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## A Relayed Translation. Looking for the Source Text of the First Polish Translation of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*

### Abstract

The first Polish translation of the successful Victorian classic *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë was published thirty four years after the original. The novel translated as *Janina* by Emilia Dobrzańska was attached in instalments to a weekly periodical “Tydzień” based in Piotrków Trybunalski. Although the subtitle claimed the story was translated from English, the text of the translation *inter alia* demonstrates a curious preference for French phrases and calques. A close analysis of some features of the translation in comparison to the French translation by Noëmi Lesbazeilles Souvestre dating back to 1854 reveals a striking similarity between the two texts, which can be traced in a variety of contexts explored in this paper. As a result, one may draw the conclusion that the Polish translation was as a matter of fact translated not directly from English, but relayed from French instead. The paper explores the underresearched topic of relay translation, along with mostly negative scholarly attitudes towards this controversial translation method. The aim is to capture some reasons for its occasional use or even a preference for this translation technique in certain circumstances.

Keywords: literary translation, relay translation, indirect translation, *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë.

On 19th September 1880, when the readers of “Tydzień”, a weekly periodical published in Piotrków Trybunalski, perused a new issue of the journal, they found the first instalment of the novel *Janina. Powieść z angielskiego. Przez Curren-Bell* [Janina. A novel from English by Curren-Bell].<sup>1</sup> In fact, the novel was the very first Polish translation of the female Victorian classic Charlotte Brontë, who adopted the male pen name Curren Bell. Published until the end of August 1881, the translation was most probably not even prepared directly from English, contrary to what the subtitle suggested. Upon a close analysis of both the original and the translation, one can notice many patterns and details which indicate that Emilia

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<sup>1</sup> All translations from Polish are mine – D.H.

Dobrzańska, the translator of *Janina*, might have been using a French translation as the source text for her work, in all probability the 1854 version translated from English by Noëmi Lesbazeilles Souvestre. This paper is an attempt to present several indicators pointing to the fact that the first Polish translation of *Jane Eyre* was in reality a relayed translation.

Before endeavouring to identify any evidence supporting this claim, it is essential to understand the nature of this translation method. Relay translation, although it has been a common practice for centuries, has not yet attracted much attention of translato­logists. Defined by *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* as “translation of a translated text (either spoken or written) into a third language”<sup>2</sup>, this type of translation has long raised certain terminological controversies, as it seems there is no established term in professional literature. Martin Ringmar mentions “retranslation”, “indirect translation”, “relay translation” and the less common “chain translation”, “double translation”, “secondary translation”, and “mediated translation”.<sup>3</sup> Not all of these labels always designate the same phenomenon. For instance “retranslation”, while sometimes used to describe relay translation, mostly refers to a new version of an already existing one or more translations of the same original<sup>4</sup>, and as Dollerup stresses, the process implicates the use of only two languages.<sup>5</sup> Another example is “indirect translation”, which Ernst-August Gutt describes as “involv[ing] looser degrees of faithfulness”, as opposed to “direct translation”, which corresponds “to the idea that translation should convey the same meaning as the original, including stylistic effects”<sup>6</sup>, while Gideon Toury, when discussing the directness of translation, defines “indirect translation” as “translating from languages other than the ultimate source language”.<sup>7</sup> Dollerup understands this term in a manner similar to Toury, highlighting the fact that indirect translation entails the use of three languages; however, he further distinguishes between a relatively rare instance of “indirect translation” when the middle translation from source language into the intermediary language is created for the sole reason of creating the final translation in the target language, and “relayed translation”, which also involves three languages and occurs in a situation when the middle translation, or the “relay”, is prepared for an actual audience, and the “relayed” translation, which uses the “relay” instead

<sup>2</sup> J.St. Andre, *Relay Translation* [in:] M. Baker, G. Saldanha, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, London–New York 2008, p. 230–231, here p. 230.

