

ELIZA PIECIUL-KARMIŃSKA

A POLISH HISTORY OF THE GRIMM FAIRY TALES

Abstract: This article discusses difficulties with translating the Grimm fairy tales into Polish. The first part describes the specific features of the original text and presents Bruno Bettelheim’s conclusions about “the meaning and importance of fairy tales.” The second part reviews the existing Polish translations. The third part discusses the main goals of a new Polish translation. The conclusion stresses that the new Polish translation should be addressed to a double audience (both children and adults), as is the case with the original *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*.

Keywords: translation series, adaptation, Grimm genre

The fairy tales collected by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm are, next to the Luther Bible, the best-known masterpiece of German literature, translated so far into 160 languages. In June 2005 they were listed on UNESCO’s Memory of the World Register, which formally confirmed their place in the world literature canon. So far, there has been one translation of the “Large Edition”¹ (1989) into Polish, as well as numerous translations and adaptations of individual tales. In November 2009, the Media-Rodzina publishing house issued a volume of fifty tales, a Polish translation of the so-called

¹ The first edition of the German original was published before Christmas 1812. Because both the publishing house and the readers demanded that the tales be transformed into a children’s book, Wilhelm Grimm deleted expressions unsuitable for children, and made the tales more “fairy-like” in style. In this form, the second volume of the tales was published in 1815. Then, in 1819, the second edition of both volumes was issued (followed by a third volume with commentaries in 1822): it is this edition which is known as the “Large Edition.” Its seventh and final revision was done before the Grimms’ deaths, in 1857.

“Small Edition,”² and it is planning to publish a new translation of the “Large Edition” – all the 200 tales – in 2010.³ I am its translator.

How should one write about one’s own translation, especially when there already exists an ample “translation series?” A person who undertakes a new translation cannot pretend to know nothing about the output of her predecessors, but at the same time she must hope that her rendering will add something to the interpretation of the book; that it will not only supplant, but also complement and enhance the earlier editions. Therefore, she must be conscious of her strategy and goals.

In this essay, I will discuss the challenges the original work of the Brothers Grimm poses to the translator, as well as the reception of the fairy tales in Poland. I will then formulate the main goals of a new translation. In the conclusion, I will point out to the double audience of the original work, which the new translation should preserve.

1. *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* – the origins and characteristics of the tales

1.1 Origins

As we know, the Grimms’ fairy tales collected in the volume entitled *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* were not written by the brothers themselves. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm (1785–1863 and 1786–1859), librarians from Kassel, collected folk tales for thirteen years (cf. Grimm 2009: 14). A common image presents the two brothers travelling across Germany and meticulously noting down tales told by simple folk. However, the sources of the tales are much more complex.

The collection was inspired by the Grimms’ literary interests as well as their collaboration with Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano on a volume entitled *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. It was Brentano who drew the brothers’ attention to traces of oral folk tradition in works by Fischart or Grimmelshausen (cf. Stolt 1984: 18). The attempt to record the still extant oral tradition was the next step, but, interestingly, the brothers spent practi-

² In 1825, Wilhelm Grimm compiled a “Small Edition” of fifty tales selected from the “Large Edition” as the most important and, according to him, most appropriate for children.

³ Published as: Grimm, W. and J. 2010. *Baśnie dla dzieci i dla domu*. Trans. Eliza Pieciul-Karmińska. Poznań: Media-Rodzina (translator’s note).

cally no time travelling in search of tales: they had their “informants,” who worked for them collecting the material. The informants were mainly women, not representatives of the common people but “young, well-educated ladies coming from the wealthy middle class” (Stolt 1984: 19).⁴ In addition, working on the tales, which were re-edited in the years 1815–1819, the brothers drew on literary sources (Kirchhoff, Rollenhagen, Sachs).

The claim about the faithfulness of the tales to their oral sources should also be qualified. First and foremost, it should be noted that the tales were repeatedly edited and the successive editions differ significantly. Beginning with the second edition, Wilhelm Grimm transformed the tales initially intended for adults into children’s literature. He introduced stylistic changes, for example, he added a lot of details, thus departing from the abstract simplicity of the first version. The content was modified the most in order to censor erotic allusions and make the text Christian in its message (e.g. pagan heroes were given characteristics indicating piety; cf. Stolt 1984: 21f.). In this sense, the Grimms themselves failed to avoid interference in the text and the tales represent something more than just a faithful recording of folk oral tradition, as they reveal the literary and didactic intentions of the brothers:

The authors of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* were fully aware of the cultural and axiological value of the texts they edited. Through them they tried to introduce into the collective German consciousness patterns of behaviour which would, at an early stage of human development, shape an identity based on a set of recognizable character traits (Krysztofiak 1999: 149; trans. M.B.)

