

Re/Deconstructing voices of (female) translators: The case of Bolesława Kopelówna (1897-1961)

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ABSTRACT

The article presents the life and work of Bolesława Kopelówna, a Polish literary translator who was especially active (and widely criticised) in the interwar years in Poland, and is now almost completely forgotten. The article attempts to answer the following questions: why was Kopelówna so intensely criticised? Why has she disappeared from the collective memory? Why was she so active in the field of translation? And, no less crucially, who was this enigmatic figure of Bolesława Kopelówna? Through an application of microhistorical tools to fragments of Kopelówna's life and work, I will re/deconstruct her seemingly non-existing archive. Combining interdisciplinary tools from literary history, history and feminist studies, my aim is not only to bring back the voice of a silenced, overlooked, and underestimated translator, but also to encourage other researchers to attempt to fill blank spaces in translation history.

Keywords: translator studies, Bolesława Kopelówna, archives, microhistory, translation history

Re/dekonstrukcija glasov prevajalk na primeru Bolesławe Kopelówne (1897-1961)

IZVLEČEK

V članku je predstavljeno življenje in delo Bolesławe Kopelówne, poljske književne prevajalke, ki je delovala (in bila tarča številnih kritik) zlasti v obdobju med prvo in drugo svetovno vojno na Poljskem, danes pa je skoraj pozabljena. V prispevku poskušam odgovoriti na naslednja vprašanja: zakaj so Kopelówno tako intenzivno kritizirali? Zakaj je izginila iz kolektivnega spomina? Kako da je bila tako aktivna na področju prevajanja? In nenazadnje: kdo je bila enigmatična Bolesława Kopelówna? Z uporabo mikrohistoričnih orodij pri analizi fragmentov življenja in dela Bolesławe Kopelówne re/dekonstruiram njen na videz neobstoječi arhiv. Moj cilj je, da bi s kombinacijo interdisciplinarnih orodij od literarne zgodovine, zgodovine in feminističnih študij, vrnila glas utišani, spregledani in podcenjeni prevajalki ter spodbudila druge raziskovalce, da bi tudi poskusili zapolniti vrzeli v prevodni zgodovini.

Ključne besede: študije prevajalcev, Bolesława Kopelówna, arhivi, mikrozgodovina, zgodovina prevajanja

1. Introduction

In 2005 Michael Cronin made the following observation in *Palimpsestes*:

In a way that is only apparently paradoxical, we must ask ourselves not only why so much gets translated, but also why so much does not get translated. In other words, a history of translation that only looks at translations at some level misses the point. Just as a figure is defined by and necessitates a ground, so also the figure of translation demands the figure of non-translation if we are to make any sense of the activity in our society, and this holds as much for today as it did four hundred years ago. (Cronin 2005, 9)

Michael Cronin's provocative, yet eye-opening statement, might be inspiring not only for translation studies scholars investigating texts and their circulation, but also for those who focus on agents of translation. In this article, I will argue that these lacunae that Cronin notes are ever present. To paraphrase him – a history of translation that only looks at translators who are remembered, recognised, praised, and who have archives, at some level misses the point. This is especially the case when the voice of a particular translator, the author of many existing translations still in use in the target culture, is not only absent, but also not given a platform and is ignored by reviews and paratextual critique.

In what follows, I will focus on Bolesława Kopelówna (1897–1961) – a very active, but also harshly criticised female translator from English into Polish, an author of children's books and editor of several left-wing periodicals. Kopelówna has been forgotten by (translation) history,¹ and remains frequently misattributed in contemporary essays. By presenting her life and work through a microhistorical lens, I will investigate who she was, some of the reasons underlying why she was criticised, and why she is now mostly forgotten. A microhistorical examination of Kopelówna's reception also leads us to address more general questions; namely, it prompts us to reconsider different compositions of archives in translation history, and to promote metaliterary speculation in translation history.

1 Translation history in Poland is developing rapidly, with many bio-bibliographical projects in progress. To name just two of them: the National Science Center (NCN) grant "A century of translation. Translators and their work in Polish literature after 1918" led by Magda Heydel; and the Repository of Polish Translations of Shakespeare's Plays in the 19th Century: Resources, Approaches, Reception "Polski Szekspir" led by Anna Cetera-Włodarczyk. Nevertheless, currently it is still the case that many translators active in the past are not recognised by the wider audience as important agents promoting cultural development and exchange in Poland.

