

KWARTALNIK NEOFILOLOGICZNY, LXX, 2/2023

DOI: 10.24425/kn.2023.146546

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THE POLISH TRANSLATION OF *A WIZARD OF EARTHSEA*
BY URSULA K. LE GUIN

ABSTRACT

This paper analyses Stanisław Barańczak's translation of Ursula K. Le Guin's novel *A Wizard of Earthsea*. An overview of the first publications of the American writer in Poland is followed by a description of the obstacles that were encountered by Stanisław Lem when trying to publish Le Guin's novel in the book series that he directed. Subsequently, Stanisław Barańczak's translation is analysed to show the strategies that he adopted, the recurring techniques, and the problematic renderings due to a lack of familiarity with the fantasy genre.

KEYWORDS: Ursula K. Le Guin, *A Wizard of Earthsea*, Stanisław Lem, Stanisław Barańczak, censorship, translation

ABSTRACT

L'articolo analizza la traduzione del romanzo *A Wizard of Earthsea* di Ursula K. Le Guin realizzata da Stanisław Barańczak. A una panoramica delle prime pubblicazioni della scrittrice americana in Polonia seguirà la descrizione degli ostacoli incontrati da Stanisław Lem nel tentativo di pubblicare il romanzo di Le Guin nella collana da lui diretta. Successivamente, verrà analizzata la traduzione di Stanisław Barańczak per mostrare le strategie adottate, le tecniche ricorrenti e le rese problematiche dovute alla mancanza di familiarità con il genere fantasy.

PAROLE CHIAVE: Ursula K. Le Guin, *A Wizard of Earthsea*, Stanisław Lem, Stanisław Barańczak, censura, traduzione

INTRODUCTION

Thanks to its original combination of children's literature, a coming-of-age novel, an epic tale, and a mythopoetic narrative infused with Taoist philosophy and Jungian suggestions, *A Wizard of Earthsea*, the first book of *The Earthsea Cycle* by



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Ursula K. Le Guin, has become a classic of fantasy literature. This novel is set in a fictional archipelago filled with magic and populated by humans, dragons, and other imaginary creatures. The story follows a young boy called Ged, who learns to discipline his powers in a journey toward self-awareness. As a result the protagonist becomes conscious of the consequences of his actions, the delicate balance between evil and good on which the universe is built, the understanding of human limits, and the need to accept death as a natural part of the cosmic order. Over time, Le Guin's novel has had multiple interpretations and has been read from a variety of perspectives, including literary studies, cultural anthropology, psychology, religion, philosophy, feminism, and ecocriticism (among others, see Attebery 1980; Cummins 1990; Cadden 2005: 79–113; Bernardo, Murphy 2006; Miller 2023).

Published in 1968, this novel soon gained international recognition and in the following years it was translated into many languages. *A Wizard of Earthsea* was translated into Polish by Stanisław Barańczak in 1976 but published in 1983. This translation has frequently been described as one of the best renderings of Anglophone fantasy literature in Poland and a paradigmatic example of communist censorship. Nonetheless, it has never been subject to an in-depth and detailed investigation covering not only aspects such as proper names or particular lexical items (see, for example, Gutfeld 2018, 2021) but also stylistic issues, translation techniques, and linguistic strategies. Although recent studies have started to underline some problematical traits of the Polish version of the novel, much still remains to be properly exploited. Before proceeding with the analysis of Barańczak's translation, it may be useful to recall the intricate events that surrounded its publication and the context in which the book appeared, including a brief overview of the previous Polish translations of Le Guin's short stories. As we will see, it is only by accident that these translations preceded and not followed *A Wizard of Earthsea*. As a matter of fact, they ended up laying the groundwork for the translation of this novel and showed an unmet demand of the Polish audience to read Le Guin's works in their own language.