1.2 *Gattung Grimm*

In German collective consciousness the Grimms’ fairy tales embody the genre of the fairy tale. One scholar goes as far as to define the fairy tale as a story such as those collected by the Brothers Grimm in their *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (cf. Jolles 1930: 219; qtd in Stolt 1984: 17). This view finds its fullest expression in the term *Gattung Grimm* – the Grimm genre. However, the brothers’ collection is, in fact, not generically pure: out of the two hundred tales only forty to sixty would qualify today as a full fairy

⁴ They did mention, in the “Preface” to the 1857 edition, “a peasant woman” (Grimm 2009: 15), that is, Dorothea Viehmann; however, she was not a peasant woman either, but a middle-class lady of French origin.

tale (*Vollmärchen*); the remaining ones are legends, parts of sermons, and especially *Schwänke* (a sort of humorous, satirical jokes). Also formally the Grimms' tales fail to meet all the requirements of the genre: only about seventy tales begin with *Es war einmal...* ("Once upon a time..."), and a hundred and fifty lack any formal ending⁵ (cf. Stolt 1984: 22–26). As we can see, the term *Gattung Grimm* is a gross oversimplification.

1.3 "The uses of enchantment"

Discussing translations of the Grimm tales, it is necessary to mention a book by Bruno Bettelheim entitled *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (1976). A psychologist from Vienna, Bettelheim refers in his work mainly to the Grimm tales, which he must have known since childhood in their original versions, undistorted by any translation. His conclusions turn out to be of major importance to any scholar studying the Grimm tales (including the translator, of course), as they show which elements should never be given up in translation if the tales are to retain their power of "enchantment."

Through the centuries (if not millennia) during which, in their retelling, fairy tales became even more refined, they came to convey at the same time overt and covert meanings – came to speak simultaneously to all levels of the human personality, communicating in a manner which reaches the uneducated mind of the child as well as that of the sophisticated adult (Bettelheim 1976: 5–6).

Fairy tales are the sole type of text which can enrich the child's life and help develop the child's imagination, intelligence, and emotions. This is because fairy tales relate to actual fears of children, enabling them to recognize existential hardships and suggesting ways of dealing with such anxieties. While the tales say little about the present-day world (a frequent criticism), they refer to inner, universal dilemmas of the human being. Bettelheim explains why fairy tales sound so convincing:

- they take into account the real psychological and emotional being of the child;
- they address the inner pressures of the child in a way that the child unconsciously understands;

⁵ In the German tradition the ending has the following form: *Und wenn sie nicht gestorben sind, so leben sie heute noch* ("If they have not died, they are still alive"); it occurs only in the tale of *Fundevogel* (no. 51 in the "Large Edition").

- they do not belittle the child’s inner struggles;
- they offer examples of solutions to difficulties (cf. Bettelheim 1976: 6).

What we often see as a cruel or gruesome element of a fairy tale, is – according to Bettelheim – an honest confrontation with the fundamental problems of human condition: fairy tales show that, even though struggling with difficulties may be unavoidable, we can win if we face those difficulties and learn to overcome them.⁶ To achieve this, a fairy tale offers a simplified description of a situation: it disregards some details and takes the reader directly into the heart of the problem (that’s why so many tales begin with the death of a parent). Moreover – and this can be irritating for an adult reader – fairy tale characters are not so much individuals as representatives of a certain type, and they follow the dualistic “black-and-white” thinking of the child (a character is either good or bad, a brother is either clever or stupid, a sister is either beautiful or ugly, and so on). Thus the child can capture the subtleties immediately and can identify with the positive character, as it is still too early for the child to discover the ambivalence of human behaviour (cf. Bettelheim 1976: 9–10).

The merit of fairy tales lies not so much in creating the impression that good always triumphs and evil is always punished, but in letting the child identify easily with the positive character: to experience sufferings and difficulties with this character and then to overcome them and taste the triumph. Thanks to the schematic nature of the text, children accomplish such an identification fully on their own and in this way adopt the moral sense of a fairy tale. Any adaptation that tries to “enrich” and elaborate on this schematic, black-and-white world, destroys the most essential value of a fairy tale. Even more damage is done if one tries to “embellish” a tale and add to it some of the wrongly understood “fabulousness.”

Most children now meet fairy tales only in prettified and simplified versions which subdue their meaning and rob them of all deeper significance – versions such as those on films and TV shows, where fairy tales are turned into empty-minded entertainment (Bettelheim 1976: 24).

⁶ Nowadays, children’s tales tend to avoid existential problems, as if they wanted to make children believe that all people are good and the dark side of the human does not exist. That’s why they steer clear from such topics as death, old age and disease, human limitations or wish for eternal life. They avoid describing violent conflicts and emotions, leaving the child unassisted, since the child can also sink into despair, feel desolate and lonely, and fear death, which often manifests itself unconsciously through the fear of darkness, of animals, or of the child’s own body.

What is more, an unmodified fairy tale never refers to the material world of the child, who, needless to say, does not get abandoned in the forest like Hansel and Gretel. An adaptation which tries to move a fairy tale closer to the child's world makes the child lose the sense of security: excessive similarity becomes scary. Meanwhile, children understand perfectly well that fairy tales speak to them in the language of symbols and not that of everyday reality⁷ (cf. Bettelheim 1976: 62).

The same happens with cruelty in fairy tales, frequently regarded by adult readers (including translators) as harmful, senseless, and unnecessary.⁸ For children, however, punishment meted out to a wicked character constitutes the foundation of a safe world, for they are still too immature to deal with magnanimity and forgiveness – they do not understand a censored or embellished version of *Cinderella* in which the wicked sisters never get punished or in which they become elevated with Cinderella's help.⁹ An adult reader (translator) should not think that such measures will teach magnanimity to the child:

Adults often think that the cruel punishment of an evil person in fairy tales upsets and scares children unnecessarily. Quite the opposite is true: such retribution reassures the child that the punishment fits the crime. (...) the more severely those bad ones are dealt with, the more secure the child feels (Bettelheim 1976: 141).

