

Michał Borodo

Uniwersytet Kazimierza Wielkiego, Bydgoszcz
michal.borodo@ukw.edu.pl

The Sorceress Betrayed: Comics crossing cultures and changing accuracy standards

1. Comics crossing cultures

Although there are exceptions to this rule, comic books generally have a low cultural status, which appears to be reflected in the relatively scarce research on this subject within translation studies. Despite the fact that the existing English language publications [notably by Kaindl, 1999, 2004; Grun, Dollerup, 2003; D'Arcangelo, Zanettin, 2004; Zanettin, 2008; Celotti, 2008; Rota, 2008] as well as several Polish articles [Chantry, 2002; Skibińska, 2005; Pindel, 2005] are noteworthy contributions towards a more complete understanding of the nature of translating comics, there still remains much to be discovered within this area.

Crossing international borders for more than a century, comic books exhibit numerous differences with regard to their cultural status and reputation. Originally created in the USA at the end of the 19th century, in the 1930s and 1940s they enjoyed their Golden Age in America, from which they were exported to various corners of the globe. The USA continues to be a significant 'exporting' culture today, though over time several rival comic book traditions emerged, including e.g. the Japanese tradition or the Franco-Belgian tradition. In Japan, from which manga comic books have been similarly exported to other cultures, comics cherish an extraordinary status in society, with the Japanese comics

industry being the largest in the world and with the number of comics amounting to around 40% of the material published in this country (in comparison with only 3% in the USA, for example) [Zanettin, 2008: 4]. In Francophone countries, comic books also typically enjoy a relatively high cultural status, being regarded as a form of artistic expression, or ‘the Ninth Art’, whereas in Britain, for instance, they are mainly perceived as a less refined form of entertainment, primarily targeted at younger readers [Zanettin, 2008: 5], a tendency which is observable in present-day Poland as well.

It is not only the cultural status of comics, however, but also comic book formats that differ across cultures, which may concern their size, the use of colours or the reading direction. A typical American comic book, for example, is an action comic published in the form of a stapled booklet, consisting of several dozen pages, printed on low quality paper, with advertisements inside [Zanettin, 2008: 8]. A typical French comic book is an A4 album consisting of approximately 48-64 pages, printed on good quality paper and sold to a more sophisticated readership, whereas a standard Japanese comic book is published in a black-and-white, pocket-size format, contains 300-400 pages in addition to being read from right to left [Zanettin, 2008: 8].

The aforementioned differences may sometimes have implications for translation. Being anchored in particular cultural traditions, comics may undergo a number of verbal as well as visual transformations as they cross borders. On the visual plane, the translation of a comic book may sometimes involve redrawing certain aspects of comic book panels or even replacing them with new panels, due to dissimilar cultural conventions, copyright issues, censorship and the political situation [see e.g. Kaindl, 1999; D’Arcangelo, Zanettin, 2004; Zanettin, 2008]. More frequently, various transformations will be observable on the verbal plane. They may include altering comic book titles, adapting proper names, assimilating or omitting original cultural references, as well as modifying text length, which might result in producing a considerably condensed translation. Such textual modifications will be illustrated further on in the analytical part of the present study.

The focus of this article is on the first album of *Thorgal*, a Franco-Belgian comic book series illustrated by the Polish graphic artist Grzegorz Rosiński and written by Jean Van Hamme, which enjoys a special

status in Polish culture. Combining elements of fantasy, science-fiction and Norse mythology, the series tells the story of Thorgal Aegirsson, a courageous and righteous skald raised among Vikings. At the time when it was first published, the series was a novelty and a revelation, a text considerably differing from the Polish comic books available at the time, usually containing humorous content or propaganda. Thirty years after its creation, the series continues to be published, enjoying great popularity among adult and younger readers alike.

The comic book in focus, *La magicienne trahie*, was accurately rendered into Polish under the title *Zdradzona czarodziejka* [The sorceress betrayed] and there exist as many as three Polish translations of this album, published in 1978, 1988, and 2004. This appears to be unusual in the Polish context. Although in general retranslations of comics are not uncommon [e.g. Zanettin, 2008], they do not necessarily seem to be so common in Poland, where another comic book released in three subsequent translations would probably be difficult to find. The aim of the article is to establish the nature of the discrepancies between the three translations published in Poland at three different moments in time. Our initial hypothesis, which will be tested in this paper, is that due to the series becoming increasingly well-known and well-established the subsequent retranslations of the album will exhibit a higher degree of linguistic and cultural fidelity with regard to the original text. Having thus briefly described here the significance of the cultural specificity of comics for the translation process, we will now concentrate on the contextual information concerning the publication of the three Polish translations.

