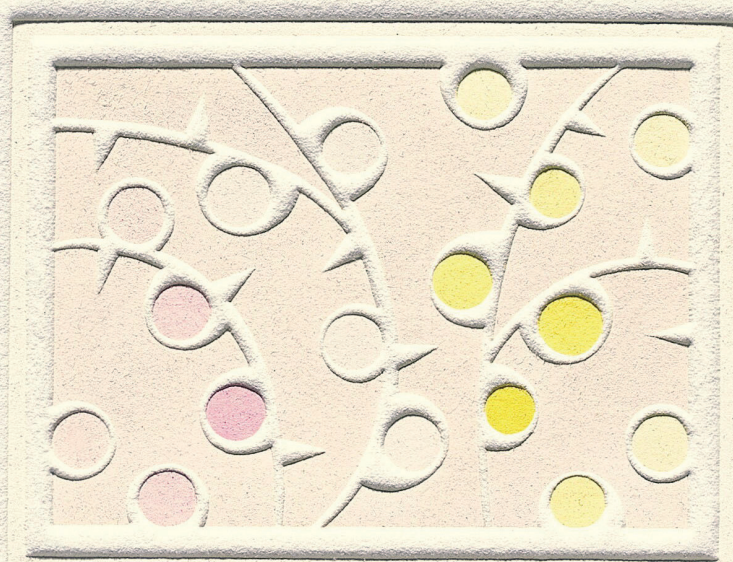


THE CHALLENGE OF TRANSLATING
CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: ALICE'S
ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND TRANSLATED
BY VLADIMIR NABOKOV

NATALIJA VID

English
Language
Overseas
Perspectives and
Enquiries



Editors: SMILJANA KOMAR and UROŠ MOZETIČ

**AS YOU WRITE IT: ISSUES IN LITERATURE,
LANGUAGE, AND TRANSLATION IN THE
CONTEXT OF EUROPE IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

Slovensko društvo za angleške študije
Slovene Association for the Study of English

Oddelek za anglistiko in amerikanistiko, Filozofska fakulteta, Univerza v Ljubljani
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ISSN 1581-8918

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Sdaš

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Volume V/1-2

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Subscription for 2008 costs 12,50 EUROS.

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The Challenge of Translating Children's Literature: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* Translated by Vladimir Nabokov

Summary

In the article the author focuses on Vladimir Nabokov's translation of Lewis Carroll's novel *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, made in 1923. The main intention of the article is to analyze Nabokov's translation strategies of domestication, realized in the text as substitution and localization, and to explain possible reasons for his decision in favour of almost complete Russification of the original. It is possible that Nabokov considered children's attitude towards the final result as the most important part of the translation process. Thus, he used domesticated strategies to transfer for Russian children the humour, the originality and brightness of the paradoxical and attractive world of Lewis Carroll, his sense of the absurd and his amazing gift for games of logic and language, providing a recognizable and familiar atmosphere for the readers. Undoubtedly, his young Russian readers were able to identify themselves with the story and to comprehend the complex world created by Lewis Carroll. On the other hand, Nabokov refuses to oversimplify his translation or to patronize its young audience through simplistic translation solutions.

Key words: Nabokov, Alice, Carroll, domesticated translation, children's literature

Prevajanje otroške literature kot izziv: prevod Alice v čudežni deželi Vladimirja Nabokova

Povzetek

Avtorica analizira prevod pravljice Lewisa Carrolla *Alica v Čudežni Deželi*, izpod peresa ruskega pisatelja in prevajalca Vladimirja Nabokova. Prevladujoča prevajalska metoda Nabokova je metoda podomačitve (*domestication*), ki predpostavlja visoko stopnjo prirejanja in prilagoditve tujega konteksta kulturnemu okolju ciljnega kroga bralcev. Glavni cilj razprave je ugotoviti in pojasniti, na kakšen način in s pomočjo katerih prevajalskih strategij je Nabokov priredil viktorijansko pravljico, da je postala razumljiva in zanimiva za ruske otroke. Priredba izvirnega besedila Nabokova vključuje med drugim zamenjavo parodij na znane angleške pesmi z njegovimi lastnimi parodijami na klasične ruske pesmi, nadomestitev kulturnih prvin, prilagoditev stilističnega nivoja in spremembo angleških osebnih imen. Avtorica namerava pojasniti, zakaj se je Nabokov odločil prav za metodo podomačitve, čeprav je v svojih kasnejših razpravah nedvoumno dajal prednost metodi potujitve (*foreignization*), ki jo je sam uspešno uporabil pri prevodu *Jevgenija Onjegina*.

