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Emily Dickinson in the Work of Polish Translators. Continuation of Research

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Abstract: This article deals with the Polish translation of Emily Dickinson's poetry and correspondence. It is a continuation of the reflection in *The Emily Dickinson Journal's* pages, which started in 2022. This time we present translations of Kazimiera Iłakowiczówna, Andrzej Szuba, Krystyna Lenkowska, Ryszard Mierzejewski, Tadeusz Sławek, Teresa Pelka, Artur Międzyrzecki, Lilla Latus, Agnieszka Osiecka, Agnieszka Kreczmar and Ewa Kuryluk. We discuss a selection of Dickinson's letters translated by Danuta Piestrzyńska. We emphasize the characteristic features of each of the discussed translations. Although Iłakowiczówna discovered Dickinson for Polish readers, her translations are perceived as archaic. Szuba mainly translates aphoristic texts. Lenkowska makes an effort to be faithful to the original. The newest translators introduce Poles to unknown poems and make new translations of the texts previously rendered into Polish.

Keywords: Emily Dickinson, poetry, translation, Polish language.

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Introduction

Emily Dickinson's poetry, known worldwide, is a real phenomenon. Although it is very difficult and troublesome for translators, and yet it has been translated into many languages, including exotic ones.

The issue of Polish translations of Emily Dickinson's poetry requires detailed research. We started this work in the article *Polish Translations of Emily Dickinson's Poetry (1965–2020)* (cf.: Krzysztofik, Wzorek, 2022), which we devoted to analyzing the workshop of four Polish translators: Stanisław Barańczak, Ludmiła Marjańska, Maciej Maleńczuk and Kazimierz Żarski. This publication is a continuation of that research; its vital complement and development provide a complex picture of Emily Dickinson's Polish translations. This time we present the specificity of the translations of Kazimiera Iłakowiczówna, Andrzej Szuba, Krystyna Lenkowska, Ryszard Mierzejewski and Teresa Pelka. We also deal with dispersed translations of Artur Międzyrzecki, Agnieszka Osiecka, Ewa Kuryluk, Agnieszka Kreczmar and Lilla Latus. In order to capture the specificity of these translations, wherever there is such a need, we compare them with the translations discussed in the cited article. We also discuss the translation of Emily's letters done by Danuta Piestrzyńska.

Discovering Emily Dickinson's works for polish readers

Emily Dickinson's excellent poetry has been present in the Polish publishing market since the mid-1960s.

K. Hłakowiczówna, who translated 125 poems by Dickinson in 1965, is rightly considered the precursor of the poetry of the "hermit from Amherst" in Poland. The recognized poet popularized the poetry of Emily Dickinson not only through subsequent translation volumes but also through the radio. She gave a talk on the Polish Radio called *Zwykły życiorys Emilci* (cf.: Życieńska, 1975, p. 12).

However, we cannot forget W. Iwaniuk and deprive him of his merits in the popularization of Emily Dickinson's poetry in the Polish version. Already in 1960, and therefore a bit earlier than Hłakowiczówna, in the pages of *Kontynenty* (1960, 21/22, p. 9), Iwaniuk translated three poems by Dickinson in Polish, which are today counted among the most outstanding: "I heard a fly buzz when I died" (J 465)¹, "I died for Beauty, but was scarce" (J 449), "A bird came down the walk" (J 328). However, given that the magazine was published in London, these translations were practically unknown in Poland.

L. Marjańska also admits that, in some sense, she was ahead of Hłakowiczówna because in the early 1960s, when she was returning from the USA with a scholarship, she had several poems translated. Fascinated by the American poet, she intended to complete a Polish volume of her poetry. Ultimately, upon hearing about the translation collection, Hłakowiczówna verified her ambitious plan. Five translated poems by Dickinson ("This is my letter to the World", "My life closed twice before its close", "I had been hungry, all the Years", "A bird came down the walk" and "I Years had been from Home") published in the magazine *Współczesność* (1964, p. 5). In 1976, she published another seven poems by Emily Dickinson in *Dialogue-USA*. Before she published her first volume of translations, Dickinson *I jestem różą: wybór wierszy* (only released in 1998), she also translated William Luce's monodrama *Piękność z Amherst*, composed of letters and poems by Dickinson. In the essay "Moja przygoda z Emily Dickinson", Marjańska does not hide her regret: "It was not me who discovered her [Dickinson] for the Polish reader. When I returned to Poland with a dozen or so translations of Emily's poems, it turned out that Kazimiera Hłakowiczówna had already found a soul mate in the old maid from Amherst" (Marjańska, 1996, p. 7).

