

## **Four-Handed Performances in Children's Literature: Translation and Adaptation in the Italian and English Editions of Tove Jansson's Picture Books**

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The present article explores the borderline between translation and adaptation in children's literature. It deals with a particular kind of "literary duets:" the four-handed performances carried out by the literal translators and adapters who co-operated in the production of the Italian and latest English versions of Tove Jansson's picture books *Vem ska trösta knyttet?*, *Hur gick det sen?* and *Den farliga resan*.

Key words: translating for children, adapting for children, Tove Jansson, picture book

Cet article examine la frontière entre la traduction et l'adaptation dans la littérature jeunesse. Il se penche sur un type particulier de «duo littéraire» : le travail à quatre mains des traducteurs littéraires et des adaptateurs qui ont collaboré aux versions italiennes et aux dernières versions anglaises des livres illustrés de Tove Jansson, *Vem ska trösta knyttet ?*, *Hur gick det sen ?* et *Den farliga resan*.

Mots clés: traduction de la littérature jeunesse, adaptation de la littérature jeunesse, Tove Jansson, livres illustrés pour enfants

### **Introduction**

Translating a children's picture book is no child's play. In picture books, in fact, the storytelling event is not confined to the textual dimension, but consists of a lively dialogic interaction between verbal and visual elements.<sup>1</sup> A creative synergy emerges, where multiple layers of meaning give rise to different interpretative options. Translation is inevitably destined to participate in this dialogue, which turns out to be particularly polyphonic, in Bakhtinian terms, when different people share the text-crafting role. From this point of view, the Italian versions of Tove Jansson's picture books *Hur gick det sen?* and *Vem ska trösta knyttet?*<sup>2</sup> as well as the latest English versions of the same picture books and of Jansson's *Den farliga resan*<sup>3</sup> are significant texts. All of these volumes are the result of a 'four-handed performance,' i.e. a translation/adaptation process involving a professional translator in charge of the literal draft, and an acknowledged poet or children's author in charge of the poetic text.

The present article explores the fascinating borderline of translation and adaptation in the Italian and English editions of these picture books by Tove Jansson. Riitta Oittinen's research on the

verbal and visual aspects of children's books and on translational action and intercultural communication in translating for children, and Susan Bassnett's studies on creativity in literary translation are the basic theoretical framework. The analytical discussion focuses on the translators' and adapters' tasks and tries to define whether it is possible to spot any role divisions or specificities. The starting point is a detailed comparative study of the literal translation drafts and of the published versions of Tove Jansson's picture books. The previous English translations and intermediate drafts have been taken into account as well, along with information contained in working notes and e-mail communications kindly made available by the translators. Both translators also offered their invaluable contribution to this study in terms of exhaustive explanations and answers to specific questions.

The 'four-handed performance' image is inspired by a special kind of piano duet, where two players sit side by side at the same instrument, one playing the high notes and the other the low notes. The parallel between these particular duets and the translation/adaptation process consists in the fact that two professionals share roles in the production of a harmonious performance. Much as these piano concerts are considered an excellent way to improve one's musical skills – in that the players must be perfectly aware of each other's role and rhythm – the study of the translation/adaptation processes at play in Tove Jansson's picture books offers us the possibility to improve our understanding of the translators' and adapters' dialogic interaction in the different stages of the editorial process.

### **Tove Jansson's World**

Tove Jansson's Moomin books are among the most popular 20<sup>th</sup> century European children's classics. The first Moomin story was published in Finland in 1945, and it was followed by a series of novels, picture books and comic strips, beautifully illustrated by the author herself. The Moomin adventures have been in print in 43 languages, and they have reached wide audiences in different countries, thanks also to various animation series and films inspired by the original stories.

