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The Bulgarian Reception of Jerzy Liebert: Bringing Him Out of the Shadows

Abstract

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The article is structured as follows: its first part is a review of the Bulgarian reception of Jerzy Liebert (until 2018), while the second focuses on new results (2018–2019). Emphasis is placed on the only translations of two poems by Liebert, which are included in *The Modern Polish Poets* anthology, published in 1967, – *Foxes (Lisy) and Jurgov Pub (Jurgowska karczma)*. These were translated by one of Bulgaria’s best poets and translators, Parvan Stefanov. He belongs to the generation of so called “quiet lyric poetry” in Bulgarian literature, which mounts a lyrical opposition to the propagandist and ideologised poetry from the time of the communist regime. The amplification of the reception of Liebert was actually the result of a voluminous Polish issue of Bulgaria’s leading *Literary Newspaper* titled “Polish Literature between the Two World Wars” (34/2018). This issue contains two new translations of poems by Liebert (*The Rider/Jeździec, Love Verse/Wiersz miłosny*) and the first translated article on Liebert published in Bulgaria: *Jerzy Liebert – The Ordinary Poet* by Anna Marta Szczepan-Wojnarska. The subsequent corrections of the Bulgarian translation receptions of Liebert appear in the second and expanded edition (June 2019) of the anthology *Polish Poetry between the Wars* (ed. by Panayot Karagyozov), where a total five new translations were: the aforementioned *The Rider* and *Love and Verse I Learn from You, Human (Uczę się Ciebie, człowieku)*, *The Beginning of Autumn (Początek jesieni)*, *Snow (Śnieg)*. The new translations are by the author of this article.

Keywords: Jerzy Liebert, Parvan Stefanov, Bulgarian reception, translations, anthology

The question of the Bulgarian reception of Jerzy Liebert emerged during our literary conversations with Prof. Anna Marta Szczepan-Wojnarska who has authored a study¹ of his poetry and is one of his most renowned Polish researchers. It was also raised in the discussions, marking the beginning of the philological collaboration between

¹ See: Anna-Marta Szczepan-Wojnarska, “Z ogniem będziesz się żenił”. *Doświadczenie transcendencji w życiu i twórczości Jerzego Lieberta* (Kraków: Universitas, 2003).

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I admit that when Prof. Wojnarska asked me two years ago whether Liebert was known and translated in Bulgaria, I gave the impromptu answer that he was relatively unknown, especially considering the translation and reception of other poets from the literature between the two world wars, who had been published in Bulgarian in independent poetic collections: Staff, Tuwim, Wierzyński, Iwaszkiewicz, Gałczyński, Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska². A bulky poetic volume of Leśmian's, a resurging interest in whom has been observed recently³ and who is challenging to translate because of his neologisms, should soon come off the press. Liebert seems obscured in their shadow, which partly affects his place in literature of the Polish interwar-period: of his relation to the then-dominant Skamander Group. He is most commonly identified as a satellite of this group in Polish literary history and is linked to Iwaszkiewicz via friendly and artistic relations, inconstant in their development mainly due to Liebert's vivid individuality⁴. On its part, Iwaszkiewicz' star rose considerably later⁵; he, too, remained in a relative shadow during the group's apogee. If we look at this from the perspective of religious Polish poetry in its Bulgarian presence, he also seems obscured by the shadows of Karol Wojtyła (John Paul II) and Jan Twardowski⁶.

Thus sounded my response to the question of the Bulgarian reception of Liebert even before it became the subject matter of this article. It is of particular importance that these conversations acted not only as an impulse to study the reception but also to improve it. One fundamental element of the self-controlling mechanisms of reception is to establish omissions, which would enable compensatory reactions. Examining his current

² Стаф, Леополд, *Есенен бунт*, trans. Кирил Кадийски (София: Народна култура, 1980); Юлиан Тувим, trans. Антоанета Ророва, Маяа Cholakova. *Лирика* (София: Народна култура, 1964); Ярослав Ивашкевич, *Утре е жътва*, trans. Ivan Valev, (София: Народна култура, 1982); Константин Галчински, *Сервус, мадона!*: *Лирика*, trans. Parvan Stefanov, (София: Народна култура, 1966); Мария Павликовска-Ясножевска, *Целувки. Избрана лирика*, trans. Panayot Karagyozov, (София: Славика, 1991); *Вкусът на любовта*, trans. Panayot Karagyozov, (София: Полски културен институт, 1993). Some of Iwaszkiewicz's prose and essays are published in separate editions.

