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MARIA SUŁKOWSKA'S TRANSLATION OF SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS

Abstract: The paper presents the first almost complete edition of Shakespeare's sonnets in Polish which, appeared in 1913 and has since been forgotten. The translator, Maria Sułkowska, chose to appear under the pseudonym Mus. She omitted sonnets 134 and 135 as untranslatable puns, and wrote a preface in verse where she expounded her views on Shakespeare's *Sonnets* and their translation. Her version is shown in the light of a highly critical 1914 review and in the context of the first Polish monograph on Shakespeare's poetry by Roman Dyboski (1914) who quoted Sułkowska's translation throughout, although with a few alterations of his own. Even though some of the sonnets must be a challenge to the Polish reader because of the choice of obsolete vocabulary or syntax, the whole merits attention for consistency of the translator's decisions as well as the attention to detail.

Keywords: Shakespeare's sonnets, translation, Maria Sułkowska, Mus

The Polish reception of Shakespeare's sonnets has a relatively short history. Wiktor Hahn's bibliography *Shakespeare w Polsce* (Shakespeare in Poland) lists the earliest translations in 1836: Konstanty Piotrowski published a volume of poetry which contained fourteen of Shakespeare's sonnets in Polish. Shakespeare's sonnets were translated and published throughout the nineteenth century, usually in magazines or anthologies, but never collected in a separate volume. In the early twentieth century a revered poet of the time, Jan Kasproicz, published an anthology of English poetry in 1907. It contained twenty sonnets in his translation. Fifteen years later he translated and published the whole collection. He was not the first to attempt this daring project, however. In 1913, exactly a hundred years ago, a small volume *Sonety Szekspira* (Shakespeare's Sonnets) appeared, with precise information as to which poems had been translated (I–CXXXIV

and CXXXVII–CLIV) and by whom. The translator's name on the title page was an intriguing pseudonym: Mus. Only two sonnets were omitted, 135 and 136. The translator justified their absence through their untranslatable plays on words, without which the poems would be meaningless. The volume was reviewed in a serious monthly *Książka* (The Book) in 1914, by a young, though recognised scholar, and by a specialist in English literature, Władysław Tarnawski.

Either Tarnawski was unaware of the translator's identity, or he respected the pseudonym, because his review consistently refers to the translator with masculine forms. The pseudonym, meanwhile, belonged to a woman, Countess Maria Sułkowska, nee Uznańska. A search through an old catalogue of the Jagiellonian University Library has culled a book entitled *Tristan II. Wiersze ulotne i fragmenta* (Tristan II: Ephemeral Poems and Fragments), published in Krakow in 1917. The catalogue card reads: "Tego samego autora Sonety Szekspira, które napisał [sic!] Mus = Sułkowska Marya z Uznańskich" (By the author of *Shakespeare's Sonnets* written [sic!] by Mus, i.e. Sułkowska Marya nee Uznańska).¹ The Polish Literary Bibliography published online by the Institute of Literary Research at the Polish Academy (<http://pbl.ibl.poznan.pl>) holds only one entry under her name. Information about the Rydzyna line of the old aristocratic Sułkowski family (pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sułkowscy) is of little help in identifying Maria Sułkowska. All we learn is that she became Count Alexander Sułkowski's widow two years after their wedding, in 1905.

Judging by the rhymed Introduction to her translation of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, she enjoyed writing and cherished some poetic ambitions of her own, but clearly tried to remain anonymous. Like the past-tense masculine form of the verb "translate" on the title page (*tlómaczył Mus*), all the verbs in the Introduction keep to the same gender whenever they refer to the translator (*Przedmowę pisać zamierzałem prozą* – the introduction I intended to write in prose). The volume kept in the Jagiellonian Library is signed by Sułkowska for her former school teacher, Leon Marchlewski. The adjective "grateful" with which she closes the inscription is likewise masculine: *wdzięczny Mus*. This last falsification is, in all probability, a joke: the professor must have known and remembered his pupil. Perhaps she was wary of revealing her identity for family reasons. Perhaps the reasons were economic; maybe she believed or was advised that the volume would sell better

¹ My translation. All translations mine unless stated otherwise.

under a man's name. There remains one other possibility: her translations make no effort to obscure the homoerotic tone of the sonnets.