⁷ In this sense, a child is less frightened by a story in which the wolf swallows the grandmother than by a modern version of the *Little Red Riding Hood* in which the wolf, instead of eating the grandmother, puts a gag over her mouth, ties her up and thrusts her into the wardrobe. It is this softened version, which nevertheless moves closer to reality, that may become a source of a child's genuine trauma. What is more, overrealistic modern versions do not allow for what is the most important, that is, for the act of working through unconscious inner pressures in fantasy (cf. Bettelheim 1976, 63).

⁸ On Polish Internet forums devoted to children's literature the Grimms' tales are most often considered "bloody, cruel and grim." Literary critics speak of "a Rhein horror story with a laboured happy end" (Mikołajewski 2003). Bettelheim comments on such an attitude in the following way: "Unfortunately, some moderns reject fairy tales because they apply to them literature standards which are totally inappropriate. If one takes these stories as descriptions of reality, then the tales are indeed outrageous in all respects – cruel, sadistic, and whatnot. But as symbols of psychological happenings or problems, these stories are quite true" (Bettelheim 1976: 155).

⁹ This is true about most of the Polish editions of *Cinderella*, which not only leave out the original ending, where pigeons peck out the evil sisters' eyes but go as far as adding didactic epilogues about forgiveness (see also 3.2).

Bettelheim's conclusions offer adults (including Grimm translators) the guidelines for telling fairy tales: they should not judge fairy tales by adult standards, they should not force fairy tales into alien literary frames; but first and foremost they should avoid didacticism, so widespread in translations (cf. 3.2). Fairy tales should not be told with didactic intentions,¹⁰ for their purpose should be, as Bettelheim points out, "a shared experience:" "[Fairy tales] will give validity to important feelings, promote insights, nourish hopes, reduce anxieties – and in doing so enrich the child's life at the moment and forever after" (1976: 154).

2. The Grimms' fairy tales in Poland: translation or adaptation

2.1 The influence of the target culture on the reception of the fairy tales

An in-depth and comprehensive account of Polish translations of the Grimm fairy tales was given by Maria Krysztofiak in her article entitled "Modelowa analiza translatologiczna na przykładzie polskich tłumaczeń baśni braci Grimm" (A Model Translation Analysis: Polish Translations of the Grimms' Fairy Tales) published in *Przekład literacki a translatologia* (Literary Translation vs. Translation Studies; 1999: 148–172). The article offers an insightful analysis of the worldview and structure of the original fairy tales, and discusses their cultural, aesthetic, lexical and semantic transformations in Polish translations. It shows the reductions as well as simplifications¹¹ that result from adapting the tales to the needs of the Polish audience and from yielding to the pressure of the fairy-tale convention existing in the aesthetic consciousness of a Pole.

Those surface elements of the Polish translations which depart from the original Grimm tales – e.g. the entirely arbitrary layout of the text, addition or omission of individual expressions, parts of sentences as well as whole passages, setting the external text structure off balance – lead to other transformations in

¹⁰ It is also important to note that pedagogical goals vary and depend on modes of upbringing.

¹¹ These simplified translations of the fairy tales are the source of a widespread conviction among Polish readers that those fairy tales are bloody, violent and grim. The question remains, of course, if this work, so important to the European culture, can be reduced to a simplified stereotype; another question is how to reconcile this view with Bruno Bettelheim's thesis about the "enchanted power" of those tales.

the remaining layers of the work. (...) The multilayered transfer of the cultural tradition of the original is neglected by the Polish translators and shifts towards a static actualization of a one-dimensional reality and towards a reduction of symbols representing the unconscious and surreal content (Krysztofiak 1999: 171; trans. M.B.)

Not to repeat Krysztofiak's argument in my article, I would like to present now a few examples of those distortions and transformations, due to which most of Grimm translations into Polish should be considered adaptations (reworkings) rather than translations.¹² Such a differentiation is essential for two reasons: first, a translation which is nothing more than an adaptation of a text should inform the reader about its nature, instead of pretending to be a faithful rendering of the original; second, the sheer amount of changes introduced in almost every Polish translation allows us to conclude that, so far, Polish versions have not given their readers an opportunity to meet the true Brothers Grimm.

2.2. Strategies of reworking in Polish translations

Most of the Polish translations, whose aim was to adapt the fairy tales to the needs of the Polish audience, can be considered adaptations because of repeated reworking strategies, such as pedagogization, purification, making the text more logical, introducing a peculiarly understood fairy-tale convention, or frequently reducing the endings in which the villains are punished. It is worth looking at a few examples to demonstrate how the translators, introducing seemingly harmless changes, create in fact a new text which lacks all the values mentioned by Bettelheim.

