolving in her poetic world. Even her shortest texts are very dense, because she manages to combine a vast range of linguistic means: phonetic expressiveness, repetition, neologisms, unexpected metaphors, and irony. She often uses these tools both to build explicit conflicts, and to harmonize most of the contrasts throughout her texts. As we will see, Ginczanka’s lyrics turn out to be not only dynamic, but also highly cohesive.

In *Virginity*, Ginczanka explores a phenomenon very much bothering for her: how the powers of nature stand (or rather ‘move’) in opposition to the social conventions of civilisation. The strophic structure of the poem is iconic of its content (its form mirrors its sense). *Virginity* is comprised of two stanzas: the first, wider and longer, is devoted to the wonder of the natural world; the second stanza is shorter and more compressed as it depicts the limitations imposed upon humanity by culture. In the first part of the poem Ginczanka shows her admiration for females giving birth to offspring; she praises nature which blooms in its open space. In the second part she describes young girls who sit closed in their rectangular rooms.

*Dziewiectwo*¹ My...

Chaos leszczyn rozchełstanych po
deszczu

pachnie tłustych orzechów miazgą,
krowy rodzą w parnym powietrzu

⁵ po oborach płonących jak gwiazdy. –

O porzeczki i zboża żrałe
soczystości wzbierająca w wylew,

o wilczyce karmiące małe,

oczy wilczyc słodkie jak lilie!

¹⁰ Ścieka żywic miodna pasieczność,
wymię kozie cięży jak dynia –

– płynie białe mleko jak wieczność
w macierzyńskiej piersi świętyniach.

A my...

¹⁵ ... w hermetycznych

jak stalowy termos

sześcianikach tapet brzoskwiniowych

uwikłane po szyję w sukienki

prowadzimy

²⁰ kulturalne

rozmowy.

Virginity

We...

The chaos of hazel trees dishevelled by
the rain

smells of the pulp of fat hazelnuts,
cows are in labour in the muggy air

in stockyards burning like stars. –

Oh, currants and ripe grains,

juiciness turning up into flood,

Oh she-wolves feeding wolf cubs,

The eyes of the she-wolves are sweet
as lilies!

The honey apiariness of resins is leak-
ing down,

goat's udder is heaving like a pumpkin –

– white milk is streaming like eternity
in the temples of maternal breast.

And we...

... in hermetic

like a steel thermos

little cuboids of peach wall-papers

entangled up to our necks into dresses

are conducting

cultural

conversations.⁴

In the first stanza, Ginczanka aims at abolishing different kinds of boundaries. When she mentions stockyards, she describes them as *burning*. In one of her central metaphors, she compares maternal breasts to temples, which can be just an open space for worship (and do not necessarily involve any walls). When Ginczanka uses the plural forms of the mass nouns *zboże* ('grain') and *żywica* ('resin'), their referents refer to different types of these substances. Being concerned with qualitative differences, she does not impose any bounds on the physical space.

A very important contribution to the sense of the dichotomy between free and restricted life lies in the frequency of bounded and unbounded nominal referents of the two parts of the poem. The first stanza opens

⁴ My close-to-literal translation of the poem into English – JP.

with the noun phrase *chaos leszczyn* ('the chaos of hazel trees'), where the head noun is *chaos*, denoting 'a state of complete disorder' or 'formless matter' (metaphorically). Ginczanka imposes unbounding on the plural count noun *hazel trees* as she uses it as a post-dependent of *chaos*. The poet profiles hazel trees in a state of disarray and lets them stretch in either direction. Their unboundedness is foregrounded by the metaphorical description *rozchelstane* ('dishevelled'), in its sense of 'messy, unbuttoned'. In a similar way she profiles the referent of the count noun *hazelnuts* as unbounded, when she talks of the *pulp of hazelnuts* (*miazga orzechów*) in the second line. In her imagery, the nuts are turned into a homogeneous mass.