The poetic Introduction calls our attention less for its form than its contents. It is an exposition of Sułkowska's translation strategy, of her admiration for Shakespeare's poetry, and of her criticism of how the Polish language is taught in schools. She is fully conscious of her pioneering effort. Showing no false ambition for future glory, but with a large dose of confidence, she tells her contemporaries who do not read Shakespeare in English to come to her: *Kto po angielsku Szekspira nie czyta, / O mnie zapyta*. This leads to the problem of translation's truthfulness ("*Czy przekład wierny?*") and uncovers the paradox behind the concept. If readers cannot read the original, they have no way to evaluate the translated text – and thus it is futile to ask such a question:

A sam pytania nie rozwiąże snadnie,
Bo sam zagłębić nie może się wcale
Woryginalne.

(He himself will not answer the question,
Because he cannot at all delve into
The original.)

The question does, however, bring forward the responsibility and the role of the translator, the ambassador – in this case – for Shakespeare in Polish culture. Sułkowska accepts this responsibility and chooses her strategy, founded on Bergson's ideas of intuition, which were very popular at the time. Intuition as a method of interpretation and translation suits her poetic temperament and goes hand in hand with her veneration for Shakespeare's genius.² At the same time, Sułkowska expresses her own, fairly exalted, desire to become one with Shakespeare, to appropriate him, to possess him almost erotically: Shakespeare fills her soul to the brim, which brings to her an imaginary death, in which her immortal part acquires Shakespeare's vir-

² Sądzę, że Szekspir wieczyście jest żywym:
Niech mnie obejmie skrzydłem miłościwym
Niech Szekspir, który prawdą swoją włada,
Sam do mnie gada.

(I believe Shakespeare ever-living:
Let him embrace me with his loving wing,
Let Shakespeare, who wields his own truth
Speak to me himself.)

tues, while his Thought not only penetrates her, but emanates from her, as it were, in the form of poetry.³ The masculine gender of the Speaker signalled by grammatical forms adds a true Shakespearean flavour to the passage.

Yet, intuition and spiritual unity with Shakespeare are not the only method of "transforming" Shakespeare into "Szekspir." Sułkowska refuses to read available translations and methodically shuns scholarly criticism and interpretations of "erudite traitors" (*erudytów zdradnych*). Nonetheless, she understands the challenge of language, which in the poetic discourse of the Young Poland period had become quite exalted, and sometimes simply quaint. It may be good enough for her Introduction, but she is unsure if it will serve Shakespeare equally well. Descending from the heights of intuition she begins to browse through dictionaries of the Polish language.⁴ She also turns to great writers of the past, whom she calls "the classical muse: "the poet Jan Kochanowski and the great Bible translator, Rev. Wujek. There she finds "the honey of expression" of "our true language" (*miód wymowy języka naszego prawego*). There is yet another spring she tries to tap: the language of peasants to whom she listened in trying to track down the preserved beauty of the Polish of the Past.⁵

³ Za to tak pełnił duszę moją całą
Tak promieniał wiecznie żywą chwałą,
Żem myślał czasem: już umieram sobie
Już jestem w grobie.
A nieśmiertelne części mej istoty
Biorą na siebie kształt Szekspira cnoty;
Wielka myśl jego chyba ze mnie tryska,
Tak jest mnie blizka.

(He filled so my whole soul
He so radiated ever-living glory,
That I thought presently: I am dying,
I am in my grave.

And the immortal parts of my being
Assume the shape of Shakespeare's virtues;
His great thought emanates from me,
It is so close/intimate to me.)

⁴ Wiedźcie: zaglądam w Lindego, Standarda
I w Karłowicza

(Know that I consult Linde, Standard and Karłowicz)

⁵ Chodziłem słuchać, czy nie zabrzmi z wioski
Ton staropolski.

