

GABRIEL BOROWSKI

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2565-4815>

Jagiellonian University, Kraków

[gabriel.borowski@uj.edu.pl](mailto:gabriel.borowski@uj.edu.pl)

# IT GIVES YOU SHIVERS: TRANSLATING POLISH HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY INTO BRAZILIAN PORTUGUESE\*

---

## Abstract

In this article, I try to lay out clearly and discuss selected issues encountered during the translation (with Eda Nagayama) of Bogdan Bartnikowski's (born 1932) collection of stories *Dzieciństwo w pasiakach* (1969) into Brazilian Portuguese. My text combines a scholarly dimension with one of self-commentary in order to offer some general reflection on the subject of the ethics of translating testimony. It consists of three parts. In the first, I provide a concise overview of the state of research on the connections between translation and studies on cultural memory. Next, I present a series of observations relating to the emotional dimension of the process of translating Holocaust testimonies. In the final section, I compare solutions adopted in translations of Bartnikowski's memoir into German, English, Italian, Spanish, French, Russian, and Portuguese. In a summing up, I try to define the memory-(re)productive role of translation: reproductive, in that the translation of testimony demands a respect for the truth of the signs present in the original and their rendering in the target culture; and productive (creative) inasmuch as it demands of the author of the translation a series of procedures with the aim of inscribing a universal theme within the specific field of cultural memory.

**Keywords:** translation, cultural memory, Holocaust testimony, Holocaust literature, Brazil, Bogdan Bartnikowski

---

\* Originally published in Polish in issue 38/2019 of *Przekładaniec*, this text was written thanks to the support of the SPECTRESS (Social Performance, Cultural Trauma and the Reestablishing of Solid Sovereignities) Programme of the European Commission, which financed my stay at the University of São Paulo in August and September 2017. The English version was prepared with the financial support from the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education (DUN grant).

In the novel *The Boys from Brazil* (1976) – on which an Oscar-nominated film version from 1978 was based, with Gregory Peck and Laurence Olivier in the main roles – Ira Levin, author of, *inter alia*, the best-selling *Rosemary's Baby*, spins a tale in which Josef Mengele, who has gone into hiding in South America after the war, attempts to clone Adolf Hitler with the aim of restoring the Third Reich (Levin 1976). Eight years later, in Roberto Drummond's *Hitler manda lembranças* (Hitler Sends His Regards) (Drummond 1984), one of the protagonists, a former inmate of the camps in Auschwitz-Birkenau, pursues the “Angel of Death” (Mengele) through the streets of the Brazilian city of Belo Horizonte. Both fictions, absurd on the surface, take on another sinister coloration, if we consider the fact, established only in 1985, that after the war Mengele really did go into hiding in Brazil, where, in 1979, he drowned at the sea-side town of Bertioaga in São Paulo state.

More than twenty years later, at the end of January 2008, the Brazilian samba school Unidos do Viradouro received a court order to dismantle a float alluding to the Holocaust in the shape of a pile of emaciated bodies. In February that year it was to be presented as part of a programme entitled “É de arrepiar!” (It Gives You Shivers!) (Viradouro 2008)<sup>1</sup>, during the world-famous carnival procession in Rio de Janeiro. As a protest, the director of the show introduced a new float into the procession, on which he placed motionless, gagged figures in white costumes with a huge banner reading *não se constrói futuro enterrando a história* (the future is not built by burying history), which led to some sharply polemical exchanges.<sup>2</sup>

The above examples point to a whole battery of tensions that are important as regards the representation of the memory of the Shoah in Brazilian culture. The largest country in South America is the site of an actual (in the case of Mengele) and a fictional (in Levin's and Drummond's novels) continuation of the trauma of the Holocaust, and, at the same time, as the example of Viradouro shows, of its problematic carnivalization. As Márcio

---

<sup>1</sup> The exhibit also referred to cockroaches, spiders, and snakes, those condemned to the electric chair and the guillotine, witches burnt at the stake, as well as figures from the films *The Exorcist*, *Child's Play*, *Edward Scissorhands*, and *Alien* ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_MvMeY1LI8w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_MvMeY1LI8w), access: 21.11.2018).

<sup>2</sup> The discussions surrounding the event brought together, *inter alia*, the sharply hostile reaction of Jewish communities in Brazil to the float by Unidos do Viradouro with a general lack of substantial opposition to presentations of Brazilian slavery in earlier carnival processions, and also a general incompatibility of the ahistorical vision of the world during the carnival period with the Jewish imperative to preserve the past via memory (Bines 2011).

Seligmann-Silva (2007) notes, in Brazilian literature the Shoah constitutes a topic that is “extremely marginal”, which may be surprising, given that for many Jewish refugees Brazil was a “safe shore” (DiAntonio 1991). The very term “Holocaust” has recently appeared in Brazilian public discourse in varying contexts, including the title of a best-selling piece of reportage *Holocausto brasileiro* by Daniela Arbex (2013), devoted to an institution for the mentally ill in the city of Barbacena in the state of Minas Gerais, where, up to the end of the 1970s, at least sixty thousand people died as a result of inhuman conditions.

