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TRANSLATION CRITICISM IN CYBERSPACE – NEW OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES (ON POLISH TRANSLATIONS OF MIKHAIL BULGAKOV’S *THE MASTER AND MARGARITA*)¹

Abstract

The ongoing digitization of our literary heritage, together with growing competition between publishing houses has led to a situation where the retranlations of works considered canonical have changed their form of extending from diachronic, linear development in time to a synchronic “explosion” of parallel texts, whose task is to win over readers/consumers with their individual novelty, distinctiveness and “inventiveness.” In fact, such translations gain a new function – they become a marketing tool for publishing houses. In my opinion the newest retranlations of Mikhail Bulgakov’s *The Master and Margarita* is one of the most interesting examples of the process described above. In recent years, new Polish versions of this novel have been published at a dizzying pace (five new translations between 2015 and 2018) and in overwhelming numbers (five editions were published in four different translations in 2018 alone). These new translations of Bulgakov’s novel have evoked a lively response from readers. All sorts of analysis, comparisons and opinions have been published not only in scholarly journals, but also in daily newspapers, internet forums and in comments on online bookstores. On the internet, professional translation criticism coexists with the personal opinions of internet users (often based on non-literary factors) and with marketing content, advertisements, and blurbs deliberately made to look like reviews. In this article I would like to discuss

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the new roles of professional translation criticism under the circumstances described above, analyse its presence on the internet and try to define its new objectives. On the one hand, its voice should be loud and clear enough to be heard within the virtual chaos of texts, whilst on the other hand it should be persuasive and lucid enough to assist readers with their decision-making regarding a particular translation and to perceive the literary value of texts hidden behind attractive covers of new editions.

Keywords: translation criticism, *The Master and Margarita*, retranslations, online journals

“I wouldn’t recommend it. The translation is cut by 200 pages. I want to return this item”² – this is one of comments cited by Joanna Barańska in an article published on the Onet.pl portal on 21 August 2020.

In her text she describes a controversy which arose among the customers of one of the larger bookstores (Empik) as a result of the re-edition of the oldest, severely expurgated translation of Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov* by Barbara Beaupré. I am deliberately writing about customers here, not readers, as the comments quoted in the article are an interesting mix of an assessment of the text and the quality of the book as a product. Has translation criticism really taken on a new form and been transposed to the internet via ratings and customers’ comments posted in online bookstores such as Empik or Amazon?

In answering this question, it is important to bear in mind that the term “translation criticism” covers a spectrum of practices: in Edward Balcerzan’s article *Tajemnica istnienia (sporadycznego) krytyki przekładu* [The Secret of the (occasional) Existence of Translation Criticism], the emphasis is on “axiological activity”, which is not so much a special feature of translation criticism, but rather a distinctive phenomenon of translation studies in its broadest sense: “Translation studies (...) continues to be a field of assessment, evaluation, consultation” (Balcerzan 2011: 174). Ewa Kraskowska, on the other hand, highlights the research aspects of translation criticism: theoretical, analytical and interpretative (Kraskowska 2018: 54). Nevertheless, they both agree on the overarching aim of translation criticism, which is “to sensitise [the readers – KR] to the paradoxical phenomenon of translation” (Kraskowska 2018: 54), or – as Balcerzan puts it: “either way, a warning to

² All quotes from Polish sources are translated by Kinga Rozwadowska.

the reader: a sign of alterity that counters the naive trust in the translator's decisions, remains the essential aspiration of translation criticism" (Balcerzan 2011: 181). In this article, I intend to consider the above-mentioned aspects of translation criticism present in various forms of texts published online, from academic papers to marketing content. I will try to show, using selected examples, how the multiplicity of translation criticism on the internet can become a strength of the field and achieve the objective set above, which is to spread awareness of what distinguishes literary translations from other works published in the target culture.