Ključne besede: Nabokov, Alice, Carroll, podomačitev prevodov, otroška književnost

The Challenge of Translating Children's Literature: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* Translated by Vladimir Nabokov

1. Vladimir Nabokov: An American Russian

Vladimir Nabokov was one of the most imaginative and accomplished writers of the twentieth century and a rare example of an eminent writer in two languages, Russian and English. He wrote seventeen novels and some sixty-five stories. Many of his works exist in double versions, Russian-English or English-Russian, which he translated himself.¹ It is interesting that Nabokov achieved even greater fame in English, which was not his native tongue, and he was one of the few Russian translators who mastered translation in three languages – English, Russian, and French – with equal facility. Undoubtedly, only a few translators in the twentieth century possessed his cultivated translation sensibility. Being also a scientist, Vladimir Nabokov left his followers not only his translations but also his essays and research about the nature and art of translation. Since the 1980s the number of Nabokov scholars has constantly been increasing.

Nabokov's novels, poems and autobiographical works are profoundly researched and analyzed, but the question of Nabokov as a translator still remains relatively unresearched. Probably, his own thoughts about the nature and art of translation may help to highlight this side of his creativity. The translation heritage of Nabokov is enormous: the novel *Colas Breugnon* by Romain Rolland was translated into Russian as *Nikolka Persik*² (*Nikolka the Peach*); *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll, translated as *Ania v strane chudes* (*Ania in the Land of Wonders*); the author's translations of his own novels *Pnin* and *Lolita* into Russian; English translations of Russian Romantics such as Pushkin, Lermontov, Tiutchev and Fet and later also Mandelstam and Hodasevich. From English to Russian, Nabokov translated Shakespeare, Byron, Keats and Tennyson, and from the French he translated Baudelaire and Rimbaud.

Significantly, even those who did not associate Nabokov with mastery of translation were familiar with his famous translation of Alexander Pushkin's novel in verse *Eugene Onegin* with detailed comments which not only revealed a detailed picture of the great Russian poet's world, but also specified some solutions to the most difficult translation problems.

Obviously, the major problems of translations and different translation methods interested Nabokov throughout his life. He often commented on his own works and made analysis of his own mistakes and inventions.

One of his most famous works devoted to translator's mistakes is the article "*The Art of Translation*" (*Iskustvo Perevoda*) from the collection *Lectures on Russian Literature*. The article contains the classification of three main mistakes, or as Nabokov called them "sins" (1998, 389), made by translators. According to Nabokov, the first type of mistake, obvious lapses caused by

¹ Nabokov gained his first literary success with his translations of Heine's songs.

² In the article the ALA-LC type of Russian transliteration is used.

misunderstanding or wrong interpretation, is the most innocent. To the next type, which is more serious, belong intentional omissions of words and sentences which a translator intentionally did not even try to understand or which he defined as being too difficult or offensive³ for the imaginative reader. The main “sin” is the intentional polishing of the original⁴ in order to conform it to the notions and prejudices of a given public. For this kind of a translational crime, Nabokov suggested torturing the translator as was done in the Middle Ages to punish plagiarism (1998, 392).

Besides clarifying three major types of translation mistakes, Nabokov also defined three types of translators (1998, 394): the scholar who wants to infect the whole world with his love for a forgotten or unknown genius; a literal “podenshchik” (which means a dilettante, a well-meaning hack) whose intentions are certainly good but who is lacking in knowledge; and, finally, a professional writer who possesses a poetic gift but uses it to create his own work instead of transferring the original, who “dresses the author in his own clothes.” Both of the first types are deprived of an artistic gift and even their hard work and numerous comments can not replace imagination and style. The third type may be a talented poet but he may not know the language of the original well enough, or is not as thorough as a scientist and as experienced as a professional translator.

According to Nabokov, in order to create an ideal text, the translator of a foreign masterpiece has to be at least as talented as the chosen author or his or her talents must be of the same nature. Secondly, the translator has to know both nations, both languages, details of the author’s style and method, the origin of the words and word-formations as well as historical allusions. Thirdly, the translator has to be capable of “mimicries”, which means to work as if he were a real author, to rebuild the author’s way of writing and his way of thinking as exactly as possible (1998, 396).

