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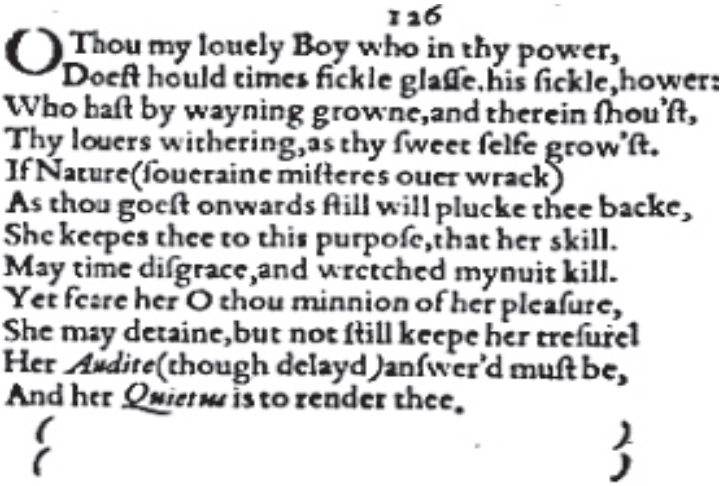
Time's Fickle Glass: Conceptualizations and Blends in Shakespeare's Sonnet 126 and Its Polish Translations

Abstract

Sonnet 126 is discussed as to its specific place in the sequence and its unusual form. Particular attention is paid to its language and the way ambiguities are created, especially in relation to the ostensibly addressed 'lovely boy', leading to ironical distancing of the speaker. The discussion of three Polish translations of the sonnet traces shifts and changes of perspective yielding three different variations on the themes of Shakespeare's sonnet.

Keywords: sonnet, ambiguity, conceptualisation, scene construal, translation choices



126

O Thou my louely Boy who in thy power,
Doeſt hould times fickle glaſſe, his ſickle, hower:
Who haſt by wayning growne, and therein ſhou'ſt,
Thy louers withering, as thy ſweet ſelfe grow'ſt.
If Nature (ſoueraine miſtreſs ouer wrack)
As thou goeſt onwards ſtill will plucke thee backe,
She keepes thee to this purpoſe, that her skill.
May time diſgrace, and wretched mynuit kill.
Yet feare her O thou minnion of her pleaſure,
She may detaine, but not ſtill keepe her treſure!
Her *Audite* (though delayd) anſwer'd muſt be,
And her *Quietus* is to render thee.

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[1] http://luna.folger.edu/luna/servlet/s/2b662s (access: 17.06.2017).

CXXVI[2]

O thou, my lovely boy, who in thy pow'r
Dost hold Time's fickle glass, his sickle hour,
Who hast by waning grown, and therein show'st
Thy lovers withering, as thy sweet self grow'st-
If Nature, sovereign mistress over wrack,
As thou goest onwards still will pluck thee back,
She keeps thee to this purpose, that her skill
May time disgrace and wretched minute kill.
Yet fear her, O thou minion of her pleasure;
She may detain but not still keep her treasure.
Her audit, though delayed, answered must be,
And her quietus is to render thee.

I.

The sonnet is unusual for many reasons. The lack of the final couplet is one of them: the sonnet contains 12 rather than the standard 14 lines. Another reason is the rhyme scheme: Instead of the expected rhymes binding three quatrains, the poet offers the reader 6 couplets. Its placement in the collection originally published in 1609 makes it especially significant: it stands between the end of the sequence addressed to the friend[3] and the beginning of the sonnets addressed to the Dark Lady. Its opening line suggests the addressee of the preceding sonnets. The speaker in Sonnet 108 turns to *sweet boy* (l. 5), to *fair friend* in sonnet 104 (l. 1), and to *dear friend* in sonnets 30 (l. 13) and 111 (l. 13). The Dark Lady only once, and then not in a direct address, is referred to as *my friend* (sonnet 149, l. 5). The link to earlier sonnets is brought to an end, as it seems, with the word *quietus* in the last line of 126. "Her quietus" according to Booth[4] means "settling her [Nature's] debts"; "quietus" meaning receipt for full payment.[5] Remembering, that the poem ends unexpectedly on line 12, one might see the last line as closing the account with the *sweet fair dear boy/friend*. The original printed form in the 1609 Quarto suggests the missing last couplet by adding two pairs of brackets which embrace two empty spaces. This typographical figure does not only suggest lack of continuity, but also "highlights the frustrating expectations created by the poem's form", and refers back to the poem's figures of the crescent moon

[2] The modern text of sonnet 126 is taken from *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. S. Booth, Yale University Press, New Haven 1977, p. 108. Any other source will be separately acknowledged.