(I walked to the village to hear the old Polish language)

Evidently Sułkowska believed in assimilation, in a translation which would allow her readers to read Shakespeare's sonnets as part of the Polish cultural capital. She seems also to side with stylisation, plumbing the Polish resources of the sixteenth century to find a diction equivalent to Shakespeare's sonnets, the better to integrate them into the Polish literary canon. Thus the somewhat pretentious form of the Introduction contains a fully-formed translational programme: translation means appropriating the source text, re-writing it in the target language, which is warranted, on the one hand, by intuition, but on the other, by a constant search for the best form of assimilation in the target culture.

Władysław Tarnawski (1914: 287-288), the first reviewer of Sułkowska's translation, did not understand her Introduction, failing to see the programme in it. "The book," he writes, "is the first complete translation of the sonnets, long awaited." He confirms the untranslatability of the sonnets she left out. This, however, concludes his praise of the translation, though at the very end he sugars his criticism slightly with "this volume contains comforting signs of literary competence, but with no practical consequences." The "practical consequences," according to the reviewer, means "some idea about the original;" however, Mus's translation does not meet this expectation for several reasons.

First and foremost, Tarnawski cannot accept her rejection of scholarly literature on the sonnets. His idea of a good translation rests on a solid literary interpretation with the inevitable commentary and notes. Commentary is indispensable because the sonnets, "though full of magnificent moments and profound thoughts," contain much that is "offensive to today's taste." This includes the "adoration of the Friend," the "sensual tone" of this adoration, as well as "antitheses, hyperboles, forced metaphors and other unpleasant details;" the first eighteen sonnets are generally condemned as a trivial "litany on the subject of 'get married and bear children'." Tarnawski finds the true attraction of the sonnets in the secret of the sonnets' origin and their relation to the poet's experience. The key to this secret is the mysterious dedication. Thus, Tarnawski's conclusion points to the importance and value of scholarly research and commentary, without which the real value of the sonnets must be inaccessible to the reader of the translated text, while poetic beauty does not attract "the modern reader."

Sułkowska's Introduction and Tarnawski's review represent two very different ways of understanding the sonnets. To her they are superb poetry, to the young academic a literary monument of middling artistic merit, but

of great value as a key to the secret of Shakespeare's identity. Details which are "unpleasant" for Tarnawski sing in Sułkowska's soul. "The Shakespeare riddle" held no interest for her, and did not inspire the ambitious project of translating the whole collection.

The dedication Tarnawski mentions is indeed ambiguous. It has been interpreted in various ways throughout the history of Shakespeare criticism, and remains an object of great interest in scholarly introductions to new editions of the sonnets. We might say the dedication is a Derridean fissure through which various meanings appear and disappear according to how the text is read. Indeed, the dedication is not a standard text of its kind; addressed to the mysterious Mr W.H., signed with the initials T.T. (Thomas Thorpe), rendered in a complicated syntax, unusual punctuation and graphic layout, it introduces yet another persona, indispensable in the process of begetting and publishing the sonnets: *our ever-living poet*.⁶ The ambiguity of *begetter* (father or procurer), makes for at least two ways in which the role of Mr W.H. may be defined. If parent, then only metaphorically: one who was the inspiration as a muse? A lover? If procurer, then for the publisher: one who brought the poems to Thorpe either with or without the poet's consent. If Thorpe describes himself as an *adventurer* in this business of *setting forth*, he either boasts of having had the courage to publish the poems, or suggests that he is ready to take any adventure in setting his sails for profit. In the latter case, he is obviously ignoring the poet's rights. The dedication less settles than complicates the problem of authorship; there is no certainty as to who arranged the poems in the sequence in which the book was printed. Is our ever-living poet responsible for the peculiar dialogue which we read between the sonnets, or is the adventurer, in setting forth, in collusion with the procurer?

⁶ TO.THE.ONLIE.BEGETTER.OF
THESE.INSUING.SONNETS.
Mr.W.H.ALL.HAPPINESSE.
AND.THAT.ETERNITIE.
PROMISED.
BY.
OVR.EVER-LIVING.POET.
WISHETH.
THE.WELL-WISHING.
ADVENTURER.IN.
SETTING.
FORTH.
T.T.