For Nabokov, as a translator, even the slightest detail deserves special attention. Consequently, in his lecture devoted to Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis* (2000, 325–30), he scrupulously analyzed the type of insect into which Gregor Samsa was transformed. Most commentators thought it was a cockroach, but Nabokov objected to this statement. His precise and professional analysis of the insect in Kafka’s novel resulted in the explanation that Gregor was most likely transformed into a May-bug.

This article focuses on some aspects of Vladimir Nabokov’s translation of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* in which Nabokov used a domesticated method⁵ (emphasis on the language and culture of the target text) of quite radical familiarization⁶ of the original that illustrates the

³ Nabokov provides an example of such an omission in the Victorian translation of Anna Karenina when Anna answers Vronskii “I beremenna” (which means I am pregnant in Russian). According to Nabokov, a Victorian reader had to think hard about the nature of a rare illness which Anna might have because the translator thought it would have been offensive to use the word “pregnant” and just wrote the Russian word with Latin letters (Nabokov 1998, 394).

⁴ The example provided in the article is a description of the flowers which Ophelia gather in the Russian translation of Hamlet. In the original she gathers simple wild flowers but in the Russian translation there are lilies, jasmine, and violets (translation of A. Kronberg, Saint-Petersburg, 1863). (Nabokov 1998, 395)

⁵ Venuti defines domesticated translation as “an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target language cultural values, bringing the author back home.” In this case the translator should erase every shred of foreignness and create a familiarized and immediately recognizable text, adjusted to the target text’s linguistic and cultural dimensions (1995, 20).

⁶ In contrast, his translation of Pushkin’s novel in verse Eugene Onegin signified a complete change to an extreme foreignized translation, aimed at keeping the original text as authentic as possible.

translator's intention to satisfy the target audience. The main intention of the article is to analyze domesticated strategies of familiarization of some linguistic and literary dimensions which adjust the text of Carroll's book to the target audience of Russian children.

2. Translating children's literature

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (1865) is considered a children's classic. During the twentieth century *Alice* has been translated more often than almost any other work, except for the Bible (Carpenter and Prichard 1984, 17), even though the author himself thought when *Alice* was first translated into French, that his book was untranslatable (Kibbee 2003, 308). *Alice* has become a veritable friend of many children and inspired more than fifteen films as well as television and theatre productions and even paintings.⁷

However, translation of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is a daunting task because of the numerous parodies, puns (especially the frequent use of homophones), other types of wordplay, verbal humour, "speaking" names, personification, enciphered allusions, literal interpretations of phraseological components, and unusual metaphors. Carroll himself admitted that the verse parodies could pose the greatest difficulty; without knowledge of the originals, the parodies would be unintelligible and it would thus be better to omit them (Weaver 1964, 33). The Russian translator Boris Zakhoder, who successfully translated *Winnie the Pooh*, was frequently asked: "Why don't you translate *Alice*" – whereupon he would answer: "It would be easier to transpose England" (qtd. in Nikolaeva 1996, 89).

Before discussing Nabokov's translation, some characteristics typical only of children's literature translation should be mentioned. Contrary to common belief, translating for children might not be easier than translating for adults. In the case of children's literature, it is particularly important to access the target audience and to take its interests and abilities into consideration. Zohar Shavit, in his research into translating children's literature, uses the term "freedom of manipulation", suggesting that the translator of children's literature may permit himself/herself changing, enlarging, or abridging the text as well as deleting or adding to it as long as the translator is adjusting the text to make it appropriate and comprehensible for the child. The translator may even adjust the plot, characters and language considering the child's ability to read and comprehend (1986, 112–13). Changing and adjusting the text, the translator has to follow two main criteria: the norms of morality accepted and demanded by the children's system and the assumed level of the child's comprehension (Shavit 1986, 121).

Riitta Oittinen states that, "translating as rewriting for target-language audiences – we always need to ask the crucial question: 'For whom?' Hence, while writing children's books is writing for children, translating children's literature is translating for children" (2003, 128). The interests of the readers, in this case of children, should be considered even more seriously than when one translates for adults. Children's literary scholar Puurtinen (1995, 22) also states that specific characteristics of the child readers, their comprehension and reading abilities, experience and knowledge must be

⁷ In 1969, Salvador Dali produced twelve illustrations based on *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

kept in mind by each translator to avoid the production of overtly difficult or even uninteresting translations that “may alienate children from reading”. Zena Sutherland maintains that what may be a mild hazard for an adult may be a serious barrier for a child, for instance, foreign names, titles, complex syntax, or allusions to cultural heritage or common knowledge unfamiliar to members of recipient cultures. Sutherland agrees that, in the case of children’s literature, a “new”, domesticated and familiar text can be created instead of a “translation” (1981, 69).