[3] Colin Burrow, editor of *The Complete Sonnets and Poems*, Oxford University Press, Cary 2002, suggests that 126 concludes "the finest group of poems to the young man (and they are the latest both in their sequence in Q and probably too in order of composition), 104–26" (pp. 135–136).

[4] *Shakespeare's Sonnets…* , p. 433.

[5] Another context for the concept of ending, of a final closure, are Hamlet's resonant words "When he himself might his quietus make / With a bare bodkin."

and Time's sickle.[6] Whether the compositor's addition (as most critics seem to believe), or an intended stratagem of the poet, or even of Thomas Thorpe, it is difficult to ignore the missing part represented by the brackets in the overall appreciation of the sonnet.[7]

The rhyme scheme contributes to the sonnet's ambiguity in a different way. Couplets, the striking and most characteristic feature of Shakespeare's sonnets, end them with a witty turn of a phrase, punctuating their meaning and striving to achieve a quality of a *bon mot*. Most often than not, they also suggest an ironical stance against the emotional quality of the argument developed in the preceding quatrains. Helen Vendler finds the couplet a possible meeting point of the fictive speaker with the poet: "Although the speaker seems 'spontaneous' in his utterance, the cunning arrangements of the utterance belong primarily to Shakespeare. It is at the moment of the couplet that the view of the speaker and the view of the author come nearest to convergence."[8] Vendler also suggests "a crucial *tonal* difference between the body of the sonnet and the couplet".[9] In sonnet 126 the missing couplet serves the sonnet's argument, turning it, as a whole, into an unexpected coda to the fair friend sequence. The couplet structure is, therefore, an interesting formal feature to be taken into consideration when trying to unravel the ambiguities of the argument, and possibly its ironies.

The structure of the argument, however, is quite clearly organized in the three quatrains made of two couplets each. In this ways the formal features suggest an ambiguity of form which serves well the ambiguity of the speaker's utterances. In the first quatrain the speaker addresses the *lovely boy*, who immediately gains and unstable identity. If "thou, my lovely boy" profiles the figure of a beloved person who has power over the transient power of time, who 'grows with time, while his lover 'withers', who defies the destruction of time – we can read the quatrain as a compliment to the young man's beauty. It is a conceptualization which can be gleaned from many earlier sonnets. The lover is a trajector who is profiled against the landmark of the reality in which time destroys youth and beauty. The speaker places himself within the scene (if we understand the Q's *lovers* as *lover's*[10]), evidently as part of the landmark (*thou show'st thy lover's withering*); if we keep the plural form, the speaker disappears from the scene construal, the landmark is filled with all the boy's lovers, while the figure of the *lovely boy* is still shown as distant, separate, grounded in a different space where time does not exist. This line of the conceptualization is, however, negated, or superimposed by another scene construal in which the *lovely boy* is profiled as Cupid – a frequent figure in traditional lovers' apostrophes. The fickle Cupid does serve as a concept of love-at-first-sight by holding the *fickle glass*, the mirror in which beauty is reflected for a while before time destroys it. Thus the trajector of a Cupid may appear against

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[6] *The Complete Sonnets…*, p. 632.

[7] See also the comments of Katherine Duncan-Jones in *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. K. Duncan-Jones, The Arden Shakespeare, 1997, p. 366.

[8] H. Vendler, *The Art Of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1999, p. 26.

[9] Ibid., p. 28.

[10] As does K. Duncan-Jones (*Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. K. Duncan-Jones, p. 365).

the landmark of conventional love poetry to suggest the speaker's ironic intention in apostrophizing his *lovely boy* who may hold the fickle mirror in front of his beauty, unaware of the time's sickle[11] glass, i.e., the hour glass which marks the passage of time and journey to death, sickle being the conventional attribute of the deadly power of Time the Destroyer.

There is, however, yet a third conceptualization which exists side by side with the other two, that of the moon. The *boy* who has "by waning grown" gets transformed into the moon the changing phases of which are traditionally seen as waning and growing. The moon is a figure of constancy in change, i.e., that which the lover seems to defy. Thus the figure of the waning and growing moon stands in a paradoxical opposition to the suggested figure of the lover for ever growing in sweetness.

