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OLD W(H)INE IN NEW BOTTLES: FROM *GOTH GIRL*'S INTERTEXTUAL FLAVOURS TO TRANSLATING CULTURAL OMNIVOROUSNESS

Abstract

Chris Riddell's *Goth Girl* five-book series (2013-2017) offers young readers a simple, yet gripping family saga, brilliantly penned in a rather sophisticated literary style and copiously illustrated by the author himself. The first three books in the series (*Goth Girl and the Ghost of a Mouse*, *Goth Girl and the Fete Worse than Death*, and *Goth Girl and the Wuthering Fright*) have been translated into Romanian (2017-2018) by Mihaela Doagă (Corint Junior Publishing House). Of the manifold challenges posed by Riddell's novels, the present paper will focus on intertextual humour (which goes hand in hand with culinary terms and wordplay) and the way it was dealt with in translation. Another, correlative aspect concerns paratextuality (specifically, translator's footnotes), tacitly assumed to redress whatever allusion or pun might have been 'lost' in translation. Given that "[v]erbal humour travels badly" (Chiaro, 2010: 1), and intertexts are often diffuse (if not altogether convoluted), our overall conclusion is that the Romanian version under consideration here is as accurate as is linguistically, (inter)culturally, and humanly possible.

Keywords: children's literature, Gothic, intertextuality, cultural omnivorousness, culinary terms, wordplay, translation

Introduction

Nowhere is difficulty more apparent (translation-wise) than in attempting to translate a text which, aside from brimming with jargon, paronomasia, and countless cultural references, happens to explicitly address as specific and sensitive a target public as children. Yet, as (translation) history has shown¹, there is usually no shortage of translators when it comes to precisely such texts. Moreover, given the recent book-market trend which capitalizes on children's books in a so far unparalleled fashion, it is hardly surprising that a series like Chris Riddell's *Goth Girl* should have already been rendered into most of Europe's languages (Romanian included), quite soon after the original edition came out.

A multi-awarded British illustrator, political cartoonist and cover artist for the *Literary Review* magazine, Chris Riddell has taken a late-blooming interest in a career as a children's author. Having previously used his resplendent drawings to adorn Paul Stewart's, Neil Gaiman's, J. K. Rowling's and many other authors' paperbacks, Riddell had naturally amassed a wealth of experience in the field before embarking on both writing and illustrating read-alouds. An astute observer, he quickly apprehended the essence of kidlit (*i.e.* its intrinsic duality) and acted accordingly, devising books which

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¹ According to the Index Translationum (2019), Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (one of the most complex and challenging children's texts ever written) is listed among the twenty most translated books in history (http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=7810&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html).

use the child as “an excuse rather than as a real addressee” (Shavit, 1986: 37) and appeal equally (if not primarily) to adults.

Riddell’s is a self-consciously, assertively, brazenly intertextual narrative. The *Goth Girl* series, in particular, offers a multilayered story, with varying degrees of graspability which largely depend upon the reader’s age, insight, and cultural competence. With one ‘stone’, this kind of stratification effectively assists in demystifying two major myths at once (*i.e.* that children’s literature is meant for children only and that it ought to be linguistically and stylistically ‘simple’).

The said series (a Children’s Laureate which is in point of fact a spin-off of the *Ottoline* series) comprises five volumes, published with Macmillan Children’s Books between 2013 and 2017: *Goth Girl and the Ghost of a Mouse* (2013), *Goth Girl and the Fete Worse than Death* (2014), *Goth Girl and the Wuthering Fright* (2015), *Goth Girl and the Pirate Queen* (2015 World Book Day edition), and *Goth Girl and the Sinister Symphony* (2017). Three out of the five have already been translated into Romanian by Mihaela Doagă (a professional translator and former English teacher). The “Aventură și mister” collection issued by Corint Publishing House, which hosts the Romanian editions, bears a distinct “9+” on the back cover, thus hinting at nine-year-old children and above as potential readers, while the original series is recommended to 6- to 8-year-olds.

What the present paper proposes, in the first instance, is a detailed breakdown of the intertextual material and cultural influences which account for the *Goth Girl* series’ in-betweenness, as far as targetship is concerned. Secondly, it examines the three currently available Romanian versions (*i.e.* *Domnișoara Goth și fantoma șoricelului* (2017), *Domnișoara Goth și festinul cel sinistru* (2018), and *Domnișoara Goth la răscrucea groazei* (2018)), with a view to identifying the means by which the translation manages to minimize source text entropy. The latter part confines itself to analysing the intertexts grafted on the elaborate food discourse Riddell consistently and artfully weaves into the plot. One of the main questions is: to what extent should translators unriddle puns and cultural allusions and exploit the paratext, taking into account that the source texts are children’s books with a highly constricting format?