BEFORE *A WIZARD OF EARTHSEA*

Le Guin's works began to be published in Poland in the second half of the 1970s, beginning with the short story *The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas*, which was published in the monthly "Literatura na Świecie" in 1976 as *Ci, którzy odchodzą z Omelas* (in later editions, the title was changed to *Niektórzy odchodzą z Omelas*). It is emblematic, or at least curious, that Le Guin's debut in People's Poland, despite being notoriously disrespectful of civil liberties, took place with a story of a utopian society whose prosperity is achieved by the violation of human rights. Additionally, the story was not published by the clandestine underground press, but in an official periodical, albeit liberal and open to new trends, of the

Polish National Library. Between 1978 and 1980, several of Le Guin's stories appeared in high-circulation, mainstream, and widespread magazines such as "Problemy", "Przegląd Techniczny" and "Nurt", including *April in Paris* (*Kwiecień w Paryżu*, 1978), *The Masters* (*Mistrzowie*, 1978), *Nine Lives* (*Dziewięć żywotów*, 1979), *The Word of Unbinding* (*Magiczne słowo*, 1979), *Semley's Necklace* (*Naszyjnik Semley*, 1979), *The Diary of the Rose* (*Dziennik Róży*, 1980). Afterward, the short story collections *The Wind's Twelve Quarters* (*Wszystkie strony świata*) and *Very Far Away from Anywhere Else* (*Zewsząd bardzo daleko*) were printed in 1980 and 1983, respectively, by the stated-owned publishing house Iskry¹. The translation of a large number of Le Guin's writings in the official publishing circuit, including texts on uncomfortable topics for the highly ideological cultural climate of the time, was likely to be due to the common belief that fantastic literature was disengaged, escapist, and detached from reality, and therefore inoffensive. Moreover, fantasy and science fiction often resorted to symbolic, metaphorical, and allegorical narratives that were too elusive to end up in the grip of censorship. Contrary to what is commonly believed, censors often recognized these writing procedures but allowed the books to be published (Budrowska 2009: 99). The reason is that

The "Aesopian language" of the time was an effective weapon (or rather: a shield), but not because it effectively confused the censors, but rather because any ambiguous, camouflaged "criticism of the system", formulated by means of various (fantastic, grotesque, historical) "costumes" was considered by the censors to be so hermetic or so generic that, in fact, harmless. (Mojzak 2015: 304)²

Like other fantasy and science fiction authors, Le Guin was not published by the opposition press, which was hostile to writers who did not carry out a social critique through direct and politicized analyses of the contemporary world. This is (for instance) the main criticism addressed to Stanisław Lem and other novelists by the advocates of realistic and committed literature (see Kornhauser, Zagajewski 1974). However, fantastic fiction was frequently not at all disengaged and apolitical but acted in a veiled or disguised way, resorting to crypto-political (Mazurkiewicz 2011) or metonymic modes of representation (Szczerbakiewicz 2016).

Instead, Le Guin aroused interest in the youth counterculture linked to alternative, punk, and anarchic movements operating outside the regime and opposition dichotomy that was in force until 1989. Here, clubs of Polish science fiction enthusiasts produced their own fanzines and semi-legal publications, the so-called "club editions", many of which were translations of foreign literature. They were often printed without the author's authorization, with makeshift means, poor

¹ For a complete bibliography of the Polish translations and editions of Le Guin's works see <encyklopediafantastyki.pl> and <baza.fantasta.pl>.

² Unless otherwise indicated, translations are my own, A. A.

graphics, and a circulation of less than 100 copies (but in the absence of accurate controls, this figure was often much higher) to avoid submitting them to the scrutiny of the Main Office for Control of the Press, Publications and Public Performances, that is the Censorship Office. In theory, they constituted a space of almost unlimited freedom of expression. Le Guin's *The Rule of Names* appeared as *Prawa imion* in the fanzine "Materiały" (1979) and *Planet of Exile* as *Planeta wygnania* in the fanzine "Kwazar" (1982), which were both published by the Science Fiction Lovers Club "Orbita" in Poznań. These were often amateurish, unprofessional and literal translations but they continued to appear throughout the 1980s because they filled a gap: if the official publishing houses did not offer texts that the readers wanted to read, then the readers published them themselves. This was a unique phenomenon on a worldwide scale (see Gutfeld 2021: 220–221; Pindel 2019: 100, 104–106).