2. The human factor in Translation Studies

Since the cultural turn in Translation Studies in 1990s (Bassnett and Lefevere 1990), linguistic or functionalist aspects of translation are no longer considered the main focus of the discipline. Translation in its broader definition is now regarded as a “historical product that serves a specific function within the target culture” (Fólica et al. 2020, 5) and a complex process of cultural transfer (Espagne 2013) involving institutions (Lefevere 1992; Hermans 2007) and individuals (Delisle and Woodsworth 2012). In his *Method in Translation History*, Anthony Pym (1998) investigated many translators from various cultural and historical contexts, and identified five features they shared: he recognised that there is no point in talking about “the” translator – an abstract and impersonal concept. Instead, he stressed the importance of taking into consideration a variety of individuals with different physical bodies, sociocultural and economic backgrounds, personal aspirations, motivations, and abilities.

In two decades since Pym’s seminal work, there has been a growing interest in (investigating) individual translators in different historical, geographical, linguistic, and cultural contexts. Furthermore, the methodology applied to the TS research has become more varied, and even started to draw on some other well-established disciplines. Not only historical, but also sociological, cognitive, and cultural approaches have been used to investigate the biographies, agency and working conditions of translators. A decade after Pym’s work, the focus on the translator was explicitly set out in Andrew Chesterman’s seminal paper “The Name and Nature of Translator Studies”. Chesterman, building on James Holmes’ foundational map of Translation Studies (1988), called for recognising and defining the field of Translator Studies (Chesterman 2009). This has led to growing interdisciplinary and integrated interest in various individuals who translated in different times and places. In 2019 a conference organised by Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań – along with Jagiellonian University, Kraków, one of the two most active academic centres for Translation Studies in Poland – focused on Translator Studies. One of its results was also the publication of the volume *The Human Factor in Literary Translation – Theories, Histories, Practices* edited by Ewa Rajewska (2020). It sparked a discussion on the current state of Translator Studies in the local context. In an international setting, it is worth mentioning the 2018 Conference “Staging the Literary Translators: Roles, Identities, Personalities” organised by the University of Vienna that resulted in a recent Routledge publication *Literary Translator Studies* (2021).

This article addresses the absence of Bolesława Kopelówna’s voice (as evidenced by a lack of interviews and few paratexts in relation to her impressive body of translated works) and focuses on “an otherwise unknown individual who would at most be a

footnote in a larger account of the period” (Ginzburg, Tedeschi and Tedeschi 1993, 21, quoted in Munday 2014, 67).

2.1 How to research translators within translation history

Studying translators’ personal interests and private lives provides a fruitful ground for investigating the reasons why and how particular translators started their careers and, sometimes even more interestingly, why and how they stopped translating. It seems fair to say that translators’ career trajectories are still not the subject of much research in Translation Studies, something which the present study may help to remedy. As Pym (1998) suggests, translators can do much more in their lives than “just” translate, and indeed, translators’ biographies show many of those who translated had also gained prestige and recognition in different fields, i.e., art, education, theology, pedagogy, and science. Pym clearly shows that monoprofessionalism in translation is an illusion. He also stresses the ability of translators to travel, and notes that in many historical contexts, those who knew foreign languages moved across borders with considerable ease. Pym also argues that translators’ physical form, i.e., their bodies, is no less important than their minds: “when I talk about translators, plural, I refer to people with flesh-and-blood bodies. If you prick them, they bleed” (Pym 1998, 161). Bodies can hurt, feel pleasure or pain. Furthermore, translators move with their names across scripts, languages, nations and political regimes. This journey is ascribed in their identity and leaves traces even at the seemingly cursory layer of nicknames. Different spellings and/or pronunciations of their names in different dialects and contexts tells a profound truth about the existential challenges related to the so-called in-betweenness that lies at the core of their profession. As was stated by Maria Constanza Guzman, translation should be considered as “invested and embodied practice, rendering translators’ bodies and life histories as part of the epistemological enquiry about the translator’s self” (Guzman 2013, 189). This view of translators as people, with their own identities, ambitions, and agenda, was also adopted in the following investigation of the translation history and biography of Bolesława Kopelówna.

This brief review of some aspects of Pym’s approach to translation history also highlights that the research on biographies within translation history can encounter many potential difficulties, such as inconsistencies and gaps in the archives of translators who moved, changed their names and professions, and who were either neglected or known for their other occupation, and sometimes deliberately hidden, for instance in the case of oppressive state policy (Hermans 2007). In this respect, an important approach to data collection was proposed by Lieven D’hulst (2010): by asking traditional questions from rhetoric (*quis? quid? ubi? quibus auxiliis? cur? quomodo? quando?*) it

becomes possible to extend our understanding of translators' archives and uncover key aspects, such as who translated, when, for what purposes, and for whom.

