

# Translated Christmas Picturebooks: English to Croatian

---

**Genzić, Laura**

**Master's thesis / Diplomski rad**

**2019**

*Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj:* **University of Zagreb, Faculty of Teacher Education / Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Učiteljski fakultet**

*Permanent link / Trajna poveznica:* <https://um.nsk.hr/um:nbn:hr:147:380811>

*Rights / Prava:* [In copyright](#)/[Zaštićeno autorskim pravom.](#)

*Download date / Datum preuzimanja:* **2024-11-08**

*Repository / Repozitorij:*

[University of Zagreb Faculty of Teacher Education - Digital repository](#)



**SVEUČILIŠTE U ZAGREBU  
UČITELJSKI FAKULTET  
ODSJEK ZA UČITELJSKE STUDIJE**

**LAURA GENZIĆ  
DIPLOMSKI RAD**

**TRANSLATED CHRISTMAS  
PICTUREBOOKS: ENGLISH TO  
CROATIAN**

**Zagreb, rujan 2019.**

**SVEUČILIŠTE U ZAGREBU  
UČITELJSKI FAKULTET  
ODSJEK ZA UČITELJSKE STUDIJE  
(Zagreb)**

**DIPLOMSKI RAD**

**Ime i prezime pristupnika:** Laura Genzić

**TEMA DIPLOMSKOGA RADA:** Translated Christmas  
Picturebooks: English  
to Croatian

**MENTOR:** Izv. prof. dr. sc. Smiljana Narančić Kovač

**SUMENTOR:** Nada Kujundžić, predavač

**Zagreb, rujan 2019.**

## Contents

Abstract .....	
Sažetak .....	
INTRODUCTION .....	1
1. CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS .....	3
1.1. Christmas in the Anglo-American culture.....	3
1.2. Christmas in the Croatian culture .....	5
2. TRANSLATION.....	8
2.1. Domestication and foreignization .....	8
2.2. Translating children's literature and picturebooks .....	9
2.2.1. Translations of picturebooks.....	9
2.2.2. Translated Christmas picturebooks.....	10
2.2.3. Christmas picturebooks selected for the analysis .....	12
3. AUNTIE CLAUS.....	13
3.1. Story summary .....	14
3.2. Analysis .....	15
3.2.1. Names .....	15
3.2.2. Food-related names.....	17
3.2.3. Gift-giving tradition.....	18
3.2.4. Other culture-specific items.....	20
3.3. Conclusion.....	21
4. BADNJA VEČER – THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS .....	22
4.1. Story summary .....	22
4.2. Original vs. adaptation .....	22
4.3. Analysis .....	23
4.3.1. The style of translation .....	23
4.3.2. The translation of culture-specific items .....	24
4.4. Conclusion.....	25
CONCLUSION .....	27
References .....	29
Izjava o samostalnoj izradi rada.....	
Izjava o trajnoj pohrani i javnoj obrani rada .....	

## **Abstract**

This thesis analyses translations of two Christmas-related picturebooks. Specifically, the aim of the thesis is to examine strategies used in the translation of culture-specific items in two Christmas-related picturebooks: *Auntie Claus* (1999) by Elise Primavera and *Badnja večer – The Night Before Christmas* (2016) by Tom Sperling. The thesis examines how translator's choices affect the overall result of translation. It begins with a short overview of the development of Anglo-American and Croatian Christmas culture. The following chapter discusses the role of the picturebook translator and introduces two opposed methods often used in translation of culture-specific elements: domestication and foreignization Venuti (1995). It also focuses on aspects that need to be taken into consideration when translating picturebooks and explains the criteria of selection of the two picturebooks analysed in this thesis. An analysis of the translated picturebooks follows, concentrating primarily on culture-specific items.

**Keywords:** picturebook, translation strategy, domestication, foreignization, culture-specific items

## Sažetak

Tema ovoga diplomskoga rada je prijevod dvaju slikovnica o Božiću. Cilj je rada analizirati strategije vezane uz prijevod kulturno-specifičnih elemenata u slikovnicama: *Teta Mraz* (1999) autorice Elise Primavere te *Badnja večer – The Night Before Christmas* (2016) autora Toma Sperlinga. U radu se također analizira utjecaj odabranih strategija na cjelokupan ishod prevođenja slikovnice. Rad započinje kratkim pregledom angloameričke i hrvatske božićne tradicije u kojem se prikazuje razvoj svake kulture kroz vrijeme. Naredno poglavlje govori o položaju slikovnice te prevoditelja slikovnica u odnosu na područje prevođenja dječje književnosti. U poglavlju se također govori o dvjema glavnim metodama prevođenja, a to su odomaćivanje i otuđivanje, koje se ponajviše odnose na prijevod kulturno-specifičnih elemenata. Poglavlje također ističe koje kompetencije prevoditelja zahtijeva prevođenje slikovnica, kao i koje se elemente slikovnice treba pritom i uzeti u obzir. Isto poglavlje donosi kratak pregled slikovnica prevedenih s engleskoga na hrvatski jezik koje su dostupne u knjižnicama, a vezane su uz temu Božića. Također se objašnjavaju kriteriji prema kojima su dvije slikovnice odabrane za analizu. Nakon opisa provedene analize prevođenja kulturno-specifičnih elemenata, sažimaju se glavne spoznaje rada te se iznose smjernice za buduća istraživanja.

**Ključni pojmovi:** slikovnica, prijevodna strategija, odomaćivanje, otuđivanje, kulturno-specifični elementi

## INTRODUCTION

*"With great power comes great responsibility."*

*author unknown*

This sentence can carry a lot of meanings, but for the purposes of this thesis, it is understood as referring to power and responsibility translators have when it comes to translating culture-specific items in children's literature, and especially in picturebooks. But first, what exactly is a picturebook?

There is no universal definition of a picturebook, but many scholars agree that it is a work of art in which words and images interact and complement each other. Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott consider picturebooks an art form based on the combination of two levels of communication: the visual and the verbal (2006, p. 1). Smiljana Narančić Kovač defines them as works of art which combine the verbal and the visual discourses to tell the same story (2015, p. 7), while L.R. Sipe concludes that in a picturebook, both the text and the illustrations form a synergetic relationship, meaning that one would be incomplete without the other (2001, p. 24).

The importance of picturebooks goes beyond their status as works of art: namely, they are a child's first encounter with what books are about and what they mean (Oittinen, Ketola, & Garavini, 2018, pp. 3, 4). Besides "being entertaining", they also "teach the child about other cultures, about naming things, and about understanding the symbolic meanings of words and images" (ibid., p. 4). Children are like sponges that absorb anything and everything that is offered to them. Especially at an early age, it is essential that adults (including teachers) offer them a wide variety of picturebooks, not only from their surroundings and culture, but from other cultures as well. In that way, they expand their knowledge about the world and teach them how to be tolerant and accept differences. In other words, they become true citizens of the world.

However, such a wide variety of picturebooks would not be available to us were it not for translators who bring cultures close to each other by translating. One of the cultures that would certainly remain distant, but for them, is the Anglo-American Christmas culture. On the surface, Christmas seems to be celebrated in the same way

*in Anglo-American culture and in Croatian culture. However, there are some cultural items specific for each of them which can be seen through translated Christmas picturebooks.*

The aim of this thesis is to analyse two American picturebooks about Christmas and their Croatian translations: *Auntie Claus* by Elise Primavera (1999), a charming story about the importance of giving, rather than receiving gifts, and the bilingual picturebook *Badnja večer – The Night Before Christmas* by Tom Sperling (2016), which is actually an adaptation of Clement Clarke Moore's poem *A Visit from St. Nicholas ('Twas the Night Before Christmas)* (1823). Specifically, the thesis focuses on Christmas-related culture-specific items in the two picturebooks and examines which strategies were used in their translation from English into Croatian. The thesis also proposes and answers some questions: How are Croatian children introduced to the topic of Christmas in their own language? What did translators do to bring the other culture closer to them? Which translation strategies did they use, and why? Why is it important to take both visual and verbal texts into consideration when translating?

