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## ***THE BLACK VEIL: 19TH-CENTURY POLISH TRANSLATIONS OF CHARLES DICKENS'S SHORT STORY***

**Key words:** *The Black Veil*, Charles Dickens, 19th-century Polish translations, gothic tale

### **General remarks**

The name of Charles Dickens appeared in the Polish press relatively early, given the isolation of then partitioned Poland from major 19th-century literary and cultural centres. The earliest known written record is the article entitled *Boz* published anonymously in 1839 in the literary weekly *Tygodnik Literacki* in Poznań under Prussian rule at that time [Kujawska-Lis 2013, 481]. Its author discussed Dickens's works still unpublished in Poland and predicted his future fame as a writer of fiction to be comparable to that earned by Shakespeare. He paid special attention to Dickens's humour, noting that initially his works were apparently merely funny, yet gradually became more serious, culminating in tragic overtones, this assessment being based on *The Pickwick Papers*, *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby*. Polish readers, however, could not evaluate the writer's talents themselves by referring to these novels. His first works in the Polish language were selected stories from *Sketches by Boz*. The first volume of *Rozrywki Umysłowe* [Mental Puzzles] published in 1841 in Kraków (which remained under Austrian rule) featured *The Black Veil* and *Early Coaches*, followed by *The Drunkard's Death* and *The Great Winglebury Duel*. The publisher specialised in second-rate Polish novels and poetry as well as anonymous translations of foreign works. Interestingly, in the entire first volume the only author whose surname is given is Dickens. All other articles or literary pieces were anonymous, signed with initials or accompanied with general information: novel from French or from English.

Thus Dickens's surname distinguishes itself by its very presence. The selection of his stories may suggest a desire to win the public by means of the sensational plot, terrifying images and humour [Kocięcka 1962, 150]. Not much information is available as regards the periodical in which Dickens's tales appeared. *Rozrywki Umysłowe* was published by Józef Mączyński (1807-1862), a Polish writer who popularized legends about Kraków, and printed by Józef Czech (1806-1876), an eminent bookseller and printer, who published scientific and literary works. Each issue had to be accepted by the authorities and censors. Dickens's 1836 gothic tale appearing in this journal can then be seen as his imaginative debut on the Polish literary scene (along with *Early Coaches* that appeared in the same volume. My purpose here is to discuss this first Polish translation and additionally to compare it with two other 19th-century versions of *The Black Veil* to indicate selected differences between them.

The second translation was published in 1871 in the illustrated weekly for women *Bluszcz* [Ivy], based in Warsaw. This periodical was originally issued in 1865-1918 and 1921-1939, and then briefly in 2008-2012. Established by Michał Glücksberg (1838-1907), an influential Polish bookseller, printer and publisher of Jewish origin, the weekly promoted women's emancipation and featured "articles devoted to aesthetic and moral upbringing, poetry, dramatic pieces, original and translated novels, biographies of outstanding women, domestic and foreign news, reviews of literature, music and arts, news concerning hygiene" (front page of the weekly).<sup>1</sup> Its co-operators included Maria Konopnicka (1842-1910), Eliza Orzeszkowa (1841-1910), Adam Asnyk (1838-1897), Zofia Rogoszówna (1881-1921), Maria Dąbrowska (1889-1965), Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński (1905-1953), Maria Kuncewiczowa (1895-1989) – all of them outstanding figures of Polish literature (poets, fiction writers, translators) – and Lucyna Ćwierczakiewiczowa (1829-1901), the author of cookery books, who had her own column in *Bluszcz* devoted to cuisine and fashion. The weekly was prepared by experienced editors and the quality of the published articles and literary pieces was much higher as compared to *Rozrywki Umysłowe*. Volume 7 of 1871 in which Dickens's tale appeared also included, for instance, a novel *Mogilna* by Józef Ignacy Kraszewski (1812-1887), a famous Polish writer of contemporary and historical fiction; a translation of *Clavigo* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe; a novel by Charles Reade; several poems by Victor Hugo. The inclusion of Dickens's story in this journal can be viewed as a step towards presenting him as a writer of fiction about females (the major character is female) and for females (focus on the tragedy of a mother).

As opposed to the first translation of *The Black Veil*, which introduced Dickens's writing to Polish readers, the second one appeared when he was

<sup>1</sup> All translations from Polish sources, including back-translations into English from the three Polish translations of *The Black Veil* are mine.

already a well-established literary figure in Poland and his other works were available. To illustrate: In 1844 *American Notes* appeared in an anonymous translation. It was of very poor quality: many fragments were missing and still more summarized. The 1844 translation of *Nicholas Nickleby* marked a more serious involvement in the dissemination of Dickens in Poland (but only one volume out of the planned four appeared). It was followed by *Oliver Twist* and *The Old Curiosity Shop* as well as *The Chimes* in 1846. Published in Warsaw and Leipzig each of them reached only selected readers. *Nicholas Nickleby* re-appeared in full version in 1847. In the 1850s *Bleak House* and *David Copperfield* became available. The last mentioned novel is considered exceptionally popular, although the circulation was small and the quality of the translation left much to be desired. Its translator, Franciszek Dmochowski, termed it “free translation” which suggests changes and omissions. The 1860s opened a new period in the translations of Dickens. The most important magazine disseminating his oeuvre was *Gazeta Polska*, edited by Kraszewski, which published *Great Expectations* (1863), *Hard Times* (1866/7) and *Our Mutual Friend* (1866). In 1863 *A Tale of Two Cities* appeared. Paradoxically, two editions of the novel devoted to the revolutionary turmoil were published independently (in Vilnius and Warsaw) in the year ending the Polish struggle for independence. In 1867 fragments of *The Pickwick Papers* were published serially, which foretold the appearance of the long awaited, most popular Dickens novel. The readers had to wait until 1870, which sadly commemorated its author's death, to befriend Mr Pickwick in Włodzimirz Górski's translation [Kujawska-Lis 2014, 181-184].<sup>2</sup> Thus, the 1871 re-translation of *The Black Veil* can be viewed as an addition to the repertoire of the known and appreciated works of a recently deceased author and one that targeted a specific readership – women.

