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# THE QUEST FOR THE GOLDEN FLEECE: ON TRANSLATING APOLLONIUS RHODIUS' *ARGONAUTICA*

**Abstract**: Before recently, there was no full Polish translation of Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*. However, five Polish classical scholars, W. Klinger, Z. Abramowiczówna, J. Łanowski, W. Steffen and W. Appel, have translated excerpts of this Hellenistic epic into Polish. A comparative analysis of these excerpts with the relevant passages from the first complete Polish version of the *Argonautica* by E. Żybert-Pruchnicka makes it possible to trace the individual strategies of the translators. The most important decision which every translator of epic poetry has to take at the beginning of his or her work is to choose the form in which the poem will be rendered. In Polish there are three main traditions of translating epics: in thirteen-syllable meter, in prose, and in hexameter. The last type of versification was chosen by five out of six of the translators mentioned above; only Świderkówna decided to render the Apollonian poem in thirteen-syllable verse. There are also stylistic and language differences that occur in the passages, due to the individual preferences of the translators, as well as the writing style characteristic for the times in which they lived. Klinger, for instance, prefers modernist stylistics, while Steffen chooses to archaise the language of the poem. However, the aim of this article is not to evaluate the translations but to open a discussion on how poems written over two thousand years ago might be rendered in an adequate and contemporary fashion.

**Keywords:** Apollonius Rhodius, epic poetry in translation, Polish translations of the *Argonautica*, translating dactylic hexameter

Every translator commencing their work on an ancient epic poem has a difficult decision to make at the outset, concerning not only the choice of their translation strategy, but also the very form that the translation is going to take. The choice has to be made between prose and poetry, and when one chooses verse translation, it has to be established whether the poem is to be rhymed or in blank verse, syllabic or syllabotonic, isometric or experimen-

tal, or whether it will combine several different traditions. The classical epic owns this *embarras de richesse* to its exceptional cultural significance, its own long history and, finally, to its ambivalent origins. In the Polish tongue the classical epic has been rendered both in prose and poetry, and when its form is versified, it is usually in thirteen-syllable verse – hexameter that may or may not be rhymed, depending on the historical period and the individual preferences of the translators.[1]

When I started my work on the Polish version of Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*, I was aware of the multiplicity of views as to the form the epic should take in contemporary Polish as representing a specific literary genre. I decided to translate the poem with the use of the "Polish hexameter," which relies on metrical words and obviously provides only an approximation of the ancient hexameter, as a result of a vowel length that the Polish language cannot accommodate.[2] I made this decision based on the principle that we should translate using the verse that we can successfully employ (cf. Wikarjak 1977: 130).

A similar choice was made by the majority of the translators who undertook the task of rendering Apollonius Rhodius' poem into Polish. An analysis of their work and its comparison with chosen passages from my own translation may be taken as an introduction to a renewed discussion on the most adequate form for the ancient epic in Polish.

Before now, only partial translations of the *Argonautica* have been published. These were penned by five classicist philologists: Witold Klinger (1938, 1939), Zofia Abramowiczówna (written at the turn of the 1960s–1970s, published in 2000), Wiktor Steffen (1980), Jerzy Łanowski (1991) and Włodzimierz Appel (2002). As they chose to translate various pas-

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[1]    We may take as relevant examples the translations of ancient texts in wide circulation: the *Iliad* translated by F. K. Dmochowski in 1800 (rendered in rhymed thirteen-syllable verse), by K. Jeżewska in 1972 (in unrhymed hexameter), as well as J. Parandowski's prose version of the *Odyssey* from 1953, and Hesiod's *Theogony*, *Works and Days* and *Shield of Heracles* translated (in unrhymed hexameter) by J. Łanowski in 1999, but also the multitude of forgotten and unread versions by less fortunate translators. It will suffice to mention that there are seven complete Polish versions of the *Aeneid*, eight of the *Iliad*, seven of the *Odyssey*, as well as numerous fragmentary translations.

[2]    Even though the discussion on the possibility (or lack thereof) of introducing the metre into Polish has been underway since the nineteenth century, new hexameter translations of Greek and Latin epics are created on its periphery, as it were. The discussion itself is detailed in M. Dłuska's analysis in *Studia z historii i teorii wersyfikacji polskiej* (Studies in History and Theory of Polish Versification, 1978: 123–142) and in her *Prace wybrane* (Selected Works, 2001: 477–494).

sages, the following is a comparison of the verses that repeat in these incomplete versions of the epic.