The (comparative) analysis integrates various ideas from semantics, onomastics, structuralism, sociology etc. and loosely dwells on an eclectic translational model encompassing a variety of often disparate elements. Central to this approach, albeit covertly and incidently, is inter-/cross-culturality and the extent to which it resists translation. In actual practice, I will rely on other related and more openly acknowledged concepts such as *intertextuality* (vertical, diffuse, masked etc.), *cultural intertextuality* (see Pascua Febles, 2005), *cultural omnivorousness* (Peterson, 1992), *paratranslation* (Yuste Frías, 2012), *(translated) wordplay* (Delabastista, 1993), etc.

Back-translation (from Romanian to English), written between brackets, is always mine.

What the Source Text Offers (Intertextuality-wise)

As Montaigne once famously wrote, “nous ne faisons que nous entre-gloser” [All we do is comment upon one another.] (1994: 358). Julia Kristeva’s (post-)1966 conceptualisation of *intertextuality* aptly and amply corroborates this (hypo)thesis, whether it focuses on text in terms of permutation, absorption, transformation of other texts, or in terms of a “mosaic of quotations” (Kristeva, 1986: 37). Following Genette (1997), who links the meaning of hypertextual works with the reader’s knowledge of the hypotext, the very label *intertextuality* is no longer consonant with a field which has expanded way beyond literature and is more response-oriented than ever:

Intertextuality envisages all texts as inextricably conditioned – *in both their production and their reception* – by other texts. It casts texts as radically porous entities, whose words and forms are derived from, and whose meanings are glimpsed through, the mediation of other texts. (Baron, 2020: 2, emphasis mine)

Chris Riddell’s *Goth Girl* series showcases a linear, uncomplicated plot wrapped up in exceedingly fancy packaging. Each of the five volumes in the series may well be autonomous, as there is little progression from one book to another. The main ‘cast’ (twelve-year-old Ada and her father, Lord Goth, her servants-turned-friends-or-opponents, her successive governesses, and an array of fleeting guests), the eerie setting (a Gothic castle named Ghastly-Gorm Hall and its outbuildings), as

well as some of the events are constantly reiterated from slightly different angles as the series unravels. The sumptuous (though sketchy, black-and-white) illustrations are equally reproduced whenever necessary.

Recycling is what lies at the heart of Riddell's fictional account: from traditional Gothic tropes (*e.g.* an orphaned maiden, an attic, villains, ghosts, vampires, nocturnal escapades etc.) to a monumental collection of classic characters, events, and sayings, almost everything seems to be appropriated and given a fresh twist, as repetition, parodic or not, is always reliant on difference (see Deleuze, 1968; Hutcheon, 1991). True to Gothic as "a writing of excess" (Botting, 1996: 1), Riddell's books juggle an arsenal of glaring intertextual devices (allusions or echoes², quotations, pastiche, touches of parody, nods or homages etc.). The scandalous extent to which they parasitize both Gothic and mock-Gothic texts, with regular infusions of matter-of-factness, can be seen in, for example, the seemingly casual reference to a novel entitled *Northanger Cabbie* (which blends Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* – in itself a parody of Gothicism – with the informal term for "taxi-driver").

Chris Riddell's mockery targets a wide range of people, texts, characters, and subjects, derived mainly from:

- English literature (Shakespeare's tragedies and sonnets; various Gothic and mock-Gothic authors; Victorian realists like Thomas Hardy; the Brontë sisters; Romantic poets, among which William Blake, William Wordsworth, and Lord Byron)
- American literature (Walter Scott's *Waverley*; Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*; Emily Dickinson's *Hope*)
- other children's books, tales or authors (*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*; Hans Christian Andersen and *The Little Mermaid*; Lewis Carroll; *Peter Pan*; *The Secret Garden*; *The 101 Dalmatians*; *Nanny McPhee*)
- painting (Eugène Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People*)
- pop culture (film and animation: *Mary Poppins*, *King Kong*, the 007 series, *Frozen*, *Tom and Jerry*; television: Simon Cowell, implicitly also Pop Idol, The X Factor, Britain's Got Talent, and a number of cooking shows, among which The Great British Bake Off; music: Simon & Garfunkel, ABBA, Oasis, Taylor Swift etc.)
- printed media (*The Observer*)
- sport(s) (cycling, cricket, hunting, wrestling, rugby)
- science (Charles Cabbage's inventions in the series point to real-life polymath Charles Babbage)
- history (Julius Caesar, Marc Anthony, Cleopatra, Henry 8th, Anne Boleyn, Lucrezia Borgia etc.)
- mythology (centaurs, minotaurs, harpies, cyclops, gorgons, fauns, the three Graces, and so on).