Mary Wardle, the author of the article *Eeny, Meeny, Miny, Moe: The Reception of Retranslations and How Readers Choose*, recognises and describes the transformation of translation reviews from professional (published mainly in print) to commonplace (functioning online) and points out "the paradox whereby traditional paper-based publications, once considered the most permanent and stable point of reference, are rarely consulted in their original format and remain largely unread by the general public. Material posted on the internet, on the other hand, initially seen as more transient and ephemeral, has become the primary accessible source, open to all readers, whatever their interest or level of education" (Wardle 2019: 227–228). The progressive digitisation of literary heritage has meant not only that, in theory, any user can comment on any text online, but above all – and this is strongly emphasised by Wardle – it has changed the circulation of retranslations from diachronic to synchronic. Thanks to online bookstores, readers have increasing access to a wider selection of translations than ever before, affording them choices not previously available. In this article I shall present the contemporary circulation of Polish translations of Bulgakov's *Macmep u Mapzapuma*, point out the problems and challenges they pose to translation criticism and analyse texts on selected translations that approach these problems and challenges in various ways.

New retranslations of *The Master and Margarita* into Polish have been appearing in recent years at such a fast pace that the situation might be described as a "curse of abundance". In 2015, Julia Celer's translation was published by Greg, a publishing house specialising in scholarly editions. Two more translations appeared in 2016: one by Leokadia, Igor and Grzegorz Przebinda, published by Znak in the prestigious series: "50 na 50", but also in an edition outside this series, and the second by Krzysztof Tur (Fundacja Sąsiedzi). Jan Cichocki's translation was published in 2017, and Barbara Dohnalik's in 2018. To this impressive collection of new translations, which

are being re-published almost every year, we also need to add re-editions of older translations (the first one, by Irena Lewandowska and Witold Dąbrowski from 1969, and the latter by Andrzej Drawicz from 1995). As a result, in 2018 alone, five editions of Bulgakov's novel in four different translations were published, and in total fourteen different editions were published between 2015 and 2020.³ What triggered this spate of texts with the common title: *Mistrz i Malgorzata*? The novel has been very popular in Poland for years, but until recently this fame was solely due to the first translation by Lewandowska and Dąbrowski. So why have new translations appeared in such overwhelming abundance and variety in recent years? There are many theories on reasons for the retranslation of texts, but in this article I will focus on the sociological and economic perspectives. Researchers analysing translations from this angle have noticed the significant impact of publishing so-called canonical books on the financial results of publishing houses (who view classics, especially school texts, as a safe and secure investment), as well as on aspects that are financially non-measurable, yet important for other reasons, such as prestige (Wardle 2019: 218). As Johan Heilbron and Gisèle Sapiro have noted, publishing translations of canonical works offers a "means of accumulating symbolic power for a publisher lacking economic and cultural capital" (Heilbron, Sapiro 2007: 103). Therefore, it is hardly surprising that increasing competition within the publishing marketplace results in an increase in the number of re-editions of well-known, highly regarded books present for years in the source culture in older translations. As a result, as I write this article (28 June 2022), large online bookstores are simultaneously offering up to a dozen translations of the book in various editions (data according to: Empik, Bonito and Świat Książki). Readers have many editions to choose from – but how do they choose? What criteria influence their decisions?

Using as examples the circulation of Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* in Italian translations and Machiavelli's *The Prince* in English translations, Mary Wardle concludes that a combination of "'external' factors, such as availability, marketing strategies, price, prominence and distribution network of the publishing companies, star-ratings and levels of appreciation registered by fellow consumers" produce the biggest impact on readers' decisions (Wardle 2019: 235). If the above-mentioned factors determine readers' choices, it is because the text of the translation itself seems "transparent" to them; it

³ Data according to the National Library of Poland catalogue as of 4 February 2021.

is – or at least should be – a faithful reflection of the original. If it is not, the disappointed customer demands a refund. This is where translation critics can enter the debate, analysing how the differences between books suggested by search results are not limited to the cover design or price point. In this article I analyse the presence of translation criticism on the internet, revealing how its language is influenced by the above-mentioned changes in the circulation of translations, as well as by changes in the publishing market.