If Sułkowska indeed ignored all such learned speculations,⁷ her translation of the dedication suggests her own interpretation of the sonnets. In her text T.T. becomes a well-wishing publisher who hopes to gain the kind protection of Mr W.H. for himself and the poet. The translator ignores the full stops that divide the words, changes the order of the verses, and eliminates syntactical ambiguities. Mr W.H. is the addressee of both the flattering dedication and of the sonnets, in which the poet promises him eternity by immortalising him in the poems. All the possible senses of *adventurer* and the shady dealings in procuring the poems are eliminated. In this way the Speaker in the poems is the Poet, and the addressee undoubtedly Mr W.H.

Sułkowska does not try to “improve” the relationship between the Speaker and the Addressee in those sonnets where gender is not specified; she consistently employs masculine endings of verbs, adjectives, and pronouns, as in Sonnet 87:

Farewell, thou art too dear for my possessing
Żegnaj, zbyt cennyś, abym Cię miał długo

The relationship between the Speaker and the Addressee is strengthened by capital letters in second person singular pronouns (as in *Cię* above). This is how she translates the intimacy of *thou* as opposed to you. In Sonnet 104 *fair friend* is addressed as *you*. Sułkowska translates *friend* as *druh* (companion), as if avoiding the erotic bond, but then she continues in a very intimate tone:

For as you were when first your eye I eyed,
 Such seems your beauty still.

*Mnie jak w dzień pierwszy, lśni Twa piękność świetnie,
 Gdyś oko moje wzroku odbił czarem.*

(For me, as on the first day, your beauty shines gloriously,
 When you returned/ reflected my eye with the charm of [your] gaze.)

It comes as no surprise that Tarnawski does not praise her translation. “The unpleasant details” are neither smoothed nor explained by a learned commentary on the ideal of Renaissance friendship.

⁷ Bo kiedy widzę gmach hipotez kruchy,
 Nie mam otuchy

(For when I look at the crumbly building of hypotheses/ lose heart.)

A covert opinion on Sułkowska's translation can be found in Roman Dyboski's monograph *O sonetach i poematach Szekspira* (On the Sonnets and Poems of Shakespeare), also published in 1914. This is a serious academic study in which Dyboski, a professor of English Language and Literature at the Jagiellonian University, presents the contents in detail and discusses the form of the sonnets in a separate chapter (1914: 27–80). He also adds information on the history of the sonnets' reception. His bibliography includes all the important English, American, and German studies prior to his publication. Dyboski discusses the homoerotic aspect from the historical perspective that was then generally accepted. He writes of "a new wave of enthusiasm for friendship between men" in the Renaissance. This ideal was, in Dyboski's interpretation, very popular in Shakespeare's world, in life as well as in literature, expressed by other important poets as warmly as Shakespeare (p. 34). Writing on the sonnets, Dyboski frequently quotes them in Polish. Only in the second quotation (p. 32) does he explain: "I quote – with minor corrections – from the translation published under the pseudonym Mus." Thus, Dyboski must have had Sułkowska's translation when he was working on his monograph. He must have appreciated the results of this first attempt at a full Polish version of the sonnets; otherwise he would not have used it throughout. Nowhere in his study is he openly critical of the quality of the translation. Moreover, he seems to have preferred her versions to the few sonnets also translated by the famous Kasprowicz, which in itself confirms his appreciation. The "minor corrections" which he introduced, of which more below, may be treated as his opinion on details of the translation.