Another scholar whose work proposed new ways of thinking about translation history, therefore also responding to some of the difficulties raised by Pym, is Christopher Rundle. Rundle (2014) overtly encourages presenting the results of one's research to a deliberately selected audience that can provide relevant feedback. In the case of TS scholars and "conventional" historians, dialogue and collaboration can lead to the revision of traditional literary and cultural history with particular attention to figures that were previously neglected or hidden. Openness to integrated tools from various disciplines, as proposed by Rundle, make it possible to not only ask more inspiring questions, but also to benefit from the achievements of different fields.

If I seek a dialogue with a 'conventional' historian who works on my same historical subject, it is because that historian will have a similar expertise to mine and will therefore be in a position to appreciate the value of any historical insight that I have to offer. We engage in the same discourse and he or she will be in a position both to appreciate my own position and influence it. (Rundle 2014, 4)

This can apparently bridge the gap between historians and translation scholars who present a substantial "asymmetry of engagement" (Rafael and Rundle 2016, 28) in the recognition of the importance and potential of translation in history.

2.2 Microhistories and translation history

Adopting an integrated, interdisciplinary approach within translation history will not automatically solve all the problems of the field as encountered by Translation Studies scholars: because – as Jeremy Munday puts it – they not only "need to be aware of the applications, and limitations, of methods employed by historians, social scientists and literary theorists", but also "be prepared to tailor them in a way that can address the needs of the discipline" (Munday 2014, 64). By investigating the working papers of little-known or forgotten translators, such as Andrew Hurley, Bernard Miall or Margaret Sayers Peden, Munday tries to demonstrate the potential of manuscripts, especially translators' papers, post-hoc accounts and interviews in producing archives of translators and histories of translation. Munday applies a microhistorical approach in order to give voice to individuals "we did not know existed" (Munday 2014, 66–67 quoted in Paloposki 2017, 3). He presents many benefits of this approach, and in particular he argues that it allows access to the motivations of

particular translators, which would be impossible to reconstruct from the traditional textual analysis only. As he points out, personal papers offer relatively unmediated access to the working practices of translators and can provide the researcher with a valuable historical context (Munday 2014, 66).

The microhistorical approach adapted to the particular translator's persona, contributes to the accumulation of translation knowledge and is in line with Julio César Santoyo's remark that "[i]f we think of the history of translation as a mosaic, there can be little doubt that there are still many small pieces or tesserae missing, as well as large empty spaces yet to be filled" (Santoyo 2006, 13, quoted in Woodsworth 2012, XVII). The importance of accumulating translators' accounts in comparative studies of different practices of transfer in translation history was also emphasised by Dirk Delabastita (Delabastita 2012, 246, quoted in Paloposki 2017, 2). In this sense, investigating the accounts of Kopelówna's life and work from many sources will hopefully also add more small pieces to the mosaic of translation history in Poland.

The use of primary sources raises several challenges for translation studies, as mentioned by Outi Paloposki (2017, 3), who elaborated on Munday's microhistorical approach to translator's archives. Paloposki identified two main reasons underlying the reluctance within translation studies with regard to archival work. Firstly, she claims that archives are not attractive as they are usually seen as reserved for the so-called 'proper historians' only; and secondly, the fact that they are organised along national distinctions makes it almost impossible to create comparative patterns (*ibid.*).² According to my own research, there is yet another factor, valid at least in the Polish context, which works as a disincentive for translation-related archival research: the fact that the archives are difficult to access and lack clear reference to translators. As Munday states:

When it comes to the study of translation, until recently exclusion seems to have been the norm. Traces of the translator are generally hard to find in many collections and require some excavation. In the absence of a central catalogue of archives searchable by keyword or theme, it is often difficult to locate collections that are relevant for translation studies research. (Munday 2017, 71)

As translation is often not "at the first level of classification" (Munday 2014, 73), archival work in the context of translators requires particular creativity and determination.

2 Recently, change can be seen thanks to global and transnational approaches increasingly adopted within Translation Studies; e.g., Batchelor and Harding (2017); Castro and Ergun (2017); D'hulst and Gambier (2018).

Adopting a microhistorical approach legitimises and encourages the focus on the non-obvious and obscure traces of translators' agency, motivation, and attitude to the profession through the everyday experience of individuals inscribed in personal papers, correspondence, and artefacts. In addition, as Munday emphasised, material on translation and translators is often housed in the collections of others, i.e., diplomats, publishing companies or writers (Munday 2014, 72).