2. The publishing history

The original text of *La magicienne trahie* was initially released in installments in the popular Belgian comics magazine *Tintin* in 1977 and was subsequently published for Polish readers in 1978 in five installments in the Polish comic book magazine *Relax* (the fifth of these installments was published in 1979). This form of publication had consequences for how the story was told, as each of the five parts constituted a coherent narrative encouraging prospective readers to purchase the following issue of the magazine to read on. The Polish installments were preceded by a brief summary of the content of the previous

installment and each of the five parts was also given a title (namely *Syn burzy*, *Pierścienie Frei*, *Święto Joll*, *Baaldowie* and *Drakkar z lodu*). Interestingly, while we know the name of the publishing house of the Polish magazine (Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza), the name of the Polish translator of the 1978 installments remains anonymous. The five issues of *Relax* in which the Polish translation of *La magicienne trahie* originally appeared merely contain the information about the magazine being edited by the team (“redaguje zespół”), but no reference to the translator(s) is made.

In 1980, *La magicienne trahie* was republished in French by Editions du Lombard, this time in the form of a comic book album. The first Polish translation in the form of a complete album appeared only after an interval of several years, in 1988. It was again issued by Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, the same publisher that was responsible for publishing the Polish *Relax* magazine in the late 1970s and since the publisher had not changed it would be somewhat logical to expect that the same translation that had previously appeared in *Relax* could potentially be republished. This was not the case, however. As will be further demonstrated, these two translations differ considerably, and thus the possibility of the anonymous translator from the late 1970s and the Polish translator from the late 1980s, Ewa Nowak, being one and the same person may therefore be excluded.

Around fifteen years after the publication of the second translation, *La magicienne trahie* was retranslated again by another Polish translator, Wojciech Birek, and released by Egmont Polska publishing house, which had in the meantime taken over the publication of the whole series. Published in 2004, this was already the third Polish translation. Thus, confronted with one comic book story, two publishers, and three different versions, we will investigate the major discrepancies between the Polish translations. Prior to this, however, let us present the research methodology applied in this study.

3. The research method

The preliminary analysis of the three translations revealed that some of the speech balloons differ in terms of text length and textual density. Therefore, prior to the analysis proper a quantitative analysis was

conducted, which involved a meticulous word count of each of the three Polish translations. This analysis revealed that the first translation consisted of 2213 words, the second one of 1877 words, while the third translation contained 2191 words. These initial results were most surprising. While the graphic layout and the number of pages in all three translations were the same, significant changes must have clearly taken place on the verbal level in the second Polish version. Why is the 'middle' translation considerably shorter than the other two and what effect did this textual transformation have on the integrity and semantic content of the album are some of the questions we will return to in the final part of the article.

Following the quantitative analysis, two theoretical frameworks were adopted as a methodological basis. First of all, with regard to the treatment of cultural specificity, Aixela's (1996) categorization of Culture Specific Items (CSIs) was employed. This typology distinguishes between two major orientations, i.e. conservation and substitution, which are further divided into several subcategories. The conservation strategies are thus divided into: *repetition* (when the original reference is retained in translation), *orthographic adaptation* (including transcription and transliteration), *linguistic (non-cultural) adaptation* (i.e. using a well-established target term which is nevertheless perceived as belonging to the source culture), *extratextual gloss* (resorting to a footnote, endnote, glossary, etc.) and *intratextual gloss* (incorporating explanation within running text) [Aixela, 1996: 61-62]. With regard to the substitution strategies, Aixela [1996: 63-64] distinguishes: *synonymy* (employed to avoid repetition of the same cultural reference), *limited universalization* (i.e. replacing the original CSI with another reference anchored in the source culture but more easily recognizable for the target reader), *absolute universalization* (which involves the deletion of the original cultural reference and replacing it with a culturally neutral one), *naturalization* (i.e. substituting the original reference with a target culture reference), *deletion* (when a CSI is omitted in translation), as well as *autonomous creation* (i.e. employing a cultural reference absent from the original). These categories will be used in the following section while discussing the treatment of CSIs in the three Polish translations.