This specific quality of the discourse relating to the Shoah became of importance for us, when in 2017 I was commissioned along with the writer and scholar Eda Nagayama by the Publishing House of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum to translate into Brazilian Portuguese the memoir of a former camp inmate, Bogdan Bartnikowski (born 1932). The memoir was published originally in 1969 under the title *Dzieciństwo w pasiakach* (A Childhood in Stripes/Childhood behind Barbed Wire) (Bartnikowski 2016a), and was at that time available in German, English, Italian, Spanish, and French, and was soon to be available in Russian. Work on the translation involved answering a series of questions connected with what the editors of the volume *Translating Holocaust Lives* (Boase-Beier et al. 2017) indicate as a potential conflict between the fields of Holocaust Studies and translation studies. These are a result of a clash of the moral imperative to give as faithful as possible a rendition of the source text with the necessity of adapting the translation to the needs of the target-language receiver.

In the following article, I attempt to set out clearly and to discuss selected translation issues, combining the dimension of scholarship with elements of self-commentary, in order to undertake some general reflection on the ethics of translating testimony. The essay consists of three parts. In the first, I offer a concise survey of the present state of research on the connections of translation studies and studies of cultural memory. In the second part, I present a series of comments relating to the emotional dimension of the very process of translating testimony of the Holocaust. In the last section, I juxtapose solutions that have been adopted in translations of Bartnikowski’s memoir into German, English, Italian, French, Russian, and Portuguese (Bartnikowski 2018b).<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> I am grateful to Wydawnictwo Państwowego Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau (the Publishing House of the State Museum of Auschwitz-Birkenau) for making available transla-

## Translation and memory

Wulf Kansteiner (2017: 305) notes:

Holocaust memory was one of the first fully-fledged transnational collective memories traveling around the Northern hemisphere in the form of attractive imagetexts and uniting publics from different countries in appreciation of similar media events.

In Kansteiner's view, the analysis of memoirs of Holocaust victims has always formed a conceptual infrastructure within memory studies, especially in relation to the concept of transnational memory. To a large extent, this process takes place via translation, which makes possible the development of a multilingual community of receivers. Thus, it is, however, surprising that there is a relatively weak and diffuse presence of scholarly discourse devoted to the connections of memory research and research into translation (Kershaw 2018), especially if we note, as Tomasz Bilczewski does (2013: 41), that at least two dynamically developing tendencies within translation studies – the feminist and the post-colonial – have profusely drawn on references to traumatic phenomena.

If we consider this issue from the perspective of memory studies, it emerges that the challenge of crossing boundaries between disciplines that is demanded within memory-related studies is often problematic. Kornelia Kończal argues that “contrary to the widespread use of the aspirational and normative slogan ‘interdisciplinarity’, research into memory is still marked by divisions” (2014: 19). Similar views are expressed by Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska and Robert Traba, editors of the encyclopedia *Modi memorandi*, who point out that, although many Polish researchers stress the interdisciplinary nature of their projects, “if (...) one looks at the lists of contents and programmes of their presentations, it is easy to see that this ‘interdisciplinarity’ is more a linguistic passe-partout rather than a serious scholarly challenge” (Saryusz-Wolska, Traba 2014: 14). Already a few years earlier, Saryusz-Wolska had, in fact, insisted:

---

tions in German (Bartnikowski 2016b), English (Bartnikowski 2016c), Italian (Bartnikowski 2016d), Spanish (Bartnikowski 2016e), French (Bartnikowski 2016f), and Russian (Bartnikowski 2018a). Because of my limited knowledge of Russian, there are significantly fewer examples from the Russian translation.

Research on memory has, thus, at present a multidisciplinary character, but only in a few cases is it really inter- or transdisciplinary. Mutual listening to one another and making oneself familiar with the achievements of scholars that adopt differing approaches, however, constitutes a good and, at the same time, indispensable start, in order to cross the boundaries of individual fields in the future. But the development of this tendency may be two-fold. Either in the course of increasingly frequent meetings of persons dealing with this set of issues, a certain community of discourse evolves, one that makes possible real interdisciplinary understanding; or we will have to accept existing differences, which will make communication possible, but communication that will be superficial and imprecise (2010: 80).

A lack of a real “community of discourse” between memory research and translation research is perhaps indicated by the very structure of the *Modi memorandi* encyclopedia, which “supplements the international debate that has lasted from the late 1980s on the subject of memory research, by systematizing and summarizing the state of theoretical reflection” Saryusz-Wolska, Traba 2014: 13), is to be considered as the first “complex treatment that offers an overview of the entire issue and makes it possible to compare differing positions” (14), and offers a selection of concepts according to the criterion of “the possibility of applying them in research into and interpretations of phenomena that can be located within the framework of the culture of memory” (24). One looks in vain in the contents list (or, indeed, in the index) of this encyclopedia for the term *przekład* (translation), although the issue of the problematic choice of translation variants in the case of foreign-language entries is clearly underlined in the introduction to the volume (24). A similar gap can be seen in other memory-studies volumes published recently in Poland: *Pamięć jako kategoria rzeczywistości kulturowej* (Memory As a Category of Cultural Reality) (Adamowski, Wójcicka 2012) – although here the presence of a section devoted to linguistic memory (*pamięć językowa*) should be noted; *Kultura jako pamięć. Posttradycyjne znaczenie przeszłości* (Culture As Memory: The Post-traditional Meaning of the Past) (Hałas 2012); *Pamięć i afekty* (Memory and Affects) (Budrewicz, Sendyka, Nycz 2014); and *Historie afektywne i polityki pamięci* (Affective Histories and the Politics of Memory) (Wichrowska et al. 2015).