³ Steliana Dankova concludes that, as of 2014, "there are few Bulgarian translations of Leśmian, and some of them have been published twice, i.e. their number is insufficient to adequately introduce the Polish poet's work to the Bulgarian reader". Стеллиана Данкова, "Преводна рецепция на поезията на Болеслав Лешмян в България", *Zeszyty Syrylo-Metodiańskie*, 4 (2015), 53. Wojciech Gałzka undertakes to remedy this situation and, together with the poet Petar Parvanov, they translate some 100 of Leśmian's poems. See the interview with Wojciech Gałzka: Wojciech Galonzka, Margreta Grigorova, "Most Important in Life Are Ethics and Freedom" (Разговор с Войчех Галонзка), *Литературен вестник* 15 (1917), 13. The translation of *I Am Lying on My Back in a Lawn* (*Leżę na wznak na łące*) was published in it.

⁴ "Their friendship has undergone challenging moments and not without troubles, mainly for Liebert's strong personality that prevented him from falling under Iwaszkiewicz's influence". Szczepan-Wojnarska, „Z ogniem będziesz się żenił”. *Doświadczenie transcendencji w życiu i twórczości Jerzego Lieberta*, 33.

⁵ "Iwaszkiewicz existed in the farthest point of the scene, as the weakest of Skamander members, even though later, as an author of "Brzezina" and "Panny z Wilka", he became one of the best novelists of the first half of XX century. Stefan Chwin, "Literatura Trzydziestolecia (1989–2019)", *Kwartalnik Artystyczny* 2/102 (2019): 49.

⁶ Except for 12 books of theological texts, 4 volumes of poetry by Karol Wojtyła (John Paul II) have been published in Bulgaria since 1989 – in 1991, 1992 (2 volumes), 1995, and 2005. Two volumes of Jan Twardowski's poetry and essays also came out in 1999 and 2007.

presence has in fact resulted in a pursuit of rehabilitation and enhancement of interest in this author – in particular, new translations of Liebert’s poetry and a new and broader introduction of its author. These are gestures of attention that this poet most certainly deserves. The first humble results can already be marked at this stage, which I hope will be followed by new and ever better ones, and, eventually, by the publication of an independent collection of this author’s poetry, accompanied by an apposite foreword for his brief yet vigorous path of life, and for his unique artistic image.

This article is structured as follows: its first part is a review of the current state of the reception of Liebert (until 2018), while the second focuses on new results that are the outcome of the aforementioned initiative (2018–2019). The second part also contains this author’s own attempt at translating poems that have not been translated before and the interest aroused in Liebert’s works and artistic path. The year 2018 serves as a dividing line because it is when, in connection with the centenary of the Independence of Poland and the establishment of Polish-Bulgarian diplomatic relations, a special issue of Bulgaria’s leading literary newspaper dedicated to interwar Polish literature was released wherein Liebert received due inclusion.

The text at hand also conforms to the conference theme (at which an abbreviated version of it was delivered) and aims to demonstrate how the question of translating the imagery and the experience of the transcendent in the poetry of the author of *The Rider* (*Jeździec*) stands.

Review of the Reception of Liebert up to 2018

Studying the reception of the poet at this stage included mainly book editions (anthologies) and some literary magazines. Enquiries were made to the St. Cyril and St. Methodius National Library and the Veliko Tarnovo Regional Library. Further results would be obtained at a subsequent stage by the thorough review of the literary press.