It is hard to decide which elements in the source text can be preserved and which should perhaps be omitted. According to Nikolaeva, the best translation of a children’s book does not necessarily entail precise accuracy and closeness to the original. It is much more important to consider issues of reception and to anticipate readers’ response. Children have to be able “to accept and utilize the book”. A translation should arouse in them the same feelings and associations experienced by the young readers of the source text (1996, 28). Instead of aiming at an “adequate” translation, the translator should aim at an acceptable translation since children with their imperfect reading abilities and limited world knowledge can not and are not expected to tolerate as much strangeness and foreignness as adult readers. It is the task of the translator to make appropriate decisions on how she/he will compensate for the children’s lack of background knowledge without oversimplifying the original and “forcing children into simple texts that have lost any feature of difficulty, foreignness, challenge and mystery” (Stolze 2003, 209).

The use of annotations and comments, a useful instrument in translations for adults, is out of the question for translations for children. Christina Nord (2003, 195) emphasizes the importance of addressee-orientation in a decision for or against annotations,

The problem with the explanations of puns and jokes is that it kills them. A joke that has to be explained is as dead as Dodo. [...] the decision for, or against, annotations must be guided by addressee-orientation. For an adult readership, it may be interesting to read the two texts, either “side by side” or one after another. For children, one text will probably be sufficient.

Nord also distinguishes between instrumental and documentary translation, emphasizing the purpose or the function of the translation which is particularly important for translation of children’s literature because children read more or less for pleasure. Documentary translation aims at producing in the target language a kind of a document of a communication interaction in which “a source culture-sender communicates with a source-culture audience via the source text under source-culture conditions”. In contrast, the instrumental translation process aims at “producing in the target language an instrument for a new communicative interaction between the source-culture sender and a target-culture audience, using (certain aspects) of a source text as a model” (2001, 47).

Any translator who decided to translate an “untranslatable” book should acknowledge the fact that a functioning translation can only be achieved at the expense of some elements in the original. Nabokov’s translation of *Alice* in the Russian language is admittedly successful mainly because the British cultural milieu of the novel was substituted with the Russian.

In his *Alice in Many Tongues: The Translations of Alice in Wonderland* Warren Weaver singled out Nabokov's translations as an "especially clever and sensitive foreign reincarnation of the novel" (1964, 90). Before Nina Demurova's (1967, 1978) and Boris Zakhoder's versions (1971), *Ania v Strane Chudes* had been undoubtedly the most accomplished translation (or adaptation) of Carroll's book in Russian.

3. Russification of Alice

One of the main translation challenges in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is the translation of humorous nonsense verses, which are parodies of popular poems from Carroll's time. Whenever Alice wants to recite a poem it comes out wrong and funny. Nabokov's translations of verse parodies are domesticated, being at the same time dynamic and pictorial, and they can be thought to have a sufficient appeal to children.

All the poems in *Alice* are parodies upon familiar rhymes, which are related and intertextually connected to Victorian English culture. Among them are a parody of Isaac Watt's didactic poem "Against Idleness and Mischief" (in Carroll's "How Doth the Little Crocodile"); a parody of Robert Southey's "The Old Man's Comforts and How He Gained Them" (Carroll's "You are Old, Father William"); a parody of the famous nursery rhyme "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" (Carroll's "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Bat"); a parody of Mary Botham Howitt's "The Spider and the Fly," (Carroll's "The Mock Turtle's Song,"); a parody of Isaac Watt's "The Sluggard" (Carroll's "The Lobster Quadrille"); a parody of the popular song "Star of the evening" (Carroll's "Beautiful soup") and a parody of David Bates' "Speak Gently" (Carroll's "Speak roughly").