Pedagogization is a particularly common practice: Little Red Riding Hood in Marcei Tarnowski's translation is a well-behaved little girl: *Zrobię wszystko, jak każesz – przyrzekł Czerwony Kapturek mamusi* ("I will do everything as you say," Little Red Riding Hood promised her

¹² The German term for adaptation, *Bearbeitung* (reworking), was introduced by Michael Schreiber in his book *Übersetzung und Bearbeitung* (1993) to denote an interlingual transformation of the text which cannot be regarded as translation proper (meeting the requirements of invariance through which the identity of the original is preserved). Contrary to translation, reworking allows for transformations which do not result directly from the translation process. Schreiber distinguishes three basic types of reworking: amplification (enhancing), which includes improvement, extension, poetization, purification; adaptation, which includes modernization, adaptation to a specific group of readers, ideologization; and diminution (belittling), which includes reduction, prosaization, vulgarization, abridgement.

mummy; Grimm 1989: vol. I, 143). In the original, however, Little Red Riding Hood is a responsible partner: she does not promise anything to her “mummy,” but confirms her decision with a handshake: “*Ich will schon alles gut machen,*” *sagte Rotkäppchen zur Mutter und gab ihr die Hand darauf* (“I’ll do everything as it should be done,” said Little Red Riding Hood to her mother and shook her hand; Brüder Grimm 1996: vol. I, 141). Sometimes such pedagogization acquires a humorous dimension, as in Little Red Riding Hood’s account of the contents of the basket: *Kuchen und Wein: gestern haben wir gebacken...* (Cake and wine. We baked it yesterday...; Grimm 1996: vol. I, 141) is changed into: *Placek i wino, mamusia piekla wczoraj...* (Pie and wine, mummy baked it yesterday...; Grimm 1989, vol. I, 143), as if it were necessary to emphasize the hierarchy, the superiority of “mummy” over the child, at all times.

Purification, that is, deleting any allusions to sexuality from the text, is equally common. The Big Bad Wolf in Polish translations of *Little Red Riding Hood* does not satisfy his fancy, or even lust (*Wie der Wolf sein Gelüsten gestillt hatte*; Grimm 1996: vol. I, 143), but only his appetite (Grimm 1998: 90) or hunger (Grimm 1999), and when he asks the Red Riding Hood what she is carrying under her apron (*Was trägst du unter der Schürze?*; Grimm 1996: vol. I, 141), the Polish translation finds it too suggestive and transforms it into *A cóż to niesiesz w koszyczku?* (And what are you carrying in your basket?; Grimm 1985: 33). Seeing the wolf asleep in grandma’s bed, the huntsman calls him an old sinner in the original (*Finde ich dich hier, du alter Sünder*; Grimm 1996: vol. I, 143), whereas in the translation the wolf becomes an old pest (*stary szkodnik*; Grimm 1989: vol. I, 39).

A very common tendency is to **logicalize** the text, i.e. to explain psychological reasons for characters’ behaviour and to make character descriptions more detailed. As a result, a fairy tale ceases to be a tale about people in general, thus making it impossible for the child to identify unconsciously with the protagonist. It is also very common to “explain” at all costs the seemingly unclear cause-and-effect relationships. Thus, in one translation, the following sentence from *Cinderella: In aller Eile zog es das Kleid an und ging zur Hochzeit* (Grimm 1996: vol. I, 123), which in my translation was rendered as *W wielkim pośpiechu dziewczyna założyła suknię i pobiegła na bal* (In a great hurry, the girl put on her dress and ran to the ball; Grimm 2009: 194), was extended by a reminder about the necessity to wash: *Kopciuszek umył się szybko, ubrał i podążył na zabawę* (Cinderella washed quickly, dressed up and went to the party; Grimm 1989: vol. I, 125).

Another strategy of adapting the text to a child audience consists in using **diminutives**. Hence, a specific linguistic convention emerges, where a bear is turned into a “little bear,” a dog into a “doggie” (in the *Little Red Riding Hood* we have a “mummy” instead of a mother and a “nanny” instead of a grandmother). More significantly, it leads to infantilization of the presented world: Little Red Riding Hood prepares a *little* bunch of flowers (*bukiecik* instead of *bukiet*) for her grandmother; grandmother’s bed is trimmed with *little* curtains (*firaneczki* instead of *zastony*), and grandmother herself lives in a *little* house (*domek*), a *little* half an hour away from the village (*pól godzinki*), etc. The diminutives introduced instead of neutral expressions are not only stylistic modifications: they constitute “the way of modelling the reader’s outlook, which is based on a simple axiology: what is diminutive in name usually represents the world of positive values (the good, upright, and unbiased)” (Legeżyńska 1999: 184; trans. M.B.). As a result, a fairy tale becomes “babified,” its reception is simplified and disambiguated. Fairy tales by no means have to be addressed solely to the child recipient (cf. Krysztofiak 1999: 16); in fact, it is the reader who should decide whether Little Red Riding Hood, Rapunzel or Cinderella are little girls or young women.