The earliest possible penetration of Liebert into Bulgaria may be sought at least several years after his début in Poland in 1925 – the first book of poetry *Druga Ojczyzna* (*Second Motherland*) and, more realistically, after his second poetry book, *Gusta* (*Rebeck*), was published in 1930. We should note that this inter-war period is an exceptionally prolific and emblematic time for the reception of Polish culture in Bulgaria. Here we observe the first programmatic strategy of Polish-Bulgarian cultural relations, in which literature occupies a dominant position as a spiritual bridge between our two nations. This programme launched very powerfully as early as 1918 when the man of letters Tadeusz Stanisław Grabowski (1881–1975)⁷, an exceptionally resourceful and charismatic person, came to Bulgaria in his capacity of free Poland’s first diplomatic ambassador. The strong presence of Polish culture in Bulgaria during the interwar period is, to a very

⁷ See: Магда Карабелова, *Българската мисия на Тадеуш Ст. Грабовски – пратеник на възкръсваща Полша* (София: Изд. Боян Пенев, 2011); Albena Popova, *Bułgarska misja Tadeusza S. Grabowskiego, wysłannika odradzającej się Polski i dwujęzyczne wydanie "Ankiety bułgarskiej w sprawie polskiej" (1915–1916), Postscriptum polonistyczne 2* (2013), 85–91.

large extent, owed to its constructiveness and to its powerful amiable relations with Bulgarian specialists on Polish literature⁸ and admirers of Polish culture. A Polish-Bulgarian Society was created, a Polish Library was set up, and the unique *Polish-Bulgarian Review* magazine (*Полско-български преглед*) began to be published, which served as the fundamental tool for Polish-Bulgarian cultural symbiosis. It came out intermittently during the periods of 1919–1925 and 1931–1935, publication being interrupted by the end of Grabowski's diplomatic mission, upon completion of which he was seen off with great honours. During its first publication period, the magazine was a content-rich biweekly that published materials about all areas of life in Poland and about Polish-Bulgarian relations in both historical and contemporary aspects. Its culture section aimed to present the history of Polish culture and its most remarkable authors, and Polish-Bulgarian contacts throughout history, but also to provide a contemporary panorama, the latest facts and phenomena, and pronounced talents. A great share of the said materials appeared in translation. Poems and prose fragments were also published in Polish for those Bulgarians who spoke the language and for Poles living in Bulgaria. During the magazine's second development period, it also published Bulgarian articles in Polish and Polish articles in Bulgarian.

The Liebert's increased presence may be found in the magazine's second period, as renewed in 1931 by Adam Tarnowski (1866–1946)⁹, the third Polish ambassador to Bulgaria, who served between 1930 and 1941. Although not a professional man of letters, he took special care of literature. We should note that during the magazine's first period emphasis was laid on the poetry of romanticists and the poets of Young Poland (*Młoda Polska*)¹⁰. The subject of testing the connection between man and God, something key to Liebert's poetry, is chiefly found in the *Młoda Polska* work, its dramatic culmination in the Bulgarian reception gravitating between Mickiewicz's *All Souls' Day* (*Dziady*) and Kasprowicz's *Hymns*, the latter being published in the 1924 volume Polish Library, the whole cycle translated by Dora Gabe, although the *Święty Boże, Święty mocny* hymn having been available as early as 1910 with Lyubomir Andreychin's translation¹¹. Obviously, the magazine's second period would focus increasingly on contemporary interwar literature. While the revived *Polish-Bulgarian Review* was limited in frequency and volume, Issue 1 published a translation of A. Guttrie's¹² article *The Polish Literature*

⁸ Grabowski's contacts with literary critic and historian Boyan Penev (1882–1927) and his wife, translator and poet Dora Gabe (1888–1983) played a crucial role.

⁹ Карабелова, Магда, *Посланик Адам Тарновски и неговото дипломатическо пилигримство*, София: Унив. изд. „Св. Климент Охридски“, 2014.

¹⁰ See: Margreta Grigorowa, *Niechronologiczny czas historii recepcyjnej: próba zarysu teorii względności przekładowej polskiej literatury w Bułgarii*, in: *Literatura polska w świecie*. Vol. V, *Mapowanie, opisy, interpretacje*, ed. Romuald Cudak, Katowice: Wydawnictwo Gnome, 2014, 11–25.