Tove Jansson's *Vem ska trösta knyttet?*, *Hur gick det sen?* and *Den farliga resan* are highly artistic volumes, which combine colorful illustrations with playful rhyming texts, thus involving the readers – children and adults alike – in a creative dialogue with the story. Tove Jansson is repeatedly quoted in the English publisher's web site as having once said: "In a children's book there must be a path where the author stands still and the child walks on."<sup>4</sup> This quote shows the author's agenda and expectations about her audience's willingness to get involved in the storytelling event.

Tove Jansson's books introduce the readers to an enchanting world, made up of fascinating pictures and rhythmic sounds. *Vem ska trösta knyttet?* is the story of a lonely and timid forest creature who remains unnoticed and alone until he makes friends with a little frightened girl. Together, they comfort each other and live happily ever after. In *Hur gick det sen?* little Moomintroll gets lost in the forest during his journey back from the dairy. The original cut-out page designs of this book narrate Moomin's adventures and create unexpected interconnections between the various stages of his homebound itinerary. The protagonist of *Den farliga resan*, little Susanna, discovers a pair of magic spectacles, which transform her surroundings into an exciting, mysterious landscape. She thus finds herself wandering in various hostile and dangerous places, until she is finally rescued by a balloonist and taken back to Moominvalley. The covers of these books – created by Tove Jansson herself – are also visually attractive, as the following pictures<sup>5</sup> show:



## **The Subtle Line between Translation and Adaptation**

Zohar Shavit dedicates an entire chapter of her book *Poetics of Children's Literature* to translation. Right from the beginning of her analysis, however, she decides to include abridgments and adaptations in the discussion as well, since “they claim some sort of relationship between themselves and the original.” The primary condition for this inclusion – she explains – is the fact that translation can be considered “as part of a transfer process.”<sup>6</sup>

Riitta Oittinen too, in her *Translating for Children*, offers an in-depth discussion of the relationship between translation and adaptation in children's literature. She identifies different adaptation strategies – versions, imitations, abridgements, shortened editions or editions destined to a specific audience or kind of performance – analyses their peculiarities, and suggests that the borderline between translation and adaptation is very frequently not as clear as might be expected in theory. Oittinen's position focuses on the mechanisms involved in translation and takes into account two different perspectives. If, on the one hand, translation is defined as “a process producing sameness,”<sup>7</sup> i.e. a word-for-word version of the original text, in her opinion a distinction between translation and adaptation is unavoidable. Translation, in this sense, is a mere literal version, necessarily followed by a rewriting stage. If, on the other hand, translation is considered more broadly as rewriting, re-creating the source text into another language and for another culture, the distinction becomes unnecessary, as adaptation is an integral part of the transposition process itself. Whatever definition is chosen, Oittinen considers the translation/adaptation process as a recursive movement of subsequent rewritings, originated by the translator's dialogic approach with the text. Although in ordinary situations translation and adaptation are intimately intertwined and difficult to separate, a tentative and temporary distinction between the two is possible in the context of the different tasks performed by the translators and adapters of the sample texts analyzed in this paper. Translation, in these cases, implies a literal version of the source text and establishes a privileged dialogue with the author; while adaptation implies a poetic retelling of the text and establishes a

privileged dialogue with the audience. In line with Gideon Toury's opinion that "any a priori definition [...] allegedly specifying what is 'inherently' translational, would involve an untenable pretense of fixing once and for all the boundaries of an object which is characterized by its very **variability**"<sup>8</sup> and with Susan Bassnett's idea that "attempting to differentiate between *translations*, *versions*, *adaptations*" and to establish "a hierarchy of 'correctness' between these categories"<sup>9</sup> is a pointless effort, the following discussion is therefore going to adopt a descriptive attitude towards translation and adaptation, as they complement each other in the case studies selected for analysis.