The first translation by Kazimiera Hłakowiczówna

Hłakowiczówna's translation volume of Emily Dickinson, *Poezje* from 1965 (reissued 10 years later by the People's Publishing Cooperative), pioneering on the Polish reading market, seems to be a thing of the past today. It has grown old; it does not stand up to comparison with newer translations. The translations contained therein are literally correct, faithful to the original, but they also contain archaic sounding words. In the translation method, we can see attempts to adapt

the text to the contemporary ideas about female lyric, and therefore stylistically smoothed, easily subject to thematic classification, focused on didacticism. It is no coincidence that Iłakowiczówna's translations have been divided into thematic categories, known from Higginson and Todd's edition, directing the reader to a specific interpretation key: *Życie / Life, Przyroda/ Nature, Miłość / Love, Czas i wieczność/ Time and eternity, Wiersze inne /Other poems*. It happens that under the pen of a Polish poet, the excellent lyrics by Dickinson lose the elliptical character present in the prototype. Iłakowiczówna unnecessarily lengthens the lines. In her translation, there are additional words added to the original. Let us show it on the example of the poem "I took my Power in my Hand" (J 540), translated by Iłakowiczówna as follows:

*I took my Power in my Hand –
Wszystkie me siły ujęłam w dłoń
And went against the World –
I stanęłam ze światem do walki;
‘Twas not so much as Dawid – had –
może to mniej, niż Dawid miał,
But I – was twice as bold –
Lecz ja miałam więcej odwagi.*

*I almed my Pebble – but Myself
Celowałam z mej procy, ale wnet
Was all the one that fell –
sama tylko w boju poległam.
Was it Goliath – was too large –
Nie wiem, czy Goliat za wielki był,
Or was myself – too small?
czy za mała byłam ja biedna (Dickinson,
1965, p. 30).*

In Barańczak's translation (from the volume *Wiersze wybrane*, Dickinson, 2000a), the poem takes the following form:

*Moc swoją ujęłam w Dłoń –
I stanęłam naprzeciw Świata –
Słabsza niż niegdyś Dawid –
Lecz dwakroć śmielsza – za to –
Zamierzyłam się swym Kamykiem –
Ale upadłam – Ja Sama –
Czy Goliat – był zbyt olbrzymi –
Czy ja – za mała? (Dickinson, 2000a, p.
139)*

Iłakowiczówna's lines are elaborate, and the aforementioned excess of words are in them. The penultimate lines of both translations sound very similar, but in Iłakowiczówna, an additional "nie wiem" lengthens the line. Iłakowiczówna's departure from abbreviation, which is an essential component of Dickinson's poetry (and Barańczak's opposite striving for an ellipse), is even more visible in the last verse. Iłakowiczówna decides to issue a personal (two-component) judgment. Meanwhile,

Barańczak gives up this part of the sentence and uses the hyphen with success. Iłakowiczówna practically forgets about this punctuation mark. It often distorts Dickinson's bold, audacious imagery. The metaphor used by her "stałam do walki ze światem" is poorer and opens up fewer interpretative possibilities than Barańczak's metaphor: "I stałam naprzeciw Świata". The simplification of the metaphor causes Dickinson's poems to lose their semantic capacity in Iłakowiczówna's translations; they become more unambiguous to the detriment of the prototypes.

