

When new media turn old: Towards object-oriented translation of historical digital literature

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Reflection on electronic literature, “born digital” within the new writing space of computer software and hardware, has a built-in resistance to a logocentric perspective.* Reflection on digital literature tends to be so preoccupied by technical affordances and limitations of the medium that the traditional focus on text and meaning is often delegated to the background. Methodologies of medium specificity (Hayles 2004; Kinder 2014) and digital archaeology (Kirschenbaum 2008) position the translation of e-literature in close affinity with the materiality of the work, where additional software and interaction layers play a crucial part in constituting both its semiotics and in influencing its semantics. This deep involvement in material aspects of the work determines translation in ways more profound than in translating oral or print literature. On the one hand, the fast-paced developments of computer technologies, where software-hardware configurations of the original source text are replaced, made obsolete, and delegated to the realm of “abandonware”, invite translators to look beyond this techno-determinism and at the same time devise valid substitutes for interface behaviors and paratexts surrounding the work. On the other hand, recent technological advances in software emulation and institutional practices of hardware preservation allow for the recreation of the original experience of the source text as it was written by the author and read by its first audience. This gives a translator the option of delivering the work to the target audience in the native environment of the original. As a result, the answers to the question about what is to be translated, what is allowed to be left out, and how to manage the localization process in the context of digital literature became even more complex and are in need of rephrasing.

Although it is indisputable that recreating the effect of the original is impossible, digital media introduce an important shift in traditional understanding of what constitutes the set of achievable equivalents during the historization process. Because digital technologies get old within such a short time that material and medium specific support of the text is replaced within one or two decades, it is possible to go back and recreate historical elements fundamental to the reading, interpretation and reception of the original. A telling example can be the Pathfinders research project at Washington State University. Authors of hypertext fiction published by Eastgate Sys-

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tems in the early 1990s were invited to do “traversals” or “reflective encounters” with their work on the original hardware and software, and among some of the original readers (Moulthrop, Grigar, and Tabbi 2017, 7). This demonstrates that translators of e-literature are in a much more privileged position than, for example, translators of the Bible (Rieu and Phillips 1955). The difference between translating very old text and 20th century digital text calls for the introduction of a degree, or scale of attainability of the effect of the original.

The first aim of this article is to follow up on recent reflection on translating literary classics in the digital domain (Pold, Portela, and Mencía, 2018) by looking at translation with an emphasis on the possibilities given by digital preservation practices, and additionally from the Central and East European perspective. Secondly, I want to propose possible new theoretical frameworks for the translation of historical digital literature that is both experience and object based. The works under discussion include Polish translations of two hypertext fictions by Michael Joyce, *afternoon. a story* and *Twilight. A Symphony*, published by Korporacja Ha!art. In the less than a decade which has passed from the publishing of *afternoon. a story* (2011) one might want to revisit the goals and results undertaken by collaborative effort behind these translation projects.¹

THE LAWS OF THE ORIGINAL

A proposed starting point for the experience-driven and object sensitive translation, or in other words, a historically inclined translation sensitive to medium specificity, is to establish what constitutes the core of translation process in the digital work. Translation and digital research scholars often refer to Walter Benjamin and his observations on translation. While bringing up the problem of translating historical examples of digital born works, Søren Pold, Manuel Portela, and María Mencía support their argument as follows:

If translation is a form and if “the laws governing the translation lie within the original”, as Walter Benjamin claims, how do we find this translatability of form in electronic works? [...] The theoretical question could perhaps be rephrased as follows: how much is the source code and the interface part of the original form? In other words: when is the translation of code and interface also part of the form of literary translation? (2018)

It is worth stressing that the difference between traditional and digital text is not formal or trivial. To find Benjaminian laws governing the translation of e-literary work one has to study relations between different layers of the work, from code – with its algorithms determining a textual outcome and readers’ interaction – to presentational and interactive functions of the interface. Different elements constituting these layers can at any given time during the “run” of the work influence the narrative outcome of the story. For example, in Michael Joyce’s *Twilight. A Symphony*, readers are told in the introduction that story goes in two main directions: east towards the past and life, and west towards the future and death. However, these directions are not a mere allegory of thematic clusters. Every text window on the screen is accompanied by a hypertext map where segments of narrative are represented as rectangles connected to each other. One can in fact locate the eastward and westward directions