First, let us recall the “translation scandal” described at the very beginning of this article, caused by numerous omissions in *The Brothers Karamazov* translation. It seems that we are now dealing with another scandal in the case of one of the most recent translations of Bulgakov’s *The Master and Margarita*, but this time it is not about abridgements, but rather about a surfeit of text.

The translation in question was undertaken by Barbara Dohnalik, and her controversial – to put it mildly – translation strategies were exposed by Aleksander Wawrzyńczak in his article: *Bulhakow zmanipulowany, czyli o „fachowym i wybitnym” przekładzie „Mistrza i Małgorzaty”* (Bulgakov Manipulated – on the “Professional and Outstanding” Translation of *The Master and Margarita*). The quotation marks in which the epithets denoting the translation are enclosed, leave no doubt that his assessment will not be flattering, while the author himself questions his role as a translation critic: “I do not intend to carry out a detailed analysis of it [Dohnalik’s translation – KR], since due to its overall weakness, it does not deserve one” (Wawrzyńczak 2019: 112). A philological analysis can be said to be the foundation of, or at least a starting point for, translation criticism (Kraskowska 2018: 59), so it is slightly ironic that later in the text Wawrzyńczak fails to fulfil his declaration when he states that the translation is philologically correct, but that is not enough to call it a good translation. As proof, he cites a number of stylistic lapses and argues that the comparison with the original shows that the literal translation of meanings were more important to Dohnalik than the tonality or style of the text (Wawrzyńczak 2019: 112–113).

Another noteworthy detail indicated in the title concerns the polemics between the critic and the publisher. The epithets “professional” and “outstanding” come from the blurb – a strictly marketing text. It appears not only on the back cover and on the publisher’s website, but is also copied by online bookshops. As a result, it functions on the internet along the same lines as critical texts, but is certainly more visible. Therefore, it is very likely that the

average reader will confuse it with a review. I will return to the marketing strategies used by publishers towards translations later in this text.

In his article, Aleksander Wawrzyńczak raises a number of serious accusations against Dohnalik and her translation. He points out, among other things, that in her Afterword Dohnalik refers to unproven hypotheses, rumours and insinuations concerning the author of *The Master and Margarita* and his novel, and presents them as facts, without providing either sources or evidence, and that she offers unsubstantiated, interpretative clues – for example, the alleged *polonicas* in the novel (Wawrzyńczak 2019: 110–112). But above all, he notes that she adds fragments to the translation which are not present in the original, and which are probably intended to confirm the translator's interpretation as presented in the Afterword.⁴

However, it is worth emphasising that in the conclusion to his article, Wawrzyńczak points to other agents who contributed to the publication of this translation:

It is legitimate to ask about the moral responsibility of those who stand behind this edition, and this is by no means a question of the translator, who is a stranger to responsibility, reliability and decency. It is a question aimed at a publisher who has been active within the marketplace for more than ten years (since 2002) and who can boast a varied, attractive list, including editions of well-known and respected writers and philosophers (...). In this particular case – the edition of *The Master and Margarita* translated and with commentaries by Barbara Dohnalik – a professional approach and editorial integrity were simply missing. (Wawrzyńczak 2019: 119–120)

In my opinion, it was right that the critic raised ethical issues while at the same time, perhaps, relieving the incompetent translator and shifting the burden of responsibility onto publishers and editors. While in translation studies we speak more often and more openly about the emancipation of translators, about their coming out of the shadows and revealing themselves as authors, we should not forget those who are still as invisible as translators used to be until recently, i.e. those who are responsible for the non-artistic, but not

⁴ What I find the most interesting in Wawrzyńczak's meticulous enumeration of the passages added by Dohnalik, is that the content of some would work well as translator's footnotes (see the explanation of the word "turnikiet" – Wawrzyńczak 2019: 113–114), but she prefers to legitimise them with the authority of the original author, by placing them in the main text. Moreover, she also annotates the passages added by herself (cf. Wawrzyńczak 2019: 115).

unimportant aspects of editions of translations (Buzelin 2007). If internet users / readers / consumers perceive translations as a product, then I believe they should be shown the process of creating this product and all the agents involved in it. In this way, if they learn how many people are involved in the translation they are going to buy and the many variables present in the process of translation, they will come to an understanding that the process itself is neither imitative nor mechanical, but rather creative. Perhaps this will also result in fewer angry demands for a refund for a faulty translation...