There is no mystery about whether the target text readers would be aware of the parodies of Victorian English references. Thus, adaptation to the target audience of Russian children required changing the parody of the didactic verses, so common in Victorian pedagogy, with Nabokov's own parody of famous Russian poems which the target audience were expected to recognize. By choosing well-known poems by Pushkin and Lermontov, as well as famous Russian nursery rhymes, Nabokov preserved the original author's intention of presenting an interesting challenge for young reader's of his text as children recognized them. In this case Nabokov's most important translation achievement was to preserve the element of introducing children to play with the text which was a difficult task. As a result, he successfully achieves a comical affect by providing well-known poems in most of which he even managed to save the original meter and rhyme to make it easier to comprehend. By choosing the strategy of substitution, Nabokov successfully manipulated the famous verses belonging to the target culture, in order to ensure that the text be as meaningful and accessible to the target text reader as it was to the source text reader.⁸ Nabokov's decision in favour of classical poems instead of simple children verses, which were often used by other Russian translators of *Alice*, signifies his intention to avoid simplification of the original text.

⁸ The same strategy of domestication of original verses was used by another Russian translator of *Alice*, Boris Zakhoder, who followed Nabokov's example and substituted Carroll's verses with Russian equivalents. However, he decided in favor of famous children verses, avoiding classical poems as in Nabokov's case.

The strategy of adaptation employed by Nabokov makes it possible to read *Alice* without the slightest suspicion that her image and her adventures were in fact spawned by an English model. Even the characters' names have become Russian in Nabokov's version. Although one can understand name changes in the poems where rhyme and meter have to be taken into consideration, there seems to be no justification for the name change in the main text. The author did not create the story considering future translations into other languages. Thus, proper names usually play an important role within a story and their domestication often means suppressing the functions they were created for. Thus, Alice in Nabokov's translation was transformed to Ania, a diminutive of the common Russian girl's name Anna. In this case, Nabokov chooses the name with the same initial letter, establishing the sound similarity between Alice and Ania. Regardless of this similarity, it should be noticed that this decision is one of the most contentious because the change of the girl's name signifies the change of the title as well: *Ania v Strane Chudes*. Nabokov remains the only Russian translator in the twentieth century who changed the name of the main protagonist. All other translators have retained the name used in the original.

All personal names in the book are domesticated. Thus, the name "Mabel," which appears in the second chapter when Alice is losing her sense of certainty about herself, is replaced by Asia, and Mary-Ann, the name the White Rabbit calls Alice, with Masha. Both female names are common in the Russian language. Two other common names appear in the fourth chapter. Servants who work for the White Rabbit are called "Pat" and "Bill". In the translation Bill is replaced with Iashka (a colloquial diminutive of the Russian name Iakov) and Pat with Pet'ka (a colloquial diminutive of the Russian name Peter). Both of the colloquial diminutives signify the social position of the servants because in Russian diminutives of personal names are usually used to express familiarity or, sometimes, even disrespect. Elsie, Lacie, and Tillie in the Dormouse's story were renamed Masia, Pasia and Dasia (derivatives of the Russian names Masha, Pasha and Dasha) which, according to Connolly, allowed Nabokov to transfer the effect of sound repetition (1995, 19).

Surprisingly, Queen of Hearts and King of Hearts remain unchanged in the translation. Considering the general strategy of domestication, Nabokov could use Russian royal titles of "tsar" and "tsaritsa". However, Queen and Kind of Heart represent playing cards characters and have the same names in Russian. There are a couple of other characters in Nabokov's translation whose names did not undergo domestication. One of them is Caterpillar.⁹ The word "gusenitsa" (caterpillar) is a feminine noun in the Russian language, so Nabokov erases the addressing "sir" used in the original. It is interesting that he did not decide to use any other forms of formal address to stress Alice's respectful attitude towards other creatures. The Duchess is also translated directly but the Russian word "gertsoginia" (Duchess) used by Nabokov has German roots and sounds out of place in the whole russified context. The March Hare and the Hatter as well as Dormouse also remain unchanged in Nabokov's translation. Unfortunately, the hidden meaning enciphered in the names of the March Hare and the Hatter is lost in translation. The phrases "as mad as a hatter" and "as mad as a March Hare", common in Carroll's time, have no equivalents in Russian. The White Rabbit as well as the Gryphon and the Pigeon were also translated literally.

⁹ Boris Zakhoder translated Caterpillar as "cherviak" (worm) and was criticized for using an unpleasant image.