Dyboski did not share Tarnawski's distaste for the sonnets. He did not believe that things "offensive to the taste of today" diminish the beauty and the emotional truth of the poems. Indeed, he seems to have overlooked such things. His conviction of the Platonic ideal of masculine friendship made him read the sonnets in Sułkowska's translation without prejudice, and allowed him to construe a smooth narrative interpretation of the first 126 sonnets, full of the praise of the beauty of the addressee and of intimate feelings for the Friend. Dyboski points out that there may have been more than one addressee of the sonnets and informs his readers that the specific quality of the English language does not always indicate the gender of the second person; still, his interpretative line stresses the emotional, tense, stormy, and painful relationship between the Poet and the Friend. Here Sułkowska's translation serves him well, as she consistently maintains

the masculine forms of address to the Friend. An example might be Sonnet 100, in which the English addressive forms are neutral, and which in Sułkowska's translation are unambiguously turned towards the male Friend. Dyboski notes in a footnote: "Kasprowicz translates the sonnet as addressed to a woman (*my love's = mojej lubej*) and nobody can prove him wrong" (1914: 40). True, nobody can; but Dyboski obviously agrees with Sułkowska's interpretation.

Tarnawski accuses Mus of "striking errors in the understanding of the text," quoting the translation of *tire* in Sonnet 53 as *tiara* as an example, or the *dyer's hand* (Sonnet 111) changed into *dłoń w kości gracza* [a dice player's hand]. Indeed, *dyer* must have been confused with *dicer*, but *tire* may mean both attire and tiara, the head ornament. Other criticism concerns a loss of concise expression, alterations to images, unnatural word order for Polish, changes in the rhyme scheme, and generally false rhymes. This sounds like serious criticism and demands thorough evidence. Dyboski does not point out Mus's errors; instead, he introduces "slight corrections" (though he does not mark the changes). And so, the verses in Sonnet 18

But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ows't,
Nor shall death brag thou wand'rest in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st.
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this and this gives life to thee.

are translated by Sułkowska as

*Lecz lato Twoje kwitnąć będzie wiecznie,
I też nie stracisz skarbu Twojej krasy,
I cienie śmierci ominiesz bezpiecznie,
Gdy **wieczną drogą** pełne zmierzysz czasy.
Póty tchu ludziom, **póty** oczom wzroku,
Wiersz mój żyć będzie, Tobie sporząc roku.*

(But your summer will bloom eternally,
And you will not lose the treasure of your beauty,
And shadows of death you will pass by safely,
When by eternal path you measure full times.
As long as men breathe, as long as eyes can see,
My verse will live, multiplying your year[s].)

Dyboski corrects the phrases marked here in bold: his **I nie utracisz skarbu twojej krasy** corrects rhythm in line 2 and leaves out *też* (also),

which makes the meaning stumble a bit. *Wieczną drogą* (eternal path) is corrected to **pieśni drogą** which eliminates Shakespeare's *eternal*, but suggests *lines* (pieśń = song) and gives the Polish text a more logical meaning. Studying his corrections one uncovers the flaws in the translation, such as the faulty rhythm and awkward sense. But he does not meddle with the imagery, which makes the translated text quite different; for example, *wieczną/ pieśni drogą pełne zmierzysz czasy* in no way conveys Shakespeare's meaning of *In eternal lines to time thou grow'st*, even with Dyboski's correction. In addition, the last line of the sonnet, apart from its use of the very unusual verb *sporząc* (which, after some reflection, one may connect to *przysparzając*, i.e. giving more and more, multiplying), does not express the Poet's certainty that *this gives life to thee*. The archaic form *póty-póty* is corrected by Dyboski to **póki-póki**, and rightly so. Too much stylisation only hinders the reader's enjoyment of the translation. However, he also corrects Sułkowska's capital T in the second person pronouns, probably because Shakespeare's text contains no such thing. Yet, this particular trait of Sułkowska's translation brings to the Polish text an intimacy of tone which is characteristic of the whole volume, and which does not require correction.

Sułkowska had also difficulties with Sonnet 54, especially lines 9–10:

But for their virtue only is their show,
They live unwooed and unrespected fad

*Lecz dla nich samych krasa próżna płonie:
Samotnie żyją, więdną bez szacunku.*

(But for themselves the vain beauty burns [or: the beauty burns in vain]:
They live alone and fade without respect.)