The most prominent moment when Ginczanka construes a bounded entity as unbounded takes place in line 10, where she coins the neologism *pasieczność*. The poet adds the suffix *-ość* to the adjective *pasieczny* ('apiary-like'), which derives from the count noun *pasieka* ('an apiary'). This unusual semantic concept lets her foreground the effect of shifting attention from the contour of the bounded entity (*an apiary*) to a certain unbounded quality (*apiariness* or *apiary-likeness*).

Ginczanka also makes a count-to-mass conversion when she creates the metaphor *wymię kozie cięży jak dynia* ('goat's udder is heaving like a pumpkin'). She is talking here not of any specific *goat's udder*, but of an abstract one – hence the absence of the definite article in my translation. The object of her metaphor is treated as an unbounded instance. Likewise, Ginczanka establishes unbounding on the referent of *maternal breast* in the metonymy *w macierzyńskiej piersi świątyniach* ('in the temples of maternal breast'). This *maternal breast* denotes not a concrete, but rather a symbolic entity.

The second stanza offers the reader the vision of culture as a repressive force. Ginczanka's *we* stands here for girls and women (most probably) who conduct cultural conversations in their "hermetic" peach rooms. There are no unbounded referents in this stanza and Ginczanka even imposes bounding on the only mass noun she mentions. The poet uses *tapety* ('wallpapers') as a dependant of the count noun *sześcianiki* ('little cuboids') which denotes solids that have concrete boundaries and are built up of six rectangular faces at right angles to each other. She foregrounds the bounding by creating a rare diminutive form: *sześcianiki*

(‘little cuboids’). What is more, this manipulation of scale lets Ginczanka achieve an effect of ironic attitude towards the girls’ rooms.⁵

Table 1 demonstrates the ratio of unbounded referents to bounded referents in each stanza. In the first stanza there are 14 unbounded referents which prevail over 9 bounded referents. The second stanza shows the opposite proportion – there are 4 bounded referents and no unbounded ones. There is an evident link between the grammatical structure of the poem and its conceptual system. The abundance of unbounded referents appears to be in iconic relation to the unbounded power of nature.

Table 1. Bounded and unbounded referents in Zuzanna Ginczanka’s poem *Virginity*

	<i>bounded referents</i>	<i>unbounded referents</i>
<i>1st stanza</i>	krowy [‘cows’] obory [‘stockyards’] gwiazdy [‘stars’] porzeczki [‘currants’] wilczyce [‘she-wolves’] małe [‘wolfcubs’] oczy [‘eyes’] lilie [‘lillies’] dynia [‘a pumkin’]	chaos leszczyn [‘chaos of hazel trees’] deszcz [‘rain’] orzechów miazga [‘pulp of hazelnuts’] powietrze [‘air’] zboża [‘grains’] soczystość [‘juiciness’] żywice [‘resins’] wylew [‘flood’] pasieczność [‘apiariness’] wymię [‘udder’] mleko [‘milk’] wieczność [‘eternity’] piers [‘breast’] świątynie [‘temples’]
<i>2nd stanza</i>	termos [‘a thermos’] sześcianiki ta- pet [‘cuboids of wallpapers’] sukienki [‘dresses’] rozmowy [‘conversations’]	–

⁵ For more about the ironic effect of manipulation of scale in scene construal, see [Tabakowska 1993]; for more about Ginczanka’s ironic utterances, see [Głowiński 1955].

However contrastive the two parts of the poem are, the whole text is highly cohesive. Ginczanka harmonises the stanzas through the use of the present tense in both of them. She also starts each stanza with the same personal pronoun *we*. The interpretation is more a task for a literary critic than a linguist, but it could be said that such repetition suggests that the opposite worlds of nature and culture symbolize the dual character of a woman.