Adaptation for a child audience also results in reduction of elements regarded by the translator as improper for young readers. These include death, disease, and – as I have already mentioned – punishment for wrongdoing. The opening scene of *Cinderella*, in which the reader learns that the girl’s mother has died, and which is essential to the overall meaning of the fairy tale, is absent from Irena Tuwim’s translation (Grimm 1995: 89–95). What is more, the translator decided to dispose of Cinderella’s father as well, as if his helplessness and submissiveness towards his second wife were incongruent with the pedagogy-driven necessity to glorify one’s parents. The opening sentence of this version reads: *Była sobie raz mała sierotka, bez ojca i matki...* (Once upon a time there lived a little orphan, without mother or father...; Grimm 1995: 89). Naturally, in this version Cinderella does not visit her mother’s grave; neither does she plant the hazel branch she got from her father, nor does she receive help from a little bird (the symbol of her dead mother) who lives in the hazel tree.¹³ In many

¹³ These changes at the beginning of the tale lead to the omission of numerous important threads of the plot. Moreover, the translator introduces elements borrowed from Perrault’s version of the tale (the carriage, the glass slipper, the midnight “curfew”), which are incongruous with the Grimms’ version.

fairy tales, the closing scenes, in which the villains receive punishment, are treated equally badly by translators, who seem to be driven by a didactic assumption (described by Bettelheim, cf. 1.3) that children should be taught magnanimity and forgiveness. Consequently, the epilogue in *Cinderella*, describing the punishment of the wicked sisters (whose eyes are pecked out by pigeons) assumes the following form:

Kiedy wesele miało się odbyć, przebiegłe siostry chciały się przypochlebić i podzielić szczęściem siostry. Gdy państwo młodzi szli do kościoła, starsza siostra stanęła po prawej stronie Kopciuszka, a młodsza po lewej. Podeszła też macocha, skłoniła nisko głowę przed panną młodą i powiedziała: „Przebacz nam nasze winy”. A szczęśliwa dziewczyna uśmiechnęła się łagodnie, bo nie chciała nikogo skrzywdzić (Grimm 1999).

When the wedding was about to take place, the cunning sisters wanted to flatter their sister and share her happiness. When the bride and groom were going to the church, the elder sister approached Cinderella from her right and the younger sister from her left. The stepmother approached, too, bowed low before the bride and said: “Forgive us our trespasses.” And the happy girl smiled benignly, for she did not want to harm anybody (trans. M.B.).

The most common strategy in Polish translations is to adapt the text to a specifically understood fairy-tale convention (a specific **dramatization** and **poetization** of the text). This strategy is so widespread that in fact most of the translations could illustrate the processes of accumulating epithets, increasing suspense and adding “fairy-like” elements. All of them are alien to the very nature of the fairy tale, whose main principle is simplicity (and schematicity, mentioned by Bettelheim): both of the plot and of the language¹⁴ (cf. Krysztofiak 1999: 157– 158). In Polish, Cinderella cannot simply get a dainty dress (*wytworna suknia*; Grimm 2009: 195), but she has to have a silvery gown with a trail, a diamond necklace and a pair of glass slippers (*srebrzysta suknia z trenem, naszyjnik z brylantów i szklane pantofelki*; Grimm 1995: 92).

¹⁴ Among the features defining the style of a proper fairy tale, Max Lüthi mentions one-dimensionality (Eindimensionalität), abstract style and universality (Allverbundenheit) (1985: 84).

2.3 The Grimms' fairy tales in Polish as an adaptation

All these changes, which deserve a separate study as the evidence of translators' didactic goals or their projections about the needs of the Polish audience (cf. Krysztofiak 1999: 172), show that all the Polish translations of the Grimm tales published so far cannot qualify as translations proper. So far, Polish readers have not had an opportunity to discover the original world of the Grimm fairy tales:

All Polish translations of the Grimm tales have been shaping Polish culture, and they cannot be erased from the consciousness of generations brought up on these texts; nevertheless, there is a need (and Polish readers have a right to it) for a complete – culturally, aesthetically and semantically undistorted – translation of the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm. Often Polish readers, literary scholars or teachers do not realize fully that in their reading practice they do not use the texts of the Grimm tales, but merely their inadequate Polish copies concocted by publishers and translators (Krysztofiak 1998: 174; trans. M.B.).¹⁵

3. The new translation of the fairy tales: goals and difficulties

Considering all the abovementioned deviations from the original, which lead to significant reductions, simplifications and modifications, any new translation of the Grimms' fairy tales should aim at faithfulness to the source text. Since this article should not be a self-review, I will only outline my own translation strategy, letting the readers evaluate to what extent I have managed to realize it.

¹⁵ One might thus claim that such a book as *The Uses of Enchantment* could have been written only by a scholar who was familiar with the original versions of the tales. In an endnote, the Polish translator of Bettelheim's book indicates that she is unable to refer to any of the extant translations, for they are defective and fail to convey the content discussed by Bettelheim: "In Polish there are many translations of many of the tales from this collection; however, they fail to meet the present-day requirements of the craft" (1985: vol. I, 287). [Having written this book in English, Bettelheim himself recognized the defective nature of the existing English translations of the tales: "This book has been translated many times, but only a few of these translations are true to the original" (endnote 6) – translator's note.]

3.1 Faithfulness

With regard to the techniques described in 2.2, it seems obvious that faithfulness postulated here should imply resistance to the pressure of the “fairy-tale convention” alive in the aesthetic consciousness of the Polish reader, as well as caution about achieving didactic goals through translation. Therefore, translators should neither poetize the language nor dramatize the action; moreover, translators should be particularly wary of their own prejudices concerning the alleged cruelty or schematicity of the tales.

The readers who are accustomed to the refined language of previous translations may find the style of the new translation quite plain or even rough at times, for instance when, instead of the orphan’s moving wail in *Little Brother and Little Sister: Od śmierci mateczki nie zaznalismy chwili radości* (Since our dear mummy’s death we have not had one happy hour; Grimm 1989: 68), a dry statement appears: *Od kiedy zmarła matka, źle nam się wiedzie* (Since our mother died we have fared poorly; Grimm 2009: 124).