As we can see from the list above, Riddell's parody covers a considerable span of cultural taste, welcoming both highbrow and lowbrow genres and deliberately crossing established boundaries. He thus seems to address an 'omnivorous' consumer³. Though British literature is undoubtedly Riddell's main concern, ethnicity in itself is never an impediment to his all-encompassing burlesque (nor is literature or chronology, for that matter). Such a transgressive parody of references to more or less familiar icons and styles may remind one of "comic operas from Giovanni Battista Pergolesi in the early eighteenth century to Gilbert and Sullivan in the late nineteenth century, which frequently invoke styles and gestures of serious opera in comic ways, through exaggeration, incongruity, and other twists on the original" (something J. Peter Burkholder, as quoted in Burns and Lacasse, 2018: n.p., associates with intertextual advertising, but which seems to befit Riddell's text just as well). High culture bits complement and add prestige to pop culture the same way classical music often spices up cartoons, without overbearing them.

Parody may be directed at texts (*e.g.* the novel *Nonsense and Nonsensibility*), at personal styles (*e.g.* Lord Goth's lifestyle closely mirrors Lord Byron's), at genre (*e.g.* Gothic topoi and tropes are employed with the express purpose of triggering laughter rather than panic), at discourse (*e.g.* famous incipits like "Call me Ishmael...") and the rhetoric of food or fashion are also cleverly manipulated so as

² Cf. Will Kynes distinguishes between allusions and echoes based on the following criterion: allusions originate in the mind of the author, whereas echoes merely in the mind of the reader. (Kynes, 2012: 31)

³ This profile emerged, due to socioeconomic and political macro changes, at the end of twentieth century, as conceptualized by Richard Peterson (1992) in the sociological context of an accretive *cultural omnivorousness*.

to suit the parodic mode), at culture by and large. The use of intertexts goes beyond the commonplace; it matches both *horizontal* and *vertical intertextuality*, with “primary texts” being quoted either in similar texts or in texts of a “different type” (Fiske, 1987: 108). Never satirical, always used as praise rather than criticism, Riddell’s spoof of either ancient or recent culture is milder than expected, as its tenor ranges from good-natured mockery of contemporaneity to exaltation of the (literary) past.

The intertexts differ widely from one another in terms of transparency. While “*masked intertextuality*” (Chandler, 2002: 207) might be too strong a label for the *Goth Girl* series, we can safely admit that some allusions are more precise than others. What renders them “diffuse”, in Frowe’s terms (1986: 155), is their pluridirectionality: most of them point simultaneously to various Gothic gimmicks and to present-day popular culture. Of course, since intertextuality is only accomplished in the reader, he or she may see allusions where, in fact, there is none. At the very least, a reader provided with the pleasure of identifying an intertext will possibly be tempted to investigate further, to uncover more (half-)hidden meanings, to develop the habit of making deeper connections between facts – a wager which may prove, in the end, not only commercially, but also pedagogically profitable.

The series is, in truth, worthwhile in more than one way, as its formidable intertextuality seems like a mere bonus as compared with its other sides. There is also flamboyant iconotextuality: full-page illustrations and drawings placed among units of text, in a kind of “complementary interaction” (see Nikolajeva and Scott’s classification, 2006: 12). There is, in addition, an ever-expanding paratextuality: regular but baffling *foot notes* (sic!) which are written by a foot separated from its owner, and booklets of verse which accompany the text as a sort of modern parergon. Last but not least, there is a conspicuous display of metatextuality, as the text never seems to take itself seriously: Riddell constantly drops hints as to the way his text should be ‘administered’ (*i.e. cum grano salis*), some of which will be detailed upon as follows, in *What the Source Text Offers (Terminology-wise)*.

What the Source Text Offers (Wordplay-wise)

The palimpsestic nature of Riddell’s text resides in his allowing intertexts to fully display their dream-like quality. His books are constructed as if by collage (and so are dreams, according to Freud, 1992). His creativity (whatever that is) can hardly be denied, but, much like in (recurring) dreams, it is a creativity of “the second-hand” (Compagnon, 1979) – one of reuse, repetition, and distortion rather than origination. It often consists in his devising new combinations and inventing new effects from scratch. Another technique he commonly resorts to is that of merging at least two allusions into one name (*e.g. Mary Huckleberry*, the name of one of the supporting characters, hints at both Twain’s Huckleberry Finn and Mary Berry – English food writer, chef, baker, and television presenter). Tmesis (*e.g. Alfred Tennislesson*, a nod to Alfred Tennyson), homophony or oronymy⁴ (*e.g. Anne Bowl-in*, a reference to Anne Boleyn; *Mrs Beat’em* – the cook of Ghastly-Gorm Hall), and polyptota (*e.g. The Unstable Stables*) are also frequent.

As detailed elsewhere (Häisan, 2020), wordplay humour in the series is technically based on substitution, literalization or concretization (*i.e. inducing a literal interpretation when a figurative one is in order, or privileging a concrete / proper / primary meaning of a given word over its expected abstract / figurative / secondary one* – see *foot note* above, or creating a context in which *the last straw* can be taken both literally and figuratively), and very often appears in the form of portmanteau words. Substitution is by far the most productive of strategies, as it may be phonetic (*e.g. Mopey Dick* vs. *Moby Dick*), antonymic (*e.g. Pippi Shortstocking* vs. *Pippi Longstocking*; *Becky Blunt* vs. *Becky Sharp*), paronymic (*e.g. The Little Barmaid* vs. *The Little Mermaid*) etc.