<sup>3</sup> M. Ringmar, “Roundabout Routes”. *Some Remarks on Indirect Translations* [in:] F. Mus, *Selected Papers of the CETRA Research Seminar in Translation Studies 2006*, Leuven 2006, <https://www.arts.kuleuven.be/cetra/papers/files/ringmar.pdf> (access: 16.02.2016), p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> See Y. Gambier, *Working with Relay: An Old Story and a New Challenge* [in:] L.P. González, *Speaking in Tongues: Language across Contexts and Users*, Valencia 2003, p. 47–66, here p. 49.

<sup>5</sup> See C. Dollerup, *Relay in Translation* [in:] D. Yankova, *Cross-linguistic Interaction: Translation, Contrastive and cognitive Studies. Liber Amicorum in Honour of Prof. Bistra Alexieva Published on the Occasion of Her Eightieth Birthday*, Sophia 2014, [http://bwpl.unibuc.ro/uploads\\_ro/762/BWPL\\_2008\\_2\\_Dollerup.pdf](http://bwpl.unibuc.ro/uploads_ro/762/BWPL_2008_2_Dollerup.pdf) (access: 16.02.2016), p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> E-A. Gutt, *Translation and Relevance. University College London Doctoral Dissertation*, London 1989, <http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1317504/1/241978.pdf> (access: 16.02.2016), p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> G. Toury, *The Nature and Role of Norms in Translation* [in:] L. Venuti, *The Translation Studies Reader*, London 2000, p. 202.

of the source text.<sup>8</sup> In this paper, the less ambiguous but still popular term “relay translation” is preferred in the same sense Dollerup understands it.

Translation based on another translation is not perceived as an esteemed subject to tackle in general, being a derivative of an already derivative form.<sup>9</sup> That is why this kind of translation is sometimes met with disdain or even contempt, as it may be more prone to inaccuracy due to its nature.<sup>10</sup> Especially in literary translation, relay translation as a method may be stigmatised as manipulative and damaging. Dinda L. Gorfée mentions relay translation as one of the examples of situations “in which the source text has been modified, even mutilated, peripherally or almost beyond recognition”.<sup>11</sup> As a result, many critics and scholars tend to be rather negatively biased towards relay translation, and consequently ignore or comment only briefly upon the subject in many translation handbooks.<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, it is relatively easy to indicate the reasons why this type of translation is considered a suitable translation method. First of all, Bible translation history demonstrates that relay translation is likely to occur in such historical contexts when the original source text is hard to reach, or otherwise not obtainable. Some portions of the original have not been preserved till present day, such as the Aramaic text of New Testament, and furthermore, not all translators in the past had access and skills required for direct translation; as a result, many Bible translations used relay translations in various languages as the source.<sup>13</sup> Secondly, the instance of the most popular Bible translation, the *Vulgata*, which was authenticated as the official Bible translation to Latin during the Council of Trent in the 16th century and functioned as the primary sacred text used by the Church for several centuries, shows how a successful translation can in some way overshadow the original to the extent of serving as the legitimate source material for further translations.<sup>14</sup> Thirdly, it is also preferred due to economical or practical reasons when an exotic language pair is involved, and it is difficult to find a translator with the relevant skills to translate from a given language.<sup>15</sup> Finally, the prestige and popularity of certain languages and cultures at a given point in time tend to influence the choice of relay translation as a technique. The more popular a language, the more translations are relayed through it.

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<sup>8</sup> See C. Dollerup, *Relay...*, p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> See J.St. Andre, op. cit., p. 230.

<sup>10</sup> See C. Dollerup, *Tales and Translation: The Grimm Tales from Pan-Germanic Narratives to Shared International Fairytales*, Amsterdam 1999, p. 300.

<sup>11</sup> D.L. Gorfée, *On Translating Signs: Exploring Text and Semio-translation*, Amsterdam–New York 2004, p. 113.

<sup>12</sup> See M. Ringmar, op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> See C. Dollerup, ‘Relay’ and ‘Support’ Translations [in:] A. Chesterman et al., *Translation in Context: Selected Papers from the EST Congress, Granada 1998*, Amsterdam 1998, p. 17–26, here p. 21.