Translation studies has made substantial advances in this matter after the so-called cultural turn, within which “from the philological level attention has been transferred to the level of politics and ethics” (Heydel 2009: 23). The gradual consolidation of the topic is especially indicated

by monographs and collections. One can mention here, *inter alia*: the special issue of *Translation and Literature*, edited by Peter Davies (2014), devoted to the translation of Holocaust testimonies; and the small section (consisting only of four articles) entitled “Memory and Translation” in the Canadian journal *TranscUlturAl* (Malena 2016). Of especial importance are the books *Memoria, lingua, traduzione*, edited by Mirella Agorni (2014), *Translating the Poetry of the Holocaust: Translation, Style and the Reader* by Jean Boase-Beier (2015), *Translating Holocaust Literature*, edited by Peter Arnds (2015), *Mapping Memory in Translation* by Siobhan Brownlie (2016), *Translating Holocaust Lives* (2017), edited by Boase-Beier, Davies, Andrea Hammel and Marion Winters, and, this year, Davies’s *Witness between Languages: The Translation of Holocaust Testimonies in Context* (2018). An important step along this path should be the forthcoming volume *Handbook of Translation and Memory*, which is scheduled to be published by Routledge in 2020 (Spiessens 2018).

By virtue of these and other publications, one can see the seeds of a radical reorientation of the paradigm, marked by a change in the manner of perceiving the relation between the two disciplines. The editors of *Translating Holocaust Lives* claim that “it is becoming increasingly difficult for research into Holocaust testimony to ignore the issue of translation, even though the full contribution of translators and the discipline of Translation Studies to the creation and transmission of knowledge about the Holocaust has yet to be acknowledged” (Boase-Beier et al. 2017). Davies (2018: 1) warns against limiting the role of translation studies to that of offering negative criticism:

The two fields of study seem to clash or contradict each other to such an extent that, when translation becomes an issue in the studies of Holocaust testimony, it does so in the form of scandal, or unproductive, defensive complaints about the “betrayal” of a cherished original.

Davies himself vigorously stresses the important role of translation in Holocaust Studies as a multilingual and multicultural phenomenon. He goes so far as to write that “without translation, there would be no Holocaust” (2), because translation is inscribed into the structure of the concept, a concept that has emerged on the basis of scholarship, commemoration, and political discourse. He acknowledges that he abandoned his original idea for the title of his book – it was “Translating the Holocaust” – because it assumed that the concept of the Holocaust existed prior to translation and required only a transfer from one language to another, while, in his view, the Holocaust “is

created through translation and has translation written into it from the start” and “depends on translation and could not exist without it” (5–6).

As, for example, Angela Kershaw (2018) and Anneleen Spiessens (2018) emphasize, in order to develop a fruitful perspective in both disciplines, analyses of translation understood literally as “translation proper” (Jakobson 2009; cf. Dizdar 2009) are especially important, and not just those in which translation is understood metaphorically as rules of intergenerational transmission or a way of formulating the experience of the Holocaust within linguistic frames. The third part of this article is devoted this kind of research.

## Translator as witness

This paper is devoted to a text that does not belong to “canonical” Holocaust testimonies; such testimonies, being well-known and having had an important influence on representations of the Holocaust in the English-speaking world, have dominated research into the connections of translation and the Holocaust (Boase-Beier et al. 2017). *Dzieciństwo w pasiakach* is a relatively small collection of short narratives, some 200 pages in length, which present the fates of children in a concentration camp. It is based on the experiences of the author, who in 1944, along with his mother, was put in KL Auschwitz-Birkenau. The volume first appeared in 1969 with Nasza Księgarnia publishing, and was reissued several times (1972, 1977, and 1989). Since 2007 it has been published by Wydawnictwo Państwowego Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau (Publishing House of the State Museum of Auschwitz-Birkenau). The Museum’s publisher has brought out the translations into German (*Eine Kindheit hinterm Stacheldraht*, translated by Werner Hölscher-Valtchuk, 2008), English (*Childhood behind Barbed Wire*, translated by Tomasz Pobóg-Malinowski, 2009), Italian (*Infanzia dietro il filo spinato*, translated by Anna Lia Guglielmi Miszerak, 2010), Spanish (*Infancia en traje de rayas*, translated by Fernando Bravo García, 2010), and French (*Une enfance en pyjama rayé*, translated by Alexandre Dayet, 2016). In 2016, two further translations were commissioned: into Russian (*Детство в полосатых робах*, translated by Nadezhda Ivaniec) and into Portuguese, and particularly into Brazilian Portuguese. The latter translation was entrusted to me, and I invited Eda Nagayama to be my co-translator. Eda is a writer, author of, *inter alia*, the collections of stories entitled *Palavracidade* (2013) and *Traço comum* (2013), and of the novellas *Desgarrados*

(2015) and *Yaser* (2018); she is connected with the Faculty of Philosophy, Letters, and Human Sciences of the University of São Paulo. The project included working on a translation that was to be the result of negotiations between the original in Polish (a language unknown to my co-translator) and the target text, which was meant to inscribe itself in a Brazilian linguistic and cultural reality, tasks for which she is eminently qualified.