Dickinson, as seen by Iłakowiczówna, is permeated with the translator's style. There are points of contact between the poems by Iłakowiczówna and Dickinson. Both poets provide similar answers to questions about human fate. Reflection on one's creativity and suffering is also common among others. The difference, however, is that, according to Iłakowiczówna, suffering leads to moral renewal. For Dickinson, as A. Hołojuch (1983) writes, it is an indispensable element of the world. However, Iłakowiczówna's translations are too fluent; they impose conventional interpretations. A certain excuse for Iłakowiczówna is the fact that she probably did not know the critical edition of Dickinson's poetry from 1955. However, Barańczak in *Ocalone w tłumaczeniu* leaves no illusions: "Even if Iłakowiczówna knew Dickinson's texts in their authentic form, she would probably translate them in the same way as she did" (Barańczak, 1992, p. 56). Regardless of the aforementioned shortcomings, Iłakowiczówna was the first translator to be called "Polish Emily Dickinson" by Z. Łapiński (1956, p. 4), and "our Emily" by K. Wierzyński (1967, p. 97).

Translations of the aforistic texts of Andrzej Szuba

Andrzej Szuba has a strong position among the translators of Emily Dickinson – poet and, at the same time, a translator of American, British and Irish lyrics, an English philologist. Szuba's contribution to the popularization of Dickinson's lyrical works in Poland is considerable. He has published two volumes of Emily Dickinson's translations – *Bilingual Poems: Wiersze: poems* (Dickinson, 2005) and *333 wiersze* (Dickinson, 2016). From the beginning of the 21st century, he published his translations in many magazines. The most important assumption of Andrzej Szuba was the translation of unknown poems previously unpublished in Poland. Szuba presented to the Polish reader the poems that cannot be found in the translation collections of Barańczak or Marjańska. He expressed his program as early as 2005 when he noted in the note closing the first volume of translations (Dickinson, 2005) that all poems, except seven, were new, so far absent on the Polish publishing market (Dickinson, 2005, p. 111). In a bilingual volume from 2005, out of 100 translations, only seven had their premieres in the collections of other translators. These are the lyrics J 781 ("To wait an Hour – is long –"), J 887 ("We outgrow love, like other things"), J 917 ("Love – is anterior to Life –"), J 1151 ("Soul, take thy risk"), J 1255 ("Longing is like the Seed"),

J 1377 (“Forbidden Fruit a flavor has”), J 1391 (“They might not need me – yet they night –”).

Szuba mainly translated very short Dickinson poems, aphoristic, close to a sentence, focused on religious or quasi-religious themes (a very difficult, ambiguous issue for Dickinson) and the theme of loss. One of the most beautiful sentences in Szuba’s selection (being a translation of the poem J 684: “Best Gains – must have the Losses’ Test – / To constitute them – Gains –”) reads: “Zysk – musi przejść Próbę Straty – / By zasłużyć na miano – Zysku” (Dickinson, 2005, p. 23). Szuba’s translations are skilful, stylistically nice, rhymed, and almost always faithful to the original. The translator rarely interferes with the primary text. We encounter the situation of violating the original, for example, in the translation of the poem J 87 (“A darting fear – a pomp – a tear –”), where the verb “zmartwychwstałeś” appears (Dickinson, 2005, p. 23), which does not appear in Dickinson’s poem. Its use, however, seems justified due to the image of the funeral shown in the previous verses. In this case, as Jacek Gutorow explains in the sketch *Nieuzbrojonym okiem*, the translator’s violation of the text “makes sense and completes the logic of the book: the experience of death is also the experience of a new life” (Gutorow, 2007, p. 411).

Caring for faithfulness in Krystyna Lenkowska’s translations

K. Lenkowska’s translations were not published 2018 in the Łódź Oficyna under the joint title *Jest pewien ukos światła*. However, it should be remembered that they were previously published in magazines. The volume is bilingual and consists of over 100 translations. The title comes from the poem J 258 (“There’s a certain Slant of light”), known to Polish readers thanks to the translation by Barańczak. In the introduction, Lenkowska confessed that “the translator must fall in love with the poet’s mind to devote much time to his/her emotions and thoughts” (Dickinson, 2018, p. 16). The awareness of making such a great effort as translating Dickinson’s poetry was born out of a fascination with the extraordinary personality of the 19th-century poet. Lenkowska entered the world of Emily Dickinson’s thoughts and feelings because there is a noticeable concern for fidelity to the original in the translations. The most spectacular proof of this is the translation of the poem J 712 (“Because I could not stop for Death –”), which stands out from other translations (it was translated by Marjańska, Barańczak, Pelka), that it retains the masculine gender of the noun present in the original “śmierć”/ Death. Writing about death, Dickinson uses the English pronoun “he”.