Of course, in comparison with earlier translations, I have tried to avoid didacticism. All I had to do was follow the Grimms’ text and refrain from adding didactic suggestions and diminutives, which were absent from the original.

Another significant issue is keeping the overall structure of the text in order to retain the symbolic aspect of objects and characters. A good example comes from *The Town Musicians of Bremen*, a fairy tale of vast ideological and symbolic import, usually unappreciated by Polish readers. In this tale there appears a deeply philosophical statement often quoted in German literature: *Etwas Besseres als den Tod findest du überall* (Something better than death you will find everywhere; Grimm 1996: vol. I, 146),¹⁶ which in Tarnowski’s translation is reduced to a hackneyed phrase: *Na śmierć zawsze jeszcze masz czas* (There is always time for death; Grimm 1989: vol. I, 147). Such a statement could never have become the title of a speech given by Professor Werner Welzig, President of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, who referred specifically to this tale (*Etwas besseres als den Tod findest du überall oder Was man von einem Esel alles lernen kann*; Something better than death you will find everywhere, or, What we can learn from an ass).

¹⁶ In my translation: *Coś lepszego niż śmierć znajdziesz wszędzie* (Something better than death you will find everywhere; Grimm 2009: 229). The quote was used by Carl Zuckmeyer in his *Captain of Köpenick* to show that even a seemingly hopeless situation may turn into a new beginning. An Internet search engine showed about 300 thousand German hits containing this quote.

The Austrian professor of German studies underlines the fact that *The Town Musicians of Bremen* is a tale about humanity and identity: the anonymous animals awaiting death win their independence and future through naming one another. This important scene was omitted from Tarnowski's translation, where the names are not written in capital letters and function as mere characteristics rather than names: *łapaj* (catcher), *wąsacz* (whisker), *klapouch* (flatears), *rycerz z czerwonym pióropuszem* (knight with a red plume).

However, as every translator and translation scholar knows, faithfulness in translation has its limits, and one must always give something up.¹⁷

3.2 The limits of faithfulness

Numerous problems arise when faithfulness confronts **tradition**: being faithful to the original does not mean ignoring an established tradition. That is why I did not dare to experiment with the name *Kopciuszek* (Cinderella), even though the original name *Aschenputtel* carries a much deeper symbolic meaning.¹⁸ However, I did reject the well-established *złota rybka* (gold fish) from the *Tale of the Fisherman and His Wife*, as in the original we find no justification whatsoever for using that equivalent: the prince turns not into an enigmatic “gold fish,” but into a very specific *turbot* (*der Butt*).

Another impassable barrier to faithfulness is **systemic untranslatability** (cf. Wojtasiewicz 1996: 24 ff.). It is difficult, for example, to retain the neuter gender of the original names: *das Rotkäppchen* (*Little Red Riding Hood*, *Czerwony Kapturek* – masculine in Polish), *das Aschenputtel* (*Cinderella*, *Kopciuszek* – masculine), *Das Rapunzel* (*Rapunzel*, *Roszpunka* – feminine), *das Sneewittchen* (*Snow White*, *Śnieżka* – feminine), which enables readers of the original to decide on the sex of the character (cf. Bettelheim 1976: 282). The Polish reader is deprived of such a choice. A similar thing happens with the “schematic,” or rather “universal,” nature of the main characters, which enables the child's projection and identification with them (cf. Bettelheim 1976: 9–10). In the original, the protagonist is often *a girl* or *the youngest brother*, and often referred to only by means of a personal pronoun (*er*, *sie*, *es*). In Polish this technique is practically

¹⁷ “In our translation if we want to emphasize a feature of the original that is important to us, then we can do so only by playing down or entirely suppressing other features” (Gadamer 2004: 387–388).

¹⁸ *Asche* – ash as the symbol of purity and mourning (cf. Bettelheim 1976: 236–240; Krysztofiak 1999: 161).

impossible to reproduce, hence it becomes necessary to introduce nouns in place of pronouns, which all too often invite interpretation, for it is the translator, and not the reader, who identifies a given character, referring to it as either *młodzieniec* (young man) or *chłopiec* (boy), either *dziewczyna* (young girl) or *dziewczynka* (little girl).

3.3 Correcting the mistakes

The postulate of faithful translation, however, enables the translator to correct the mistakes of previous translations, both small and serious, for instance those that make the text less logical or comprehensible. A less known tale of *The Sparrow and His Four Children* (KHM 157) offers good examples of mistakes that lead to nonsense and lower the quality of the text. In the original, the old sparrow warns the son who lives among the mountaineers that *Bergbuben haben manchen Sperling mit Kobold umbracht* (The mining lads have killed many sparrows with a piece of cobalt; Grimm 1996: t. III, 27). In an earlier translation, instead of the name of the rock, there appears – perhaps in the name of the fairy-tale convention – the mythical *kobold*: *często się zdarzało, że wraz z koboldem i wróbel od nich [górników] oberwał* (it often happened that both kobolds and sparrows alike got beaten by the mining boys; Grimm 1989: vol. II, 234).