The first to publish his translation of excerpts from Apollonius' work (altogether 476 lines) was Witold Klinger, a professor of philology affiliated with the university in Poznań and an outstanding authority in ancient folklore. As his translation is the most comprehensive, it will serve as a starting point for my comparison of the Polish renderings of the poem.

Let us start the analysis with the opening lines of the epic. They were translated by Witold Klinger, and almost sixty years later by Włodzimierz Appel, professor at the Nicolas Copernicus University in Toruń.

Ἀρχόμενος σέο Φοῖβε παλαιγενέων κλέα φωτῶν
μνήσομαι οἳ Πόντοιο κατὰ στόμα καὶ διὰ πέτρας
Κυανέας βασιλῆος ἐφημοσύνῃ Πελίαο
χρύσειον μετὰ κῶας ἐύζυγον ἤλασαν Ἀργώ.
<div align="center">(I, 1–4)</div>

Phoibie! Od ciebie zacząwszy, opiewać dziś będę witezi
Sławę dawniejszych, co raz z Peliasa rozkazu władyki
Miedzy skałami czarnymi przez Pontu gardlisko przewiedli
Okręt misterny Argó, gdy po runo on mknął szczerozłote.
<div align="right">trans. W. Klinger.</div>

Febie, od ciebie zacząwszy, przesławne czyny pradawnych
Mężów przypomnę, którzy przez Pontos i między skałami
Kyanejskimi z króla Peliasa rozkazu po złote
Runo pożeglowali na Argo pięknie spojonej.
<div align="right">trans. W. Appel</div>

Rozpoczynając od ciebie, Fojbosie, sławę przypomnę
mężów dawno zrodzonych, którzy przez gardziel Pontosu
i Granatowe Skały, z rozkazu króla Peliasa
po złote runo pomknęli na Argo mocno spojonej.
<div align="right">trans. E. Żybert-Pruchnicka</div>

Beginning with thee, O Phoebus, I will recount the famous deeds of men of old, who, at the behest of King Pelias, down through the mouth of Pontus and between the Cyanean rocks, sped well-benched Argo in quest of the golden fleece (Apollonius 1990: 21).

Klinger followed in the footsteps of the translators of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (Paweł Popiel, Augustyn Szmurło, Stanisław Mleczko and Józef

Wittlin) and used Polish unrhymed hexameter in his version. Characteristic for the practical implementation of this metrical pattern is its meandering style, stemming from the predominance of dactyls over trochees, which replace spondees in the Polish rendering.

On a lexical level Klinger is an heir of modernist Young Poland poetics: in his translation people (Gr. *φώς*) are archaically called *witezie*, i.e. arch. "knights," and the king (*βασιλεύς*) becomes *władyka* (arch. "king"). The choice of such stylistics should come as no surprise, considering the fact that Klinger was born in 1875, and therefore his *akmé* fell on the climax of the Polish modernist phase.[3] The translator replaces *Μνήσομαι* (*przypomnę*; I will recount) with the verbal phrase *opiewać będę* (I will sing the praises), as he probably decided it would be more suitable in the light of the whole epic tradition.[4] Klinger does not render *στόμα* (*usta*, mouth; *paszcza*, jaws) with a neutral equivalent, such as "strait" or "narrows," but tries to keep the original meaning, which adds to the terror of a dangerous passage; therefore he translates the word in a manner faithful to the Young Poland stylistics, as *gardlisko* (maw). It is well worth noting a number of other differences between the original and Klinger's version. A sophisticated proper name, Symplegad – *πέτραι Κυάνεαι* – is rendered as *czarne skały* (black rocks); the use of the lowercase letters suggests here that it is not a proper name at all, while the black colour does not reflect the original *κυάνεος* (dark blue, navy blue) hue. The word *ἐύζυγον*, which is troublesome in translation, Klinger renders as *misterny* (intricate), even though the Greek compound adjective means literally "well-joined" and emphasises the strength of the ship rather than the artistic quality of its workmanship. Another word that is hard to render in Polish is the verb *λαύνω*, with several meanings that match the context: "hurry, set sail, tow," but also "to be in distress, in difficulty." Klinger splits the word into two verbs: *mknął* (hurried) and *prze-wiedli* (towed), trying to salvage two of the four meanings of the original.

