

Looking for the Censor in the Works of Sean O'Casey (and Others) in Polish Translation

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The March 1953 edition of the Polish publication *Medycyna Weterynaryjna* ('*Veterinary Medicine*') carried on its first page a photograph of the recently deceased Stalin. In an internal report, the censor wrote:

Szkodliwość w okolicznościowym numerze polega na tym, że redakcja ograniczyła się do zamieszczenia na pierwszej stronie zdjęcia Tow. Stalina bez jakiego-kolwiek art. wstępnego. Bardzo nieprzyjemne wrażenie mógłby odnieść czytelnik znajdując na miejscu art. okolicznościowego /wstępnego/ - art. o "Ochronnym szczepieniu świni".

(The harmfulness of the special issue consists in the fact that the editors limited themselves to putting a picture of comrade Stalin on page one without any kind of leader article. A very unpleasant impression might be made on readers finding in the place of a leader (or special) article a piece about 'Swine Vaccination.')

The periodical went to press with a proclamation to the Polish people on the reverse of the photograph of Stalin, and the offending article was pushed back a page.

In such a case it is all too easy to assume that the censor was a doctrinaire Stalinist. It is quite possible, on the other hand, that his zeal was feigned in case some superior should feel that *Medycyna Weterynaryjna* had not displayed enough reverence for Stalin. The report is so absurd that one might even think the censor was privately making fun of censorship and the cult of personality – in an eminently deniable manner, of course. And what of the editor? Was it an oversight? Did he assume a full-page picture of Stalin would in itself satisfy the censor,

¹ Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie (State Archive in Lublin; hereafter 'APL'), file 761, item 5: 'Sprawozdanie z kontroli prewencyjnej no. 37' ('Report on preventive control no. 37'). Dated 14 April 1953. My translation, as are all English translations below.

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or was he making an anti-communist statement by leading with an article on the vaccination of swine? A glance at the other numbers for 1953 suggests that the first article was usually more political than that for March. The titles, at any rate, contain such communist clichés as ‘walka’ (‘struggle’), ‘rozwój’ (‘development’), and ‘nauka weterynaryjna w służbie ...’ (‘veterinary science in the service of ...’).²

This is a well-documented example, and yet, as is often the case with political censorship, the modern-day researcher is left to speculate on the basis of incomplete records which, even though they originated with the censor, were themselves subject to censorship. There is always a danger of overinterpreting or underinterpreting decisions like publishing an article on pig vaccination. Equally, if we know the censor may have intervened, or even been on the writer’s mind, it is hard to show he had no impact. The effects of direct protocols such as ‘do not permit any writer to blame the USSR for the Katyń massacre’ or ‘always show married couples sleeping in separate beds’ can be seen and accounted for, but censors did not usually issue (or possess) such clear instructions. It is doubtful that either the editor or the censor of *Medycyna Weterynaryjna* knew exactly how much Stalin was enough. Rather, there comes into being a system of nods and winks in which everyone – editors, authors, publishers, translators, readers – more or less knows the rules, and either plays by them or produces work not intended for publication, or intended for the *samizdat* press. Piotr Kuhiwczak speaks of ‘a conspiratorial pact of mutual understanding’ between poets and readers in the Cold War-era Polish context.³ The rules can be bent, and much depends on the political climate obtaining at the time. Much also depends on the individual censor. He or she might let a ‘dangerous’ reference pass if it can later be claimed – in the event of query – that the offending passage or word also had a completely innocent meaning or explanation. Editors were aware, too, of the advantages of what we might call ‘plausible denial’. Some censors’ reports give examples of misprints that sound like deliberate mistakes.

Translators would also have been drawn into this system, and similar interpretive problems present themselves with their work. In a joke at Franco’s expense, the censor adjusts his title in Polish translation from ‘Generalissimus’ to ‘General’ because the former is connected with Stalin.⁴ Once again, we cannot now be certain whether the translator

² Respectively nos 5, 6, and 2.

³ Piotr Kuhiwczak, ‘Outwitting the politburo: Politics and poetry behind the Iron Curtain’, in *Cold War Literature within the Global Conflict*, edited by Andrew Hammond (Abingdon, 2006), pp. 195–211 (p. 209).

⁴ APL, file 761, item 6, 2 August 1953.

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sought to make a point or the censor was over-sensitive. But we can be fairly sure that some translation decisions would have been taken with an eye to what was likely to meet the censor's demands as well as the usual demands of the marketplace, publishers' interests, and readers' expectations. Marta Fik goes so far as to describe the censor as a 'co-translator'.⁵ According to Jerzy Jarniewicz, one's 'image of a foreign literature, its canon, is created not by historians of that literature, not by philologists and not by critics but by translators'.⁶ On this principle, Polish perceptions of foreign literatures must have been influenced by censorship. But the very existence of censorship makes it extremely difficult to assess translations. It is impossible to know whether certain decisions were taken by the translator with the censor in mind, or with faithfulness to the text in mind. A certain amount of 'decoding' over and above questions of translation must be done, but one can never be sure how much decoding is needed, and sometimes the text may not be encoded at all. One must also take into consideration motives to censorship other than purely political institutions. In the case of Poland, the doctrines of the Catholic Church have apparently lain behind some of the translators' decisions discussed below, which can thus be said to arise from the general Catholic ethos that still permeated the country under communism. Such decisions might be regarded as mere cultural adaptation, or as indirect censorship, with the translator anticipating what will and will not be acceptable.