<sup>14</sup> See M. Majewski, *Jak przekłady zmieniają Biblię. O teorii i praktyce tłumaczenia Pisma Świętego*, Kraków 2013, <https://upjp2.academia.edu/MarcinMajewski> (access: 16.02.2016), p. 23.

<sup>15</sup> See C. Dollerup, *Relay...*, p. 8.

If [indirect translation] is viewed in the light of language/translation hierarchies it can be assumed that the [source language] and the [target language] are small/dominated languages, whereas the [mediating language] is a dominant language [...]. In (western) Europe the dominating language and mediating language *de préférence* was for a long time French, which has since increasingly been replaced by English during the twentieth century.<sup>16</sup>

The first, third and fourth reason behind relay translation may have been significant for Emilia Dobrzańska, the translator of *Jane Eyre* into Polish. The original English novel by Charlotte Brontë might have been out of reach for the Polish translator, especially due to the difficult historical point in time in the partitioned Poland. Piotrków Trybunalski, where the translation was created, had been a part of the partition called the Kingdom of Poland, an artificial entity occupied by the Russian Empire since 1815. It has been confirmed by Emilia Dobrzańska's great-grandson, however, that there was a link with the British Empire, namely, the translator had cousins living on the British Isles.<sup>17</sup>

As far as the third reason is concerned, that is, the economical or practical causes which might have influenced the choice of relay translation as a method, English indeed was less common than French at the time. This is linked closely with the fourth reason, namely the popularity of a language. As it has already been mentioned, in the 19th century French was the most fashionable and well-known language in Europe, and a relay for many translations. It is widely known that Dobrzańska knew French very well: as a small child, she had a French governess, and in one of her mother's letters to family it is reported that the then 8-year-old girl "runs all over the house and prattles in French".<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, it is well known that as an adult, she was a French teacher herself at Krzywickie sisters' *pensja* (boarding school) for girls in Piotrków Trybunalski.<sup>19</sup> "Tydzień" relied heavily on translation from French, and probably most of Emilia Dobrzańska's translations published in this periodical, leaving aside the case of *Janina*, were translated from French. Thanks to Dobrzańska's great-grandson it was possible to compile a comprehensive list of her translations apart from *Janina*. Thanks to the list it can be surmised that she translated mainly from French, and towards the end of her translating career, she also translated two German novels. *Janina*, Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* (published in Warsaw in 1882) and an obscure short story *Dinky* by Mary Brainerd (published in "Tydzień" in 1885) are the only translations prepared supposedly from English. Without a close analysis one cannot decide if the latter two were in fact relayed translations. Nevertheless, it has been confirmed that Dobrzańska knew English, but it is not certain to what extent and if she would be able to translate a complex novel from this language.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> M. Ringmar, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>17</sup> Private correspondence with Krzysztof Rondo, Emilia Dobrzańska's great-grandson.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> See Z. Bartzczak, *Biuletyn okolicznościowy wydany z okazji 150-lecia istnienia II Liceum Ogólnokształcącego im. Marii Skłodowskiej-Curie w Piotrkowie Trybunalskim*, Piotrków Trybunalski 2006, p. 9–10, [http://lo2piotrkow.eu/data/\\_uploaded/image/150\\_lat\\_biuletyn.pdf](http://lo2piotrkow.eu/data/_uploaded/image/150_lat_biuletyn.pdf) (access: 16.02.2016), here p. 9.

<sup>20</sup> Private communication with Krzysztof Rondo.

Although the circumstances of the translation as well as personal preferences and skills of the translator seem to allow room for the hypothesis that *Janina* was in fact translated via French to Polish, these are not sufficient to definitely exclude the possibility that the novel was after all translated directly from English. There is, however, overwhelming contrary evidence within the body of the translation itself, which can be identified thanks to a close analysis of the text in comparison to the original novel.