Secondly, due to the fact that in places significant differences are observable between the three translations with regard to text length, it was

decided that the use of a complementary theoretical framework would be advisable, which would allow to categorize the various examples of omission and condensation appearing in the 1988 translation. As comics, similarly to audiovisual productions, may be referred to as multimodal texts, in which meaning is simultaneously communicated on the verbal and the visual planes, we will be referring to a theoretical framework originally proposed by Bogucki [2004] in the context of subtitling. The translation procedures of interest in the present analysis primarily include those on the condensation end of Bogucki's continuum, such as: *decimation* (i.e. omission of substantial parts of the original text, in which the degree of textual reduction is the greatest), *condensation* (which refers to a lower degree of textual omission, being further subdivided into several subtypes, such as condensation of repetitions, qualifiers, connectives, detailed content, complex syntax or phatic expressions) or *referencing* (the procedure which involves replacing nominal expressions with pronouns) [2004: 133-145]. It is these two theoretical frameworks, one concerned with the treatment of cultural specificity, the other with textual reduction in the context of multimodal texts, that constitute the two pillars on which the following analysis will be based.

4. Analysis of the Polish translations

The aim of this section is to investigate the three Polish translations of the album *La magicienne trahie*, focusing on the degree of their linguistic and cultural fidelity towards the original text. The author's motivation behind the selection of these particular comic book panels for analysis was above all to present the most characteristic examples illustrating the strategy adopted by Ewa Nowak, the translator of the second Polish version of the album. As they are mostly concerned with textual condensation and cultural specificity, these panels capture the essence of the approach observable in the 1988 translation. In the analysis below, we will initially present the visual content of a specific comic book panel in order to provide the necessary contextual information. Then, the appropriate passage from the comic book panel will be followed by its three Polish translations. Finally, we will comment on the discrepancies between the original and the translations as well as point out some of their most distinct characteristics.

Before discussing particular examples, however, let us briefly summarize the content of the album in focus. *La magicienne trahie* opens with the main protagonist Thorgal being chained to a sea rock by Gandalf-the-mad, the king of the Vikings of the North. The tide is just starting to rise and Thorgal is about to die within an hour or so, a punishment for falling in love with Aaricia, Gandalf-the-mad's daughter. Miraculously, he is rescued by the mysterious, red-haired queen Slivia, who has an old score to settle with Gandalf. Thorgal and Slivia then join forces and capture their mutual foe Gandalf, who is now at Slivia's mercy. In the turbulent journey that follows, Thorgal saves Gandalf's life twice, for the second time in the concluding part of the comic, which leaves the reader with the impression that the two may possibly reconcile in the subsequent album of the series.

4.1. Fox or raven?

The first panels under analysis (See Figures 1 and 2) present Thorgal, chained to a rock on the seashore at the time when the tide is beginning to rise. In freezing water, Thorgal is on his knees and bent forward, with his opponent, Gandalf-the-mad, standing next to him and insulting him verbally. Thorgal's reply to these insults is the following:

THE 1977 ORIGINAL:

Gandalf-le-**fou**, tu n'es pas seulement **fou**, bête et cruel [...]
[...] tu es aussi **plus fourbe que le corbeau** et plus lâche qu'un lièvre
bancal!

[Rosiński, Van Hamme, 1984: 3]

THE 1978 TRANSLATION:

Gandalfie **Szalony**, jesteś nie tylko **szalony**, głupi i okrutny [...]
[...] **ty jesteś jeszcze większym szelmą niż kruk** i większym tchórzem niż
kulawy zając!

(Rosiński, Van Hamme, 1978a: unpaginated)

THE 1988 TRANSLATION:

Gandalfie **Szalony**, **tyś** nie tylko zły i okrutny [...]
[...] **aleś gorszy od lisa** i tchórzliwszy niż kulawy zając!

(Rosiński, Van Hamme, 1988: 3)

THE 2004 TRANSLATION:

Gandalfie **Szalony**, jesteś nie tylko **szalony**, zły i okrutny [...]
 [...] **jesteś także bardziej podstępny od kruka** i tchórzliwszy od kulawego zająca!

(Rosiński, Van Hamme, 2004: unpaginated)



Figure 1. “Thorgal. Syn burzy” [1978a: unpaginated], published by © Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza



Figure 2. Zdradzona czarodziejka [1988: 3], published by © Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza

Out of the three passages presented above, it is the 1988 translation which clearly differs from the original with regard to length and accuracy. Perhaps the least noteworthy of the textual transformations

noticeable in this translation appears to be the omission of the adjective *fou* [mad], which already constitutes part of the addressed protagonist's name (Gandalf-le-*fou*). This omission, therefore, does not seem to result in a significant loss of meaning.