Philosophically, the main source of linguistic playfulness is *lexical ambiguity*, which, Trask claims, “results merely from the existence of two different meanings for a single word” (Trask, 2007: 14), in conjunction with *structural ambiguity*, “in which the words have the same meanings, but quite different structures can be assigned to the entire string of words, producing different meanings”

⁴ We employ the term as used by Gyles Brandreth in *The Joy of Lex* (1980), namely as a special subtype of homophony based on groups of words which, in connected or rapid speech, may lead to confusions (*e.g. ice-cream* vs. *I scream*). In *Beat’em*, the comic effect is produced by a phonetic similarity with *beat them*, if pronunciation is continuous and elided. As a matter of fact, in the Romanian edition of the *Goth Girl* series, a translator’s note provides a ‘free’ translation: “În traducere liberă, “Arde-i””.

(*ibidem*), lead to newly-created words or phrases of an essentially paronomastic or malapropistic nature. The all-pervading ambivalence contained in these puns calls for vigilance, acumen and a significant amount of extra-linguistic knowledge on the part of the (young) reader, which makes the translator's (already arduous) task even more difficult.

So, even though Riddell clearly uses old threads to weave new meanings, or puts old wine in new bottles, this does not mean that the light-hearted humour engendered by his intertextual wordplay is to be taken lightly, especially when it comes to translation. On the contrary,

[L]inguistic playfulness is common in children's literature, but it is also one of the hardest issues to cope with in translation. The play with words and meanings is often related to a play between lexical meanings of words in standard language, which are turned around in the context. (Bertills, 2003: 209)

What the Source Text Offers (Terminology-wise)

Food terminology complicates things even further, as it is yet another pretext for intertext, often nothing but form for form's sake. In *Goth Girl and the Fete Worse than Death* mostly, but to some extent in the other volumes as well, gastronomy, Gothic motifs and various other intertexts are commingled into portmanteau words or hybrid concepts. Breakfast, supper and other occasional repasts are regularly described in detail, and the types of meals which predominate are *pie*, *pudding*, and *jelly* (for the starter), *stew*, *gruel* and *gravy* (for the main course), *custard*, *syllabub* and *trifle* (for desserts), with *sauce* being mentioned in relation to main dishes as well as afters, and *porridge* used all along.

Some of these terms could function as clues to the overall meaning of a given episode, in keeping with the general tongue-in-cheekness which characterizes the text as a whole. *Humbug*, for instance, may well designate a boiled sweet, especially one flavoured with peppermint, but the reader would be well-advised not to ignore the primary meaning of the noun either (*i.e.* "deceptive or false talk"). *Kipper* is not only "smoked herring", but also *red herring* – in other words, a deliberate diversion, distraction, or false clue. The etymology of *sauce* (*i.e.* Lat. *salsa* "salted") is responsible for the idiomatic sense of the word (*i.e.* impudence or impertinence, closer to what "saucy" expresses). According to Robert A. Palmatier, "[t]he association of *sauce* with "rudeness" is attributable to the sharpness of the taste of some of the early sauces; and the connection between *sauce* and alcohol prob. reflects the powerful effect of some of the more recent *hot sauces*." (Palmatier, 2000: 313) *Gruel* is basically a thin porridge, but given the phrases and collocations in which it appears ("to get one's gruel"; "a gruelling schedule"; "the argument is thin gruel"), we may infer it also has something to do with punishment or torture (highly adequate tropes for a (mock-)Gothic book) or, better yet, with lack of substance (something the *Goth Girl* series excels in). Last but not least, *gravy*, which Palmatier describes as "not a primary food but a condiment, poured over meat, mashed potatoes, and vegetables to enhance their flavor – and perhaps hide their imperfections" (Palmatier, 2000: 303), seriously departs from its primary meaning ("sauce") when employed in "everything else is gravy" (*i.e.* if life were meat and potatoes, and luxuries were gravy, then once you reached a certain stage, the rest should be "a piece of cake"), or "to ride the gravy train" (*i.e.* "to be living on easy street").

Food-related terms are also 'tinted' with ludicity, ostentatiously so. Mrs Beat'em, the Ghastly-Gorm Hall cook, likes to serve concoctions like "onion custard", "strawberry gravy", "salted hot chocolate sauce", "apple-and-bacon trifle", or "rhinoceros-foot jelly and baked sea-otter pie in a reduction of scullery-maid's tears" (which is Lord Goth's favourite dish). These are unusual associations, to say the least (*custard*, usually based on milk and egg (yolk), with sugar and vanilla, does not generally 'agree' with onions, whereas strawberries and *gravy* – a sauce made from the juices of meats remaining in the pan after cooking, combined with milk and thickened with flour – are an utterly incongruous mismatch). *Onion gravy* is, instead, a bona-fide recipe, and so is *strawberry custard*.