The third translation of *The Black Veil* appeared in 1896 in the Warsaw-based *Tygodnik Mód i Powieści* [Fashion and Fiction Weekly]. This magazine was issued from 1862 to 1915 with slight modifications to the title. When it published the translation of Dickens's work, the journal had already achieved a long tradition and was quite deeply rooted in Polish culture. It was edited by experienced journalists. Despite its apparent focus on female fashion, as the first part of the title suggests, and popular fiction as the second word indicates, it was a high-quality magazine. Its contributors were carefully selected and the journal played an important role in the cultural life of the time, featuring culture- and literature-related information, critical analyses, biographies, domestic and international news as well as original works by Polish writers and translations of both contemporary fiction and older literary works. Polish

<sup>2</sup> A comprehensive list of all translations and editions of Dickens's work in Polish can be found in my 2014 paper *Dickens przerobiony: bibliografia polskich przekładów i wydań utworów Dickensa* [Dickens Reworked: Bibliography of Polish Translations and Editions of Dickens's Works], pp. 189-198.

writers who published in it included for instance Eliza Orzeszkowa, Józef Ignacy Kraszewski (both contributors to *Bluszcz*), Adolf Dygasiński (1839-1902), and Henryk Sienkiewicz (1846-1905) – the first Polish laureate of the Nobel Prize in literature. Translations published in this weekly featured such works as Ivan Turgenev's *Asya* (1876), Ouida's *Tricotrin* (1872) and several other works, William Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1875), Victor Hugo's *Hernani* (1875), Guy de Maupassant's *Menuet* (1891), stories by Rudyard Kipling, H. G. Wells, Oscar Wilde, and Mark Twain, as well as works by many French authors. Before *The Black Veil*, the journal published two other works by Dickens: *Dombey and Son* in 1871 and *John Scrooge*, a translation of *A Christmas Carol* in 1872. Thus the last 19th-century translation of Dickens's gothic tale served as a reminder for readers that he was not only a great humorist and writer of fiction devoted to social themes, but that his oeuvre was very versatile.

All three translations of *The Black Veil* were anonymous, which was not an unusual practice in the 19th century. In the 1841 version the translatorial provenance of the text is actually effaced, as the only information given is "by Dickens" appearing below the title. This formula was employed to mark the author of any text (also originally written in Polish), so potentially – at least initially before the setting of the story is established – readers may not have known that the text was originally authored by an English writer. In the 1871 version the fact that readers are offered a translation is emphasized. The title is accompanied by the information that it was written by Karol Dickens (Karol being the Polish equivalent of Charles) and translated from English by G.F. Based on these initials, it is unfortunately impossible to decipher who the translator was. The grammatical form of the verb "translated" indicates a male and he seems to have been a regular contributor to *Bluszcz*, as in the same volume other texts are also signed with the same initials (e.g., a report on the lecture given by prof. Brodowski on the popularization of medical sciences). The third version is, as the first one, unmarked as a translation. The only information provided is the name of the author (Karol Dickens) and the title, though by that time (unlike in 1841) the name itself was sufficient to make readers realize that they were being offered a translation of a work created by a famous English author. Presently it is impossible to establish the translators' identities. Hence it is unclear what translatorial experience they possessed and why they decided to translate *The Black Veil* – whether it was their personal decision or whether they were commissioned by the editors of particular journals. Their competences (linguistic, translatorial and literary) can be assessed only by comparing their translations to the original.

None of the translations was accompanied by editorials or paratexts that would introduce Dickens as a writer or offer interpretative clues. This is significant especially as regards the 1841 version because readers would form their image of Dickens's art and literary interests solely on the basis

of the translation provided. I have been unable to locate any reviews specifically devoted to *The Black Veil* in the Polish press, so it is unclear how this story was received and whether it had any significant influence on the reception of Dickens. In terms of circulation, it is difficult to determine the popularity of *Rozrywki Umysłowe* (no information is given as to the number of copies printed and sold). It can be assumed, however, that the accessibility of the journal was limited to Kraków and its surrounding towns, so the first translation most likely did not reach readers in other parts of Poland. The second translation must have captured the attention of many more readers. *Bluszcz* was a very popular periodical. Although it was printed in Warsaw under Russian rule at that time, it was also distributed in Lviv and Kraków, both in the partitioned part under Austrian rule, as well as in Poznań under Prussian rule. It could be subscribed to in all Warsaw bookshops which sold periodicals and was mailed at a liberal price to locations in the three partitions. Consequently, its readership was not limited to one part of Poland only. Although the number of copies printed in the 1870s ranged from 2150 to 5400 [Kamisińska 2010, 102], it was one of the oldest journals published in Polish and was considered to be one of the most widely read papers for women in the history of the Polish press, though, in fact, it was perceived as an elite journal due to its high quality journalistic and literary writing. This weekly effectively shaped the consciousness of Polish women and was comparable in its quality to two most prestigious journals: *Kłosa*, illustrated weekly devoted to literature, science and art, and *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* [Illustrated Weekly], focused on cultural and social issues. Its readership was, however, not limited to women. Fryderyk Henryk Lewestam (1817-1878), literary critic and co-editor of *Kłosa*, claimed that in time *Bluszcz* had become most engaging both for women and men [Piotrowska, online]. *Tygodnik Mód i Powieści*, in which the third translation appeared, was based in Warsaw, but available also in Lviv, Kraków and Poznań, so its range was comparable to that of *Bluszcz*; however, it printed and sold fewer copies – 1500-1900 [Kamisińska 2010, 102].

It can be safely claimed that the work which introduced Dickens to Polish readers in 1841 did not greatly influence the reception of this writer in Poland mostly due to the limited circulation of the journal in which it appeared. *The Black Veil* was published in the first issue with which the journal entered the press market. It had not yet established its reputation and did not survive long, thus readers' interest in it must have been minimal. Yet, from the historical perspective of Dickens's presence in Poland, it must be acknowledged as one of the four stories that began the process of disseminating his works.

The three 19th-century translations of *The Black Veil* seem to be independent works of particular translators. Each treats the original text slightly differently. Perhaps later translators had some access to the previous versions, yet specific solutions applied to some problematic areas are dissimilar. In my further analysis I would like to address briefly a few important issues:

the reconstruction of the original suspense, the translators' linguistic expertise, the translation of culture-related elements, and the completeness of the translated texts.

## Suspense

*The Black Veil* is a gothic story that describes how a young doctor (who has not yet had any patient) is unexpectedly visited by an insane mother who begs him to revive her son after he has been hanged. Obviously, this information is not revealed till the end of the work. The reader, along with the doctor, is provided with an incoherent story of an unexpected stranger and then follows the doctor in his discovery of the truth.