A microhistorical approach therefore seems to be most suitable for the study of the case of Kopelówna. Although she authored dozens of translations from English into Polish in the interwar period, she is virtually unknown today (Sobesto 2018). Kopelówna authored the first Polish translation of Katherine Mansfield's prose, and in 1934 the collection *The Garden Party and Other Stories* was published and soon reviewed in various literary periodicals by many eminent scholars who also happened to be translators, such as Witold Chwalewik and Zbigniew Grabowski. The findings from my research revealed that Kopelówna's allegedly poor renditions of Mansfield's short stories greatly affected the writer's reception in Poland for many decades.³ Since many questions about Kopelówna still remain unanswered, this article will describe her persona employing the concept of *reading against the grain* (Wiget 1991, 209) – a postcolonial mode of critical reading in order to recover marginalised voices, in this particular case, of a forgotten female translator.⁴

2.3 Gender matters

The position of a woman in patriarchal society is also reflected in Kopelówna's life and works, however, in order to study this, we need to extend the traditional notion of archival material in order to include previously excluded “silent majorities, unheard

- 3 The status of the author can be inferred from the very scarce frequency of reeditions of her short stories (Sobesto 2018). Only recently a retranslation of Mansfield's stories into Polish was published in a critical collection which was edited, translated and given an ample foreword by Magda Heydel – a translator and translation studies scholar (cf. Mansfield/Heydel 2020). Unfortunately, even in this edition Kopelówna was not given true credit – instead of “Bolesława” she was referred to by a similar in spelling and pronunciation yet substantially different Polish female name “Bronisława” (Heydel 2020, 386).
- 4 Although used earlier, the term *reading against the grain* along with the notion of *reading with the grain* were popularised by a prominent figure in the field of composition and rhetoric, David Bartholomae, and a co-director of the Institute for Learning (IFL) at the Learning Research & Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh and a poet Anthony Petrosky. It was announced in their anthology *Ways of Reading. Anthology for Writers* (1995) and later borrowed by many scholars from various fields, including history, culture studies and feminist studies.

voices and marginalised groups” (Paloposki 2017, 3) into the historical research within Translation Studies. Specific challenges are associated with archival research concerning female creators. For instance, in the volume *Working in Women’s Archives*, female literary scholars aimed to bring back voices and stories of seven female writers of various ethnic origins and socio-cultural backgrounds from different historical periods, now completely forgotten, excluded from the canon and relegated to their relationships with male relatives. The autobiographies, letters, private notes, biographies, paintings, inscriptions on gravestones and many other artifacts of someone’s mother, wife and daughter were investigated to create multidimensional, non-linear and sensitive-to-gaps narrative of great, and yet forgotten minds, while, at the same time, not pretending objectivity or usurping the absolute truth. In this respect, the approach proposed by the scholar Gwendolyn Davies, who researched the 18th century maritime writer Deborah How Cottnam, seems particularly inspiring. Davies (2001) coined the term *re/deconstruction*, “to describe the complexity of the multiple goals that women academics in our times bring to archives, as we both deconstruct the traditional views of the female subject and reconstruct female subjects from the anonymity of history” – as was aptly stated by the editors of the volume (Buss and Kadar 2001, 2). In this way, Davies speaks of the silences that surround these women and the need to re-create with sensitivity and diligence their profile and spirit with the help of the so-called ‘material history’ (Davies 2001, 35). In this respect, accumulating private artefacts (including e.g., dried flowers, locks of hair, timetables) often overlooked by historians, extends the notion of the conventional archive and enables the telling of stories from different perspectives and tracing the voice of female subjects.

In the case of Kopelówna, extending the notion of an archive to the artefacts linked with her everyday life was not sufficient, as there were no private objects to collect or investigate at our disposal. That is why in our research into Kopelówna the notion of an archive needed to be extended even further. If we understand the archive not only as a set of tangible artefacts, but also as a dynamic net of interpersonal relations (Guzman 2013, 179), this allows us to research Kopelówna through the study of her professional affiliations with the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) and her relationship with one of its leading figures, Zygmunt Żuławski. Adopting this extended understanding of the source material, the archive of her friend Żuławski was also investigated, which consists of dozens of letters, manuscripts, and documents. Nowadays Żuławski’s personal papers are stored in one of the largest scientific libraries in Poland, the Ossolineum, and has been investigated by historians and bibliographers (Smyłła 2008). Our main interest was the volume consisting of Żuławski’s letters, speeches, and articles, edited by the historian Jakub Tyszkiewicz and librarian Ireneusz Lipiński and published in 1998 by the Ossolineum Publishing House. It was particularly striking that although many of the letters in the volume were

addressed to Kopelówna, she was referred to in only one modest footnote, in which there was no mention that she was also a translator (Żuławski 1998, 19).