Meanwhile, the word “śmierć” in Polish is feminine. Barańczak, Marjańska, and Pelka consistently adhere to it; in their translations, in place of the English “he” appears the Polish pronoun “ona”. Lenkowska does it differently. She is true to the original – her death is male. Here is an adequate excerpt from her translation:

*Because I could not stop for Death –
Nie mogłam się zatrzymać przed Śmiercią
–
He kindly stopped for me –
Więc On z uprzejmości –
The Carriage held but just Ourselves –
Swoj powóz zatrzymał tylko dla Nas –
And Immortality
I Nieśmiertelności (Dickinson, 2018, p.
157)*

As the basic criterion for Lenkowska's translations, faithfulness can also be seen when juxtaposed with Tadeusz Sławek's translations. The first verse of the poem J 650 ("Pain – has an Element of Blank –") in Lenkowska's translation is a copy of the Dickinson poem:

*Ból – ma Element Pustki
It cannot recollect
Nie pamięta żadną siłą
When it began – or if there were
Kiedy się zaczął – ani czasu
A time when it was not –
Kiedy go nie było – (Dickinson, 2018, p.
149)*

A slight deviation can only be indicated on the second line. Lenkowska allows herself to modify this fragment, keeping, of course, the primary meaning: "Nie pamięta żadną siłą." A greater interference occurs in the volume of translations.

*W Cierpieniu – jest Martwe Pole –
Nie pomni
Swego początku – i nie wie,
Czy był czas od Bólu wolny (Dickinson,
2018, p. 27)*

The translator uses the nouns "pain" and "suffering" interchangeably; besides, the phrase by Dickinson "Pain – has an Element of Blank –" Lenkowska reproduces better, more accurately than Sławek.

The latest translations of Ryszard Mierzejewski, Tadeusz Sławek and Teresa Pelka

Recently, Emily Dickinson's poetry has been translated by Ryszard Mierzejewski (cultural expert, doctor of humanities, poet) and Tadeusz Sławek (poet, professor-literary scholar). Mierzejewski's collection of Dickinson was published in 2015, unfortunately, only in Polish. In this regard, the online edition of *Libertas* (cf.: Dickinson, 2015a) turns out to be richer, with a dozen or so poems by Dickinson J 2, J 81, J 94, J 128, J 208, J 215, J 249, J 339, J 412, J 710, J 1024, J 1116, J 1418, J 1558, J 1640, J 1722, J 1723), both in the original version and in Polish by Mierzejewski (Dickinson, 2015b). Our collection includes 45 translations – poems,

as the title suggests, unknown. Although the selection also includes the well-known and repeatedly translated poem J 249 (“Wild Nights – Wild Nights!”). Interestingly, Mierzejewski resigns from the impersonal monologue of this extremely erotic poem; moreover, it makes a woman a speaker. Let us add that he ignores Dickinson’s stanza (this will become a frequent procedure in his translations) and verse dismemberment. Under the translator’s pen, “Dzikie noce” becomes a stichic poem with a surplus line in them. In the translations that concern us, which is probably due to the perception of Dickinson’s poems in terms of personal poetry, a woman is quite often a lyrical subject (e.g. J 412, J 1558, J 1640). When reading Mierzejewski’s volume, one can indicate translations that accurately reproduce the original (e.g. J 2 or J 92). In the translation of the poem J 81 – which proves the meticulousness of Mierzejewski – there are even the same species of bird as in its original form (“Ryżojad”), little known; therefore, the author provides a footnote with an appropriate explanation. Mierzejewski respects the unusual Dickinson punctuation but lengthens the line, thus blurring the elliptical nature of this poetry.