The thesis is divided into four chapters: the first chapter gives an overview of two Christmas traditions: Anglo-American and Croatian. The second chapter looks at translation in general and the position of picturebook translation in it. When compared to translations of adult literature, translations of children's literature are underestimated and often looked down upon. This chapter discusses the misconceptions connected to translating children's literature, as well as qualities of a good picturebook translator and the strategies he/she uses. Moreover, the chapter discusses some questions which are important for further analysis, such as: Which Christmas picturebooks have been translated into Croatian and why? How many of them focus on Christmas as a religious holiday and how many present it as a secular holiday? Is there any ideological reason for that? To which group(s) do the selected two picturebooks belong? What is the link between the age of the intended readers and the translation of culture-specific items? The next two chapters present the main focus of the thesis. Each provides an analysis of one of the two selected picturebooks, and the translation strategies used in translating their culture-specific items. They also examine how, why, and how successfully the translation strategies were used. In the end, the conclusion summarizes the main findings of the thesis and proposes future discussion and research.



# **1. CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS**

Christmas has always had a special status in the life of Christians. Even though it is not the biggest Christian holiday, it surely is the most favourite holiday for many, and not only for Christians. Throughout time, it overcame the status of a single-day holiday, and became a whole “season”, the Christmas time. For the purposes of this thesis, there follows an overview of the development of two Christmas traditions – Anglo-American and Croatian.

## **1.1. Christmas in the Anglo-American culture**

It is well-known that Anglo-American culture is a mixture of many cultures from around the world, so it is not surprising that typical Anglo-American Christmas is a mixture of various traditions as well. However, Christmas has not been celebrated on a large scale up until the 19th century when the Congress declared it as a national holiday (Gulevich, 2003, p. 23). Until then, its celebrations varied from region to region – the German communities in Pennsylvania celebrated the holiday by decorating the Christmas tree, baking cookies and Christmas cakes, surrounded by family and friends; those of Anglican English descent hosted lavish Christmas meals and parties; while those in Puritan England ignored the holiday (ibid, p. 19; Wernecke, 1962, p. 226). After Christmas had become an official holiday in the United States, some of the customs of the minorities became accepted on a larger scale. Those that were accepted were related to the notion of Christmas as a domestic holiday – the decoration of the Christmas tree (first with candies and nuts, later with glass balls and lights), the preparation of Christmas meals (mince pies, plum-pudding, stuffed turkey) and cakes (gingerbread and other cookies), as well as family gift-exchanges (Gulevich, 2003, p. 19). Throughout time, American consumeristic spirit took over the holiday and introduced some new customs to the American Christmas tradition. Gift-giving custom became central – people started to spend a lot of money on Christmas presents, gradually creating today’s picture of American Christmas and Christmas gift-giving.

Before the invention of fancy wrapping paper, the gifts were put in stockings which served as a kind of wrapping (Marling, 2001, p. 5). However, sellers realised that packed goods were more attractive to buyers, so they started packing them in boxes, wrapping them with paper, and binding with string or cord (ibid., p. 16). Gradually, the whole industry developed around producing boxes and various

wrapping papers and ribbons, because people became obsessed with creating pretty packages for Christmas gifts (ibid., p. 17).

The gift-giving obsession was also a perfect ground for creation of one of the most famous gift-giving figures in American Christmas tradition – Santa Claus. Everything started with Clement Clarke Moore’s famous poem *A Visit from St. Nicholas* (*'Twas the Night Before Christmas*) (1823) in which he created the figure of “a jolly old elf” dressed all in fur, who brought presents on Christmas Eve. As a basis for creating the character, Moore used the character of the old European saint, St. Nicholas – a bishop who fills the stockings or shoes of well-behaved children with presents. However, Moore’s St. Nicholas is not a bishop, but an old plump figure who travels in a sleigh pulled by eight reindeer. He enters the house through the chimney and puts presents into children’s stockings hung up by the fireplace (which is another European Christmas tradition related to St. Nicholas) (Gulevich, 2003, pp. 699, 703). Moreover, Moore “shifted the traditional date of St. Nicholas’s visit from the eve of his own feast day to Christmas Eve. In this way he transformed the saint into a Christmas gift bringer” (ibid., p. 703).

Moore’s character, however, served to the American artist Thomas Nast as a basis for creating a new character – Santa Claus. Although he resembles Moore’s St. Nicholas in a manner of bringing gifts to children, his appearance is slightly different. Santa Claus is an elderly man with a long white beard, wearing black boots and a red suit trimmed with white fur. Nast also expanded the character by giving him North Pole address and some helpers, i.e. elves (ibid., p. 706). Such a character became appealing to many, but especially to the retailers and advertisers who saw it as an opportunity to make more money. As a result, the department stores hired Santas to attract customers and to promote their goods as perfect Christmas gifts. Also, after seeing that Santa brings profit, some retailers began to promote the idea that the Christmas shopping season began on the day after Thanksgiving. Stores organized whole Thanksgiving parades with Santa Claus as a mascot to alert people that the Christmas shopping season has started (ibid., p. 180). A well-known example of such an idea is today’s annual Macy’s Thanksgiving Parade that signifies the official start of the Christmas shopping season (Marling, 2001, p. 82).

Given all the above, one would say that modern-day American Christmas is far from religious, and that would not be far from truth. As Karal Ann Marling writes, the American Christmas has always been more secular than sacred. Since the appearance of Christmas as an official holiday, people of the American culture were always in search of a way how to make profit of Christmastime (2001, p. 43). As a result, American Christmas became a symbol of mass consumerism, not only in their country, but in the rest of the world as well.

## 1.2. Christmas in the Croatian culture

The traditional Croatian Christmas customs, according to Hrvatski informacijski centar (Croatian Information Centre)<sup>1</sup>, include preparations for Christ's arrival through a one-month-long period called Advent, customs related to the Christmas Eve, for the Christmas Day, and for the Three Kings' Day (Epiphany). The majority of the Croatian population belong to the Catholic faith, so the customs are connected with the Catholic religion.

The St. Catherine's Day on November 25, in the Croatian tradition signifies the beginning of a four-week period of preparations for Christ's arrival, also known as Advent. People in many Croatian areas tend to denote that period with the saying: *Sveta Katarina van, do Božića mesec dan* [Saint Catherine out, it's a month until Christmas] (Rihtman-Auguštin, 1997, p. 30). In that period people attend mass every day early in the morning as a sign of their faith and joy because of Christ's arrival. A more recently adopted symbol of Advent in Croatian culture is the Advent wreath – a wreath made from greenery with four candles on it. Each Sunday during Advent, one candle is being lit, until the last Sunday before Christmas when all four candles burn. On the St. Barbara's Day or St. Lucy's Day, people plant Christmas wheat as a symbol of new life and prosperity. It usually grows enough until Christmas Eve when it is tied with the Croatian tricolour and put under the Christmas tree. Another tradition connected to St. Lucy's Day is gift-giving – in the past time, there was a tradition in which people covered in white sheet went around and gave dried figs, almonds, walnuts, and apples to well-behaved children (ibid., p. 34). The naughty ones would get a twig as a reminder of their bad behaviour. In more recent time, the figure of St. Lucy as a gift-giver has been replaced with St. Nicholas, a bishop that leaves gifts for

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.hic.hr/bozic-hrvata01.htm> (accessed 1 September 2019)

well-behaved children in their boots, thoroughly clean and shiny and placed on window sills, while his companion Krampus leaves bundles of birch twigs for the naughty ones.