Interestingly, and contrary to the tendency to Latinise Greek proper names that was customary at the time, Klinger retains the original Apollonian *agnomen* (*Φοῖβος*), though he shortens it for metrical reasons and uses the Latin alphabet to render the Greek letter φ. Equally innovative

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[3] It may well be that the language and style of the translator were influenced, on the one hand, by Józef Wittlin's translation of Homer's *Odyssey* (1924, 1931 and 1957), whose first two editions were strongly marked by Young Poland stylistics, and on the other by the Polish version of the eight books of the *Iliad* (1896) by a Young Poland poet, Lucjan Rydel.

[4] In the first line of the *Iliad* we find the verb ἄειδε (*opiewaj*, sing).

is the graphic marking of the original accent within the name of the ship (*,Αργώ*), which must have been strongly rooted in the aural memory of the translator.

Let us have a look at Włodzimierz Appel's translation. Appel was a student of an eminent Polish classicist, Zofia Abramowiczówna, and among other things, the author of the Polish version of the *Homeric Hymns,* which he wrote in Polish hexameter. In his translation work he would use regular hexameter with no degree of license, no rhyme and only slight archaisation of language, which will be more visible in further excerpts of Apollonius' poem that he translated. In his translation caesuras are mostly feminine and dactyls occur more frequently than trochees.

Like Klinger, Appel changes the original line order, starting the first line with the name of the god; the main difference is that he remains faithful to the tradition of Latinising the Greek names. Moreover, he translates *κλέα* in accordance with the definition of *pluralis* in *κλέος* (fame, rumour, glory) as *czyny* (deeds). He renders the verb *μνήσομαι* literally as *przypomnę* (I will remember), but leaves the original name of the rocks unchanged, forfeiting an attempt to add a bit of colour to the dry text. Nor does he translate *στόμα*, which strips the text of the image of a narrow sea passage and the accompanying danger that the word "maw" connotes. The Greek *ἐλαύνω* is rendered as *pożeglowali* (they set sail), with the translator's choice confined to a single meaning, whereas *ἐύζυγον* as *pięknie spojona* (beautifully-joined) decides the grammatical gender of the ship as feminine from the very beginning, even though in Polish it sounds like a neutral form, and at the same time underlines the beauty of the vessel, not the sturdiness of its design.

In my own translation I retained the original position of the participle *ἀρχόμενος*, taking advantage of the equal number of syllables and the same position of accents in the Greek word and in my version. Additionally, both here and in the rest of the text I make consistent use of the Greek versions of names instead of their Latinised counterparts. Nor do I employ the abbreviated forms, which added difficulty to the task of fitting into the frame of the hexameter proper names that are more than three syllables long.

In an attempt to remain faithful to the original, at least in the invocation that provides something like a table of contents for the first two books of the epic, I translated the verb *μνήσομαι* literally, just as Appel did. Unlike Appel, however, I decided to render the *pluralis κλέα* as the Polish *sława* (fame) going back to the etymological meaning of the word, in the hope that it would not only connote glory, but also its causes. The adjective

*παλαιγενής* (born a long time ago) I translated verbatim, trying to render the contents of the invocation as precisely as possible. Taking into consideration countless names of people and places in Apollonius' work, I chose to translate their meaning into Polish wherever it might enrich and diversify the imagery, and, in other cases, to comment on them in the notes. For this reason, but also to keep from discouraging the reader with the use of commentary from the very opening of the translation, I rendered *πέτραι Κυάνεαι* as *Granatowe Skały* (Navy-Blue Rocks, as the adjective *κυάνεος* means more or less precisely "navy blue"). By choosing this lesser known name of Symplegad, Apollonius was not only trying to demonstrate his learning and originality (which is symptomatic of Hellenistic writers), but also to emphasise the ominous hue of the crushing rocks, thus evoking the dread they would arouse. As such, I chose a solution similar to Klinger's translation, rendering the Greek *στόμα* as *gardziel* (maw); the term does not fully mirror the original, but it evokes the image of a narrow passage and danger. When I translated the Greek *εββζυγον* into the Polish *mocno spojona* (strongly-joined), I was, like Appel, striving to mark the grammatical "gender" of the vessel which, for the Greeks, is feminine.[5] The adverb *εâ* (well) is rendered as "strongly" in my version, because it underlines the sturdiness of the whole construction, on which the lives of the questers frequently depended.