There are several examples of French lexis retained in proper names of the Polish translation, while absent from the English original. The most striking illustration of this practice is the town Hay, which is translated as “*La Hay*”.<sup>21</sup> The same issue is visible in the translation of Mr Rochester’s dog’s name, Pilot, which in the Polish version appears in the French spelling “*Pilote*” (Dobrzańska 78, 86, 91, 103, 112, 135, 145, 426). Furthermore, the translator exhibited a preference for some words of French origin, which probably would not have been chosen while translating from English. An instance of such a word is “*elewka*” (Dobrzańska 35, 36, 41, 47, 54, 57, 60, 62), which is a rare term of French origin for a female student or a pupil. Normally, the word *uczennica* would have been used to describe Mr Rochester’s ward Adèle or the girls in Lowood. Another such example is “*infirmeryia*” (Dobrzańska 41), a word used to indicate the place where the ill students were laid, which is an old-fashioned calque of a French term “*infirmierie*”, although in the original the place was referred to as a “sick-room” or a “hospital”.<sup>22</sup> When drafting her advertisement to be published in a newspaper, the original *Jane Eyre* specifies her address as: “J. E., Post-office, Lowton, — shire” (Brontë 75). The Polish *Janina* phrases it differently: “*J. E. Poste restante, Lowton, hrabstwo N...*” (Dobrzańska 47). It is also possible, however, that these words and expressions were used by the translator because they were popular in literary Polish at that time, which was under a considerable influence of French.

One of the most decisive arguments in favour of the hypothesis proposed in this paper is related to the fact that all lines of dialogue which in the original were specifically written in French due to the plot of the novel (the little Parisienne, Adèle, initially does not speak English at all), were translated into Polish mostly without any suggestion or note that they were uttered in a different language. For example, in *Jane Eyre*, Adèle announces in French that the dinner is served: “*Mesdames, vous êtes servies!*” adding, “*J’ai bien faim, moi!*” (Brontë 93), while in *Janina*, she expresses the same in Polish with no hint from the narrator that she is speaking in French: “— *Obiad na stole! — zawołala — a mnie się tak chce jeść!*” (Dobrzańska 71). The same situation is repeated when she comes back

<sup>21</sup> [Ch. Brontë] C. Bell, *Janina. Powieść z angielskiego* [przełożyła E. Dobrzańska], „Tydzień” 1880, 38–1881, 35, p. 62, 75, 76, 80, 84, 86, 95, 96 (subsequently cited in the body of the text as: Dobrzańska). The French definite article is clearly added by Dobrzańska, as it is not used in the French translation, see [Ch. Brontë] C. Bell, *Jane Eyre ou les memoires d’une institutrice. Traduit par Mme Lesbazeilles Souvestre*, Paris 1854, [https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Jane\\_Eyre](https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Jane_Eyre) [1890 edition] (access: 16.02.2016), p. 110 (subsequently cited in the body of the text as: Lesbazeilles Souvestre).

<sup>22</sup> Ch. Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. London 1999, p. 65 (subsequently cited in the body of the text as: Brontë).

dressed in a gown she received as a gift from Mr Rochester: “*Est-ce que ma robe va bien?*” cried she, bounding forwards; ‘*et mes souliers? et mes bas? Tenez, je crois que je vais danser!*’” (Brontë 122), all her lines are written in French, while in the translation there is no signal that she is using a different language: “— *A co, czy dobrze leży? — wołała już w progę — nie wytrwam, muszę potaćńczyć trochę*” (Dobrzańska 124). On the one hand, if the translator was using the English original, which does not even provide translations of the French lines in footnotes, she would have probably left most of the French utterances unchanged, as it was expected of an educated person at this time to know this language. On the other hand, she might have intentionally decided to translate all French lines due to the fact that the serialized novels attached to the periodical were mainly aimed at mass audience; “Tydzień” pandered to the tastes of a popular reader by low-brow, pulp, sentimental or spine-chilling publications.<sup>23</sup> This is, however, understandable if she was in fact translating from a French version where the originally French dialogues were not marked in any way, as it is going to be shown further below.