as one continues to navigate the text guided by visual cues provided by the Storyspace hypertext software. In *afternoon. a story*, hypertextual mechanics of conditional links – which result in many narrative cycles, returns and narrative loops – is reflected on several levels of the diegetic axis. There are scenes where Peter, the main character (and the reader, on the screen), repeatedly comes back to the scene of a car crash to understand what has happened, or another scene where he's trying to call his therapist lover with no success. These artistic effects enforce to the general narrative pattern of entrapment delivered by the unreliable narrator. As Jill Walker Rettberg noted, *afternoon. a story* is an allegory of its own reading (Walker 1999, 117). Taking into account the constant entanglement of software, presentation, interaction and text meaning in the digital work, and the fact that many elements of these layers of any digital source text might no longer be supported at the time of translation, the problems of what is there to be translated, what to be left out, how to treat localization are more urgent than ever.

With high degree of mediatization of contemporary discourses, the canvas for translation needs broadening and has to embrace the whole writing space of the source work. It does not mean that translators are obliged to read the code or encode the colour palette of the translated work. If anything, translation becomes more of a collaborative effort and positions itself within the general context of remediation (Bolter 2001). Digital literature demonstrates that embedding of translations in social and ideological as well as cultural contexts (Bassnett and Lefevere 1998) needs to encompass the domain of materiality, and particularly “digital materiality” (Kirschenbaum 2008, 9).

THE “PERSONAL MANDALA” OF THE SOURCE TEXT

If a general framework for translation has expanded as a result of emergence of digital literature, it would be beneficial to redefine what is considered the core of translation on the lower level, where the sum of details on the semantic, paratextual and interface levels builds up – just as in poetry translation – to create larger units which define the overall experience of the text. In other words, what is the unique style of the digital work? Are we able to apply to it the Benjaminian “law” of the original? Reflecting on “style” in the context of translation brings forward some oblique, poetic but functional notions of “the spirit” or “the fire” of the text given by John Dryden and Alexander Pope (Lefevere 2002, 117, 127). Some translators also speak of “energy” or even a “wholly personal mandala” of the poem where “idea, image and spirit float free of the poem” (Boase-Beier 2017, 3).

If there is currently no common agreement as to what constitutes the core of translation, and if inspiration is to be taken from poetry, let's pursue this path further. In *The Small History of Photography* Walter Benjamin presented his first version of the notion of aura. It was presented there as a “strange wave of space and time. The unique appearance or semblance of a distance, no matter how close the object may be”. Benjamin writes:

While resting on a summer's noon, to trace a range of mountains on the horizon, or a branch that throws its shadow on the observer, until the moment or the hour become

part of their appearance – this is what it means to breathe the aura of those mountains, that branch (1999, 518–519).

As Rodolph Gasché points out, “[t]he auratic is the attribute of the thing, or object-like appearing, or something beyond appearances that thus becomes effective, actual, real” (1994, 198). Gasché’s interpretation of the auratic element in photography and the work of art in general can function as a convenient connection between reflection on the essence of poetic translation in general and the relevant repertoire of contemporary philosophical categories that could be utilized in the theory and practice of e-literature. Because digital-born literature is by definition entangled in the affordances and constraints of digital materiality which manifests itself in numerous “objects” it could be of benefit to consider object-oriented philosophy and criticisms, proposed by Graham Harman (2018), as a valid perspective or even a resource. Perhaps Benjamin’s “distance” is not far from Martin Heidegger’s and – later – Graham Harman’s initial “withdrawal” of things? If so, then both notions can reinforce the philosophical framework within which a reflection on experience or object-oriented translation can take place.

However, I suggest going beyond the often used and misused category of “aura” and draw from categories more focused on translation itself. For Stanisław Barańczak, the most prominent Polish translator in the 20th century, translation starts and circles around the pivotal poetic moment and the poem’s most potent image. For example, it can be an image of a grass stalk, wavering in a morning mist just a second after a doe has jumped over a forest shrub. If this scene is the governing element of the poem, on which other linguistic choices depend, a translator’s foremost goal is to retain it. For Czesław Miłosz, on whose work Barańczak has built his poetry translation methods, there is no higher role for the poet than to encode the moment of experience by a depiction (via poetic montage and poetic transfocation) of accurately chosen elements of the given image or scene (Barańczak 1981, 164–166). If it succeeds, a scene, an object, a moment, appear in reader’s mind in “every single detail”. For the Nobel Prize laureate Miłosz, this task was considered one of the major premises of poetry in general. Can this poetic struggle of extracting the maximum concreteness from words and a prerogative of descending “further down the ladder of abstraction” (158) serve as a guideline for an experience-driven translation? For works written in different media, on exotic hardware and long-gone software – it might seem so.