In a similar fashion, in *The Town Musicians of Bremen* the rooster, asked why he crows so loudly, answers in Tarnowski's translation: *Muszę dobrą pogodę przepowiedzieć, bo nasza pani uprała koszulki Pana Jezuska i musi je wysuszyć* (I have to foretell good weather, for our lady has washed Christ Child's little shirts and she has to dry them; Grimm 1989: vol. I, 146). The reader does not know why the rooster's lady has washed Christ Child's little shirts or what those shirts are in the first place. A faithful translation renders this sentence in the following way: *Dzisiaj jest święto Przenajświętszej Panienki, gdy wyprała ona koszulkę Dzieciątka Jezus i chciała ją wysuszyć* (Today is the day of the Holy Virgin, when she washed the shirt of Child Jesus and wanted to dry it; Grimm 2009: 229); in the new Polish translation of the "Large Edition" it will be accompanied by a footnote commenting on the "folk" way of thinking demonstrated by the rooster, who understands the Feast of the Purification of the Virgin (i.e. the Candlemas) very literally.¹⁹

¹⁹ The explanation (the whole context, together with Tarnowski's translation) can be found in the translator's afterword: Pieciul-Karmińska 2010: vol. II, 475–476 (translator's note).

In this context, it is worth looking at the history of Polish translations of *Rumpelstilzchen* (KHM 55). This character, known from earlier translations as *Dydko* or *Hałasik* (Little Noise) was renamed *Titelitury* in the 1989 full edition of the fairy tales. In the “Editor’s Note,” we read: *tajemniczego pomocnika (w oryg. Rumpelstilzchen), którego imię zdradza ptaszek, przemianowano z Hałasika na Titelitury, co brzmi bardziej wdzięcznie i jest łatwiejsze do wyspiewania przez ptaka* (the name of the enigmatic helper, called *Rumpelstilzchen* in the original, given away by a little bird, was changed from *Hałasik* to *Titelitury*, which sounds more gracefully and is easier for a bird to sing; Grimm 1989, vol. II, 407). This explanation is peculiar, as neither the original nor Tarnowski’s translation with the editors’ commentary feature any little bird. The gnome reveals his name himself: *wokół ogniska skakał i tańczył na jednej nodze śmieszny karzełek wołając: (...) Bo nikt nie wie o tym, że jest Titelitury / O tym nie wie nikt na całym świecie!* (round and round the fire jumped and danced on one foot a funny gnome, shouting: (...) For no one knows that I’m Titelitury / No one knows that in the whole world!; Grimm 1989: vol. I, 265).

This example is particularly interesting, as the name *Titelitury* seems to owe its existence in Polish literature to a mistake of a rather grave nature, springing from the editors’ lack of familiarity with the edited text. Assuming the name is revealed by a little bird, they claim to have chosen a name resembling bird chirping, i.e. *Titelitury*. However, is this sufficient to explain the curious replacement of *Rumpelstilzchen* by *Titelitury*? The “Editor’s Note” does not mention a more probable source of this new name. In Swedish, there is a similar fairy tale about a demon whose name has to be guessed; his name is *Titteli Ture* (cf. Thorpe 1853: 170). It seems, then, that one of the editors of the volume decided it was necessary to change *Hałasik* into Swedish *Titelitury* (with the original alliteration distorted), and then another editor, being unaware of its origins, added the explanation about the little bird revealing the gnome’s name. A fascinating story indeed, but how can it be reconciled with the postulate of faithfulness towards the author and the work? And why was a German fairy tale translated with the help of a Swedish source? Still, this is how *Rumpelstilzchen* is introduced to Polish schoolchildren every school year.

4. The double reader of the Grimms' fairy tales

The task of every translator is to preserve the identity of the source text – in the case of the Grimm tales this also means taking responsibility to preserve in translation the double role of these texts: both “for children” and “for the household,” as postulated by the original title: *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*. Indicating the target audience, the title points out that “the volume contains not only children’s tales but also narratives told at homes, and therefore addressed to adults as well” (Kryzstofiak 1999: 153; trans. M.B.).

And so, by imitating the schematicity, the simplicity of language and plot (cf. 3.1), and the black-and-white nature of the presented world, a faithful translation should retain its fundamental importance to the emotional development of the child. The Brothers Grimm themselves, conscious of the didactic purpose of their book, indicated that it would never be fulfilled by “an anxious expurgation of everything that relates to certain conditions and relations, which occur daily and in no way can remain hidden” for “the correct approach would not find evil in such things but rather (...) a testimony of our heart”²⁰ (GHDI). This may serve as a word of warning against any attempts to improve or censor the translated text.

In turn, when it comes to adult readers, a faithful translation may give them insight into the original work of the Brothers Grimm: into its literary and non-literary goals, the linguistic image of the world which is a mixture of ancient folk mentality and newly-born German self-awareness of the early 19th century. Thus, the Polish translation of the “Large Edition” of all the two hundred tales will be addressed both to children and adults. It will be annotated in order to supplement the reader with contextual knowledge because human communication requires not only a suitable text but also a sufficient background knowledge (cf. Gutt 2004: 29).

As for me, the translator, all I can do is hope that imperfections unavoidable in any translation will obscure neither the “blessing” mentioned by the Brothers Grimm nor the “power of enchantment” discovered by Bettelheim.

trans. Magdalena Buchta

²⁰ Cf. also for Polish translation of the Preface in Grimm 2009: 13f (translator’s note).