THE PUBLICATION OF *A WIZARD OF EARTHSEA* IN POLAND

The Polish translation of *A Wizard of Earthsea* was published in 1983 and was a turning point in the diffusion and reception of Le Guin's works in Poland. Not only was it the first novel by the American writer to be translated into Polish but leading figures of the Polish intelligentsia of the time were involved in its release and faced numerous troubles to print the book. The translation of *A Wizard of Earthsea* had been strongly desired by Stanisław Lem, a writer with considerable symbolic capital and bargaining power in People's Poland, as well as a great admirer of Le Guin, to whom he was linked by a genuine though not always easy friendship (see Orliński 2021; Gajewska 2021: 470–489)³. Lem planned to publish the book in the series *Stanisław Lem Poleca* (Stanisław Lem Recommends), which he directed at the publishing house Wydawnictwo Literackie of Krakow. Characterized by a careful selection of texts, all provided with an afterword by Lem himself, the series did not have an easy life. A total of four volumes – Philip K. Dick's *Ubik*, Stefan Grabiński's *Amazing Stories*, Montague Rhodes James's *Short Ghost Stories of an Antiquary*, and the Strugatsky brothers' *Roadside Picnic* – were released after many difficulties (see Orliński 2007, 2021; Gajewska 2021). Lem had less luck with Alfred Bester, whose *The Stars My Destination* was rejected by the publisher with the accusation of American imperialism, and, indeed, with Ursula K. Le Guin. Again, the reason was political. The American writer's novel was translated by Stanisław Barańczak, the most prominent translator and translation

³ Recalling her refusal of the Nebula Prize in sign of protest when Lem was deprived of his honorary membership to the Science Fiction Writers of America, Le Guin (2017: 61) said that "Lem was a difficult, arrogant, sometimes insufferable man, but a courageous one and a first-rate author, writing with more independence of mind than would seem possible in Poland under the Soviet regime".

specialist of the time, the Polish voice of Shakespeare, esteemed poet, opposition intellectual, and from the 1980s professor at Harvard, who had never until then, and never afterward, tried his hand at a prose work. His translation of Le Guin's novel, which was ready in 1976, was immediately blocked by censorship. Barańczak was one of the founders of the socio-political movement KOR (Workers' Defence Committee), from which *Solidarność* would later be born, and had been among the signatories of the *Letter of 59*, a protest against the project of changes to the constitution aimed at perpetuating the hegemonic role of the Party as well as the alliance with the USSR. As a result, in 1977 Barańczak was fired by the University of Poznań and ended up on the list of writers and artists whose names could not even be officially pronounced and whose publications were systematically blocked by the supervisory bodies. An internal directive of the Main Office for Control of the Press, Publications and Public Performances dated 21 February 1976 stated that:

All publications of the authors from the list below, reported by the press and publishing houses, and all cases of mentioning their names, should be reported to the management of the Office, in agreement with which these materials may only be released. The provision does not apply to radio and TV, whose management ensures compliance with these rules on its own. The content of this provision is intended solely for the information of censors. (Strzyżewski 2015: 95)

The translation of *A Wizard of Earthsea* was therefore blocked, but Lem did everything in his power to find a solution. On October 26, 1976, he wrote to Katarzyna Krzemuska, vice-director of Wydawnictwo Literackie, complaining about the situation and stating that "the series is in prolonged agony. This agony should be shortened by suspending the series, or the series should be healed" (Orliński 2021: 231). On December 19, 1976, he wrote to Andrzej Kurz, director of Wydawnictwo Literackie, in which he stated, among other things:

I hereby permit myself to submit to your attention the following memorandum in accordance with the practices proper to big politics. The series is in trouble as currently four of its volumes cannot be released. Two because the translators [Barańczak and Lewandowska, AA] has become *persona non grata* for our authorities. [...] As regards the first two books, I will omit the high considerations of social and moral nature in support of the publication of these works, translated by people who have fallen into political disfavour, because such a prohibitionist policy is clearly an affront to everything that is preached in our system about protecting culture. (Lem 1976)

Remarking the fact that he publicly announced the release of the books, including that of Le Guin, "a writer I know personally", Lem tried to convince the publisher that his public image could be compromised: "It is therefore impossible for me in the long run not to communicate to the interested party why the book cannot be published by Wydawnictwo Literackie. It probably won't have world-

shattering repercussions, but it will not put us in a good light” (Lem 1976). Finally, Lem underlined the consequences that this decision would have had on the series:

I’m afraid that failing to publish books that have been named and are ready to be printed will deal a fatal blow to the series, which will never recover from it. Again, such omission won’t probably be the end of the world, but it will be a symptom, very unfavorably testifying to our editorial policy. (Lem 1976)