Substitution lies, again, at the very foundation of such composites, some of which perceptibly malapropistic (*e.g.* "porridge-crust ed kippers", instead of *oatmeal-crust ed*). It is, however, precisely in such exotifying stance and nonconformity that Dan Jurafsky sees the (unique) path to (culinary and linguistic) innovation:

In fact, rebelling against these norms is one way that innovation happens. This is most evident with modernist cuisine (“molecular gastronomy” or “deconstructivist” cooking), which often uses ungrammatical dishes (*popcorn soup*, *toffee of white chocolate and duck liver*, *caramelized tomato with hot raspberry jelly*) as a creative tool. [...] The implicit cultural norms [...] make us think that desserts should be sweet; I suspect that it is the grammar of cuisine that underlies the recent fad for pork in dessert. [...] We delight in bacon ice cream not because this is necessarily the most delicious way to serve bacon but, at least in part, because it breaks the rules, it’s fun, it’s rebellious, it’s even . . . ungrammatical! (Jurafsky, 2014: n.p.)

Knowledge of (popular) culture as well as gastronomy is usually expected from the reader of the *Goth Girl* series. Idiomatic language itself is ‘contaminated’ and turned into culinary jargon, as the following table shows, and everything is ‘served’ already infused with linguistic playfulness. We selected examples from several categories of cooking-related terms, namely:

- spaces in and around residential buildings (“the outer pantry”, which contains “Bundles of parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme from Scarborough Fair [which] hung on lengths of string together with a Syphon & Garfunkel, an instrument for blending buttermilk.”), “the Whine cellar”, and the garden (with “Cockney apples and pears”)
- ‘innovative’ techniques of preparation (“frangellate the crusts” and “neptunize those prawns”)
- cutlery / tableware ([about Baked Scunthorpe] “Best eaten with a runcible spoon.”)
- dishes (“burbleberry syllabub”, “Baked Scunthorpe”, “Bubbling Chocolate Lagoon”, “Ghastlyshire pudding”, “rhinoceros-foot jelly”, “Gravy Rocket”, “Salad Rocket”, “coddled whelks”, and “regret-me-not sauce”)
- games involving food (“the Eton Mess Wall Game, where they throw meringues at the side of the building”).

There are distinct columns in the table below, meant to separate popular culture intertexts from allusions to food proper.

| <i>Goth Girl</i> Text: | Allusion to (Popular) Culture: | <i>Goth Girl</i> Text: | Allusion to Actual Food: |
|-------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|---|
| ▫ “Scarborough Fair” | ▫ the <i>Scarborough Fair</i> ballad | ▫ “Baked Scunthorpe” | ▫ Baked Alaska |
| ▫ “Syphon & Garfunkel” | ▫ Simon & Garfunkel | ▫ “Bubbling Chocolate Lagoon” | ▫ Bubbling Chocolate Lake |
| ▫ “the Whine Cellar” | ▫ “The Whine Cellar” (<i>The Nanny</i> , series 2, episode 10) | ▫ “Ghastlyshire pudding” | ▫ Yorkshire pudding |
| ▫ “Cockney apples and pears” | ▫ London street trader rhyming slang (“stairs”) | ▫ “rhinoceros-foot jelly” | ▫ calf’s-foot jelly |
| ▫ “frangellate the crusts” | ▫ the comedy duo Frangela (Frances Callier and Angela V. Shelton) + verb <i>flagellate</i> | ▫ “Gravy Rocket” ▫ “Salad Rocket” | ▫ gravy + idiom “to ride the gravy train” ▫ Rocket Salad |
| ▫ “neptunize those prawns” | ▫ Neptunize (musical artist) + planet Neptune + Neptune’s trident | ▫ “coddled whelks” | ▫ coddled eggs |
| ▫ “runcible spoon” | ▫ nonsense adjective <i>runcible</i> , in Edward Lear’s works (e.g. <i>The Owl and the Pussycat</i> , 1871) | ▫ “regret-me-not sauce” | ▫ Regret hot sauce |
| ▫ “burbleberry syllabub” | ▫ <i>The Maryoku Yummy</i> cartoon, | ▫ “the Eton Mess Wall Game” | ▫ Eton Mess (traditional British |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| | episode “Burpleberry Surprise”) + bumbleberry pie | | dessert) + Wall’s (British icecream and frozen dessert brand) + idiom “throw it against a wall and see if it sticks” |
|--|--|--|--|

Table 1. Intertexts (Allusions to Popular Culture and Actual Food)

