

Janusz Pasterski

Parallel Worlds: On Bilingualism and Cultural Polyphony in Andrzej Busza's Poetry

Literary bilingualism is often the result of permanent rootedness in two cultures. Individual biographical experiences leave many opportunities here, the most frequent of which are, for example, emigration and settlement in a new country or life on the ethnic and linguistic borderland. In each case, however, it is a particularly complex situation and related not only to the category of artistic expression language, but also to the notion of cultural (and often national) identity. The duration of intercultural contact and its origin in relation to the individual age is of great importance. The earlier and the longer, the more durable and more penetrating the consciousness. In border areas such contact is somehow natural, perpetuated both by everyday customs and rituals of the symbolic sphere. In the case of expatriation, however, we are dealing with a fundamental cultural change understood as the main factor influencing the shaping of the immigrant's consciousness and shaping his internal intercultural relations.

The encounter of an individual with difference or alienation may lead to various interactions, including various forms of cultural adaptation - from the simple acquisition of the ability to function only within one's own diaspora, to assimilation, i.e. full integration into the culture of the host country. The indirect form in this process is precisely biculturalism, i.e. the position of the individual in relation to two different groups, which results in a hybrid shape of cultural identity. It is the result of coexistence in two social environments between which a relationship with an unsustainable, dynamic structure is es-

tablished. It is usually distinguished by the gradual reduction of distance from the new environment while at the same time reducing or modifying the ties with the native culture. The link integrating both circles remains bilingualism, present even in subsequent generations. Biculturalism is therefore above all a feature of the first generation of immigrants as a formula for mitigating cultural change and enabling the reduction of axionormative conflicts. Produces a separate, compilation type of personality, located outside defined uniquely communities and systems.

In the works of Polish writers who emigrated from independence after September, the phenomenon of biculturalism was not a desirable factor. The ideologically defining Polish circles, especially in Great Britain, strongly emphasized the patriotic attitude and the preservation of national cohesion. For example, Tymon Terlecki [see: "Choraży Emigracji" [see: Terlecki]]. In this situation, acculturation or assimilation tendencies had to be perceived as divergent from the Polish interest. Nevertheless, some eminent artists in exile treated it in a more universal way - not as a state of failure, but as an opportunity to enrich their own writing. Such an attitude was characteristic of, among others, the following Czesław Miłosz, Witold Gombrowicz, Jerzy Pietrkiewicz, Gustav Herling-Grudziński and Sławomir Mrożek. The latter wrote a letter to Wojciech Skalmowski: "I am convinced that the quality of my, our, Polish writing, our way of thinking, formulating, writing - we owe it to emigration. This is the positive side of our otherwise unhappiness" [Mrożek and Skalmowski 2007, p. 547].

However, while in relation to these writers a stronger insight into the culture of the country of settlement took place at a mature age and was not connected (apart from Jerzy Pietrkiewicz) with a change in the language of artistic expression, in the case of the youngest generation of this emigration, the situation turned out to be much more complex. Young artists, among others, will be gathered around the London magazine "Kontynenty" ("Continents"). Andrzej Busza, Bogdan Czaykowski, Adam Czerniawski, Zygmunt Ławrynowicz, Bolesław Taborski or Florian Śmieja, were also in a position determined by British education, graduation from local schools and universities, good knowledge of English and practical bilingualism. Their placement in English culture, knowledge of realities and traditions, understanding of the local world of values determined the rapid acquisition of bicultural competences. At the same time, however, aware of their origin and attached to the Polish language, they developed their work in their native language, although in strong opposition to the passeistic models and stereotypes of emigration poetry. What distinguished them was their conscious thinking about the language material, their attitude of rebellion motivated by the sense of "triple alienation" and their use of Polish and English sources of literary tradition.