More importantly, Wawrzyńczak points out that Barbara Dohnalik's activities as Bulgakov's populariser (which have been detrimental to the author, in his opinion) have been known to scholars at least since 1989, when she published a collection of Bulgakov's short stories in her translation entitled *Pan Piłsudski i inne opowiadania* (Mr Piłsudski and Other Stories). The problem is that "the author of *The Master and Margarita* did not in fact write six of the nine texts included in this collection!" (Wawrzyńczak 2019: 107). The publication caused a scandal among experts, who quickly unmasked Dohnalik's mystification. However, Wawrzyńczak notes that "critical opinions published in low-circulation scientific journals never reached a broader audience, and as a result Ms Dohnalik's literary frolics remained a secret to the general public" (Wawrzyńczak 2019: 108). It is worth considering these remarks in the context of Mary Wardle's observations quoted above, concerning reviewing practices going beyond a circle of professionals and being made popular by ordinary readers on the internet. In my opinion this is an oversimplification: to contrast the professional, i.e. printed, with the general, i.e. online. Wardle's article itself is available online, as is Wawrzyńczak's text, published in "Przegląd Rusycystyczny" both in print and online. This is, of course, an academic, specialist journal, but when one enters the words "mistrz i małgorzata dohnalik" into the search engine, Wawrzyńczak's review is the first result suggested (as of 1 July 2022), so a reader interested in this particular translation will have no problem finding information on it. I will provide the search results for other translations later in this article.

However, search engine optimisation is not the only factor determining the dissemination of knowledge on translation to non-professional readers. Wawrzyńczak's text also grabs readers' attention with its bravura style and radical assessments expressed in an emotional way, often in colloquial language, as for example: "insynuacjami sypie ona jak z rękawa" (she is throwing in one insinuation after another – Wawrzyńczak 2019:

111); „To dopiero początek radosnej twórczości tłumaczki, która w kolejnych rozdziałach wyraźnie się rozkręca” (This is just the beginning of the translator’s delightful creativity, which visibly picks up speed in subsequent chapters – Wawrzyńczak 2019: 114); „Zacznijmy od «perełki» zaserwowanej czytelnikowi na stronie 166” (Let’s start with a true gem served up to the reader on page 166 – Wawrzyńczak 2019: 117). Wawrzyńczak’s review is undoubtedly an interventionist piece, the voice of both an expert as well as an outraged reader. In the broader perspective, his aim is the same as that of Joanna Barańska, who wrote on Onet.pl about the re-edition of the oldest translation of *The Brothers Karamazov*, calling out reprehensible translation and publishing practices. These two texts reveal that we should not write about one while ignoring the other, that we should consider them as a whole, i.e. as a “product” offered to the reader. In my opinion, thanks to its straightforward style, irony and humour, Aleksander Wawrzyńczak’s article could easily be published on one of the nationwide portals, and thus reach a larger audience.

A second example of a text evincing some aspects of translation criticism and potentially reaching a relatively wide range of non-professional readers is the article entitled *Narzan, zubrik i pepegi* by Bożena Witowicz, published for the second time under the title *Co wyczytali tłumacze w najnowszych przekładach “Mistrza i Małgorzaty”* (What translators have read in the latest translations of *The Master and Margarita*) on the Polish Literary Translators Association website. The text was originally published in the weekly journal “Przeгляд” on 2 January 2018, both in print and online. In terms of style and objectives, I would place this article in opposition to Wawrzyńczak’s text. The timing of Witowicz’s review is of course significant: it appears after the first three 21st-century translations were published and before the publication of Barbara Dohnalik’s controversial text. The author of the review writes appreciatively about Jan Cichocki, Grzegorz Przebinda and Krzysztof Tur as experts in Bulgalov’s work.

