

"Translating Children's Literature: Case Study of ""Miševi i mačke naglavačke"" by Luko Paljetak"

Ilišin, Mateja

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J.J. Strossmayer University of Osijek

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Study Programme: Double Major MA Study Programme in English Language
and Literature – English Translation and Interpreting Studies and Pedagogy

Mateja Ilišin

**Translating Children's Literature:
Case Study of “Miševi i mačke naglavačke” by Luko Paljetak**

Master's Thesis

Supervisor: Marija Omazić, Full Professor of Linguistics

Co-supervisor: Romana Čačija, Senior Language Instructor

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Abstract:

The aim of this paper is to examine children's literature and the aspects of translating it. It provides an insight into the concept of childhood and children in relation to literature. Furthermore, it tries to depict the importance of children's literature as well as how it originated. The paper briefly deals with the place the children's literature has in modern society. Moreover, the significance of translations is explained as well as the role of translators in society and different cultures. Also, the paper tries to explore the methods and issues of translating children's literature, and translating poetry as well. As an example, the case study of "Miševi i mačke naglavačke" by Luko Paljetak is presented and analysed.

Keywords: childhood, children's literature, poetry, translation, "Miševi i mačke naglavačke"

1. Introduction

The paper discusses children's literature, its issues and significance for society, as well as the translation and its problems, with the focus mostly on translating poetry. While often regarded as insignificant and substandard by laymen, those who know better realise the impression children's literature has on young minds from the early years of their life.

The above-mentioned impression is explained in the first part of the second chapter, and children's reading in general is discussed. Also, the way children understand reading from before they themselves could read influences their reading habits later in life. It is explained how the reason children read is different from that of adults, which is why finding that reason and motivating children to read is imperative, while forcing them to read will inevitably lead to failure.

The last part of the second chapter examines the relationship that society has with the concept of childhood as well with children's literature. It shows the difficulties in defining the above-mentioned concepts and how those problems are in relation to each other. In addition to dealing with changes in perception of social standards and their influence on adaptations of children's literature, the chapter also briefly discusses its present and possible future status.

The third chapter is focused on translation in general, as well as translation of children's literature, and, ultimately, translation of poetry. The chapter begins with the definition of translation and explains its importance throughout history and among societies. Furthermore, it clarifies the way translations can be adapted and used to influence people, and how the perception of translation can depend on the context (which is explained on the example of the former German Democratic Republic).

The third chapter further talks about the importance of translating children's literature and the role of a translator as a mediator. The importance of adaptation for children is discussed as well as the difference between translating for children and translating for adults. In the final part of the third chapter the paper deals with poetry translation. It goes in detail about the difficulties while translating poetry, and brings into question the possibility of translating poetry adequately since there is usually an aspect that has to be sacrificed in order for other aspects to be translated.

The fourth chapter deals with the four chosen poems from the collection of poems “Miševi i mačke naglavačke” by Luko Paljetak. It includes an abridged biography of the author, short summaries of the four selected poems, and the analysis of their translation.

2. Children's Literature

2.1. Literature and Children

Defining literature seems to be an easy task. *Dictionary.com* explains it as “writings in which expression and form, in connection with ideas of permanent and universal interest, are characteristic or essential features, as poetry, novels, history, biography, and essays”, and *Britannica.com* defines it simply as “a body of written work”. There are numerous sources that define it in different, yet similar ways. However, defining literature is only a small step towards discovering what literature really is. Literature cannot be perceived as a set of words that define it; it has to be comprehended in relation to the context and the influence it has on everyone reading it.

Literature creates an imaginary world which allows people to escape from the reality. As Cullingford states: “books constitute an interpretation of the world that people need” (9). The problems that make the real life challenging for some people are projected into the book, but the story in it, unlike the reality, has structure and meaning; it becomes the vehicle of one's coping mechanism. Regardless of how unrealistic the plot is, or how different the protagonist is from the reader, the bond between the two of them is created from the onset. The fact is that the reader identifies with the main character, “as if the reader looked for characteristics in the heroes that related to their own” (Cullingford 20). Therefore, the more neutral the protagonist is, and the less defining characteristics he has, the more the reader will identify with them. Because “identification (...) lies not so much in the characters as in the events” (Cullingford 20). The reader accepts the actions of the hero as their own, and, consequently, experiences the situations in which the hero is in with the corresponding emotions, desires and aspirations.

The main difference between the reality and literature is that, no matter the difficulties, disappointments and injustice in the world, literature provides “an essential distancing effect”, because “he or she will come through anything unscathed, and just as important, unaffected” (Cullingford 21). The imaginary stories provide a safe haven in the middle of everything that is happening around the reader.

Children's understanding of literature somewhat differs from that of adults. In the formative years of one's life, reading books strongly influences the future persona, i.e. a person's thoughts, behaviour and motivation. It determines the way a person will deal with the problems that reality offers. Rose claims:

“reading is magic (if it has never been experienced by the child as magic then the child will be unable to read); it is also an experience which allows the child to master the vagaries of living, to strengthen and fortify the ego, and to integrate the personality – a process ideally to be elicited by the aesthetic coherence of the book” (qtd. in Hunt, *Encyclopaedia of Children's Literature* 10)

Understanding literature in that sense creates that much more pressure on creating it in a way that is influential and significant. Children like to hear and read the stories which reflect their vision of the world; they like to experience the hero's everyday routine (such as getting out of bed, going to sleep, etc.) in order for them to relate more to him. “It does not matter that the protagonists happen to be elephants or mice. What does matter is that they go through familiar experiences” (Cullingford 23).

In school, children are taught how to read, which becomes an essential skill in life, especially in the world that is rapidly evolving. However, at the period of teaching that skill, children do not understand the importance of it and they think of it as a burden. Even though reading is an imperative part of childhood, it is not seen in such a way, rather it is “associated with difficulty, with doing what the teacher wants rather than with the pleasure of story” (Cullingford 12). At a very young age, children are very keen on learning how to read, because they understand that reading is mostly how adults tell stories to them, and they want to be able to do that themselves. If they realize the connection between the act of reading and the experience of the story, they will have the urge to be the creator of that process. Yet, the more they progress with their learning, the more they must read what their teachers think is best for them and less what they love and are interested into. So, the enjoyment of reading and exploring new worlds often transforms into an obligation which they are happy to omit, because “only adults are seen to ‘authorise’ proper children's literature” (Hunt, *Understanding Children's Literature* 19).

Books that children like to read differ significantly from the books adults read or, more importantly, from books adults would like children to read. Cullingford explains that there is a major gap between the nature of popular fiction and the nature of English literature. He claims that the main difficulty is that children quickly realize the discrepancy between the two and begin to gravitate towards what is popular among their peers because it is effortless and trendy. “They begin to associate reading in school, or approaching more demanding books, with nothing more than hard work, unnecessary and unrewarding” (Cullingford 190).

For children, school is the main area for socialization, it is the place where most of the friends are found in a lifetime. It is perfectly natural for children to try to fit in as much as possible throughout their entire education. That is even more true for younger pupils who try to look for approval everywhere they can. However, apart from socialization, children perceive school as a negative aspect of their lives. In other words: “to all children school includes alienating moments; a sense of boredom, bewilderment or unfairness. In these circumstances the shared tastes of the pupils, be they designer wear, the hit parade or their choice of reading, becomes more important to them” (Cullingford 190). Their choice of reading material depends on what is popular, and not on what is enforced by adults, which consequently leads to children perceiving any literary art that demands intellectual and emotional thinking as related to school, and, consequently, as boring and unnecessary.

Cullingford also provides a solution to the above-mentioned problem: teachers should set an example. Children learn by imitation, and a teacher cannot expect from children to read and enjoy reading if they do not do that themselves. “Teaching must be charged with stories, with anecdotes, with examples from the teacher's own experience” which will lead to children realizing how much the teachers gain from their reading experience (Cullingford 194). Moreover, the teacher should talk about the books they are reading and start conversations about important topics in the book, which will lead to discussions and creating an interest in the story that is being discussed. Children cannot be forced to do something when they see it as a form of punishment. If they are shown that it can be a type of pleasure, they will be more than happy to engage in that sort of activity.

2.2. Children's Literature

Adults tend to tell tales to children from a very young age, whether they are reading something or inventing the stories on the spot. Children accept them as an element of their childhood because “stories read to them become part of their own memories” (Hunt, *Encyclopedia* 2). The more one story is told to them, the more they will expect for it to unfold in a certain way every time. Cullingford explains this idea as a contrast between the short-termed and long-termed impressions, i.e. the episodic and the generic. According to him, the former is the one that makes a more astonishing and stronger effect, but it’s instantaneous and short-lived. The one that truly makes an impact on a person is the generic, and that is the one that will stay in one’s memory. A child will remember “the familiarity of theme and tone, rather than the challenge to their perceptions. They like to have their expectations and their anticipations met” (Cullingford 11). Therefore, the reason why children like to hear some stories repeatedly lies in the sense of structure and familiarity.