The first translation is the only one that is not accompanied by any paratext that would serve to make it sound credible as a "true story". No interpretative hints are offered so readers need to draw conclusions on their own (including whether this is a purely fictional story or perhaps more of reportage). The 1871 text has a subtitle "based on a true story written by Karol Dickens", suggesting the apparently true provenance of the story, as if it was one of Dickens's journalistic pieces. The subtitle imposes an experiential function on the title, indicating that the story stems from the personal experiences of the writer. This, however, cannot be proven in any way. It also adds an evocative function, creating expectations that the story is an account of actual events. The clash between the macabre and inexplicable and the apparent "true provenance" of the tale confuses readers. The addition of the subtitle can be seen as a game played with readers who expect a journalistic piece and are confronted with mysterious elements. The last translation most radically imposes the idea that the story is an account of true events. The title is followed by a footnote stating: "The case that we are about to tell was written down in accordance to the words of a man whose truthfulness could never have been doubted among friends and relatives. We happened to hear about this particular event from him more than once, always depicted with the same intentness and emotion, and we never met variants with which less scrupulous narrators would embellish adventures of their own lives" [Dickens 1896, 125].<sup>3</sup> This addition bears functions similar to the subtitle in the second translation. The fictional aspects are stressed by the word narrator, yet this noun can also be referred to the teller – someone who tells the story. Unlike the subtitle which only highlights "the authenticity" of the events, the paratext provides a double frame: the story was first heard and then written down. Emphasis on the credibility of the first teller immediately draws one's attention: if the true provenance

<sup>3</sup> In order not to overburden the paper with quotations in Polish, I provide only my back-translations of particular fragments into English.

must be so strongly stressed, readers may either expect an authentic story, or decipher a literary game: the more the truthfulness is emphasized, the less truthful the story is. No such games are offered to readers of the first translation who can form no initial expectations as to the text.

Dickens begins his tale promptly building suspense in the opening sentence by specifying neither time nor location, and by introducing contrast between the cosiness of the indoors and the brutality of the weather: "One winter's evening, towards the close of the year 1800, or within a year or two of that time, a young medical practitioner, recently established in business, was seated by a cheerful fire in his little parlour, listening to the wind which was beating the rain in pattering drops against the window, or rumbling dismally in the chimney" [Dickens 1940, 433]. Imprecise time stresses the fictionality of the tale and the narrator's lack of specific knowledge, thus implicitly indicating that perhaps the narrator is not really so reliable if he does not know the details. This opens the possibility for understatements and forces readers to be discriminating as perhaps the narrator will not be able to provide answers to each question. In various ways the translations ruin this initial effect of vagueness. The 1841 version specifies the time "It was in December of 1800; a young doctor \*\*\* my friend" [Dickens 1841, 182]. This leaves no doubt as to the omniscience of the narrator, and he is further made more reliable by stating that he is telling a story that happened to his friend, thus he has first-hand knowledge. Although in the original text the narrator later refers to the doctor as "our friend": "What lady?" cried our friend" [Dickens 1940, 434], this is a conventional way of establishing contact with readers rather than an indication of friendship between the narrator and the doctor. Now the main character has become "our mutual friend": has been befriended by readers through the very process of reading about him and by the narrator through telling readers about him. The later translations efface the initial suspense by omitting the fragment "or within a year of two of that time" and by specifying the location. In both the phrase "recently established in business" is translated as "who has recently moved to London" [Dickens 1871, 91; 1896, 125]. Dickens's narrator does not mention the location, thus contributing to the feeling of eeriness, until half way through the story the stranger provides the address: "His visitor, after giving him a direction to an obscure part of Walworth, left the house in the same mysterious manner in which she had entered it" [Dickens 1940, 473]. This refusal to initially anchor the story to a specific place and then combining the toponym with obscurity and mystery profusely adds to creating the dream-like atmosphere of the unknown and mysterious in the original. This gradual disclosure of the location loses its functionality in the two later translations. Paradoxically, the 1841 version withholds the information concerning the setting even longer: "an obscure part of Walworth" is translated as "a distant part of the capital" [Dickens 1841, 189], but readers do not really know which capital is referred to since

no clues as to the whereabouts are provided. Additionally, the only proper names are provided in their Polish versions: Rose is Rózia and Tom is Tomek. Hence readers may form an impression that the story actually takes place in an environment familiar to them.<sup>4</sup> This assumption is clearly dissipated only when the doctor actually goes to Walworth and the narrator begins his description of this district: “The back part of Walworth, at its greatest distance from town” [Dickens 1940, 438]. Here the translator added London: “The London suburb of Walworth” [Dickens 1841, 189]. Thus it is only at that point of the story that Polish readers of the first translation realize that they are reading about an unfamiliar and foreign place.

Another element that contributes to suspense in *The Black Veil* is the juxtaposition of the doctor’s rationality and his visitor’s irrationality. Throughout the tale the doctor’s medical background and his professional attitude are stressed and contrasted with his visitor’s ambiguous answers and unclear, self-contradictory statements. This antithesis is strengthened by the initial contrast between the vile weather and the warmth of the doctor’s parlour, and further in the story between the cleanliness of the doctor’s dwelling and the squalor of Walworth and the visitor’s house. These various contrasts should be meticulously reconstructed in translations if the effect on target readers is to be analogous to that achieved in the original. Unfortunately in the 1841 text suspense created through the first mentioned juxtaposition is largely effaced. For instance, many words referring to the medical profession which are instrumental in establishing the doctor’s rationality are translated by more general terms. To compare: “surgery” [Dickens 1940, 434] becomes “the room in which his master wrote” [Dickens 1841, 183]. When the doctor asks the lady: “Why did you not obtain medical advice” [Dickens 1940, 435], he specifically focuses on the medical aspect of aid, rather than simply support. In Polish the notion is far more general and can be interpreted in various ways: “Why did you not search for help earlier” [Dickens 1841, 185]. Then, surprised that the visitor does not wish him to attend to the “patient” immediately, he asks: “why not try to save his life before delay and the progress of his disease render it impracticable?” [Dickens 1940, 436], constantly referring to the apparent disease that he has in mind. This “medical line of thought” is lost in the translation, where the sentence is reduced to “why not save his life before it is too late” [Dickens 1841, 187]. Later in the course of the conversation, the doctor continues to believe that he can save the “patient” by providing specific medical guidance: “Then, if I gave you instructions for his treatment through the night, you could not assist him?” [Dickens 1940, 437]. This, too, becomes generalized: “if I gave you instructions how to behave this night” [Dickens 1841, 188]. When finally alone, the doctor deliberates