While Aleksander Wawrzyńczak could be called a critic-exposer, Witowicz appears as a critic-populariser, as she pursues the goal of translation criticism I mentioned earlier, understood as “sensitizing the reader to the paradoxical phenomenon of translation” (Kraskowska 2018: 54). The text is written in a very clear, easy to read style and is undoubtedly addressed to the non-professional reader. The author draws attention to the opacity of the translation, for example: “Rarely do readers realise, however, that one of the secrets of the success of such books is the translation. (...) Yet the

translation has a considerable impact on the reception of the book: a bad one can ruin an outstanding work, a great one – can take a mediocre book to the top”. She stresses that the very act of translation requires a certain interpretation of the original and thus is never final: “Like any reading, a translation is first and foremost an interpretation. Every reader understands the text differently, and the more complex the text, the more readings it can have”. She explains that translation is a creative process: “The translator creates the text anew for the reader, creatively develops the meanings, language and rhythm of the work, while at the same time striving to stay close to the original, including the language of the author” (Witowicz 2018). Witowicz compares fragments of older translations (by Lewandowska and Dąbrowski, and by Drawicz) with three translations made in the 21st century, and shows the reader the choices translators had to face and the strategies they adopted. She explains the concepts of foreignisation and domestication using numerous examples. Importantly, Bożena Witowicz draws attention to the non-obviousness and instability of the original. After all, Bulgakov had been creating and revising *The Master and Margarita* over a number of years and never completed the work before his death. Let us take a closer look at this issue for a moment, because this instability of the original has somehow become part of the marketing strategies of the book’s various publishers. For example, the Greg publishing house announced: “A novel in a brand new, complete translation, consistent with the original and free of the cuts made on it by the Russian censors!”. The author of this quote cleverly combines the advantages of novelty with the illusion of full equivalence and a hint of sensation, hidden in the suggestion that the reader will be given something that was previously forbidden (meanwhile, as we know, certain sections removed by censors had already been restored in the first Polish translation of *The Master and Margarita* by Lewandowska and Dąbrowski in 1980). Additionally, it is interesting to note how differently publishers present the concept of the “comprehensiveness” of a novel to their readers, depending on the advertised translation. The quote cited above is about restoring content removed by censors for political reasons, but already in the text advertising Krzysztof Tur’s translation, a different understanding of the original as whole is being presented:

Translator Krzysztof Tur supplemented his translation with excerpts from early versions of the novel: they recall the author’s original intention, not yet constrained by censorship, and “contain values that have evaporated from the final

version”. None of his predecessors had attempted such a juxtaposition – it is an undoubted novelty in his book. (Wołodźko-Butkiewicz 2016)⁵

On the other hand, Jan Cichocki’s translation is based on the last, sixth version of the novel.

The complicated process of writing Bulgakov’s *The Master and Margarita* and its troubled subsequent fate after the author’s death open up various possibilities for defining the original, both by the translators themselves and by those who advertise the translations. It is in publishers’ interest to “stabilise” or “disambiguate” the original in order to legitimise the translation they are selling. This is why, in my opinion, one of the tasks of translation criticism should be to draw readers’ attention to the source of the translation, as for many of them it may seem concrete and settled. As a result they are vulnerable to the marketing strategy of ‘the one true’ version. Witowicz’s text fulfils this task: she briefly presents the intricate history of the original and makes her audience aware that its unfinished status is one of the reasons for the discrepancies between the various translations:

The process of writing resulted in versions so divergent that researchers now distinguish six of them. Depending on which version the translator chooses as the basis for translation – and there is complete freedom here – this is how different the translations can be.