However, when searching for a story to read, it should always be that of a difficulty adapted to the child. As Cullingford says: “the very ease of gratification leads to boredom, but anything too demanding is rejected for fear of boredom. What young readers learn is the dichotomy between reading because they want to and reading because they ought to. Children are voracious readers but they read what is essentially the same text again and again and again” (3). Therefore, a balanced text with the right motivation for reading leads to developing a passion for literature from a very young age. The role of grown-ups becomes evident in the sense of a guide who gently directs a child towards greatness.

Stories also provide children the way of understanding what is unknown to them: “the dark, the unexpected, the repetitious, and the ways adults behave” (Hunt, *Encyclopedia* 2). The fact that children use the tales as a way of understanding the world and the myriad of its uncertainties leads to a greater obligation from the adults while creating children’s literature. In children’s literature, there is less writing for the sake of writing, and more questions that arise from the process; for whom this work of art is intended, what the purpose of it is, what the child will learn from it, how they will be affected, etc. Considering the pressure of writing for a person in their formative years, one would think that the sole writing of it would be more appreciated, since:

“we can reflect on the direct or indirect influence that children’s books have, and have had, socially, culturally, and historically. They are overtly important educationally and

commercially – with consequences across the culture, from language to politics: most adults, and almost certainly the vast majority of those in positions of power and influence, read children’s books as children, and it is inconceivable that the ideologies permeating those books had no influence on their development.” (Hunt, *Understanding Children’s Literature* 1)

Most of the people seem to recognize childhood as an important part of one’s life, they almost universally perceive children as vulnerable and impressionable. However, when it comes to literature, or, in this technologically advanced world, any type of media children are exposed to, it seems not to matter how it will affect a young susceptible being. “Children’s literature is important – and yet it is not” (Hunt, *Understanding Children’s Literature* 2).

The fact is that children’s literature has to be adapted for children; in the way it is written (considering the language it is used, the characters, the ending and the overall story), and the way it will probably be understood by the readers. Unlike adults, who use literature to escape from reality, children use it to learn, maintain structure, or simply have fun. For them, reading should be relatively easy and effortless. Cullingford states that “emotional difficulties affect the child’s capacity to derive pleasure from the act of reading. Just as home circumstances affect the ability to learn to read, so it affects the pleasures of reading” (21). The act of reading combined with the desire to read leads to a more significant impact than when pressure is involved.

Nowadays, with more literate people than ever, there is a great obligation to use this achievement and “to take full advantage of the newly discovered ability” (Ellis 217). There is a considerable amount of literature meant for both learning and pleasure of children, and, with new technologies, it is very accessible and uncostly.

When thinking about children’s literature, one could easily forget to include comics. Considering that children like to read what attracts them at first glance and what is effortless to read, “nowhere is this ease of impact, and its consequences on the style of reading, more apparent than in comics” (Cullingford 167). It was once thought that television would surpass the popularity of comics, having in mind the lack of work children have to put into watching it. Nonetheless, comics still regularly appear in newspapers as well as on the internet.

However, as Ellis explains, children do not read comics for the sake of learning or having an escape mechanism; they read when they have nothing else to do (169). They understand that stories in the comics are superficial and supernatural, but they use them for a

momentary gratification. Comics do not exist to be criticized. There are too many illogical situations and events for them to be taken seriously. But they serve the purpose when filling out a moment of boredom. From that perspective, comics can be compared to a big part of the popular literature. Books that are seen as the episodic, as Cullingford would call them, will provoke a short-term impression and with that they will satisfy the reader and accomplish their function, because “the readers are not critics. They seek the kinds of gratification that come easily, and would resent making an effort” (Cullingford 169).

Therefore, even though it was thought that television will exceed the existence of comics, both media still have a place in child’s leisure time. The reason for it is that both serve the same purpose; they are both entertaining enough to keep them occupied, and with both they are exempt from thinking. As Hunt concluded: “the daily activities, as well as the free time, of children and teenagers are saturated with comics and there are no signs of comics losing their powerful hold on the collective imagination of young consumers worldwide” (*Encyclopedia* 394).

2.3. Childhood, Children's Literature and Society

Never before has being literate been so underestimated and taken for granted as it is in today's information-driven society. It would make sense that, nowadays, with the amount of literature available at any time, the number of people reading would significantly improve.

However: "the growth of literacy has been undermined by the use of such unsatisfactory instructional methods that large numbers of pupils have learned adequately neither the mechanics of reading nor their application to the understanding of different types of literature" (Ellis xii). Ellis explains that in today's world, more emphasis is put on literary works of poor quality and standard, and publishers are tenacious in making those works available in abundance. So, most of the people who do read, can rarely escape the crudeness of popular literature. "Many would complain that parents could do more to help their children, but they are in fact themselves representatives of a previously neglected generation" (Ellis xii). Those parents who have not been influenced to find the interest in reading cannot, themselves, be the influence on their children in that sense. The desire for reading (or the lack of it) is passed on from generation to generation, which would explain why the availability of literature is not connected with the actual act of reading.

Children's literature may not have been defined as such from the moment it existed, but its presence is dependent on the existence of child and childhood. "Long before John Newbery established the first press devoted to children's books, stories were told and written for the young, and books originally offered to mature readers were carefully recast or excerpted for youthful audiences" (Lerer 1). Lévi-Strauss gives an example of *Little Red Riding Hood*, and the way that folk tale by Perrault has been changed over time to suit the contemporary social standard. He suggests that "educated writers purposely appropriated the oral folk tale and converted it into a type of literary discourse about morals, values and manners so that children would become civilized according to the social code of the time" (qtd. in Cullingford 5).

Therefore, children's literature is an unstable and changeable concept which depends on the construct of society and its transformations. Similarly, the sole concept of childhood is seen as a notion that depends on the context. Considering the culture, race, nationality, economy, politics and every other aspect of life, childhood cannot easily be universally defined. Taking that into account, Lerer's take on Wartofksy's definition of children seems appropriate:

“‘[Children are] what they are taken to be by others, and what come to take themselves to be, in the course of their social communication and interaction with others.’ So, too, is children’s literature: books that are taken into childhood, that foster social communication, and that, in their interaction with their readers, owners, sellers, and collectors, teach and please.” (2)

Since childhood is difficult to define even today, it is rational to conclude that it was even more of a problem in the past. Consequently, the differentiation between children’s literature and the one of adults was virtually non-existent. Ellis explains how books that were read by children were mostly textbooks, and there was often a lack of any literature whatsoever. There was no children’s literature (in terms of literature with the purpose of giving children pleasure in reading) in England before 1600, and even after that there was a thin line between the concepts of children’s literature and school literature (Ellis 3).

With the adaptations of books for adults (as was mentioned in the example of *Little Red Riding Hood*), appeared one of the first children’s books, Ellis explains (3). “Young people carefully ignored the morals and innuendoes with which these and similar books were filled, and extracted the delightful stories which have retained their favour for generations” (Ellis 3). The 18th century was the period when it became imperative that books children read were pedagogical, which Hunt defines as “a literature in which the dominant social, cultural and educational norms are inscribed” (*Encyclopedia* 193). Ellis explains how the moral tales took over the pedagogical purpose and prevailed throughout 19th century, while fairy tales endured harsh criticism because the educationalists frowned upon the supernatural in those stories.

Over time, opinions have changed but there have not been standards for any school subject, including standards for reading. With the close of the 19th century, opinions have changed and the standardized curriculum Revised Instructions was published. Ellis explains this much awaited reform in education (which is similar to the contemporary norm):

“Fairy tales, fables and anecdotes of animals were recommended for younger children; whilst for older children narratives and poetical and literary extracts were considered to be appropriate. Lessons should illustrate the importance of thrift, temperance, good conduct as a means to well-being and success, gentleness, consideration for others, and kindness to animals. The attitude was increasingly held that children should find pleasure in their school books and should also know how to locate any information which they required.” (96)

Lerer explains how times have changed for children's literature, and how it is now the most lucrative area of publishing, and "links between traditional and innovative media establish younger readers as the prime market for imaginative writing" (8). With childhood being a universal period of a person's life, regardless of context, and with it being filled with learning processes and development, it is understandable that children's literature will increasingly improve its status even more and that its corpus will continuously flourish.

3. Translation

3.1. Literature Translation and Translators

Translation is an action essential for connecting different cultures and societies. It serves as a tool for understanding what would have been incomprehensible otherwise, not only in terms of verbal communication, but also in terms of behaviour, norms and beliefs. It became crucial for opening new worlds to specific populations.

There have been many understandings of translating literature throughout history, as there are now. The approach to translation has varied from two extremes: from it being the word-for-word concept of translating from a source-language (SL) to a target-language (TL), to translating the same reactions and ideas instead of translating words. In different times, there have been different perceptions of ideal translations; i.e. the equivalence between SL and TL is differently perceived.