3. Comments on the Ukrainian translation of *Virginity*

I will comment on the equivalence of the Ukrainian translation of *Virginity* from two main aspects:

- does the translator render Ginczanka's count-to-mass conversions, and
- does the translation mirror the proportions of bounded and unbounded referents in both stanzas?

Let me first present the full Ukrainian text:

Дівочтво

¹ Ми...

Після дощuku ліщинові віти
пахнуть духом горіхів гордо,
корови родять у парному повітрі
⁵ по оборах, що палають, як зорі. –
О порічок і збіжжя шатри,
соками налиті лінії,
о вовчице, що пестиш вовчата,
чий очі солодкі, як лілії!
¹⁰ Плинуть густо меди живиці,
вим'я кіз роздаються, як диня –
– молоком струменить вічність
в материнських грудей святині.

Virginity/Chastity

We...

After little rain the branches of hazel
trees
smell proudly the spirit of hazelnuts,
cows are in labour in the muggy air
in stockyards which are burning like
stars. –
Oh tents of currants and grain,
lines filled with juices,
Oh she-wolf, you, who is caressing
lupine cubs,
whose eyes are sweet as lilies!
Honeys of resin are flowing dense,
goats' udders are giving themselves
around like a pumpkin – eternity is
streaming like milk
in the temple of maternal breasts.

А ми...	And we...
¹⁵ ... таємничі й худенькі	... secret and thin
у салонів пірнувши	plugged in the salon's
сховок	shelter
загорнуті в довгі сукенки	wrapped in little long dresses
провадим	are conducting
²⁰ культурні	cultural
розмови.	conversations. ⁶

Yaroslav Polishchuk overlooks in his version the opening noun *chaos*, which allowed Ginczanka to impart unbounding on the content supplied by the noun *hazel trees* through construing the noun phrase *the chaos of hazel trees*. Without the word *chaos* we are also missing the initial hint that the poem will be concerned with something limitless and boundless. As an alternative, the translator introduces the plural count noun *vity* ('branches'), which simply multiplies a bounded individual. Polishchuk does try to copy Ginczanka's unbounding technique when he constructs the noun phrase *smell of hazel nuts* (line 2). The head noun here has an unbounded referent which "absorbs" the bounded referents of the dependant noun *hazelnuts*. However, the semantics of the whole expression [*branches*] *smell proudly the spirit of hazelnuts* is rather far from the original.

The translator does not take up the challenge of reconstructing Ginczanka's neologism *pasieczność* ('apiariness') from line 10. In result, a prominent sign of the poet's individual style and a sophisticated means of count-to-mass conversion becomes lost in translation. Instead of providing some alternative unbounding solutions in other lines, Polishchuk profiles the unbounded entities *grains* and *juices* as enclosed in some sort of containers (in lines 6 and 7). In his metaphors *lines filled up with juices* and *tents of grain*, the nominal referents *lines* and *tents* become vessels which effect a spatial enclosure, thus bounding.

When in line 11 Ginczanka conceives a referent of the concrete count noun *goat's udder* as abstract and unbounded, Polishchuk uses the plural form *goats' udders* in his translation. Such a solution does not let him profile any abstract sense. We are simply dealing with multiple instances of a bounded entity in his imagery.

⁶ My close-to-literal translation of the poem into English – JP.

While Ginczanka uses various means to profile bounded entities as unbounded ones in the first stanza, she applies the opposite technique in the second part of her poem. Polishchuk does not preserve there her converse approach to imagery construal. He fails to impose bounding on the referent of the mass noun *wallpaper*. In fact, Polishchuk completely ignores the image of peach wallpaper in his translation, as he does it with the noun *cuboids* and its marked, diminutive form. The translator offers his own invention: *the salon's shelter*. The construal of this image does not involve any mass-to-count conversion. What is more, Ginczanka's register becomes less ironic here due to the lack of the diminutive element.