On Christmas Eve, preparations for Christ's birth celebration become more intense. In some rural areas, women and girls get up early in the morning to clean the house and prepare meals and cakes which need to be finished by the evening. The meal on Christmas Eve usually contains fish, and no meat, because there is a tradition of fasting on that day. While women do the chores inside the house, men usually have chores outside the house – they need to feed the animals, and prepare the Yule log (*badnjak*) and straw for the evening. In the evening, the straw is put under the table as a symbol of Christ's birth in the stable, and a male family member brings the Yule log into the house with the following greeting: *Valjen Isus i Marija, na dobro van došla Badnja večer i porođenje Gospodinovo!* [Jesus and Mary be praised, may Goodness come to you with Christmas Eve and the Birth of the Lord!] (ibid., p. 59). The log is later put into the hearth to burn. In more recent times, the Yule log has been replaced with Christmas tree, especially in urban areas. People used to decorate it with apples, pears, plums, walnuts, and almonds, while today they use Christmas ornaments such as bulbs and other typical Christmas decorations to adorn the tree. Another important part of the tradition of decorating the Christmas tree is the nativity scene. It is put under the Christmas tree together with Christmas wheat, as a direct symbol of the holiday that is being celebrated. It is also a custom, especially in recent times, to open the presents nicely wrapped up and placed under the tree by family members (in some families, the presents are opened on Christmas morning). Children are told that Little Jesus brought them gifts. The final 'event' of Christmas Eve happens at midnight, when people attend Midnight Mass to celebrate the birth of Christ and wish each other merry Christmas. On Christmas day, people also attend mass, and after that celebrate the holiday together with their closest family members, enjoying an abundant Christmas lunch together. The days that follow are also spent with family and friends, which signifies that in the Croatian culture Christmas is considered as a holiday in which family is very important.

The whole Christmas season ends with the Epiphany or Three Kings' Day which denotes Jesus' christening and the visit of three wise men who brought presents

to baby Jesus. On that day, people move away all Christmas decorations from their homes, which symbolises that Christmas season is officially over.

Nowadays these customs are often simplified and reduced to a family dinner on Christmas Eve, when the tree is decorated together, and the nativity scene, called “the little barn” (*štalica* in Croatian), and the day is often spent in preparations for the Christmas day itself, cooking and baking, and wrapping presents. The Yule log is rarely seen these days, and the customs are not taken strictly. The Christmas Eve Mass and the Christmas Mass are attended, and beautiful Croatian Christmas Carols, centuries old, are sung in churches. People who are not religious do not attend the mass, but the Christmas tree and food are often present in family reunions in those families, too.

With this short overview of the old and more recent Croatian Christmas traditions, it may be concluded that Croatian Christmas still retains the religious content, despite of the mass consumerism that has appeared in recent decades. While in American Christmas tradition everything seems to be subordinated to shopping and spending money, and to some thoughts of those in need, the Croatian Christmas tradition does not forget why Christmas is being celebrated in the first place.

## **2. TRANSLATION**

Often underappreciated and underpaid, but still expected to do the translation work meticulously, translators carry the burden of great responsibility. Not only are they mediators between two languages, but also between two cultures. Each text they translate is a representative of its language and culture – the two inseparable parts. When translating, translators need to be aware that he or she is not translating for the sole purpose of transferring words from source language to target language. He or she is transferring elements of the source culture, with its own values and ideologies, to the target culture, with possibly very different values and ideologies. In doing so, the translator may encounter many culture-specific items. Riitta Oittinen refers to them as “all the elements that are exclusively anchored to a specific culture” (2018, p. 84). To be more specific, they are

textually actualized items whose function and connotations in a source text involve a translation problem in their transference to a target text, whenever this problem is a product of the nonexistence of the referred item or of its different intertextual status in the cultural system of the readers of the target text. (Franco Aixelá, 1996, p. 58)

Culture-specific items can be found in names, rites, customs, sayings, and so on. They are not connected to only one aspect of culture. As mentioned above, they may sometimes present a problem to a translator, just because they may refer to only one cultural system. That especially refers to cases in which the differences between the two cultures are significant, because there are additional culture-specific items to deal with. In the process of translating those specificities, translators often use two approaches or translation methods – domestication and foreignization, and several different translation strategies grouped under either of the above.

### **2.1. Domestication and foreignization**

According to Wenfen Yang, “domestication and foreignization are two basic translation strategies which provide both linguistic and cultural guidance” (Yang, 2010, p. 77). They were first described by Lawrence Venuti (1995) as inevitable parts of translation, where domestication meant “assimilating a text to target cultural and linguistic values”, and foreignization meant “retaining some significant trace of the original ‘foreign’ text” (Oittinen, 2000, p. 74). Or as Nada Kujundžić explains it, domestication is substitution or compensation of foreign elements with their equivalents in the target culture, and foreignization is retaining foreign elements from

the source culture (Kujundžić, 2018). However, there has been a lot of discussion among scholars whether domestication is a desirable strategy in translation or not.

While Venuti does not support the use of domestication in translation (although he is aware of the importance of domestication) (Venuti, 1995, xiii), Oittinen has slightly different opinion. In her book *Translating for Children* (2000), she writes that “all translation involves adaptation, and the very act of translation always involves change and domestication” (2000, p. 6). Furthermore, she points out that translating for children is significantly different from translating for adults, primarily because of “several other elements besides the text in words” (ibid.). Here she refers to picturebooks – a part of children’s reading often underestimated in translation industry (2018, p. 204).

## **2.2. Translating children’s literature and picturebooks**

The problem with translations of children’s literature lies in the fact that its source material is considered to be of marginal interest and the professional activity, meaning that the translation carried out on this kind of literature is often undervalued and underpaid (O’Connell, 2006, p. 19). The publishers (who play a big role in deciding which works are to be translated and presented on the market), are not the only ones to blame – equal responsibility is on those who *should* care about it: theorists and scholars (ibid., p. 15). Picturebooks perhaps suffer the most in this respect because they are often “mistaken as *simple* literature” (Oittinen, Ketola, & Garavini, 2018, p. 3) which does not require a lot of translation work. However, there is little truth in that.

### **2.2.1. Translations of picturebooks**

When translating picturebooks, translators should be aware of several aspects. First and foremost it is the complexity of a picturebook as a piece, meaning that the synergy of illustrations and text should be maintained in the translation (ibid., p. 18). The illustrations are as important as the text, so “the translation must resonate with the illustrations with the same reciprocity as the original” (ibid.). Thus, a good picturebook translator should have both verbal and visual literacy, meaning that he or she needs to know how to read illustrations and their interaction with the verbal text (Gonzalez Davies & Oittinen, 2008, xiii). The second aspect translators should be aware of is that “children’s literature is literature read silently *by* children and aloud *to* children” (Oittinen, 2000, p. 5, emphasis added), meaning that it has a *dual audience* – both

children and adults (Oittinen, Ketola, & Garavini, 2018, p. 6) participate in the reading event. For that purpose, the translator needs to take into consideration the rhythm of the original and translate accordingly to the original (ibid., p. 20). In order to keep the same narrative rhythm of the source picturebook, translator should also “thoroughly ponder how to distribute the written text on the page-openings or on different pages” (ibid., p. 87). Another aspect which should be considered is the cultural aspect. Each picturebook has its own culture-specific items that should not remain ignored in the process of translation. In order to translate such items in a proper manner, the translator should have extensive knowledge of the source culture (ibid.), as well as of the target culture. However, in all of the aspects it is important have in mind that translation should be appropriate to the age and the cognitive level of the target reader.