Most popular culture intertexts come from literature, music and television. “Runcible” is a nod to Edward Lear⁵, who clearly had a major influence on Riddell’s style. Lear is not very consistent in describing what seems to have been his favourite invention, as he uses it to refer to a number of very different objects (runcible hat”, “runcible goose”, “runcible wall”, “rural runcible raven” etc.). His most famous phrase is notwithstanding “runcible spoon”, as it appears in his best-known poem, “The Owl and the Pussy-Cat” (1871) (“They dined on mince and slices of quince, which they ate with a runcible spoon.”) and the volume *Twenty-Six Nonsense Rhymes and Pictures* (1972), under the “D” entry (“The Dolomphious Duck, who caught Spotted Frogs for her dinner with a Runcible Spoon.”). Lear himself who, like Riddell, often illustrated his own books, drew the respective spoon as a round-bowled item of cutlery, similar to a ladle. However, modern dictionaries generally define it either as a fork (sometimes called “spork”) with three broad curved tines and a sharpened edge, utilized with pickles and hors d’œuvres, or as a teaspoon that tapers to a sharp edge or teeth (also called “grapefruit / orange / citrus / fruit spoon”). It is the hybrid nature of the utensil that Mihaela Doagă, the Romanian translator of the *Goth Girl* series, focuses on, as she renders the term as “lingură cu dinți” [tooth spoon].

Musical references like Simon & Garfunkel and their version of the *Scarborough Fair* ballad are questionless, while others, like the musical artist Neptunize, may be mere speculation. The astronomical and mythological implications of Neptune cannot be overlooked though. The planet is dark, cold and very windy, a real ice giant, which suggests the proper conditions prawns should be kept in (“neptunize those prawns”), whereas those related to the god of the sea in the Roman lore are equally appropriate in the context, if only for his trident, which may point, metaphorically, to the forks Mrs Beat’em urges her kitchen maids to use more convincingly.

The pormanteau *frangellate* is an ingenious fusion between an allusion to the Los Angeles-based comedic duo composed of Frances Callier and Angela V. Shelton and the verb *flagellate*, to which we might add the etymological shreds of *frange* (“to break, smash, fracture, defeat”) and also possibly the semantic features of *gelate* – all of which are more evocative of Mrs Beat’em’s truculence than of cooking hacks. Interestingly enough, though the original phrase does not in the least allude to Frangela’s skin colour (such racism being too low an endeavour for Riddell’s purposes), the Romanian translation (verbul *a rumeni* [to make nice and brown]), though apparently unassuming, can (inadvertently) lead to such an excessive interpretation.

“The Whine Cellar”, a pun relying on the homophony of *wine* and *whine*, creatively transposed into Romanian as “Crama de Chinuri” [approx. agony cellar], is not entirely new: episode 10 of the second series of the American sitcom *The Nanny* is but one possible reference. The translator makes brilliant use of the minimax strategy, achieving maximum effectiveness (alliteration, rhyme, allusion to a medieval torture chamber, akin to Gothic imagery etc.) with a simple phrase, a clever twist on “crama de vinuri” [wine cellar].

As for the “burpleberry syllabub”, it is the locus of “diffuse” intertextuality, to our mind, which makes Riddell’s text all the more entertaining. As with most other names of dishes, the phrase relies on an objective element, a truly existing dish, the *syllabub* (a whipped cream dessert, typically flavoured with white wine or sherry), on which something more often than not fanciful is grafted. The *Maryoku Yummy* animated series might be alluded to, as one of the episodes is entitled “Burpleberry Surprise”. On the other hand, *bumbleberry pie* (Canadian mixed berry pie originating from the Maritimes) may

⁵ Lear’s “runcible spoon” proved influential enough to be constantly ‘recycled’: Thomas Pynchon’s 1973 *Gravity’s Rainbow* also refers to runcible spoons (an exhibition fight with runcible spoons is held at some point); in an episode of *The Good Life* (1975 TV series), The Runcible Spoon is the name of a restaurant to which Tom Good, the main character, attempts to sell his surplus produce; *The Runcible Spoon* is a food magazine published in the District of Columbia since 2010 etc.

also be hinted at, while the onomatopoeic quality of *burble* (“to make a bubbling sound; to talk in a confused way”) goes well with the sonority of *syllabub*, which sounds a lot like *syllable* and is part of the same semantic sphere, related to “speech”.