I present the arrangement of bounded and unbounded referents in the Ukrainian translation in Table 2. The translator casts seven unbounded referents in the first stanza and no such referents in the second stanza. Ginczanka, accordingly, mentions fourteen unbounded referents in the first stanza and none in the second one. In effect, the contrast between the two stanzas becomes clearly reduced in Polishchuk's version in comparison with the original poem. Another discrepancy between Ginczanka's imagery and its Ukrainian rendition results from the reverse proportion between unbounded and bounded referents in the translation of the first stanza – Ginczanka's ratio of 14:9 turns into 7:12. Where the poet depicts nature as boundless, the translator imposes boundaries upon the original images.

Table 2. Bounded and unbounded referents in Ukrainian translation of *Virginity* by Y. Polishchuk

	<i>bounded referents</i>	<i>unbounded referents</i>
<i>1st stanza</i>	віти ['branches'] корови ['cows'] обори ['stockyards'] зорі ['stars'] поричок и збижжя шатри ['tents of currants and grain'] соками налиті лінії ['lines filled up with juices'] вовчица ['a she-wolf'] вовчата ['wolf cubs'] очи ['eyes']	дощик ['little rain'] духом горіхів ['spirit of hazelnuts'] повітря ['air'] меди живиці ['honeys of resin'] молоко ['milk'] вічність ['eternity'] грудей святині ['temple of breasts']

	лілії ['lilies'] вим'я кіз ['goats' udders'] дини ['pumpkins']	
2 nd stanza	салони ['salons'] сховок ['shelter'] сукенки ['little dresses'] розмови ['conversations']	—

Conclusions

The translator's neglect of the original organization of bounded and unbounded nominal referents has led to diminished stylistic effects. The tension and contrast between the world of nature and that of man becomes less pronounced than in Ginczanka's poem. Her poetic mastery, which involves the application of various bounding and unbounding techniques, is reduced in the Ukrainian version of *Virginité*. The failure in adequate "lexico-grammatical tracking" of the original text is often accompanied by semantic unfaithfulness in translation, which remains to be commented on beyond the scopes of this essay.

As Elżbieta Tabakowska claims, "to achieve textual equivalence, the translator must not only paint the objects that were painted in the original picture, but also make sure that the viewers would be seeing his own creation through the right pair of glasses. In other words, he must make an optimal choice of painting techniques" [Tabakowska 1993: 132]. The equivalence on the level of such an element of imagery as bounding proves to be a useful criterion of the assessment of literary translation.

References

- Croft, W., Cruse, D. A. (2004), *Cognitive Linguistics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511803864>.
- Ginczanka, Z. (2017), *Wiersze. Wirshi* (translated by J. Poliszczuk), GO „Forum wydawnicze”, Lwów.
- Ginczanka, Z. (2016), *Of Centaurs* (translated by M. Kazmierski), Off-Press, Warsaw–London.
- Głowiński, M. (1955), „O liryce i satyrze Zuzanny Ginczanki”, *Twórczość*, 8, pp. 117-119.
- Kiec, I. (1994), *Zuzanna Ginczanka. Życie i twórczość*, Obserwator, Poznań.

- Langacker, R. W. (1983), *Cognitive Grammar*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Schallcross, B. (2011), *The Holocaust Object in Polish and Polish-Jewish Culture*, Indiana University Press, Indiana.
- Tabakowska, E. (1993), *Cognitive Linguistics and Poetics of Translation*, Gunter Narr Verlag, Tübingen.

ABSTRACT

In this article I make use of the concept of bounding developed within cognitive grammar, initially devised by Ronald Langacker (1983). I examine how the arrangement of nouns denoting bounded or unbounded entities relates to the imagery of two contrastive worlds in Zuzanna Ginczanka's poem *Dziewictwo* (*Virginity*). The accurate rendition of Ginczanka's grammatical choices in this regard will be the central criterion for the linguistic evaluation of the Ukrainian translation of the poem.

Keywords: bounding, Zuzanna Ginczanka, cognitive poetics, poetic translation