The issue of censorship and manipulation has received little attention in Poland. This is partly because the machinations of the censor often left no paper trail, and indeed in some cases no machinations were needed, because editors, publishers, and authors generally knew what would get past him and what would not. My own research in the Lublin archives has turned up relatively few examples of interference even in non-translated texts, and Andrzej Krajewski attributes the steady number of interventions Polish procedures generated to the effectiveness of other means of control (such as the system of rewards and punishments) and self-censorship.⁷ We know from original documents that scenes showing Poland in an unfavourable light in the East German film *Das Schilfrahr* [*sic*] were cut. But what pressure, if any, was brought to bear on the translator of the script is unmentioned, though

⁵ See Marta Fik, 'Cenzor jako współautor', in *Literatura i władza*, edited by Bożena Wojnowska (Warsaw, 1996), pp. 131–47 (p. 139).

⁶ Jerzy Jarniewicz, 'Tłumacz jako twórca kanonu', *Przekład – Język – Kultura* (Lublin), 2002, 35–42 (p. 38).

⁷ Andrzej Krajewski, *Między współpracą a oporem. Twórcy kultury wobec systemu politycznego PRL (1975–1980)* (Warsaw, 2004), p. 497.

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he or she must have been aware that the film was skating on thin ice when it dealt with the issue of repatriation.⁸ Zygmunt Hübner writes that editors in publishing houses would try ‘to do the censor’s job’ by urging the author to make cuts; the same process was at work in the theatre.⁹ It seems reasonable to assume that the editor-translator relationship was similar. However, Marta Fik, mentioned above, gives no examples of the censor acting as co-translator. Anna Bednarczyk has written about Polish translations of Wysocki’s songs – translations that are really rewrites, resulting in Wysocki being listed in an encyclopaedia published in 2000 as a dissident.¹⁰ Polish historians tend to lump translations in with discussions of censorship in general, assuming the same pressures applied to home-grown literature as to translations. This may be correct, but the results of the censor’s influence can differ.

Theoretically the censor’s influence might be felt in the choice of texts for translation. I understand censorship broadly, both as a proscriptive and prescriptive force, wielded by people who would not necessarily have considered themselves censors in that they were not employed by the Main Office for the Control of Press, Publications and Public Performances (GUKPPIW). For instance, readers of *Dziennik Literacki* in 1948 were treated to translations of poems by Langston Hughes, including ‘Brass Spittoons’, all of which show the United States in a poor light. It is difficult to say now whether Hughes’ reputation in Poland would not have been better served by his work going untranslated under Stalinism. According to the (not exhaustive) *Bibliografia literatury tłumaczonej na język polski wydanej w latach 1945–1976* (*Bibliography of Literature translated into Polish published between 1945 and 1976*), Richard Wright’s *The Long Dream* and *The Native Son* were rendered into Polish, but not his anti-communist *The God that Failed*. It should be borne in mind, however, that such bibliographies were themselves censored. Mention of Łobodowski’s Polish translation of *Cancer Ward* (published in France) was excised from the ‘Literature Yearbook’, *Rocznik Literacki*, for 1972.¹¹

The authorities could also make their presence felt by determining the size of a book’s print run. The leftist writer Sinclair Lewis’ *The Kingsblood Royal* (*Królewska krew*, translated by Stanisław Sielski) had an edition of 10,500 copies in the version published by Książka i Wiedza

⁸ Summary of original documentation in *Czarna księga cenzury: Black Book of Polish Censorship*, 2 vols (London, 1977–8), II, 288.

⁹ Zygmunt Hübner, *Theatre and Politics*, edited and translated by Jadwiga Kosicka (Evanston, IL, 1992), p. 70.

¹⁰ Anna Bednarczyk, ‘Kto tłumaczy – jak tłumaczy’, in *Biograficzne konteksty przekładu*, edited by Piotr Fast and Anna Kozak (Katowice, 2002), pp. 127–38 (p. 129).

¹¹ *Czarna księga cenzury*, II, 94.

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in 1950. Another version, translated by Jan Stefczyk, was published in 1950 by Prasa Wojskowa (Military Press). *Winter of our Discontent* by John Steinbeck – also known for his left-wing sympathies – was translated by Bronisław Zieliński as *Zima naszej goryczy* and published in 1965 (by the Ministry of Defence) with a print run of 10,290. Stanisław Barańczak draws attention to the state's role as a patron of culture in his *Książki najgorsze*, where he is careful also to give the print runs of the officially approved books he excoriates in his reviews.¹² However, it should be noted that Poland does not always conform to the image of an oppressive state pushing second-rate ideologically-freighted literature on the reading public at the expense of better but more critical literature. For example, Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* was published in 1958 with a print run of 10,253 units, not far from the scale enjoyed by Steinbeck and the American Communist Party member Howard Fast. *A Farewell to Arms* saw a run of 20,253 copies in 1957, and the book ran to at least four editions in communist Poland. Sean O'Casey's autobiographical *I Knock at the Door* ran to 10,251 copies. The difference in the sizes of print runs, then, may be interpreted as no more than a reflection of the differences between popular fiction (detective novels, war stories) and more demanding, 'elite' fiction. Even here, though, caution should be exercised: the second edition of a collection of Truman Capote's short stories (Polish title *Miriam*) published in 1979 had a run of 150,000 copies. The advantages to a censor of small print runs is clear, but as a prescriptive form of censorship, large print runs may not have been all that effective: individuals were not obliged to buy and read pulp fiction in Poland, except in so far as other options were limited.