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<sup>4</sup> However, in Tom’s description the word shilling appears, so careful readers should then guess that the story is set in England. Still, no town is mentioned.



over the unusual visit and his thoughts revolve about medical assistance. He wonders for instance that perhaps the lady, a possible culprit in planned murder, now “had determined to prevent his death if possible, by the timely interposition of medical aid?” [Dickens 1940, 437]. This is simplified in the Polish version to “early rescue” [Dickens 1841, 189]. To illustrate further: in the sentence “he speculated a great deal and to very little purpose on the possible circumstances of the case” [Dickens 1940, 437], “the case” can be associated with “the medical case”, while “solving the difficulty” [Dickens 1940, 437] can be referred to “medical difficulty”. The translation provides the phrase “solving the mystery” [Dickens 1841, 189]. In both cases the elimination of the potential medical meaning of specific words reduces the constant clash between the rational and the irrational, and shifts the focus to the mysterious element. Dickens is very careful and particular in employing words from the medical semantic field. Thus he creates a character so fixed on his profession that all associations that come to his mind are of a medical nature. This justifies his earnestness and willingness to help the lady late at night, during vile December weather. He is fully devoted to assisting those in need of his professional help. Such characteristics are, however, not that evident in the Polish version, in which he can be interpreted as a person who is curious about the mysterious case and the interview with the stranger is not so strongly anchored on the juxtaposition of medical reasoning and the irrational answers provided by the lady.

Suspense and the macabre atmosphere are also partly based on the doctor's judicious thinking and the utter feeling of horror evident in the behaviour of his young assistant. The boy is scared by the visitor, whose appearance in the surgery is described in a ghost-like manner. The lady is referred to as an “apparition of a customer” [Dickens 1940, 434], where the noun “apparition” evokes the notion of something supernatural (a ghost, spectre, phantom). This lexically supernatural element is lost in the translation. The lady is depicted as “an extraordinary phenomenon of a patient” [Dickens 1841, 183]; this phrase, however, does not highlight the ghostly image but the unusual event of a patient appearing at the doctor's. The notion of the supernatural is also created in the original by the employment of words such as “figure” – “the figure moved on” [Dickens 1940, 434], that in a sense dehumanize the visitor. In the Polish version this element is again lost, as the equivalent sentence begins with a verb and the implied subject “she” [Dickens 1841, 184]. Along with the reduction of the phantom-like image of the lady in black, fear evoked by her appearance is curtailed in the translation because of several omissions. For instance, the boy's “infinite horror” [Dickens 1940, 434] is quite appropriately translated by a typically Polish expression equivalent to “take fright” or “be numb with fright” [Dickens 1841, 184], yet the notion of the infiniteness of the fear is not retained. The description in which the boy's horror is stressed even further: “said the young man, addressing the boy,

whose large round eyes had been extended to their utmost width during this brief interview" [Dickens 1940, 434] is omitted. Consequently, the contrast between the doctor's composure and the boy's horror that greatly adds to the gothic quality of the tale is unfortunately missing in the first Polish version.

During the night conversation, some tension between the lady's resignation and the doctor's desire to be of assistance surfaces. This creates another mysterious contrast: she seeks help which the doctor is capable of and willing to offer, while at the same time stresses that "the patient" is beyond any hope of rescue. The lady seems to be acting schizophrenically (hence the doctor's suspicion that she might be insane) when she exclaims: "though even *I* see the hopelessness of human assistance availing him, the bare thought of laying him in his grave without it makes my blood run cold!" [Dickens 1940, 435]. The implication of death (and obviously her black attire) foreshadows the actual death that is to occur and enhances the horrific atmosphere. The lady repeatedly claims that it is too late for the "patient", suggests his imminent death and nevertheless begs for assistance. In the Polish version this schizophrenic and horrific manner of behaviour is largely diminished because the lady does not mention death and simply says that "the thought of leaving him without help" is unbearable [Dickens 1841, 185]. Then, paradoxically, in the second part of the story, when it is clear that the man is dead, the original sustains suspense by avoiding words that explicitly refer to death, as if some miracle might still happen. Upon examining the man in the darkened room the doctor exclaims: "the man is dead!" [Dickens 1940, 441]. But in protesting against letting light into the room, the lady says: "do not expose that form to other eyes than mine" and the doctor replies "I must see the body" [Dickens 1940, 442]. Later he "bent over the body which now lay full in the light of the window" [Dickens 1940, 443]. In none of these sentences is the notion of death explicitly evoked, words such as "corpse" or "dead body" are avoided, although the doctor states that "This man died no natural nor easy death" [Dickens 1940, 442]. This avoidance of death-related vocabulary in relation to the body of the evidently dead man may be confusing for readers who may expect some unusual development of the situation. This possibility of a miraculous resurrection or some other twist is not offered to Polish readers as in every instance the word "corpse" is used [Dickens 1841, 194, 195]. This foregrounding of death intensifies the atmosphere of horror at the conclusion of the story, yet in the original this aura is built much more subtly from the beginning of the tale and, in fact, at the point when the doctor examines the body suspense is based on the avoidance of vocabulary explicitly referring to the corpse.

The later 19th-century translations more carefully reconstruct the aforementioned elements that gradually create the gothic atmosphere. Although there are some shifts and changes, they are not accumulated to such an extent as in the first translation and consequently do not significantly

efface, for instance, the difference between the doctor's professionalism and the visitor's apparent illogicality. This is especially evident in the 1871 version which recreates faithfully almost all words referring to the medical profession except for "surgery" changed into "the other room" [Dickens 1871, 91] and only in one instance substitutes the body for the corpse. The assistant's fear is also evoked appropriately. The major difference between the original and this translation is the loss of suspense regarding the relationship between the lady and the person who is about to die. In Dickens's story, when explaining why she seeks medical assistance, the lady refers to the man on whose behalf she appeared by means of the pronoun *him*. Thus neither readers nor the doctor know what bond they share. Hence, he can speculate later: "It could not be that the man was to be murdered in the morning, and that the woman, originally a consenting party, and bound to secrecy by an oath, had relented, and, though unable to prevent the commission of some outrage on the victim, had determined to prevent his death if possible, by the timely interposition of medical aid?" [Dickens 1940, 437]. In the translation this speculation is utterly illogical because the lady states earlier that "her blood runs cold at the very thought of lying to grave the one whom she loves more than anything" [Dickens 1871, 91]. This immediately suggests that the man in need is the lady's son/husband/lover. On the one hand, this foreshadows the confession that the hanged man was her son. On the other, the mystery is diminished too early. Nevertheless, the gradual suspense is carefully constructed in this version, following rather closely the original text.