In the context of research into translation of Holocaust testimonies, special attention should be given to the specific features of the very process of translation understood in terms of an emotional answer on the part of the translator to a text full of descriptions of acts of violence perpetrated towards children and adults, starvation, torture, and suffering. These descriptions evoke profound reactions in the translator as insightful reader and the creator of the target text, in other words, the “author of the concrete words that come from the lips of the witness” (Heydel 2018: 270). Indeed, as Heydel stresses, “on one hand, the translator has (...) power over the witness, because he/she shapes the witness’s utterance; on the other hand, however, the testimony gains power over the translator and compels him/her to take part in the events, to take the position of a participant” (Heydel 2018: 271). As Séverine Hubscher-Davidson argues in the study *Translation and Emotion: A Psychological Perspective* (2017), although the majority of practitioners of translation and of translation scholars agrees that the affective engagement of an empathetic translator – and especially of a literary translator – is predominantly a condition of achieving a satisfactory quality in a translated text, very little attention has hitherto been given to emotion perception and expression in the process of translation.

Our work on *Dzieciństwo w pasiakach* confirmed the views of Hubscher-Davidson on the emotional dimension of translation work. The text mainly shows the suffering of children, often taken as a synecdoche of the defencelessness of the inmates in general, which fosters intercultural identification (cf. Anderson 2007) and may indeed evoke a powerful emotional reaction. This is attested to by the comments of “non-professional” readers of the original text, who compare the collection’s modest size with the intensity of the reading experience. One of its readers writes on the *Lubimy Czytać* (We Like to Read) portal: “I thought (...). Just over 100 pages (...). I’ll try (...) Despite their small number, I felt there was a minimum of 500”.<sup>4</sup> Another reader confesses:

---

<sup>4</sup> <http://lubimyczytac.pl/ksiazka/68333/dziecinstwo-w-pasiakach/opinia/2677556#opinia2677556> (access: 21.11.2018).



*Dzieciństwo w pasiakach* is very hard reading. Although I read a lot and can easily spend a few hours with a book without putting it down, it was different in this case. It is one of the greatest books I've read in my life, and one of those I took the longest to read. I digested it a few stories at a time, and even that not every day.<sup>5</sup>

The translation of this short text turned out to be psychologically oppressive, which made it impossible to work at the originally set rate and to complete the commission within the two months planned for it. In retrospect, one can see that our almost complete<sup>6</sup> concentration, often over many hours, on the translation was a strategic mistake, instead of more regular and briefer spells of work and giving oneself over to other activities that could have ensured some kind of mental balance. Hubscher-Davidson (2017) calls the latter “emotional space” that is necessary “to digest the work undertaken” and for self-reflection. Our experiences turned out to be similar to the case of Jeanne Holierhoek and Janneke van der Meulen, the translators of Jonathan Littell's novel *Les Bienveillantes* (2006) into Dutch, discussed by Hubscher-Davidson. As in their case, work in tandem, which made it possible to exchange experiences and to discuss the emotional repercussions of the process of translation, turned out to be factor that brought relief. This was connected with a second important circumstance, that is, meta-linguistic reflection. Regular discussion of the systemic differences between languages, of the variability of historical, social, and cultural *realia*, and of our search for the appropriate voice for changing narrators and focalizers, etc., made it possible to exchange

---

<sup>5</sup> <http://lubimyczytac.pl/ksiazka/68333/dziecinstwo-w-pasiakach/opinia/44975517#opinia44975517> (access: 21.11.2018). One can also cite extracts from several other views expressed there: “on almost every page of the book you can read words that stick in your memory”; “the book shocks because it's about experiments on people and about bestial behaviour”; “the whole time I was reading the book, I so wanted it to be over”; “it's not the first book about the camps that I've read (. . .). But no other, really no other book ever brought me to tears like this one. . . .”; “shocking reading”; “in its short, simple form it contains a great dose of emotion”; “one of the hardest books in my life. I don't want to go back to it, because reading it hurts too much”; “if someone asks what's the most extreme book I've read, without hesitation I point to *Dzieciństwo w pasiakach*” (<http://lubimyczytac.pl/ksiazka/68333/dziecinstwo-w-pasiakach>, access: 21.11.2018).

<sup>6</sup> The translation was mostly done during my stay in São Paulo as part of the SPEC-TRESS stipend devoted to cultural trauma, which made it possible to concentrate almost exclusively on the translation itself.

perspectives and somehow to go beyond the text, which brought with it better monitoring of its form.<sup>7</sup>

The process of distancing oneself from the original text through reflection of a formal nature can incline one to discuss the ethical aspect of work as translator of testimony. The possibility – and, indeed, the necessity – of at least partly cutting oneself off from the frequently shocking content of the text is, in some measure, in opposition to the imperative to open oneself to the original testimony, to carefully listen to it, and to transmit it faithfully. This problem is closely connected with the assumed requirement that the translator of the testimony endeavour to achieve the effect of transparency (Heydel 2018), together with the fact that his/her existence as an intermediary between the witness's authentic experience and the receiver in another language is, in Davies's opinion, "morally problematic" (2008: 25).

The fact that translation studies scholars "question not only this possibility [of transparency], but also its desirability" (Boase-Beier et al. 2017) is, in this respect, a valuable contribution to an understanding of the intercultural transfer of memory. The translator as a "secondary witness", a witness to the very process of giving testimony (Laub 1992), is a subjective and experiential entity entering into an interaction with the content of the past that is evoked, and one who actively participates in its mediation and transmission (Deane-Cox 2013: 311; Heydel 2018). In order to achieve the aim that, in this case, is intercultural and interlinguistic understanding, the translator is often compelled to step outside the role of engaged listener, and, taking account of the projected reader (Brzozowski 2009), has to take decisions that shape the final text. Thus, the credibility of testimony in translation does not mean the necessary erasing of the translator; quite the contrary, his/her active presence as an experiencing author of the translation is often the only way to achieve an effect of authenticity in a different cultural context (cf. Davies 2008). In the case discussed here, relating to a direct translation from Polish into Brazilian Portuguese, to attain this end, the translators were required to undertake a series of procedures vis-à-vis the text. In what follows, a selective and concise presentation of these measures is offered.