¹¹ See: Kalina Bachniewa, *Znalezione w przekładzie. O bułgarskich tłumaczeniach „Hymnów” Jana Kasprowicza*, in: *„Nigdy nie jestem tylko tu...”* *Polsko-bułgarskie artystyczne zbliżenia i konfrontacje* (Uniwersytet Śląski, Wyd. Gnome, Katowice, 2014), 39–150.

¹² The magazine fails to provide details about the author or where the article's original had been published. I am indebted to Prof. Piotr Mitzner of UKSW who has researched the author. This is Aleksander Guttry (1887–1955), a literary and musical critic who has published in *Wiadomości Literackie* and *Pologne Littéraire* and translated Polish literature into German. According to Prof. Mitzner, the article was most probably taken from *Pologne Littéraire* (the French version of *Wiadomości Literackie*).

of Today¹⁵. It offers a review of the development of Polish literature post-Independence, listing 15 authors together¹⁴ with the most important aspects of their work. However, not even the slightest mention of Liebert is made in the article. As always, the magazine published selected poems by those who were deemed to be the leading poets. Poems by Julian Tuwim, Kazimierz Wierzyński, and Antoni Słonimski were included in that same issue.

Stefan Mladenov's article *What We Can Learn from Our Polish Brethren*, published in its Polish translation in the same issue, is also worthy of attention. "Faith in justice and in God is inseparable from love for the motherland"¹⁵, he writes, laying emphasis on the religious origin in the Bulgarian vision of Polish mentality, an emphasis that also impacts the reception of Polish poetry and could be the reason for the interest in Liebert's oeuvre. The examples given, however, are not related to interwar-authors, but instead to Mickiewicz, who already enjoyed popularity in Bulgaria with two excerpts from *All Souls' Day* (Konrad's and Priest Piotr's monologues).

Thus, our review of the earliest period (at the current stage of research) finds no evidence of Liebert's presence. His first confirmed appearance in Bulgarian reception is after World War II. We should note that, after the war, especially since the 1960s, a powerful surge of interest was observed in interwar poetry and in authors whose artistic paths begin or pass through the two interwar decades, but also continue beyond it: Leopold Staff, Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, Konstanty Gątczyński, Julian Tuwim, whom I have already mentioned. Anthologies featuring them, as well as independent volumes, multiply one after the other.

The *Modern Polish Poets* anthology, published in 1967, features two poems by Liebert – *Foxes (Lisy)* and *Jurgov Pub (Jurgowska karczma)* – and their author is in the company of a total of 47 poets in translation, some of whom (Stanisław Czernik, Mieczysława Buczkówna, Andrzej Bursa, Krzysztof Gonczorowski) are only featured with a single poem, while Jan Lechoń, who occupied a leading position between the wars, is also presented with two poems. It is of greater importance to note that the two poems by Liebert were translated by one of Bulgaria's best poets and translators, Parvan Stefanov (one of the editors and compilers of the anthology). On the face of it, Liebert's featured poems are the least related to the religious line in his poetry, but they are, nonetheless, quite popular, and imbued with creative audacity and period-start vitality. Simultaneously, they also bear the seal of Liebert's "fiery" personality.

Worthy of special attention is the translator's figure and their place not only in the context of translation reception but also in the development of Bulgarian literature, the connection between self-authored work and translation, which concerns the problematics of the poet as translator and the proposition that "translation is a continuation

¹⁵ Д-р А. Гютри, "Из Днешната полска литература", *Полско-български преглед* 1 (1932), 14–17.

¹⁴ Among whom we find the less prominent Julian Wołoszynowski, Kornel Makuszyński, Stanisław Baliński.

¹⁵ Стефан Младенов, "На какво можем да се научим от братята поляци", *Полско-български преглед*, 1 (1932), 2–6.

of one's own work"¹⁶. We should note straight away that Liebert had the very best of luck with the best possible translator having done great service for the reception of Polish literature in Bulgaria, translating over 30 Polish authors, most of whom were poets. Stefanov is known as the translator of Gałczyński and Różewicz, whose separate books of verses he published¹⁷, as well as Karol Wojtyła's first independent book of poetry¹⁸. Among the other poets he has translated are Leopold Staff, Bolesław Leśmian, Antoni Słonimski, Kazimierz Wierzyński, Julian Tuwim, Krzysztof Kamil Baczyński, Władysław Broniewski, Adam Ważyk, Jan Twardowski and, Zbigniew Herbert. The prominent Bulgarian Slavic expert Panayot Karagyozov concludes that in his translations Parvan Stefanov "presents in the poetic tongue the multifaceted and ambiguous Polish social and cultural life in the period between World War I and the end of totalitarianism"¹⁹. Two years after Stefanov's death in 2014, Karagyozov published a substantial translator's anthology of Stefanov's work, containing translations of 20 Polish poets – but unfortunately, the 1967 translations of Liebert were not included.