In the circle of poets from the London group of "Continents", special attention should be paid to the poetic work of Andrzej Busza as the most com-

plicated case of biculturalism and literary bilingualism. In order to understand its cultural and linguistic conditions, it is necessary to recall the basic biographical facts.¹ Andrzej Busza was born on 17 November 1938 in Cracow. His father was a doctor and his mother was a daughter of doctor Apolinare Tarnavsky, a well-known doctor, a pioneer of natural medicine and the founder of a sanatorium in Kosovo, Pokuciu. It was from there that the whole family was forced to flee on September 17 of the following year after the Red Army entered [see: Tarnawski, pp. 7-8; Tarnowska 2011, p. 233]. Then, through Romania and Cyprus, Andrzej Busza found himself in June 1941 together with his mother, brother, grandparents and uncle Wit Tarnawski in Palestine. In this way, Palestine became for him the land of childhood, where he lived from the age of three to nine, i.e. 1941-1947. There he began his pre-school education (Polish and - for a short period - English kindergarten in Jerusalem), and then school education, passing the first grade of the Polish primary school also in Jerusalem. The Polish language was his first language, but it grew in a multi-cultural environment, in contact with different traditions and languages. In an interview with Beata Tarnowska, he recalled this diversity as follows:

I grew up in a Polish bubble, in Polish language. [...] However, the landscape and reality of Palestine are still close to me today [...]. Various traditions, cultures and languages were coming together here at that time. When I went shopping with Mum, for example to an Arabic shop, it spoke French; Jewish shops often used German. We also rented rooms in a house also inhabited by Armenians. My Polish school was located in the so-called Greek colony. Mum was helping in the house of an Arabian woman who had a son slightly older than me, so I grabbed a little Arabic. [Tarnowska 2011, p. 234-235]

For obvious reasons, however, it was not an idyllic childhood; the time of the war and the increasing tensions in Jewish-British and Jewish-Palestinian relations left many traces of horror² in memory. They will return in the poet's works.

The next eighteen years of his life Andrzej Busza spent in England, where he graduated from the English boarding school of St. Petersburg. Joseph's College in London, followed by English studies at the prestigious University College in London (1963). He also taught English for two years in a gymnasium in London. Throughout this time it functioned in two parallel cultural

¹ Maria Danilewicz-Zielińska described poets from the "Kontynenty" group as "mysterious young", and their biographies as "colourful, almost novel" [Danilewicz-Zielińska, p. 317].

² Andrzej Busza, for example, was an eyewitness to the bombing of the extremist Jewish organization Irgun Zwei Leumi in the hotel "King David" in Jerusalem on 22 July 1946 [see Tarnowska 2004, p. 225-228].

spaces: during the school or academic year - in the English environment, and during holidays and holiday breaks - in the Polish environment. This duality required him to switch codes and finally created a kind of spiritual and linguistic balance, according to which English became for him the language of science and professional matters, while Polish - the language of intimate and family life. Years later the poet called this state “cultural schizophrenia”:

For years I have lived and cultivated a schizophrenic mode of existence, speaking one language at home, and another in the street, the classroom, or the draughty departmental corridor. In the daytime I analyzed sonnets by Shakespeare and Hopkins; at night I wrote poems in the language of Herbert, Różewicz, and Białoszewski [Busza 1987, p. 62]

At the same time, during his studies, he established contact with the Polish academic youth community and at the end of the 1950s, he joined a group of young artists already operating in London, gathered around the magazine “Kontynenty - Nowy Mercuriusz” (later called “Kontynenty”). He belonged to the editorial team, he also participated in the literary life of the Polish immigrant community. From the very beginning, he made it very clear that his views were different, strong and clearly defined. His speeches in editorial discussions became famous, in which he was determined to defend his right to write in Polish, and at the same time sharply explained the distinctiveness of the generational experiences of the youngest émigré poets, demanding understanding and acceptance of their choices (“My environment, especially the youngest, which grew up abroad, knows Poland only from the second hand, from parents’ stories, from reading. For us, Poland is an abstraction” [Busza 1960, p. 10]).