Another passage from the *Argonautica* that can be found in Klinger's work was written by Zofia Abramowiczówna, professor at Nicolas Copernicus University in Toruń, and an eminent Greek epic scholar (n.b. her advice was sought by translators of the *Iliad*: Kazimiera Jeżewska, pub. 1972, and Ignacy Wieniewski, English trans. 1961, Polish edition pub. 1984). Abramowiczówna translated passages from the *Argonautica* for an anthology of Hellenistic poetry she planned, but was never released. Through Appel's efforts, Abramowiczówna's work was published only in 2000, in *Meander* magazine. Her work, like the versions by Klinger and Appel, is written in Polish unrhymed hexameter. Abramowiczówna is quick to employ masculine caesura, albeit not so often as Klinger, which smooths out her hexameter, also because dactyls occur on a more regular basis than

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[5]  This fact is significant not only for the understanding of the attitude of the Argonauts (and Greeks as such, as a mariner nation) towards the ship, which, at sea, embodies such feminine attributes as protection and safety, but also allows for a proper contextualization of Apollonius' comparison, the most important of which is the Argo as a mother carrying the Argonauts in her womb (IV, 1372–1374, Apollonius 1990: 168).

trochees. Additionally, she never uses trochees (spondees in ancient hexameter) in the penultimate foot.

The lines quoted below contain an evocative description of night falling, until the moment all noises are gone, even the barking of the dogs: this silence and all-embracing sleep to which even a mourning mother succumbs are then contrasted with the sleeplessness and anxiety of Medea, who worries about Jason:

> Νὺξ μὲν ἔπειτ᾽ ἐπὶ γαῖαν ἄγεν κνέφας, οἱ δ᾽ ἐνὶ πόντῳ
> ναυτίλοι εἰς Ἑλίκην τε καὶ ἀστέρας Ὠρίωνος
> ἔδρακον ἐκ νηῶν, ὕπνοιο δὲ καί τις ὁδίτης
> ἤδη καὶ πυλαωρὸς ἐέλδετο, καί τινα παίδων
> μητέρα τεθνεώτων ἀδινὸν περὶ κῶμ᾽ ἐκάλυπτεν,
> οὐδὲ κυνῶν ὑλακὴ ἔτ᾽ ἀνὰ πτόλιν, οὐ θρόος ἦεν
> ἠχήεις, σιγὴ δὲ μελαινομένην ἔχεν ὄρφνην·
>
> <div align="right">(III 744–750)</div>

> Wiodła na ziemię już noc swe ciemności. Żeglarze na morzu
> To na gwiazdozbiór Heliki, to znów na Oriona świetnego
> Z naw spoglądali już swych. Już wędrowcom się spać zachciewało
> Oraz strażnikom u wrót. Nawet matkę, co dziecię straciła,
> Mocny ogarnął już sen, otuliwszy zasłoną swą wkoło.
> Nigdzie szczekania już psów, ani rozmów człowieczych odgłosu
> W mieście nie słychać, i w mroku, co zgęszcza się wciąż, trwa milczenie.
>
> <div align="right">Trans. W. Klinger</div>

> Noc już na ziemię mrok sprowadziła; na morzu żeglarze
> Tęsknie ku Wielkiej wzrok Niedźwiedzicy i gwiazdom Oriona
> Słali wzrok ze swych statków; i snu zapragnął wędrowiec;
> Do snu strażnicy wrót zatęsknili; a nawet i matkę
> Dzieci umarłych, we łzach, zamroczyło głębokie uśpienie.
> Ani też pies nie zaszczekał gdziekolwiek w mieście, i żaden
> Dźwięk nie rozbrzmiewał; a czarną noc ogarnęło milczenie.
>
> <div align="right">Trans. Z. Abramowiczówna</div>

> Noc wtedy już sprowadzała na ziemię ciemności. Na morzu
> w stronę Heliki oraz ku gwiazdom Oriona żeglarze
> spoglądali z okrętu; snu pragnął każdy wędrowiec
> i czuwający u bramy stróż, nawet matka w żałobie,
> której umarły dzieci, we śnie pogrążyła się twardym.
> Ani szczekanie psów, ni inny odgłos wśród miasta
> echem nie rozbrzmiał; cisza zaległa w nocnych ciemnościach.
>
> <div align="right">Trans. E. Żybert-Pruchnicka</div>

Then did night draw darkness over the earth; and on the sea sailors from their ships looked towards the Bear and the stars of Orion; and now the wayfarer and the warder longed for sleep, and the pall of slumber wrapped round the mother whose children were dead; nor was there any more the barking of dogs through the city, nor sound of men's voices; but silence held the blackening gloom (Apollonius 1990: 114).