Stefanov translated only two works by Liebert, however and more importantly, he gave them a beautiful life in translation, true to the spirit and impact of the original; he has managed to follow those sacred and simple rules of which Stanisław Barańczak speaks in his book *Rescued in Translation* – that the translation should be such an interpretation of the original that it should, to the greatest extent possible, provoke such a "metaphysical and simultaneously physiological thrill"²⁰ in the reader as does the original work.

It is important to note that Parvan Stefanov was also one of the best Bulgarian contemporary poets, the author of over 20 volumes of poetry and several plays. He belongs to the generation of so called "quiet lyric poetry"²¹ in Bulgarian literature, which mounts a lyrical opposition of the bombastic, propagandist and ideologised poetry from the time of the communist regime. The main inner call of these poets, who are both fragile and strong, is salvaging the dignity of poetry itself in the situation of ideological besiegement. We could even say that Liebert's two poems weave into the generation's voice with their audacious notes, as if a protest encoded in the form of translation.

¹⁶ In Monika Kaczorowska's phrasing from the book: Monika Kaczorowska, *Przekład jako kontynuacja twórczości własnej. Na przykładzie wybranych translacji Stanisława Barańczaka z języka angielskiego* (Kraków: Universitas, 2002). We should also take into consideration various aspects of application of the concept thus formulated – the choice of translating poet, his or her closeness to the artist being translated, the polemics with him/her and the art of translation as a purpose of art and aesthetics (like in Barańczak).

¹⁷ See: Константин Галчински, *Сервус мадона!*, trans. Първан Стефанов (София: Народна култура, 1966); Ружевиц, Тадеуш, *Борба с ангела* (София: Христо Ботев, 1994).

¹⁸ Папа Йоан Павел Втори, *Стихове*, trans. Parvan Stefanov (София: Приложение към списание "Глобус", 1991).

¹⁹ Карагъзов, Панайот, *Прости са пътищата навред, но и безпътищата е вредом...* Foreword to: *Полската поезия в превод на Първан Стефанов* (София: Унив. изд. „Св. Климент Охридски“, 2014), 6.

²⁰ See: Stanisław Barańczak, *Ocalone w tłumaczeniu* (Poznań: a5, 2004), 16–17.

²¹ For the poetic voices and the generation's problematics, see the following literary miscellany: *"Тихата лирика" в българската литература: Пазете тишина!*, ed. Plamen Doynov, Ivan Stankov (София: Кралица Маб, 2015).

In one of Stefanov's best known poems, *Pastoral (Пасторално)*²², we can find a display of artistic audacity that feels close to the air of Liebert's translated poem *Foxes*. The following image emerges in *Pastoral*: twelve sheep, led out to graze by the poet who "came into this world like Jesus", change the colour of their fleece and turn into wolves. If to Liebert a fox is an emanation of the wild and untamed artistic element, but also of vagrancy, to Stefanov the wolf-cub is a rebellion against the flock's obedience in the conditions of a controlled society.