The third period of Andrzej Busza’s life is connected with Canada. In 1965, the poet, his wife and daughter left for British Columbia, where, thanks to Bogdan Czaykowski’s efforts, he received a full-time lecturer in English literature at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. Busz, who was enriched in English culture but who wrote in Polish, decided to take a step in his life, which brought him improved living conditions and professional stability, but at the same time pushed him away from both cultural sources, and the distance from Polish language and the activity of the London emigration environment was much deeper than the distance from the “Britishness” that he still had to deal with while professionally dealing with English literature. Initially, however, Andrzej Busza strongly supported his ties with Poland and the Polish language. In 1967 he came to Poland for the first time, and in 1969 he published his first collection of poetry entitled *Watermarks* at the Institute of Literature in Paris, and two years later he published a bilingual volume entitled *Astrologer in the Underground. Astrologer in the Underground*. In the 1970s he continued to write in Polish (e.g. *Kohelet / Kohelet* poem from 1975), but he

already felt a certain discomfort in using his mother tongue. Many years of poetic silence followed, which the author himself described later in one of his conversations as the result of an internal transformation that took place within him under the influence of “deep (both enriching and painful) personal experiences” and “wider socio-cultural phenomena” [Niewiadomski and Busza, p. 134]. Their essence, as you can guess, was the loss of contact both with Polish reality and with the native language.

For many years I have been teaching English literature, I got to know it more and more deeply, I was getting to know the language, its poetic potential, secrets, tricks, sound texture - said the poet, receiving the Turzański Foundation Award for 2005 - and at some point I realized that my knowledge of Polish in comparison with English is poorer. [Busza 2008b, p. 317]

As a consequence of this transformation, he wrote poems in English, using a tool that does not restrict his creativity and allows him to express himself in full³.

Busza published his next collection of poems *Glosy i refrakcje* only in 2001, and two years later another bilingual volume *Obrazy z życia Laquedema. Scenes from the Life of Laquedem*. The works included in these two small books were written in English and translated into Polish by Bogdan Czaykowski. Despite the change in the language medium, the poet consistently directed his works to Polish readers, confirming his presence in the circle of Polish literature. This resulted in a very complex and unique communication situation, in which English became the real means of contact between the poet and the Polish reader. Bogdan Czaykowski, an outstanding poet, researcher and Busza's closest friend for London years, played an important role in this process. He correctly recognized the essence of *Kohelet's* thoughts and shots, finding the right equivalents for them in the Polish language. After Czaykowski's death in 2007, Busza published their common bilingual volume (in mutual translations) *Pełnia i przesilenie. Full Moon and Summer Solstice* (2008) and his Polish poem from 1975 *Kohelet* (2008). Rejecting the idea of self-translations of his own poems, Andrzej Busza entrusted the translation of these poems to Beata Tarnowska, Roman Sabo, Justyna Fruzińska and Jacek Gutorov in recent years. The translations of the first two translators made up the last so far collection of *Uncertainty* (2013), while the translations of Fruzhinskaya and Gutorova appeared in the quarterly “Phrase” [Busza 2015, p.

³ In an interview with Beata Tarnowska, Andrzej Busza expressed his doubts as to the rightness of the decision made at that time: “It cannot be ruled out that in the choice of the English language a certain role was played by the awareness that I am not so efficient when it comes to the use of Polish syntax.... But to this day I still do not know if it was not a mistake” [Tarnowska 2011, p. 242-243]

42-50]. What is even more complicated, in the volume *Uncertainty*, among eight poems, seven were translated from English, and one was originally written in Polish (*Fun in Metaphysics*). This proves that the poet is still trying to write in Polish, and his more frequent visits to Poland and contact with the living Polish language in recent years have also resulted in attempts to break the restrictions he feels.

According to this briefly quoted biography, the poetic work of Andrzej Busza is clearly divided into two different language stages with a long break of twenty-six years in the middle. Thus, it would be a rare example of linguistic transformation within the author's work already shaped, with an important, but not very extensive literary output in the mother tongue.