All the understandings of translations are simultaneously criticised. For example, Oittinen criticises Eugene A. Nida's idea of equivalence as transferring reactions to another language: "it is not self-evident, or even possible, for translations to have exactly or even nearly the same effect on their readers as the original texts had on the original readers. Situations vary. A translation is written in another time, another place, another language, another country, another culture" (9). Newmark, on the other hand, appraises Nida's comprehension of translation as "reproduction of the closest natural equivalent of the source language message", which additionally proves the point of translation being a difficult concept (qtd. in Newmark 34).

Newmark defines translation as "transferring the meaning of a stretch or a unit of language, the whole or a part of a text, from one language to another" (27). Nowadays it is a translator's job to choose how he understands the "meaning" he must transfer. "The translator is continually making choices, weighing up, balancing, comparing the merits of one 'equivalent', or carrier of meaning, against another" (Newmark 33). Oittinen, however, argues that the key to a good translation is transferring situations:

"Situation, a key issue within all translation, can be understood as context—time, place, and culture — including the individual interpreting the context and acting in the context. When reading, writing, translating, illustrating, we are always in a situation. Nothing

we read or hear or see is simply a given; instead all our knowledge is derived from a process of interpretation in an individual situation.” (Oittinen 9)

She claims that different interpretations depend on the context/situation, and not only the words that are being said, because words are only a part of the action. Furthermore, words can have different meanings depending on the context, so she explains that it is illogical to translate words in isolation, since the situation is superior in this regard.

While translation as a process is an important act, it does not function in isolation. Translation is influenced by the translator, the reader, the source-culture and the target-culture. Translator owes the target audience as well as the original text to achieve equivalence, no matter how the equivalence is perceived. It is known that almost anything that can be said in one language can also be said in another, but it depends on the way it is said. Languages are unique, but there is a myriad of synonyms in different languages that can be considered as (more or less) perfect equivalents. There are also words that simply do not have an equivalent and they must be translated in a number of words or a phrase, which means that “translation can be described as filling out the gaps between languages” (Newmark 25). But “creativity in translation starts where imitation stops” (Newmark 9). The creativity is most visible in the translation of poetry, but the less creativity there is, the more it is probable that the translation will be a successful one.

History has taught people that translation can be perceived differently depending on the context, as well as that it can be used for diverse purposes. Many authors describe the use of translation in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) as an excellent example of that viewpoint. Notably, Van Coillie goes into detail about the position of translation in the GDR, including the status of translators and the affect the translation of children’s literature has had on the population. The aim of the state was to create “people equipped with all the tools to carry the state further towards the utopia of a communist classless society” (Van Coillie 48). Literature and translation of it had an immense role in realizing that goal because it was used as an education method for steering people in the direction that was thought correct. Every piece of art was scrutinized before being released to the public because “art was to be employed as an instrument for achieving decisions in the spirit of Party politics and ethics” (Van Coillie 48).

According to Van Coillie, both authors and translators were held in high esteem because of their pedagogical influence on the society, and they were, therefore, provided with special education, respect, secure income, and benefits, but were simultaneously greatly monitored and

controlled (49). All foreign books had to fit the criteria of the ideological standard of the country in order for them to be considered for a translation.

There were many obstacles in translating foreign literature in the GDR. Apart from a great deal of it being considered unfit for translation, there were also problems with obtaining currency from other countries. The GDR had to pay the rights for a foreign book, and since there was a lack of foreign currency (and the small amount that existed often had to be used for different purposes), publishing of a non-indigenous book was frequently rejected (Van Coillie 53-54).

Taking these facts into account, it is no surprise that the translators enjoyed a prestigious reputation. The benefits that came with the status were admirable, as their pedagogical purpose was evened out with the authors'. What is more, time constraint was not an issue as far as translating goes, since the GDR considered that quality was of outmost importance (Van Coillie 56). Translation as a profession was no longer on the sidelines. Van Coillie claims that translators in the GDR could be characterised as celebrities, because they were in touch with the audience and travelled all around the country to read from their translations (57).

The described prestige of translators differs greatly from the status that they have in most of the societies today. The fact that there is a constant emphasis on the translation being read as an original does not contribute to the position of translators in society, since they are, consequently, neglected when they do their job properly. There is, however, an intrinsic motivation present in translators and that is what repeatedly produces satisfactory results.

3.2. Translating Children's Literature

Translating can be seen as a way of learning about new worlds and cultures. As Van Coillie says:

“It is common practice today to describe the role of the translator as a mediator, as one who facilitates the negotiating 'dialogue' between source text and target audience. Nowhere else is the mediating role of the translator so strongly felt as in the translation of children's literature. (...) For children who do not master foreign languages, translations are the sole means of entering into genuine contact with foreign literatures and cultures.” (v)

The role of a translator as a mediator in that regard should be humbling and flattering at the same time, because mediation here does not mean simply negotiation between a source-text and a target-text; it means moulding the minds of the young ones and introducing them to unfamiliar experiences and ideas. This brings to a point that, even though translating children's literature often seems less demanding compared to other literary works, it seems that “often the creative, playful use of language offers an additional challenge in that it requires a special empathy with the imaginative world of the child” (Van Coillie vi).

While translating, a translator has to take multiple factors into consideration: the original text, his translation, the original audience as well as the targeted one, the different cultures, etc. However, what is mostly forgotten in the process of translating is the mindset of the translator. Since the translation is considered a good one if the translator is invisible, i.e. the translation is read as if it were an original, it is easily forgotten that the translator is also a human being with his own attitudes and perceptions of the world. It is hardly possible to be completely objective while doing anything, including translating. When speaking of children's literature, “translators cannot escape their own ideologies”, which here means: their child images (Oittinen 4). Since the entire concept of childhood is difficult to define, the main way of grasping it is through their own experiences.

Translator's child image is a decisive aspect when it comes to translating children's literature, as Oittinen describes it, since it is like any other translation – translating for a certain audience. The translator simply takes into consideration the concept of a child as he sees it, and then he acknowledges its abilities and attitudes.

Another difference between translating for children and translating for adults is in the adaptation. Oittinen argues that defining translation as “producing sameness” makes it easy to distinguish between an adaptation and a translation, but if we look at it as “rewriting” than it is much more difficult to differentiate between those two terms (75).

The concept of adaptation comes to light in the example of *Little Red Riding Hood*. The modern version of the fairy tale by the Grimm brothers is far more different from its original version. Oittinen explains how the inappropriate parts of the tale (like the scene where the wolf eats the grandmother and the girl, or how the girl brings wine to her grandmother) are omitted or changed (87). This could be seen as an adaptation (considering parts of it have been altered), or as a translation (since it is translated for a targeted audience – children). The reasons for a lot of children’s literature being on the line between translation and adaptation, are so that the story could be useful for a child to grow up into what society thinks is right, and so that it can match the child’s abilities of understanding the story. Oittinen describes the need for adaptation as follows: “the child is naive and requires naive literature; the child is illogical and needs to be educated. The child needs her/his own amusement park where all eroticism, love, and brutality are eliminated” (66).

There are, however, a lot of critics who would argue that children’s literature should not be pedagogically calculated. Hellsing describes all pedagogical art as deficient, but says that “all good art is intrinsically pedagogical” (qtd. in Oittinen 65). If any art form is good enough, it can influence a person immensely, whether it is in regard to learning about a culture, a language or people, or in regard to growing as a person and learning about oneself.

Children’s literature has two audiences: the children and the adults, because it is the adults who translate the books, the adults are the ones who buy the books, and they are the ones who often read them aloud to children.

Both children’s literature and literature for adults follow many of the same rules and problems considering relationships between authors, readers, translators and publicists. On this subject, every type of literature deals with the same issues. Van Coillie, however, claims that, since children’s literature is read aloud for the children before they learn how to read, the translator must be especially careful about many aspects of translating it:

“through various means -- repetition, sentence structure, line breaks, rhythm, and punctuation -- the translator makes her or his text live on the aloud-reader's tongue. The translator should also be aware of the different potential of expression -- intonation,

tone, tempo, pauses, stress, rhythm, duration -- and contribute in every way possible to the aloud-reader's enjoyment of the story.” (39)

The translator has to be precise in creating a new work if he wants to transfer the full experience of the original story. Oittinnen agrees that reading out loud is an important part of enjoying the story, especially for children, so she emphasises the significance of rhythm. She even insists that a translator should not exclusively follow the rules of grammar considering punctuation, but that he should follow the rules of rhythm and emotions in the text (35).

Therefore, the most important factor in deciding on the quality of translated children's literature is, perhaps, the flow of words that is created while reading. Since rhythm provokes emotions, it is far more likely that the story that is excelling in the flow will have the greater impact on children.

3.3. Translating Poetry

As it is with translation in general, translating poetry is a challenging task; however, it provides even more challenges than the rest. With poems, a translator must be aware of the significance of both meaning and form, but translating both equivalently is nearly impossible. There are two main strategies in translating poetry, as Niknasab and Pishbin explain it; literal and free translation. The former is focused solely on the meaning of the poem, and the supporters of that strategy put the emphasis on the affective function of it. Still, when it comes to the latter, Frost states that “a prose translation of poetry, however deft its workmanship, cannot convey the effect which verse produces; if it could, why do poets take the trouble to write verse?” (qtd. in Niknasab, Pishbin 2).