Furthermore, when translating culture-specific items in picturebooks, the most common strategy that is used is domestication. The reason for that is mostly because the target readers are not expected to have such wide knowledge of the source culture (ibid., p. 83), so the translators usually decide to substitute foreign elements of the source culture with their counterparts in the target culture. However, it sometimes occurs that the cultural reference is being removed or lost. Such a strategy is mostly used when translators presume that the culture-specific item of the source culture is too far from the cultural background of the target audience, and its loss would not affect further development of the narrative (ibid., p. 88). Foreignization, on the other hand, is also possible, but it is mostly effective in cases when two cultures are close to each other or if one of them has influenced the other one (ibid.).

### **2.2.2. Translated Christmas picturebooks**

For the purposes of this thesis, the translated Christmas picturebooks for the analysis were chosen from a place where they are available to everyone – the library; to be more specific, these picturebooks have been found in several libraries in Zagreb. It should be noted that this short overview does not take into account all translated Christmas picturebooks found in Zagreb libraries, but only those translated from English. The general impression is that libraries are deficient in quality picturebooks, both in terms of variety and quantity. The number of the target picturebooks scarcely reaches the number of thirty, and what saddens the most is that more than a half of them are pure *kitsch*. Illustrations with colours are often aggressive and the text leaves the impression that its author did not put even a minimal effort to produce a quality



content. Given that a lot of the observed titles belong to co-publishing editions, it is not a surprise that the aim was to produce a lot for a small amount of money – something that scholars call ideology and power of the publishing houses. That reminds us of one of Mette Rudvin's citations (1994, p. 209) in which she refers to the role of publishers in deciding what will be translated:

Policy-makers in the publishing and marketing world play an important role not only in forming images, but also in strengthening the received images of other nations through translation, particularly in the case of minority cultures in their relation to dominant cultures. (...) they are frequently images the source culture itself wishes to convey to the outside world for conscious marketing strategies, or simply because it regards them as an intrinsic part of its national identity.

Thus, it is obvious that publishing houses dictate what the youngest Croatian readers will read and learn about foreign Christmas traditions.

There are generally two aspects through which Christmas can be presented in literature – religious and secular. Secular Christmas stories present Christmas through more material traditions such as receiving presents from Santa Claus; preparing Christmas meals and cookies; decorating the Christmas tree; but also, spending the holiday with family and friends. On the other side, religious Christmas stories present not only the story of baby Jesus's birth; but promote peace, love, modesty, and compassion (Milković, 2011, p. 41). According to that classification, there are more picturebooks that present Christmas as a secular holiday than those which deal with its religious aspect. The reason may be that many children are familiar with the famous gift-giver and preparations for his coming, which makes that topic more attractive and closer to them – especially to the youngest ones.

However, some of the secular picturebooks promote the importance of compassion, doing good to others, and teach about the importance of giving rather than receiving – the values characteristic for religious picturebooks. Although the initial intention of the authors of such picturebooks was not to promote religious Christmas, but rather teach children not to be selfish in the most consumeristic time of the year, it is obvious that religious Christmas cannot be completely excluded from the secular one. Examples of such picturebooks are *Auntie Claus* (1999) by Elise Primavera (also analysed in this thesis), *Peter Claus and the Naughty List* (2001) by Lawrence David, and *The Berenstain Bears Save Christmas* (2001) by Stan, Jan and Mike Berenstain.

### 2.2.3. Christmas picturebooks selected for the analysis

From not such a long list of translated Christmas picturebooks, two of them have been chosen to be analysed. The first picturebook is *Auntie Claus* (1999) by Elise Primavera. Unlike many picturebooks about Christmas translated from English and offered in Zagreb libraries, this one stood out with its story and illustrations. The two aspects are nicely combined and well-developed. However, the main criteria by which it has been selected is that it has enough culture-specific items to reveal which strategies the translator used while translating and how successful the translator was in that. It has been translated by Lana Hölbling Matković. The story of *Peter Claus and the Naughty List* (2001) by Lawrence David, translated by Martina Aničić has also been considered and got very close to being selected for analysis. It is similar to *Auntie Claus* (1999), so the two translations could have been compared through translation of culture-specific items. Unfortunately, *Peter Claus* does not have enough culture-specific items to be analysed, and later compared.

The other picturebook selected for the analysis is interesting for several reasons. *Badnja večer = The Night Before Christmas* (2016), illustrated by Tom Sperling, and translated by Neven Borić, is a bilingual picturebook which is actually an adaptation of almost two centuries old poem *A Visit from Saint Nicholas ('Twas the Night Before Christmas)* (1823) by Clement Clarke Moore. Its bilingualism directly observes how skilfully the translator dealt with translating culture-specific items for the youngest readers, as well as with the translation of the whole poem.

### 3. AUNTIE CLAUS

*Auntie Claus* is a picturebook created by Elise Primavera, first published in 1999. Elise Primavera (1955) is an American author and illustrator of children's novels and picturebooks. Her first appearance on the literary scene was as an illustrator of Margaret K. Wetterer's picturebook *The Mermaid's Cape* (1981) and Eils Moorhouse Lewis's *The Snug Little House* (1981). Two years later she published her first work as both author and illustrator – *Basil and Maggie* (1983), a picturebook about special relationship between a girl and her new pony Basil. Since then, Primavera has illustrated more than twenty children's books and picturebooks. Some of the most noted collaborations are with awarded children's author Jane Yolen on her collection of poems *Best Witches: Poems for Halloween* (1988); and with Jerdine Nolen on her picturebook *Raising Dragons* (1998).

The idea of *Auntie Claus* came from the author's need to make a Christmas book for a very young friend. As she told in one interview, she wanted to make

something that takes the magical, fun aspect of the holiday and presents it in a way that's not cliché. Something that you could sit down with a child a couple of weeks before Christmas and the story gets them really excited about the holiday. Something that elaborates on Santa Claus, the elves, the North Pole, and what goes on up there.<sup>2</sup>

so she came up with the idea of “an eccentric woman who keeps her Christmas lights on all year long” (ibid.). This picturebook is intended for the readers aged 4 to 8 and reflects the author's attitude that children are very observant and that for them, the visual is more important than the verbal. As a result, *Auntie Claus* contains a lot of ‘visual cues’, meaning that Primavera intentionally replaced some words with images in order to make the story easy to follow and more approachable to a young reader.<sup>3</sup> Also, illustrations in double page spreads contribute to the ‘fluency’ of the story.