---

<sup>7</sup> These experiences are close to those of, for example, Désirée Schyns, the translator of Sarah Kofman's memoir *Rue Ordener, rue Labat* (1994) into Dutch; this was one of the issues discussed by her during her lecture at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków in November 2018.

## Work in language

An element that most clearly illustrates the strategy undertaken in work on the Brazilian translation of Bartnikowski's collection of stories, is the title itself, which in the original refers to the striped uniform as clothing unambiguously connoting the reality of the concentration camp. In principle, two differing strategies were adopted in translations: the authors of the first published versions (in English and German) and the Italian translator chose solutions that, as is distinct from the Polish title, refer to the image of barbed wire (*Eine Kindheit hinterm Stacheldraht*, *Childhood behind Barbed Wire*, *Infanzia dietro il filo spinato*), whereas the authors of the Spanish translation and subsequent ones (French, Russian, and Portuguese) decided to retain the reference to clothing in the original (*Infancia en traje de rayas*, *Une enfance en pyjama rayé*, *Детство в полосатых робах*, *Infância listrada*).

Key to this difference was perhaps the world-wide success of the Irish writer John Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (2006) and its film version by Mark Herman (2008). In the years that followed, these made the image of the concentration camp "stripes" widely known and, further, also associated it with the theme of children's suffering found in Bartnikowski's text. The German and English translations, published in 2008 and 2009, do not exploit this relatively recent reference. In 2010, when the Italian and Spanish translation appeared, the Spanish translator Fernando Bravo García chose *traje de rayas* (literally, "striped clothes"). This decision was fully justified in that Boyne's novel, the title of which was translated by Gemma Rovira Ortega as *El niño con el pijama de rayas*, was an absolute best-seller in Spain between 2007 and 2008 (Público 2008), while it did not achieve the same degree of popularity in Italy.

In our translation, we decided to depart from the direct reference to concentration-camp clothing, and to offer a metonymic solution. The formulation *infância listrada* (literally, "striped childhood") retains the reference to "striped pyjamas" from Boyne's novel – rendered into Brazilian Portuguese by Augusto Pacheco Calila as *pijama listrado* (literally, "striped pyjamas", with an attributed adjective) (Boyne 2007), as opposed to the European Portuguese *pijama às riscas* ("pyjamas in stripes", with the use of a preposition) in the translation by Cecília Faria and Olívia Santos (Boyne 2008) – but does not repeat it. This makes it possible for Bartnikowski's testimony to have a more independent existence, without a direct reference to Boyne's

novel. In the case of the French translation, for example, where the choice was *pyjama rayé* (striped pyjamas), the sameness of titles raises doubts of ethical nature, inasmuch as it may too forcefully inscribe the authentic testimony of a victim of the Holocaust, one who spent a part of his childhood in a concentration camp, within the fictional framework set out by Boyne's narrative, which, in the opinion of several critics, places itself on the border of "a fable, a story [which does not] have to be factually accurate" and of a "profanation" distorting the truth of the Shoah (Blech 2008).

In translating the title, we avoided literal translation, which would have demanded an explanation of the term *pasiak* as *uniforme listrado*, which in the case of Brazilian culture, permeated as it is by the presence of soccer, could lead to undesirable connotations with striped football jerseys (for example, the strip of the soccer club Santos Futebol Clube is black and white stripes). On the other hand, by virtue of its concision and the simple link of noun with adjective, the form *infância listrada* contains a reference to the titles of the most famous Brazilian regional novels of the 1930s and 1940s, which often depict children's suffering<sup>8</sup>, thus inscribing the content of the testimony within the receivers' cognitive framework. It is also worth noting that the adjective *listrado* refers to concentration-camp reality not through metaphor, which would linguistically would deflect the immediate presence of the nightmare of the Holocaust, but through metonymy, which evokes camp clothing via contiguity.<sup>9</sup>

The choice of an appropriate title for the Brazilian translation of Bar-nikowski's collection indicates the main practical difficulties that appear at the junction of the aim to achieve the effect of authenticity with the readership that exists within a target culture. Brazilian Portuguese lacks established, well-known equivalents of key terms used in describing the reality of the concentration camp, such as *esesman* (SS-man), *blokowy* (barrack chief), *kapo* (prisoner foreman), or – as it appears in the title of Tadeusz Borowski's

---

<sup>8</sup> For example, *Mar morto* (literally, a "dead sea", 1936) and *Seara vermelha* (literally, "red fields", which is a reference to the blood of exploited workers, 1946) by Jorge Amado; *Vidas secas* (literally, "dry lives", which refers to the victims of drought, 1938) by Graciliano Ramos; and *Pedra bonita* (literally, "beautiful stone", 1938), *Riacho doce* (literally, "sweet stream", 1939), and *Fogo morto* (literally, "dead fire", which means a sugar mill no longer in operation, 1943) by José Lins do Rego.

<sup>9</sup> This technique is one of the features characteristic of the poetics of Graciliano Ramos in *Vidas secas* (Borowski, 2016).

famous 1946 short story *Proszę państwa do gazu* (This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen) – (*iść do gazu* (to go to the gas).