Therefore, “the translator should make a decision whether to sacrifice the form for the meaning or vice versa” (Niknasab, Pishbin 2). With prose, there is no such burden; the meaning is always superior to the form. When it comes to poetry, however, the form is what makes it what it is, so both the meaning and form are invaluable. Nonetheless, a translator must come to terms with losing parts of the poem (maybe even significant ones), since:

“languages do not have the same phonology, syntactic structures, vocabulary, literary history, prosody or poetics. A poem that leans towards prose may present relatively few problems, but a poem that has a highly complex structure encompassing imagery, intertextuality, idiom, ambiguity and complex tonalities will almost certainly have to sacrifice some elements in translation.” (Attwater 124)

With that in mind, a question arises about whether it is even possible to translate a poem. Attwater claims that there are two standpoints considering that question: that of a rationalist, and that of a relativist. The former argues that one can express his thoughts in many different ways, thus, anything can be translated from one language to another. The latter proposes that one’s culture and language affect the way one thinks; hence, it is impossible to transfer thought from one language to another (123). However, with such two extreme perspectives, there must be a middle ground, which leads to the conclusion that translating poetry “is sometimes possible, sometimes impossible, sometimes easy, sometimes difficult, sometimes a failure, sometimes an amazing success” (Holmes, qtd. in Attwater 124).

Jones also asks an interesting question to which he does not give an answer. He wonders if a translator can know everything meant by the author in the poem, and if he claims he does,

could it be that it is simply a translator's interpretation of the meaning. There is no way of knowing for sure. On the other hand, in case the translator does not claim that, then how can he even try to translate the poem without him conveying his personal meaning instead of the author's? (3). Whatever the answer may be, translation of poetry is as important as translation of other forms of literature, so the efforts to create acceptable translations of poems must exist.

Raffel also brings into question whether it is possible to fully translate something. He claims that if every language is unique in its own way, considering vocabulary, structure and sound, then "clearly it is literally impossible to fully render anything written in one language into another. This is not a judgment about the translatability of poetry: it's a judgment about translatability in general" (11). However, he does point out that the word "fully" is key. It is not possible to fully translate something from one language to another, but it is more than possible to translate something adequately. "Exact linguistic equivalents are by definition non-existent", but satisfying translations are produced regularly, and some of them may even be masterpieces of translated works (Raffel 11).

However, there is no concrete definition of a successful translation. One can define poetry as "a means of expressing one nation's feelings and attitudes. Translation acts as a bridging tool through which different cultures can get closer to each other" (Niknasab, Pishbin 2). But a generalised statement like that does not provide any rules to achieving the said bridging tool. A good translator does not have a rulebook to follow in order to generate something worth reading, "but as is always the case, it is easier to pinpoint the factors of what is *not* a good translation than those of its elusive counterpart" (Attwater 126).

Even though there are no concrete rules about what makes a good translation, Jones points out a generic statement that could be used for that purpose: "commonly-expressed double goal among recent English language translators [is] that a translation should reflect the meaning of the source poem, but should also work like 'an original text' in the receptor language" (10).

Raffel claims that, when trying to translate poetry, a translator being simultaneously a poet is obligatory, and, understandably, a translator in general must be a literary person.

"But the translator must also be something of a scholar. He must know more than simply the language with which he works. He must be aware of literary and cultural history both in that language and in his own tongue. And (...) he must also have some awareness of basic linguistic realities. He should also have thought about the act of translation, both practically and from some theoretical point of view. Anyone who comments on,

and anyone who wants to make optimal use of, translations should have at least some knowledge in these same areas” (Raffel viii).

That means that a layman should not criticize a literary work, he can only absorb it in a way that agrees with him, and, consequently, a non-poet should not scrutinize poetry either, because they do not understand the significance of it, or the justification for a certain poetry translation.

Attwater describes several analogies of other authors comparing translation with games, but she chooses “the analogy of a complex riddle with many problems to be solved” (134). Language changes and evolves over time, verses can be differently understood with every reading, so Attwater proposes new translation of great poems each twenty years, because not every poem should be understood in a single way, and the more meanings are drawn out from the same verse, the more remarkable the poem can be.

4. “Miševi i mačke naglavačke” by Luko Paljetak

4.1. Biography

Luko Paljetak was born in Dubrovnik on 19 August 1943, where he also went to the School for Teachers. In 1968 he graduated from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zadar. After obtaining his degree, he worked as a dramaturge and a director in the Zadar Puppet Theatre for four years and then for five more years as a teaching assistant at the Department of Modern Croatian Literature and the Department of World Literature at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zadar, and simultaneously as one of the editors of the “Zadarska revija” journal. In 1978 he moved back to Dubrovnik, where he has been living ever since. In 1992, he obtained a PhD degree from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zadar. Today he is editor-in-chief of the “Dubrovnik” journal. Besides being a distinguished director of numerous award-winning puppet shows, he is one of the leading Croatian translators into several European languages, and has recently started painting. He has written countless literary works and won a number of awards for them. (matica.hr, own translation)

4.2. Short Summary

“Miševi i mačke naglavačke” is a collection of humorous but educational poems for children. Each poem contains a certain anecdote that happened between a cat and a mouse, describing the animosity between the two. There are seven poems in the book, four of which have been selected for translation for the purposes of this graduate thesis.

The first poem, “Mačka koja je mnogo jela”, or as it is translated here, “A cat who ate a lot”, deals with the issue of body weight. At the beginning of the poem, the author introduces a cat that is overweight because of all the food she ate, and, after that, a mouse that is too thin because he did not want to eat anything. The problem appears when the cat wants to catch the mouse, but cannot do so because of her excessive weight. The mouse, however, could not run because he was too weak. This situation leads to both of them changing their life habits; the cat stopped eating, and the mouse ate everything he could get his hands on. At the end, the roles were reversed; the mouse could not run because he was too fat, and the cat could not chase him because she was too weak. It is an interesting take by the author on the problems of body weight and eating disorders.

The second poem, “Mačka kod psihijatra”, translated as “A cat at a psychiatrist”, describes an anecdote in which the cat has a lovely life, but something is still bothering her. To fix it, she goes to see a psychiatrist, who happens to be a mouse. After the cat tells the mouse about all her problems, the mouse diagnoses her with a fictional disease and prescribes her a remedy which includes a bottle of tonic and a mouse, which leads to him abruptly running away from her.

“Mačka kod zubara”, or “A cat at a dentist” is the third poem. It talks about a cat who ate a lot of unhealthy food, which led to her teeth getting weak and unsightly. As a result, she could not catch a mouse, for the mice would all laugh at her and she would get embarrassed. When she finally decided to fix her teeth problem, the dentist she saw was a mouse. He worked hard to repair her teeth, and when he finally finished his job, the cat went to celebrate by eating as much as she could, which, led to her teeth decaying again. When the cat went to the dentist again, he refused to fix her teeth.

Finally, the last poem called “Mačka i glasovir”, or “A cat and the piano” talks about a cat who is a gifted piano player. After one of the strings on the piano broke, she could not find a replacement, no matter how hard she tried. She thought of the mouse who lived in the same building and was mean to her and disrespectful of her music. In the end, she used his tail in place of the broken string.

4.3. Case study

In order for this translation to lead to an acceptable result, it was necessary to decide which aspects of the poem would be emphasised as the most important. It was decided that the rhyme and the number of syllables are the main features on which the translation should be focused, because they would create the same flow as the original. Also, wherever possible, idioms, similes, and metaphors are transferred into English language, while trying to stay true to the original story.

It is important to point out that, even though the number of syllables was always one of the main priorities, English syllables are longer and there is a need to put more words in a line than there are in the original in order for the number of syllables to match. Because of this, the lines may appear cumbersome and bulky compared to the original, but, in spite of it, rhythm was achieved.

The poems in source language were read several times before translating to get acquainted with the original. Furthermore, the translated versions of the poems were read individually several times, as well as being read side-by-side with the original, to make sure the faithfulness of the translation is retained.

4.3.1. Translation Analysis

The process of translating “Miševi i mačke naglavačke” extended over a long period of time, because of the difficulties with finding the closest rhyming equivalent from the source language to the target language. Before the translation, every poem was carefully read, with paying close attention to phrases and idioms that were deemed difficult. For the purpose of translation, tools that were used were several online dictionaries (both monolingual and bilingual), a rhyming dictionary, a dictionary of synonyms and the Croatian Language Portal (HJP). After the translation process, the translated poems were read individually, and alongside with the original.

The aim of the translation was to create a satisfactory poem in the target language. Some of the translation choices were more obvious than the others. However, even though some lines were more difficult to come upon, once they were written down, they were considered fitting and, therefore, they were mostly not changed at all.

To facilitate the analysis, the lines are marked with numbers, and the analysis will proceed according to the rhyming patterns.

- Lines 1.1.-1.2.