The conceptualization of the apostrophized lover whose perfection grows rather than vanishes with time is definitely the one which takes the primary place: "that possibility quickly becomes the only one as the poem progresses."[12] But the point is that the opalescent blend of the three conceptualizations constructs a specific voice of the speaker who does and does not idealize his *lovely boy*; the voice which is both the lover's and the poet's (as Vendler suggests for the Shakespearean couplet), the voice which expresses emotional tension and the voice which simultaneously builds an ironic distance to the idealization of the apostrophized person.

The next two couplets form a quatrain which opens the argument in a direct relation to what has been expressed in the apostrophe. The key to the argument is contained in the term Nature capitalized in Q. Even though Shakespeare's readers would not necessarily read the capitalization as personification,[13] the 'sovereign mistress' opens that reading without doubt and places Nature as opponent to Time; Nature who has power (sovereign mistress) over wrack (ruin, disintegration) will *pluck* the *lovely boy back* in his progress onwards with time. Nature is the secret of the boy's constant sweetness and beauty – her skill *disgraces* Time, *kills* the transitory quality of life (*wretched minutes*). She *keeps* the boy (both possesses and protects) as a proof of her power over Time. This reading is governed by the comma placed after *onwards*. The Q text, however has no comma and allows for a more ambiguous statement. *Still* in its sense of 'always' or 'ever' may be then read as referring to the boy's movement with time: *As thou goest onwards still* – as you forever/always move forward.

The phrase would then put Nature's protective plans in question. Or, as the verb *pluck* may suggest, will keep him young and beautiful by taking his life (cf. Merriam Webster's definition, 'to pull [something] quickly to remove it'). This ominous sense hovers over the default reading extending the effect of the blends of the first four lines of the sonnet. The speaker builds a more concrete distance to

[11] Quarto's printing of **s** and **f** as almost identical letters has made many editors suggest 'sickle' for the second adjective in line 2. So C. Burrow, K. Duncan-Jones, also Jonathan Bates and Eric Rasmussen, editors of *Sonnets and Other Poems* (The RSC Shakespeare series, Macmillan, Basingstoke 2009).

[12] *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. S. Booth, p. 43.

[13] Ibid., p. 432.

(and against) his wishful proposition that the *lovely boy's* attractions are eternal. The truth of the death's sickle returns. The argument brings a very distinct note of irony in relation to the speaker, but also to the idealized fiction of the sonnet sequence.

The ironic force of the first eight lines comes to the full force in the conclusion of the argument. Nature must not be trusted, especially if the *lovely boy* is addressed as the *minion of* [Nature's] *pleasures*. The renaissance use of 'minion' in the context of instability and change[14] suggests a fickle nature of the relationship and puts an emphasis on the doubtful quality of the loveliness and sweetness of the addressee. The last couplet gains the force of the usual coda to all other sonnets. As in sonnets 1 and 4, the proverbial idea of death as "paying one's debt to nature" is evoked.[15] The admission of mortality serves both as a warning to the *lovely boy* and as an ironic acceptance of the inevitable end on the part of the speaker. His *quietus* is done. The tribute to the beloved person has been paid. The beloved person is placed on the monument of the sonnets, and, at the same time, the inevitability of loss, end, and death is stoically accepted.

The eighth line beginning with *Yet* assumes the usual form of a *volta*, of a change in the direction of the argument. Lines 11 and 12 mark a definite change of tone as Vendler suggests. It is not the tone of the despairing lover, but a firm statement of a general truth. The speaker-lover merges into the scene when the place of the conceptualizer is taken by the author of the sonnet cycle.

II.

The specific blend of conceptualizations in sonnet 126 is a daunting challenge for translators, yet not really much discussed. The interest of this section is in the examination of the ways in which three Polish translators worked and in a discussion of the ways in which their texts construe the meaning(s) of the sonnet. Maciej Słomczyński published his translation of the whole cycle in 1979; Stanisław Barańczak's translation appeared in 1993; the two translated Shakespeare's plays extensively. The latest is the translation of Ryszard Długołęcki published in 2015. Słomczyński and Barańczak were writers and professional literary translators. Długołęcki is a surgeon and a physician by profession. His only other translations of Shakespeare are *Hamlet* (2013) and *Macbeth* (2018). The selection of the three translations has been dictated by the time factor: they appeared within some 45 years and may be roughly considered as produced by contemporary users of Polish. This consideration eliminates the time factor and leaves the reader with the comparable problems of individual strategies and linguistic choices.

[14] „Fortune's minion" in *1 Henry IV* I.1.83; "minions of the moon", ibid., I.2.24.