### **The Translators' Task**

Laura Cangemi and Silvester Mazzarella are respectively the Italian and English professionals who produced the literal versions of the texts of Tove Jansson's picture books. Both of them are expert literary translators, with an extensive repertoire of publications from the Swedish language. Cangemi's name appears on the Italian book covers along with the names of the authors in charge of the adaptations<sup>10</sup>, while Mazzarella's name is only mentioned in the inside back cover of the English texts in a note explaining that the poet who carried out the adaptation "created this English version of Tove Jansson's original poem with the help of a literal translation by Silvester Mazzarella."<sup>11</sup>

Cangemi's and Mazzarella's main contribution to the translation process was based on their privileged access to the original text. They had a key role as linguistic advisors and specialized readers of Jansson's books, and their literal versions were expected to convey the exact contents of the original stories in a translation crib exclusively destined for the adapters and editorial staff. In line with this, in a short accompanying note to her Italian literal version of *Hur gick det sen?*, Cangemi confirmed to the editor that her translation was "fedelissima all'originale," i.e. "very faithful to the original."<sup>12</sup>

The professional translators' accounts of their experience and their draft translation files give evidence that the editorial process was radically different in the Italian and English publishing houses. While the Italian publisher did not expect any contact to take place between translator and

adapter, the English publisher Sort of Books promoted a steady co-operation all throughout the translation, adaptation and editing process, to the extent that the translator himself comments:

There was never any single “literal version” followed by any single “final version” by Sophie Hannah. Things were never as simple as that. Texts would go backwards and forwards, with a strong input by Natania Jansz herself, who is and was an independent publisher not working for any larger publishing company, and occasionally suggestions were received from other interested English people living in Finland and familiar with the original texts.<sup>13</sup>

Another important difference between the Italian and English editions is the fact that *Piccolo Knitt tutto solo* and *E adesso che succede?* are the first and only versions of Jansson’s picture books available in Italian, while *Who Will Comfort Toffle?*, *The Book about Moomin*, *Mymble and Little My* and *The Dangerous Journey* were previously available in English in Kingsley Hart’s translation. Speaking of these previous editions, Silvester Mazzarella explains: “I do remember that I used them in making my own literal translations for Sort of Books, though of course Kingsley’s verse could never be a literal version of the Swedish.”<sup>14</sup> Having been Kingsley Hart’s colleague for many years at Helsinki University, Mazzarella knew that Hart had been Tove Jansson’s friend and that “Tove herself [...] probably made comments or suggestions”<sup>15</sup> on Hart’s translations.

As far as the Moomin books and comic strips are concerned, however, various publications were already available both in the English and in the Italian market when the small text corpus of this case-study was translated. For this reason, Cangemi and Mazzarella carefully examined the previously published literature and, in particular, they both dealt with the existing translations of the characters’ proper names. Cangemi reports on her extensive research on the previous Italian translations, and the decision of providing the descriptive meaning of some proper names in brackets along with the “official” translation when necessary. Mazzarella, on the contrary, was initially in favour of a different approach, and in an accompanying note for his literal translations he explained:

Over the years accepted translations of Tove Jansson’s Moomin names have grown up, but I’ve always thought some of them could be better rendered into English. In some, the Swedish has delightful combinations of consonants which would delight an English child (all children like playing with sounds), but which some earlier translator has enfeebled by removing all combinations of consonants that might be unusual in English. Examples of this are Hattifattener for the stronger Hattifnatt and Filijonk for the stronger Filifyonk. I also feel the stress pattern in Swedish Hemul (which simply means the Hemul) should not be altered to Hemulen [...]. Mamma in this poem should be stressed like Italian (or Swedish) Mamma and not as English Mama. But these of course are just my own ideas [...].<sup>16</sup>

Mazzarella's suggestion, however, was not accepted by the editorial staff, as the English readers were familiar with the already existing translations of Tove Jansson's books, which were considered to form part of the literary canon.<sup>17</sup>

Both Cangemi's and Mazzarella's translations of Tove Jansson's picture books were produced in the form of plain text files. The English translator indicated the pages of the source text<sup>18</sup> and divided the translation into lines, thus reproducing the visual lay-out of Jansson's poetry. In the Italian version, on the other hand, the single lines of Jansson's poems were not recognizable, since the translator provided the content of each poem in compact paragraphs, separating the various pages with a blank line. Whenever there were captions in the pictures, both translators explicitly mentioned them before translating their content: "[Caption under the square frame:]"<sup>19</sup> "in basso sotto il riquadro vuoto."<sup>20</sup>