*Jedna je mačka mnogo jela
i postala je strašno debela,*

*There once was a cat who ate a lot
and it was absurd how heavy she got,*

The poem starts almost like a fairy tale, within an undefined time or space frame. The beginning of the first line could have easily been translated as “Once upon a time...”. However, since the equivalent of that cliché start of a fairy tale was not exactly used (“Jednom davno...”), a similar expression was used in order for it to match the original (“There once was...”). The same way of beginning a poem was used by the original author in every poem that is analysed, as well as in these translations.

- Lines 1.12. – 1.13.

*jeo je samo iz nekih bočica
bio je tanak kao pločica*

*the only thing he ever ate was a shake
no wonder he was as thin as a rake.*

Since the second line had to be a simile related to the size of a mouse, the focus of the rhyme was that line. Rhyming rake with shake fits nicely, since people who are watching their weight often drink shakes. However, even if that rhyme was not possible, the second line would still have the advantage as a simile, and another rhyme would have to be found while sacrificing the content of the first line.

- Lines 1.19. – 1.20.

*bila je na rubu živčanog sloma
onako debela i troma.*

*she was on the edge of a nervous breakdown
so fat and sluggish, she wore a frown.*

The first line here is translated literally, since the number of syllables is compatible. The second line, however, if translated literally, would have a full stop instead of a comma, and the rest of the sentence would not exist. Since the focus of the translation is the number of syllables, the last part of the rhyme had to be invented. It was concluded from the rest of the lines that the cat had to be angry because of the entire situation, and is, therefore, wearing a frown.

- Lines 1.24. – 1.26

*onako jadan
onako gladan;
i tako nije bilo ništa.*

*He felt incomplete
he wanted to eat;
and finally nothing came from it.*

The first and second line are almost identical in the original. The translation, however, was difficult to produce in the same manner because of the lack of rhyming equivalents. The shortcoming was somewhat compensated with the fact that both lines in the translation start with the same word, therefore, creating an acceptable translation.

- Lines 1.29. – 1.32.

*a to joj nije bilo milo
pa je zaključila
pa je odlučila
da skine koje kilo.*

*and it was something she did not like
so then she analysed
so then she compromised
to go on a hunger strike.*

Unlike the previous example, the third and fourth line were acceptably translated while keeping in mind the necessity of producing two very similar lines. Although “analysed” and “compromised” do not have an equivalent in “zaključila” and “odlučila”, the form and rhyming have superiority in this case, since it was concluded that the message will nonetheless be conveyed.

The last line is translated as a more extreme version of the original, but was deemed appropriate both for rhyming purposes and the common idea that losing weight means cutting back on food intake.

- Lines 1.33. – 1.35.

*Pršuta više nije jela,
slanine više nije htjela,
salame više nije smjela;*

*She didn't nibble on any ham,
she didn't want to eat any jam,
she couldn't even taste any lamb;*

It was assumed that the purpose of the lines was that the cat did not consume any food that she previously enjoyed. For that reason, again, the form has superiority over content, as it was decided that naming the type of food that rhymed was more important than naming the exact food mentioned in the original.

The same was taken into consideration while translating the following lines:

- Lines 1.45. – 54.

grašak i brašno,/ sarme i čvarke, /punjene paprike/ goveđe juhe,/ debele muhe,/ nogice suhe,/ suha rebarca,/ trista trapista,/ francuski sir,/ pa čak i žir;

broccoli and buns,/ fries and sausage rolls,/ noodle casseroles,/ a fat juicy fly,/ a big shepherd's pie,/ crispy chicken thigh,/ all the dry pork ribs,/ a Trappist cheese,/ and some French brie,/ even a pea;

Even though there were attempts at using the same types of food, rhyme and rhythm prevail in this case.

- Lines 2.1.-2.4.

*Jedna je mačka živjela sama
u svome stanu, kao dama,
i tamo joj je bilo krasno;
spavala je do vrlo kasno*

*There once was a cat, living on her own
she was a dame, a queen on her throne,
and she loved her flat, lovely and neat;
she could sleep in till she had to eat,*

The opening lines are constant in every poem; therefore, the translation stays the same (“There once was”). The second line had to be slightly changed. For rhyming purposes, “throne” was used, for it made sense that the cat was the owner of the apartment she lived in, even though it is translated in an exaggerated manner. The first version of a translation was:

*There once was a cat, she was such a dame,
she lived on her own, it was such a shame.*

This version could have also been used, but it appeared as if the cat was miserable because she lived on her own, which was not disclosed in the original, so it was discarded, and the final version was used.

- Lines 1.7. – 1.10.

*i puno knjiga na sve strane,
romana, stripova, krimića,
i pun bar skupih, stranih pića;
i pravila je ikebane,*

*and many books all over the place,
novels or comics, they were all there,
and a bar with drinks was in her lair;
she arranged flowers to fill her space,*

It could be acceptable to use any type of books in the second line, considering that the type of a book does not have any influence on the progress of the story. However, because of the lack of rhyming with any type, another form of the line had to be used. Consequently, there was a problem with rhyming “there” with any type of drink that could be incorporated in the line, so the line, again, had to be adjusted to be suitable. Ultimately, “lair” was the final choice simply because it fit the idea of those lines. As the beginning of the poem was used to describe the cat’s life and the state of her home, and a lair denotes a place where an animal lives, the rhyme there/lair was deemed appropriate.

The last line was problematic in a sense that it could have been translated literally (“do ikebana”), or descriptively (“arrange flowers”). The former would have been more faithful to the original, but was a little too long for the line to be formed in a way that makes sense and that rhymes. Therefore, the latter was used.

- Lines 2.18. – 2.19.

*Jednoga dana, da ne bi skrenula
do psihijatra je pravo krenula;*

*One day, so that she does not go berserk,
she went straight to a shrink to check out her quirk;*

Since the recreation of every idiom, simile or other figure of speech was attempted in the translation, “da ne bi skrenula” could not be translated as “so that she does not go crazy”. Amidst the numerous idioms for “being crazy”, “go berserk” seemed to fit in nicely for its shortness as well as rhyming with “quirk” which, after a little contemplation, made a satisfying line.

- Lines 2.20. and 2.24. – 2.26.

*taj psihijatar bijaše miš.
(...)
i zatim reče: “Nije to niš,
a to je, draga moja bitno -
vama miš jedan treba pod hitno!”*

*that shrink was a mouse, waiting for her.
(...)
and simply said: “You may calmly purr,
it’s naught, but dear, hear me what I say -
you have to get a mouse, without delay!”*

This is an example of how arbitrary the rhyming patterns in these poems were. The first line was at the beginning of the stanza, while the rest was at the end. It was, therefore, sometimes difficult to even notice the rhyme and it often happened that the wrong lines were accidentally chosen to be rhymed in the translation. Occasionally, it was thought that the line did not rhyme with anything, only to be later found that this was not correct.

Because of the first line, and the unexpected rhyming, the second line was accommodated so that it makes sense. If it had been translated literally, it would have been:

and then he mouse said: “It is nothing,

That, however, did not sound natural. Since the mouse used “nije to niš”, which sounds like it is used in everyday language because of its shortened form “niš(ta)”, it did not make sense to use “it is nothing”. While considering the next line, it was concluded that a lot of syllables had to be used to say very little, so the “it is nothing” part of the poem was transferred

into the third line in the form of “it’s naught”, while the second line was used as a small foreshadowing, even though that was non-existent in the original. With the mouse saying that the cat can remain calm (“You may calmly purr”), it can be presumed that the prognosis will not be so negative.

- Line 2.37

uhvatiti me morate.

you must catch me.

The original is twice as long as the translation as far as the syllable count goes. This is done on purpose and it is the only line in the translation that does not have the same number of syllables as the original. Since the final line does not have a rhyming pair and it is essentially a stanza by itself, it was concluded that it is not reasonable to add meaningless words in order for the syllable count to match, for it would lose its effect. The last line is supposed to be sudden and potent, and translating it as “your assignment is to catch me”, “first and foremost, you must catch me”, or anything of the sort, simply made no sense.

- Lines 3.7. – 3.8.

Iz čista su se mira bušili

Iz čista su se mira rušili

All of a sudden, they would just concave

All of a sudden, they would not behave

This is also an example of a translation that was not translated word for word. The essence was captured as accurately as it could be, but for rhyming purposes the exact meaning could not be translated. However, the second line contained the function of the two lines, which was that the teeth simply did not act the way they were meant to, and were unmanageable. The same was repeated in the next two lines:

I kao pravi pijanci vladali:

Sami su jedan po jedan padali,

And they would act like they had too much to drink,

She could not control them, they would make a stink.

- Lines 3.23. – 3.26.

*I sama bi se sebi smiješila
I sama bi se sobom tješila
I pojela bi dva-tri slatkiša
Mekana, u obliku miša.*

*And she would smile to herself to feel swell
And she would grin, but it didn't go so well
And then she tried to make herself feel nice
So she would eat soft candy shaped like mice.*

The first version of the two lines went as follows:

*And she would smile to herself to feel well
And she would grin, but wasn't feeling swell*

The lines had to be changed because it seemed that it was redundant to use the word “feel/feeling” two times in a row. “Swell” and “well” make a fine rhyming pair, so it was decided to leave those in and simply rearrange the wording.