Not only have the characters names become Russian. Turns of speech and dialogues have been transformed to sound native, as well as the smallest cultural details of Carroll's narrative. Thus, Nabokov uses both Russian measures of length and monetary units. When Alice falls into the rabbit hole she uses miles to talk about distance. Russian children might not be familiar with this word but had to realize it was a very long distance. Nabokov therefore uses the word "versta", inventing a more understandable concept of distance. Connolly also mentions that the sum of one hundred pounds becomes one thousand rubles and shillings and pence are converted to kopecks (Connolly 1995, 19). The supposedly unknown food items were substituted with typical Russian expressions. Thus, the word "pirozhki", typical Russian pies, is used instead of "tarts". The flower "daisy" mentioned at the beginning of the first chapter is substituted with "dandelion" which is one of the typical Russian field flowers. White Rabbit's servants address him with "vashe blagorodie" instead of "yer honour", an old-fashioned Russian expression used by servant to address the master. "Jack-in-the-box" mentioned in the forth chapter is not translated at all.

Cultural substitutions do not always receive adequate compensation in Nabokov's version. The most often-cited example is the story of the French Mouse which comes to England with William the Conqueror. In Nabokov's translation England is replaced with Russia and William the Conqueror is replaced with Vladimir Monomakh (a Russian Grand Prince). The degree of this transformation's comprehensibility appears to be questionable because this part of Russian history was not well-known to children.

Translating English puns based on homonyms and language games, Nabokov often invented his own examples based on the similarities between Russian words, as direct translations of homonyms were impossible in most cases. As Nabokov's successful approximation of the effect of English puns is thoroughly explained in Demurova's and Connolly's research, we will have a look only at those examples which are not mentioned in their papers.

For instance, the pun inverted in the conversation between Alice and the Gryphon which involves pairing the meaning of words "lesson" and "lessen". Nabokov invents his own homophone based on the sound similarity between Russian words "urok" (lesson) and "ukor" (reprimand). It is well known that in *Alice* Carroll experimented with nonsense prose and verse – with meaningless sentences or words which have a clear structure but no specific meaning. Thus, describing his early schooling, the Mock Turtle¹⁰ used the word "seography" which is translated as "arfografia" (spelling) but the Mock Turtle immediately adds that this means "to play harp" because the Russian word "arfa" means "harp". In the same chapter the subject "Laughing and Grief" is translated as "angel'ski ezik" which means "angel's language". This word play is based on the similarity between Russian words "angliiski" (English) and "angel'ski" (angel's). When the Mock Turtle substitutes "Reeling and Writhing" for "Reading and Writing", Nabokov uses "chesat' i pitat'" (combing and feeding) instead of "chitat' i pisat'" (reading and writing).

¹⁰ The Mock Turtle was translated as "chepupakha" (Connolly 1995, 22) which combines two Russian words "cherepakha" (turtle) and "chepukha" (nonsense).

A successful substitution of a word-play is also evident in the chapter “A Mad Tea-Party”. When Alice says that she beats time when she learns music, the Hatter replies that time will not stand beating, personifying the term of time and puzzling Alice. Nabokov invents another kind of misunderstanding between Alice and the Hatter, using the Russian expression “provodit’ vremia” (to spend time). The Russian verb “provodit’” also means to “to accompany”. Alice says that it is boring to spend time like this but the Hatter warns Alice that the Time is sensitive and if she accompanies HIM she should not say HE is boring. After this Nabokov invents his own word-play, transferring the absurdity of the dialogue between Alice and the Hatter. He uses the Russian expression “sest’ na vremia” which means literally “to sit upon the time” but is used in the meaning of “to take a sit for a short time”. Alice says that she “sits upon the time” (just for a while) but the Hatter argues that the Time does not like to be sat upon.

Translating the title of the chapter “A Caucus-Race and a Long Tail”, Nabokov decided to avoid the satirical political connotation implied by the English term “caucus”. He decided to play with the word “kuralessy” instead, which in Russian means “to have enormous, crazy fun”.

Another outstanding characteristic of *Alice* is its lexical and syntactical simplicity. The vocabulary of the original is rather colloquial. Although written in the middle of the nineteenth century, the book contains no old-fashioned words. Most of the dialogues are typical informal discourses. Ignoring this fact, Nabokov sometimes intentionally embellishes the text with additions and substitutions to make it more archaic and sophisticated. Thus, in the conversation between Alice and the Caterpillar, Nabokov renders the expression “short remarks” away from colloquial speech, translating it as “skupa na slova” which means “chary of words” and imbues the narrator’s voice with elegance and sophistication. Talking to Alice, the Duchess uses the word “uvol’t’e” which is an archaic word in Russian and means “leave me in peace” or “do not force me to do something”.