[15] Cf. *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. S. Booth, p. 433; *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. K. Duncan-Jones, p. 366.

Maciej Słomczyński

CCXXVI

O chłopcze śliczny, który w moc promienną
Wziąłeś zwierciadło i klepsydrę zmienną
Czasu i który tym słodziej rozkwitasz,
Im więcej zmarszczek z lic kochanków chwytasz;
Jeśli Natura, władczyni zniszczenia,
Dla ciebie tylko ruch czasu odmienia,
Czyni to po to, by mogła okazać
Wyższość nad Czasem i bieg minut zmieniać.
Jednak drżyj przed nią, choć tak ciebie lubi;
Skarbu strzec może, a jednak go zgubi.
Może rachunek odwlec, lecz cię straci,
Gdyż właśnie tobą swe długi zapłaci.[16]

The striking feature of this sonnet is lack of any indication of the relationship between the speaker and the addressee. Słomczyński's *Chłopiec śliczny* is a *lovely boy*, but not *my lovely boy*. This decision opens the possibility of profiling the boy as Cupid before the default figure of the addressee as an admired young man is firmly established in the second quatrain. *Thy lover's withering*, a possible, and indeed a strong suggestion of line 4 in Shakespeare's text is rendered in the unambiguous plural form which effectively eliminates the speaker from the scene construal and assigns him the role of the conceptualizer. The speaker conventionally warns the boy that no matter how long Nature would allow him to keep his 'sweet flowering' (*słodziej rozkwitasz*, l. 3), in the end she will 'lose him/ kill him' (two possible meanings of *straci* in l. 11) by paying her debts with him. The consistent use of the 2nd person singular as the address form need not suggest lovers' intimacy in Polish. Here it adds a patronizing note to the speaker's warning. Nature comes out as an inconstant and fickle figure, playing games with Time, and aware that she will have to pay the debt. The suggestions of the fickle mirror and the hour glass in the first two couplets are kept down to mere attributes being only seemingly in the power of the boy, because, as line 6 asserts, it is Nature who changes the course of Time in his case. Thus the boy, who is profiled as the figure in the first two couplets, gets quite early shifted to the ground and stays there, even after the warning phrase *Jednak drżyj przed nią* (l. 8, the *volta*) because the speaker immediately profiles Nature: 'though she likes you' (instead *O! thou minion of her pleasure*) and assigns to her the function of the agent. The elimination of the speaker's possible objectification as a lover in the scene construal is responsible for the emotional dryness of the whole sonnet. Death becomes the fact of Nature rather than an intimate loss.

[16] W. Shakespeare, *Sonety*, przeł. M. Słomczyński, Zielona Sowa, Kraków 1995.

Słomczyński's text can be easily read as a coda to the young man cycle of sonnets, but its general tenor, pedagogical and patronizing, is closer to the early procreative group, thus becoming strikingly different in tone and function from the sense of ending that the original 126 holds in the Quarto sequence.

Stanisław Barańczak

126

Chłopcze piękny, uroku mocą nieodgadłą
Z rąk Czasu broń wytrącasz – klepsydrę, zwierciadło –
Przez to, że z jego biegiem kwitniesz coraz śmielej,
Podczas gdy więdnie zastęp twoich wielbicieli;
Jeśli nawet Natura, udzielna władczyni
Zniszczenia, swą ofiarą i ciebie uczyni,
To nieprędko: jeszcze lic twoich atłasem
Ilustruje przewagi swoje ponad Czasem.
Choć tak cię wyróżniła, lękaj się jej dłoni:
Skarbu może nie odda, przecie go roztrwoni;
Coś jej dłużny, zwrócone być musi – w terminie
Późniejszym, ale spłata długu cię nie minie.[17]

Słomczyński keeps the vestiges of the apostrophe, and therefore of the eventual dialogical quality of the text by the initial exclamation *O chłopcze*. By eliminating the expletive, Barańczak makes his speaker's speech act hardly exclamative. He does use the vocative case of the noun – *Chłopcze piękny*, marking the form of direct address, but then offers an affirmative main clause (*Z rąk Czasu broń wytrącasz* – from the hands of Time you snatch away the weapon) which practically eliminates the effect of an apostrophe. The profiling of the boy as a trajector is achieved by an anaphoric phrase in line 1 (*uroku mocą nieodgadłą* – by a secret power of charm), and the cataphoric conclusion (l. 3) that *z jego biegiem kwitniesz coraz śmielej* – with his [Time's] course you flourish ever more boldly. The landmark is filled with the vanquished Time who loses both its attributes, the mirror and the hour glass, and with a host of waning admirers, *więdnie zastęp twoich wielbicieli*. Even though the form of address is second person singular, the definite subjectification of the speaker (nothing suggests that he might be one of the numerous waning admirers) puts him in distance to the boy and eliminates further the suggestion of any intimate relationship other than sympathy. The radical change of the category of waning lovers to admirers in line 4 strengthens such reading.