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://bookpage.com/interviews/8019-elise-primavera-childrens#.XYTYygzZPY> (accessed 3 September 2019)

<sup>3</sup> [https://web.archive.org/web/20040724171015/http://examiner.gmnews.com/news/2002/1226/Front\\_page/058.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20040724171015/http://examiner.gmnews.com/news/2002/1226/Front_page/058.html) (accessed 3 September 2019)

### 3.1. Story summary

At the very beginning of the picturebook the reader is introduced with the Kringle family – a family of not so ordinary New Yorkers. They lived above the Bing Cherry Hotel and adored Christmas. Mr. and Mrs. Kringle had Christmas related jobs, and their children, Sophie and Christopher were given presents as if every day had been Christmas. Sadly, that did not make them any more grateful for everything they had. Every time their great-aunt, Auntie Claus, had suggested that they had been given too many presents, they would just scream ‘No!’

Despite of not sharing the same opinion about receiving presents, Sophie Kringle was fascinated with her great-aunt who lived in penthouse 25C, at the top of the Bing Cherry Hotel. Auntie Claus was a slightly eccentric woman, always wearing “glamorous red velvet gowns with white ermine trim” (Primavera, 1999, [n.p.]), eating Christmas cookies with tea through the whole year! Every day when Sophie visited her, Auntie Claus would instruct her on a different topic. Some days it would be on choosing the right Christmas tree, and another day she would talk about decorations. Every visit would end with Auntie’s words of wisdom: “And darling, always remember my first and final rule – whether it’s birthdays or Christmas, it is far better to give than it is to receive” (Primavera, 1999, [n.p.]).

Sophie was not aware of the wisdom of her words – she was rather interested in the nature of Auntie Claus’ annual business trip right after Halloween from which she would not return until Valentine’s Day. When the day of Auntie’s departure had come, Sophie decided to travel as a stowaway in Auntie’s luggage. They had travelled with an old elevator that was going high up to the sky for hours. When the elevator had finally landed, Sophie was welcomed by a slightly nervous elf called Mr. Pudding who had mistaken her for a new elf. Sophie had realized that she had to blend in if she wanted to find out where Auntie Claus was. She had spent weeks doing the elf job, when she was sent to the coal mine to pick up the Bad-Boys-and-Girls list. Worried that she would not receive any Christmas gifts, she had immediately looked for her name on the list. There was no Sophie Kringle. However, the name of her spoiled brother appeared.

Although he would get what he deserved, Sophie had realized that seeing her brother happy on Christmas day was more important to her, so she decided to erase his

name from the list and put her name instead. In the next moment, Sophie appeared right next to the Auntie Claus and Auntie's brother, Santa. Auntie Claus proudly hugged her because Sophie learned the first and final rule – that it is far better to give than it is to receive. The next morning Sophie woke up at home, seeing her brother happily sitting on a pile of Christmas presents; not feeling any regret because she did not get presents. In that very moment she realized that her beloved Auntie Claus was right. (Primavera, 1999)

### **3.2. Analysis**

The emphasis of the analysis of *Auntie Claus* is on culture-specific items concerning names, food-related names, and gift-giving traditions. There are also some notes on the other, uncategorised culture-specific items, as well as on the style of translation. The translator of the picturebook is Lana Hölbling Matković, a Croatian well-known and experienced translator.

#### **3.2.1. Names**

The first two names to be analysed are actually the two surnames of the characters from the picturebook – Kringle and Claus. In Anglo-American culture, Kringle is a shortened version of Kris Kringle, which is another name for Santa Claus. However, the name does not originate from the United States, but is rather a modification of one of European names for the Christmas gift-giver. In the ages of Protestant Reformation, many European people accepted the Christ Child, or *Christkindl* as a gift-giver in the time of Christmas (Gulevich, 2003, p. 114). That tradition was brought to the New World more than two centuries ago by the Pennsylvania Dutch – “the descendants of the German and Swiss immigrants who came to Pennsylvania before the Revolution” (Wernecke, 1962, pp. 225, 226). By keeping alive “Old-World Christmas customs” (ibid., p. 225), they influenced the later development of the New-World's Christmas tradition, as well as the change of the name of divine gift-giver. Through the ages *Christkindl*, or sometimes *Krischkindel* (ibid., p. 228) was modified and became *Kris Kringle*. However, not only the name changed, but also the personality of the gift-giver – the divine child became a more commercial version in the body of a chubby old man called Santa Claus.

In the Croatian Christmas tradition, the name and personage of *Christkindl*, or *Little Jesus* is also familiar, primarily because of the influence of German culture

through the ages (Rihtman-Auguštin, 1997, p. 48). However, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, by the influence of the Communist regime, it was replaced by a figure very similar to the American Santa Claus (ibid., p.51); it was given a more secular names, such as Grandfather Frost (Djed Mraz), adopted from the Russian original, or Grandfather Christmas (Djed Božićnjak) later on. Today, there are two names used for the figure of Santa Claus in Croatian Christmas tradition – *Grandfather Frost* (Djed Mraz) and *Grandfather Božićnjak* (a relatively new term in Croatian history) (Rihtman-Auguštin, 1995, p. 113). Both names were made up under the influence of different ideologies, but scholars have agreed that either name “should not be *prescribed* for the public” (ibid., p. 114, emphasis added). Instead, people “should be allowed to choose for themselves” (ibid.).

In that manner, Lana Hölbling Matković chose the two different solutions in her translation – *obitelj Mrazić* for *the Kringle family*, and *Teta Mraz* for *Auntie Claus*. Hölbling Matković’s choice shows that she has one of the important qualities of a good translator, i.e., the extensive knowledge of the source culture (Oittinen, Ketola, & Garavini, 2018, p. 87). She paid attention to the historical context and origin of each name and translated accordingly. The term *Kringle* in its source language is a diminutive, as well as *Mrazić* is in the Croatian language; and the term *Claus* can be translated into Croatian either as *Božićnjak* or as *Mraz*.

Moreover, while domesticating the two terms, the translator both times used the term *Mraz*, rather than *Božićnjak*. That does not necessarily mean, but it may mean that the translator supports certain ideologies or values, but she has undoubtedly managed to convey the rhythm and the fluency of the source text in her translation. There would be a big difference in reading a text that would be translated like this:

*Obitelj Božićnjačić stanovala je visoko na najgornjem katu raskošnog hotela Višnjevac u New Yorku i obožavala Božić. (...) Gospodin Božićnjačić bio je predsjednik cijenjene tvrtke Zvončići cijelu noć. Gospođa Božićnjačić bila je vlasnica prekrasnog salona ljepote Budite svoja božićna zvijezda!*

and the actual translation:

*Obitelj Mrazić stanovala je visoko na najgornjem katu raskošnog hotela Višnjevac u New Yorku i obožavala Božić. (...) Gospodin Mrazić bio je predsjednik cijenjene tvrtke Zvončići cijelu noć. Gospođa Mrazić bila je vlasnica prekrasnog salona ljepote Budite svoja božićna zvijezda! (Primavera, 2008)*

The text itself abounds in long words. By adding another long word that could have been translated differently, the text would lose its fluency and rhythm. Also, the complexity of the word *Božićnjačić* could contribute to the adult reader struggling to read such a complex word to a young reader; and the target child reader losing the interest for the story, whether the child is reading herself or is being read to.

Another name interesting to analyse is the name of Sophie's brother Chris. In the English language it is a shortened version of either of two names – Christian and Christopher. In the picturebook's sequel *Auntie Claus and the Key to Christmas* (2002) his full name is revealed, and that is – Christopher. However, whether the translator knew about the sequel or not at the time she was translating, she certainly did not have an easy task to do; primarily because of one of the initial sentences:

*They had even named their young son after you-know-who. (Primavera, 1999)*

Because of the family's love for Christmas, *you-know-who* is probably Christ. The logical conclusion would be that a young child's full name is Christian, because it is connected with the whole Christian tradition and its main reason for existence, and the person of Christ; whereas Christopher does not have any obvious connections to Christmas, especially not in Croatian tradition. Nevertheless, the translator used the substitution strategy in which she substituted "the source allusion with another one still anchored to the source culture but probably better known by the target audience" (Oittinen, Ketola, & Garavini, 2018, p. 88). In that manner, Chris became Nikola, referring to St. Nicholas, a famous gift-giver Croatian children are familiar with.