At the same time this case can be treated as a model and at the same time as an atypical one. It is a model because it combines with the poet's biography and a visible imbalance in the structure of his personal relations between the country and language of origin and the country and language of settlement. In a way, in a "natural" way, the cultural and linguistic competences of the surrounding world lead over the consciously developed, but only by the power of internal need, skills and possibilities of functioning in the initial culture, i.e. spatially very distant and unreal in the sense that it was never an experience of constant and real influence (it is difficult to describe the wandering of childhood in Palestine, participation in the life of the Polish immigrant youth environment in London or later short tourist arrivals to Poland). These have always been experiences either mediated by others (parents, families, migrant communities) and developed in the diaspora, or short-term, superficial and necessarily stereotyped by the stay of a Canadian Polonus in their homeland. On the other hand, atypicality comes from attachment to Polish literature and rejection of the possibility of joining the circle of English literature of Canada. In other words, the change in the language of creation and probably a stronger embedding in the local reality did not translate into a potential opportunity to gain new readers. The linguistic and cultural capital of English has been used as a communication medium because the author's intention is to publish works in Polish and direct them to Polish readers, i.e. "existence through translation". This does not preclude, of course, the possibility of treating this work (mainly from a formal point of view) as a part of English Canadian literature, but it would also have to involve publishing the versions of original works in collections or magazines⁴ published there. However, the poet prefers to publish his collections in Polish or, which seems optimal, in bilingual form, but in Polish outbuildings.

⁴ The poetic work of Andrzej Busza was noticed in Canada after the publication of the bilingual volume *Astrolog in the metro. Astrologer in the Underground* (1971), which received several press releases, and also after the anthology of *Volvox*, a collection of poems

The encounter with such a rare cultural phenomenon and at the same time a peculiar literary experiment leads to many questions concerning the problematic scope of this work and identity issues, its developmental dynamics and conditions of linguistic communication, as well as the circles of literary tradition, stylistic or genre choices. It is therefore worth mentioning at the outset that we are dealing here with achievements that are structurally bipartite, but at the same time internally coherent and consistently developed. Neither linguistic nor geographical criteria, nor thematic criteria are, in the case of Busza's poetry, the most important differences and factors determining its place in the "farm" of Polish or Canadian literature. This function cannot be assigned to the poet's individual identity, because it has an exceptionally complex and dynamic structure. In an interview with Jurgen, Hesse Busza clearly emphasized this internal multilayeredness:

[...] being bilingual entails not only the question of the language which we use, but also our attitudes. I would even suggest our emotions. Our emotions are probably a little bit different when one is operating in one linguistic context and then another one. When I am speaking to Poles, and then when I am speaking to Englishmen and Canadians, I am a slightly different person, I think.

[...] my life is also complicated because I am Polish, I am British, and I am a sort of Canadian. There is this certain hierarchy of emotional authenticity. I think I can say that at the emotional level I am most Polish. Then comes 'Englishness'; in many ways I am more English than Canadian. [Hesse, p. 38, 39-40]

The poet's work is completely peculiar because they do not modify its language changes, and the subject matter is consistently developed without any relation to the current place of residence. Busza does not manifest unequivocal and specific cultural ties or belonging to a specific literary tradition; on the contrary, it eagerly emphasises universality and the lack of unequivocal rooting. Actually, I do not belong anywhere," he declares, "or more precisely, as I express it in the poem *Babylon*, I belong "everywhere and nowhere" [Tarnowska 2011, p. 248]. In his opinion, the meaning of the poem is determined by the act of personal reading, and the cultural contexts of the work by the senses given in the interpretation.

Already in the first, Polish period of his poetry, Andrzej Busza's poetry was distinguished by its linguistic originality, efficiency of imagination and domestication in the tradition of universal codes of culture - the Bible, mythology, philosophy, literature, painting or music. From the very beginning, the author

"in unofficial languages" of Canada, including poems by Busza and Czaykowski translated into English. The biography and discussion of the poet's output have also been published in *the Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada* [see: New, p. 167-168].

of *Watermarks* developed a general outline of a poetic model, which led him towards a strongly expressed individualism and interest in epistemology, ethics, tradition and diverse cultural fiction. Its core was unlimited creative freedom and the abandonment of the emigrant perspective of the literature of “duties” in favour of a modern understanding of the problems of existential alienation and rootedness. Like a contemporary wanderer, sometimes Baudelaire’owski *flâneur*, he was looking not for a distant homeland, but for the truth about the world and himself. However, the acquired knowledge was not edifying, and in the poems of the poet scepticism and pessimism appeared for good. The most important partner of lyrical dialogue has become time, usually clashed with the fragility and beauty of existence. As Justyna Budzik put it, “the subject in Busza’s poetry looks at his existence not through the prism of the place, but through the prism of the times in which he lives” [Budzik, p. 300].