TRANSFERRING THE MOMENT OF EXPERIENCE

Czesław Miłosz’s poetic goal of recreating a given moment and transferring the subjective experience of that moment to the reader can serve as a convenient allegory of the intersemiotic dimension of translation, adaptation and any literary attempt to represent one genre or art form in another. Let us look at two examples: John Keats’s “Ode on a Grecian Urn” and Czesław Miłosz’s poem “Turner”. If we agree that the object of lyrical representation in both cases is not the painting on the urn and Turner’s painting *Chateau de St. Michael, Bonneville, Savoy* (Stadnik 2016, 180–190), but the ancient sacrifice ritual represented by the urn and the specific afternoon scene on the country road as experienced by the painter, then equivalence

efforts for adaptation and translation need to be focused on a skillful accumulation of selected elements of the scene. In the case of Keats, there is a visible concentration of nouns and adjectives: sacrifice, green altar, mysterious priest, silken flanks, garlands, little town, river, seashore etc. Similarly, in the case of Miłosz, the moment depicted in Turner's *St. Michael* is evoked by clusters of nouns and their adjectives, as well as by verbal expressions denoting spatial relations between these objects: clouds above mountains, a road in the sun, long shadows, low walls, the castle tower vertically rising, etc.

When poetic processes of ekphrasis or any other forms of resemiotization are brought to the field of new media and are applied to the digital writing space, a similar clustering of objects, potentially crucial for translation, is taking place. Seemingly insignificant elements of the work's interface and trivial, semantically neutral aspects of reader interaction can in time constitute characteristic features of the work, part of its "heart and soul" as perceived by its first reading audience and critics. Which editions of Michael Joyce's *afternoon. a story* can be seen as the source of translation process? Mac or Windows? If Mac, is it because of the iconic, minimalist black and white text windows and horizontal bottom bar and dialogue box which borrow their look and feel from grayscale Mac OS 7.5? Or perhaps a priority to finding an equivalence in the target language and software would be to prevent the small roadmap of possible narrative paths from a given place in the story represented by the link window with the chosen path highlighted in subtle pinks or blues (depending on the reader's system settings)? In the case of Joyce's later work, *Twilight. A Symphony*, in which the interface accommodates larger number of text windows, sound and video, and is augmented by the multi-layered map of text segments, translators intending to present the work for the 21st century audience need to decide which of these objects are to be retained in order for the work to speak to its new audience across time, culture, software, and hardware. Additionally, one can argue that much smaller and trivial objects can constitute the work's "allure" (Harman 2012, 187) – numerous secondary texts on the hypertext map (link names, path names, and even the arrangement of text rectangles on a given map layer which might at times employ concrete poetry's visual semantics) or even the look of text window headings, and the sounds and animations which accompany their manipulation (closing, minimizing etc).

Distinguishing between interactive and non-interactive elements is crucial. The interactive ones constitute the interface layer of digital work, the non-interactive most often create a functionally expanded type of paratext, or more precisely, a domain that Anja Rau proposed to call the *shell* of digital work. The interface is interactive and behavioral. The shell is paratextual (help files, read-me-first files, installation guides), and metatextual in an inherent sense. As Rau points out, in hypertext

the reader reads the text of the text blocks but she also reads the text of the link-structure and assembles the final text from both of them, while the link-structure describes the text on a level besides that of content. In this sense, the text-informing structure of a digital text and its reading environment form the inherent metatext of every digital text (1999, 119–120).

One needs to add that Gérard Genette's notion of paratext, viewed as any secondary signal surrounding the text proper (1997, 3), does not exhaust the scope of textual phenomena within the shell of digital work. Link labels, text window headings, hypertext path names scattered around the interface and revealed by its buttons, scroll bars and special menus might potentially define the whole genre – or a “school” – of digital works, as with hypertext fiction and poetry created in the Storyspace writing environment or animated digital poetry created in Macromedia Flash.

Textual and non-textual objects of the interface in the historical electronic literature, defined here as literature which cannot be accessed on modern computers, motivate translators to look for units of reading which would firstly expose the intricate interdependence of these phenomena and secondly help determine which of them are essential and worth preserving in a changed technological context of the target audience. Miłosz's and Barańczak's emphasis on the poetic moment and poetic image invite to speak about a “software and hardware moment” as a unit of translation in digital forms. A useful category to accommodate the poetic categories to the structural ones is Jim Rosenberg's category of *acteme*, a unit of non-trivial actions related to both the reading of the text and other steps necessary to progress from the beginning to the end of the work (1996, 22–30).