An instance of textual transformation which does result in meaning loss appears in the second line of the 1988 translation and concerns the expression *plus fourbe que le corbeau* [more deceitful than a raven]. The raven has a special status in Norse mythology. It is associated with Odin, who is sometimes depicted with his two ravens, Huginn and Muninn, whose task is to provide the ruler of Asgard with information about what is happening in Midgard, the world inhabited by humans. In the 1988 translation, however, the reference to the raven was replaced with the reference to a fox, certainly a more universal and more easily recognizable symbol of cunning. Thus the expression *plus fourbe que le corbeau* [more deceitful than a raven] was rendered in the 1988 version as *aleś gorszy od lisa* [but you are worse than a fox]. In Aixela's typology this kind of textual transformation falls under the category of absolute universalization, as the translator omitted a foreign reference deciding upon a neutral one.

Finally, it should be noted that the 1988 translation uses the words *tyś* and *aleś*, the result of combining the second person pronoun *ty* [you] and the conjunction *ale* [but] respectively with the ending of the second person singular of the verb *być* [to be]. This has a slightly archaic effect, but also results in greater conciseness in comparison with the other two translations (compare *tyś* with *jesteś nie tylko* as well as *aleś* with *jesteś także*).

In general, occasional archaization, which might not necessarily be undesirable in the text about the Viking Age, seems to be another distinguishing trait of the 1988 translation. This is observable in the consistent use of such phrases as *boś*, *tyś*, *aleś*, *żeś*, the employment of the interjection *nuże* (archaic for *come on!*) [1988: 16, 29], as well as such expressions as *branka* (archaic for a captive woman) [1988: 30] or *woj* (archaic for a knight/warrior). The latter is a particularly interesting instance of partial archaization. Note, for instance, the following Polish renderings of *un guerrier* [warrior] from the original in the translation: *woj-pyszalek* [a conceited warrior] (1988: 8), *nuże dzielni wojowie* [come on, warriors] [1988: 16] or *Byleś wszak Gandalfie wojem dzielnym i walecznym*

[After all you were once a brave and valiant warrior, Gandalf] [1988: 22]. The above expressions do not only appear to be examples of partial archaization but they also have a partly naturalizing (or mildly domesticating, to use Venuti's terminology) effect on the text, to some extent anchoring it in the Polish culture.

4.2. Drakkar or ice boat?

The next comic book panels under analysis present the Viking king Gandalf-the-mad, severely wounded and close to death, who reveals to Thorgal the past actions of Slivia, a proud, red-haired queen of the Island of Frozen Seas, at whose mercy Gandalf currently is. Standing next to him on the seashore and looking at the turbulent waves of the northern sea, Slivia is listening to the following words uttered by the Viking king:

THE 1977 ORIGINAL:

Depuis des siècles, **sur son drakkar de glace**, elle hante nos côtes à la recherche d'esclaves pour ses mines souterraines. Combien d'hommes ont péri là-bas, pour satisfaire [...] (Rosiński, Van Hamme, 1984: 31]

THE 1979 TRANSLATION:

Od wieków **zaczajona na swoim lodowatym drakkarze**, jest postrachem naszych wybrzeży, szukając niewolników do swoich podwodnych lochów. Iluż tam zginęło ludzi, by zaspokoić [...] [Rosiński, Van Hamme, 1979: unpaginated]

THE 1988 TRANSLATION:

Od wieków gnębi nasz kraj, porywa ludzi do robót w swych kopalniach. Iluż tam przez nią zginęło [...] [Rosiński, Van Hamme, 1988: 31]

THE 2004 TRANSLATION:

Od stuleci nawiedza nasze wybrzeża. **Przypływa na lodowym drakkarze**, by łąpać niewolników do swoich kopalni. Iluż ludzi tam zginęło, by zadołować [...] [Rosiński, Van Hamme, 2004: unpaginated]

Refraining from a meticulous analysis of every textual transformation observable in the above passages, we will focus on the most noteworthy modification, which appears in the 1988 translation. Severely

condensed as it is, in Bogucki's terms the 1988 translation may serve as an example of decimation, while according to Aixela's typology the omission of the cultural reference to the drakkar, the Viking longship, may be referred to as an instance of deletion. Even more interestingly, on the subsequent page of the same translation the phrase *drakkar de glace* [ice drakkar] is replaced with the expression *łódź lodowa* [ice boat] [1988: 32], which is in turn an example of absolute universalization in Aixela's classification (See Figures 3 and 4). Thus, instead of being retained in translation, or explicated with an extratextual gloss, this cultural reference was first omitted and was replaced on the next page with a culturally neutral item, which resulted in certain degree of cultural impoverishment.