Therefore, more than the emigrant alienation, nostalgia or ideological and generational disputes of the author of *Watermarks* was occupied by human existence, melancholic consciousness of passing in the world of inaccessible cognition and striving for intellectual mastery of this universe. The existential rootedness took over the whole burden of the world of poetic feeling. The dark, pessimistic vision of the world dominated the works from the whole collection, revealing the sense of absurd existence. The swans, for example, have become its pictorial metaphor, which in the poem under this very title are figures of death and a manifestation of the power of passing away:

swans flow
black
flattened to the shadows
black
dirty weather sails
framed in the sun [Busza 1969, p. 15]

It was not a real and concrete reality, but a symbolic and mythical one, which hid terror and emptiness under the surface of things and phenomena. “He grows in the darkness” [*ibidem*] - the poet says - and announces the coming nothingness. It is also one of many figures of melancholy present in this poetry, in this case evoking a poem by Charles Baudelaire *Le Cygne (The Swan)*.

The poetics of this poem and many others from the volume *Watermarks*, especially the primacy of a poetic painting, significant restraint, the use of colour schemes and symbols - all this indicates a reference to the poetry of English imagists from the beginning of the 20th century, who prefer a similar economy and discipline of language, and above all, the precision and purity of a poetic painting [see: Wąciór, p. 18; Hutnikiewicz, p. 120-126]. Thomas Ernest Hulme’s theoretical thought, which rejected romantic emotion as the

basis of art in favour of classical objectivity with the idea of clarity and precision, was also close to the author of *Swans*. The avant-garde idea of returning to the poetic image and combining the intellectual and emotional layer in it remained an inspiring model of creation, all the more so as it referred primarily to the workshop assumptions, leaving aside programmatic or ideological involvement. He was also often associated with symbolic tendencies or the expressionist opposition of opposites.

In his early Polish poems, Andrzej Busza eagerly used the tradition of English literature, referring to the works of Eliot, Hopkins, Yeats or the achievements of the aforementioned imagery. He was also close to French symbolism and Spanish modernism. At the same time, like most of the artists from the London group of "Continents", he watched with attention the national poetry after 1956, the development of linguism, turpism and the rebirth of classicist tendencies, he was fascinated by the poems of Herbert and Białoszewski.

An interesting combination of these two main traditions was achieved in the last work from the "Polish language period"⁵, printed in the December issue of "Kultura" from 1975, i.e. in the extensive poem *Kohelet*, which in a problematic sense complemented the subject matter present in the debut volume, and in an artistic sense was a multilateral reference to the English and Polish forms of poems and the "wisdom" entries in the *Book of Ecclesiastes*. As Beata Tarnowska points out in her poem edition, from the Hebrew title of this book the poet took the name and role of the person who "convenes, tells, teaches", as well as the idea of *vanitas*, which is the warp of the work. On the other hand, from the extensive tradition of "Poetic Parnassies", he derived an original genre formula. In Polish literature it has its important point of reference in Czesław Miłosz's *A Treatise on Poetry*, devoted to the twentieth-century history of poetry, individualities and phenomena, styles and conventions, as well as the relations between nature, history, man and God. In turn, in the English literary and cultural tradition such a form of personal social or environmental panorama has been known since the Middle Ages, among others thanks to such works as *The Canterbury Tales* Geoffrey Chaucer, *Essay on Criticism* by Alexander Pope or *In Memory of Major Robert Gregory* by William Butler Yeats [see Busza 2008a, p. 23]. Andrzej Busza's *Kohelet* is a polyphonic poem in which the author combines two narrative orders, led simultaneously by the "I" personified in the form of the Old Testament sage and the "I", contemporary, *porte parole* of the author. However, the two voices merge in a common tonality of *vanitas*, somehow above time and history. The first