Edward Możejko describes how Soviet critics presented writers as moving gradually towards socialist realism, giving, among others, the example of Sean O'Casey [sic]. 'There is no need to add', he adds, 'that in this case we are dealing with second-rate writers'.¹³ O'Casey was not a uniformly brilliant playwright, and some of his later plays in particular are tainted by propaganda – *Oak Leaves and Lavender* and *The Star Turns Red* are usually mentioned in this regard. Nonetheless, in his home country he is firmly established in the canon, and in Russia, O'Casey theoretically belonged to officially approved literature. An excerpt from his play *Hall of Healing* featured in the Soviet higher education textbook *Stylistic Analysis* along with Joe Wallace's

¹² Stanisław Barańczak, *Książki najgorsze (1975–1980) i parę innych ekscesów krytycznoliterackich*, second edition (Poznań, 1990). One example is the 100,000-copy print run for Andrzej Bogusławski's *Zemsta wampira (Revenge of the Vampire)*.

¹³ Edward Możejko, *Realizm socjalistyczny. Teoria. Rozwój. Upadek* (Cracow, 2001), p. 132.

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socialist realist ‘In Their Singing, Shouting Thousands,’ Shaw’s *Widowers’ Houses*, and Shelley’s ‘Mask of Anarchy.’¹⁴ Articles in the Soviet *Literatura Radziecka* by Yelistratova (1952) and Saruchanian (1955) sing his praises in terms typical of communist discourse, complete with – in the former – ample quotations from Lenin about Irish socialism. Saruchanian’s article has the approving title ‘Pisarz-bojownik’ (‘Writer-Fighter’),¹⁵ while Yelistratova’s article bears the scarcely less pointed heading ‘Sean O’Casey – Writer-Citizen’, and characterizes the playwright as ‘continuing to march in the avant garde of fighters for peace’. Yelistratova values O’Casey’s earlier work less highly, finding it lacking in the ‘broad perspective’ of later works.¹⁶ Western commentators, in contrast, generally feel that O’Casey’s later work sometimes declined into propaganda, a view shared by Polish critics, less easily fooled, or (more likely) less oppressed than their Soviet counterparts. But this picture of Russian approval is subject to qualification. The editor of *Sovietskaya Kultura* once complained to O’Casey that his plays were too realistic, ‘unattractive and unheroic’.¹⁷ And despite official praise, only one O’Casey play (*The Bishop’s Bonfire*) had been performed in Russia by 1965, though his works had been translated.

One might expect the range of O’Casey plays translated and published in Polish to illustrate selection as a form of censorship. It has been shown how a *Complete Works* of Joseph Conrad published in 1970s Poland omitted five stories which appeared in other editions.¹⁸ O’Casey never received the complete works treatment, but among his untranslated plays are his most openly socialist, *Oak Leaves and Lavender* and *The Star Turns Red*, the latter of which was performed in East Berlin in the sixties. (We might speculate that this was a conscious decision, taken unminuted by the ‘Performance, Radio and Television team’ of the GUKPPIW in order to protect the reputation of a lifelong supporter of communism: much better to have a Western European sympathizer who writes decent plays than one who writes propaganda.)¹⁹ The four plays for which published Polish translations

¹⁴ Elena Georgievna Soshalskaya and Vera Ivanovna Prokhorova, *Stylistic Analysis* (Moscow, 1976).

¹⁵ A. Saruchanian, ‘Pisarz-bojownik (W związku z 75 rocznicą urodzin Seana O’Casey)’, *Literatura Radziecka*, 3 (1955), 152–4.

¹⁶ A. Yelistratova, ‘Sean O’Casey – pisarz-obywatel’, *Literatura Radziecka*, 11 (1952), 174–180 (p. 174).

¹⁷ Garry O’Connor, *Sean O’Casey: A Life* (London, 1988), p. 356.

¹⁸ Teresa Bałuk-Ulewiczowa, ‘The Boring and the Magnetic: A Case Study in Translation, Censorship and Manipulation’, in *Studies in English and American Literature in Memory of Jerzy Strzetelski, Uniwersytet Jagielloński*, edited by Irena Przemicka and Zygmunt Mazur (Cracow, 1995), pp. 211–24 (p. 213).

¹⁹ On the other hand, Bolesław Taborski seems to have been free to criticize these two plays in his *Nowy Teatr Elżbietańs i* (Cracow, 1967).

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exist are *Cock-a-Doodle-Andy*, *Red Roses for Me*, *Shadow of a Gunman*, and *Bedtime Story*.²⁰ The first two belong to O'Casey's later, more stridently socialist period, as is acknowledged by the Polish critic Grzegorz Sinko, writing in 1960; but they are highly thought of.²¹ Since they chimed in with the political climate it might be expected that censorship would have little effect on the translations, and in Wojewoda's translation of *Cock-a-Doodle-Andy* the most noticeable adjustments to the original are related not to politics but to the Church.²²

Overtly political changes are indeed hard to detect here. One might be inclined to see a small piece of political resistance in Wojewoda's rendering of 'rough fellows' as 'Robotnicy' ('workers', 'working men'), or, in a more complex detail, the Polish version's use of the second person plural when the priest Fr. Domineer speaks peremptorily to working-class lorry drivers. The significance of this is that the normal form of address in Polish between people who are not relatives or close friends is the third person singular ('Pan/Pani'). However, Polish communists sought to introduce the Russian model of using the second person plural, as 'Pan' is a respectful form, meaning 'Master' ('Pani' would correspond to 'Ma'am'). Putting a 'communist' grammatical form into the mouth of a negative character could, then, be seen as a subtle criticism of communist Russian influence. This is complicated, however, by two things. One is that, as in the failure to translate 'Domineer' with its negative connotations into Polish, the priest is shown in a more favourable light in translation. The second is that the use of the second person plural is also associated with rural speakers. Here, then, the presence of political oppression tempts us to see a second meaning in what may well be a straightforward linguistic decision made by the translator in an effort to render some of the richness of O'Casey's language.