The Polish ones are based on four of the six versions of the original. (Witowicz 2018)

I find the above comment all the more valuable because, although a great deal has been written about the writing process and transformations of *The Master and Margarita* during Bulgakov’s lifetime and after his death, these texts are generally less accessible to non-professional readers.⁶

⁵ It is also worth noting that this quotation comes from a review by Alicja Wołodźko-Butkiewicz printed on the cover of this edition. These words are copied by internet bookshops alternately with the second review on the cover, by Waldemar Smaszcz. Both texts are often presented on the internet - including the “Fundacja Sąsiedzi” website – as the publisher’s description.

⁶ The most important discoveries and theses of Russian researchers (e.g. Lidia Janowska, Anna Saakianc, Yelena Kołyszewa) concerning the textual basis of the novel have not been translated into Polish. Grzegorz Przebinda collected and summarised them in his article, outlining a fascinating history of textual research on the manuscripts of *The Master and Margarita* (Przebinda 2019).

The aforementioned quality of novelty, on the other hand, is of course a strategy well known to translation critics – creating the illusion that “if this is a new translation there was possibly something lacking in the previous version(s)” (Wardle 2019: 233).

Publishers using translation for marketing purposes use the word ‘new’ in all its possible contexts: “This is an excellent new translation of this extraordinary novel” (Fundacja Sąsiedzi); “Mikhail Bulgakov’s most famous novel (...) in a sensational new translation by Barbara Dohnalik” (Vis-a-vis Etiuda); “They offer a new key to the reading of this great book, bringing it closer to the contemporary reader” (Znak). Such novelty value is supposed to win over new readers and tempt *The Master and Margarita* fans, who will want to read a different version of their beloved book. Since Edward Balcerzan noted that even translation critics are sometimes prone to the “illusion that the last translator is the best translator” (Balcerzan 2011: 183), then what can we say about non-professional readers, lost in advertisements which often pretend to be reviews of translations!

As for Bożena Witowicz’s article, let us note that firstly, she does not evaluate the translators’ choices, and if she does so, it is only a subtle suggestion which relates to individual issues and not to the text as a whole. For example:

Footwear made of canvas on a rubber sole, in the novel worn by Ivan, was translated by Cichoński as black *pepegi*, which comes from the abbreviation PPG – Polski Przemysł Gumowy [Polish Rubber Industry]. Nowadays you rarely hear this word anymore and usually choose – as other translators have done – *tenisówki* (trainers). *Pepegi* seem all the less appropriate here because the action of the novel is set in the 1930s in Moscow, which has no connection to Poland or its industry. On the other hand, *pepegi* existed in Poland already in the interwar period, so it can be assumed that the translator used a term corresponding to the realities of the original. (Witowicz 2018)

Thus, Witowicz does not entirely fulfil the duty of translation criticism, which Balcerzan calls “axiological activity” (Balcerzan 2011: 174), as the main aim of her work is to popularise our knowledge concerning the multiple different versions of Bulgakov’s novel, to explain the reasons for the translations’ variety, and to encourage readers to familiarise themselves with all the translations and appreciate the efforts made by their authors to enrich Polish literature with new versions of this excellent Russian novel: “And by reading five translations, we have a chance not only to admire the effort (rather the

artistry) of several translators, to reflect on the choices we ourselves would have made in their place, but also to experience a great spiritual adventure” (Witowicz 2018). Hence, her text provides more questions and suppositions than answers or solutions. If we can speak of the interventionist nature of this article, it is only in the sense of sensitising the reader to the choice they make when buying a particular translation, rather than – as in the case of Wawrzyńczak – highlighting lapses or even impostures of the translator.

Since I mentioned earlier the effects of search engine optimisation – and in my opinion this is an important indication of the presence of translation criticism online – it is worth adding that thanks to the re-publication of Witowicz’s article on the Polish Literary Translators Association website, it appears as the first result when searching for information on translations of *The Master and Margarita* in general (after entering the words “mistrz i małgorzata tłumaczenia”), or specifically the translation by Jan Cichocki (as of 16 February 2021). It is therefore quite likely that, after becoming familiar with Witowicz’s text, non-professional readers will make an informed decision, and in the future will pay more attention to the available translations of a book they are interested in.