The situation is different in the last translation. This version actually increases the doctor's professional ambience, manner of thinking and acting. In this text he is well educated, focused on his job and speaks Latin. For instance, "prevent his death if possible, by the timely interposition of medical aid?" [Dickens 1940, 437] is translated as "scientific intervention... in extremis" [Dickens 1896, 131]. Then, when examining the body he "took the hand, checking for the pulse" [Dickens 1896, 142]. Such additions do not significantly modify the original text; rather they intensify the doctor's expertise. However, this text diminishes the horror as evoked, for instance, by the boy's behaviour. This is due to mistranslations or misinterpretations of the original. In this Polish version the boy is "agitated" and "troubled" because "a sudden entrance of someone unknown into this quiet solitary place was an extraordinary event", and then the boy's eyes are round not because of his horror, but admiration [Dickens 1896, 125]. This obviously influences the initial reception of the text. The most significant change, however, as regards the suspense results from the serial publication of this translation. Because it appeared in instalments in three consecutive numbers, the text was distributed in such a way as to create cliff-hangers and boost readers' interest. Thus the first part finishes with the lady's words that "tonight he [the man] is at risk of certain death, and you [doctor] cannot see him and

cannot help him in any way” [Dickens 1896, 125]. Readers had to wait for a week to learn the particulars of why it was impossible to help the man and why the doctor, though trained, could do nothing to assist him. Part two begins with the doctor’s explanation that the lady’s speech is rather incoherent and illogical, which readers could have guessed themselves when analyzing the former instalment, and now their speculations are confirmed. In this part the confusing conversation continues, the doctor deliberates over the reasons for the lady’s unusual behaviour and goes to Walworth. It finishes with the cryptic exchange: “Am I in time?” “Too soon!”, followed by the comment that the doctor could not conceal his surprise or even anxiety [Dickens 1896, 132]. This ending is perplexing, as the dialogue is rather illogical, and readers are left with a feeling that the doctor is in danger. And again, another week had to pass before the mystery was solved. Thus apart from the contrast between the doctor’s rationality and the lady’s apparent irrationality, suspense in this version is built on the distribution of the text.

Reconstructing original poetics in translation is no easy task. Such effort requires, amongst other considerations, intimate knowledge of the writer’s stylistic choices and an awareness of his narrative techniques. In the case of a gothic tale, as represented by *The Black Veil*, in which uncertainty, the sublime feeling of horror, understatements and semantic gaps are essential and constructive elements, it becomes a real challenge. The solutions offered by Polish translators indicate a gradual grasp of Dickens’s method of creating a specific atmosphere of this tale. Sadly, the first translation largely missed the various contrasts projected by the writer and thus diminished the impact of the story.

### **Translators’ linguistic and translatorial competences**

Since no information is available as to the identity of the translators of *The Black Veil*, their linguistic competence can be only assessed on the basis of a comparison of the original and respective target texts. Such an evaluation may, however, be flawed as each translation contains numerous omissions (to be discussed further) and it is not certain whether the reason was the lack of linguistic competence and the impossibility of translating particular excerpts, or the publication format. Since all three translations appeared in journals, it is likely that omissions may have been caused by publishers’ intervention. Hence, in this section only some glaring discrepancies will be noted that influence the reception of the target texts.

It should be acknowledged that generally the number of mistranslations is not great, which indicates a quite good level of linguistic competence of particular translators. In the 1841 version many original descriptions are simplified (but not really mistranslated) and only some solutions seem

to stem from a wrong interpretation of the original text, thus amounting to mistranslations. For instance, "he began to wonder when his first patient would appear" [Dickens 1940, 433] implies that the doctor was considering the issue, while in the Polish text he dreamt about being called to his first patient [Dickens 1841, 183]. Later, he falls asleep and dreams about Rose, yet the Polish text implies day-dreaming. Such problems, however, do not significantly influence the reception of the story. It is more problematic when the text is internally contradictory and illogical. In his sleep, the doctor dreams about Rose's "soft, tiny hand" and then indeed feels a hand upon his shoulder, but "neither soft nor tiny", belonging to a corpulent boy [Dickens 1940, 433]. This is perfectly clear, unlike in the Polish version in which Rose's hand is "tiny and plump", the actual hand is "neither tiny nor plump", and yet belongs to "a chubby boy" [Dickens 1841, 183]. Another internal illogicality results from translating "two miles" in the sentence "The idea of such things happening within two miles of the metropolis appeared too wild and preposterous to be entertained beyond the instant" [Dickens 1940, 437-438] as "quarter of a mile" [Dickens 1841, 189]. This vastly diminishes the distance that separates the doctor's decent quarters from the horrid Walworth. Yet, apart from such problems, the 1841 text is free from major mistakes.

The real issue is the great number of simplifications that do not render Dickens's artistry in descriptive parts. This is particularly evident when the action takes place in Walworth. To illustrate: the following description is provided from the doctor's perspective, who is inside the house and can only listen to what is happening, thus the fragment focuses on the auditory effects (and adds comments that contribute to the suspense):

He had not remained in this position many minutes, when the noise of some approaching vehicle struck his ear. It stopped; the street-door was opened; a low talking succeeded, accompanied with a shuffling noise of footsteps, along the passage and on the stairs, as if two or three men were engaged in carrying some heavy body to the room above. The creaking of the stairs, a few seconds afterwards, announced that the new-comers having completed their task, whatever it was, were leaving the house. The door was again closed, and the former silence was restored [Dickens 1940, 440-441].

In translation, not only is the excerpt shortened, but also personifications found in Dickensian descriptions that enliven them disappear, just as comments on the side:

After a few minutes he heard the rattle of the approaching wagon. The wagon stopped in front of the house – the door opened – and some men talking quietly were heard and stepping in the hall and stairs, as if they were carrying something heavy. Soon they came down and left the house; the door was closed behind them, and again all was silent [Dickens 1841, 193].