The Polish version of *Red Roses for Me* also backs down from some of the anti-Catholic sentiments expressed by characters in the play – and O'Casey had already toned down this element himself.²³ 'Wine from th' royal Pope's a common dhrink' (R 202) becomes 'wino z

²⁰ See appendix for footnoting conventions used with these works. *Purple Dust* and *Juno and the Paycock* were performed but not published, the latter on television.

²¹ Grzegorz Sinko, 'Irlandia – daleka i bliska', *Dialog*, 66 (1961), 106–17 (pp. 108–9). For a brief review of critical stances on O'Casey's plays see Bernard Bucknell, *Sean O'Casey* (Lewisburg, 1970), esp. pp. 89–90.

²² A very slight tendency to tone down O'Casey's criticism of the church might be discerned in the decision not to translate Fr. Domineer's meaningful name. 'Shanaar' (a phonetic rendering of the Irish for 'old man') is also untranslated, and the character is described, in ironic inverted commas, as a 'bardzo mądry katolik' (K 47; 'a very wise Catholic') while in the original he is a 'very wise old crawthumper' (CD 119).

²³ Heinz Kosok, 'The Three Versions of *Red Roses for Me*', *O'Casey Annual*, 1 (1982), 141–7 (p. 144).

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najprzedniejszych piwnic będzie pospolitym napojem' (Cz 76; 'wine from the most select cellars will be a common drink'). Similarly, in rendering 'smitten sore with Popish stones' (R 217) the translator drops all reference to religion (Cz 81). Turning to this play's more clearly political dimensions, the second person plural form is used by the authorities when talking down to people: 'Heard what I said?' (R 226) is rendered 'Słyszeliście, co powiedziałem?' (Cz 85; 'Did you [plural] hear what I said?'). The speaker here is a policeman who, furthermore, represents not Irish but British power in Ireland, just as the militia – for so the police were called in Communist Poland – may have been seen by Polish citizens as representing a foreign power in the country. Also, the policeman in the original wears, in the words of another character in the play, 'the King's uniform' (R 190), whereas in Polish it is merely a uniform (Cz 72). This raises the question: did the translator encourage the identification of British police in Ireland with the Polish militia? We could be dealing with a case of 'plausible deniability', as referred to earlier: a censor accusing the translator of this could be met with the perfectly reasonable reply that it was simply considered that the introduction of the question of royalty would be an unnecessary burden for readers unfamiliar with British constitutional monarchy and Ireland. Of course, this could also have been the genuine reason for dropping the reference to the king.

The changes mentioned so far would probably more accurately be described as adaptation to Polish norms than the effects of external, ideological censorship. At most one might accuse Wojewoda of (perhaps unconscious) self-censorship. Some might consider these changes entirely justified by the need to render the 'feel' of the original. Much of the anti-Catholic invective in O'Casey's text is spouted by two fanatical Protestants who are the true target of the satire. Since the Polish audience is unlikely to be well informed as to the nuances of class, religion, and imperialism in early twentieth-century Ireland, the translator may have felt the need to intervene, sacrificing exact fidelity. In any case there remains in the Polish translation plenty of criticism of the Catholic Church.

Wojewoda's translation of *Bedtime Story* shows even less evidence of ideological interference. 'She is something of a pagan' (B 230) becomes 'Nie trapią jej żadne skrupuły religijne' (O 62; 'She is not troubled by any religious scruples') and 'Oh, forgive me' (B 228) becomes 'Och, wybacz mi, Boże!' (O 62; 'Oh, God forgive me'). These might be seen as adaptations to Polish norms regarding religion – forgiveness is God's prerogative – but again it seems unlikely that a communist censor lies behind the changes. *Shadow of a Gunman*, however, is a poorer

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fit with the ideology professed by the Polish People's Republic, and here the effects of manipulation, as opposed to selection, can be more clearly discerned, though whether 'manipulation' is the right word to describe what is essentially a faithful translation is, as will be seen, debatable. *Shadow of a Gunman* was translated by Zygmunt Hübner and Bronisław Pawlik, and published in 1956 with a print run of 3,020. It received its premier on 20 July 1955 and was performed seventy-eight times. (For comparison, *Waiting for Godot* premiered in the same theatre in 1957 and was performed sixty-six times.)²⁴ The dates are of significance here: Hübner and Pawlik's version came into being in the more oppressive, pre-1956 Poland.