Figure 3. "Thorgal. Drakkar z lodu" [1979: unpaginated], published by © Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza



Figure 4. *Zdradzona czarodziejka* [1988: 32], published by © Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza

4.3. Aegir, the sea giant



Figure 5. “Thorgal. Syn burzy”
[1978a: unpaginated],
published by © Krajowa
Agencja Wydawnicza



Figure 6. Zdradzona
czarodziejka [1988: 7],
published by © Krajowa
Agencja Wydawnicza

The comic book panel analyzed in this section (See Figures 5 and 6), presents Slivia, a mysterious queen of the Island of Frozen Seas, who is about to rescue Thorgal, chained to a sacrificial rock on the seashore. Slivia addresses Thorgal in the following words:

THE 1977 ORIGINAL:

Thorgal le scalde... Nul ne sait d’où tu viens, pas même toi. Mais **on te prétend fils d’Aegir, le géant qui règne sous la mer** [...] [Rosiński, Van Hamme, 1984: 7]

THE 1978 TRANSLATION:

Thorgal skald... Nikt nie wie, skąd przybywasz, nawet ty sam, ale **mówią, że jesteś synem Aegira, olbrzymia, który żyje pod wodami morza** [...] [Rosiński, Van Hamme, 1978a: unpaginated]

THE 1988 TRANSLATION:

Thorgal-skald. Nikt nie wie skąd jesteś, ale **mówią, żeś synem Aegira-olbrzyma, władcy głębi mórz**. [Rosiński, Van Hamme, 1988: 7]

THE 2004 TRANSLATION:

Thorgal skald... Nikt, nawet ty sam, nie wie, skąd pochodzisz. Ale **nazywają cię synem Aegira, olbrzyma, który panuje w głębinach morza** [...] (Rosiński, Van Hamme, 2004: unpaginated]

In the above, several differences may be noticed between the 1988 version and the other two Polish translations particularly with regard to text conciseness. For example, the 1988 translation omits the insertion *pas même toi* [not even yourself], and contains the shortened form *żeś*, the result of combining the connective *że* [that] with the ending of the second person singular of the verb *być* [to be]. Another noteworthy example of achieving textual conciseness in the 1988 translation relates to the following passage within the final sentence: “fils d’Aegir, le géant qui règne sous la mer” [son of Aegir, the giant who reigns in the sea]. While the original and the other two translations employ a relative clause here, the 1988 version makes use of a noun string, consisting of six nouns in a row: (1) *synem* (2) *Aegira* (3) *olbrzyma* (4) *władcy* (5) *głębi* (6) *mórz*, in which *Aegir-olbrzym* and *władca głębi mórz* are in the relation of apposition. Thus, modifying the semantic content of the speech balloon in focus only slightly, the translator expressed the original meaning in a more concise way, which is also observable when we compare the number of words used in the three translations, i.e. 22 words in the first translation, 21 in the third one, and only 14 words in the 1988 version.

Though Aegir, the name of the sea giant from Norse mythology, is repeated verbatim in all three versions, this is not the case as regards the treatment of other proper names appearing in the Polish translations. The types of names which appear in the original comic book include a variety of proper names derived from Scandinavian mythology, such as names of gods (Odin, Thor, Aegir, Freyr), place names (Midgard, Niflhel), all of which have established Polish equivalents (e.g. Odyn, Midgard, etc.), as well as names of fictional characters (Gandalf-le-fou, Thorgal, Aaricia, Slive, Herliuf, Baalds, Sharn, Fural). While most of these names are rendered correctly, certain factual errors appear in the earliest two translations. For example, the expression *les anneaux*

de Midgard was translated correctly as *Na pierścienie Midgardu* in the 2004 translation but rendered as *Na pierścienie Midgarda* in the two earlier translations, mistakenly suggesting that the name may refer to a Norse god rather than to the world inhabited by humans. Then, in the Polish translations the phrase *les anneaux de Freyr* [Freyr's rings] is rendered in turn as *pierścienie Frei* (1978b: unpaginated), *obręcze Freyra* (1988: 14) and *pierścienie Freya* (2004: 14), and whereas the latter two are variants of the name of the god Freyr, in the earliest Polish translation this name was for some reason replaced with the name of the Scandinavian goddess Freya. It might also be added that the earliest Polish translation contains naturalizing instances of orthographic adaptation, which relates to the name of the wolf *Sharn*, rendered as *Szarn*, as well as to the thunder god *Thor*, rendered as *Tor*. The most recent translation, on the other hand, may be described as the most accurate one with regard to the treatment of names in translation.