The third line practically repeats what the first two lines already said, but in a different way, plainly because it was difficult to achieve the syllable count. Therefore, the third line turned out to be a “filler line”, and the fourth line of translation contains what is said in those two lines in the original. There was a choice to be made about following a path of content or a path of form, and the result seemed obvious because the rest of the poem also focused on the number of syllables.

- Lines 3.28. – 3.31.

*Da stane na kraj tome kvaru
Da stane na rep tome jadu,
Pa se uputila zubaru
Ponajboljemu u tom gradu.*

*To put an end to her deep despair
To put a stop to this whole affair,
Going to the dentist was her quest
She found the one that was the best.*

The Croatian version of “to put a stop to” fits perfectly to the whole concept of a cat and a mouse since it is literally translated as “stand on a tail of”. Unfortunately, there are no idioms like that in English language, but, luckily, “to put an end” and “to put a stop”, work great in this translation because they both begin the same just like the two versions in the original. “Despair” and “affair” of course do not match the original version of the rhyme, but they do make a nice rhyming pair and illustrate the difficulties the cat had.

The “quest” used in the third line may not be perfectly suitable, since it would imply that the cat’s search for the dentist was long and difficult. Nothing in the original suggests that, but it does not negate it, either, so it could be an acceptable translation, and since it nicely rhymes with “best”, it was chosen as the final version.

- Lines 3.41.- 3.44.

*Kad su je pozvali po broju
Mački se srce ko kamen stvrdlo,
Ušla je, sjela je, sva u znoju
A miš je odmah uzeo svrdlo.*

*When she was finally called inside
She knew that from there it was all downhill
She got in, sat down, feeling petrified
And the mouse instantly took out his drill.*

The second translated line was improvised for the purposes of rhyming with “drill”. This line, again serves as a foreshadowing; the assumption that being at the dentist was not going to be a pleasant experience. The statement that cat’s heart turned into a stone was easily used in the third line with the word “petrified” which was very suitable as a translation, even though it was mentioned in a subsequent line.

- Lines 3.47. – 3.58.

*Neke je vukao/ Neke je vadio/ Neke je žbukao/ Neke je sadio/ Neke je
bušio/ Neke je lupao/ Neke je rušio/ Neke je čupao/ Neke je blanjao/
Neke je brusio/ Neke je sklanjao –/ Svaki drmusio*

*A few of them he skewed/ A few of them he glued/ A few of them he
moved/ A few of them he smacked/ A few of them he drilled/ A few of
them he cracked/ A few of them he filled/ A few of them he patched/ A
few of them traded/ A few of them detached/ All had to be abraded*

These types of lines were the biggest challenge in the translation. Usually, if there is a problem with creating a rhyme, there is a possibility of rewording the line so that a translator can create other options for translation and rhyming. In lines that were this short there was no room for “cheating the system”, especially if all the lines begin the same. Luckily, the original poem also noted several actions that do not necessarily have to do something with teeth, which opened an opportunity for the translation to do the same. The actions that could be translated were used in the final version, and those that could not be translated were substituted by words that rhymed and somewhat fit the context.

The same problem continued in the next stanza, which created even more problems because there were several lines which were formed by a single noun:

Šibice/ Žbice/ Žlice i/ Žice,/ Iglice/ Ukosnice,

A dog crate,/ a plate,/ a slate and,/ a skate,/ a floodgate,/ a licence plate

The final translation was nowhere near the original as far as the content goes. It was problematic to rhyme the same words while being careful about the syllable count. It was decided that, since the point of these lines was to illustrate that the cat could eat practically anything, it would not affect the overall story to use any inedible objects so that the form and rhyme would not suffer.

- Lines 3.76. – 3.79.

*Miš je vidio da se prenaglio
I lijepo smjesta je odmaglio
Smjesta je lijepo strugnuo
I kao mudar šmugnuo.*

*The mouse saw that the cat was truly raddled
So he took the chance and he skedaddled
He took the chance and hit the road
And wisely left to his abode.*

Since the above-mentioned lines are filled with idioms, it was necessary to translate them as such as much as it was possible. Consequently, the focus was on “odmaglio” and “strugnuo”, which was translated as “skedaddled” and “hit the road”, respectively. The former is not an idiom per se, but it was deemed as an appropriate translation since it was an informal form of saying “run away”, and it seemed to fit the context. Because of those two terms, the first and last line were adjusted to match the rhyme, and even though they are not translated exactly like the original, they do fit the overall idea.

- Lines 4.5. – 4.8.

*I svirala je stvari fine
i valcere i sonatine
zanosila se glazbom lijepom
sa dvije, tri i četiri noge
a služila se čak i repom.*

*And she played the things that made her dance
and a waltz, an ode, or a romance
she played like she was telling a tale
moved her two, three or four paws around
and sometimes even moved her tail.*

As it was in the previous poems, when there is an enumeration, usually its purpose is not to note something exactly, but to emphasize the magnitude of actions or things. Therefore, the second line was used simply to exemplify several types of music she could play, among, presumably, a greater selection of music in her repertoire.

The third line was created from the assumption that the cat gets carried away by playing the piano as if she were telling a story, even though it was not mentioned in the original. However, for the purpose of a rhyme, “tale” was paired with “tale”.

- Lines 4.12. – 4.15.

*Jednog je dana tako
svirala cica-maca
kad iznenada lako
cak! – pukne jedna žica*

*One day the pussycat sat
and started to play again
when suddenly, just like that
pop! – a single thin string snapped*

At first, the second and fourth line appeared as though they should rhyme, so the first version of those lines went as follows:

*and started to play again
(...)
pop! – a single string snapped then*

The reason for the confusion was the term “cica-maca”, which is a way of affectionately calling a cat, but the term “cica-mica” is also often used. The latter coincidentally rhymes with the last line, but was not chosen in the original for an unknown reason.

“Pop!” was chosen as an onomatopoeic counterpart of the Croatian version “cak!”. There were several other choices for it, like “snap”, “crack”, or “bang”; the first one would be perfect, but the verb “snapped” was needed in the following line, so it was not used to avoid repetition, and others did not quite fit the context.

- Lines 4.25. – 4.26.

*imao jedan mali miš
po imenu gospodin Iš,*

*the one who lived there was a mouse
and he was known as mister Ouse,*

After re-examining the entire poem, it was obvious that the name of the mouse was entirely made up for those two lines to rhyme, since the name was not mentioned nowhere else before or after them. The conclusion was that it was possible (and even advisable) to do the same in the translation (omitting the first letter of “mouse” to create a name). Even though the original could be translated as “shoo”, which is relatable to the idea of a mouse, the rhyming pair would then be lost, so this idea was discarded.

- Lines 4.35. – 4.36.

*ništa je nije šljivio
za svoj je račun živio.*

*about her he couldn't care less,
he only cared for his success.*

Even though the original intention was to use an idiom as a translation to match the original better, there was a lack of suitable choices. For that reason, even though the first line could have been translated as “the mouse did not care about her”, the above-mentioned was chosen, simply because it is an informal phrase and fits the context better.

- Lines 4.49. - 4.50. and 4.54. – 4.55.

*Glasovir opet bješe nov
glasovir opet bješe lijep.
(...)
imao mišev rep!*

*the piano appeared brand new
the piano appeared displayed.
(...)
was the one the tail made!*

This is yet another example of an odd rhyming pattern. These lines are at the end of the last two stanzas. While reading the poem a reader does not get an impression that they rhyme because they are so far apart. While translating, it took several times to reread the stanzas to

realize the connection, and in the first attempt at a translation, the lines 4.50. and 4.55. did not even rhyme.

It was also necessary to create two lines that begin in the same way (4.49. and 4.50.). That way was chosen to be “the piano appeared”, but this, again, created difficulties because it narrowed the possibilities for the end of the second line.

For this reason, the second line had to be constructed in sort of a clumsy form, and it may not be possible to conclude what was supposed to be said. In this sense “appear displayed” means “in such an immaculate way as it were displayed to the public”. It does seem cumbersome, but for a lack of better choices, it was left in the final version.

5. Conclusion

Childhood, as a formative time of a person's life, plays an important role in an individual's development. Since a child spends a significant amount of time in school, reading becomes an essential skill early in the course of a lifetime. But even before school, parents often read to their children, which encourages them to start reading on their own as soon as possible. They soon realize that reading creates stories that help them experience certain situations and connect to the characters in the story. Adults, however, realize that there is much more than a simple enjoyment when it comes to children's literature. They are aware of the influence this literature has on the young ones, and recognize the necessity of their pedagogical purpose. Therefore, the reasonable approach to creating a passion towards reading at a young age should be learning by imitation. Adults (above all, teachers) should read often, but also create discussions and ask questions about certain topics in the books to teach the children how to think about and question what is being read.