Changes made to the play on its journey from English into Polish range from the striking to the subtle. The most striking change is in the title: *Shadow of a Gunman* becomes *Cień bohatera*, or 'Shadow of a Hero'. The original presents us with a far more equivocal and nuanced image of revolutionaries. A 'gunman' might be a common-or-garden bank robber; a *bohater* – although the word is sometimes used in Polish to describe the main mover in an infamous incident – is probably not. At various points in the play 'gunman' is translated as 'bohater' and 'powstaniec' ('rebel'). The equivocal 'A gunman on the run!' (S 104) becomes the straightforwardly positive 'Powstaniec z Armii Republikańskiej' (CB 29; 'A rebel from the Republican Army'). Lest there be any doubt that the Irish Republican Army is positive, the introduction to the play explains that 'a civil war broke out between the Irish Republican Army, which wanted to fight for complete independence from England, and right-wing conciliatory parties' (CB 4). The civil war division is not usually seen by Irish historians as one involving a 'right wing', and indeed many commentators bemoan the absence of 'normal' right-wing *vs.* left-wing politics in modern Ireland, seeing the dominance of two right-wing political parties (Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael) as an unfortunate legacy of the split. Similarly, 'He thinks you're on the run' (S 87), which becomes 'Myśli, że jesteś w Armii Republikańskiej' (CB 24; 'He thinks you're in the Republican Army'), is once again a much less equivocal statement in the translation. These changes point in one direction: glorification of the cause of independence. O'Casey's original is more subtle, with less flag waving.

Paradoxically, the replacement of 'gunman' with 'powstaniec' ('rebel') puts the revolutionaries in a particularly bad light when one

²⁴ Information from *Pamiętnik Teatralny*, 95–6 (1975), 410–18, and *Almanach Sceny Polskiej* (Warsaw) for the relevant years. Pawlik was Hübner's co-director.

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character is made to proclaim:

I say stop when I hear rebels trumpeting about dying for the people when it's the people who are dying for the rebels. I'm full of all due respect for the rebels but I don't want them to die for me.

(CB 50)

In the original the speaker complains of violent people, who may or may not be (but in fairness to the translator probably are) genuine revolutionaries:

I draw the line when I hear the gunmen blowin' about dyin' for the people, when it's the people that are dyin' for the gunmen! With all due respect to the gunmen, I don't want them to die for me.

(S 111)

In the translation the targets of the speaker's ire are, unambiguously, true freedom fighters. In the original the word 'hero' appears only once, in a song sung by Tommy Owen, who is portrayed as all talk and no action: 'God save Ireland ses the hayros, God save Ireland ses we all' (S 95). With all the talk of heroes in the Polish version, it comes as no surprise that one of the most openly ideological reviews of the play was entitled 'Bohaterowie i tchórze' ('Heroes and Cowards').²⁵

Matters become more complicated when we consider more subtle deviations from the original, and try to answer the key question: 'does this differ from the original because of a censor's direct or indirect influence, or was it the translator's considered, neutral, professional choice, uninfluenced either by censor or political context?' Or in other words: 'Am I being paranoid? Do I see censors lurking behind every sentence?' Anna Bednarczyk writes that the critic cannot always objectively know how many changes came from an external censor and how many from the translator – to which one might add that we cannot always know whether there *are* any changes.²⁶

For instance, 'the men o' '98' (S 90) is rendered 'o rewolucjonistach z 1798 r.' (CB 27; 'about the revolutionaries of 1798'). This could be viewed merely as an example of the coarsening or blunting of the translation – 'revolutionaries' having more positive connotations in the eyes of the censor than mere 'men'²⁷ – or the translator may

²⁵ Roman Szydłowski, 'Bohaterowie i tchórze', *Trybuna Ludu*, 29 September 1955, p. 8.

²⁶ Anna Bednarczyk, 'Collage polityczno-translatologiczny', in *Polityka a przekład*, edited by Piotr Fast (Katowice, 1996), pp. 163–71 (p. 167).

²⁷ It is also not gender-specific, which could have been an important consideration in the avowedly egalitarian People's Republic of Poland.

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simply have thought it a good idea to supply extra information which would be unnecessary for the Irish reader, but useful for the Polish (a footnote in the Polish version explains in more detail who the men of '98 were). An example which has less to do with overt political censorship than with social and religious mores is (or might be) the following line in the Polish version: '... że po śmierci diabli będą się znęcać nad twoją duszą' (CB 17; 'that after death devils will torment your soul'). The original reads 'that God will torture your soul in the next world' (S 82); there is a clear shift from God's cruelty to the cruelty of devils. This might be seen as 'anticipatory' self-censorship, or simply as a naturalization or 'domestication' strategy. Such examples illustrate the difficulty – or possibly the artificiality – of distinguishing between external and internal, or active and passive, censorship. It might be better to speak of a spectrum of censorship ranging from 'knowing what the done thing is' to being told what to do. When censorship is thoroughly internalized, breaking the rules may be seen less as daring nonconformity than as irrational behaviour. Although I am unlikely to express my views in this article by using four-letter words, I am even less likely to complain of having been censored by the editors.