Drawing from Algirdas Julien Greimas's notion of *seme* as a basic unit of narrative discourse (1983), Rosenberg's *acteme* makes a good starting point in discussing both the semantics of the source text and its entanglement in the techno-cultural milieu by examining – step by step – the structure of the meaning-making within the source text's writing space, its techno-discourse. When a reader opens *Twilight. A Symphony* on a classic Macintosh computer, the first thing she or he encounters is a window where one can choose a new reading or click a button and resume the previous reading. Then readers are presented with a loading screen displaying some basic hypertext statistics. The window shows the number of loaded text units and the total (loaded and unloaded) number of links in the story. Only then the proper title page appears. These three steps form an *acteme*. In the Polish version of *Twilight. A Symphony* the same introductory *acteme* is trimmed to the minimum. After activating a link in the web browser, readers are taken directly to the title page. The loss of extra shell text and inherent metatextual content was driven by the limitations and affordances of the changed writing space. Instead of a stand-alone program on the Macintosh computer, the translated work was presented online, like any other Internet website. A loading screen with life data about objects being loaded is something that html and JavaScript do not usually facilitate, although with some extra programming effort it is possible to recreate it. Because digital translation most often implies a publishing project of a collaborative scope, which might be viewed in the context of “multi-agency” type of translation (Jones 2011, 7), the decision whether to retain or forgo specific elements of the source text lies not only within the translator's responsibility. Considerations of publisher, programmer, producer and need are also at play.²

A clear distinction must be made between functional and cultural objects. The former ones must be translated at all costs, as they constitute the core mechanics of

the born-digital work and without them, the program might not run properly. The latter are non-obligatory, but their presence or lack can greatly influence the outcome. Functional objects are, for example, conditional links which determine the order of the narrative sequence during user's interaction or authorial labels on link choices. The cultural objects refer to the reading culture or software culture: various conventions of presentation or distribution of the text at the time of publication. Carefully examining sequences of actemes in the original, determining their importance and relevance and considering the introduction of valid equivalents within software environment of the target work becomes a task that translators of e-literature cannot avoid.

Nevertheless, the presence of retro computing labs on universities and the growth in the number of computer museums in the long run will change the range of possibilities and decisions about preserving historical features of the work as far as its techno-discourse is concerned. If a work was written on an old Macintosh computer and gained critical acclaim and popularity among readers on this particular platform, the translating team might consider recreating the system's look, feel and peculiarities, or even publishing the translation on that historical platform. In certain cases, be it special editions, anniversary editions, one might expect these radical preservationist projects to happen.

TRANSLATION AS AN ESCAPE FROM THE PRISON OF ABANDONWARE

afternoon. a story by Michael Joyce is a hypertext fiction written in 1987 on the prominent writing software Storyspace and published by Eastgate Systems in 1990 as a standalone computer program on floppy disk for Macintosh Computers. Nearly three decades after its publication, it remains the most widely discussed e-literary work in American and world literature studies. In 1993 the hypertext was translated into Italian, and in 1998 into German. Both were published on the same platform as the original: Storyspace, this time both for Mac and Windows editions.

The original goal of the Polish editorial team in 2006, of which I was a part, was to follow the path of previous translations and publish a localized version on the same platform. The main text of the novel, translated by Radosław Nowakowski, was ready for testing in 2007. Yet it soon turned out that the character encoding limitations of Storyspace, accommodating very few diacritics and catering mostly for Western languages, made a Polish version on Storyspace impossible. At the same time Storyspace has become an exotic, almost obsolete software, limited to specific computer systems and an offline reading mode. The 20-year-old software was not a writing space fit for any target audience, not only non-Western. It was apparent that the work needed to be published within a software environment familiar to a 21st-century audience. With only one restriction from the publisher – the Polish version was to come in a strictly offline mode – the resulting translation was shipped in 2011 as a stand-alone application readable on popular Internet Browsers and distributed on a CD-Rom.³ This publishing mode, aligned with the original distribution model from the 1990s, was outdated from the start. While 2011 had

seen an emergence of iPad popularity, downloadable apps, and file syncing via data clouds which made it possible for readers to pick up their reading sessions whenever they were online, the Polish translation remained a standalone, physically bound software.