Samotność przestrzeni by T. Sławek (2019a) is one of the last – so far – volumes of translations of Emily Dickinson’s poetry. It consists of 48 Polonized poems (selected from J 47 to J 1775) arranged chronologically. The collected poems deal with loneliness and space, especially about the family home. In the title of the volume, the author highlighted the poem J 1695 (“There is a solitude of space”), from which the phrase “samotność przestrzeni” comes. Tadeusz Sławek translated both well-known poems, previously translated by Iłakowiczówna (“Success is counted sweetest”), Barańczak (including “Success is counted sweetest”, “Some things that fly there be –”, “I dwell in Possibility –”, “The Mountains – grow unnoticed –”), Marjańska (including “The grave my little cottage is”, “Alone, I cannot be –”) or Lenkowska (including “The earth has many keys”, “A little East of Jordan”, “Success is counted sweetest”, “Alone, I cannot be –”, “Pain – has an Element of Blank –”) and not so far Polonized (e.g. lyrics J 47, J 1761, J 1764). As J. Pielichowski states in “Małe me życie przebadalam –. Samotności i przestrzenie Emily Dickinson”:

The Dickinson-Sławek duo turns out to be one of the happiest marriages that can be imagined on the shaky ground of this unique poetry. And it is not only about fidelity at the level of the basic meanings conveyed by the text, but also about a deeper relationship of imagination (Pielichowski, 2019, p. 63).

Sławek keeps the original punctuation, does not use a gearbox, and finally does not specify Dickinson’s poems. The simplicity of his message seems to be the distinguishing feature of his translations. Sławek’s translations are clearer and easier to read than, for example, those of Barańczak. Barańczak prefers figuratively elaborate, difficult to perceive. For the sake of the reception, Sławek does not associate words that are distant in meaning for the reader’s comfort. For example, in the deep, philosophical poem J 686 dealing with suffering (“They say that Time assuages –”), Barańczak introduces the metaphor of “czas uśmierza ból” (Dickinson, 2000a, p. 161). Sławek, on the other hand, chooses a phrase that exists in the Polish language, thus the phrase in common use:

“Czas leczy rany” (Dickinson, 2019a, p. 30), which is a loan translation of the Latin proverb *tempus sanat omnia vulnera* (time heals all wounds). A bit further in the same work by Barańczak, we read:

*W cierpieniu jak w Żyłastym Starcu,
As Sinews do, with age –
Rośnie Krzepkość, gdy lata biegną.
(Dickinson, 2000a, p. 161)*

In Sławek’s translation, a metaphor also appears at this point, but it is easier to interpret: “Cierpienie wciąż narasta, jak Ścięgno,/ Co wzmacnia się z wiekiem.” (Dickinson, 2019a, p. 30).

At the end of 2019, Emily Dickinson’s poems were translated by Teresa Pelka – a linguist and translator of American literature. The publisher of a large volume, comprising 115 works (also those well known to the Polish reader), is the Lulu.com internet platform. The collection is available in electronic form (cf.: Dickinson, 2019b). In addition to translation, the volume contains a very interesting comparison of the Dickinson manuscripts with the first edition of Higginson and the famous and acclaimed Johnson edition. It is the only work of this kind in Poland. The translator comments on the value of Johnson’s canonical edition, paying attention to its particular punctuation.