⁵ In 1977-1982 Andrzej Busza made even more attempts to write in Polish, trying to broaden his own poetic skills with new syntactic and compositional solutions, as well as a slightly different range of problems. During this period several works were created, which were only published in 2005 and 2006 in "Fraza". At that time, however, the poet already spoke English [see Busza 2005, pp. 9-10; Busza 2006, p. 195-206].

voice is the structural frame of the whole and a kind of universal perspective, while the second voice evokes in lyrical close-ups portraits of contemporary Polish writers and poets captured in moments of alienation and full of despair at the encounter with the illusion of literature. Among them is, for example, the image of Czesław Miłosz:

I saw Miłosz as if in an empty hall
comb the hair with white fingers
I saw an old catastropheist
bent like a chimera
on San Francisco Bay
listened to voices from Lithuania at dusk
and he saw only behind dark water
cheap sky Swedenborg
but the next morning when the mountain Tamalpais
once again took the copper bars of the lightning
straightened in the window to the open world
and thanked him with hardened weather
for white sails for blue sea [Busza 2008a, p. 7-8]

Called to witnesses of emptiness and nothingness of the creator penetrating from all sides, they confirm a kind of Kohelet's recognition, because both literature and human life are marked by the same streak of *vanitas*, bringing to light the hidden dimension of suffering, loneliness and despair. "For there will be no memory / as wise as it is foolish / and posterity will cover everything / forget it all," the biblical sage proclaims in the work [Busza 2008a, p. 19].

After *Kohelet's* publication, as has already been mentioned, there was a very long break in the printing of subsequent works, combined with the most radical change that the writer can make, that is, a change of language. Subsequent volumes have already been written in English and translated by Bogdan Czaykowski, because Busza himself rejected the possibility of self-translation. The first collection of *Glosses and Refractions* was published in 2001, the title of which almost programmatically reflected the character of the poems included in it. Therefore, "Glosses" should be understood as notes, additional explanations or comments to the problems already known from earlier works, but in a broader sense, "glosses" also mean the cultural provenance of most of these poems, somehow "added" on the margins of other works and included in intertextual dialogues. On the other hand, "refractions" can be combined with a nascent awareness of the disproportion between a work written in English and a translated text, which eventually reaches the Polish reader, as there always remains a margin of otherness, which will not be eliminated even by the best linguistic equivalent [see Busza 1983, pp. 21-29]. In this way, the poet

clearly marked the difference between the current creative situation and the evolutionary character of the collection, combining the two stages of creativity.

On the continuation side, there are poems in this volume, the construction and pronunciation of which refer to works from *Watermarks*. Despite the change of language, it is easy to find in them already known thematic motifs and features of poetics, such as the focus on the poetic image and dense symbolism (e.g. *Waiting*, *Sketch of the Storm* or *Cedar*). At the same time, imagery was expanded by the expressiveness and density of cultural contexts. Poems often began to resemble works of art, painting visualizations, whose aesthetic sublimation was combined with a restrained, mature, elegiac distance. It is worth recalling here especially the *Seasons*, a small poem, whose title and compositional outline refer to the musical work of Antonio Vivaldi, while the imaging and emotional aura to John Keats' *To Autumn*. But music is not the most important thing here, but the art of painting and its history. With the help of works of art by the old masters and the quality features of their paintings, the poet presented a contemplative description of the beauty of the world. The four parts of this cycle, referring to the changeability of forms of vegetative rhythm, reflect the colours and shapes of the changing nature. In the first part of the poem we read:

Since I was passing through this place for the last time
The rowanberry dressed in Barocco blueberries
And carpets come off through the glades
According to the last autumn fashion
Rusty browns with dark gold in dews
Oak and maple leaves interwoven geometrically
Like Owen Jones' brocade
Coniferous shrubs of course have as usual as always
This particular blue colour of Morris
And although you are not a Tate Gallery or V and A or Hermitage
You are my personal gallery path
Opening of a new exhibition each season
Daily vernissage for squirrels and birds [Busza 2001, p. 30]