The second quatrain profiles the figure of Nature, the sovereign mistress of the wrack who will eventually make the boy her victim, but at the moment she documents her advantage over Time with the boy's velvet face. Barańczak's Nature is a figure whose aspect of wrack and destruction is profiled much more dis-

[17] W. Shakespeare, *Sonety*, przekł., wstęp i oprac. S. Barańczak, Wydawnictwo a5, Poznań 1993.

tinctly than in Shakespeare's text by force of the enjambment *udzielna władczyni / Zniszczenia* (ll. 5–6) and by the unambiguous assertion in l.6, *swą ofiarą i ciebie uczyni* (her victim she will also make of you). The conditional structure is fully realized by *Jeśli* /*To* – if/then – (initial words in ll. 5 and 7) to emphasize the Speaker's certainty. Shakespeare's ambivalent *still* is translated as *jeszcze*, i.e. in the sense of 'as yet' and refers exclusively to the temporary quality of Nature's games with Time. The suggestion of the boy's aging (going onward) is lost. This translation, though skillfully following Shakespeare's speaker's argument, eliminates ambiguities and makes the sonnet's senses conveyed by the scene construal develop pretty straightforwardly.

The last two couplets in Barańczak's text bring a striking alteration. In Shakespeare's text the phrase *O thou minion of her* [*Nature's*] *pleasure* by the force of the apostrophe profiles the boy, even if only for just a flicker of a moment: he may be the object of Nature's pleasure, but he is (and repeatedly so in Shakespeare's sonnet) the speaker's interlocutor (even though never saying anything). Barańczak's translation acknowledges only the boy as an object of special interest to Nature (*tak cię wyróżniła*) profiled consistently in the couplet as the trajector. Even though in the last couplet Barańczak's choice of pronouns does make the speaker turn directly to the boy (***coś** jej dłużny, **cię** nie minie*) to warn him that his debt must be paid back, the boy is consistently objectified in relation to Nature rather than to the speaker. Shakespeare's Nature is represented as the debtor to Time (*her audit, her quietus*): she can delay the boy's destruction by Time, but she can't keep her treasure forever and must yield to Time. Here, though, the speaker suggests that the boy is in debt to Nature (*coś jej dłużny*) and that he will have to pay the debt (*spłata długu cię nie minie*). The unfortunate turn of the phrase makes the logic of the sonnet uncertain. The boy snatches away from Time 'the fickle/sickle hour glass', but he can do it only because he is endowed with secret power (charm) by Nature. So he has to return the debt of the secret power – the hour glass? Nature seems to be the one responsible for his destruction (being the sovereign mistress). Time is made insignificant, Nature holds advantage over him to the end. The ending seems to part ways with the beginning of the poem in this translation. Apart from this incongruity, the translation suggests no more than a conventional closure to a cycle of sonnets rather than being, in the words of Don Paterson, "the final sonnet in this remarkable gut-wrenching, tormented sequence."[18]

Ryszard Długołęcki

126

Mój piękny chłopcze! Masz pod rozkazami
Czas z jego sierpem i lustrem, co mami
Bo on w swym biegu pomnaża twe czary

[18] D. Paterson, *Reading Shakespeare's Sonnets. A New Commentary*, faber and faber, London 2010, p. 374.

Gdy z twych przyjaciół czyni ludzi starych.
Jeśli Natura, władca sił niszczących
Zwolni twój życia czas uciekający
Czynić to będzie, by swymi siłami
Móc go zawstydzić, że jego wpływ łamie.
Lecz strzeż się, chociaż jesteś jej pupilem
Ona cię, skarb twój, chroni tylko chwilę.
Musi rachunki spłacać, choć ze zwłoką
Co czyniąc, podda cię czasu wyrokom.