### **3.2.2. Food-related names**

Although Mr. Pudding is a name of the elf in the picturebook, it is connected with a kind of food characteristic for Christmas tradition of English-speaking countries. Plum pudding or Christmas pudding is a traditional English dessert that is being served after Christmas dinner. It features dried fruits, spices, and other flavourings, such as orange peel, sugar, eggs, flour, and butter or suet (Gulevich, 2003,

p. 613). Since there is no such, or even similar dessert in Croatian Christmas tradition, the name of Mr. Pudding could not have been replaced by a name based on a Croatian Christmas cake. Instead, it remained as such in the translation (*gospon Puding*), adding a funny note to the story.

The home of the Kringles and Auntie Claus, the luxurious Bing Cherry Hotel, also has a food-related name. Cherries are often present in many Christmas cookie recipes of the Anglo-American culture, and the Bing Cherry is the most produced variety of sweet cherry in the United States.<sup>4</sup> However, there are different words for sweet cherry and sour cherry in the Croatian language – sweet cherry is *trešnja*, while sour cherry is *višnja*. Hölbling Matković translated the Bing Cherry Hotel as *hotel Višnjevac*, although the right translation would be *hotel Trešnjevac*. There could be several possible reasons for that, but the most possible reason is that she completely ignored the variety of the cherry, not considering it relevant for the understanding of the story. Instead, she paid attention to the fluency of the text, and the familiarity with the word in Croatian.

### 3.2.3. Gift-giving tradition

In the Anglo-American culture, children are familiar with the tradition of leaving their stockings near the fireplace on the Christmas Eve, in hope that Santa Claus will come and fill them with candy and toys during the night (Gulevich, 2013, p. 742). The ones who behave well throughout the whole year receive gifts, while the naughty ones do not receive anything. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the naughty children could sometimes “encounter unpleasant surprises inside the stockings” (Marling, 2001, p. 5) – their stockings would be filled with lumps of coal instead of toys (*ibid.*). Related to that tradition, there is a song in *Auntie Claus* chanted by the elves in the coal mine:

*Spoiled brats and crybabies, whine babies, and all the ones  
who don't believe: Here's some coal and here's some gunk –  
fill a stocking that smells like skunk!* (Primavera, 1999)

---

<sup>4</sup> <http://oregonprogress.oregonstate.edu/fall-2009/cherries> (accessed 7 September 2019)



The translated version of the song lyrics is slightly different:

*Razmaženci, cendravci i svi drugi sumnjivci,  
/ Spoiled brats, whine babies, and all the other suspects /  
evo uglja, evo smrada, a pod borom šaka jada! (Primavera, 2008)  
/ here's some coal, here's a skunk, and under the Christmas tree a fistful of  
misery! /*

The extent of Hölbling Matković's knowledge of the source culture once again comes to the spotlight in her translation. She is familiar with the tradition of putting coal in the stockings of naughty children, but is also aware that in the Croatian culture, children do not get presents in stockings for Christmas, especially not lumps of coal. In Croatia, well-behaved children can expect Little Jesus or Santa Claus to leave presents under the Christmas tree, and nowhere else; while the naughty ones do not get anything. That is probably the reason that the translator reached for a domestication strategy and replaced “a stocking that smells like skunk” with “a pod borom šaka jada” ‘and under the Christmas tree a fistful of misery’. In that way, the point of the lyrics become clearer to the target readers. However, the illustration still tells a different story – a line of elves in the coal mine, each carrying a stocking filled with lumps of coal. To support the visual element as well, the translator decided to retain the foreign element (coal) in her translation of the song lyrics.

Yet, on the following page, the translator opts for a different solution in translation of the same element. When little Sophie read her brother's name on the Bad-Boys-and-Girls list, she realised that

*On his favourite day of the year, Chris would find only a stinky stocking filled  
with coal and gunk. (Primavera, 1999)*

In this case, the translator decided to retain foreign elements in the text, in spite of the fact that on the previous page she domesticated this item:

*Na njemu najdraži dan u godini, Nikola će naći tek smrdljivu čarapu ispunjenu  
šakom jada. (Primavera, 2008)*

Although translators sometimes purposely “retain the items specific of the source culture in order to revoke peculiarities of the source culture, even to the detriment of the understanding of important narrative elements” (Oittinen, Ketola, & Garavini, 2018, p. 86), it is not clear why the translator did it at this point. If she wanted to introduce the target readers with peculiarities of the source culture, she could have easily translated the song lyrics differently, and still retain the rhythm of the original, for example:

*Razmaženci, cendravci i svi drugi sumnjivci,  
/ Spoiled brats, whine babies, and all the other suspects /  
evo uglja, evo smrada, a u čarapi šaka jada!  
/ here's some coal, here's a skunk, and in the stocking a fistful of misery! /*

In that case, the foreignization of the latter would follow the previous, and it would be completely acceptable. As it is, the translator's solution may leave the target audience confused – what do Christmas presents under the Christmas tree have to do with stockings?

### **3.2.4. Other culture-specific items**

An interesting wordplay occurs at the very beginning of the picturebook. Sophie's mother, Mrs. Kringle is an owner of

*the fabulous Mistle-Toe-to-Nail Salon* (Primavera, 1999).

Such word play in the source language requires a skilful and inventive solution in terms of translating it to the target culture and language, for a target reader. Being aware that the name of the salon is only a pun with a cultural reference to a well-known Christmas plant typically accompanying Christmas festivities in the source culture, Hölbling Matković opts for a solution in which she came up with a completely new, domesticated salon name. Thus,

*the fabulous Mistle-Toe-to-Nail Salon*

becomes

*prekrasni salon ljepote Budite svoja božićna zvijezda! / a prettiest beauty salon*  
Be your own Christmas star!

‘Word salon’ by its definition denotes a store where one can get a particular service, especially related to beauty and fashion (Cambridge Dictionary) – the adjective *fabulous*, and the nouns *toe* and *nail* add to the definition. By using the noun *zvijezda / star*, the translator referred to the final result of coming out of a beauty salon, where one certainly feels like a star. However, she had to keep the cultural reference to Christmas in the translation (mistletoe), so she paired the noun *zvijezda / star* with an adjective *božićna / Christmas*. In that way, she presented how a term can be successfully translated, without being misguided by a culture-specific reference.

Another culture-related item worth noticing is the number of Auntie Claus’ apartment – 25C, which is an obvious allusion to the date of Christmas. However, it is not known for sure what ‘C’ actually denotes. Is it Christmas, Christ, or the initial of Auntie’s last name? In that manner, the ‘C’ could have been replaced with ‘B’ (Božić), ‘K’ (Krist), or ‘M’ (Mraz), but the translator decided not to translate it. Multiple choice could lead to possible mistakes in the interpretation and translation of the original work, especially if it is a minor detail not relevant for further understanding of the story, as this one is.