4.4. Time is running out

The next comic book panel (See Figures 7 and 8) to be discussed presents Slivia, kneeling down on the rocky shore of the sea and addressing Thorgal, who is now waist deep in freezing cold water due to the advancing tide:

THE 1977 ORIGINAL:

Dans moins d'une heure, le froid t'aura paralysé. **Dans moins de deux heures**, tu seras **mort**. **Mort** en vain. Moi, je t'offre **la vie**. Et **de cette vie**, je ne te demande qu'une année. Qu'as-tu à perdre Thorgal? [Rosiński, Van Hamme, 1984: 8]

THE 1978 TRANSLATION:

Za godzinę zimno sparaliżuje twe członki. **Za niespełna dwie godziny umrzesz**. **Umrzesz** daremnie. A ja ofiaruję ci **życie**. **I z tego życia** żądam dla siebie tylko jednego roku. Cóż masz do stracenia Thorgalu!? [Rosiński, Van Hamme, 1978a: unpaginated]

THE 1988 TRANSLATION:

Za chwilę zdrętwiejesz z zimna, **później umrzesz** i to na próżno. Ja ofiaruję ci **życie**, a **z niego** biorę tylko rok. Cóż więc tracisz Thorgalu? [Rosiński, Van Hamme, 1988: 8]

THE 2004 TRANSLATION:

Za mniej niż godzinę zeszytniejesz z zimna. **Za niespełna dwie godziny** będziesz **martwy**. **Martwy** i nie pomszczony. Ja zaś ofiarowuję ci **życie**. **A z tego życia** proszę tylko o rok. Co masz do stracenia Thorgalu? [Rosiński, Van Hamme, 2004: unpaginated]



Figure 7. “Thorgal. Syn burzy” [1978a: unpaginated],
published by © Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza



Figure 8. *Zdradzona czarodziejka* [1988: 8],
published by © Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza

The 1988 translation is yet another noteworthy example of textual condensation, this time of repetitions and detailed content. In contrast to the other two translations, the 1988 version condenses and generalizes *Dans moins d'une heure* [in less than an hour] into *za chwilę* [in a moment] and *Dans moins de deux heures* [in less than two hours] into *później* [later], a less precise rendering, which results in a certain degree of semantic loss. Then, the 1988 translation eliminates the repetitions of the words *mort* [dead] and *vie* [life]. Thus, the passage: "In less than two hours you'll **die**. **Die** in vain. And I'm offering you **life**. And of this **life** [...]" from the original was condensed into: "Then you'll die in vain. I'm offering you life. And of it [...]" In the above, the first repetition, of the word *mort*, was deleted, while the second one was condensed through the procedure of referencing. It might be noted that although the elimination of the original repetitions does not result in a semantic loss, the intended original stylistic effect is partly missing, especially if we consider that repeating the words *mort* and *vie* to the man who is chained to a rock and whose life is hanging in the balance additionally dramatizes and emphasizes the seriousness of his situation.

Although, due to space constraints, we only discuss selected condensation procedures employed by the 1988 translator, let us quote below two other examples to further illustrate the discrepancies between the Polish translations in this respect. Compare, for instance, "Czemu taisz swe plany" [1988: 21] with "Dlaczego nic nie mówisz o swoich planach?" [1977: unpaginated] or "Boś za tłusty, Gandalfie Szalony" [1988: 21] with "To dlatego, że stałeś się zbyt gruby, Gandalfie Szalony" [2004: unpaginated]. In light of the examples so far discussed in this article, it is argued that despite the fact that Ewa Nowak's decisions do sometimes result in meaning loss in her 1988 translation, many of her translation choices may be referred to as examples of true virtuosity in textual condensation.

4.5. Through the desolate mountains

To further illustrate the condensation approach observable in the 1988 version, this time in the context of the multimodal nature of the comic book medium, let us quote yet another passage from this translation, a comment made by Thorgal, who is travelling with the queen Slivia

through desolate mountains covered with snow (See Figures 9 and 10). The main protagonist addresses Slivia enquiring about their destination and the aim of the journey.



