

care about ruining Polish areas. In Buchenwald Roman volunteered to work on a bomb disposal team. The work was dangerous but not hard, and the Germans did not force them to hurry in their tasks. They received food in better portions and taste than at Auschwitz. As they repaired destroyed train tracks, they found abandoned warm clothing and food and took it for themselves: the police turned a blind eye to this appropriation. Roman also witnessed the American bombing raids toward the end of the war. Eventually he and other Polish prisoners were sent to Dresden, a city in ruins, to clear the rubble and the tracks.

Roman survived the war and settled to civilian life in England rather than returning to Soviet-occupied Poland. He married Patricia Dismoor, an English officer's daughter, on Christmas Day 1952. In 1959 their son Leon was born, named for his grand uncle. Roman's friends and family in England knew nothing of his wartime escapades, but when the film "*Hubal*" was shown in London he became a celebrity among them. He received a special invitation to the film's viewing and met the Polish Consul Mieczysław Hara. He was also featured in *The Observer* and in a television interview. As the Soviet grip on Poland lessened, Roman returned to his homeland on several occasions, visiting his family, Wańkowicz, and his "*Hubal*" friends. In January 2013 he reached his hundredth birthday. His friends organized a celebration that featured flowers and champagne---and a special letter from Polish President Bronisław Komorowski. His children and friends came from Utah, Australia, and Warsaw. This chatty book records all of these events in an appealing way. Δ

## Translating Cyprian Kamil Norwid's *Generalities* A Case Study of Cooperation

(continued from September 2014 issue)

22 July 2014

**Agata Brajerska-Mazur to Patrick John  
Corness:**

I totally agree with your point that "Norwid's poetry carries many associations, connotations,

and allusions to his own works and to Polish literature and world culture in general." I also agree that a translator cannot always let readers know about such intertextuality by means of a commentary or a footnote. Nevertheless, intertextual or cultural allusions shouldn't be eliminated just because of this inability. The translator should know, recognize, and render all allusions that are present in the original, even if they are very unlikely to be grasped by readers. This task results from the first and most important translation rule (you have written about it yourself), that is from the translator's duty to give readers "a similar range of opportunities for interpretation of the work as enjoyed by readers of the original."

As for your rendition of Norwid's maxim—it is *not* the same as the original. Yours means half of what Norwid's line stands for. It has no connection to the human condition in it. In your version, only the association with reality and truth is preserved. You only convey the basic meaning of the maxim (the *mot juste* postulate).

I am fully aware that "Polish and English have different versification systems and that English verse is not based on syllable count in the same way as Polish." That is precisely the reason why I always recommend shortening Polish lines in English translations. The specificity of the longer words in Polish and the shorter words in English requires this solution: make Polish verses shorter in English in order to sound natural and to avoid padding. This rule is important especially when the Polish original is deliberately short ("*Ogólniki*" falls in this category). In such a case the translation should retain the conciseness of the original. This can only be done by reducing the number of syllables rather than by multiplying them. Padding only "dilutes" the poem. Even if the number of syllables in the original and in the translation is the same, in the English version there are words and phrases that do not exist in the Polish text. This dilutes the translation; the "perception of the reader" has nothing to do with this simple fact.

Thus your translation is simpler than Norwid's poem because it offers readers only one interpretation of a complex, multilayered Polish

text. Again, this simplicity has nothing to do with the perception of the reader, but it has a great deal to do with the perception of the translator.

Thank you for improving the first version of your translation as far as *poezja* and *wymowa* are concerned. I wish you had also eliminated the padding and corrected the maxim so that it could correctly convey Norwid's meaning.

Of the two new versions I prefer the first, the rhymed one. The second one does not elaborate on any of the poem's features; it is simply a word-for-word translation.

**23 July 2014**

**Patrick John Corness to Agata Brajerska-Mazur:**

Thank you for your latest response. I am glad that you are willing to continue our discussion of the translation of Norwid's "Ogólniki."

I would like to re-emphasize at this point that I of course acknowledge your expert knowledge of Norwid's works and your vast experience in the field of the translation of his works into English. It goes without saying that I benefit greatly from your analysis and criticism of my attempts in this area. As you know, when presenting my translations of "Fatum" and "W Weronie" I pointed out that I was able to produce translations that I think you found successful only by taking into account certain guidelines you had set out in respect to these two poems. I hope you will bear with me if I continue to work on "Ogólniki," with the benefit of your analysis (I believe there are aspects of English semantics worthy of further debate, but I will put them aside).