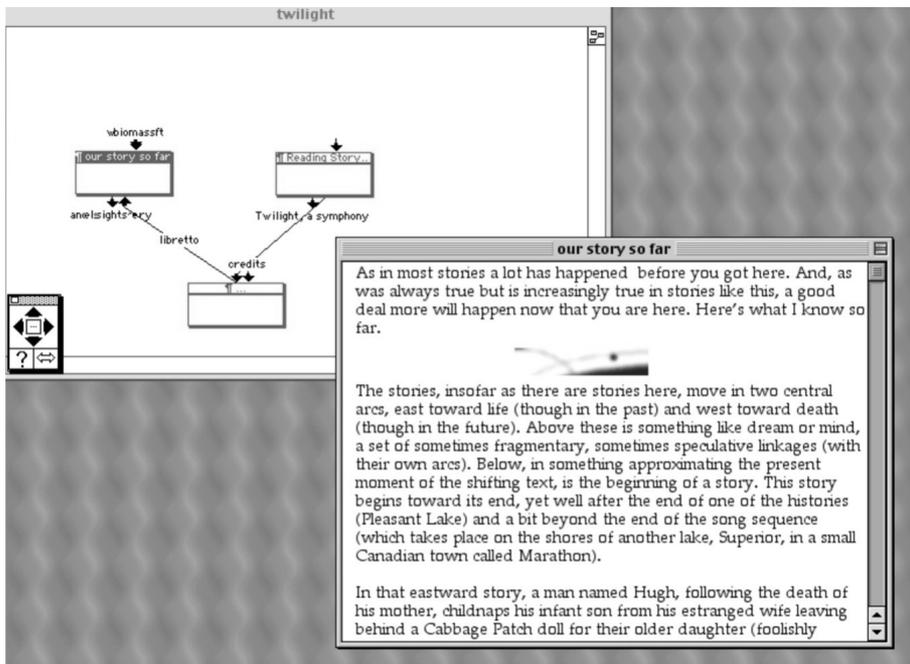


Fig. 1: *Twilight. A Symphony*, hypertext 1996, Eastgate Systems

Having taken that experience into account, the follow-up project of translating *Twilight. A Symphony*, a second hypertext fiction by Joyce, was published online, for free and to be available on all possible platforms.⁴ The original *Twilight. A Symphony* was published in 1996 solely on the Mac, and at the time of the Polish translation the program was no longer readable by modern Mac computers. The free web edition was accompanied by some strong localization efforts. To mark distinct narrative paths, the Polish version employed themed backgrounds in the form of original artworks created by the popular digital poetry author Łukasz Podgórn. The Polish motifs in the story (its main characters are post-Solidarity emigrants to the U.S.) were strongly emphasized during promotional events. The main goal of these efforts was to make the pioneering hypertext fiction not only widely accessible, but also to make it feel familiar to a young Polish audience. At the same time, open access and localization objectives had positioned any possible preservation efforts further down the priority list. As a result, the technical challenge of possible transfer of the original hypertext maps, their number reaching the hundreds, was not taken into serious consideration. Looking at the project from the perspective highlighted in this paper, or from a point of view of any future translator aiming at recreating elements of the original software in a “bibliophile” detail, the Polish translation of *Twilight. A Symphony* could present

itself as a lighthearted approach to digital materiality and medium specificity, with no respect for retro computing sentiments or object-oriented and experience-driven translation. None of these approaches should be considered authoritative. Both are equally valid for the practice and theory of translation. In case of *Twilight. A Symphony*, where the work which has been literally entrapped in a time capsule of obsolete software and hardware and could not be easily obtained by its original audience, making it open, free and amenable to a different audience, even or especially with no consideration for the original writing space, was perhaps the best choice at the given moment. This is not to say that there are no other choices.