The poet registers a colourful and multifaceted world with the inventiveness of a sophisticated aesthetics, combining the boldness of imagination with a deep cultural setting. The metaphor of the path as a "personal gallery" triggers in this work an aesthetic prism and not a mimetic or sensual vision of reality, but rather a painting one. In this sense, nature becomes a representation of art, and the seasons a transposition of colours and forms known from the shots of outstanding artists. However, the captivating beauty of nature permeates the thought of death. Behind the colourfulness of the Arcadian landscape

is the terror of passing away. “Et in Arcadia Ego” - repeats the author after the famous inscription from the paintings of Giovanni Francesco Guercin, as well as Nicolas Poussin. Poems from the volume *Głosy i refrakcje* reflect Andrzej Busza’s permanent penetration into the space of universal culture (poem *Hagia Sophia*), as well as into the circle of English literary tradition (e.g. the poem *Wariacje*). For him, the texts of culture are a kind of a prop, from which he draws topos, motifs, notions or details. With their help he builds an erudite, intertextual and intersemiotic message. In it, the poet finds his own language, which serves him not so much to bear witness to reality, but to build his own story about the world.

The issue of existential non-rootedness was at the basis of Andrzej Busza’s next collection, published in a bilingual version entitled *Obrazy z życia Laquedema. Scenes from the Life from Laquedem* in 2003. The title character of the Eternal Wandering Jew was used by the author to construct a parabolic story about exile and wandering as a universal archetype of human fate. This theme united six parts of the cycle, which are half symbolic, and half real reference to the poet’s biography. Historical time and mythical time were combined into one whole, and the free composition of “images from life” gave them the character of allegorical generalization. The series includes, among others, paintings of escape from the biblical city of Gomorrah, departure from Krakow and Kosovo in 1939, stay in Jerusalem, London fire in 1666, the defeat of Carthage and, finally, a symbolic vision of life in modern Babylon. From all these places you once had to flee or leave, because to be a human being means to be condemned to defeat and exile. There always appears someone who “exiles us once again / into the steppes and desert” [Busza 2003, p. 11]. In an ironic ending, even technological perfection does not free man from the sense of alienation and rootedness, because “we are everywhere and nowhere” [Busza 2003, p. 13].

The *Obrazy z życia Laquedema* was not so much another version of Ahaswer’s topos, but rather his reinterpretation in the context of a postmodern, universal reflection on the need for rootedness and community. The ironic distance of the author does not make the contemporary wanderer look for a specific place, because each of them is available today. The real purpose of the journey is to anchor in the space of culture, although paradoxically it is culture that most strongly reveals its illusory and fragile nature.

After publishing *Obrazy z życia Laquedema*, Andrzej Busza published a handful of new poems in Bogdan Czaykowski’s translations, which were published in the “Phrase” quarterly in 2005 and 2006, and partly in the bilingual collection *Penia i przesilenie. Full Moon and Summer Solstice* (2008). The last of Andrzej Busza’s collections published so far, *Uncertainty*, comes from 2013. The late Bogdan Czaykowski was replaced by new translators. Of the eight poems included in this volume, two were translated by Beata Tarnowska, five by Roman Sabo, and one (as I have already mentioned) was

originally written in Polish. This small collection, in turn, reveals the author's interest in the physical side of reality, the problem of the limits of existence on the macro- and micro-scale of the universe, and consequently, metaphysical reflection and questions about death and the possibility of transcendent empowerment of life.

The core of Andrzej Busza's philosophical reflection is agnostic "I don't know". It comes to the fore many times, especially in those works that deal with the subject of death. The title *Uncertainty* refers, for example, to the famous thought experiment by Erwin Schrödinger, in which a hypothetical cat is both alive and dead from the point of view of quantum mechanics. And although this is at odds with common sense, such an unspecified state of affairs is real until the moment of verification. Uncertainty activates its metaphysical sense. Thus, as the poet writes, all judgments on the properties of phenomena must be "suspended".