Translation plays an important role in literature in general, as well as children's literature. It opens a perspective into new worlds and cultures to anyone willing to explore them. But, when it comes to children's literature a translator must be more careful. Depending on the age of a young reader, translators cannot expect from a child to conclude and analyse a literary work in a way that an adult can. They must think the way a child thinks in order for them to create a valid translation, as does the author of the original. Since reading aloud is an important aspect of children's literature, it is safe to say that rhythm and rhyme are of outmost importance when translating for children, especially when it comes to poetry.

Consequently, the focus of translating "Miševi i mačke naglavačke" by Luko Paljetak, were exactly those aspects. There was, of course, a considerable amount of effort to transfer the content of the poem into English, but whenever a choice had to be made between the content and the form, the latter was chosen, and the former was adjusted in a way that was appropriate. The main problem with the translation (except for the expected difference in lexical and structural patterns) was the discrepancy between the ways both languages expressed ideas. For example, what was said in Croatian in two lines of a poem, could be said in a single line in English. This resulted in many invented and inserted "filler lines", which had to be created for the syllable count to match in the translation.

Since rhythm and rhyme are the aspects that provoke emotions, especially when the readers/listeners are children of a younger age, and, even though it was attempted to stay as close to the original as possible, when it was inevitable, rhythm, rhyme and syllable count had superiority. The reason for that is the fact that children are not interested that much in what the original sounded like, but they are rather expected to enjoy the story, which would, hopefully, be given to them with this translation.

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7. Appendix (Translation of “Miševi i mačke naglavačke”)

MAČKA KOJA JE MNOGO JELA 1 A CAT WHO ATE A LOT

Jedna je mačka mnogo jela i postala je strašno debela, užasno troma, užasno spora, i da stvar bude mnogo gora, jednog je dana srela miša. Taj miš je strašno mršav bio jer ništa nije jesti htio: ni hranu grublju, ni hranu finiju, taj miš je čuvao liniju; jeo je samo iz nekih bočica bio je tanak kao pločica. Kad je ta mačka tog miša srela i kad ga je pojesti htjela trčati nije mogla- skočiti nije mogla- pomaknuti ni brk; bila je na rubu živčanog sloma onako debela i troma. I miš se htio dati u trk, ali da budu veći jadi, trčati nije mogao od gladi onako jadan onako gladan; i tako nije bilo ništa. Mačka je vidjela što je na stvari da joj debljina posao kvari a to joj nije bilo milo	1.1. There once was a cat who ate a lot and it was absurd how heavy she got, incredibly slow, incredibly fat, 1.5. and it wasn't all, on top of that, one day she stumbled across a mouse. And that mouse was incredibly light because he would never take a bite: out of food that's coarse, 1.10. or the food that's great, it was a mouse that's watching his weight; the only thing he ever ate was a shake no wonder he was as thin as a rake. When the cat ran into the mouse that time 1.15. and when she thought that it was mealtime she couldn't run by any means - she couldn't jump by any means - couldn't move a whisker; she was on the edge of a nervous breakdown 1.20. so fat and sluggish, she wore a frown. The mouse also wanted to scamper, but to make things worse than they would be, he was hungry, he couldn't even flee he felt incomplete 1.25. he wanted to eat; and finally, nothing came from it. The cat understood what was going on that she was bound by the weight she put on and it was something she did not like
---	--

pa je zaključila
 pa je odlučila
 da skine koje kilo.
 Pršuta više nije jela,
 slanine više nije htjela,
 salame više nije smjela;
 jela je samo iz malih bočica,
 postala je tanka kao pločica:
 tako je bila tršava
 tako je bila mršava.
 I miš se odmah sjetio bijede
 pa je odlučio da više jede,
 jeo je mnogo
 jeo je strašno
 sve što je mog'o:
 grašak i brašno,
 srme i čvarke,
 punjene paprike,
 goveđe juhe,
 debele muhe,
 nogice suhe,
 suha rebarca,
 trista trapista,
 francuski sir,
 pa čak i žir;
 tako se sa svime pomirio
 tako se strašno širio
 i postao je najdeblji miš.
 Mačka je opet tog miša srela
 i opet ga je pojesti htjela,
 ali ovako jadna
 ali ovako gladna
 trčati nije mogla

1.30. so then she analysed
 so then she compromised
 to go on a hunger strike.
 She didn't nibble on any ham,
 she didn't want to eat any jam,
 1.35. she couldn't even taste any lamb;
 she would eat her food in a form of a shake,
 she became so slender, as thin as a snake:
 due to that she was so famished
 due to that her body vanished.
 1.40. The mouse instantly remembered his blues
 so he decided the food will be his muse,
 he ate a great deal
 he ate truly tons
 gobbled every meal:
 1.45. broccoli and buns,
 fries and sausage rolls,
 noodle casseroles,
 a fat juicy fly,
 a big shepherd's pie,
 1.50. crispy chicken thigh
 all the dry pork ribs
 a Trappist cheese
 and some French brie,
 even a pea;
 1.55. so he came to terms with the size of it
 so he widened, he wasn't fit
 and he then became the fattest mouse.
 The cat stumbled upon him one more time
 and again, she wanted him for lunchtime
 1.60. but because of starvation
 but because of vexation
 she couldn't run anymore

skočiti nije mogla	she couldn't jump anymore
ovako tršava	for she was so famished
ovako mršava....	1.65. for her body vanished...
I miš je opet pobjeći htio,	And the mouse again wanted to escape
ali to nije mogao	but he couldn't even do that
jer nije snage smogao	for his strength decided to scat
ovako debel kakav je bio:	because he was so hugely out of shape:
i tako nije bilo ništa.	1.70. and finally, nothing came from it.

MAČKA KOD PSIHIJATRA

2 A CAT AT A PSYCHIATRIST

Jedna je mačka živjela sama	2.1. There once was a cat, living on her own
u svome stanu, kao dama,	she was a dame, a queen on her throne.
i tamo joj je bilo krasno;	and she loved her flat, lovely and neat;
spavala je do vrlo kasno,	she could sleep in, till she had to eat,
spavaćicu je imala dugu	2.5. the cloth was lengthy on her night gown,
i krevet mekani, u krugu,	and bed round and soft as she would lie down,
i puno knjiga na sve strane,	and many books all over the place
romana, stripova, krimića,	novels or comics, they were all there
i pun bar skupih, stranih pića;	and a bar with drinks was in her lair;
i pravila je ikebane,	2.10. she arranged flowers to fill her space,
i spremala je kineska jela	and every Chinese recipe she'd nail,
i štapićima jela vješto,	and she was skilled at using chopsticks
i potpuno je bila bijela	and her fur was white from head to tail
i po parketu meko klizila,	and would softly slide on the wooden floor,
al mučilo je ipak nešto,	2.15. but something was wrong, needed a fix,
jer nije znala što bi htjela,	she was indecisive, without fail,
i zbog toga je stalno šizila.	and it made her bonkers more than before.
Jednoga dana, da ne bi skrenula	One day, so that she does not go berserk,
do psihijatra je pravo krenula;	she went straight to a shrink to check out her quirk;
taj psihijatar bijaše miš.	2.20. that shrink was a mouse, waiting for her.
Ona mu reče sve po redu,	There she told him the whole ball of wax,

i ispriča mu svoje probleme;
 miš samo malo počeše tjeme
 kad je vidje onako blijedu
 i zatim reče: "Nije to niš,
 a to je, draga moja bitno –
 vama miš jedan treba pod hitno!"
 I recept joj tada napisao,
 a zatim polako kroz vrata zbrisao.
 Mačka je bila vrlo ljuta,
 Mačka je bila vrlo kruta;
 Na receptu je pisalo ovo,
 glasno i jasno, slovo po slovo:
 Opasna bolest – MIŠITIS KRONIKA!
 Popijte stoga bocu tonika,
 za prvu pomoć ovog puta;
 a ako želite pravi lijek,
 uhvatiti me morate

and all of her problems she did confess;
 the mouse scratched his head but did not really stress
 when he saw she didn't make wisecracks
 2.25. and simply said: "You may calmly purr,
 it's naught, but dear, hear me what I say -
 you have to get a mouse, without delay!"
 And he wrote her a prescription for that,
 and then he went through the door and fled from the cat.
 2.30. The cat became extremely irate,
 The cat became extremely distraight;
 In the prescription the mouse had conferred,
 very plain and simple, word for word:
 MOUSITIS CHRONICLE – a nasty disease!
 2.35. Drink loads of tonic and you'll be at ease,
 but that's just a short-term solution;
 and if you truly want a real cure,
 you must catch me.

MAČKA KOD ZUBARA

3 A CAT AT A DENTIST

Jedna je mačka jela slatkiše
 i gutala ih što može više,
 pa su joj zubi postali slabi
 klimavi kao staroj babi
 i sami su joj od sebe škljocali
 i sami su joj od sebe zvali.

3.1. There was a cat who ate a lot of sweets
 and she gobbled them up, they were her treats,
 so each of her teeth became so decayed
 and wobbly, like she was an old maid
 3.5. and all by themselves suddenly they would click
 and all by themselves suddenly they would snick.