Dyboski changes this to,

*Lecz oku jeno ta ich krasa płonie,
Samotnie żyją, giną bez szacunku.*

(But only for the eye their beauty burns:
They live alone and disappear/die without respect.)

The verse "But for their virtue only is their show" is difficult and English editions of the Sonnets always add comments here. Burrow (2002: 488) explains, "the sole value of dog-roses lies in their appearance." Duncan Jones (2001: 54) explains, "their merit lies in their appearance." Bate,

Rasmussen (2009: 248) write, “their worth lies only in their appearance.” But Stephen Booth (1977: 226) says, “The context of this line requires one meaning (‘But because their only virtue is their show’), but the word order suggests another and contrary one (‘But because their virtue is the only thing they show’).” Shakespeare builds the argument on the differentiation between a rose of beautiful fragrance and a dog-rose, which has none. Sułkowska distinguishes roses of sweet smell and those which spread *zara-zy zdradliwe* (treacherous pestilence). In line 9 the Polish text suggests either that the beauty of the rose of “treacherous pestilence” is vanity, or that it opens the flower in vain because it has no perfume. Her interpretation follows the general sense of the sonnet, which places more value on the scent than on the beauty of the flower. Dyboski’s correction does not improve the translation. Nor does the translation suffer through Sułkowska’s avoidance of scholarly interpretations. The correction introduced into the couplet is not felicitous either.

And so of you, beauteous and lovely youth,
When **that shall vade**, my verse distills your truth.

*Choć zgaśniesz, chłopcze miły I piękny,
Prawdę Twą wiersze już moje streścily.*

(Although you shall die (be extinguished), youth beautiful and lovely,
Your truth my lines have already abstracted.)

In Shakespeare’s text the repetition of *fade/vade* (lines 10 and 14) strengthens the suggestion of the contrast between beauty which fades, and truth (perfume) which does not disappear. Sułkowska does not repeat the verb *więdnąć* (line 10: *więdną*), which is a direct equivalent of fade, but repeats the verb she uses in line 11, *gasnąć*. The verb pertains to light or flame and means to be put out, extinguished, or metaphorically, to die. It is this verb which forms the structural repetition in her text: the burning beauty of the rose extinguishes, as will the beauty of the lovely youth, while the truth is abstracted (extracted) into poetry. Dyboski’s correction of line 10 *więdną* into *giną* (fade into disappear, get lost) adds no essential improvement, and removes all trace of Shakespeare’s *fade*.

Dyboski engages in correcting Sułkowska’s translation in order to better illustrate his narrative interpretation of the whole cycle. He is not interested in evaluating the translation, as is Tarnawski’s aim. The latter is often correct in his criticism, especially concerning her imagery. It seems that, in

getting carried away by her own imagination, Sułkowska leads the reader into a maze of the senses which does not correspond to the argument of the source text. This is the case with her translation of Sonnet 55. She begins well: in the first two lines she keeps the enjambment; though she does not open the sonnet with a line as powerful as Shakespeare's *Not marble, nor the gilded monument*, she still manages to introduce a strong negative statement by placing the verb in an emphatic position at the very end of the first sentence. But then she stumbles. The comparison *you shall shine more bright in these contents/ Than unswept stone* puts a Horatian argument into the speaker's mouth. Sułkowska's speaker compares the brightness of the addressee and a stone, suggesting the metaphor of a jewel (*świecić będziesz, w mych rymów oprawie,/ Jaśniej niż kamień*), and changes the argument into a compliment. The turning point of the sonnet – *the living record of your memory* – which will not be touched by *Mars his sword or war's quick fire*, in Sułkowska's rendering becomes the ambiguous phrase *pamiętek Twoich* which suggests mementoes or relics of the Friend; with a heavy dose of good will, the meaning may be contorted to suggest "all that is left of you," "your remains" – a far cry from the proud living record of poetry. 'Gainst death, and all-oblivious enmity/ Shall you pace forth of lines 9–10 is a hurdle which the translator was unable to leap, thus producing a sentence which is gibberish: *Z drogi Twej zemkną wrogów zapomnienia* (from your path will run away enemies' oblivion); *your praise* is translated as *Twa chwała* (your glory), which will sustain posterity (*będzie krzepić przyszłe pokolenia*): for a Polish reader this would reverberate with patriotic heroism and take him far from the sonnet indeed. The famous line which closes the sonnet, *You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes* – the perfect monument to the Friend, as it will live forever in the eyes of lovers who will read the sonnet – is twisted into a conclusion which less praises the monument, the living testimony, these lines, than the Friend: *W wierszu żyć będziesz, hold zbierając cnoty* (you will live in the poem gathering homage of virtue).