3. Who is Bolesława Kopelówna?

The fate of research on Bolesława Kopelówna embodies many of the tendencies presented in her biography. Kopelówna might be seen as a case in point when it comes to Pym's "five principles" in relation to translators: she cannot be considered "the cultural figure" typical or stereotypical of translator, and cannot be identified only with the translatorial practice. The trajectory of her life and work was not linear: she did not study translation, nor did she carry on the profession throughout her entire life. She was also not considered as the most representative of the so-called professional translators⁵ (she was more a political activist than translator) and certainly not (fully) recognised. She is not only neglected by the existing history of translation and ignored by her contemporaries, but she is also hidden under many pseudonyms. For example, in various relatively comprehensive entries on her she is listed by the following names: Anna Kopel, Franciszka Kwiatkowska, Bolesława Kopelówna and the nickname "Bolka" (Smogorzewska 1992; Smyłła 2008; Żuławski 1980). Moreover, in some bibliographical entries the books she translated are ascribed to the non-existent Bronisława Kopelówna. Furthermore, not only her first name, also her surname varies – which, in the Polish context, would not be that surprising as a woman traditionally takes her husband's surname – but, in this case it is surprising, as Kopelówna never married. In her case, the changes of her first name were related to her conversion to Christianity in 1924 (she was born Jewish),⁶ while the alteration of surnames might have had political reasons, as during the Second World War she went by Franciszka Kwiatkowska to conceal her political activism from the Nazis (Smogorzewska 1992).

Her place of birth was not difficult to track: she was born in Warsaw in December 1897, although the exact day varies from record to record, stating either the 2nd or the 7th of December (Smogorzewska 1992; [wg] 1961). She travelled a lot, and soon after finishing her secondary school in 1914 she moved with her mother (a music teacher) to the United States, where she studied literature and history at the New York College.

5 As was pointed out by Kaisa Koskinen, for decades the focus in Translation Studies was put on so-called professional translators, defined as experts trained in the field. Koskinen recognises the need for the research on paraprofessionals – those individuals who did not get the professional training but happened to be experienced in translation or interpretation for one reason or another (Koskela et al. 2017; Koskinen et al. 2020).

6 She was a delegate during the Jewish Trade Union Congress in Paris in 1927 (J.T.A. 1927, 16). Her surname, Kopel, and the first name of her father, Samuel also suggests her Jewish origin.

She returned to Poland in 1919 and enrolled in the Polish Socialist Party (PPS). She lived in Warsaw, but travelled to Paris in March 1927 as the Polish press delegate for the Trade Union Congress (J.T.A. 1927, 16). During the Second World War, in 1941, she fled from Warsaw to the city of Łańcut, and returned to the capital in 1945. After the war, she took part in various international conferences abroad, like, for example, the Three-Power Conference in London in March 1948. She died in Warsaw in 1961. Paradoxically, her death was an important moment for the recognition of her life and work, as the obituary notice published in the press revealed some biographical facts that had not been mentioned before ([wg] 1961). It is often the case for female writers and translators that only after their deaths do they become recognised as authors, and that their *oeuvre* is mentioned (Buss and Kadar 2001). The fact that Kopelówna's obituary was published in the Press Notebooks issued by the Centre of Press Studies in Kraków [Krakowski Ośrodek Badań Prasoznawczych] is telling, and also in line with Pym's (1998) observation that translators do more than translate. As far as her career as a translator is concerned, Kopelówna's first work experience was in technical and legal translation, which she did for the Life Insurance Bureau [Biuro Ubezpieczeń na Życie] in the US (1915–1917). In 1917, before her conversion, she joined the Young Women's Christian Association, and later, in 1918 in Poland, she worked in an American company in Warsaw as a translator, though her tasks there are unclear.

In the interwar period, she was a very active part-time literary translator and translated almost 50 books, mostly from English into Polish. Kopelówna rendered many works from popular genres: from adventure books aimed at young adults (e.g., by Philip Gibbs) to romances (e.g., by Mary Webb) and detective and mystery fiction (e.g., by Bernard Newman). She also translated pieces written by Pearl S. Buck, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1938, as well as by the novelist and playwright W. Somerset Maugham. Kopelówna worked for different Polish publishers, and did not rely on one client (Worldcat 2022; Heydel et al. 2022).