### **3.3. Conclusion**

In the translation of *Auntie Claus*, Lana Hölbling Matković proved that she is an experienced picturebook translator. The choices she made concerning the translation of culture-specific items were appropriate to the age of the target readers and their level of cultural knowledge. Thus, the culture-specific items that were important for understanding of the narrative were all domesticated and nicely incorporated into the narrative, while the ones of minor importance were retained as foreign elements. In doing so, Hölbling Matković took illustrations into account, knowing that they are equally important for translation as the verbal text is. Moreover, the typographic elements in the picturebook are not related exclusively to the source culture (the dates and the names of countries and cities), so they did not require much change. Finally, it can be concluded that Hölbling Matković successfully translated the cultural items in this picturebook, and overcame obstacles with ease.

## **4. BADNJA VEČER – THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS**

*Badnja večer – The Night Before Christmas* (2016) is a bilingual picturebook illustrated by the American illustrator Tom Sperling. The picturebook is actually an adaptation of a well-known Christmas poem for children *A Visit from Saint Nicholas ('Twas the Night Before Christmas)* (1823) by the American author Clement Clarke Moore – the poem which influenced the creation of Santa Claus as a gift-giving figure. The author of the adaptation is unknown; however, the adaptation is intended for child readers aged 5 to 8.

### **4.1. Story summary**

As the title says, the story begins the night before Christmas, when all the members of the family are fast asleep. Children prepared their stockings, and dreamt about all the presents they would get. Suddenly, a great clatter woke up the father who immediately went to the window to check what was the matter. He was slightly surprised when he saw Santa Claus and his eight reindeer landing on the top of their house. A few moments later, Santa Claus came down the chimney with a sack of toys on his back. The father could not believe it was really Santa Claus – a merry old man dressed all in red from his head to his foot. He even ate the mince pie and drank a milky drink the family had prepared for him! With his stomach full, Santa Claus took out some presents from the sack and filled up the stockings. After he was done with the work, he sprang through the chimney to his sleigh. He took off satisfied because the night's work was nearly done. (Sperling, 2016)

### **4.2. Original vs. adaptation**

For further understanding of the analysis, it is important to point out some differences between the original and the adaptation. First of all, the time span between the two works is almost two centuries. During that time many things changed, including language, customs, and habits; not to mention the personage of the original gift-giver. Consequently, some details had to be deleted or changed in order to keep the poem appropriate and interesting to present-day children.

Details such as *visions of sugar-plums* were substituted with *dreams of presents*; stockings are not *hung up by the chimney with care* anymore, but only *hung up*; whereas the descriptions of the gift-giver were completely changed. Present day children are familiar with Santa Claus as a Christmas gift-giver, so the description of St. Nicholas as a jolly old elf dressed all in fur, who smokes a pipe and has a funny face would leave the young readers confused. For that reason, he was replaced with a more familiar character – a merry old man dressed all in red who eats mince pies and milky drinks, and is called Santa Claus.

### 4.3. Analysis

The emphasis of this analysis is on the style of translation, and on the way the culture-specific items are treated in translation.

#### 4.3.1. The style of translation

The translator of this picturebook, Neven Borić, did not translate it in verses, but turned the text into prose instead. Such a choice required some changes in the translation, such as adding extra words to the text in order to make it fluent. He also kept in mind the age of the target readers, so at some places he added some extra information – either for better understanding of the narrative, or for bringing the story closer to a child reader. There are several examples for this, with the first one at the very beginning of the picturebook:

English: *It was the night before Christmas and all / through the house, / nothing was stirring, not even a mouse. /*

Croatian: *Bio je Badnjak, noć uoči Božića. U kući je vladao potpuni mir, čak se ni maleni miševi nisu micali.* (Sperling, 2016)

In this example, the translator added some extra information in translation. Being aware that *noć uoči Božića / the night before Christmas* is a very abstract term to a young reader, Borić added the actual name of that night – *Badnjak / Christmas Eve*. In that way, a young reader could follow the story more easily. Moreover, he changed the singular noun *mouse / miš* into its plural form *mice / miševi*, and added the adjective *little / maleni* to it, to emphasize the calm atmosphere in the house, and to maintain the fluency of the narration.

In the part of the narrative where Santa Claus flies over the family's garden,

English: *Then suddenly, what do you think should appear, / but a sparkling*

*sleigh and eight reindeer!*

Borić enriched the narrative by additionally describing the appearance of the reindeer:

Croatian: *I zamislite što se onda pojavilo: blještave sanjke Djeda Božićnjaka i*

*osam prekrasnih sobova!* (ibid.)

Above-mentioned examples of translation can be considered as good examples of the translator's competences. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for the translation of culture-specific items.

#### **4.3.2. The translation of culture-specific items**

The translation of certain culture-specific items is disputable, as well as the translator's knowledge of both the source and the target culture. One of the opening verses:

*the stockings were hung up with care*

was translated as

*čizmice i čarape bile su pažljivo obješene* (ibid.).

The stockings were already mentioned in the thesis as a part of the Anglo-American gift-giving tradition. However, its counterpart in Croatian tradition definitely are not boots, so it is not very clear why Borić added the word *boots* / *čizmice* to the translation. The possible intention was to make an allusion to St. Nicholas who brings gifts and puts them into children's boots on the windowsill, and in that way bring the specificities of the two cultures together. Unfortunately, Borić obviously neglected the fact that in the Croatian Christmas tradition Santa Claus and St. Nicholas are still two separate gift-giving figures, and not blended into one as they are in the Anglo-American tradition. Neither do they have the same way of gift-giving, nor do they bring gifts on the same date. As a consequence, young readers could be confused by the translator's solution.

Another disputable translation is that of the typographic element in one of the illustrations. The illustration shows Santa Claus holding a book with a bilingual title:

*A Christmas Carol – Božićne pjesme*. *A Christmas Carol* (1843) is a famous Christmas novel written by Charles Dickens. It tells the story of a greedy old man Ebenezer Scrooge who received a visit from three spirits – the Ghost of Christmas Past, the Ghost of Christmas Present, and the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come – who showed him scenes from his past, present, and future. As a result of his experience with the Spirits, Ebenezer became a kind, humble, and generous person (Gulevich, 2003, pp. 132, 137). In the Croatian translations it can be found as *Božićna priča*, or as *Božićna pjesma* in some editions. With all that in mind, it is not clear what the translator had in mind when he was translating the title. If the title on the book was *Christmas Carols*, the translation *Božićne pjesme* would be completely acceptable, because it is the literal translation. Moreover, if the translator remembered the story of Ebenezer Scrooge, he would have not translated its title as *Božićne pjesme*. As it is, the translator failed to provide an acceptable solution.

The only culture-specific item that Borić translated appropriately is “mince pie” – it is a traditional English Christmas dish, also present in the Anglo-American Christmas tradition, which got its name after its main ingredient – minced meat. Through centuries people experimented with the recipe and began to put more sugar and dried fruits into it, instead of minced meat. Today people can choose between meat and meatless versions of the recipe; however, most common is the sweet version without meat in it (Gulevich, 2003, p. 497). Moreover, in some English-speaking countries children leave mince pie for Santa Claus on Christmas Eve, hoping that he will eat it when he arrives with presents.<sup>5</sup> In his translation, Borić decided to keep *mince pie* as a foreign element, and translate the expression literary, referring to it as *mesna pita*, not considering this item important for the further understanding of the story.