Such simplifications are particularly harmful when applied to metaphors. Dickens has a special gift of painting images that seem to be living pictures,

as in the description of the decrepit room: “A handful of fire, unguarded by any fender, was burning in the grate, which brought out the damp if it served no more comfortable purpose, for the unwholesome moisture was stealing down the walls, in long slug-like tracks” [Dickens 1940, 440]. The image is so vivid that readers can almost visualize the damp to be some mysterious animal. This effect is not reconstructed in the translation in which the second part of the sentence evokes a different (rather improbable) image: “the dampness was dribbling in drops down the cold walls” [Dickens 1841, 192]. The first translator evidently found it problematic to reconstruct metaphors and so many fragments lose their artistic and aesthetic qualities. This is also evident in the loss of alliteration that adds to the literariness of the story, for example, “the chances of *detecting desperate* characters” [Dickens 1940, 439; emphasis mine] is reduced to “thieves” [Dickens 1841, 191]. Thus, although the first translation does not contain many evident errors resulting from insufficient knowledge of English, its artistic level is affected because the metaphorical level of the utterances is ignored and many metaphors are paraphrased.

The second translation, in comparison, reads more fluently and is free from mistranslations (though Rose’s hand is also plump). It appears that the translator was more skilful; however, this text also contains some simplifications, especially in the parts referring to Walworth. Some metaphors are paraphrased, as the one in the description of the room, rendering it more literal: “Dampness and mustiness were felt in the atmosphere, the walls at the bottom were covered in smudges and mould” [Dickens 1871, 92]. In other fragments the text follows almost exactly the original, as in the description of bringing the body to the house. This translation definitely presents a closer reconstruction of Dickens’s tale than the first one in terms of the stylistic layer, despite its occasional simplifications.

The most curious case is that of the last translation under discussion. Given that it is the third one in the consecutive series of target texts, it should be mistake-free (assuming that the translator had access to the previous ones and could correct imperfections). The 1896 version is characterized by a number of unnecessary additions. For instance, the doctor’s “dressing-gown and slippers” [Dickens 1940, 433] are expanded as “fluffy dressing-gown and warm and dry slippers” [Dickens 1896, 125], as if to intensify the contrast between the outdoors and indoors. In the first paragraph the sentence “His day passed laboriously” [Dickens 1896, 125] is added as if to clarify the notion that “he had been walking through mud and water the whole day” [Dickens 1940, 433]. Yet, based on the original text, readers cannot be certain why he was walking all day. After all, he does not have any patients. The description of his wandering thoughts:

Then, his mind reverted to his annual Christmas visit to his native place and dearest friends; he thought how glad they would all be to see him, and how happy it would make Rose if he could only tell her that he had found a patient at last, and hoped

to have more, and to come down again, in a few months' time, and marry her, and take her home to gladden his lonely fireside [Dickens 1940, 433]

is amplified and unnecessarily expanded as follows:

Then his thought runs far – far to his little home town, and to former friends, who would be surely sincerely glad if they could see him among them during the coming Christmas. Later his tired imagination begins to fantasize about his favourite subject and the young novice doctor dreams that he is writing to his beloved Rose to tell her that he finally has one patient, expects to have more and more, and that this much desired day is not so distant when he will lead her to the altar and then to a tiny little flat in London, where the presence of this dear person will give him new courage and will to live [Dickens 1896, 125].

It appears initially that the translator uses the original text quite freely, stressing melodramatic aspects. Unnecessary additions occasionally render the text illogical, as in the first description of the stranger: "It was a singularly tall woman, dressed in deep mourning" [Dickens 1940, 434]. The narrator can only provide information concerning the woman's external ambience as she is hidden behind the eponymous black veil. In the Polish version, however, her age is specified: "There was a no longer young woman" [Dickens 1896, 125]. In the original her age is only revealed once the veil drops from her face, so in this translation the narrator provides more details and too early. Similarly when the doctor asks Tom to "Draw the curtain, and shut the door" [Dickens 1940, 434], in the Polish version the addition "the doctor repeated" [Dickens 1896, 125] is confusing, since he has not asked the boy to do it before. Other problems result from seemingly insignificant changes, such as "lift the knocker" [Dickens 1940, 439] translated as "ring or not" [Dickens 1896, 132], indicating ringing a bell. Yet in the same sentence the house is described as a hovel, which most likely would preclude a bell.

Some mistranslations, however, do not lead to incoherence and so would not be noticed by readers without comparing the original with the translation. For instance, the doctor finally "knocked gently at the door" [Dickens 1940, 440], either because he was still hesitant, or because he did not wish to startle the dwellers, while in the Polish version he "knocked resolutely" [Dickens 1896, 132]. Polish readers would interpret that as a sign of courage. Having knocked, the doctor hears "low whispering" followed "by the noise of a pair of heavy boots upon the bare floor" [Dickens 1940, 440]. This is both in line with the appearance of the building, suggesting poverty, and the position of the doctor (only some loud steps could be heard outside). The translation provides an opposite image: "the sound of heavy boots was heard, muffled by the carpet, spread on the floor" [Dickens 1896, 132]. Without referring to the original, Polish readers cannot know that no carpet covered the floor.

The largest numbers of additions appear in the final section during the conversation over the dead body to strengthen the dramatic effect: the lady implores the doctor to help her son more violently than in Dickens's tale.

She also accuses him of not being helpful enough and attempts to restore the life in the dead body with her kisses. The doctor, on the other hand, tries to encourage her to be brave. These changes cannot be classified as errors pointing to insufficient linguistic knowledge, but can be treated as an attempt to “improve” on the original text, as if the translator believed that the emotional tension needs to be highlighted.

The most problematic solution related to the “improvement” of Dickens’s story is its ending. The writer decides to close the work in the frame formed from the title and the final words, leaving the meaning for the reader to interpret: “but, amid all the honours of rank and station which have since been heaped upon him, and which he has so well earned, he can have no reminiscence more gratifying to his heart than that connected with *The Black Veil*” [Dickens 1940, 443]. This ending is ambiguous and can be interpreted in various ways. The reminiscence of the *Black Veil* may refer to the first patient who ever entered his surgery. After all, the woman was the first visitor who sought his help and received it. The *Black Veil* may be associated with maternal love and devotion. It can be seen through the prism of unrelenting motherly love and distress at the death of a child. This open ending is retained in the first two translations, while the last one provides one, unambiguous interpretation: “on the peak of his success he always remembered that day which left him the memory of the largest human misery that he had ever seen in his life” [Dickens 1896, 142].