Figure 9. “Thorgal. Pierścienie Frei” [1978b: unpaginated], published by © Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza



Figure 10. *Zdradzona czarodziejka* [1988: 9], published by © Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza

THE 1977 ORIGINAL:

Arrivés où? Personne ne vit **dans ces montagnes désertes**. Que cherches-tu, femme sans nom? Quel but poursuis-tu? [Rosiński, Van Hamme, 1984: 9]

THE 1978 TRANSLATION:

Na miejscu, gdzie? **W tych bezludnych górach** nie ma żywego ducha. Czego tu szukasz, kobieto bez nazwiska? Jaki ścigasz cel? [Rosiński, Van Hamme, 1978b: unpaginated]

THE 1988 TRANSLATION:

Gdzie zaszliśmy? Nikt **tu** nie mieszka! Czego szukasz kobieto? Do czego dążysz? [Rosiński, Van Hamme, 1988: 9]

THE 2004 TRANSLATION:

Gdzie dotarliśmy? Nikt nie mieszka w **tych opustoszałych górach**. Czego szukasz, kobieto bez imienia? Jaki masz cel? [Rosiński, Van Hamme, 2004: unpaginated]

This time the most noteworthy difference between the 1988 version and the other two Polish translations relates to the treatment of the expression *dans ces montagnes désertes* [in these desolate mountains], which was condensed through the procedure of referencing into the pronoun *tu* [here]. Interestingly, the condensation of the original expression is not necessarily an instance of meaning loss due to the multimodal nature of the comic book, which simultaneously communicates meaning through words and images. In the above example, despite condensation on the verbal plane, the comic book panels in focus invariably present massive, desolate mountains covered with snow. Thus, in the more nuanced, multimodal sense, the loss of meaning is insignificant, as the reader/viewer may infer the original meaning from the visual mode. The impact of the multimodal nature of comics on translators' decisions is, by the way, one of the aspects of comics translation which deserves to be covered in greater detail in a separate publication.

5. Comics, condensation and culture

The major aim of this article was to illustrate the condensation procedures that might be employed in the context of translating comics as well as to investigate the treatment of culture-specific items by the Polish translators. The initial, tentative hypothesis that the subsequent translations will be characterized by a growing linguistic and cultural fidelity with regard to the original text was corroborated only to a limited degree. Out of the three Polish translations, it is the second and not the first translation that is undeniably the most condensed of the three versions. It is also the second version, and not the first Polish translation, that is the most radical in omitting, replacing and naturalizing some of the cultural references. On the other hand, it is the third Polish translation that exhibits the highest degree of linguistic fidelity toward the original text, as was initially hypothesized, and it is similarly the third translation that

may be referred to as the most exact in terms of the translator's treatment of cultural specificity.

Thus the differences in accuracy standards observable in the three Polish translations cannot be explained by merely referring to the chronological order of publishing the subsequent translations and should be related to many other factors, such as the comic book status, the intended addressee, translators' idiosyncratic decisions as well as the dominant translation norms of the day. It may be hypothesized, for instance, that the first, 1978 anonymous translator was not necessarily a professional comic book translator but a member of the editorial team of the Polish *Relax* magazine eager to offer to comic book readers in Poland an ambitious, avant-garde comic book story that surpassed the comic books available on the Polish market at that time. In 2004, at the time of publication of the third translation, the series seemed to enjoy an even greater respect. This time, it was perhaps primarily targeted at older readers and enthusiasts of comic book art who grew up with the series, in addition to being translated by Wojciech Birek, himself an enthusiast of the *Thorgal* series and Grzegorz Rosiński's art.

Finally, in the case of the second Polish translation published in 1988, it might be presumed that it was created by a professional translator, a virtuoso in textual condensation, who nevertheless perceived the original as a text possessing a relatively low cultural status and primarily intended for younger and less refined readers. Such a perspective could have resulted in the adoption of more liberal translation methods and the modification or deletion of some of the original cultural references. It is also possible that the editors and the publisher of the 1988 translation created a set of guidelines for the translator to follow, which could have influenced Ewa Nowak's decisions, though at this point this is difficult to establish due to the fact that the publisher ceased to exist years ago. It may also be noted that the turn of the 1990s, the time when the second Polish translation was released, was the time of an unprecedented boom in the comic book market in Poland. It would therefore be tempting to investigate whether the tendency to condense comic books was more widespread at the time. Answering this question, however, would require further research encompassing a larger sample of translated comic book titles.