The position of Busza is close to agnosticism, both in terms of knowing reality and the existence of God. The poet devoted this last problem to the poem *Zabawa w metafizyce / Fun in Metaphysics*, in which he entrusted the resolution of a fundamental question to a playfully childish game of tearing off the leaves from the daisy's flower to the rhythm of a rhyme: there is - no more. Such a game, of course, does not bring any answer, but at the same time it becomes a metaphor for the limitations of human cognition, which, due to the lack of real possibilities, creates substitute visualizations of imagination. Armed with tools and objective laws, science provides no more evidence than a child's rhyme. So you can just as well limit yourself to playing, although this one leaves in your hands a naked "stem / and a naked flower" [Busza 2013a, p. 8]. This short poem, exceptionally vivid and sophisticated in sound, was written by the poet in Polish, which only confirms his still excellent knowledge of Polish and his sensitivity to all the details of our language.

While the *Game of Metaphysics* refers to Polish children's play, the poem *Idyll*, in which the image of the desert landscape of the future appears, and as a result the thought of the futility of the earthly world, interacts with Percy Shelley's *Ozymandias* sonnet, where the statue of the king, stepping in the sand, is an ironic sign of man's vain ambitions. Assessed from the perspective of the whole, the collection *Uncertainty of the Busza* is a reflection of the crisis of modernist ideas about the world, the place of man and the existence of a transcendent source of legitimacy of existence. The poet responds to the erosion of the traditional world order, the clash of contradictory reasons, the sterility of religious imagination and the experience of universal relativism with a sense of uncertainty. His agnostic "I don't know" is a confrontation of rationalistic awareness and remnants of religious imagination with the contemporary vision of a world without a permanent structure. Although it leads to the suspension of cognitive judgments, at the same time it does not stop searching for signs other than physical empowerment of reality.

The poetic work of Andrzej Busza is an example of bilingual writing with a clearly marked (although extended in time) caesura. The change of language was not an ideological, cultural or identity choice. Rather, it involved a pragmatic assessment of one's own linguistic proficiency and a rationalisation of the creative process. This is proved both by the author's own statements and by the homogeneity of his poetry. The language caesura did not turn out to be absolute, because poems in Polish are still being written. In the system of literary communication, the caesura did not introduce any fundamental change either. The poems are still addressed to the Polish audience, though now through translations. And although this "switching of codes", means "switching from one language to another and vice versa, is similar to travelling between two different worlds" [Wierzbicka, p. 103], in the case of the author of *Watermarks* these are fully parallel worlds. Bilingualism is accompanied by a cultural polyphony, which is the aftermath of multicultural personal experiences (Palestine, England, Poland, Canada). In this respect, Busza draws primarily from the Mediterranean culture mediated by Polish and English cultural heritage. He is best known for the tradition of English literature, but masterpieces of Polish literature are also deeply assimilated, especially those of 20th-century poets close to him in terms of generation or art (e.g. Zbigniew Herbert, Miron Białoszewski, Czesław Miłosz, Jacek Bierezin). In Polish literature, the "transplant" of the achievements of imagination, Eliot's objectivity, poem forms or typically British distance and irony, while in English it introduces a sense of history, moral traits, as well as sensitivity to the musical qualities of the poem. What distinguishes the poet most strongly, however, is his own perception of the world, independent of the language of expression. They are constituted by a critical attitude to the present day and the civilisational powers connected with it. It is precisely this scepticism that directs the poet towards the European tradition of culture, which has become for him a space of spiritual rootedness. He reads individual experiences with the help of cultural paradigms, and in the tradition of culture finds a useful way of describing human existence. *Kohelet's* establishment in culture as a field of symbolic forms and the articulation of experience and imagination, however, finds its counterpoint in other features of the poet's aesthetic consciousness - melancholy and irony. In the first one, understood as an experience of undefined loss, one should see a reaction to the domination of history in human life, instability, constant changes in status, a crisis of identity and values. The second one is the aesthetic category that softens the artist's pessimism, disarm melancholy, and in a more general sense - it is a world-view response to the shape of contemporary reality. Andrzej Busza's poetry, equipped in this way, can be perceived as a reflection of multicultural experiences of 20th and 21st century man and a literary phenomenon of contemporary cultural universalism.

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