If an internet user is interested in Julia Celer’s translation of *The Master and Margarita*, they will find Monika Sadowska’s article online without much trouble. The title of this text is: *Elementy trzeciej kultury w przekładach polskich wersji “Mistrza i Małgorzaty” Michaiła Bułhakowa* (Elements of the Third Culture in the Polish Translations of Mikhail Bulgakov’s *The Master and Margarita*), published in the journal “Acta Polono-Ruthenica”, in print and online. The information and arguments it contains are more difficult for general readers to assimilate, since the article is strictly scientific and focuses on a very narrow aspect of the comparison of recent translations – that is, proper names and forms specific to the biblical themes of the novel. It is undoubtedly aimed at a narrow audience – professionals studying this field. However, the tables listing these names, which clearly illustrate the differences between domestication and foreignisation, as well as the valuable comments at the beginning and at the end of the article relating to the intended audience of the translation, may be of interest to the general reader. In her article, Sadowska shows that translation strategies are highly dependent on the target readers:

The author often uses omissions and adaptations in translating this type of lexical units. It is possible that this strategy – aimed at making the work easier to

read – was dictated by the fact that the book is addressed to secondary school students. As a result, the focus on cognitive value was not the translator's main concern – it was to make the novel easy to read. (Sadowska 2018: 153)

This conclusion brings readers closer to one of the factors influencing the differences between translations and indirectly explains the reasons for the extraordinary and rapid expansion of the retranslations of *The Master and Margarita*, which have given readers such difficult choices.

The situation is different when we search the internet for information on Krzysztof Tur's translation – in this case it is mostly located in online bookstores and book portals (e.g. Lubimyczytać.pl), and these mostly repeat excerpts from reviews placed on the cover of the edition, which fulfil the marketing functions I mentioned above.

The visibility of the translation by the Przebinda family (a married couple of philologists – Grzegorz and Leokadia and their son Igor) online is yet another – and probably the most complex – phenomenon. Here, we are mainly dealing with statements by the translators themselves. On Grzegorz Przebinda's webpage we can find an entire archive of interviews conducted for the radio, press and television. These materials provide valuable information both on the translation as well as on the original – Grzegorz Przebinda, a professor at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, is a recognised Bulgakov-expert, the editor and author of the footnotes to the translation by Lewandowska and Dąbrowski published in the Biblioteka Narodowa series, and author of such publications as *“Sto dwadzieścia jedna Małgorzata”*. *O tekście pierwszego polskiego przekładu “Mistrza i Małgorzaty”* (One Hundred and Twenty First Margarita. On the Text of the First Polish Translation of *The Master and Margarita*) or *Mogarycz i inni. Dramatyczne losy kanonu tekstowego “Mistrza i Małgorzaty”* (Mogarych and Others. The Dramatic Fate of the Textual Canon of *The Master and Margarita*). However, we should not forget that the texts collected on his website have also a self-promotional function. This is a noteworthy phenomenon, when paratexts to translations are no longer the only texts where translators can “explain themselves” (“wy-tłumaczyć się” – Balcerzan 2011: 177), but where they can now reach a much wider audience via the media. The issue is so complex and interesting that it deserves a separate study. In this article, which deals with the presence of translation criticism on the internet, I will limit myself to noting Maria Mocarz-Kleindienst's article titled: *Dlaczego powstają nowe przekłady? “Mistrz i Małgorzata” Michaiła Bułhakowa w nowym*