In the first line Abramowiczówna used the perfective aspect of the verb to render, ῦγεν, but it seems that the original usage of *imperfectum* provides a more accurate image of the gradual fall of darkness, ending with the description of the time in the dead of night. The second line presents difficulties that are connected with the translation of the Greek equivalent of the Ursa Major (Ἑλίκη). Like Klinger, I chose to retain the original version of the term, as the Greek name comes from the verb ἑλίσσειν, i.e. to turn: the original evokes the image of a star which revolves around the pole, but is not the Great Bear. The triple repetition of *już* (already) in Klinger's translation and a rather clumsy division of the name of the North Star by the word *wzrok* (sight) in Abramowiczówna's version result from the necessity to even out the rhythm in the hexameter. Additionally, Abramowiczówna adds the adverb *tęsknie* (longingly) in her translation, which is absent from the original, and divides the meanings of the verb ἐέλδετο (*zatęsknili*, they were longing for and *zapragnął*, he became desirous for), which made the passage more suggestive. It may well be that Klinger omits *gwiazdy* (stars) for a similar reason, and adds *świetny* (excellent) as the attribute of Orion, though the change itself is not fully justified.

Another troublesome word is κῶμα, which in Homer's poetry means deep, god-sent sleep. Such equivalents as *śpiączka* (lethargy) or even *koma* (coma) are unsuitable, and the four-syllable *odrętwienie* (torpidity) breaks the line. Both Klinger and I accepted the fact that there is no perfect equivalent of this word in Polish, whereas Abramowiczówna chose to differentiate between the two terms, and translated the Greek κῶμα as *uśpienie* (slumber).

The onomatopoeic word ἠχήεις, consisting of three long vowels, was rendered in my translation with the Polish *echo* (which, incidentally, is also derived from the Greek ἠχώ), as I wanted to come at least a bit closer to the sound of the original.

Let us have a look at another brief passage from the *Argonautica*, this time in the versions by Klinger and Jerzy Łanowski, professor of classical philology at the Wroclaw University, an eminent Greek literature scholar

and the translator of Euripides' tragedies, Menander's comedies and Hesiod's epic poetry. This excerpt is a captivating description of Aphrodite's morning toilette just before an unexpected visit from the goddesses Hera and Athena.

> λευκοῖσιν δ᾽ ἑκάτερθε κόμας ἐπιειμένη ὤμοις
> κόσμει χρυσείῃ διὰ κερκίδι, μέλλε δὲ μακροὺς
> πλέξασθαι πλοκάμους᾽ τὰς δὲ προπάροιθεν ἰδοῦσα
> ἔσχεθεν εἴσω τέ σφε κάλει, καὶ ἀπὸ θρόνου ὦρτο
> εἷσέ τ᾽ ἐνὶ κλισμοῖσιν᾽ ἀτὰρ μετέπειτα καὶ αὐτή
> ἵζανεν, ἀψήκτους δὲ χεροῖν ἀνεδήσατο χαίτας.
> Τοῖα δὲ μειδιόωσα προσέννεπεν αἱμυλίοισιν᾽
>                    (III 45–51)

Włosy zaś bujne z stron dwu rozsypawszy po białych ramionach,
Złotym swym czesać grzebieniem i w długie je splatać warkocze
Właśnie pragnęła, gdy wtem, dwie boginie przed sobą ujrzawszy,
Myśli wyrzekła się tej, bo je w dom zaprosiła i z swego
Stołka zerwawszy się, wnet usadziła przybyłe, a potem
Sama usiadła, rękoma też w węzeł związała ogromny
Niedoczesane kędziory i tak, uśmiechając się, rzekła:
                    trans. W. Klinger