From March 1920 to September 1939, she worked for the *Robotnik* socialist periodical as a proofreader and editorial assistant ([wg] 1961). She was also the editorial assistant in the Polish socio-cultural weekly *Światło* and the chief editor of the magazine *Metalowiec*, which was a periodical published by the Polish Metalworkers' Association [Związek Metalowców w Polsce]. During the Second World War, she worked as the secretary of the politician Mieczysław Niedziałkowski, and after his death in 1940 she fled to Łańcut where, under the name Franciszka, she worked in the Polish Insurance Company and taught English unofficially (Smogorzewska 1992).

After the Second World War, Kopelówna worked as a translator in the International Work Department of the Ministry of Labour. In addition to this she was also a journalist,

publishing in the *Telegram Codzienny* and *Nowy Świat* dailies (1918–1919). Shortly after the war, she also worked as a teacher in Łańcut, and later as a secretary in the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare in Warsaw. From 1950 Kopelówna was employed in the national medical publishing house [Państwowy Zakład Wydawnictw Lekarskich], and in the 1950s she joined the Polish Journalists' Association (Smogorzewska 1992).

Her personal interests and motivations have not been recorded anywhere. Through the process of re/deconstruction or the path of her life I will try to partly and retrospectively trace her archive.

3.1 Where does Kopelówna's archive come from?

To overcome the lack of Kopelówna's voice in the present research, I have extended the definition of her archive in order to re/deconstruct her position within Polish culture of the first half of the 20th century by incorporating paratexts and every cultural practice of reception "that surrounds, wraps, accompanies, extends, introduces and presents the translated text" (Yuste 2012, 118). I have analysed her translations in the search for footnotes and other authorial gestures. In this respect, Kopelówna's translation of Katherine Mansfield's stories turned out to be particularly intriguing. In the Polish edition of the collection *The Garden Party and Other Stories* (1922), only a few and inconsistent footnotes appear, but what turned out to be particularly intriguing was the reception and editorial fate of the volume. Published for the first time in Polish in Kopelówna's translation in 1934, these stories noticeably received underwhelming and critical press reviews. Stanisława Kuszelewska, a writer and translator herself, called Kopelówna's rendition "[...] decent, however, Mrs. Kopelówna's quill, usually promising and very hard-working, is not able to transplant Katherine Mansfield's subtle charm⁷ (Kuszelewska 1934, 5). Irena Krzywicka, a writer and left-wing activist was much more critical. To her, Mansfield's novels were published "in a translation so poor that there is nothing left of them, it is just a wreck of a book, impossible to judge" (Krzywicka 1935, 3). Krzywicka accused the translator of wrecking Mansfield's style, but does not mention Kopelówna by name.⁸ Elżbieta Kurowska's study on the reception of translations from English into Polish in the 1930s also proves that Kopelówna was a well-known, but heavily criticised translator. She depicts Kopelówna

7 All translations, unless otherwise stated, are by the author of the article. I would like to thank prof. Magda Heydel and my colleague Karolina Kwaśna for help in this regard.

8 The motivation of Krzywicka for not revealing Kopelówna's identity is not known, but it is striking that unlike all other reviewers she decided not to overly embarrass the translator. Or maybe her decision was motivated by the fact that she did not want Kopelówna to become recognised.

as hard-working, but producing “extraordinarily inaccurate translations” of various English and American novelists (Kurowska 1987, 40). Kurowska points out that Kopelówna translated various literary genres: from modernist contemporary prose published in prestigious publishing houses, like J. Przeworski’s, to crime novels and romance novels for popular publishing houses. The majority of her translations appeared in the 1930s. Kurowska suggests that in the interwar period almost all translators from English were criticised for their renditions of the source texts, but Kopelówna was especially disdained (Kurowska 1987, 40). For example, she writes that J. Przeworski “carelessly” commissioned Kopelówna for translation of Mansfield’s prose (Kurowska 1987, 40). Critics particularly disliked the fact that she did not domesticate cultural references and was too literal in her renditions, so that the text sounded awkward in Polish.

In this context, it is worth mentioning the textual material from Mansfield’s collection *The Garden Party and Other Stories* published in 1934, 1954 and 1970 in an abridged version. Kopelówna’s initial translation choices show that she was struggling to understand the source text. If we take an example of the titles of particular stories: the original set phrase, *Bank Holiday*, which is non-existent in Polish, was initially translated as *Święto sierpniowe* [the August Festival] and changed in the 1958 edition into an even more misleading rendition: *Święto bankowe* [the Bank Festival]. Kopelówna used false friends, omitted difficult phrases, and treated words she did not understand as proper names. For instance, in one of the stories, *At the Bay*, she left common words like porridge untranslated in the target text: “wyżłobiła sobie tylko rzeczkę pośrodku swego *porridge*” (Mansfield 1934, 19), probably not as a deliberate choice adopting the so-called foreignizing strategy, but due to the fact that she was unfamiliar with the term. If we compare Kopelówna’s first translation of the collection of short stories *The Garden Party and Other Stories* from 1934 to the one from 1958, we see that she made some seemingly random alterations: Kopelówna changed two out of fifteen titles and made dozens of corrections in each of the short stories. The reasons behind the revisions and the dynamics and workflow with the publisher in this case are not clear. I assume that it was Kopelówna’s initiative to make changes and potentially protect herself from further critique. She revised poems and footnotes, which could be evidence of her continued engagement with the text and her changing attitude towards the first version of the translation, as well as her possibly growing familiarity with the source culture.