The allusions to actual food are generally based on substitution and mixing. Thus, “Baked Scunthorpe” is a variation on *Baked Alaska* (as they both contain ice-cream and meringue), with Scunthorpe (a large industrial town in northern Lincolnshire) replacing the American Alaska, the northernmost state in the United States. “Bubbling Chocolate Lagoon” is built on the same pattern as *Bubbling Chocolate Lake*, with a jocular “lagoon” displacing the generally accepted “lake”. “Ghastlyshire pudding” may be a local (Ghastly-Gorm Hall) version of the more famous *Yorkshire pudding*, whereas “rhinoceros-foot jelly” is definitely a play upon *calf’s-foot jelly* (aspic made by boiling calves’ feet until the natural gelatin is extracted.) “Salad Rocket” simply reverses the order of the two elements of *Rocket Salad*, but “Gravy Rocket” goes even further, substituting a superior class vehicle, “rocket”, for “train”, without, however, completely losing the metaphorical meaning of “to have it ‘made’” or “easy work with a position of luxury”, as implied by Palmatier (2000: 304), who equates the train with life. “Coddled whelks” sounds remarkably like the canonical *coddled eggs* (gently cooked – whole or broken – eggs, usually in a bain-marie), “regret-me-not sauce” points to the *Regret* brand of hot sauces (with a latent “forget-me-not” touch), and “the Eton Mess Wall Game” brings a lot of things to mind, among which the Eton Mess (traditional British dessert), Wall’s (British icecream and frozen dessert brand), and the idiom “throw it against a wall and see if it sticks” (which originates in an old method of testing spaghetti by throwing a strand against a refrigerator – if it stuck, the spaghetti was considered fully cooked and ready to serve).

What the Translated Text Offers (Terminology-wise, Wordplay-wise and Paratextuality-wise)

With so many challenges (intertextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, specialised terminology, wordplay, a child / dual addressee etc.) which practically defy translation altogether, it is a wonder there is something (worth reading) left in the target text. Time-honoured tenets like the one requiring translation for children to be necessarily governed by a different set of rules and principles from those applicable to literary translation proper, or the very postulate of translation integr(al)ity, are prone to dissolution when there are too many incongruities between the (two) linguacultures involved in translation. As imparted by Vinay and Darbelnet, “there is loss (or entropy) when a part of the message cannot be conveyed because of a lack of structural, stylistic or metalinguistic means in the target language” (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1995: 345).

Of course, one (convenient) way of dealing with ‘untranslatables’ is to move to the bottom of the page whatever the translated text cannot or would not contain. Footnotes are by far the most popular type of extratextual gloss translators resort to whenever they feel they cannot simply dispose of some linguistic, semantic or cultural residue, in spite of the fact that notes are commonly considered ‘shameful’⁶ (i.e. indicative of translators’ incompetence) and disruptive of the smoothness of the target text, thus increasing the target reader’s processing effort (see He, 2010). This being said, we may ask ourselves to what extent a translator can make use of the paratext, taking into account that the source texts are children’s books with a limiting format (the Romanian editions of the *Goth Girl* series reproduce the original editions illustration by illustration, so the original layout needs to be preserved too, with not too many extra footnotes).

Our analysis of Mihaela Doagă’s translation of Riddell’s books shows she did her best to minimise entropy, despite the many difficulties she had to face. The minimal changes she made for the child-reader were obviously motivated by communicative reasons which Isabel Pascua Febles (2005) subsumes under *intertextual culture* or *cultural intertextuality*⁷: “Keeping intercultural education in mind, it is important for us to maintain the “cultural references” of the original text, and yet, the issues of acceptability and readability must be taken into consideration as well.” (Pascua Febles, 2005: 134)

⁶ See Dominique Aury’s very drastic definition given in the preface to Georges Mounin’s famous book *Problèmes théoriques de la traduction* (1963: xi): “La note en bas de page est la honte du traducteur.” [The footnote is the translator’s shame.]

⁷ Cf. Klingberg (1986) considers *cultural context adaptation* (i.e. explaining cultural features to the readers, facilitating comprehension of foreign information) as fundamental to translating children’s literature.

Mihaela Doagă starts from the premise of the readers' lack of knowledge of cultural presuppositions and occasionally provides clarification, inasmuch as the typographic space allows it, in the shape of translator's notes. These are used only as a last resort; other techniques, besides the editorial means, are much more common. *Punning correspondence* (as Díaz-Pérez calls it, 2013) is scarce (as it involves a literal translation which captures the entire semantic range of the original pun), although "Crama de Chinuri", for example, considered above, is an inspired rendering of "the Whine Cellar"; changes of pun, due to a lack of congruity between the levels of signifier and signified across languages, often come as "sacrifices of secondary information" (Díaz-Pérez, *op. cit.*) (e.g. prioritizing one of the meanings in a polysemic pun, normally deemed more relevant, or choosing meaning over form). A portmanteau word like *smellywich*, for instance, is treated by retroversion, being disassembled into its original parts (*smelly* + *sandwich*) which are then translated: "sandvici puturos" [smelly / stinky sandwich]. Ada Goth's typical breakfast, "soft-boiled egg and soldiers", is rendered as "un ou fiert moale și pâine prăjită". The rectangle shape of the 'soldiers' and their preordained function (*i.e.* dipping into liquid egg yolk) are missing from both the text and paratext, as a matter of details (which can be dispensed with, in the context).

