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PICTURE – POEM – TRANSLATION: “(UN)PAINTED STORIES”

BY WISŁAWA SZYMBORSKA IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH TRANSLATION

Summary

Art holds a prominent place in the work of Wisława Szymborska, which can be seen not only in her poems, but also in her numerous essays on this topic as well as in hundreds of collages made by the poet. Even though many scholars have shown a considerable interest in this motif in the literary output of the Polish Nobel Prize winner, the relations between a painting and a poem inspired by it are usually on the margins of researchers' deliberations. To a much lesser extent, this topic has been discussed so far in the works of translation critics.

This study is an attempt to examine ekphrastic poems by Wisława Szymborska from translation studies' point of view. Its aim is to analyse the relationships between a work of art (an oil painting, a woodblock print), a poem inspired by it and its translations into English and Spanish. Three poems whose reference to a specific painting can be easily identified have been discussed here in detail: “Dwie małpy Bruegla” (“Brueghel's Two Monkeys”), “Ludzie na moście” (“The People on the Bridge”), “Vermeer” (“Vermeer”).

The study consists of an introduction, a short theoretical part (Chapters One and Two), an extensive analytical part (Chapters Three – Five), concluding remarks, an appendix and a bibliography. While briefly discussing (in Chapter One) selected works on ekphrastic poems by Wisława Szymborska, the author identifies the need for a more in-depth analysis of the relations between paintings, poems engaged with those paintings and their translations. Then, for the purpose of further analysis, the most important terms and concepts are presented – namely: ekphrasis and hypotyposis, and their types, *Bildgedicht*, intersemiotic translation. Special emphasis is put on the concept of ekphrasis,

which has been the source of an ongoing debate among scholars. The definition of ekphrasis as proposed by Paweł Gogler is adopted and combined with the typology of ekphrasis proposed by Aneta Grodecka. In accordance with the postulates of some researchers of ekphrases (including Lawrence Venuti and in Poland – Rozalia Słodczyk), a translation studies perspective has been adopted. This allows for applying translation terminology to the description of ekphrasis, which is seen as the end product of the process of intersemiotic translation through which the language of visual arts is transformed into the language of poetry. It should be noted, however, that the contemporary ekphrasis present in the works of Wisława Szymborska is not limited to intersemiotic translation, but also contains philosophical reflection of the poet on, among others, art, human condition and the desire for immortality. Chapter Two discusses the concept of a translation series and its internal relationships. It also describes the phenomenon of favourable reception of Wisława Szymborska's poetry in Spanish-speaking and Anglo-Saxon countries.

Each of the chapters in the second part is devoted to the analysis of a different ekphrastic poem. Chapter Three discusses the poem "Dwie małpy Bruegla," which is an informative ekphrasis, inspired by a painting "Two Monkeys" by a Dutch painter Pieter Brueghel the Elder, along with two translation series: the English one consisting of six versions and the Spanish one made of five translations. Chapter Four is devoted to the analysis of the work "Ludzie na moście," which is an example of informative ekphrasis with elements of ecstatic ekphrasis. Two pictures have been indicated as the source of inspiration for this poem, namely a woodcut print by Hiroshige Utagawa entitled "Sudden Shower over Shin-Ōhashi Bridge and Atake" and an oil on canvas painting by Vincent Van Gogh "Bridge in the Rain (after Hiroshige)." Two series of translations are then discussed: the English series, consisting of three translations, and the Spanish one, consisting of four versions. Chapter Five examines the poem "Vermeer," which is a synthetic ekphrasis and comments on Johannes Vermeer's canvas entitled "The Milkmaid." Two translation series are also described: English and Spanish, both consisting of one version.

In each analytical chapter, the starting point is to present selected critical works discussing the painting that inspired a given poem in order to identify the most important features of the former. Next, the process of intersemiotic translation is described in Szymborska's work. Then, some philosophical reflections to be discovered in the poems

are considered. Using the empirical – comparative method, the mutual relations within one translation series and between two different series are being examined. The terms of central and polemical translation as introduced by Anna Legeżyńska and the concept of appreciative (consolidating) translation proposed by the author of this thesis have been used to describe the relations between different versions within a given translation series. Finally, each chapter examines whether and how the process of intersemiotic translation is rendered in each English and Spanish version of a given poem, and whether the poet's philosophical reflection has been conveyed.

In concluding remarks, the title of this study is explained and the most important findings from the research are recapitulated. The study has indicated that although Szymborska applies the whole gamut of artistic means of expression in order to transform the language of visual arts into the language of poetry and each time they are carefully selected depending on the type of the work of art discussed, some common features can be noticed (e.g. the composition of the painting and the perspective used by the artist are reflected in the system of versification and the order in which the elements present on a canvas, an oak panel or a sheet of paper are enumerated in the poem; the painting technique is rendered on a semantic and phonetic layer of the text; and the frozen motion effect is achieved in it through a skillful use of present tense forms). The analysis of translation series has shown that the fact that a poem refers to a specific painting can facilitate the work of translators, allowing them to make better translation choices. Moreover, it turns out that the more accurately a translated poem renders the intersemiotic translation process that occurs in the original poem, the more faithfully it conveys the poet's philosophical reflection.

The appendix provides information on how many times and by whom each one of Szymborska's poems has been translated into English and Spanish, which not only gives a broader perspective on the works discussed herein but can be a starting point for further research.