Oba białe ramiona okrywał płaszcz włosów,
Czesała je grzebieniem złotym i warkocze
Miała właśnie zaplatać, lecz widząc boginie
Przerwała. Wstaje z krzesła, do wnętrza zaprasza.
Tu sadza je na sofach. Sama także siada,
Nie ułożone pukle zagarnie rękami
I uśmiechając się lekko, tak rzecze do gości
                    trans. J. Łanowski

Oba jej białe ramiona tonęły we włosów powodzi,
którą złotym grzebieniem czesała, bowiem pragnęła
zapleść swe długie warkocze; gdy zaś ujrzała wchodzące,
naraz przerwała; do środka je prosi i z miejsca powstawszy
sadza na krzesłach wygodnych, sama również usiadła,
a rozsypane swe pukle rękami jedynie zgarnęła.
Po czym z uśmiechem im rzekła słowa zwodniczo pochlebne
                    trans. E. Żybert-Pruchnicka

And her white shoulder on each side were covered with the mantle of her hair and she was parting it with a golden comb and about to braid up the long tres-

ses; but when she saw the goddesses before her, she stayed and called them within, and rose from her seat and placed them on the couches. The she herself sat down, and with her hands gathered up the locks still uncombed. And smiling she addressed them with crafty words (Apollonius 1990: 96).

In his translations of the *Argonautica* Łanowski combined two traditions of Polish epic poetry. The passages he translated are written in the thirteen-syllable verse, but are also subjected to a metrical rigour that resembles hexameter: each line contains five quite regular stresses. The quantitative change from six to five stresses stems from the fact that the number of syllables is limited to thirteen – and hexameter can count, at least theoretically, from twelve to eighteen syllables. Łanowski also uses initial ictus. Moreover, there are no rhymes in his translation, in accordance with the ancient tradition; the language in itself is entirely modern with no trace of archaisation or stylisation. These features make the translation sound like rhythmic prose.

Apart from the obvious differences resulting from the stylistic and formal preferences of the individual translators, there are no discrepancies in the way their translations are rendered on the lexical level. It is up to the reader's inclinations whether the word used by Klinger, *stołek* (stool), sounds discordant with a description two lines earlier, δινωτόν θρόνον, i.e. ornamented chair. The very question of the furniture where Hera and Athena sit is troubling, as κλισμός may also mean a sofa (or, more accurately, a recamier) or a chair with armrests, which is simply an armchair. Klinger did not settle the matter, skipping over it in his translation; Łanowski chose *sofa*, whereas I decided to exhaust all the possibilities and adhere to the phrase *wygodne krzesło* (comfortable chair), probably because I could not imagine that goddesses who visit Aphrodite to discuss an urgent matter recline in order to do so.

In the last line, both Klinger and Łanowski omit the word that turns out to be a translatorial stumbling block, αἱμυλίοισιν, meaning "slick" or "smooth" (implicitly referring to "words"), but also "cunning" or "deceptive." Rendering this ambiguity in the translation is important, as it allows Aphrodite's further comments to be read in their proper context; she addresses the two goddesses in a manner full of sophisticated politeness that verges on humility. The contemporary reader would not notice irony in her welcome, and therefore would not understand the indignation with which Hera answers Cypris: κερτομέεις – Thou dost mock us (l. 56, Apollonius 1990: 96). In my own translation I decided to render αἱμυλίοισιν with two

words, even though I was aware of the fact that such a strategy usually breaks the dense and compact style of the original.

Wiktor Steffen seems to remain solitary in his translatorial choices. Unlike his predecessors, he decided to work on one long passage from the *Argonautica* (Book I l. 228–360, which altogether makes 132 lines) instead of translating several short excerpts. Another, much more significant difference between Klinger's, Abramowiczówna's and Appel's translations and Steffen's rendition of the poem is his use of rhymes in the Polish hexameter. This model, unlike that employed by the Polish Romantic poet, Adam Mickiewicz, imitates the hexameter line within the bounds of the Polish language as invented by another Romantic, Cyprian Kamil Norwid.