Let us focus briefly on several details from the translation of *Foxes*. In the first stanza, the equivalent of the original's "by the wall" topos is the translation's "under the eaves", which serves to localise differently the proximity of the foxes to the house – in Bulgarian tradition, the eaves are a metonymic substitute for "home", which is referred to as a "father's", "mother's" or "native eaves". One omission is, however, found in the second stanza, that of an image, which is essential for Liebert's poetic code – the fir. The call to go out under the "fir vault" is missing, instead we have the simpler "outside you go!". And we know what symbolic role the image of the fir is for Liebert from his death-bed *Lullaby of the Firs*. Instead of "learn, learn" (meaning "follow the example of the fox") in the third stanza, we find "get used to it get used to it", with one translator's addition seen as well: "fearlessly" has been added to "to err", which indicates that Stefanov has heightened the fox's (man's) lack of fear of making mistakes. In stanza 8, the equivalent of "glitter roving in your eyes" is "the passion of the fox glows in your eyes". On the whole, in his translation of *Foxes* Stefanov has captured the wild, passionate, and adroit image of this poetic totem – the initiator fox, "wrought by the Moon" (in the style of heavenly projections that are characteristic of Liebert), by deducing from it the so called "semantic dominant" (Barańczak)²³. The semantic dominant is intensified at the finale. Liebert's final line, "I am an inspired fox!" is transformed by Stefanov into "An inspired fox... that's me!", which he writes in italics. The vital and the ecstatic, which seem to have appealed to the Bulgarian poet and translator, are also present in the second translated poem, *Yurgov Pub*, that recreates the image of the drunkenness of love.

Let's also look at the "About the author" note accompanying Liebert's poems in the 1967 anthology. It is terse and, as it turns out, contains translation errors: "Jerzy Liebert was born in 1904. He is a poet related to the Skamander literary group and to the Catholic circles. Liebert died from tuberculosis in 1931. He published *The Second Motherland* (1925) and *Rebeck* (1930) poetry books. Posthumously published are *Alder Cradle* (1932), *Letters, Poems* (volume one) (1934, with a foreword by Leopold Staff), *Selected Poems* (1951). He translated Russian and French poetry"²⁴. There are errors and inaccuracies in the translation of the titles of the second and the third (posthumous)

²² The poem was translated into Polish by Wojciech Gatłzka. See: Stefanov, Parwan, "Pastoratka", trans. Wojciech Gatłzka, in: *Literatura bułgarska w przekładach Wojciecha Gatłzki*, <https://literaturabulgarska.vilnet.pl/category/przeklady-poezji/przyjaznie-bliskie-i-dalsze-pyrwan-stefanov/>

²³ Barańczak, Stanisław, op. cit, pp 35–36.

²⁴ *Съвременни полски поети. Антология*, Ed. Dora Gabe, Blaga Dimitrova, Petar Karaangov, Parwan Stefanov, София: Народна култура, 1967, p. 303.

books. The title *Gusta* (*Spells or Witchcraft*) was mistranslated into Bulgarian as “rebeck” (the medieval three-stringed instrument), possibly under the influence of the complete interlinguistic homonymy. *Kotysanka jodłowa* (*Alders’ Lullaby*) was mistranslated as “cradle” instead of as “lullaby”. The anthology comes with an extensive foreword by Petar Dinekov (a prominent Bulgarian Slavonic and Bulgarian scholar) where Liebert is mentioned in passing as one of the poets that are connected, to a lesser degree, to the Skamander group²⁵.

A new detail concerning Liebert emerges in Panayot Karagyozov’s foreword to the first edition of the translated anthology *Polish Poetry between the Wars* (1996), which he compiled, where we can read that “the Catholic and surrealistic orientation in Jerzy Liebert’s poems expands the group’s multifacetedness and occasions critical commentary about its eclectics”²⁶. Karagyozov also mentions Liebert alongside Staff and Zegadłowicz in his article *Degradation of Prometheism (based on materials from Greek and Polish literature)*, writing that there is “a renewal of the Renaissance dialogue with God” in these poets²⁷. Unfortunately, there are no translated poems by Liebert in the anthology’s first edition. However, the second and expanded edition (June 2019) features five newly translated poems of his. They are the work of the current author and the fruit of Slavic collaboration with that connoisseur of Polish literature and translator Panayot Karagyozov. These are: *The Rider*, *Love Verse*, *I Learn from You*, *Human*, *The Beginning of Autumn and Snow*²⁸. This brings the number of Liebert’s translated works to a total of seven.