tłumaczeniu na język polski (Why Do New Translations Appear? *The Master and Margarita* by Mikhail Bulgakov in a New Translation into Polish) which is entirely devoted to the Przebindas' translation and, to a large extent, to the phenomena described above, but the article itself is difficult to locate within the thicket of promotional and self-promotional texts on this translation. The author of the review praises the Przebindas' translation. She approvingly presents examples of retrofitting the language of Lewandowska and Dąbrowski's translation (Mocarz-Kleindienst 2018: 272), endorsing Paul Bensimon's thesis "that each generation should have its own translation" (Mocarz-Kleindienst 2018: 269). Unfortunately, however, she does not compare the Przebinda family's version with other contemporary translations (although she notes the publication of translations by Cichocki and Tur). Mocarz-Kleindienst writes appreciatively about the extensive, erudite and multifunctional footnotes that distinguish the Przebindas' translation from other versions:

Thus, trying to answer the question contained in the title: why are we translating?, one can state that the Przebinda family, fascinated by Bulgakov's masterpiece, decided to offer a new version: preserving the specific culture of the original, facilitating its reception thanks to unconventional commentaries that can be read as a separate work. (Mocarz-Kleindienst 2018: 278)

The last words of the passage quoted above are surprisingly convergent with the blurb for an edition of the Przebindas' translation, which states: "This is probably the first time where the footnotes are as fascinating to read as the text of the novel itself" (publisher's description, 2021). Internet readers will unfortunately find this blurb faster and easier than the article by Mocarz-Kleindienst, published online in the academic journal "Przekłady Literatur Słowiańskich".

When I type the phrase "mistrz i małgorzata tłumaczenia" into a search engine (17 February 2021), a few other suggestions appear before Mocarz-Kleindienst's article – among which is a link to Turbotlumaczenia.pl, a translation agency which also hosts a blog devoted to various translation issues. There is an entry entitled *Które tłumaczenie "Mistrza i Małgorzaty" warto wybrać?* (Which Translation of *The Master and Margarita* is Worth Choosing?), published at the end of 2020 by a user signing himself as TurboMariusz. I am not going to discuss this text in detail, as it is largely a summary of Bożena Witowicz's article. However, what might attract the attention of readers is its very clear and concise discussion of the history of

subsequent translations, as well as information about the specific versions of the original on which they are based. What is missing, however, is an element of philological analysis – a comparison of texts, however brief. Thus, this entry can hardly be called a review, especially since it does not even attempt to answer the title question but concludes abruptly: “It is best to find out for yourself, because each of them is unique, being a specific interpretation of Bulgakov’s work” (TurboMariusz 2020).

I agree with Ewa Kraskowska, who has written that “the more translation criticism is to be found in the most diverse forms and media, the higher the translation awareness within the circles of cultural participants and users” (Kraskowska 2018: 55). The problem, however, is that what was once commonly said about paper can now be said about the internet: it will absorb anything. Looking for information on translations of a selected work, we come across reviews, marketing content pretending to be critical texts, and finally academic texts containing some elements of translation criticism, available thanks to recent open access strategies – valuable, but often written in a way that is not accessible to the general reader. It is not surprising that in this situation, consumer/readers, lost in the maze of texts, relying on the most easily accessible and visible ‘stars’ and comments made by other consumers, perceive the lack of a reliable but accessible form of translation criticism, and express their dissatisfaction, for example, in demands for a refund of the money for the “goods” purchased.

The development of translation criticism, which is, as Edward Balcerzan, quoted at the beginning of this article, notes, an “axiological activity”, should be a natural consequence of the changes taking place within the publishing marketplace: reviews written by experts should be visible and easily accessible to the average internet user. On the one hand their voice must be loud and clear, so as to break through the chaos of internet comments; on the other hand it must be articulate and transparent enough to help readers understand the diversity of works sold under the same title and make them aware of the literary qualities of the texts hiding behind the attractive covers of new editions. It seems that online professional reviews have the best chance and opportunity to achieve Edward Balcerzan’s goal of translation criticism, which is to “maintain in the reader’s mind” the fact that “alterity from the original is a constitutive feature of translation ‘as such’” (Balcerzan 2011: 181).

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