On December 27, 1976, Lem wrote again to Krzemuska declaring that

The tactics that WL used towards Mrs. U. Le Guin do not seem reasonable to me. (She sent me a copy of her correspondence with you). WL wrote to her that *Wizard* had already been sent to the printing house in 1976, but nothing about why it was not released. [...] I did not give her any advice, but I know that she intends to present the case to PEN America. (Orliński 2021: 235)

However, Lem’s protests yielded no results. He then tried another approach, attempting to get the translation released with the name of Barańczak’s wife, Anna, so as to circumvent the censorship. The text was sent for composition and was ready for printing when Jerzy Łukaszewicz, secretary of the Central Committee responsible for press and propaganda, ordered its destruction (Looby 2015: 19; Orliński 2017: 331). In the face of these problems, and as a sign of protest, Lem made the drastic decision to permanently close the series and stop publishing. In a 1983 interview, answering a question from Raymond Federman about his current situation, he replied that he was “on strike”, indicating the reasons as follows:

It had to do with a poet, Baranczak (considered a dissident in the 1970s, but at present teaching at Harvard University, I believe), whose translation of a novel by Ursula Le Guin could not be published here. I was at the time Director of the collection in which this book was to appear. The only way for me to express my protest was to stop publishing. For the last three years I have not published anything in Poland. (Federman 1983: 7)

It is worth noting that the text itself was not censored, cut, or edited. The publication was blocked as a result of the political stance of the translator and not because of the content of the novel. As Agnieszka Bąbel (2018: 208) points out, censors “paid less attention to the text itself and more to the general political and ideological attitude of the author”. As Stanisław Barańczak’s case shows, this statement can be extended to other figures involved in the publishing process, including the translators (for more detail on this topic, see also Budrowska 2009; Looby 2015).

Just that year, however, after having remained in the drawer for a long time, the translation of *A Wizard of Earthsea* was published by Wydawnictwo Literackie with the 1976 afterword by Lem, but in another series, *Fantastyka i Groza* (Fantasy and Horror). The initial print run, which was high by our standards but normal for the

time, was 20,350 copies (“Przewodnik Bibliograficzny” 1983: 828). The publication of the novel was almost certainly due to the new political climate: martial law was suspended in Poland on December 31, 1982, the leadership of the Party had changed, as had its priorities, including censorship, whose grips had loosened, while Barańczak had emigrated to the United States in 1981.

READINGS AND REVIEWS UPON RELEASE

In his afterword Lem expressed great esteem for Le Guin, stating for example that “today in the United States there is no one at her level in the field of fantastic literature, except perhaps Philip K. Dick”, and adding that “Le Guin helped me, with her novel, to regain faith in the vitality of American fantastic literature” (Lem 1983: 192 and 198), on which he had expressed unflattering judgments in the past, leading to his expulsion from the Science Fiction Writers of America. He then described the main themes of the novel – the growth and maturing of the protagonist as a parable of the process of gaining self-awareness, and the understanding of one’s limits and the limits of knowledge, which can be both an instrument of freedom and a source of danger. Among the reading keys that Lem suggested to the reader, the most interesting, and only apparently paradoxical, is that of a realistic “fairy tale”, as he defined the novel. According to Lem, its realism derived from the depiction of a typical real-life situation (the importance of knowing oneself) and from the description of an internally cohesive universe, which was plausible and governed by its own laws, regardless of the allegorical narrative. Lem then concluded by stating that it was “the only example of American fantasy that commanded my respect” (Lem 1983: 198).

The book was enthusiastically received in both the sectoral and generalist press, and the following year it received the *Złota Sepulka* prize for best foreign novel. Lem exerted a strong influence on its reception, both with his authority, which provided a sort of patronage and guarantee of the quality of the text, and with his afterword, which presented ready-to-use terms, interpretations and concepts that the reviewers made full use of. In this homogeneous and somehow predictable scenario, centred on the reading of *A Wizard* as a Bildungsroman and a metaphor for becoming aware of oneself and the surrounding world, two other interpretations stood out. The first saw in the reunification of the protagonist with his own shadow a concrete realisation of the Jungian “process of individuation” that aimed at the reconstitution of the integrity of the individual through the acceptance of his own dark side (Szponder 1984). The other suggested that the vision of a world torn between light and shadow, life and death, word and silence, with the consequent need to find a balance between antithetical elements, was based on Taoist philosophy (Zgorzelski 1984). The few criticisms received by the novel did not concern the work itself but were made of the Polish edition. On the one hand, it lacked maps, which were an integral part of the original novel and an aid for readers, but were clearly