What is worth mentioning is that her work was later re-used. Two decades after Kopelówna’s death, in 1980, the peculiar selection of 8 out of 15 stories from the collection *The Garden Party and Other Stories* was republished under the title of one of the other stories, *Her First Ball*. However, it is impossible to treat the translation of

Mansfield as Kopelówna's independent voice due to the fact that during her lifetime and even after her death a plethora of unregistered and inconsistent changes were made to her translations throughout the editing process in the 1950s and 1980s.

3.2 Where can Kopelówna's voice be heard?

As the notion of an archive was extended in the case of Kopelówna, yet another important factor comes to play. Being involved in the socialist movement in Poland as a long-standing associate of the periodical *Robotnik*, Kopelówna worked with many politicians, especially Zygmunt Żuławski, a socialist activist and journalist. Initially, Żuławski was her colleague, but in his memoirs he mentions the rapid development of their relationship. He refers to Kopelówna in a vague, indirect way: stressing her young age and physical appearance in detail, e.g. recalling her “serene nut-brown eyes of a frightened gazelle” (Żuławski 1980, 81). He directly speaks about the fact that Kopelówna's main motivation for translation was in fact the need to earn a living: her mother died in the US, and she had to be financially independent for her entire adult life. Żuławski mentions that Kopelówna was not only a reliable companion in the professional context of political events, but also his closest and dearest friend. It was Kopelówna with whom Żuławski shared his plans, thoughts and dreams (Żuławski 1980, 81). It is not stated directly, but while reading Żuławski's recollections of Kopelówna he seemed to be embarrassed by the extent to which he took advantage of her work: she accompanied and supported the entire process Żuławski's social and political activity, by contacting his colleagues, collecting press reviews for him, making notes and typing his papers (Żuławski 1998: 20–21). Maybe Żuławski even blamed himself for involving her too much in political affairs: “I have disturbed her as I have put her in the midst of the battle I have been fighting myself and I dragged her into the life I have lived myself – adventurous and extreme” (Żuławski 1980, 81). In his memoirs, he states:

Zośka [Zofia Żuławska – JS] was my wife, a housewife, a mother for my children and a member of my family, loved by everyone – whereas Bolka was an inspiration, a good caring spirit in my life, my faithful comrade in my social work and a support in hard times. (Żuławski 1980, 121, quoted in Smyłła 2008, 240)

As far as the present research is concerned, the most important source of knowledge about Kopelówna was Żuławski's letters to her. Published in the meticulously designed collection entitled *Zygmunt Żuławski: Listy, Przemówienia, Artykuły* [Letters, Speeches and Articles] by the eminent publishing house Ossolineum, they are

strikingly personal when compared to other, rather more official texts included in the volume. Surprisingly, out of all 39 letters published, the majority (26) were addressed to Kopelówna. What emerges from the reading of those personal letters is the different voice Żuławski adopts, one that is far from his charismatic yet harsh tone that can be seen in his political speeches and letters, such as those addressed to the communist politician and president of People's Poland Bolesław Bierut (Żuławski 1998). In many of his letters to Kopelówna, Żuławski thanks her for her hospitality, devotion, financial support after the Second World War, for the medicines, clothes and food she sent him. He also stresses how important she is to him and how grateful he is:

I am so glad every time I receive a letter from you, for you always write in such a kind and warm way. You are indeed my best and the most faithful “ambassador” who, even without a direct contact with her “principal” can instinctively feel my own desires”. (Żuławski 1998, 32)

In a sense, some of Kopelówna's personality is reflected back to us through Żuławski's writings: her generosity despite experiencing financial instability herself, and her empathy and diligence in maintaining her relationships.

