

Practical Lessons in Barbarism: Poetry of Tadeusz Różewicz in English Translation.

In his seminal essay “Culture Critique and Society” (written in 1949 and published in *Prisms* in 1955), Theodor Adorno famously claimed that “To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric”. Tadeusz Różewicz’s proper post-war debut *Niepokój* (Eng. *Anxiety*, originally published in 1947 and reprinted numerous times since then) was frequently interpreted in the context of Adorno’s contention, as if some critics’ claims to absolute originality and authenticity could counterweight the philosophical recognition of the impact which the endeavours of the 3rd Reich institutions and their formative influence had on the developments of culture. Undoubtedly, the publication of *Anxiety* constitutes a landmark in the history of Polish literature and had a revolutionary influence over the formations of the poetic language per se. As far as the thematic content is concerned, the poems allude constantly to the barbarities of Nazi-ruled everyday experiences which all too frequently led to silencing of any kind of original/authentic communication (in reality) and muteness (as far as artistic and symbolic expressions are concerned). The barbarism of the (necessary) translation of experience calls into question any conviction undermining the transformative (perhaps dialectical by nature) powers of poetry. Mutilation of speech becomes a device objecting any easy rendition whose mere presence reiterates the question of (un)translatability. English translations of most canonical poems included in *Anxiety* will be analysed in order to try to delineate the edges of the transgenerational and transnational trauma encapsulated in a poem (for the clarity of the argument certain passages from English translations will be juxtaposed with corresponding phrases in German). Literary lineages of barbaric origins mediated by various transformations of originally expressed in Polish traits can be traced in so remote places as J. M. Coetzee’s frontiers of ‘the Empire’ in *Waiting for the Barbarians*. Translation(s) become an all-encompassing metaphor, a territory whose very existence is fully dependant on our ability to read traces.