οἷος δ᾽ ἐκ νηοῖο θυώδεος εἶσιν Ἀπόλλων
Δῆλον ἀν᾽ ἠγαθέην ἠὲ Κλάρον, ἢ ὅγε Πυθώ
ἢ Λυκίην εὐρεῖαν ἐπὶ Ξάνθοιο οῇσι᾽
τοῖος ἀνὰ πληθὺν δήμου κίεν, ὦρτο δ᾽ αὐτή
κεκλομένων ἄμυδις. Τῷ δὲ ξύμβλητο γεραιή
Ἰφιὰς Ἀρτέμιδος πολιηόχου ἀρήτειρα,
καί μιν δεξιτερῆς χειρὸς κύσεν᾽ οὐδέ τι φάσθαι
ἔμπης ἱεμένη δύνατο προθέοντος ὁμίλου,
ἀλλ᾽ ἡ μὲν λίπετ᾽ αὖθι παρακλιδόν, οἷα γεραιή
ὁπλοτέρων, ὁ δὲ πολλὸν ἀποπλαγχθεὶς ἐλιάσθη.

(I 307–316)

Jak ze świątyni wonnej wychodząc Apollo uroczy
Dumnie po Delos lub Klaros albo po Delfach swych kroczy,
Lub po likijskiej równinie albo nad Ksantu wodami,
Tak przez tłum ludzi Jazon przechodził. A lud okrzykami
Witał go tłumnie. Podeszła doń także stara niewiasta
Iphias, kapłanka troszczącej się Artemidy o miasta.
Pocałowała go w rękę, lecz, chociaż mocno pragnęła,
Z nim porozmawiać nie mogła, bo rzesza naprzód sunęła.
Ona, staruszka, zepchnięta przez młodszych, została na boku,
On zaś zgubiwszy się w tłumie, zginął staruszce z widoku.

trans. W. Steffen

Niby Apollo, gdy z wnętrza pachnącej świątyni wychodzi
i najświętszą Delos, Klaros lub Pytho przemierza,
albo też Lykię rozległą, leżącą nad nurtem Ksanthosu –
tak właśnie szedł poprzez tłumy i wielka się wrzawa podniosła,
gdy zakrzyknięto pospołu. Wyszła mu też na spotkanie
Ifias, sędziwa kapłanka strzegącej miast Artemidy.

Ucałowała mu prawą dłoń, lecz nie mogła wymówić
słowa, choć tego pragnęła gorąco, gdyż tłum spieszył naprzód;
wnet ją ominął i z boku zostawił, jak to młodzieńcy
starców; Jason też poszedł przed siebie i zniknął w oddali.
        trans. E. Żybert-Pruchnicka:

And as Apollo goes forth from some fragrant shrine to divine Delos or Claros
or Pytho or to broad Lyeia near the stream of Xanthus, in such beauty moved
Jason through the throng of people; and a cry arose as they shouted together.
And there met him aged Iphias, priestess of Artemis guardian of the city, and
kissed his right hand, but she had not strength to say a word, for all her eager-
ness, as the crowd rushed on, but she was left by the wayside, as the old are
left by the young, and he passed on and was gone afar (Apollonius 1990: 29).

Steffen uses even rhymes that are often assonant or grammatical. It has
to be underlined that ancient poetry did not know rhymes; therefore, their
use in a translation of a classical epic was a conscious choice of the transla-
tor who wanted to facilitate the reception of the poem for a Polish reader
accustomed to rhyming poetry. This ambitious assumption seems to act
as a double constraint, limiting both the metrical pattern and the rhyming
scheme. The search for rhymes is the very reason why Steffen adds, in the
first line, the word *uroczy* ("charming," as a rhyme for *kroczy*, walking) that
in no way seems a fitting description for Apollo; in the following line he
adds *dumnie* (proudly), and omits $\dot{\eta}\gamma\alpha\theta\dot{\epsilon}\eta\nu$ (the most sacred), an adjective
used to refer to the island of Delos. He also chooses to replace Pytho, i.e.
an old name of the city which recalls an association with the verb $\pi\upsilon\theta\dot{\epsilon}\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$
(to learn), with the name *Delfy* (Delphi), more familiar to the reader, and
to divide with the connector *albo* (or) the phrases *likijską równinę* (Lyeian
plain) and *nad Ksantu wodami* (by the waters of the Xantus), thereby sug-
gesting that these are two different geographical regions.

The above comparison allows me to highlight the features that all the
translations of Apollonius' *Argonautica* share, which in turn may be useful
in defining the general tendencies in the contemporary translation of clas-
sical epic poetry.