As previously mentioned, the most probable source text of Emilia Dobrzańska’s translation is the first French translation of *Jane Eyre* by Noëmi Lesbazeilles Souvestre dating back to 1854. It was surely accessible in Poland by 1880, when first instalments of *Janina* were being published in “Tydzień”. Already at first glance one can instantly recognise a small detail which Noëmi Lesbazeilles Souvestre’s translation has in common with Dobrzańska’s rendition, namely, a comment from the translator at the very beginning of each text. Although the sole fact that both translations open with a note from the translator does not seem uncommon, and the issues raised in both texts are rather typical, the similarity in structure is rather striking. It can be easily noted that both comment on their translation methods, use similar arguments by emphasising Charlotte Brontë’s portrayal of human character – “*l’étude profonde des caractères*” (Lesbazeilles Souvestre i) in Noëmi Lesbazeilles Souvestre’s foreword and “*napisane z taką znajomością charakterów ludzkich*” (Dobrzańska 1) in Dobrzańska’s – and both suggest that Currer Bell is a prominent woman writer’s pseudonym.

In fact, there are many instances when a close comparative analysis of the two texts clearly indicates that the Polish translator could have been using this particular French translation as the base for her translation, as noted in my previous examples. Additionally, there is only one fragment of *Janina* in which it is stressed that Adèle is using French and it surprisingly closely mirrors its equivalent in Lesbazeilles Souvestre’s translation: Polish “— *Czy to moja nauczycielka — spytała piastunki po francuzku*” (Dobrzańska 63) is a word for word rendition of the French “‘*C’est là ma gouvernante ?*’ dit-elle en français à sa nourrice” (Lesbazeilles Souvestre 100). Meanwhile, the original does not mention French, but uses it instead: “‘*C’est la ma gouvernante!*’ said she, pointing to me” (Brontë 87).

<sup>23</sup> See S. Frycie, “Tydzień” piotrkowski jako czasopismo społeczno-literackie, “Rocznik Naukowo-Dydaktyczny Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej w Rzeszowie. Nauki Humanistyczne” 1964, 1, p. 37–141, here p. 132–133.

Furthermore, upon closer examination, one of the most notable errors identified in *Janina*, which I previously attributed to the translator's misunderstanding of the original, seems to originate from the French translation.<sup>24</sup> In Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Adèle reveals that her mother died: "I lived long ago with mama; but she is gone to the Holy Virgin" (Brontë 88). Bearing this in mind, it is quite bewildering to read in the Polish version that Adela's mother immigrated to Virginia in America, leaving her daughter behind: "*Potem mama pojechała do Wirginii, a mnie zostawiła u państwa Frederic*" (Dobrzańska 64). It all becomes clear when one reads the French rendition of this fragment and discovers the same is true of Mme Souvestre's Celine Varens: "*J'ai longtemps demeuré avec maman; mais elle est partie pour la Virginie*" (Lesbazeilles Souvestre 101). It also seems striking that although throughout the whole Polish translation the currency used is the pound, at one point in *Janina* a five-franc note is mentioned (Dobrzańska 457).

Moreover, one can also notice some changes in the tone of voice of some characters in the Polish translation in comparison to the original, which mirror parallel changes in the French translation. For instance, in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Adèle thanked Mr Rochester for a present and "then rising, she added" a comment that her mother used to thank him in quite the same words (Brontë 122). In the Polish translation, however, Adela in this fragment exclaimed: "*zawołala*" (Dobrzańska 124); the same can be observed in the French rendition: "*s'écria-t-elle*" (Lesbazeilles Souvestre 139). Another, perhaps a more convincing example, is the use of the same phrase, namely, calling in a loud voice. It was used both in the French: "*elle demande un cadeau à grands cris*" (Lesbazeilles Souvestre 121) and in the Polish translation: "*wielkim głosem dopomina się o gościniec*" (Dobrzańska 94), while in the original, Mr Rochester observed that Adèle "demands a 'cadeau' clamorously" (Brontë 105). Finally, there are also some more subtle translational shifts throughout *Janina* which may be traced to its probable relayed status. Rachel Williams, when analysing Lesbazeilles Souvestre's translation of *Jane Eyre*, noticed the following:

