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INTRODUCTION

The notion of translation has been meticulously scrutinised by scholars and linguists all over the world and there seem to be as many explanations of the translation phenomenon as there are theorists. Some of them are listed below:

Susan Bassnett and Andre Lefevere believed that

translation is a rewriting of an original text. (...) Rewriting is manipulation, undertaken in the service of power, and its positive aspect can help in the evolution of a literature and a society (Lefevere 1992: 3).

Ignacy Włodek (1723-1780) presented his view on translation in the following manner:

Mówiąc o tłumaczeniu w szczególności te prawidła zachować przynależy: aby tłumaczenie było rzetelne, jasne i takie, aby nie znać było tego, że to z innego języka przenoszone jest (Balcerzan 1977: 20).

Whereas Petrus Danielus Huetius (1630-1721) defined translation process accordingly:

a translation is a text written in a well-known language which refers to and represents a text in a language which is not as well known (Lefevere 1992: 4).

Perpetually, prominent writers and contemporary scholars endeavour to find the key to impeccable, perfect translation. Undoubtedly, they have been inspired by translation history which abounds in unique and invaluable translation accomplishments. Yet, at the same time, they must be aware that our translation heritage also contains translations which invariably have been doomed to constitute only humble copies of the original works.

Clearly, a successful rendition is easier to define than to achieve, irrespective of the epoch in which it is written.

Ignacy Krasicki (1735-1801) expressed the illusionary search for success experienced by translator in the face of the challenging task of translation in the following manner:

Tłumaczenie zdaje się być wielu wyznaniem upokarzającym własnej niezdolności (Balcerzan 1977: 74).

Despite constant attempts both in the past and the present, the key to ideal translation has not yet been found, perhaps due to the fact that there are potentially more keys to one and only success.

As the book attempts to show, theory met practice to the degree that a particular translator allowed for it. Interestingly, success in translation could be seen in a vast array of possibilities depending on individual translators' approach and their courage to take risks where conformists would not dare to do so.

The present study attempts to introduce the views on translation of prominent 18th century writers, and to demonstrate, on the basis of samples, to what extent theory was applied in practice. The samples are carefully analysed and conclusions are drawn.

The whole work consists of two parts, presenting all the information necessary to convey the theoretical background to 18th century translation studies. Chapter 1, after a brief account of the history of translation up to the 18th century, covers a spectrum of opinions on translation as advocated by the most distinguished representatives of the epoch (both Polish and English). Chapter 2 concentrates on the practical dimension of the study and reveals portraits of subsequent renditions which are analysed in the light of 18th century theoretical translation guidelines. The earliest translations from English into Polish are carefully analysed to establish whether given translators succeeded in reconciling both theoretical requirements and their natural geniuses. The findings of the research are based on relevant examples presented in the book. Each masterpiece is accompanied by original samples and illustrations. Chapters 3 and 4 present the 18th century poetry and drama translations supported by relevant examples. Chapter 5 focuses on culture-bound elements in the selected 18th century translations. The final conclusions allow us to form a wider picture of 18th century translations by juxtaposing all the examined literary works and their translations with the theoretical requirements, thus contributing to greater objectivity in the final commentary. The conclusions contain my individual comments, with particular emphasis on the dominant translation strategy preferred by a given translator. Attachment includes biographies of famous authors and writers whose works were used for the purposes of this research.

It is my hope that the theoretical and practical material as well as the resources presented in this book will serve as a useful reference which will encourage further research in the field of translation studies. At the same time, perhaps some of these stunning masterpieces will be rescued from oblivion as we carefully take them down from the top shelves to wipe away the dust.