The majority of translators renders the last phrase quite literally: English, *go to the gas*; German, *ins Gas gehen*; Italian, *andare al gas*; and Spanish (where the translator by adding the term “gas chamber” deprives the expression of some of its force), *ir a la cámara de gas*. The French version is the exception: *le gaz attend (quelqu'un)*, literally “*the gas is waiting (for someone)*”. In order to represent the concision and simplicity of the formulation, we also decided on the literal *ir pro gás*, although we used here the colloquial Portuguese abbreviation of the preposition expressing the aim of movement *para* and of the determiner *o*, in order to render the commonness of the expression and the simplicity that clashes with the macabre undertone.

As far as other terms and expressions are concerned, most translators render the word *esesman* (which appears with great frequency) by using an equivalent noun (English: *SS-man*; German: *SS-Mann*), or a related syntactic structure designating the member of an organization of member of a unit (French: *un SS*; Spanish *un SS*; Italian: *una SS*). In the Portuguese translation, in order to offer the perspective of a child, who is a narrator or focalizer who does not at first comprehend the organization of life in a concentration camp, we used the extended syntagm *homem da SS* (literally, “man of the SS”), which half-way through the translation is joined by the abbreviated form *um SS*, which is similar to the solutions in other Romance languages. In this way, we were able to represent the gradual and slow process of penetrating the reality of the camp.

On the other hand, in the Portuguese translation we domesticated only a small part of the terminology which appears in *Dzieciństwo w pasiakach*, referring mostly to the varied functions performed by inmates and soldiers. We adopted this solution in the case of the term (which sounds natural in Polish) *blokowy*, used to designate an inmate responsible for order in a hut, the distribution of food, and keeping the roll, which we rendered as *chefe de bloco*. In the case of terms that, despite similar form, clearly betray their foreign provenance – such as the word *sztubowy*, designating an inmate that had a supervisory function in one of the rooms (German, *Stube*) – we opted for a borrowing. This decision is part of a wider strategy that had to be adopted because of the many expressions coming from German, which formed an integral part of the camp sociolect, or “*lagerszpracha*” (Wesołowska 1996). Terms such as *szrajber* (camp writer, from the German *Schreiber*), *torwacha* (an inmate guarding the hut exit, from the German

*Torwache*), or *aufzejerka* (female supervisor, from the German *Aufseherin*), although they are Polonized, demonstrate the vital necessity within the camp *realia* of constantly existing not so much in different languages as between languages, in the face of crimes the extent and cruelty of which place them outside the sphere of linguistic expression. Indeed, as Danuta Wesołowska notes, “*lagerszprache*” (camp talk) is “a completely new linguistic convention, or rather a collection of linguistic conventions” (Wesołowska 1996: 63), serving to dehumanize the victims, conventions created on a German substrate although not reducible to it, insofar as the terminology imposed on the inmates often provoked resistance and abhorrence (Wesołowska 1996: 43).

The solution adopted by the translators into English, Italian, and French, relying on borrowing the above names in German form (including the above-mentioned terms *blokowy* and *sztubowy* as *Blockältester* and *Stubendienst*), constitutes an interference in this aspect of the testimony. Freely interwoven German terminology appears in the discourse of narrators and characters, which may give rise to a misconception about the linguistic reality of the camp. As it were, the translinguistic, amalgam-like nature of the Polonized terms – which arose through a partial domestication of German lexis in order to find a place for oneself in the structures of the machinery of annihilation and “to save oneself from ultimate defeat” (Wesołowska 1996: 43) – disappears in favour of a binary discourse, in which there is only the target language and the German terminology that stands in clear opposition to it. In the case of translations of works originally written in German, the retention of words describing the structure of managing a concentration camp can make it possible to preserve what Arnds calls their “inhumane edge” (2012: 170), expressive of the cruelty and dehumanization inscribed in them. However, it could be seen as an ethically dubious procedure to introduce them into a translation of *Dzieciństwo w pasiakach*. That also is why in our translation into Portuguese we adopted a strategy similar to the one that is apparent in the Spanish translation. By leaving terms such as *szrajber*, *torwacha*, and *aufzejerka* as in the original, we hoped to indicate the existence of a sociolect, which is not identical with using German terminology. There is no doubt that this vocabulary is an alien element for the Brazilian reader – who, what is more, can only imagine the pronunciation from the German equivalents provided in footnotes; nonetheless, it is worth noting that the reader of the original also has to make an effort to understand the camp terminology in the stories. The adoption of the Polonized terminology seemed morally appropriate inasmuch as it made it possible to avoid

the appropriation of the witness's discourse by the language belonging to the perpetrator.

The formal and ethical reflection accompanying our work, a selected example of which has been shown above, restored our consciousness of our role as mediators between languages and cultures, suspending the recurrent spectre of identification. In terms of our affective engagement in the process of translating testimony, the necessity of facing up to technical difficulties, such as the sound of the title or the presentation of elements of “*lagerszprache*”, was not so much an obstacle on the road to finishing our work as a helpful factor, a substantial emotional buffer, one that made it possible to achieve some distance from the text and to monitor meanings within it.