## Culture

*The Black Veil* is not particularly deeply rooted in culture. A tale of horror rather than a sketch describing life in London, it focuses on the atmosphere of mystery. Hence it does not feature many culture-related elements that might pose a great challenge for translators. However, some points associated with culture merit attention. The setting of Walworth as contrasted with a more central London location allows Dickens to make some poignant comments on the quality of life in the poverty-stricken district. This subtly introduces a social theme into the tale. The depiction of the squalid whereabouts suggests topicality:

The back part of Walworth, at its greatest distance from town, is a straggling miserable place enough, even in these days; but, five-and-thirty years ago, the greater portion of it was little better than a dreary waste, inhabited by a few scattered people of questionable character, whose poverty prevented their living in any better neighbourhood, or whose pursuits and mode of life rendered its solitude desirable [Dickens 1940, 438].<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> This quotation presents a highly cultural remark in itself. It depicts the area as it still was before the coming of the railways and the building of a sewage system.



Although the tale apparently depicts the Walworth of the past, the comment that it remains a wretched and gloomy place indicates that the changes in the quality of life of its poor inhabitants are perhaps not as significant as one would wish. By specifying the number of years (thirty-five) the narrator emphasizes the temporal shift between the telling situation (contemporary, i.e., more or less 1836, indicating the extratextual level when the story was written) and the described events. This creates a temporal bond between the narrator and the original readers who could relate their own experiences of London as they knew it to the apparent changes that occurred during the past thirty-five years.

Interestingly, all translations change this specific number of years. In the 1841 version the number is recalculated and adapted to the time when the translation was published: "The London suburb of Walworth is presently still very miserably built-up, and 40 years ago it was a sad desert" [Dickens 1841, 189]. This clearly sets out to reconstruct the temporal distance between the narrative situation and the events, expanding the time frame. The 1871 version follows this path, accounting for the time when the translation was published. In this version, however, the solution is different – time is treated less specifically: "Distant parts of Walworth are still today gloomy and deserted; in the epoch in which the accident we are talking about took place, it was a horribly barren place" [Dickens 1871, 92]. The word "epoch" creates a great temporal distance and thus the topicality of the story is quite diminished. In the last 19th-century translation, thirty-five years are changed into "several dozen years" [Dickens 1896, 131], not allowing Polish readers to pinpoint both when the story was written (extradiegetic level) and the distance between the telling and the tale (intradiegetic level). This translation is additionally quite confusing as it is difficult to visualize the administrative division based on it: "The district of Walworth, most distant from the capital, has even today a poor and miserable appearance, but several dozen years ago it was a town left exclusively for suspicious population" [Dickens 1896, 131]. The notion of a district being distant from the capital implies that Walworth is not part of London, which is further stressed by the word "town", as if it was a separate urban location. For readers unfamiliar with London and its whereabouts this may be quite obscure.

Another point closely related to culture is the reference to notoriety and crime in London as represented by body snatchers. This reference is preceded by the fragment indicating the efficiency of the London police force and changes that have apparently occurred in poor districts:

The police of London were a very different body in that day; the isolated position of the suburbs, when the rage for building and the progress of improvement had not yet begun to connect them with the main body of the city and its environs, rendered many of them (and this in particular) a place of resort for the worst and most depraved characters. Even the streets in the gayest parts of London were

imperfectly lighted, at that time; and such places as these, were left entirely to the mercy of the moon and stars [Dickens 1940, 439].

This fragment not only serves to justify why the young doctor hesitated before entering the desolate house, but also to create the atmosphere of uncertainty as to what might happen to a decent person who finds himself in this vile place. Then the reference to the London Burkers appears to further intensify the feeling of horror:

it must be remembered that the young man had spent some time in the public hospitals of the metropolis; and, although neither Burke nor Bishop had then gained a horrible notoriety, his own observation might have suggested to him how easily the atrocities to which the former has since given his name, might be committed [Dickens 1940, 439].

Given the topicality of the body snatchers who came to prominence in 1831, first for stealing freshly buried bodies and then for murdering people to sell them to anatomists, Dickens did not need to specify who Burke and Bishop were. His readers would have understood the allusion easily, given the publicity that the arrest and trial of John Bishop and his gang garnered in 1831. Similarly, the murders committed by William Burke in 1827 and 1828 would have been still fresh in the memory of original readers, having led to the passing of the Anatomy Act in 1832. These events, however, were largely unknown to Polish readers. Hence translators needed to deal with the reference to body snatchers in such a way as to make the story comprehensible. Each decided on a different solution to this problem.

The first translation intensifies the horrific atmosphere by explaining in detail the meaning of the reference. The text is less cryptic than the original, which relies on readers' first-hand knowledge of the events. In the 1841 text we read: "The young doctor due to his calling knew about numerous abuses and crimes committed by people who delivered corpses for anatomical analyses – suffice to mention Burke and Bishop" [Dickens 1841, 191]. This explicit information is expanded by a footnote in which further explanation is provided: "These criminals under various guises lured victims that were dissected on anatomical tables on the following day" [Dickens 1841, 191]. Hence readers were notified of a horrifying idea of murdering people for anatomical purposes, which justifies the doctor's uneasiness to enter the desolate house. The explanation confirms the translator's extensive knowledge of English history and the correct decoding of the allusion to extratextual events.

The next translation omits the culture-related element. It retains the fragment concerning the London police and emphasizes the doctor's courage [Dickens 1871, 92]. It is unclear whether the translator did not decipher the allusion, or whether the omission results from the publishing format and the limited space allocated for the story in the weekly. Presently no reliable explanation may be provided. The paragraph in which this allusion appears is

much shortened in the translation. The sentence about the lighting condition in the streets is also missing, so perhaps the latter option is more probable. The result for readers, however, is that the text misses an important suggestion that might explain the conduct of people in the house (carrying the body upstairs that could be interpreted through the prism of body snatching) and a cultural reference important for the atmosphere. Instead the doctor's bravery is highlighted. The same situation occurs in the 1896 translation. Although the paragraph describing crime on London streets is not so significantly abbreviated, no mention of Burke and Bishop and body snatchers can be found. This would imply that the later translators most likely did not have access to the first one, since even if they had not comprehended the allusion themselves, the first translation would have clarified it for them.