In her translations, Pelka follows both Iłakowiczówna and Barańczak. She applies the thematic division popularized by Iłakowiczówna: Time and Eternity, Love, Nature, Life. She authoritatively assigned the presented translations to them. In this way, it narrowed down the semantic content of the originals and outlined the mainline of interpretation. Besides, she has titled or numbered many of her translations as she sees fit, which is confusing as it makes it difficult to recognize the original text. The style of Pelka’s translations, which makes them very valuable, is often close to that of Barańczak. The translator can afford a good metaphor or a neat ellipse, although she is much bolder than Barańczak in using a full sentence (thus destroying the laconic character of the prototype). Pelka, translating the poem J 193 (“I shall know why – when Time is over –”), introduces in the first verse two verbs “dowiem się” and “przyjdzie” (Dickinson, 2019, p. 118), corresponding to the English “know” and “is”. At this point, Barańczak limits himself to one judgment: “dowiem się” (Dickinson, 2000a, p. 45). Another example illustrates the same phenomenon: in Barańczak’s verse (which is a translation of “some Industry must be –”, lyric J 478) there is no verb at all (“W braku lepszego Zadania” Dickinson, 2000a, p. 125). At this point Pelka introduces the sentence: “A że dbałość wskazaną jest” (Dickinson, 2019b, p. 205). Many of Pelka’s translations seem to imitate Barańczak’s style, incl. lyric IV or XVII, in which there are similar metaphors. The verse “Safe in their Alabaster Chambers” (J 216) Barańczak translates as follows: “Bezpieczni w swych Komnatach z Alabastru” (Dickinson, 2000a, p. 51). Pelka translates almost identically: “Bezpieczni w alabastrowych swych izbach” (Dickinson, 2019b, p. 80). In the translation of the poem of J 1052, many lines take a similar shape. In Barańczak’s translation, we read:

*I never saw a Moor –
Nie widziałam nigdy Wrzosowiska –
I never saw the Sea –
Nie widziałam nigdy Oceanu (Dickinson,
2000a, p. 209).*

And here is almost the same version of Pelka: “Nie widziałam nigdy –/ Wrzosowiska, morza” (Dickinson, 2019b, p. 93). Sometimes Teresa Pelka ignores Dickinson’s stanza; for example, the poem J 67 (“Success is counted sweetest”) in the original consists of three quatrains. Under Pelka’s pen, it becomes tangy. The poem “I had no time to Hate –” (J 478), based on a six-verse verse, consists of four-lines in the volume that is occupied by us.

The distinguishing feature of Pelka’s translations is the archaization of the language, which does not occur in any other translation. Teresa Pelka archaizes the language to adapt her style to the nineteenth-century style of the American woman. For example, he introduces the unused noun “hurma” (Dickinson, 2019b, p. 182) to name the crowd, the mass. The line “Permit a child to join” from the poem J 130 under Pelka’s pen takes the archaic wording: “dozwól przystąpić dziecięciu” (Dickinson, 2019b, p. 176). For comparison, Barańczak – as usual – uses modern Polish: “Mnie, dziecku, wyświadczyć” (Dickinson, 2000a, p. 37). In our opinion, the archaization of the language is an unfortunate procedure because it makes it difficult for the modern reader to understand the meaning of the original.

Distributed translations

In the 1970s, A. Międzyrzecki published several translations of Emily Dickinson in *Poezja* (including 288, 1755, 333, 1695) (Międzyrzecki, 1992). With time, he included them in an anthology of American poetry ... *Opiewam nowoczesnego człowieka*, which he prepared together with the poet Julia Hartwig (1992). Polish dicinsonologist Salska highly appreciates Międzyrzecki’s translations. “Real pearls” (2018, p. 280) is called the Polish translation of two poems: J 333 and J 288. This last piece is “I’m Nobody! Who are you?” is very famous. Apart from Międzyrzecki, it was also translated by S. Barańczak, L. Marjańska and M. Maleńczuk. They all achieved very good results; they captured the features of the Dickinson style. In general, Międzyrzecki’s translations are laconic, though less elliptical than those of Barańczak’s and Marjańska’s. This is quite clearly visible in the translation of the poem “To make a prairie it takes a clover and one bee” (Jn 1755). In Barańczak, the lines are short, only one- and two-word, based on the following calculation:

*Kwiat koniczyzny
And revery.
Marzenie
i pszczoła (Dickinson, 2000a, p. 257)*

The corresponding Międzyrzecki's lines take the form of a sentence, are more elaborate: "I jedna pszczoła/ Jeden kwiat koniczyzny i pszczoła,/ I marzenie, co je przywoła" (...*Opiewam nowoczesnego człowieka* 19). In Międzyrzecki's translations, there is a tendency to maintain the syllabic size and even the accentual-syllabic course. There are also noticeable attempts to streamline Dickinson's lyrics by departing from unusual punctuation, mainly hyphens and capital letters.