Bibliography

Source texts

- Brüder Grimm. 1996. *Kinder- und Hausmärchen (nach der Großen Ausgabe von 1857 textkritisch revidiert, kommentiert und durch Register erschlossen. Herausgegeben von Hans-Jörg Uther)*. München: Diederichs.
- Grimm, J. and W. 1985. *Baśnie* [Fairy Tales]. Trans. M. Tarnowski, selected by S. Wortman. Warszawa: Nasza Księgarnia.
- _____. 1989. *Baśnie braci Grimm (Baśnie domowe i dziecięce zebrane przez braci Grimm)* [Grimms' Fairy Tales (Household and Children's Tales Collected by the Brothers Grimm)]. Trans. E. Bielicka and M. Tarnowski. Warszawa: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza.
- _____. 1995. *Baśnie* [Fairy Tales]. Trans. I. Tuwim. Wrocław: Siedmioróg.
- _____. 1998. *Baśnie* [Fairy Tales]. Based on translation by E. Jezierski and Z. Kowerska (*Kolorowy Świat Lektur*). Warszawa: PWW.
- _____. 1999. *Baśnie braci Grimm* [Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm]. Trans. Z. A. Kowerska. Warszawa: RTW. [no pagination]
- _____. 2009. *Baśnie braci Grimm* [Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm]. Trans. E. Pieciul-Karmińska. Poznań: Media Rodzina.
- _____. 2010. *Baśnie dla dzieci i dla domu* [Children and Household Tales]. Trans. E. Pieciul-Karmińska. Poznań: Media Rodzina.
- _____. Undated. "Preface to the Second Edition of the Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm (1819)." Trans. Jonathan Skolnik. *GHDI: German History in Documents and Images, Volume 3. From Vormärz to Prussian Dominance, 1815-1866*. http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=348

Secondary sources

- Bettelheim, B. 1976. *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. New York: Random House.
- _____. 1985. *Cudowne i pożyteczne. O znaczeniach i wartościach baśni* [*The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*]. Trans. D. Danek. Warszawa: PIW.
- Gadamer, H.-G. 2004. *Truth and Method*. Second, Revised Edition. Translation revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. London/New York: Continuum.
- Gutt, E.-A. 2004. *Dystans kulturowy a przekład*. Trans. A. Pokojcka. Kraków: Universitas. [Originally: "Modes of Translation and Cultural Distance", guest lecture delivered in 2003 at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland]
- Jolles, A. 1930. *Einfache Formen*. Halle: Niemeyer.
- Krysztofiak, M. 1998. "Wprowadzenie do analizy przekładów baśni braci Grimm na język polski" [Introduction to the Analysis of Polish Translations of Grimm Fairy

- Tales]. *Przekład artystyczny a współczesne teorie translatologiczne* [Literary Translation vs. Contemporary Translation Theories]. Ed. P. Fast. Katowice: “Śląsk” Wydawnictwo Naukowe. 165–176.
- _____. 1999. *Przekład literacki a translatologia* [Literary Translation vs. Translation Studies]. 2nd edition. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM.
- Legeżyńska, A. 1999. *Tłumacz i jego kompetencje autorskie. Na materiale powojennych tłumaczeń z A. Puszkina, W. Majakowskiego, I. Kiryłowa, A. Błoka* [Translators and Their Competences as Authors. On the Basis of Postwar Translations from A. Pushkin, V. Mayakovsky, I. Krylov, A. Blok]. 2nd edition. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Lüthi, M. 1982 [1947]. *The European Folktale. Form and Nature*. Trans. by J. D. Niles. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Mikołajewski J. 2003. *Baśnie, Grimm, Jacob; Grimm, Wilhelm* [Fairy Tales, Grimm, Jacob; Grimm, Wilhelm]. www.wyborcza.pl/1,75517,1728188.html. 11.01.2011.
- Pieciul-Karmińska, E. 2010. “Słowo od tłumaczki. Baśnie braci Grimm na nowo” [A Word from the Translator. The Grimms’ Fairy Tales Anew]. *Baśnie dla dzieci i dla domu*. [Fairy Tales for Children and Household]. W. and J. Grimm. Vol II. Poznań: Media Rodzina. 443-484.
- Schreiber, M. 1993. *Übersetzung und Bearbeitung*. Tübingen: Narr.
- Stolt, B. 1984. “Textsortenstilistische Beobachtungen zur ‘Gattung Grimm’.” *Die Brüder Grimm. Erbe und Rezeption*. Ed. A. Stedje. Stockholmer Germanistische Forschungen 32. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wikse.
- Thorpe, B. 1853. *Yule-Tide Stories: A Collection of Scandinavian and North German Popular Tales and Traditions, from the Swedish, Danish, and German*. London: Bohn.
- Wojtasiewicz, O. 1996. *Wstęp do teorii tłumaczenia* [An Introduction to the Theory of Translation]. 2nd edition. Warszawa: TEPIS.

Eliza Pieciul-Karmińska lectures at the Institute of Linguistics (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań). Her interests include the theory, practice and didactics of German-Polish translation. She has translated the Grimms’ *Children’s and Household Tales*.