Bibliography:

- Aixela, J.F. (1996), "Culture-specific Items in Translation", in: Alvarez, R., Vidal, M.C.A. (ed.), *Translation, Power, Subversion*, Multilingual Matters, Clevedon, pp. 52-78.
- Bogucki, Ł. (2004), *A Relevance Framework for Constraints on Cinema Subtitling*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź.
- Celotti, N. (2008), "The Translator of Comics as a Semiotic Investigator", in: Zanettin, F., (ed.), *Comics in Translation*, St. Jerome, Manchester, pp. 33-49.
- Chantry, X. (2002), "*Schtroumpf vert et schtroumpf* – Awantura w wiosce Smerfów, czyli tłumaczenie belgijskiego sporu językowego na kartach komiksu", *Między oryginałem a przekładem*, 7, pp. 151-159.
- D'Arcangelo, A., Zanettin, F. (2004) "Dylan Dog Goes to the USA: A North-American Translation of an Italian Comic Book Series", *Across Languages and Cultures*, 5, pp. 187-211.
- Grun, M., Dollerup, C. (2003), "'Loss' and 'gain' in comics", *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology*, 11, pp. 197-216.
- Kaindl, K. (1999), "Thump, Whizz, Poom: A Framework for the Study of Comics under Translation", *Target*, 11, pp. 263-288.
- Kaindl, K. (2004), "Multimodality in the translation of humour in comics", in: Ventola, E., Charles, C. & Kaltenbacher, M. (ed.) (2004), *Perspectives on Multimodality*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam, pp. 173-192.
- Pindel, T. (2005), "Tłumacz scenarzystą – *Mafalda* po polsku. Kilka uwag o przekładzie komiksu", *Między oryginałem a przekładem*, 10, pp. 113-119.
- Rosiński, G., Van Hamme, J. (1984), *La magicienne trahie*, Editions du Lombar, Bruxelles.
- Rosiński, G., Van Hamme, J. (1978a), "Thorgal. Syn burzy", *Relax. Magazyn opowieści rysunkowych*, 19, Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, Warszawa, unpaginated.
- Rosiński, G., Van Hamme, J. (1978b), "Thorgal. Pierścienie Frei", *Relax. Magazyn opowieści rysunkowych*, 20, Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, Warszawa, unpaginated.
- Rosiński, G., Van Hamme, J. (1979), "Thorgal. Drakkar z lodu", *Relax. Magazyn opowieści rysunkowych*, 23, Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, Warszawa, unpaginated.

- Rosiński, G., Van Hamme, J. (1988), *Zdradzona czarodziejka*, Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, Warszawa.
- Rosiński, G., Van Hamme, J. (2004), *Zdradzona czarodziejka*, Egmont Polska, Warszawa.
- Rota, V. (2008), "Aspects of Adaptation. The Translation of Comics Formats", in: Zanettin, F. (ed.), *Comics in Translation*, St. Jerome, Manchester, pp. 79-98.
- Skibińska, E. (2005), "Niedoceniona wartość przymusu. O przekładzie pewnego komiksu dla dzieci", *Między oryginałem a przekładem*, 10, pp. 91-104.
- Zanettin, F. (ed.) (2008), *Comics in Translation*, St. Jerome, Manchester.

STRESZCZENIE

Zdradzona czarodziejka, czyli o kulturowych aspektach przekładu komiksów i zmieniających się standardach dokładności

Artykuł skupia się na klasyce komiksu francusko-belgijskiego, tj. stworzonej przez Jeana Van Hamme'a i polskiego rysownika Grzegorza Rosińskiego serii *Thorgal*, która posiada dość wyjątkowy status kulturowy w Polsce. Choć minęło już 30 lat od wydania pierwszego albumu, seria *Thorgal*, łącząca elementy fantasy, science-fiction i mitologii nordyckiej, nadal pozostaje jedną z najbardziej popularnych na polskim rynku komiksowym. Niniejsza publikacja dotyczy otwierającego serię albumu *La magicienne trahie* [Zdradzona czarodziejka], który został przetłumaczony na język polski aż trzykrotnie, tj. w roku 1978, 1988 i 2004. Celem artykułu jest omówienie różnic pomiędzy trzema polskimi tłumaczeniami w odniesieniu do ich dokładności względem oryginału oraz podejścia tłumaczy do kwestii specyfiki kulturowej.

Słowa kluczowe: przekład komiksu, standardy dokładności, kondensacja, specyfika kulturowa, *Thorgal*

SUMMARY

The article focuses on the classic Franco-Belgian comic book series *Thorgal* created by Jean Van Hamme and the Polish graphic artist Grzegorz Rosiński, which enjoys a special status in Polish culture. Combining elements of fantasy, science-fiction and Norse mythology, thirty years after its creation, it belongs to one of the most popular titles on the Polish comic book market. The focus of the

present study is on the opening album of the series, *La magicienne trahie* [The sorceress betrayed], which was translated into Polish at three different moments in time, i.e. in 1978, 1988, and 2004. The aim of the article is to establish the nature of the discrepancies between the three translations with regard to their accuracy and the translators' treatment of cultural specificity.

Key words: comics translation, accuracy standards, condensation, cultural specificity, Thorgal