Omission is also inevitable, as drastic selection needs to be implemented, for reasons of space and target reader age. A mixture of addition and compensation can equally be found in Mihaela Doagă's translation. As an illustration, not only is the syntactic parallelism of "[a] partridge pie, a pigeon pie and a plover pie, each bigger than the one before, were followed by potted rabbit, jugged hare and jellied goose on increasingly large platters" preserved in "[o] plăcintă cu potârniche, o plăcintă cu porumbel și una cu pescărel, una mai mare ca alta, le trecură pe dinainte, urmate de iepure înăbușit, iepure de câmp călit și piftie de găscă, pe platouri din ce în ce mai mari", but we also have names of similar birds and beginning with the same letter, for the sake of sticking to the "P" alliteration. What is more, "porumbel" rhymes with "pescărel", and "înăbușit" with "călit", a prosodic effect absent from the English text. "Potted rabbit", on the other hand, would be potted meat stored in a jar (something Elizabethan cooks were very fond of), and not "înăbușit", which is closer to stewing (or jugging, for that matter).

Deeply aware of "the *double distance* in intertextuality, involving the text author upstream (type of intertextuality; degree of alteration and concealment) and the receiver downstream (level of knowledge of quoted text)" (Cintra Torres, 2015), the Romanian translator embraces extratextual enhancement and "paratranslating agency" (Yuste Frías, 2012) with remarkable discernment. Her creativity and context-sensitivity are vital in translating a text such as Riddell's. Even if children should not be bothered with too much paratext, in this case translator's notes are utterly necessary. Exegetic footnotes (meant to reveal a particular intertext) and metatextual-exegetic footnotes (meant to both explain a given pun and clarify its allusiveness) are instrumental as far as textual / cultural meaning is concerned, insofar as they also have an intrinsic pedagogical value. Here are two examples of footnotes, which elucidate the allusive *Syphon & Garfunkel* and *Scarborough Fair, Gravy Rocket* and *Salad Rocket*:

Aceste patru mirodenii sunt pomenite în refrenul cântecului *Scarborough Fair*, o baladă populară englezească, preluată printre alții de formația Simon & Garfunkel. [These four spices – meaning parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme – are mentioned in the chorus of the song *Scarborough Fair*, an English popular ballad, covered, among others, by the band called Simon & Garfunkel.]

"Gravy Rocket" în original, joc de cuvinte între "gravy" – "sos" și "gravy train" – "câștig ușor". "Racheta Rucola" – "Salad Rocket" în original, inversare a termenului "Rocket Salad" – "rucola". ["Gravy Rocket" in the original text, a pun on "gravy" – "sauce" și "gravy train" – "easy money". "Racheta Rucola" – "Salad Rocket" in the original text, a swap of the terms in "Rocket Salad" – "rucola".]

The Romanian translation is remarkable, as it often happens, in its occasional target-oriented touches. This can be seen in the way linguistic fillers are treated: if *delicious* is literally transposed, *perfect*, on the other hand, is idiomatically rendered as "o minunăție" [a (thing of) beauty, a marvel] ("Mrs Beat'em's roast beef and Ghastlyshire pudding was delicious and her burbleberry syllabub was perfect. / Friptura de vită a doamnei Beat'em, cu budincă de Ghastlyshire era delicioasă, iar *syllabub*-ul ei era o minunăție.") A translator's note accompanies *syllabub* and succinctly presents the essentials

(“desert tradițional englezesc cu frișcă, vin și zahăr” [traditional English dessert with whipped cream, wine and sugar]). “Ciubuc de orz” is another interesting and well-inspired solution for the polysemous *humbug*, as its secondary meanings (“tip, backsheesh”) are as exhibitively doublespeak as those of the original term.

Closing Thoughts

Set on reviving dead metaphors and set phrases, Riddell counts on his readers to understand and enjoy his riddles; certainly, in order to understand the innovation, one needs to be familiar with tradition first. British readers will face fewer problems with that, having the privilege of linguistic and cultural immediateness, even if the intertextual network he created reaches further back in time than we can trace and in more intricate ways than we can ever imagine. There are, naturally, ‘leftovers’, residual information which did not ‘survive’ the process of translation. Then again, translation itself is always a partial process “whereby some but not all of the source text is transposed” (Tymoczko, 1999: 282).

The Romanian translator of Riddell’s texts manages to unscramble what the author deliberately mishmashed, and accepts the even more formidable task of making the text intelligible, of clearing up difficulty, while also leaving something for the reader to discover and disentangle. The strength of this translation arises in great part out of the well-balanced way in which it provides the target reader with a fairly thorough grounding in the foreign specificities of the source culture. A more fine-grained analysis of her work would probably show the translator left aside (too) many of the non-British intertexts, trusting the ‘omnivorousness’ of the reader, but as it is, and under the circumstances, the Romanian version is definitely on a par with the original.

If Chris Riddell put “old wine in new bottles”, so did his translator, for as far as we are concerned, this idiom could serve as a metaphor for translation at large.

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