## The memory-(re)productive role of translation

The above remarks relating to several decisions that gave shape to the translation of a testimony come down to a phenomenon that one can call the memory-(re)productive role of translation. It is a reproductive role, since the translation of testimony demands a respect for the truths of the meanings present in the original and possibly (though never completely) a precise rendering of them in the target culture. Therefore, it is, I believe, from the perspective of translation studies today, a valuable reference to the universally questioned imperative of fidelity to the original. At the same time, it is a creative (productive) role because it forces the authors of the translation to undertake a series of procedures with the aim of inscribing a potentially universal topic within the specific fields of collective memory (Kershaw 2014). Thus, from the point of view of Holocaust studies it draws attention to the dynamic nature of intercultural transfer of memory and to the impossibility of seamless transmission, a transmission that brings to mind the utopian notion of ideal repetition in translation.

However, one must also clearly insist that a fuller grasp of the topic touched on in this article, and a better understanding of the substance of the process of the transfer of memory in translation, will only be possible through an even closer cooperation among representatives of translation studies and of memory studies. As Susan Bassnett stresses (2012: 23), since translation studies are “at a cross-roads”, they must “come out of the enclave that we have defined and controlled but which has had very little impact outside its borders”, and if they do, translation studies may prove valuable and helpful

in other fields of the humanities. Such a relation should, however – as Gentzler indicates (2003) – be based on reciprocity, understood as dialogue and exchange among disciplines.

“Testimonials always involve some forms of translation [and] have the potential to create communities of speakers along different, multiple, and intersecting axes of belonging, communities of rememberers yet-to-come,” writes Dorota Glowacka (2018: 257–58). Together with Eda Nagayama, I have attempted to extend this community of rememberers in the translation of *Dzieciństwo w pasiakach* into Brazilian Portuguese, while this outline is a summons to build a similar community of scholars from translation studies and memory studies – a community demanded by Saryusz-Wolska, “a community of discourse” that – it may be – is still to come.

Translated by David Malcolm

## Bibliography

- Adamowski J., Wójcicka M. (eds.). 2012. *Pamięć jako kategoria rzeczywistości kulturowej*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS.
- Agorni M. (ed.). 2014. *Memoria, lingua, traduzione*, Milano: Franco Angeli.
- Anderson M.H. 2007. “The Child Victim as Witness to the Holocaust: An American Story?”, *Jewish Social Studies* 14 (1), pp. 1–22.
- Arbex D. 2013. *Holocausto brasileiro*, São Paulo: Geração Editorial.
- Arnds P. 2012. “Translating Survival, Translation as Survival in Primo Levi’s *Se questo è un uomo*”, *Translation and Literature* 21, pp. 162–174.
- (ed.). 2015. *Translating Holocaust Literature*, Göttingen: V&R Unipress.
- Bilczewski T. 2013. “Trauma, translacja, transmisja w perspektywie postpamięci. Od literatury do epigenetyki”, in: T. Szostek, R. Sendyka, R. Nycz (ed.), *Od pamięci biodziedzicznej do postpamięci*, Warszawa: IBL PAN, pp. 40–62.
- Bines R.K. 2011. “Samba and Shoah: Ethnic, Religious and Social Diversity in Brazil”, *European Review of History — Revue Européenne d’Histoire* 18 (1), pp. 101–109.
- Bartnikowski B. 2016a. *Dzieciństwo w pasiakach*, Oświęcim: Państwowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau.
- 2016b. *Eine Kindheit hinterm Stacheldraht*, trans. W. Hölscher-Valtchuk, Oświęcim: Staatliches Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau.
- 2016c. *Childhood behind Barbed Wire*, trans. T. Pobóg-Malinowski, Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.
- 2016d. *Infanzia dietro il filo spinato*, trans. A.L. Guglielmi Miszerak, Oświęcim: Museo Statale di Auschwitz-Birkenau.



- 2016e. *Infancia en traje de rayas*, trans. F. Bravo García, Oświęcim: Museo Estatal de Auschwitz-Birkenau.
- 2016f. *Une enfance en pyjama rayé*, trans. A. Dayet, Oświęcim: Musée d'État d'Auschwitz-Birkenau.
- 2018a. *Dietstwo w polosatyach robach*, trans. N. Iwaniec, Oświęcim: Gosudarstvennyy Muzey Osventsim-Birkenau.
- 2018b. *Infância listrada*, trans. G. Borowski, E. Nagayama, Oświęcim: Museo Estatal de Auschwitz-Birkenau.
- Bassnett S. 2012. "Translation Studies at a Cross-roads", *Target* 41 (1), pp. 15–25.
- Blech B. 2008. "The Boy in the Striped Pajamas: This Well-meaning Book Ends up Distorting the Holocaust", Aish.com, 23 October, <http://www.aish.com/j/as/48965671.html> (access: 21.11.2018).
- Boase-Beier J. 2015. *Translating the Poetry of the Holocaust: Translation, Style and the Reader*, London: Bloomsbury.
- Boase-Beier J., Davies P., Hammel A., Winters M. (eds.). 2017. *Translating Holocaust Lives*, London: Bloomsbury.
- Borowski G. 2016. "Oszukać głód: O trudnościach w przekładzie estetyki niedostatku na przykładzie powieści *Zwiędłe życie* Graciliano Ramosa", in: E. Kujawska-Lis, I.A. Ndiaye (eds.), *Komunikacja międzykulturowa w świetle współczesnej translologii. Teoretyczne i praktyczne aspekty przekładu literackiego*, Olsztyn: Katedra Filologii Angielskiej UWM, pp. 27–40.
- Boyne J. 2006. *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, New York: David Fickling Books.
- 2007. *O menino do pijama listrado*, trans. A. Pacheco Calil, São Paulo: Seguinte.
- 2008. *O rapaz do pijama às riscas*, trans. C. Faria, O. Santos, Vila Nova de Gaia: Asa.
- Brownile S. 2016. *Mapping Memory in Translation*, Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Brzozowski J. 2009. "Czytelnik projektowany w przekładzie. Problem paratektstu", in: *Czytane w przekładzie*, Bielsko-Biała: Wydawnictwo ATH, pp. 51–60.
- Budrewicz Z., Sendyka R., Nycz R. (eds.). 2014. *Pamięć i afekty*. Warszawa: IBL PAN.
- Davies P. 2008. "The Obligatory Horrors: Translating Tadeusz Borowski's Holocaust Narratives into German and English", *Holocaust Studies* 14 (2), pp. 23–40.
- (ed.). 2014. *Translation and Literature* 23 (2) (special number "Holocaust Testimony and Translation").
- 2018. *Witness between Languages: The Translation of Holocaust Testimonies in Context*, Rochester, NY: Camden House.
- Deane-Cox S. 2013. "The Translator as Secondary Witness: Mediating Memory in Antelme's *L'espèce humaine*", *Translation Studies* 6 (3), pp. 309–323.
- DiAntonio R. 1991. "Redemption and Rebirth on a Safe Shore: The Holocaust in Contemporary Brazilian Fiction", *Hispania* 74 (4), pp. 876–880.
- Dizdar D. 2009. "Translational Transitions: 'Translation Proper' and Translation Studies in the Humanities", *Translation Studies* 2 (1), pp. 89–102.
- Drummond R. 1984. *Hitler manda lembranças*, Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira.
- Gentzler E. 2003. "Interdisciplinary Connections", *Perspectives* 11 (1), pp. 11–24.