### **Completeness of the text**

As already indicated, the translations do not render the complete text of the original story. Omissions range from single words to longer expressions and entire scenes. The main reasons for these omissions could not have been linguistic problems. Often the deleted fragments are not particularly challenging in terms of their translation. In the 1841 translation easily translatable phrases such as "half awake", "with cheerfulness", "by prolonging the interview" are omitted. Such deletions do not actually impact on the reception of the text. More significant problems stem from abridgments of longer fragments that in various ways build the atmosphere. For instance, the loss of "As there was no demand for the medicine, however, and no necessity for the messages, he usually occupied his unemployed hours – averaging fourteen a day – in abstracting peppermint drops, taking animal nourishment, and going to sleep" [Dickens 1940, 433-434] not only diminishes the fact that the doctor's business was essentially non-existent, but also eradicates the tinge of humour, so typical of Dickens, in the description of the boy's behaviour. The loss of "addressing the boy, whose large round eyes had been extended to their utmost width during this brief interview" [Dickens 1940, 434] diminishes the sensation of fear. The reduction of "And a shudder, such as the surgeon well knew art could not produce, trembled through the speaker's frame. There was a desperate earnestness in this woman's manner, that went to the young man's heart" [Dickens 1940, 435] to simply "She suffered saying these words; grave pain of her soul deeply touched the doctor" [Dickens 1841, 185] erases the doctor's conviction that the lady was not pretending. The following fragment highlights the doctor's uncertainty as to the situation:

Then, his original impression that the woman's intellects were disordered, recurred; and, as it was the only mode of solving the difficulty with any degree of satisfaction,

he obstinately made up his mind to believe that she was mad. Certain misgivings upon this point, however, stole upon his thoughts at the time, and presented themselves again and again through the long dull course of a sleepless night; during which, in spite of all his efforts to the contrary, he was unable to banish the black veil from his disturbed imagination [Dickens 1940, 438].

It is reduced to “He had his first idea that the woman was insane and he could not solve the puzzle otherwise, although he thought only of that all night long; as the black veil constantly stood before his eyes” [Dickens 1841, 189], thus not only changing the style, but also removing the doctor’s confusion. He was definitely more perplexed that the Polish version would have it. The effect that the woman made on the doctor is partly lost. Such abridgements primarily lessen the feeling of bewilderment and weaken the gothic atmosphere. The Polish version, though still in the vein of the gothic tale, presents a much clearer situation: the doctor has fewer misgivings; the woman is clearly insane.

Omissions and abridgements are most numerous in the fragments that shift attention from the mysterious atmosphere typical of the gothic tale to the implicit criticism of social injustice. The depiction of the doctor’s way through the miserable whereabouts of Walworth is radically simplified and shortened, thus not evoking the misery and poverty of its inhabitants so strongly. Radical treatment of the detailed descriptions that bring to light the decrepit housing conditions, poverty and lack of any prospects for a better life indicates that the translator was more interested in the sensational element than the social one. This has two implications. First, the translation does not fully recreate the slight departure from the convention of gothic fiction in which the criticism of social conditions is absent. *The Black Veil* is placed in the Tales section of *The Sketches by Boz*; not in the Scenes. Original readers would not have expected expanded descriptions of poverty in a gothic story. Dickens, however, subtly intertwines his social criticism with the gothic atmosphere. Second, the translation weakens the argument that the story implicitly makes: that poverty breeds crime. The focus on the inhumane living conditions serves to partly explain why people inhabiting such districts as Walworth turned into criminals. The universality of the plight of poor people as represented by the lady’s son is strengthened in the final section with the sentence: “The history was an every-day one” [Dickens 1940, 443] which is also missing from the translation. Thus the target text presents a single case and cannot be treated as an exemplum of a larger social problem.

The other 19th-century translations do not abridge the original so profoundly in the Walworth section, thus readers can visualize the district with ease and formulate similar conclusions as to the living conditions and consequent proneness to crime as the original readers. However, both radically shorten the penultimate paragraph. The 1871 version omits both the sentence about the companion being acquitted and the lady’s son hanged, and the one shifting the story to the more universal level. Similarly, the 1896 text stresses

the plight of the mother who, widowed and left alone, devoted her life to bringing her child up. Her story seems to be unique and not representative of similar cases. Both translations limit the interpretative scope of the original story, anchoring it to a particular family.

### Concluding remarks

It is difficult to objectively assess whether the first translation of Dickens's works that appeared in Poland had any real impact on the perception of his art by Polish readers. Given the rather limited circulation of the magazine in which *The Black Veil* appeared and the lack of any critical material that accompanied it, it may be assumed that this specific translation was not of great importance for the reception of Dickens in Poland. Paradoxically, the case would be somewhat similar to the consecutive translations of this short story, since both were published when Dickens's reputation had been already established and rather illustrated the variety of genres that the writer explored and, sometimes, modified.

For the aforementioned reasons (abridgments and simplifications), the 1841 translation of *The Black Veil* cannot be treated as the version that would help to do justice to the original. Yet this translation, although shortening Dickens's story (thus influencing its reception both in terms of its aesthetics and semantics) did not contain serious mistakes that would misrepresent the original ideas. The translator obviously adapted the text linguistically to create a more fluent reading experience for Polish readers, but without changing Dickens's poetics drastically, although many metaphors were pitifully paraphrased, phrases relating to the medical profession lost, and the shift towards focusing mostly on the sensational element at the expense of social criticism is evident. Generally, the translator understood the original quite well despite some linguistic problems; the main plot was not grossly misrepresented. Nevertheless, given the time when this version appeared, the translation conventions allowing for a rather free approach to the original text, the absence of available critical material on Dickens's works and his characteristic manner of writing (apart from the already mentioned anonymous article), and the fact that the translator had no model to follow, the 1841 text may be evaluated as decent. It seems that the translator had little chance to create proper metacontexts for the interpretation of the original and so may have overlooked the implicit social criticism. Perhaps editorial policies also influenced the work at least to some extent by insisting on making the sensational element most prominent.

Yet, contrary to what might be expected when dealing with the work of an unknown writer of as yet not established reputation, the translator did not forcefully impose literary and cultural domestic models. Though Polish

equivalents of proper names are employed as was the common practice at that time, the translation does not eliminate culture-related elements: this can be seen in the transfer of Burke and Bishop to the target text. Arguably, retaining the information about body snatchers was meant to heighten the horrific element. Reductions in the descriptions of Walworth, reflecting culture as well, were perhaps the outcomes of the same strategy: instead of focusing on the misery, the translator emphasized those elements that strengthened the mystery, the sensation and the criminality. It is a pity that the 1841 translation did not receive any publicity. Had it included the complete text of the original, it would have greatly enriched the repertoire of translated literature and allowed Polish literary circles to genuinely enjoy Dickens both as a writer of sensational fiction and as a social critic.

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### Summary

This paper sets to analyze and compare three anonymous translations of Charles Dickens's gothic short story *The Black Veil* that appeared in the 19th-century, the first one serving as an introduction of Dickens on the Polish literary scene. The analysis focuses on selected issues, such as the reconstruction of the suspense, treatment of culture, translators' linguistic competence and completeness of the text.

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