Nabokov’s use of language results in a translation which sounds natural in Russian but at the same time transfers an exact correspondence of the style-level, which is important because Victorian society was so strictly ordered that the smallest disturbance signified comical connotations. In this case his fidelity to the style of the novel is remarkable. Nabokov constantly uses the polite form of addressing other persons (the pronoun “vy” in Russian) when Alice addresses her interlocutors and literally translates all expressions aimed to stress Alice’s politeness and her respectful attitude towards other creatures: “bud’t’e dobry”, in the conversation with the White Rabbit (“would you be so kind”); “ochen’ vezhlivo otvetila” (“she answers very politely”), in the conversation with the Caterpillar; “bud’t’e dobry mne ob’iasnit’” (“be so kind and explain to me”), talking to the Duchess; “akh, prostite menia” (“Oh, excuse me!”), in the conversation with the Mouse. There are also no examples of unacceptable slang in Nabokov’s translation.

Nabokov also renders uneducated, lower-class speech successfully, as in an example with the Queen’s gardeners (Five, Seven and Two). The “Miss” with which they address Alice, which is commonly used in sub-standard English speech, is substituted with “baryshnia”, an old-fashioned naming of young women in Russia. The word expresses lower-class respectfulness but in modern Russian it often has humorous connotations.

Nabokov may omit a word, phrase or a whole passage, whenever he finds such an omission justified by his own vision of the original text. Thus, he eliminates Carroll's explanation of Alice's puzzlement with the "Do cats eat bats? Do bats eat cats?" In this case, Carroll uses two rhyming substantives, "bats" and "cats", which change places in the sentence, providing humorous effect. Nabokov decided to overlook the humorous effect produced by changing subject and object in the sentence. Unlike Carroll's Alice, who attempts to answer the daunting question, Nabokov's Alice simply repeats "cats on the roof, flying mice..."

In the chapter "Pig and Pepper" the Duchess violently shakes her child as she sings her famous "Speak roughly to you, little boy". Nabokov erases this passage completely. Probably, he felt discomfort at the scene's explicit violence.

4. Conclusion

Umberto Eco writes in the introduction to *Experiences in Translation*: "Every sensible and rigorous theory of language shows that a perfect translation is an impossible dream" (Eco 2001, ix). This statement attests to the fact that there is no such thing as a perfect translation.

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland remains the only novel for children translated by Nabokov. Consistency in Nabokov's choice of domestication as the main translation strategy in this case is questionable, especially considering his later ideas about the importance of a translation's exactness and accuracy. Allowing himself to russify most aspects of Carroll's *Alice*, including the Russification of the main heroine's name, Nabokov then offered his readers not just a scientifically complete *prose* translation of *Eugene Onegin* but also a transliteration of the original in order to avoid any misunderstandings and misinterpretations. It is astonishing that the Nabokov who once liberally used language facilities to reinterpret an original text in order to make it comprehensible for the target audience came to a complete refusal of any attempt to preserve the original structure of the text (in this case the verse structure of the poem). Probably, in the process of translating his own works, Nabokov came to the conclusion that it was primarily the author's domain to make significant changes, or any changes at all, in a work while translating. Thus, the primary task of the translator may have appeared to him as a representation of the original work in a different language as precisely and exactly as possible, leaving the poetical creativity to the original author. In this case, he might consider himself mainly as an "invisible" scientist whose task it was to preserve the integrity of the text.

Translating Carroll's novel (1923), Nabokov considered primarily his future readers' abilities and interests, creating a translation that would be as accessible as possible to the mind of a child. In other words, Nabokov's translation tended to achieve the same range of functions as the original text. On the other hand, he kept in mind that the target audience does not mean that the original should be oversimplified and that children should not be challenged. Nabokov does not force children into a simple text that has lost any feature of challenge, game and mystery. Although Lewis Carroll's clear intertextuality as well as his references to a particular cultural and historical epoch (Victorian England) were lost in Nabokov's translation, Russian children were

able to recognize the interplay between fiction and reality, to enjoy the humour and originality of the paradoxical and attractive world of Lewis Carroll and to comprehend games of logic and language presented in the novel.

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