[...] while Noëmi Lesbazeilles Souvestre did not change the plot or major events in any substantive manner, she did enact subtle changes upon Brontë's text in order to make the character of Jane Eyre conform more closely to the rules of feminine behavior; her Jane is thus less angry, less passionate, more timid and more concerned with outward perceptions of her behavior [...]. By altering Jane's speech and actions, Lesbazeilles Souvestre succeeds in muting her passion and in large part suppressing Jane's actions or feelings that could be interpreted as improper by her readership.<sup>25</sup>

Some considerable changes in the protagonist's character can also be discerned when analysing *Janina*. The governess in the Polish version has been proven to have low self-esteem, be less sensible, sharp-minded, refined and educated, as well as more naive, superficial and impulsive than Jane in the original. It can be observed that she is in love with Mr Rochester, and she is more sentimental

<sup>24</sup> See D. Hadyna, *A Controversial Translation Justified by the Context: Janina, the First Polish Version of Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre*, Kraków 2013 (unpublished MA Thesis), p. 23.

<sup>25</sup> R. Williams, *The Reconstruction of Feminine Values in Mme Lesbazeille-Souvestre's 1854 translation of Jane Eyre*, "Translation and Interpreting Studies", 2012, vol. 7,1, p. 19–33, here p. 27.

in expressing her affections.<sup>26</sup> It would seem, therefore, that Jane's personality, intellect and temperament in both versions were adjusted to the prevalent standards of feminine behaviour by means of slight changes in translation. The above similarity does not necessarily imply that the changes in Lesbazeilles Souvestre's rendering of the text influenced Dobrzańska's translation. However, a closer comparative analysis of the two texts might reveal a connection between the two versions of Jane Eyre's story.

Williams exemplifies her claims by the examination of one particularly important scene, namely, the conversation between Jane and Mr Rochester in the garden, when he asserts his plans for marriage, and the governess famously explodes into a passionate monologue. Some of several passages examined are translated into Polish in the abridged *Janina* and exhibit closer resemblance to its French equivalents. One such fragment in the original reads: "I have spoken my mind, and can go anywhere now" (Brontë 222); in this line Jane suggests that now, after she revealed her thoughts and "speech has set her free from her emotions"<sup>27</sup>, she is able to part with Mr Rochester. The French translation, however, removes the notion of freeing properties of speech: "*je me suis rendue maîtresse de moi, maintenant je puis aller n'importe où*" (Lesbazeilles Souvestre 36) translates to "I have mastered myself, now I can go anywhere".<sup>28</sup> What seems exceptionally telling, the same fragment in the Polish translation, "*Zapanowałam nad sobą — i dziś, wszystko mi już jedno, gdzie pojadę*" (Dobrzańska 275) has the same implications as its French equivalent.

Taking into consideration all of the above examples and tendencies described, it is safe to conclude that the proposed hypothesis regarding Emilia Dobrzańska's translation seems to be correct. Although it might not be possible to establish with all certainty the exact level of Dobrzańska's fluency in English, it seems this piece of information is not essential to confirm that *Janina* was in fact relayed from French. However, the hypothesis cannot be fully proved until a thorough comparative examination of both translations briefly analysed in this paper is conducted. Still, as relay translation in general is an underresearched and undervalued area of translation studies, such an investigation could open the route to further debate regarding the opaque nature of relayed translations of literature in the 19th century, the role of the French language in distributing foreign works in partitioned Poland, and the lax approach to copyrights in the past.

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<sup>26</sup> See D. Hadyna, op. cit. p. 52–57.

<sup>27</sup> R. Williams, op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.



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