Kopelówna's extraordinary affection, esteem and willingness to sacrifice herself were stressed by Żuławski many times in his letters. Of course, as with any subjective writing of this nature, it is difficult to tell whether she was indeed as she was described in his letters, or whether he exaggerated his own gratitude. It could also be the case that the relationship was not symmetrical, but more one-sided: maybe Kopelówna was used by Żuławski in a rather cynical way. In one of his letters from 1946, he states that:

for many years I have this feeling that I am in fact exploiting you and I am still pushing it forward. If there is any kind of plea for my behaviour, maybe it is the fact that you help me with that a lot, as well [...] (Żuławski 1998, 51)

What seems certain is that he relied on her and that she was an active and seemingly aware participant in the relationship.

From other letters, we learn about their mutual friends and political undertakings. Żuławski also mentions the fact that Kopelówna lives in Warsaw, writes about her trips to London and the political circumstances affecting their correspondence, such as censorship. He also refers to her living conditions, i.e., lack of central heating and financial problems:

“I’ve received sweets from Stefan and sugar from Witek, I thank you so much. You are far too good for me, you are spoiling me. For, dear Boleczka, you are having quite a hard time yourself, why are you spending money like that.” (Żuławski 1998, 63)

In one of the letters from 1945, Żuławski gives thanks for sweets and the playing cards; he also expresses concern that another parcel Kopelówna sent is still on its way (Żuławski 1998, 33–34). In some of Żuławski’s letters, he thanks her for supplying him with books that were inaccessible in Poland in the late 1940s. Kopelówna often received copies directly from the authors – among them also those by Irena Krzywicka, who had criticised the quality of Kopelówna’s translation of Mansfield’s prose, but also by other famous artists like Kornel Makuszyński, Karol Irzykowski and Władysław Broniewski. She was also buying many books in second-hand bookshops in London, and sent them over to Żuławski (Smyłła 2008, 240):

I thank you a lot for your, gifts but it is really extravagant of you. You know me, I am a modest man, and you have bought half of London. You are not my aunt. Instead of thinking about your own needs you tool me up as if I was going to live for 100 years. (Żuławski 1998, 20).

There was humour and familiarity inscribed in these exchanges, thereby shedding precious light on what Pym (2014) referred to as the private life story of this translator – her deeply personal, travel-filled, and embodied history.

Żuławski’s approach to his seemingly private correspondence was surprisingly self-censoring, although this attitude is perhaps characteristic of male figures aware of their importance in political history (Buss and Kadar 2001). Żuławski believed he was important enough to have his private archive preserved and potentially accessible for his descendants. Perhaps he may have been worried that others might misinterpret the nature of the relationship due to the gifts Kopelówna gave him, but to my understanding he might have also been aware of the potential that his private letters be read in the future by others and that he might be judged after his death. At least this seems to be evident from the last letter to Kopelówna from 1947, where Żuławski writes:

My Dearest Boleczka! I wrote to you a couple of days ago but nowadays I am never sure whether you’ve obtained my letter. Only now I got a parcel from you, as I reckon, only to force me to answer you as quickly as possible. Why are you doing this? You sent me so many sweets and lemons,

and pate, and tea, for I don't really need that. You are always so good to me – really, far too good, please, don't do this as we only compromise ourselves. (Żuławski 1998, 67)

Even in these scattered fragments of Kopelówna's indirect and re/deconstructed voice, one can trace a devoted and kind colleague and friend. There is no further evidence of the true nature of their affection, but, undeniably, due to this friendship it is possible to have some refracted access to at least part of Kopelówna's life. The intangible tension between the two political activists and human beings can be traced, but it is only briefly and vaguely signalled, leaving room for much speculation. Kopelówna's story, as told by Żuławski, points to some interesting revelations about the translator's biography. The fact that these additional insights are brought forward to us through another person's correspondence gives further evidence that invisible women need to be approached 'obliquely', and often become the subject of literary detective work (Gerson 2001, 15).

4. Conclusion

Microhistories are still rare in translation studies: the biographies of translators, especially of female translators, are scattered, unrecognised, difficult to investigate, and yet – fascinating. In the case of Kopelówna, one of the reasons that she was criticised by her fellow female translators could be because she approached translation as a profession that could provide an unmarried woman with a stable source of income, and thus a means of independence. Her culturally divergent political engagement and her Jewish origin could also have played a role in the fact that she was so widely criticised by her contemporaries, as well as by other critics after the Second World War.

In this article, my aim was not to address the entire complexity of Kopelówna's life and work, but rather to attempt to highlight commonly overlooked sources as potential reservoirs of a translator's voice, personality, affects and motivations. This kind of careful, meticulous, and determined approach seems to be particularly important in defining and constructing archives in translation history. Adopting a microhistorical approach in Translation Studies might be yet another proof that "[...] history is a creative, interpretive act, to some extent an act of imagination. Not unlike translation [...]" (Woodsworth 2012, XIII).

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