Another, less overt change is a footnote explaining a reference to Shelley. The Polish reader is informed that Shelley was the author not of, say, 'Ozymandias' but of 'On the Necessity of Atheism', and that he was a 'an advocate of slogans of freedom and progress' ('głosiciel hasel wolności i postępu', CB 17). If one is paranoid (perceptive?) enough, one may see this as a sly undermining of Shelley: the translator, aware of Poland's Catholicism, discredits Shelley by associating him with atheism and 'progress' – a word which would have been immediately associated with socialist propaganda. The example quoted above 'gdy słyszę powstańców trąbiących o śmierci za lud' ('when I hear rebels trumpeting about dying for the people') contains a more subtle problem of this kind. Might a translator untrammelled by censorship have translated it as 'o śmierci za ludzi'? *Lud* ('the folk', 'people') had positive connotations in the eyes of the communist authorities. It was used to mean the 'plain folk' and occurs in such communist-era slogans as 'nauka w służbie ludu' ('science in the service of the people'). 'Ludzie', by contrast, is simply the plural of 'człowiek' ('person'). 'Lud' also appears in one of the songs in the translation of *Red Roses for Me* (Cz 76) where the original has 'thy people' (R 204). To further complicate matters, before the communist hijacking of the word, *lud* had enjoyed a career in Polish Romanticism, with its glorification of

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the folk.²⁸ Without asking Hübner we cannot know which associations – communist or Romantic – he was seeking to trigger. Individual readers will make their own associations, which to some extent will depend on their political sympathies and their distance from the everyday life of communist Poland.

It may seem far-fetched to suspect that a reference (in a footnote at that) to Shelley's atheism is there at the censor's behest, but this might be to underestimate the extent of the game in which writers, translators, publishers, and censors were engaged. Barańczak notes that the censor or his editor – there was no way of knowing which – added inverted commas to some parts of his (Barańczak's) unfavourable reviews of socialist realist books.²⁹ We cannot now tell what changes, if any, were made by the censor, and what changes, if any, were made by Hübner, Pawlik, and Żuławski to head off censorship. Nor can we tell what changes were made as a sop to the censor. Hübner wrote *Theatre and Politics* (published 1992), which mentions some of the subterfuges and compromises used to get around the censor, but he does not refer to *Shadow of a Gunman*. He does, however, mention the importance of introductions and commentaries: Jan Józef Szczepański got a book past the censor by writing in its introduction that it was not to be read as an allusion to contemporary Polish life (though in the end the censor decided the introduction had to go).³⁰ Two historians recall how getting permission to publish historical texts on a certain subject was conditional on spelling out clearly in an introduction how the given texts were to be read and understood by contemporary readers.³¹ An interesting example of the interplay of evaluation and censorship can also be found in the Lublin archives. An article in *Kurier Lubelski* (13 May 1957) which reported the *Scotsman's* praise for Mao Tse Tsung's choice of a communist path independently of Russia was cut in its entirety. The reason given in the censor's report was that it appeared without a commentary, which 'indicates that the editors ... have a similar standpoint' ('świadczy o tym, że Redakcja ... zajmuje podobne stanowisko').³² Michał Głowiński has also drawn attention to the importance of evaluation in the language

²⁸ For instance in Mickiewicz's 'Oda do młodości' ('Ode to Youth'), whose first line reads 'Bez serc, bez ducha, to szkieletów ludy' ('Without hearts, without spirit/souls, they are people consisting of skeletons').

²⁹ Barańczak, *Książki najgorsze*, p. 9.

³⁰ Hübner, *Theatre and Politics*, pp. 49–50.

³¹ Wiktoria and René Śliwowsky, 'Nasze rodzinne potyczki z cenzurą PRL', in *Cenzura w PRL. Relacje historyków*, edited by Zbigniew Romek (Warsaw, 2000), pp. 215–28 (p. 219).

³² APL, file 1266, item 2423, 'Przegląd ingerencji i przeoczeń' ('Review of interventions and oversights').

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of communist Poland.³³ Western and American prose appearing in, for example, the newspaper *Kuźnica* was often accompanied by stern criticism.³⁴ This kind of evaluation can be seen in *Cień bohatera* in the lengthy footnote on Shelley, which ends by mentioning how ‘the sensitive lyricist, Davoren, drawing inspiration from Shelley’s poetry, forgets about the revolutionary tendencies in his work’ (CB 17). Here the translator can clearly – perhaps suspiciously clearly – be seen instructing the reader on the political import of the references in the play to Shelley. Hübner and Pawlik’s translation of *Shadow of a Gunman* comes with an introduction and remarks on staging that might reasonably be read as a ‘corrective’ to the translation.

Just as Szczepański claimed his book was not to be read as an allusion to modern Poland, Hübner suggests an analogy between Ireland and Nazi-occupied Germany. According to Thomas Venclova, Hitler’s Germany was ‘the most sophisticated metonymic substitution’ for artists trying to get around the ban on treating contemporary life.³⁵ Also, Hübner’s introduction gives the original English title, translating it as ‘Cień bojownika, bojowca’ (‘shadow of a fighter/fighting man/combatant’).³⁶ This may be understood in terms of the common practice of restricting the flow of information rather than cutting it off altogether.³⁷ The mass audience would not normally have access to information contained in the introduction, which is for a select group of people. But by smuggling the ‘real’ title of the play into the introduction, Hübner plants a very pertinent question in the mind of any potential director: is this play about heroes and rebels, or merely gunmen?

Elsewhere in the remarks there appear what seem sops to the censor. In discussing O’Casey’s belief that it is impossible to live in society and yet outside it (i.e. to be disengaged), Hübner writes that ‘he who takes no part in the building of our country, waiting on the sidelines to “see what will come of it”, is playing into the hands of our enemies, though he may not realize it himself’ (CB 75–6). This

³³ Michał Głowiński, *Nowomowa po polsku* (Warsaw, 1990), pp. 8–12.

³⁴ Fik, ‘Cenzor jako współautor’, p. 42.

³⁵ Thomas Venclova, *Forms of Hope: Essays* (Riverdale-on-Hudson, N.Y., 1990), p. 188. One review of *Shadow of a Gunman* was entitled ‘Jak u nas za okupacji ...’ (‘Like Poland under occupation’) - *Życie Warszawy*, 232 (1955), p. 3.