Iz čista su se mira bušili
 Iz čista su se mira rušili
 I kao pravi pijanci vladali:
 Sami su jedan po jedan padali,
 Pa nije mogla grickati kosti,

All of a sudden, they would just concave
 All of a sudden, they would not behave
 And they would act like they had too much to drink,
 3.10. She could not control them, they would make a stink
 So she couldn't gnaw and nibble on her snacks,

Ni smješkat se kad dođu gosti,
Ni otići u grad na ples.

Nor with her guests could she smile or relax,
Or go outside to dance somewhere.

A najveći je hvatao bijes
Što nije mogla loviti miše!

But mostly she thought it wasn't fair
3.15. That she couldn't catch a mouse anymore!

Svaki bi odmah u smijeh prasn timer
I sav bi se od smijeha tresao
I kao lud bi pred njom plesao,
i sav njen polet tad bi splasn timer
I sav njen polet tad bi zgasn timer
Pa bi se skrila iza zida
Rumena do uha od stida.

With every single mouse the giggle would start
Because each would be shaking with laughter
And they would dance in front of her after,
and thereupon she would be sick at heart
3.20. and thereupon she would then fall apart
To her it was no longer a game
She flushed because they put her to shame.

I sama bi se sebi smiješila
I sama bi se sobom tješila
I pojela bi dva-tri slatkiša
Mekana, u obliku miša.
Jednog je dana mačka odlučila
Da stane na kraj tome kvaru
Da stane na rep tome jadu,
Pa se uputila zubaru
3.30. Ponajboljemu u tom gradu.

And she would smile to herself to feel swell
And she would grin, but it didn't go well
3.25. And then she tried to make herself feel nice
So she would eat soft candy shaped like mice.
One day the cat had made a tough decision
To put an end to her deep despair
To put a stop to this whole affair,
3.30. Going to the dentist was her quest
She found the one that was the best.

A taj je zubar bio miš.

And that dentist was a small mouse.

Mačka je ušla u čekaonicu
I tamo našla jednu slonicu,
I strizibube dvije blijede,
Kako na istoj klupi sjede.

Before she got to see him, she had to wait
An elephant was there, right at the gate,
3.35. Beetles were before her in the line,
Sitting together, not feeling fine.

Krokodil jedan star i sijed
Mirno je čekao svoj red,

In the crowd, there was an old croc
Waiting peacefully for his doc,

I mirno je čitao žurnale;
Zнала je da sada nema šale.

And quietly reading, he barely spoke;
3.40 The cat now realized this was not a joke.

Kad su je pozvali po broju
Mački se srce ko kamen stvrdlo,
Ušla je, sjela je, sva u znoju
A miš je odmah uzeo svrdlo.

When she was finally called inside
She knew that from there it was all downhill
She got in, sat down, feeling petrified
And the mouse instantly took out his drill.

Sve joj je zube redom dirao
Ko' po klaviru da je svirao

3.45. Each and every tooth he fully explored
He tinkered with teeth like playing keyboard.

Neke je vukao

A few of them he skewed

Neke je vadio

A few of them removed

Neke je žbukao

A few of them he glued

Neke je sadio

3.50. A few of them he moved

Neke je bušio

A few of them he smacked

Neke je lupao

A few of them he drilled

Neke je rušio

A few of them he cracked

Neke je čupao

A few of them he filled

Neke je blanјao

3.55. A few of them he patched

Neke je brusio

A few of them traded

Neke je sklanјao -

A few of them detached

Svaki drmusio

All had to be abraded

i svaki zub joj tako armirao

And then her every tooth was filled with concrete

Da je i samu mačku šarmirao;

3.60. So that even the cat was swept off her feet;

Tako je divno i spretno radio.

Everything he did was up to speed.

A kad je bilo gotovo sve to

And when he was done with the repair

Miš je tada rekao: -eto,

The mouse then turned to her and said: -there,

Za vas problema nema više:

The problem is gone, this should suffice:

Možete jesti hranu svaku,

3.65. Any food you want, you can eat some

Možete gristi čak i žvaku

You can take a bite out of a gum

Šibice

A dog crate

Žbice

A plate

Žlice i		A slate and
Žice,	3.70.	A skate,
Iglice		A floodgate
Ukosnice,		A license plate,
Možete loviti čak i miše!		You can even get yourself tasty mice!
I dok je mačka tu novost smjestila		And when she realized that she had heard right
Jadna se gotovo onesvjestila.	3.75.	The poor cat practically went out like a light.
Miš je vidio da se prenaglio		The mouse saw that the cat was truly raddled
I lijepo smjesta je odmaglio		So he took the chance and he skedaddled
Smjesta je lijepo strugnuo		He took the chance and hit the road
I kao mudar šmugnuo.		And wisely left to his abode.
Mačka je tada od silne sreće	3.80.	The cat was so happy she could relax
Slatkiša smazala tri vreće.		She found some candy and ate three sacks.
Mjesec je dana tako slavila		For a month she honoured her success
I tjerala je sve po starom,		With every piece of candy she found
Od tada se ista bolest javila -		And then the old illness started to progress -
Pred istim našla se zubarom.	3.85.	She realized she had to come around.
Miš joj je vrata otvorio		Again, she went to the mouse keenly.
I kad je vidio tko je		And as soon as she showed up there
Znao je odmah što je,		He knew what was her affair
Pa joj je odgovorio		So he responded serenely
Sa smješkom i u lice:	3.90.	With a big smile on his face:
- oprostite mi gđice, danas me nema		- you'll have to forgive me, miss, but today I am not
doma!		home!

MAČKA I GLASOVIR

4 A CAT AND A PIANO

Jedna je mačka glasovir svirala	4.1.	There once was a cat, the piano she played
i svaku tipku redom je dirala		and not one sole key on it would she evade
i napamet je znala note		and she knew all of the notes by heart

i topila se od divote.
 I svirala je stvari fine
 i valcere i sonatine
 zanosila se glazbom lijepom
 sa dvije, tri i četiri noge
 a služila se čak i repom.
 Tako je divno gudila
 da se i sama čudila.
 Jednog je dana tako
 svirala cica-maca
 kad iznenada lako
 cak! - pukne jedna žica
 jer glasovir je bio star;
 a to je bila strašna stvar.
 Mačka dva dana nije spavala
 samo je glasovir naštimavala
 i tražila je žicu svud;
 uzalud bješe svaki trud.
 Toj mački naglo jedan dan
 na pamet padne sjajan plan:
 naime, kod nje je svoj stan
 imao jedan mali miš
 po imenu gospodin Iš,
 a tu je (sasvim jasna stvar),
 živio kao podstanar.

Njemu je sve to sviranje
 i preludiranje
 naravno išlo na živac,
 a mačka bijaše krivac.

On za nju ništa nije mario
 i uvijek joj je posao kvario:

and she'd melt from the sound of her art.

4.5. And she played the things that made her dance
 and a waltz, an ode, or a romance
 she played like she was telling a tale
 moved her two, three or four paws around
 and she sometimes even moved her tail.

4.10. It was sweet the way it sounded
 that she, herself, was astounded.

One day the pussycat sat
 and started to play again
 when suddenly, just like that

4.15. pop! – a single thin string snapped
 for the piano was worn out;
 and it was bad, without a doubt.

For days she didn't sleep, looked everywhere
 fixing the piano was her only care

4.20. that one string had to be around;
 but it was nowhere to be found.

And then one day, out of the blue,
 the cat saw what she had to do:
 well, she rented a flat and knew

4.25. the one who lived there was a mouse
 and he was known as mister Ouse,
 and there (it was as clear as day)
 he had a rent he had to pay.

4.30. No matter when she was playing
 or how she way swaying,
 beyond doubt, it got in his hair,
 it was her fault, she was aware.

He didn't care about the cat one bit
 whatever she did, he wanted her to quit:

ništa je nije šljivio
za svoj je račun živio.

4.35. about her he couldn't care less,
he only cared for his success.

Mački se javila sjajna misao,
pa ga je sedam dana vabila,
da joj gospodin ne bi zbrisao,
i napokon ga ipak zgrabila.

The cat came up with an incredible trick,
so she baited him for seven days straight,
because she knew the gentleman was quick,
4.40. and she caught him before day number eight.

Od sreće sva je cvala
od sreće sva je sjala
od uha do uha razvuklo joj se lice
zatim je, lijepo, rep mu zategla - umjesto
žice!

She was so thrilled, she gleamed
she was so thrilled, she beamed
the smile on her face was a magnificent detail,
then she, delicately, instead of a string,
stretched out his tail.

I to je za nju bio spas,
rješenje baš u zadnji čas,
isplatio se tako lov,
glasovir opet bješe nov
glasovir opet bješe lijep.

4.45. And the solution was a boon,
it came not a moment too soon,
it was something she needed to do,
the piano appeared brand-new
the piano appeared displayed.

Mačka je kao luda svirala
i svaku tipku redom dirala,
a najljepši je glas
i najljepši je zvon
imao mišev rep!

4.50. The cat was insane in the way she played
and not one key on it would she evade
but the loveliest tone
and the loveliest sound
was the one the tail made!