A key issue is clearly the translation of what you refer to as the maxim, in the last line of the poem. Acknowledging the limitations of a discussion via email, can we take it a step at a time, for now considering once again only the final line?

*Odpowiednie dać rzeczy – słowo!*

You wrote that in Norwid's work *słowo* has a Christian (biblical?) connotation, "wielding the power of naming and creating," and that *odpowiednie* (referring to *słowo*) means many things: *real, true, matching reality and the*

*artist's understanding of reality; dignified, significant, creative.* Attempting to incorporate these concepts and interpretations as succinctly as in the original, I suggest:

*Giving everything its fitting name.*

Do you find this a closer translation? I understand *rzecz* in a universal, comprehensive sense, i.e., as denoting more than just a concrete thing/object in the real world, but not excluding the latter either. Danuta Borhardt has *matter*, which I read as specifically denoting something abstract. Am I right? This is why I propose *everything* (as distinct from *every* thing [cf. Czerniawski (1) *each thing*; Czerniawski (2) objects; Mikoś *each thing*; Borhardt *each matter*]) as a comprehensive concept, encompassing abstractions, human situations etc., as well as concrete objects. As for *fitting*, this adjective denotes what is *right, true* etc., while also connoting your concept *dignified*, for example.

Your comments, as always, will be gratefully welcomed.

**23 July 2014**

**Agata Brajerska-Mazur to Patrick John Corness:**

Uff, what a relief! I thought about "Your words must tell things as they deeply/profoundly are" but your new solution is much better. And it is shorter too! In such cases I find the Polish proverb: "*co dwie głowy to nie jedna*" particularly appropriate. Waiting (im)patiently for our further improvements.

**23 July 2014**

**Patrick John Corness to Agata Brajerska-Mazur:**

Thanks, I echo your words: What a relief! I will take it from there and try to come up with the next version of the complete translation soon.

**25 July 2014**

**Patrick John Corness to Agata Brajerska-Mazur:**

Having established a final line that I think you find acceptable, I have prepared the following new version, following your advice to reduce the

line length. I await with some trepidation your assessment of this latest edition:

**By Way of an Introduction (Generalities)**

When an Artist's spirit in spring of life  
Absorbs its breath as do butterflies,  
All he may say is this:  
*The Earth is round – it's spherical!*  
But later, when amid shivery frosts  
Trees shake and petals<sup>1</sup> fall,  
Then he must further add:  
*At the poles it's somewhat flattened.*

Supreme of all your charms –  
Yours, poetry! and yours, oratory! –  
One is eternally paramount:  
*Giving everything its fitting name!*

Translated by Patrick John Corness  
Version 4 (25 July 2014)

**28 July 2014**

**Agata Brajerska-Mazur to Patrick John Corness:**

The sense is now perfect, the structure of the poem is not that ideal. Maybe we should make the lines more or less even (but shorter than the original) and try to rhyme some of them. This is now a good translation, but I think we can make it a very good one. If I come up with a solution I will let you know, though right now I have little time to spare on Norwid due to other commitments. At any rate, the progress is visible and I hope we will deal with structural difficulties soon.

**28 July 2014**

**Patrick John Corness to Agata Brajerska-Mazur:**

Thank you—very encouraging. I will consider your latest proposals as soon as I get a chance.

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<sup>1</sup> Here, as perhaps the closest means of rendering the diminutive *kwiatki*, I propose the literary device of *synecdoche*.

**6 Aug 2014**

**Patrick John Corness to Agata Brajerska-Mazur:**

To attempt to rhyme even just some of the lines is a tall order. The well-known paucity of rhyming resources in English in general leads me to the conclusion that a choice usually has to be made between content/sense and rhyme pattern. On the other hand, in response to your first suggestion I believe it is more feasible to emulate the regular structure of the poem in terms of line length. You suggested that we might “make the lines more or less even (but shorter than the original).” There are nine syllables in each line of Norwid's original poem. Perhaps this regularity, natural to Polish, could be matched by adopting throughout a structure of four feet in English, a natural rhythm in that language (iambic tetrameter, cf. Wordsworth's *I wandered lonely as a cloud*). I have attempted this as follows, hopefully without detriment to the “perfect sense” you found in my previous attempt. What do you think? Is this progress?