Not all the sonnets are so badly translated, however. Many are rendered into Polish with understanding, elegance, and care. It must be remembered that she was the first to take up this extremely exacting challenge. Even if she had made a point of thorough study, she could not have turned to such sophisticated editions as we have today. Though it is easy to criticise a hundred years later, it is unfair. If she is to be defended, it should be against the severe sentence passed on her by her contemporary, Władysław Tarnawski.

Sonnet 60 opens with a striking comparison of waves to minutes, which offers an image of the time and its relentlessness, its continuous movement forward:

Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,
 So do our minutes hasten to their end,
 Each changing place with that which goes before,
 In sequent toil all forwards do contend.

Sułkowska's image is equally suggestive: like the waves in the pebbled shore, so our moments quickly die; her version is particularly felicitous in rendering line 3, *I jedna w drugą w chyżym sphywa biegu* (and one into another flows in hasty course) stressing the processual nature of the continuous flow of waves/moments. Kasproicz did no better. He changed the pebbled shore into a rock, implying a violent splash at the end rather than the smooth transformation of one wave into another: *Jak fale morskie do skalnego brzegu* (like sea waves towards the rocky shore). Moreover, line 2 highlights the end of each moment of time: *Tak do swych kresów płyną nasze chwile* (Thus to their end flow our moments). Time moves forward to its end, or its aim, thus changing Shakespeare's meditation on the flow of time, the transitoriness of time and life, into a reflection on the inevitable end – death.

Sułkowska carries out the *fearful meditation* of Sonnet 65 unflinchingly. She changes the metaphor of the third quatrain, yet she keeps the argument of the whole and follows Shakespeare's pattern of keeping each step of the meditation in a separate quatrain. Lines 11–12 mirror the rhythm and syntax of the English verses, giving the Polish speaker the tone of apparent resignation which is, in truth, its ironic opposite, a revolt against the destruction wrought by Time:

Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back?
 Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?

*Lub któż powstrzyma czasu chyże stopy?
 Lub kto piękności zabroni zniszczenia?*

(Or who'll check time's quick feet?
 Or who of beauty will forbid destruction?)

The translation of Sonnet 65 is interesting and inventive, though, of course, the word order and spelling belong to the nineteenth century and sound dated to the twenty-first-century reader's ears. Sułkowska is evi-

dently aware of the function of the series of rhetorical questions and successfully holds the tension between apparent helplessness in the face of the time's destructive power and a belief in poetry's amazing indestructibility.

Sonnet 73 is worth reading as well. In Sułkowska's text one hears the melancholy tone and feels the coldness of the season in which the leaves are few and the birds are gone:

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
 When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
 Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
 Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang.

*Oglądasz we mnie tej pory odbicie,
 Kiedy z gałęzi strząsa wichler chłodny
 Ostatnie liście; drzew puste kaplice,
 Gdzie ptaszki śpiewał niedawno chór zgodny.*

(You see in me of that season's reflection
 When cold wind shakes from the boughs
 The last leaves; empty chapels of trees
 Where a birds' unison choir sang not long ago.)

The main effect of this metaphor comes from the act of looking in the mirror. It is both an invitation for the addressee to look at the speaker to see the reflection of autumnal melancholy, and introspection, an act of looking at the self, of discovering melancholy as a reflection of the speaker's age.

Sułkowska's autumnal scene differs in details: cold wind shakes the last leaves from the boughs, the trees are empty chapels where birds sang in unison not long ago; but the space opened for the Polish reader in the melancholy reflection and the sad invitation to look is comparable to Shakespeare's own.