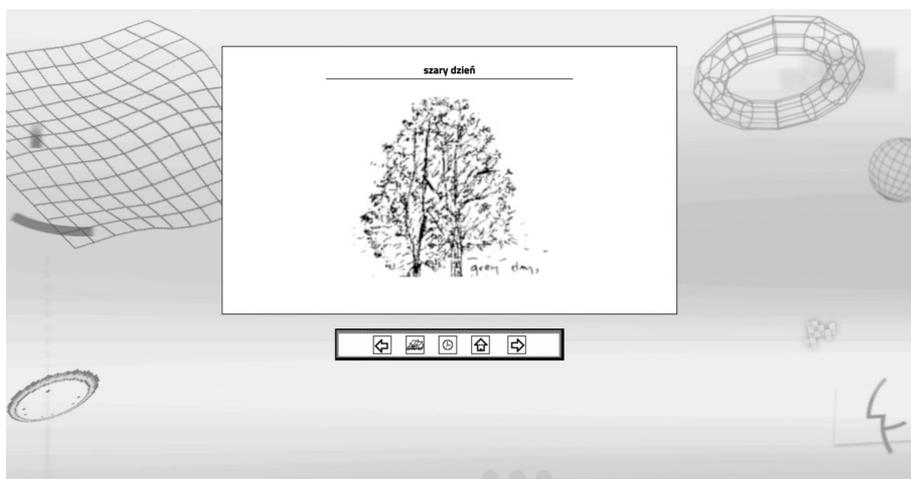


Fig. 2: *Twilight. A Symphony*, Polish edition 2015

OBJECT-ORIENTED CRITICISM IN TRANSLATION AND DIGITAL PUBLISHING

For Fredric Jameson, culture is history in representational form (Galloway 2012, vii). The fact that the writing spaces of personal computers form a part of this indexical and symbolic typology is becoming clear from year to year. And as those years go by, translators or publishers might quite naturally ask themselves if more could have been done to emphasize the importance of a work's digital milieu.

Inevitably, at this point in the discussion, grand themes of intentionality and essentiality of the work of art are invoked: the notion of the work as an autonomous universe, a "holistic machine" versus its understanding as a network of socioeconomic and intertextual relations, New Criticism versus New Historicism, or formalism and structuralism versus post-structuralism and deconstruction. Object-oriented philosophy criticism as advocated by Graham Harman promises an approach aimed both at balancing the two extremes and delivering a framework for identifying some crucial regularities within the shifting identities of the work. Similar to the way that personal identity in the light of object-oriented criticism implies constant changes yet at the same time these transformations cannot be completely random, one is able to approach a single work or a whole body of work and apprehend some form of con-

tinuity, which would constitute a crucial point of reference for the translator. Taking Shakespeare as an example, Graham Harman concludes,

contextuality is not universal. Shakespeare is molded by some aspects of his era while completely unaffected by others, and his own character is partly responsible for which aspects are assimilated and which are screened from view. Indeed, Shakespeare as a writer is a style – a style that among other things would enable us to distinguish between authentic and inauthentic plays under his name (2012, 195).

The notion that objects have a “definite character that can nevertheless change, be perceived, and resist” is crucial for both publishing and translational projects where the focus lies in preservation of certain elements of the work as essential to their identity. This objective serves as a binding cross-reference not only for a translator intending to present *Twilight. A Symphony* to a young audience whose main writing spaces are smartphones and tablets. It can be equally important for publishers and educational institutions. Adam Mickiewicz’s *Crimean Sonnets* in digital form, 200 years after the printed, authorial edition, can serve as a good example of where the object-oriented criticism might be useful. Although there are no strict rules to be followed, publishers’ choices need to be informed and considerate. Coming back to the original and early editions of the work can be profoundly instructive and enlightening for the preparation of the digital edition. The original Moscow print from 1826 remains one of the most sought-after antiques on the market of “mickiewicziana” (objects from the life and work of the Polish romantic poet). Although from an editorial point of view, the book did not represent any particular achievement, it is still praised for its exquisite “calm elegance” and well-executed typography with a very readable, attractive font *allure* (Kacprzak 2018).

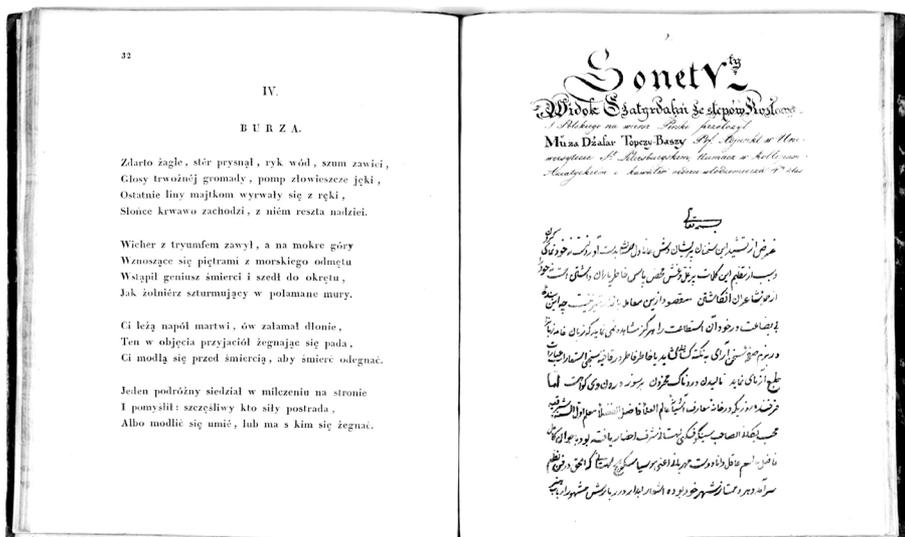


Fig. 3: Adam Mickiewicz, *The Crimean Sonnets*, Moscow 1826

Particularly impressive is the layout of the cycle of sonnets of which the book is composed. Each poem, each title and even each dedication have their own dedicated