In Długołęcki's text Time seems to be definitely the loser; first, the boy holds time in his power (*Masz pod rozkazami / czas z jego sierpem I lustrem*), and then Nature has the power to slow down the running course of the boy's life (*Zwolni twój życia czas uciekający*) to show her power in shaming Time by breaking its usual working (*Móc go zawstydzić, że jego wpływ łamie*). The *volta* reverses the argument by arguing that Nature has to pay her debts to Time, even though with delay (*Musi rachunki spłacać, choć ze zwłoką*). This line of argument, though, is questioned from the very beginning. The formal apostrophe of the first line (the formality stressed by the exclamation mark) seems to introduce the scene construal in which the speaker profiles by default the boy who is the addressee of the apostrophe and the subject of the next sentence. This interpretation becomes immediately invalidated, however; Time (*Czas*) in the initial position of line 2 is the owner of the sickle and the mirror which deceives/deludes because (ll. 3 and 4) Time in his run multiplies the boy's charms while turning the boy's friends into old people. The subordinate clauses of lines 2–4 introduce Time as the figure and shift the figure of the boy with his power to the ground. The translation offers an interesting way in which the merging of the two scene construals builds a paradox of the addressee's position: his beauty is multiplied, but it is a delusion; his power over Time is stressed, but it is not true. The speaker pays a compliment to his addressee, and at the same time issues a warning.

The paradoxical statement of the first quatrain forces the attention on the initial if (*Jeśli*) of the next quatrain. Whether Nature slows down the course of the boy's life is a highly questionable proposition on several counts. First, why should she do it, if the boy holds in his power Time's sickle and mirror? Second, the course of the boy's life is defined as running away (*uciekający*), so the implied end will only be postponed. If Nature is the governor of destructive powers (*władca sił niszczących*), then only in a limited way. And third, Nature will only do it to try her power to shame Time: the initial position of *Móc* (*to be able*) in line 8 profiles the possible, but by no means certain power of the governor of destruction. The scene construal offers us Nature as the default figure, yet with feeble prerogatives. The position of Time shifted to the ground by force of its position in the complement placed at the very end of the quatrain is, however, visible also from another perspective in which it becomes an indelible figure who will not serve as ground to any other figure, no matter how wishful (if!) the speaker may be. The paradoxical line of this translation does not disambiguate Shakespeare's complexities;

quite the opposite, the speaker's and the boy's relationship as well as the speaker's intentions and the sonnet's message are by the force of the paradoxical structure given a puzzle-like form, a riddle.

The third quatrain is grammatically linked to the first line of the sonnet: you keep Time in your Power (*Masz pod rozkazami / Czas*), but beware (*Lecz strzeż się*). At the same time the warning is about Nature, not about Time: you are her minion, but she will protect you and your treasure only a while (*Ona cię, skarb twój, chroni tylko chwilę*). The ambiguity of *strzeż się* leads to the truth behind the sonnet's paradox: we want to believe that beauty (Nature) is indestructible and succumb to the illusion, but Time ticks on, no matter what our wishes are. The boy will be subject to Time's verdict ([Natura] *podda cię czasu wyrokom*, l. 12) and must not forget it.

The general quality of the reflection is not necessarily linked to any intimate relationship of the speaker and the addressee. As in the case of the other translated versions, that relation may be postulated only against the emotional and narrative elements of the whole sequence. The text itself does not suggest anything beyond friendship (indeed, *Thy lovers* become here 'your friends'), even in spite of the initial possessive pronoun in the apostrophe. It seems that all three Polish translators have not been able to find the right tone of voice (i.e., the right language) for modulating the desire and sadness of Shakespeare's speaker and the self-ironic aspect of the poet's warning. None of the three Polish versions suggest the stoic but painful acceptance of death with the clarity equal to Shakespeare's speaker's *quietus*. The intertextual force of this word is untranslatable, thus the three Polish endings suggests death only by the metaphoric expressions of paying debts to time and lack a more emotional and/or ironic overtone.

All three translators are very careful to keep the ambiguity of form: the couplets are carefully rhymed, the argument is developed in three quatrains, the last couplet rings the tone of the regular sonnet's ending. Yet their ambiguity of form does not convey the complexities and ambiguities of Shakespeare's sonnet with perhaps the only exception of Długołęcki's strategy of employing the riddle-like shape of the argument. Słomczyński and Barańczak explicate the ideas of life's transience in a form of warning (the latter with what seems a less felicitous turn). Nor the graphic suggestion of the empty brackets has helped the translators: in all three editions the brackets are ignored. It is true, the two lines have never been written, yet, like a ghost they haunt the sequence in the 1609 Quarto. That ghost has disappeared from the Polish versions of Shakespeare's sonnets. The translation's fickle glass reflects with a difference, as if a sickle has been used to eliminate the richness and variety.

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