In Sonnet 91 Sułkowska successfully turns Shakespeare's tone and rhythm into Polish:

Some glory in their birth, some in their skill,
 Some in their wealth, some in their bodies' force

*Jedni się rodem, drudzy kunsztem szczycą,
 Inni bogactwem, inni silnym ciałem*

(Some of their parentage, others of their skill boast,
 Others of wealth, others, of strong body.)

In line 8 she matches Shakespeare's alliteration and word-play; even though she changes the meaning slightly, the sense of the sonnet's argument is kept:

All these I **better** in one general **best**

I dobro moje ponad dobra cenię,

(My goodness above wealth I value.)

Light and happy tones of flirtatious wooing at playing music in Sonnet 128 resound just as playfully in the translated lines,

Since saucy jacks so happy are in this,
Give them thy fingers, me thy lips to kiss.

*Skoro klawisze tak już chcesz radować,
Daj im Twe palce, mnie usta całować.*

(Should you want to bring joy to the keys,
Lend them thy fingers, and me thy lips to kiss.)

As deftly as she is able to translate the rare moments of joy in love, she can also extract dark tones of lust, repulsion, passion and despair. Translating Sonnet 129, she follows the tense and uneven rhythm of the man *in a waste of shame*:

The expense of spirit in a waste of shame
Is lust in action; and till action, lust
Is perjured, murderous, bloody, full of blame,
Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust,

*Haniebnie niszczy i moc ducha trwoni
Czyn pożądliwy; już krwawa, mordercza
Jest chuć przed czynem; cześć i wiarę roni,
Nieokiełznana, dzika, przeniwiercza.*

(Shamefully destroys and the soul's power wastes
An act of lust; already bloody and murderous
Is lust before action: it discards dignity and trust,
Unbridled, wild, faithless.)

The irregularity of rhythm increases, as it does in Shakespeare's lines; though she is unable to create the panting effect of the accumulation of

words, she still follows the slower rhythm of the opening line and the ragged, quicker pace of what follows; she shifts caesuras to enhance the speaker's emotional upheaval and proves her vocabulary to be rich and disturbingly expressive.

In his review of Sułkowska's translation, Tarnawski picks up on her mistakes and poor understanding of English. He is academically pedantic, and his evaluations are flawed. Sułkowska is an attentive and sensitive reader of Shakespeare's sonnets; her translations pass on the wide range of emotions, moods, and reflections of the Shakespearean speaker to the Polish reader, as well as many shades of meanings which express the complications of love, and the changing relationship between the lovers. A particularly valuable aspect of her translation is her enthusiasm for poetry; she reads the sonnets as poetry and tries to smuggle much of Shakespeare's poetic subtleties and beauty into her texts. She is not interested in biography, or in a literary historian's approach. Nor is she squeamish, and she is far from passing moral judgement on the erotic or homoerotic aspect of the sonnets. She has the courage to treat the sonnets as works of art, and in her translation she endeavours to make them poems which could be appreciated and incorporated into the Polish literary canon.

Unfortunately, Sułkowska was not recognised in her time, and her translation fell into oblivion. She had none of the aura surrounding Kasprowicz as a poet and translator. His translation of Shakespeare's sonnets, published ten years after hers, in 1922, was greeted with enthusiastic reviews. But we must also remember the historical facts. Her translation appeared a year before the Great War. The tragic four years of the war were additionally complicated for Poles, whose effort went into restoring Poland to the map after 123 years of absence. The struggle for independence left very little space for other concerns...

Kasprowicz timed his translation much better. And so Sułkowska's translation, despite Shakespeare's assurances of the immortality of his art, became an *unswept stone besmear'd with sluttish time*. Old monuments do indeed lose their lustre, and their form cannot appeal to posterity's taste. But they need not be forgotten, and their real value should be appreciated. In the history of Shakespeare's reception in Poland, Maria Sułkowska's name must find its place.

trans. Marta Gibińska

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