space. The text of the sonnets never overflows from one page to another, instead each poem occupies a single page in its entirety, with titles and dedications having also an ample space to visually “breathe”. The whole edition was in fact so generous in the print space given to the text that Mickiewicz was allowed to carry out his idea of including a Persian translation of one sonnet along with the introduction. The resulting edition is both a bibliophile rarity, which includes four pages of lithographed Persian translation, and a great example of the classical approach to poetry publishing, where each poem is treated as an autonomous entity, given a dedicated single page, with supportive metatextual, paratextual and visual elements (horizontal lines under text) laid out in exemplary fashion. Because the edition was prepared in collaboration with the author, there might also be a semantic, metaphorical aspect to the final shape of the first edition. The book is a poetic itinerary recounting Mickiewicz’s travel to Crimea. Each sonnet depicts a different place. Giving one whole page to a single stop on the Crimean itinerary might evoke in a reader’s mind the experience of browsing an artist’s sketchbook, here filled with images from the artist’s travels, where each scene is represented as a tableau either on a single page or on a spread.

These considerations are lost in the digital edition of *Crimean Sonnets* available on the government-supported portal Wolne Lektury (Free Schoolbooks). In the transfer from the print media to digital media, one of Mickiewicz’s best works has been diminished to a sequence of poetic verses in need of constant footnoting with no regards for spacial ordering and sequential structure. Although e-books are highly efficient and cost effective with not much extra cost for extra pages, the text, titles and commentary are cramped together as in a student’s crib sheet. A quick historical research, awareness of influential editions of the original on the part of digital publishers would guarantee a cultural continuity within the remediation of the printed *Crimean Sonnets* into their digital incarnation. This time the remediation has turned into a disruption. The authorial vision, editorial artistry, and cultural connotations of the book *Crimean Sonnets* as travel in time and space within the comfort of one’s own reading, afforded by a skillfully designed book experience, was forcefully suspended by the hastily prepared digital edition.

The “counter-method” advocated by object-oriented philosophy, focusing on how a text resists dissolving downward to its cultural elements or upward to its readings, conveniently aligns with digital publishing in general and with translating of e-literature in particular. Graham Harman encourages critics to attempt various modifications of texts – and these modifications include transmedial transfers – in order to “see what happens”. For example, the object-oriented method can be comprised of several tests: adding different punctuation to Mickiewicz’s *Crimean Sonnets*, writing new parts for Keats’s “Ode on a Grecian Urn”, shortening *Moby Dick*, or changing the set-up of *Pride and Prejudice* will still render them as the same poems and novels. In fact, transferring a text from one context to another, cutting out some parts and supplanting some others while probing the integrity of the work are part of standard translational procedure, but are especially true when media-specific factors are additionally at play. The complex entanglement of code and text, reading and interaction and the necessary coexistence of focus-oriented reading spaces remediated from

print culture with distraction-friendly interface layers make reading, interpreting and translating e-literature a convenient proving ground for object-oriented criticism. At the same time, object-oriented criticism might be helpful in reminding the translator and publisher how, in a given medium-specific configuration, one can recreate the experience of the work in the best possible way. Within a framework where elements of the work are initially withdrawn but when focused on can illuminate their specific, localized set of differences and relations, the original experience of the work could be recreated according to a more rigid and structured set of guidelines.

The image shows a digital edition of Adam Mickiewicz's 'The Crimean Sonnets' by Wolne Lektury. The interface is split into two columns. The left column contains the title 'Sonety krymskie', a motto, and the poem 'Stepy akerańskie'. The right column contains the poem 'Cisza morska'. The interface includes a logo for Wolne Lektury, a navigation menu, and a footer with the publisher's name and a small icon.