considered unnecessary by the publisher Wydawnictwo Literackie. On the other hand, it was supplemented by misleading illustrations, which pushed toward a reading of the book as a gothic novel rather than a fantasy novel (Zgorzelski 1984: 66).

AN ANALYSIS OF BARAŃCZAK'S TRANSLATION

Barańczak's translation has been defined as "beautiful", "perfect", "brilliant" (see Zgorzelski 1984; Szostak 2011; Sedenko 2014) and has been highly appreciated both by critics and readers, an opinion that has basically never changed over time⁴. An extremely polished version, it is characterized by great fluency, stylistic refinement, and a sense of language, carefully distinguishing linguistic registers, and returning the sound and the rhythm of Le Guin's phrase. Still, it presents some debatable solutions, probably due to Barańczak's lack of confidence in fantastic fiction, which the translator's aura of prestige and professionalism has overshadowed but which more recent studies have begun to highlight (see Gutfeld 2018, 2021). It should be recalled that Barańczak introduced the concept of "semantic dominant" into Polish translation discourse, which was developed from Jakobson's notion of "linguistic dominant", consisting of the "absolutely primary semantic element" of a text, "its indelible and irreplaceable 'formal' ingredient, which in its essence is the key to 'content'" (Barańczak 1990: 17). It can be thus considered as the main style element (e.g., rhyme, metre, syntax, discourse structure etc.) that distinguishes a text and constitutes the axis around which the translator develops and carries on their own translation strategy. In Le Guin's novel, the dominant identified by Barańczak is presumably of a stylistic type. Lem (1983: 195), for example, stated that the translation "hasn't lost a single crumb of the poetry of *A Wizard of Earthsea*". However, fantastic fiction is often marked by other distinctive factors, such as specific terminology, neologisms or unique onomastic elements that are aimed at underlining the otherness of the imaginary world created by the author.

As regards terminological issues, Dorota Gutfeld points to a problem of lexical inconsistency and inadequacy:

In the original, there is a distinction between *wizards* (fully qualified magicians who are primarily obedient to the philosophy of their art) and *sorcerers* (mages who have not undergone full training and provide more down-to-earth services). The former are translated by Barańczak as *czarodzieje*, the latter as *czarownicy*, but in the title as an equivalent of *wizard* there is also another term, *czarnoksiężnik*, which does not apply to the title character and is generally used to describe the user of black magic (as, for example, by Skibniewska in Tolkien's translation of *necromancer*). (Gutfeld 2018: 149)

⁴ It has even been claimed that "if any translation was 'better' than the original, it would be this one" (see Miś 2014).