³⁶ Ironically, it is Yelistratova’s and Sarachunian’s outright communist paeans to O’Casey that translate the title most faithfully, as ‘Cień strzelca’ – though here again, the matter is complicated by the military overtones of the word *strzelec* - ‘shooter’, ‘rifleman’ – and by the fact that the words were presumably translated into Polish via Russian.

³⁷ For instance, data on alcoholism in Poland could be published, but only in specialist publications with a low circulation. See Stanisław Barańczak, ‘*The Black Book of Polish Censorship*’, *New Republic*, 2 April 1984, p. 33.

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looks as though made to order for the communist authorities, but even here one might read ‘though he may not realize it himself’ as a coded message to non-communist readers not to take the sentiment seriously, because one ought to realize such things oneself.³⁸ In addition, the verb Hübner uses, ‘uświadomić sobie’ (‘realize, become conscious of’) was often used in the context of political (read: socialist) consciousness. For instance, Szydłowski writes in his 1955 review of the play that since writing it O’Casey’s ‘consciousness’ (‘świadomość’) has been raised, resulting in *The Star Turns Red*.³⁹ Remarks like this by Hübner, and the references to O’Casey’s ‘correct and interesting illumination’ (‘śluszne i ciekawe oświetlanie’, CB 76) of certain problems, clearly belong to the realms of newspeak. The word ‘śluszny’ (‘correct’) is described by both Głowiński and Bralczyk as being of key importance in communist Polish newspeak: it serves to evaluate along political lines.⁴⁰ These references are so formulaic and recognizable that the clued-in reader can skim over them until arriving at the broad hint in the last lines of the section entitled ‘Idea i problematyka utworu’ (‘the idea and issues of the work’), where Hübner says the remarks are incomplete, and stresses that the play is rich (‘bogata’, CB 77). The thrust of the previous remarks, and, at times, the translation itself, has been towards an impoverishment of O’Casey’s message, and here we learn that after all there is more than meets the communist eye to O’Casey. This technique has been described by Kornei Chukovsky with reference to non-translated writing. Venclova writes: ‘A dangerous text is interlaced with entirely well-intentioned phrases in the hopes that the reader will disregard those phrases he is sick and tired of, and catch the essential meaning. This is the tactic of “curtsies” and “lightning rods.” Many writers have achieved such perfection in this method that practically nothing besides obsequious expressions is left in the text.’⁴¹

Hence the existence of the censor makes an honest assessment of the translation very difficult. Even what are referred to above as broad or striking changes – from ‘gunman’ to ‘hero’ and ‘rebel’ – are not so drastic that they could only be explained as a response to the censor. We might be dealing with an entirely innocent case of adaptation or

³⁸ Barańczak writes ironically of the selection of titles for a songbook marking the thirtieth anniversary of the People’s Republic of Poland that ‘it only seemed to you’ (‘to tylko nam się tak wydawało’) that *non*-communist songs were the best loved in postwar Poland (*Książki najgorsze*, p. 40).

³⁹ Szydłowski, ‘Bohaterowie i tchórze’.

⁴⁰ Głowiński, *Nowomowa po polsku*, p. 10; Jerzy Bralczyk, *O języku polskiej propagandy politycznej lat siedemdziesiątych* (Warsaw, 2001), pp. 210–11.

⁴¹ Venclova, p. 189.

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free translation, particularly common phenomena, of course, in the medium of drama. One might be tempted to look at the translator's background and politics in order to try to guess how much of the finished translation is his own work; but the irony of judging a work on the basis of its creator's politics should be apparent – 'Hübner was in the opposition so his version of O'Casey's play is alright: he is just playing a game with censor and reader.' Or conversely: 'Hübner was a card-carrying communist so his translation is a travesty of the original.' This brings us back to the censors' way of looking at things; translations of English metaphysical poets were suspect if the translator's name happened to be Stanisław Barańczak.⁴²

The case of Howard Fast's *Citizen Tom Paine* seems at first to be more straightforward: certain changes were plainly motivated by censorship. Although Fast does not express as many doubts in the Cause as O'Casey, his vision of it is more complex than that in the 1952 and 1954 Polish translations. For example, in 'the people are no more all-seeing than their rulers once were' (TP 221), 'rulers' is changed by both Polish translators into 'tyrani' (OJK 245, OMM 247; 'tyrants'). The Polish version draws a clear dividing line between past (tyrants) and the future (rule by the people) – a dividing line which, while *Citizen Tom Paine* is no *Animal Farm*, is not so clear in Fast's original. A further example would be 'the mob was a mob and no more' (TP 43), which becomes a more respectful 'tłum jak to tłum' (OJK 57, OMM 56; 'the crowd was just a crowd') in both translations. And yet, where Fast uses the word 'comrade', his translators try to avoid using the straightforward Polish equivalent 'towarzysz', either deleting it or replacing it with 'druh' (given in the dictionary as a bookish word meaning 'friend'). One explanation for the avoidance of 'towarzysz' is that because of its communist overtones it was simply not used in everyday Polish speech – or at any rate not without ironic intent. To which one could reply that we are not dealing with everyday usage but with the exalted speech of a heroic fighter for justice. 'When a strong man bends towards a weaker and says, "Here, comrade, is my arm"' (TP 221) becomes 'kiedy silny człowiek nachyla się nad słabszym i wspiera go swym ramieniem' (OJK 245, OMM 247; 'when a strong man bends towards a weaker and supports him with his arm') in both versions. "Hey there, old comrade" (TP 176) becomes "hej, stary druhu!" in both versions (OJK 198, OMM 200). It might be that the translator is cutting 'comrades' out to avoid alienating the reader. But it is entirely possible that the *censor* cut out

⁴² Kuhiwczak, p. 200.