- Głowacka D. 2018. "The Tower of Babel: Holocaust Testimonials and the Ethics of Translation", in: *Jewish Translation – Translating Jewishness*, M. Waligórska, T. Kohn (eds.), Berlin: De Gruyter, pp. 237–259.
- Hałas E. (ed.). 2012. *Kultura jako pamięć. Posttradycyjne znaczenie przeszłości*, Kraków: Nomos.
- Heydel M. 2009. "Zwrot kulturowy w badaniach nad przekładem", *Teksty Drugie* 6, pp. 21–33.
- 2018. "'Wszystkich przesłuchano, tylko nas nie'. Tłumacz ustny jako świadek", *Teksty Drugie* 3, pp. 267–280.
- Hubscher-Davidson S. 2017. *Translation and Emotion: A Psychological Perspective*, New York-Oxon: Routledge.
- Jakobson R. 2009. "O językoznawczych aspektach przekładu", trans. L. Pszczołowska, in: P. Bukowski, M. Heydel (eds.), *Współczesne teorie przekładu. Antologia*, Kraków: Znak, pp. 43–49.
- Kansteiner W. 2017. "Transnational Holocaust Memory, Digital Culture and the End of Reception Studies", in: T.S. Andersen, B. Törnquist-Plewa (eds.), *The Twentieth Century in European Memory: Transcultural Mediation and Reception*, Leiden-Boston: Brill, pp. 305–343.
- Kershaw A. 2014. "Complexity and Unpredictability in Cultural Flows: Two French Holocaust Novels in English Translation", *Translation Studies* 7 (1), pp. 34–39.
- 2018. "Memory Studies", in: L. D'hulst, Y. Gambier (eds.), *The History of Modern Translation Knowledge. Sources, Concepts, Effects*, Amsterdam-Philadelphia: John Benjamins, pp. 273–276.
- Kończal K. (ed.). 2014. *(Kont)Teksty pamięci*, Warszawa: Narodowe Centrum Kultury.
- Laub D. 1992. "An Event Without a Witness: Truth, Testimony and Survival", in: S. Felman, D. Laub (eds.), *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, New York-London: Routledge, pp. 75–92.
- Levin I. 1976. *The Boys from Brazil*, New York: Random House.
- Malena A. (ed.). 2016. *TransCultural* 8/1 (special number "Translation and Memory").
- Público 2008 = "El niño con el pijama de rayas sigue batiendo récords", Público, 23 October, <https://www.publico.es/culturas/nino-pijama-rayas-sigue-batiendo.html> (access: 21.11.2018).
- Saryusz-Wolska M. 2010. "Zapomnieć się w pamięci. Pytania o badanie pamięci kulturowej", *Kultura Współczesna* 1 (63), pp. 76–86.
- Saryusz-Wolska M., Traba R. (eds.). 2014. *Modi memorandi. Leksykon kultury pamięci*, Warszawa: Scholar.
- Seligmann-Silva M. 2007. "Literatura da Shoah no Brasil", *Arquivo Maaravi* 1 (1).
- Spiessens A. 2018. "Featured Member: Anneleen Spiessens", *Cultural Memory Studies Initiative*, 31 August, <http://www.cmsi.ugent.be/featured-member-anneleen-spiessens/> (access: 21.11.2018).
- Viradouro 2008 = "Unidos do Viradouro, carnaval de 2008", *Galeria do Samba*, <http://www.galeriadosamba.com.br/escolas-de-samba/unidos-do-viradouro/2008/> (access: 21.11.2018).
- Wesołowska D. 1996. *Słowa z piekiel rodem. Lagerszpracha*, Kraków: Impuls.
- Wichrowska E. et al. (ed.). 2015. *Historie afektywne i polityki pamięci*, Warszawa: IBL PAN.