**By Way of an Introduction (Generalities)**

When Artists' spirit, in life's spring,  
Absorbs its breath like butterflies,  
The most that they may say is this:  
“The Earth is spherical — it's round!”

But later, come the shivery frosts,  
Trees shake and petals fall away,  
And then they have to further add:  
“Well, at the poles it's somewhat flat.”

Surpassing always other charms –  
Yours, poetry! Yours, eloquence! –  
One golden rule will stay the same:  
“Give everything its fitting name!”

Translated by Patrick John Corness  
Version 5 (6 August 2014)

**6 Aug 2014**

**Agata Brajerska-Mazur to Patrick John Corness:**

I find this translation ABSOLUTELY PERFECT! I could never have thought of a better rendition myself. All the last week I was

trying to better the last version of your translation but in vain. And now such a pleasant surprise. CONGRATULATIONS!

6 Aug 2014

**Patrick John Corness to Agata Brajerska-Mazur:**

That's wonderful! Thank you, I really appreciate your support, and thank you for guiding me to a better translation. I hope Ewa will publish it in due course.

## MORE BOOKS

*Germans, Poland, and Colonial Expansion to the East: 1850 Through the Present*, edited by **Robert L. Nelson**. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. x + 201 pages. Index. ISBN 13-978-0-230-61268-6. Hardcover.

An excellent little book that lucidly details the most vital aspects of Polish-German relations within the time frame mentioned in the title. The present is particularly well described in Oliver Schmidtke's essay. The author points out disparities between the official discourse on Poland in Germany such as the inclusion of Poland in the European family of nations, and the media discourse that often resorts to stereotypes of Polish car thieves and so on, and attaches that stereotype to the Polish national character. Schmidtke concludes that "in post-1945 German-Polish relations the colonialist legacy has remained a significant force—not so much in terms of structures of domination but of stereotypical perceptions and seem to be almost frozen in time" (190). Schmidtke considers this to be "an astonishing example of the persistence of collective memories" and of freezing the Other in a classically Orientalist immobile image. However, the discourse of Germany's political and intellectual elites is somewhat different in that these negative images are less entrenched among the educated and the sophisticated. Yet the image of "a threatening and inferior Polish neighbor" (191) is still strong.

Schmidtke concludes that "the colonialist structures did not only characterize European powers' policies [toward countries outside

Europe], but they have also shaped Europe domestically and provided a forceful script for imperialistic policies" (193).

*The Legs of Izolda Morgan: Selected Writings*, by **Bruno Jasiński**. Translated by **Soren A. Gauger and Guy Torr**. Prague: Twisted Spoon Press (P.O. Box 21, Preslova 12, 150 21 Prague 5, Czech Republic), 2014. 163 pages. ISBN 978-80-86264-40-0. Hardcover.

Jasiński was a typical futurist of the 1920s, pretentiously declaring that social structures should be destroyed and full anarchy introduced. As was the case with his Russian counterparts, his artistic manifestos now strike us as the games spoiled children play rather than conclusions reached after much reflection. Jasiński wrote poetry, prose, and manifestos about "the futurization of life" (9). In one of them he declares his intention to "join Stanisław Brzozowski (an earlier literary rebel) in declaring a great clearance sale of old junk" (10). In the anarchistic future world he envisages, "everyone can be an artist" (13) and everyone can enjoy "equality in erotic and family relationships" (14). This manifesto is followed by a number of futuristic short stories that strike one as stale and dated.

Like the gay twenties in Paris and New York, futurism was a trend that combined innocence and carelessness with an unmatched demonstration of irresponsibility. Jasiński eventually left Poland for the Soviet Union which he considered a futurist paradise. His untimely death there (he was executed in the Butyrki prison in 1938 at age thirty-seven) was a not unexpected *coda* to his chaotic life.

While it is entertaining to page through this brief book, one wonders to what purpose and for whose money was it translated into English and handsomely published. Jasiński contributes nothing constructive to the life of contemporary humanity. His absurdities lost their bite long ago, just as did those of the Russian futurists. With so much valuable Polish literature remaining untranslated into English, why spend so much time and money on Jasiński? (SB)