Scattered translations also include poems by Lilla Latus, published in *Wiadomości Kulturalne* (Dickinson, 1997b, p. 13). The poet was delighted with the works J 650, J 540, J 245, J 903, J 1544. Recognizing the original texts she used is not easy, especially for a reader less familiar with Dickinson's work, because Lilla Latus – contrary to tradition – does not use or incipits or original numbering, and the translations are given its titles: "Tajemnica bólu", "Pojedynek", "Zaginiony klejnot", "Z kwiatem." Only in one case does it retain the original incipit.

Generally, a big downside to almost all translations is those dispersed (a glorious exception is Agnieszka Osiecka's translation, about which in a moment); there is no comparison with the prototype, which makes it difficult to identify the latter. Among the translations of Latus, the translation of the poem J 1544 deserves special attention. The translator ignores the original motif and replaces it with a new one. This is how Dickinson's double-line: "For Angels rent the House next ours, / Wherever we remove –" "Boską posiadłość mam po sąsiedzku/ Miłość jest jej wyposażeniem" (Dickinson, 1996, p. 13). The poems *Pojedynek* (translation of the verse J 540) and *Z kwiatem* (translation of the poem J 903) prove that Lilla Latus can afford sophisticated metaphors such as:

'Twas not so much as Dawid – had –
Nie dane mi było tyle, ile Dawid miał ...
Was it Goliath – was too large –
Czy Goliat był zbyt wielki,
Or was myself – too large –
Czy to ja zbyt mała? (Dickinson, 1997b, p. 13)

or

I hide myself within my flower
Ukrywa mnie mój kwiat (Dickinson, 1997b, p. 13)

Single poems by Emily Dickinson were translated by A. Osiecka, A. Kreczmar and E. Kuryluk. A. Osiecka (Dickinson, 1996), a poet, a songwriter, translated the lyrics of J 125 very well, retaining the characteristics of Dickinson's style. She gave her piece the meaningful title "Z Emily Dickinson" and cited an English incipit. This translation reflects the elliptical syntax of the poet from Amherst, original metaphors, and openness of meaning. Osiecka's translation is easier for the reader to perceive than the artistic version of Barańczak. Osiecka offers simpler

metaphors. For example, let us put together the opening lines of both translations. In Barańczak, we read:

*For each ecstatic instant
Za każdą chwilę ekstazy
We must tan anguish pay
Płacimy w udręki monecie –
In keen and quivering ratio
W myśl chybotliwej proporcji
To the ecstasy.
Upadków i uniesień. (Dickinson, 2000a, p.
35)*

Osiecka's lines are not that complicated:

*Za każdą chwilę szczęścia
musimy płacić męką,
bo stuka tępy licznik
grzechów i uniesień! (Dickinson, 1996, p.
13)*

In 2000, *Literatura* published a short but meaningful philosophical poem of Dickinson J 1732 ("My life closed twice before its close.") translated by Kreczmar. The original text has a deep thought: "Parting is all we know of heaven". In the Polish version, we read: "Rozstanie, to wszystko, co wiemy o niebie" (Dickinson, 2000b, p. 2). For the translator, this is the key to reading the work. Hence the title "Rozstanie". The translation, like the original, is rhymed and strophic, and it does not lack good metaphors, such as those taken from the first verse: My life closed twice before its close:

*My life closed twice before its close –
Życie moje dwa razy się zamknęło,
It yet remains to see
Niedługo przyjdzie czas
If Immortality unveil
Gdy nieśmiertelność się odsłoni
A third event to me
Przedemną trzeci raz. (Dickinson, 2000b,
p. 2)*

It can therefore be said that Kreczmar, although she has practically no experience with translating Dickinson into Polish, copes with this difficult poetry no worse than Barańczak, who is considered a master of translation. The above-quoted fragment from Kreczmar and Barańczak's translation sounds very similar:

*Ale wciąż czekam przecież,
Czy Nieśmiertelność mi odsłoni
Jakieś zdarzenie trzecie – (Dickinson,
2000a, p. 255)*

When examining Dickinson's scattered translations, one should also mention the poem J 883, Polonized by the poet and painter Kuryluk

(“The Poets light but Lamps .”). The poem was previously translated, among others, by Marjańska. Both versions show many similarities in terms of both lexis and syntax. Importantly, Kuryluk is a great mimic of Dickinson in terms of laconic statements. Let us listen to the very short lines of Kuryluk:

*The Poets light but Lamps –
Poeci tylko zapalają lampy
Themselves – go out –
Sami – gasną –
The Wicks they stimulate –
Lecz światło
If vital Light
– jeśli życiodajne –
In there as do the Suns –
trwa jak słońca (Dickinson, 2002, p. 55)*

Danuta Piestrzyńska's translation of letters

Not only is Emily Dickinson's poetry known in Poland, but also some of her correspondence to her brother, Austin, friends, and acquaintances, incl. to Susan Gilbert, later Dickinson, Abiah Root, Emily Fowler Ford, Jane Humphrey, and finally, the famous critic and writer Thomas W. Higginson, and the preacher and spiritual guide Charles Wadsworth. Poetry enjoys much greater popularity, while letters appeared in the Polish publishing market only in 1994. They came into being thanks to Piestrzyńska, who, based on the collective edition of the Dickinson correspondence from 1958, edited by Thomas H. Johnson, published 180 Polonized letters. Barańczak (who translated the lyrical attempts contained in the letters) and Salska, who checked the content-related translations of the letters, were heavily involved in the preparation of this publication. She did the time-consuming and painstaking work juxtaposing the originals and Polish (2018, pp. 271–290.).

Piestrzyńska's selection includes letters from various stages of Emily's life. In the introduction to “Emily Dickinson i jej List do świata”, the translator indicates the distinguishing features of this correspondence and discusses its affinities with poetry (1994, p. 10–11). He draws attention to the laconic nature, especially of Dickinson's later letters, the use of literary allusions and paradoxes, originality of thoughts, and finally, the same peculiar punctuation as in the poems. Underlining the closeness of Dickinson's poetry and correspondence, Piestrzyńska notes: “Emily Dickinson wrote her letter to the world not only in verse but also in prose” (1994, p. 12). There are indeed ambiguous, if not unusual, metaphorical phrases in Emily's letters. That is why Piestrzyńska undertook a difficult task. Importantly, it achieved a very good result. Z. Kolbuszewska, in her review “Słowo jako list”, gave the translator a high note:

“What a Risk the Letter is” – wrote Emily Dickinson to her mentor T. W. Higginson. How much riskier, however, to make a representative selection of

someone else's letters! Especially when they were written by a person who attached great importance to the word as a messenger, and at the same time belonged to a world distant from the reader in time and space. It must be admitted that Danuta Piestrzyńska accomplished this difficult task very well! The style of her translations is precise and elegant (1995, p. 177).

The Polish-language version of the letters perfectly reflects Emily Dickinson's anxiety and a crowd of experiences and feelings. She is, like the original, very emotional, intimate, and at the same time faithful to the inner world of the nineteenth-century poet.

Conclusion

An analysis of the methods of Polish authors struggling with the difficult poetry of Emily Dickinson makes us aware of the complexity of the problem of literary translation. It is worth emphasizing that this specific lyric is translated mainly by poets, sensitive to the semantics of the word and aware of the fact that poetry is governed by rules other than prose, which is why it is often untranslatable. Despite the existence of this hermetic barrier, our translators make an effort to introduce the poet from Amherst to the Polish reader. Their choices, oscillating in the area of fidelity to the original, are different; therefore, it is valuable that we have several different translations of the same poems. This phenomenon shows the Polish literary language's richness and allows us to explore the depths of the American poet's message. The poet's letters are easier to translate. We are waiting for their next editions.

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Notes

- 1 The abbreviation J refers to Emily Dickinson's poems (Dickinson, 1997a).