All the translations described in this article were written by classicists,
as in our day it is only they who have sufficient knowledge of Ancient
Greek. This fact influenced most of all the form that Apollonius' epic took
in their works: apart from Łanowski all the translators chose to use hexame-
ter. We have to distinguish, however, between their versions of the model,
and the literary experiments that the metre was given by such Polish poets

as Leopold Staff, Kazimiera Iłłakowiczówna or Władysław Broniewski. It seems that philologists are less susceptible to metrical license, perhaps because many years of reading epic poetry in the original injects into their bloodstreams the rhythm of the hexameter, becoming as natural to them as the thirteen-syllable line. Although Mickiewicz's and Norwid's contribution to the development of hexameter in Polish should not be overlooked, Klinger, Abramowiczówna and Appel did not follow in their footsteps, but rather seemed to emulate previous hexametric translations of ancient epic poetry.

An objection often raised against translations by philologists is that they are too "philological" and not "poetic" enough. Undoubtedly, this phenomenon has its positive sides, which are a result of the translators' meticulous interpretation of the text. At the same time, many translators try to "poeticise" their translation through various means and strategies, but the outcome is not always favourable.

One of the ways of "poeticising" the text is the rhyme (which was Steffen's tactic), another archaisation employed by Klinger, whose work has many stylistic features characteristic of the Young Poland movement: in his translation of fragments of the *Argonautica* the characters are *witezie* (arch. knights), the king is *władyka* (arch. king), armour is *zbroica* (arch. armeure), a sacrifice is always *obiata* (arch. sacrifise), dancing is *pląs* (arch. gambolde), etc. Steffen also uses archaisation, but a certain amount of stylization to the nineteenth-century Polish is observable in his version, which inscribes itself into the notion of the rhymed translation of Greek epic poetry: in his work, mourning is rendered as *biadać* (to wail), crying as *szlochać* (to sob), complaining as *utyskiwać* (to bemoan), a ship is a *nawa* (vessel), etc. Some of these expressions may be controversial, such as *wojacy* (soldiers) in reference to the group of the military leaders (ἀριστῆες) or *swojacy* (fellow countrymen; ἔται) as kinsmen belonging to one family. Appel adds touches of archaisation in his work, using (in further passages) such expressions as *ninie* (forthwith), *włodarz* (steward), *jak tuszę* (methinks), *wieszczki* (seeresses), etc. These phrases do not harmonise with the tone of the contemporary language that this translator most often uses.

Abramowiczówna and Łanowski chose neither archaisation nor rhymes, creating their translations of the *Argonautica* in contemporary literary Polish. This allowed them to avoid the risk of rapid ageing of the text as well as the occasional use of inappropriate vocabulary enforced by the need to find a suitable rhyme.

In my own translation I decided to abstain from rhymes or linguistic stylisation. I wrote it in contemporary literary language and the measure of its archaicism is its metre. In my hexameter there is no license, the accent is always initial and the trochees – just like the spondees in Apollonius' work – hardly ever occur in the penultimate foot. I transcribed proper names in the Polish alphabet as closely as possible,[6] adding declensional affixes to the singular nominative form. In this way I was trying to approximate the sound of the original as much as possible, without altering it with Latin terminology. I always retain the names created by Apollonius,[7] translating them into Polish only when it added to the content or enriched the imagery. In the remaining cases I fell back on notes, the last resort of the translator. The choice of such a strategy springs from my conviction that, in the words of Goethe, a translation should force us to enter a foreign country, feel what it is like, the peculiarities of its tongue, the uniqueness of its character. Whether I have come back from this quest with golden fleece or empty-handed is for the reader to judge.

**trans. Anna Kowalcze-Pawlik**

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[6] An exception to this rule and the names deeply rooted in Polish, for example that of *Orfeusz*, Orpheus (Ὀρφεύς).

[7] In my translation I retain e.g. the ancient name of the Black Sea (*Pontos*) and the Sea of Marmara (*Morze Czarne*, Μέλας Πόντος, the Black Sea), although I do take into account the fact that the reader may find such a choice misleading.

dite's Morning Toilette III 43–75, First Encounter with Medea III 275–298]. Trans. W. Klinger. *Przegląd Klasyczny* IV, 10, 733–736.

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