For the same reasons, the translation of other terms falling into the semantic field of magic also seems to be inaccurate, such as *wizardry*, which was variously rendered as *sztuka czarnoksięska*, *czarnoksięska wiedza*, *czarnoksięstwo* (necromantic art or knowledge, necromancy). It should be also added that the term *czarnoksiężnik* not only appears in the title but also in the text, while *sorcerer* is translated on one occasion as *guślarz*, a word with a strong cultural connotation that is linked to the magical practices of the ancient Slavs and as such appearing in Polish romantic literature, such as in Adam Mickiewicz's *Forefather's Eve, part II*. The very translation of the title is perplexing: not only is *wizard* rendered with the unfitting *czarnoksiężnik*, but we also note the substitution of the toponym *Earthsea* with *Archipelag*, a hyponym by which Le Guin indicates only a part of her imaginary world. In fact, only the inner islands belong to the archipelago, not the four Reaches nor the Kargad Lands. The neologism created by the American writer has been probably replaced with a common, realistic term to avoid emphasizing right from the title that the novel belongs to the fantasy genre, which did not enjoy particular respect in Poland at that time. The same toponym *Earthsea* is translated in the text as *Światomorze* (lit. Worldsea), but the Polish neologism "emphasized the dominance of sea and water" and "did not obtain the general approval of the readers, who did not find in that name the presence, so important to understand the worlds conceived by Le Guin, of the balance existing between the creative forces of that reality" (Błażejowski 1993: 26). In later editions *Światomorze* was therefore replaced by *Ziemiomorze*, which "emphasized the constant interpenetration of land and sea spaces" (Błażejowski 1993: 26). The reasons behind this change are not entirely clear and "it has not been possible to determine who ultimately changed the name in Barańczak's translation – himself or the publisher. Regardless of that, the version accepted by the majority of SF lovers was adopted" (Błażejowski 1993: 165). However, Gutfeld (2018: 224) states that "Barańczak's translation of *A Wizard of Earthsea* was re-edited to include a new Polish neologism for Earthsea ('Ziemiomorze' rather than Barańczak's original 'światomorze') to be consistent with later volumes"⁵. In later editions other small inaccuracies were also fixed to restore the internal consistency of Le Guin's imaginary world. One of them concerns the term *ivory*, which was originally translated as *kość słoniowa*, literally meaning "elephant bone", an animal that was not present in Le Guin's universe. Although the Polish expression is the semantic equivalent of the English term, it has been replaced with a more adequate *kość smocza* (dragon bone) (see Gutfeld 2021: 224). The lack of familiarity with fantastic literature also emerges in the generalisation of some specific terms; such as *familiar*, which was translated with *zwierzę* (animal), although in Polish language the word *chowaniec* indicates the creature that accompanies a wizard or a witch.

Neologisms referring to plants, animals, fantastic creatures, or objects are usually borrowed without any adaptation, for instance *perriot*, *corly*, *gebbeth*,

⁵ Barańczak's translation was reprinted seven times in the years 1991–2013.

pellawi, *otak*, *harrekki*. Other times, they undergo a lexical recreation or morphological calque, such as *Sparkweed* as *Iskiernik* or *fourfoil* as *czworolistek*, or a graphical-phonetical adaptation, such as *pendick-tree* as *drzewo pendik*, or *turbies* as *rybki zwane turbikami* (small fish called turbies), here with an internal gloss. Omission and generalisation are also adopted, so *rushwash tea*, a tisane made from an imaginary plant that exists only in Le Guin's world, is translated as *filiżanka ziółek* or *kubek naparu z ziół* (herbal infusion). Barańczak sometimes takes existing terms for neologisms and consequently uses the same word in the target text as it is found in the source text, supplementing it with an internal gloss that explains to the reader the category that the item belongs to. For instance, *a school of silver pannies* is translated as *ławica srebrnych rybek zwanych "pannies"* (a school of silver fish called "pannies"), while *murre* is rendered as *ptak murre* (the bird murre). However, it must be said that this kind of error is probably due to limited access to dictionaries, glossaries, and other lexicographic resources in the 1970s.

A translation technique that Barańczak frequently resorts to is the descriptive specification, which aimed to explain cultural-specific items to Polish readers or to add more details and information about some aspect of the reality described in the novel (only page numbers will be indicated henceforth when quoting from Le Guin 1983 and 1984):

EN	PL
dry wheatcakes (175)	suche podplomyki z pszennej mąki (168)
clinker-built (142)	zbita z nakładających się jedna na drugą desek (138)
whale-gut hammock (143)	hamak spleciony ze sznurów z wielorybich jelit (138)
West of Roke [...] lie the Ninety Isles (82)	Na zachód od Roke [...] leży stłoczona gromada Dziewięćdziesięciu Wysp (81)
Here's a month's work nearly finished (86)	Cały miesiąc trwała ta robota; dopiero teraz zbliżam się do końca (84)

The translation of proper names, especially anthroponyms and toponyms, would deserve a study of its own. Here, we only point out that the main techniques employed by Barańczak are the direct borrowing of neologisms (*Roke*, *Ged*, *Jasper*); the semantic translation of transparent names (*Northward Vale* as *Dolina Północna*, *High Fall* as *Wysokie Zbocze*, *Falcon's Nest* as *Sokole Gniazdo*, *Ravenland* as *Kraina Kruków*); the partial calque, in which only the common noun but not the neologism is translated (*Kembermouth* as *Ujście Kember*, *Kargad Empire* as *Cesarstwo Kargad*, *Kapperding Scarp* as *Urwisko Kapperding*, *Ogion the Silent* as *Ogion Milczący*); and, graphical-phonetical or morphological adaptation to Polish language (*Torikles* as *Torykle*, *Enlades* as *Enlady*, *Andrades* as *Andrady*, *Pelnish Sea* as *Morze Pelniskie*, *Nagian Chant* as *Pieśń Nagiańska*).