#### **4.4. Conclusion**

The general impression after the analysis of this picturebook is that its translator Neven Borić encountered some problems in translating culture-related. First, it is not clear why he decided to transform the famous poem (although adapted) into a prose text. Is that because he is not skilled enough in writing verses, or was it the publisher’s decision? Whatever the reason, the verbal text he produced could have

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.history.com/news/dont-forget-santas-cookies-and-milk-the-history-of-a-popular-christmas-tradition> (accessed 7 September 2019)

been more coherent. Despite the fact that he added extra words and explanations (possibly having in mind the young reader), the sentences still remained too short, making the narrative hard to read aloud. There is no use of short sentences adapted for young readers, if they are incoherent. The whole translation is dominated by foreignization, except at the beginning, where the translator attempted at a domestication of the culture-specific item of stockings, without much success, and also of the typographic element of *A Christmas Carol*. This example shows that the foreignization of the picturebook is not always wrong, especially in cases when well-known poems are being translated. In that way, the specificities of the source culture are introduced to the target readers. When this happens, it needs to be done properly, especially if it is intended for young readers.

The translator's decisions imply that he did not show much sensitivity in translating culture-specific items.



## CONCLUSION

It is my impression that, in preparing this thesis, I have learned a lot, especially regarding the topic of translating picturebooks. Many people are not aware of the benefits children have from picturebooks. That multi-layered piece of literature helps children develop an image of themselves, the world they live in, and the cultures that surround them. Translators are usually the ones, who, besides the picturebook creators, contribute to producing stimulating and engaging content. Their role could even be considered more important than the one of the author – although authors create the content, it is translators who add meaning to picturebooks beyond their source culture.

The Christmas tradition, although it may seem to be universal in the present-day context, still varies from culture to culture. Because of that, competent translators play a major role in translating culture-specific items in picturebooks. While doing so, the translators need to be aware that children may not have such extensive knowledge of the source culture and that they sometimes need to substitute some items so that children could follow the story more easily. However, children are very observant – they observe pictures, and anything that is not connected to their culture will be noticed. Because of that, translators need to be careful and pay attention to the visual discourse as well. Every misinterpretation could lead to creating misconceptions about cultures in young reader's minds. In order to be successful in translation of culture-specific items, it is important for translators to gather extensive knowledge of both source and target cultures, as well as of both languages. Analysed picturebooks provide examples for both more and less successful translators' decisions.

What saddens the most is that public places such as libraries do not offer Christmas-related picturebooks that are in any way specific. In every picturebook the story and the elements are the same – Christmas is presented as universal. It is hard to expect children to learn something about foreign Christmas culture, when they are not given the proper content. We may also ask why some picturebooks that offer quality content are not translated, or are translated only after they are put on the big screen? It is to conclude that it is not of publishers' interest because it is easier to produce more for a smaller price, than to invest into producing something of a greater importance for the development of the child's cultural awareness.

In the end, instead of proposing some future researches, I would like to appeal to scholars, translators, publishers, and teachers; to scholars, to pay more attention to the importance of picturebooks in the cultural education and to provide proper education for translators of children's literature; to translators, to invest in their education on translating for children; to publishers, to stop focusing only on their interests and income, but to start considering the interests of children they publish for instead; and finally, most importantly, to teachers, especially those teaching a foreign language, to introduce more picturebooks with cultural content to their classes. After all, living in the world of induced sameness, it is important to give the youngest readers the sense that cultures in other parts of the world may not be the same as theirs because this is how, they may learn not to judge, but to respect.

## References

- centar, H. i. (1999-2001). Retrieved from Božić u Hrvata: <http://www.hic.hr/bozic-hrvata01.htm>
- Drennan, M. (1999, December). Retrieved from BookPage: <https://bookpage.com/interviews/8019-elise-primavera-childrens#.XYZKYigzZPa>
- Franco Aixela, J. (1996). Culture-specific Items in Translation. In R. Alvarez, & M. del Carmen-Africa Vidal, *Translation, Power, Subversion* (pp. 52-78). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Gonzalez Davies, M., & Oittinen, R. (2008). *Whose Story? Translating the Verbal and the Visual in Literature for Young Readers*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Gulevich, T. (2003). *Encyclopedia of Christmas and New Year's Celebrations*. Detroit: Omnigraphics Inc.
- Herring, P. (2009). *Oregon's Agricultural Process Archive*. Retrieved from Oregon Sweet Cherries Make Their Mark on the World: <http://oregonprogress.oregonstate.edu/fall-2009/cherries>
- Kujundžić, N. (2018). Putting the Child Reader First: The Croatian Translation of J.R.R. Tolkien's Father Christmas Letters. *SIC - a journal of literature, culture and literary translation, No. 2, Year 8*.
- Marling, K. A. (2001). *Merry Christmas!: Celebrating America's Greatest Holiday*. London: Harvard University Press.
- Milković, Ž. (2011, December). Dva prikaza Božića u hrvatskoj (dječjoj) književnosti. *Magistra Iadertina, Vol. 6, No. 1*, pp. 37-44.
- Moore, C. C. (1823). *A Visit from St. Nicholas*.
- Narančić Kovač, S. (2015). *Jedna priča - dva pripovjedača: Slikovnica kao pripovijed*. Zagreb: ArTresor naklada.
- Nikolajeva, M., & Scott, C. (2006). *How Picturebooks Work*. New York: Routledge.
- O'Connell, E. (2006). Translating for Children. In G. Lathey, *The Translation of Children's Literature: A Reader* (pp. 15-24). Clevedon, Buffalo, Toronto: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Oittinen, R. (2000). *Translating for Children*. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc.
- Oittinen, R., Ketola, A., & Garavini, M. (2018). *Translating Picturebooks: Revoicing the Verbal, the Visual and the Aural for a Child Audience*. New York: Routledge.
- Primavera, E. (1999). *Auntie Claus*. London: David & Charles Children's Books.
- Primavera, E. (2008). *Teta Mraz*. Zagreb: Algoritam.

- Pruitt, S. (2018, August 31). *History*. Retrieved from Don't Forget Santa's Cookies and Milk: The History of a Popular Christmas Tradition : <https://www.history.com/news/dont-forget-santas-cookies-and-milk-the-history-of-a-popular-christmas-tradition>
- Rihtman-Auguštin, D. (1995). Santa Claus in Transition. *Narodna umjetnost* 32/1, pp. 107-122.
- Rihtman-Auguštin, D. (1997). *Christmas in Croatia*. Zagreb: Golden Marketing.
- Rudvin, M. (1994). Translation and 'myth': Norwegian Children's Literature in English . *Perspectives: Studies in Translation Theory and Practice*, 199-211.
- Sipe, L. (2001). Picturebooks as Aesthetic Objects. *Literacy Teaching and Learning: An International Journal of Early Reading and Writing*, 6, 23-42.
- Stravelli, G. (2002, December 26). *Examiner*. Retrieved from Drawing Children into the Magic of Christmas: [https://web.archive.org/web/20040724171015/http://examiner.gmnews.com/news/2002/1226/Front\\_page/058.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20040724171015/http://examiner.gmnews.com/news/2002/1226/Front_page/058.html)
- Venuti, L. (1995). *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. London: Routledge.
- Wernecke, H. H. (1962). *Celebrating Christmas Around the World*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press.
- Yang, W. (2010). Brief Study on Domestication and Foreignization in Translation. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 77-80.

## **Izjava o samostalnoj izradi rada**

Izjavljujem da sam ja, Laura Genzić, studentica integriranoga preddiplomskoga i diplomskoga studija primarnoga obrazovanja s engleskim jezikom Učiteljskoga fakulteta u Zagrebu, samostalno napisala ovaj diplomski rad uvažavajući komentare i izmjene mentorica.

Laura Genzić

Potpis

---