Fig. 4: Adam Mickiewicz's *The Crimean Sonnets* in digital edition by Wolne Lektury

The method becomes even more urgent today, when one can recreate the original technological context thanks to institutionalized preservation efforts that will potentially result in relatively easy access to the original software and hardware of the source text and where specialist support of trained preservationists (librarians) and specialized “historical” programmers or software archaeologists will curate and maintain the experience of the translated work as it was at the time of initial reception.⁵

If object-oriented approach is going to gain ground in translation studies, its first goal would be to undertake the general recontextualization of translation as a process oriented towards aligning the ever elusive work of translation to an ontological premise where “objects never make full contact with each other any more than they do with the human mind” (Harman 2018, 12). The particularity of digital literature would allow for the introduction of additional layers of work where the general mechanics of object-oriented aesthetics could be literalized and tested on the level of user activity. The task of translating and appearances of objects is thus smaller,

sensual elements can be used as an allegory for approaching the real object of translation (9).

CONCLUSION

Object-oriented translation, driven by recreating the elements of the original writing space, can be a valid way of bringing the work to its new audiences, especially when afforded by technologies emulating the technological milieu (including VR). The translator's job is to determine if and to what extent the work and medium specific affordances at the time of writing did not align with each other and if it is better for the work to be presented in an environment contemporary with the translator.

Future research might be focused on developing frameworks within which the relations and tensions between the e-literary work and its techno affordances are mapped. This would help in determining essential, non-essential and detrimental aspects of that relation at the time a work is digitally created. This in turn will determine the need and the scale of paratextual transfers accompanying the translation and localization. Their goal would be to capture and translate those elements of the work and its technological "shell" which, along with the text, build up the "allure" of the work, preserve the "aura" or "allure" of the original, and (at least in an evocative manner) transfer the reader to the time and place of the original.

Current incarnations of phenomenology, especially object-oriented perspectives on the literary work as highlighted by Graham Harman, might propose a set of useful tools and philosophical categories to such translational endeavors.

NOTES

- ¹ This article expands on the translational reflection which followed the Polish translation of Michael Joyce's *afternoon. a story* (Pisarski 2015) and was inspired by recent growth of media labs (for example Ubu Lab at Jagiellonian University) and computer museums (Muzeum Komputerów in Katowice) but first and foremost by the ground-breaking Internet Archive initiative. From 2018, the publicly funded Internet Archive curates software libraries where old software can be uploaded and run on an emulated machine. The software is run on any popular web browser. See https://archive.org/details/softwarelibrary_mac.
- ² In fact, Francis R. Jones points out that in general most professional poetry translations are multi-agency projects (2011, 7).
- ³ The Polish team was comprised of the main translator Radosław Nowakowski, the programmer Jakub Jagiełło, the editor and publisher Piotr Marecki, head of Ha!art Publishing House in Kraków, the producer, supervisor and co-translator Mariusz Pisarski, and Michael Joyce as a consultant.
- ⁴ With Michael Joyce being relieved from his copyright obligations to the publisher (the previous time Eastgate Systems could object to the online edition) the primary goal of the translation was to deliver the text to readers. The Polish version remains to this day the only fully accessible and fully functional hypertext classic in the history of Storyspace publishing.
- ⁵ Additionally, one can expect that the growth of virtual reality technologies will potentially result in immersive simulations not only of the times, landscapes and culture of the writer's milieu but also of the original software-hardware environment in which the work was written.

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When new media turn old: Towards object-oriented translation of historical digital literature

Digital literature. Object-oriented translation. Media. Translation. Hypertext.
Object-oriented criticism. Electronic literature.

This article is a reflection on the possible future of translating the classics of "born digital" literature in the light of new developments in preservation, restoration and dissemination of digital cultural heritage. Open "software libraries" initiatives of the Internet Archive and a growing popularity of media labs and computer museums make it easy for contemporary audiences to read the old hypertext fiction and animated poetry in their original context. This recreated retro computing experience calls for a new perspective on translating digital classics. Pixelated constellations of rectangles on Storyspace maps, the minimalist palettes of Mac OS system sounds and colors – all these objects and artefacts, along with inherent metatexts, paratexts and behaviors, can contribute to "the laws of the original" (W. Benjamin). A viable path of translation opens up which allows for experiencing the source work the way it was conceived and presented to its first audience. Additionally, the experience-driven approach can be also used in editorial and publishing projects which rely on remediation and transmodal processes (from print to digital, from visual to aural). An exemplary project of a digital, educational edition of Adam Mickiewicz's *The Crimean Sonnets* and its possible improvement by the experience-driven and object-oriented approach is analyzed.

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