Sometimes proper names, or their parts, although being quite understandable, are not semantically translated but totally or partially borrowed, such as *Thwilburn*, *Low Torning*, or *Cutnorth Cliff* rendered as *Urwisko Cutnorth* (more detail on Barańczak's translation of proper names can be found in Gutfeld 2012: 67-68).

Idiomatic expressions have been generally recognized as such and consequently translated by Barańczak with functional equivalents, such as *to sneak a look* (63) with *zapaść żurawia* (64). However, the translator sometimes did not identify them and rendered them literally: for instance, *it sticks to your ribs* (42), said of a food that makes you feel like you have eaten a lot, is translated with the calque *trzyma się to żeber* (44).

As regards style issues, though Barańczak generally respects and reproduces the different linguistic registers that are employed in the novel, he is somehow inclined to elevate the tone of the phrase by means of an ennobling strategy, frequently accompanied by expansion and amplification, as in the following examples:

EN	PL
storm-racked (1)	umęczony przez sztormy (7)
eyes like pebbles (40)	z agatowymi oczyma (41)
If silence and gloom is what you want (62)	Jeśli cisza i ponurość są przedmiotem twoich pragnień (62)
to steel himself (106)	uzbroić się w męstwo (104)
slow, sparse conversation (142)	powolna, często przerywana milczeniem pogawędka (138)
full of passions and wonders (50)	pełne gwałtownych namiętności i nadprzyrodzonych zdarzeń (50)

These excerpts exemplify Barańczak's tendency to apply his own poetical principles, devices, and solutions to the text that he was translating – ennobling, enriching, and manipulating it. Kaczorowska (2011: 25) states that “his poetical personality constitutes the overarching category that organizes the whole creative practice”, so that “both his own works and translations are created according to similar principles”. Eventually, “as a result of the translation strategy he adopted, Barańczak creates an image of the original that fulfills the poetic norms he established” (Kaczorowska 2011: 25; for more detail on Barańczak as *poeta translator*, see also Rajewska 2007).

Other stylistic features of the Polish version that can be explained as idiolectal traits of the translator are the omission and the simplification – that is, the tendency to avoid repetitions by means of periphrases and circumlocutions, to substitute two or more synonyms with only one word, or to reduce the redundancies –, which are typical traits of Le Guin's writing, as in the following table:

EN	PL
ridge behind ridge (2)	jeden za drugim (7)
heart and hearth of the Archipelago (30)	serce Archipelagu (34)
The world is in balance, in Equilibrium (48)	Świat jest w Równowadze (49)
the relentless pull and pull and pull (111)	nieprzerwane ciągnięcie (108)
He ran, he ran (116)	Biegł (113)
In Gont they say Gontish women are brave (169)	Na wyspie Gont twierdzi się, że tamtejsze kobiety są odważne (163)
This is only a harrekki, have you no harrekki on Gont? (169)	To tylko harrekki, czy nie macie takich na wyspie Gont? (163)

Generally, Barańczak maintains the high, solemn tone of some Le Guin's sentences, which was probably congenial to his personal writing style, for example *Hateful was the look he fixed on Ged across the dark intervening air* (193), translated as *Pelen nienawiści był wzrok, który utkwiał w Gedzie poprzez dzielący ich półmrok* (185). We should also note a frequent recourse to a whole set of procedures like reformulation, displacement, syntactic inversion, lengthening, addition and so on that were aimed at rephrasing the source text so as to obtain a more natural, genuine effect. Two examples follow:

EN	PL
Jasper took Ged to sit with a heavyset fellow called Vetch, who said nothing much but shovelled in his food with a will (42)	Jasper i Ged usiedli wraz z krępyim chłopakiem imieniem Vetch, który po przedstawieniu się nie powiedział nic więcej, a tylko z zapałem pakował sobie jedzenie do ust (43)
Straight out into the sea they danced, under the moon one night past full, and the music was lost in the breakers' sound (60)	W świetle księżyca, który zeszłej nocy był w pełni, dotarli tańcząc aż do samego morza i muzyka zginęła w szumie przyboju (61)