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'towarzysz' and, moreover, for the same reason.⁴³ It may not have been thought desirable to reveal that Howard Fast, the American communist, used hated communist clichés like 'comrade.'⁴⁴

Once again, the very existence of the censor, rather like the presence of an observer in experiments, makes objective assessment impossible. In practice it is impossible to state categorically 'If it were not for the censor the translator would have done *x* rather than *y*.' The censor, the political context, and – crucially – one's own politics are too entangled in each other for it to be feasible to subtract their significance, to achieve objectivity by 'making allowances' for their influence. For instance, Hübner writes in the introduction to *Shadow of a Gunman* that 'O'Casey did not want to take into account that the Irish Free State quickly betrayed the progressive tradition of the liberation movement and headed towards closed-mindedness and obscurantism' (CB 9). The Polish reader might be tempted to ignore this because it is formulaic newspeak, but many Irish readers, not necessarily communist, would agree that the socialist contribution of James Connolly and the Irish Citizen Army to the liberation movement was indeed lost in the new state. In the early days of communism such things may have been accepted at face value, but by the mid '50s, after ten years of none-too-subtle propaganda, it seems likely that all but the youngest, most naive Young Communists would have seen through it. In later years true believers would have been still harder to find, although this is not to say that people ignored anything couched in communist jargon.

One effect of censorship is a lack of respect for the integrity of the original, which is sometimes treated as raw material for an instructive lesson for the reader rather than a self-sufficient work of art. Jaworski's translation (or 'polonization') of 'Brass Spittoons' even adds a line to the poem, and the first line at that. The tendency of translation under censorship towards bluntness or coarsening might be contrasted with the tendency in original literature towards obliquity and subtlety, as described by Lev Loseff in *The Beneficence of Censorship*, where he points out that readers often find double meanings and allusions where none were intended.⁴⁵ In original works, he points out, writers affected by censorship often search for ways to convey a message known and

⁴³ Censors sometimes cut material that was overly socialist realist. Fik, 'Cenzor jako współautor', p. 137.

⁴⁴ In Wojewoda's translations of *Cock-a-Doodle-Andy* and *Red Roses for Me* 'comrade' is translated as 'towarzysz'.

⁴⁵ Lev Loseff, *The Beneficence of Censorship: Aesopian Language in Modern Russian Literature* (Munich, 1984), p. 120. Kuhlaczek refers to the censor's unpredictability, caused by his training in discovering allusions even where none were intended (Kuhlaczek, p. 200).

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agreed on by reader and writer.⁴⁶ Translations, as we have seen, tend to spell things out for the reader. But nothing is that simple where censorship is concerned. This spelling out may, in turn, be seen as an Aesopian device. On coming across the word ‘druh’ (as opposed to ‘towarzysz’) in Howard Fast, the reader who is a little too wise to the tricks people play or appear to play on the censor might respond: ‘the translator doth protest too much: Fast is a propagandist, after all’. Once a convention (such as calling one another ‘comrade’ or ‘towarzysz’, albeit not in genuine everyday conversation) is firmly in place, even to avoid it is to accept it. Conversely, on finding the word ‘towarzysz’ in the Polish version of *Red Roses for Me*, the reader might think the translator chose it not because Sean O’Casey used such a word, but to appease the censor.

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APPENDIX

Page references to works discussed are given in the body of the text with the appropriate abbreviation, given below.

- B** *Bedtime Story, Collected Plays*, vol. 4, (London), 1951, pp. 225–58.
- CB** *Cień bohatera. Tragedia w 2-ach aktach (Shadow of a Gunman)*, translated by Zygmunt Hübner and Bronisław Pawlik. Poems translated by Juliusz Żuławski. Introduction and staging notes by Zygmunt Hübner (1956).
- CD** *Cock-a-Doodle-Andy*, in *Collected Plays*, Vol. 4 (London, 1951), pp. 117–224.
- Cz** *Czerwone róże dla mnie (Red Roses for Me)*, translated by Cecylia Wojewoda, songs and anthems translated by Włodzimierz Lewik, *Dialog*, 66 (1961), 50–85.
- K** *Kukuryku (Cock-a-Doodle-Andy)*, translated by Cecylia Wojewoda, *Dialog*, 49 (1960), 47–83.
- O** *Opowiadanie na dobranoc*, translated by Cecylia Wojewoda, *Dialog*, 162 (1969), 61–72.
- OJK** *Obywatel Tom Paine*, second edition, translated by Jan Karen (Warsaw, 1952).
- OMM** *Obywatel Tom Paine*, translated by Mira Michałowska (Warsaw, 1954). (This edition belongs to a series of Stalin Peace Prize winners.)

⁴⁶ Loseff, pp. 219–20.

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- R** *Red Roses for Me*, in *Collected Plays*, Vol. 3 (London, 1951), pp. 123–232.
- S** *Shadow of a Gunman*, in *Three Plays* (London, 1980), pp. 75–130.
- TP** Howard Fast, *Citizen Tom Paine* (New York, 1943).