ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A PUSS IN BOOTS: HANNA JANUSZEWSKA’S POLISH TRANSLATION AND ADAPTATION OF CHARLES PERRAULT’S FAIRY TALES

Abstract: This article opens with an overview of the Polish reception of fairy tales, Perrault’s in particular, since 1700. The introductory section investigates the long-established preference for adaptation rather than translation of this genre in Poland and provides the framework for an in-depth comparative analysis of the first Polish translation of Mother Goose Tales by Hanna Januszewska, published in 1961, as well as her adaptation of Perrault’s tales ten years later. The examination focuses on two questions: first, the cultural distance between the original French text and Polish fairytales, which causes objective translation difficulties; second, the cultural, stylistic and linguistic shifts introduced by Januszewska in the process of transforming her earlier translation into a free adaptation of Perrault’s work. These questions lead not only to comparing the originality or literary value of Januszewska’s two proposals, but also to examining the reasons for the enormous popularity of the adapted version. The faithful translation, by all means a good text in itself, did not gain wide recognition and, if not exactly a failure, it was nevertheless an unsuccessful attempt to introduce Polish readers to the original spirit of Mother Goose Tales.

Keywords: translation, adaptation, fairy tale, Perrault, Januszewska
be as frequent as editions of fairy tales by the Brothers Grimm or Hans Christian Andersen, yet they are sufficiently noticeable in bookstores and libraries to guarantee Perrault’s popularity. However, few Polish readers realise that the versions of his tales they read in childhood or bought for their own children usually have as little in common with their French original as Tim Burton’s film adaptation of *Alice in Wonderland* has with its own original.

Literary rewritings, abbreviated versions and adaptations have, of course, a very long tradition and in children’s literature they are often considered not only acceptable but also necessary. Fairy tales and fables as source texts are often objects of such free renditions, which also result from their connections with folklore and oral tradition. Even though – in theory – the fairy tale “functions as a highly objective written work, usually in the form of a book,” and its shape is “closed and unchanging” (Lugowska 1981: 33; trans. E.K.), in reality its text status is uncertain, since it is perceived as an adaptation or even “translation” into literary language of an earlier folklore tale, inherently subject to transformation. Such textual “unsteadiness” is partly due to authorial strategies. The Brothers Grimm emphasized that *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (*Children’s and Household Tales*) were “collected” (*gesammelt*), not written by them; and although in the foreword to their first edition they declared, “We tried to present the fairy tales as faithfully as possible. No situation has been added or embellished or changed, because we were anxious not to add our own comparisons or memories to these tales, which are rich in themselves” (cf. Simonides 1989: 30; trans. E.K.), they actually corrected and retouched the gathered material, polished it stylistically and linguistically, combined various versions into one story and compounded them according to their own tastes. What is more, they modified subsequent editions (in their lifetime seven editions came out, the first in 1812 and the final in 1857): they removed and added texts, regrouped them, altered many plot elements and other details (suffice it to say that in the first version of *Snow White* the evil queen was not the protagonist’s stepmother but her actual mother). For instance, the first English translation of *Kindermärchen* by Edgar Taylor was published in 1823, and so was based on the second, 1819, German edition, different from the 1812 version, but also from the final of 1857. Taylor’s version, which introduced many adjustments itself, became highly popular and was frequently reissued; it also provided the basis for translations into other languages. Research