Barańczak shows an excellent knowledge of English language, from lexicon to idioms, from syntax to morphology, nonetheless from time to time he incurs comprehension mistakes, whose number is quite limited, as the following examples show:

EN	PL
<u>Like any village witch</u> she could brew up a love-potion (6)	Potrafiła warzyć lubczyk <u>jak żadna wiejska czarownica</u> (11)
He put into Vetch's hands the little otak, which as usual <u>had been riding</u> on his shoulder (63)	Włożył w dłonie Vetcha małego otaka, który jak zwykle <u>siedział był</u> na jego ramieniu (64)
<u>He knew now</u> why the Archmage had feared to send him forth (90)	<u>Nie wiedział</u> , dlaczego Arcymag lękał się wyprowadzić go w świat (88)
White <u>Godbrothers</u> of Atuan (12)	Biali <u>Bracia Boga</u> z Atuanu (16)

In the first sentence, the meaning is that the woman, like any other simple country witch, can prepare basic potions, but in the Polish translation she is presented as the only one who is able to do it. In the second, the little animal that is kept as a pet is always on the go, and not just sitting still on Vetch's shoulder. The third is clearly a reading mistake: probably Barańczak read *not* instead of *now*, so in Polish the meaning of the sentence is exactly the opposite than in English. Finally, the White Godbrothers are two Gods, Atwah and Wuluah, called Twin Gods or Warrior Gods of the Kargad Lands. The Polish translation suggests instead that they are the brothers of another, non-existing God of Atuan.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the above-mentioned inadequacies, and considering the generally high level of Barańczak's version, it stands out clearly against the background of the translations of fantasy and science fiction literature that were made in Poland in the 1970s and 1980s. Usually, they were very amateurish and characterized by a large number of typos, misunderstandings, borrowings from English, cuts, and reductions because they were made by exponents of the fandom driven by great passion but without specific linguistic or literary skills (see also Braiter 1993; Pindel 2019: 100; Gutfeld 2021). In consideration of their weaknesses, these novels were later retranslated by well-known practitioners in the field of science fiction and fantasy literature to meet higher linguistic standards and the increasing demands of the readers. Limiting ourselves to the sole *Earthsea Cycle*, the following three volumes of the series were later retranslated by Piotr W. Cholewa and Paulina Braiter, who are, among others, the Polish voices of such writers as J.R.R. Tolkien, Neil Gaiman, Ray Bradbury, Isaac Asimov, Terry Pratchett, William Gibson, and Robert Zelazny. In particular, *The Tombs of Atuan*, which was released as *Grobowce Atuanu* in Jacek Kozerski's translation as a club edition in 1986 (and was later released by Phantom Press in 1990), was made available in the following year in a new rendition by Piotr W. Cholewa. *The Farthest Shore*, which was originally released as a club edition in 1986 as *Najdalszy brzeg* in Jacek Kozerski's and Zofia Uhrynowska-Hanasz's version, and *Tehanu*, which was translated by Robert Jawień and released in 1991 by Phantom Press, were both retranslated by Paulina Braiter. Only Barańczak's version has never been retranslated and is still reprinted, which is clear evidence of the constant approval of publishers, commentators, and readers, due to a combination of coherent translation strategy, smooth writing and a clear stylistic direction. Barańczak and Lem also deserve credit for having introduced Le Guin's work into the Polish literary system, legitimizing it thanks to their intellectual prestige and symbolic capital in a politically insidious era, which was not particularly well-disposed towards fantasy fiction. The publication of *A Wizard of Earthsea* marked the passage of Le Guin from a niche writer, whose works were known only by

a small audience (i.e., the science fiction and fantasy fandom), to a mainstream author. Her reputation persists to this day in Poland, where almost all of her writings are now available and have been subject to a number of original interpretations that have contributed to the global understanding of Le Guin's oeuvre (to name few, see Bianga and Stawicki 1997; Oziewicz 2008; Lason-Kochańska 2008; Trębicki 2014).

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