Corrections in the reception of Liebert after 2018 – with a hope of continuation

The above mentioned correction of the reception of Liebert was actually the result of voluminous Polish issue of Bulgaria’s leading *Literary Newspaper* titled “Polish Literature between the Two World Wars” (44 newspaper pages, equalling 200 standard pages), whose thematic editors (and also translators of selected texts) are the current author and Kristian Yanev, doctoral student in Polish literature at the Sofia University. This issue contains the first translated article on Liebert (my translation as well) published in Bulgaria: Anna Marta Szczepan-Wojnarska’s *Jerzy Liebert – The Ordinary Poet*²⁹, which introduces the reader to Liebert’s short but intensive life and elucidating his artistic positions. The article begins with what is perhaps Liebert’s best known verse, the highlight of his poem *The Rider*: “Since I have made a choice forever, I shall now have to choose each moment!”

²⁵ See П. Динков, *Съвременната полска поезия*, ibidem, p. 6. (Preface).

²⁶ Карагъзов, Панайот, *Полската поезия между двете световни войни*. Антология, София: Унив. изд. “Св. Климент Охридски”, 1996, p. 17.

²⁷ Karagyozov, *Degradacja prometeizmu na podstawie literatury antyeczno-greckiej i polskiej*, Postscriptum Polonistyczne, 2013, no. 2, p.127.

²⁸ *Полската поезия между двете световни войни*. Антология, ed. Панайот Карагъзов, Унив. изд. “Св. Климент Охридски”, 2019, pp. 41–43.

²⁹ Анна Марта Шчепан-Войнарска, “Йежи Либерт – обикновеният поет”, trans. Margreta Grigorova, *Литературен Вестник* 34, (2018), 9.

Naturally, the poem itself had to be translated; I was convinced that this emblematic and powerful work must be brought to the Bulgarian reader. I saw my chief task of translator in expressing most powerfully and adequately the clearly perceptible psychomachia, the conflict within the author's soul, with which I had become acquainted with via medieval and Baroque Polish literature and developed an interest in. Although Liebert is known to have opposed being associated with Baroque authors such as Mikolaj Sęp Szarzyński³⁰, to me this poem sounds in the spirit of Sęp Szarzyński's Baroque activism, of the Baroque spiritual and metaphysical poetry. I have identified for myself the tribulations of God-seeking, the principles of the so-called Baroque conceptismo, of the poetics of oppositions, paradoxes and oxymorons of the "vanquished by mercy" type in which the winner is that which is ostensibly (physically) frailer but stronger spiritually. I had to choose whether to translate the title as *Rider* or *The Rider*, definite article or no definite article. I opted for the definite article because of its ability to emphasise. I also had to choose one of two synonyms – "the horseman" or "the rider". I have opted for "the rider" because with this synonym the emphasis is on steering the horse – the Bulgarian word *ездачи* is derived from *езда/юзда*, which means "rein". Furthermore, the Victorious Christ is referred to (in the Synodical Bulgarian translation of the Bible) as a "rider with a bow" on a white horse (Revelation 6:2).

We decided that the above-mentioned issue of *Literary Newspaper* should feature a section on love poetry. I therefore chose to translate Liebert's *Love Verse*, where the main task I set myself was to render the loving caress between the yet slumbering, slowly awaking earth, and the sky at dawn, the entire palette of colour shades and the highlight on "love that is stronger than pain".

From Liebert's place in the Polish issue of *Literary Newspaper* we arrived at Liebert's place in the second edition of the *Polish Literature between the Two World Wars* anthology, which I have already mentioned. I have added the poems *I Learn from You*, *Human* and *The Beginning of Autumn* to those translated in *Literary Newspaper* in order to introduce the touching, wise, and beautiful sadness of the poet that is hidden in his smile and is shared with the horses, with his vision of the twofold human fate. Translating the short poem *Snow*, I wanted to show the image of the snowflakes, passing through several metaphorical reincarnations – colour, sky, maternal caress, hour-glass sand.

I hope that the new translations and the growing interest in Liebert will gradually bring him out of the shadows. Many more of his beautiful poems (and letters) stir a desire for them to be translated and to find their way to Bulgarian readers and interpreters.

³⁰ See: Jerzy Liebert, *Listy do Agnieszki*, (Warszawa: Więź, 2002), 332.

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