As far as the lexical level of the texts is concerned, both Cangemi and Mazzarella sometimes added explanations or multiple translation alternatives. At the end of *Hur gick det sen?*, for example, when the characters drink some "hädanefter saft," the Italian translator used the word "succo," i.e. juice, followed by an explanation in brackets: "(letteralmente sciroppo di frutta allungato con acqua)."<sup>21</sup> The English translator, on the other hand, sometimes provided two or three alternative translations for a Swedish term. Again in *Hur gick det sen?*, for example, "skymningen" was thus rendered with "dusk/twilight/nightfall."<sup>22</sup>

What characterizes Mazzarella's translations is the fact that he sometimes offered detailed literary references or background information about the original text. In *Den farliga resan*, for instance, he carried out a careful analysis of two characters and of their way of speaking:

[\*These timid little characters, Thingumy and Bob in the English text of *Finn Family Moomintroll*, are called 'Tofslan' and 'Vifslan' respectively in the original Swedish; privately they represented Tove herself and her then lover, the theatre director Vivika Bandler – two women who in fact were not at all timid. Their real-life affair was intense but brief, but Vivika became a lifelong friend, encouraged Tove to write for the stage and directed her theatre works for many years. The intimate relationship between Thingumy and Bob is conveyed through their special language, which no one else understands. This in Swedish consists in adding '-sla' or '-slan' to nearly every word (as in their own names); in the English version of *Finn Family Moomintroll* it is replaced by swapping round the initial letters of words; e.g. 'smell food' becomes 'fell smood' and 'Sniff is peevish' becomes 'Piff is sneevish'.]<sup>23</sup>

These explanations were destined to become important guidelines for the re-writing stage, as the character Bob's direct speech in the published version proves. The literal exclamations: "All-sla wrong, phenomenally-sla wrong! I really believe-sla evil-sla forces-sla are playing-sla nasty-sla tricks/games!," for example, were thus re-created with the inversion mechanism used in *Finn Family Moomintroll*: "A mightful fress! Hite quorribly foncusing! Whoever's glaying pames with us, they're linning and we're wusing."<sup>24</sup>

In general, text analysis proves that the translators' task was one and the same in the English and Italian editions of Tove Jansson's picture books. Both Cangemi and Mazzarella, in fact, were expected to read the Swedish text carefully and to offer a transposition in the target language which should be very close to the original at the syntactic and semantic level. There were no particular expectations, however, as far as the readability of their literal drafts was concerned, as they were destined to be re-elaborated in a literary form.

### **The Adapters' Task**

The adaptation of the picture books analyzed in this study was carried out by well-known writers. The two Italian titles were adapted by Bianca Pitzorno and Roberto Piumini, who are listed among the most representative contemporary Italian children's authors by the Italian Cultural Institute<sup>25</sup> and explicitly mentioned on the book covers together with the professional translator Laura Cangemi. The three English poetic versions were created by Sophie Hannah, who is presented as "one of Britain's best-selling poets ('a real star' – *Daily Telegraph*)."<sup>26</sup>

The fact that the people in charge of the literary re-creation are acknowledged authors themselves has of course a double significance. On the one hand, their experience in the literary field was most probably considered by the publishers as a guarantee of refined poetic standards; on the other hand, marketing strategies also played a role in the situation, in that a best-selling author's name on a book cover is invariably destined to become an eye-catcher for potential buyers.

What the adapters in both the Italian and English publications had in common was a hybrid position towards the source texts: a first-hand approach to the visual dimension (i.e. Tove Jansson's

pictures) and a second-hand approach to the verbal dimension (i.e. the literal drafts) of the original stories. From this starting point, they all managed to establish a new dialogic situation, which involved the stylistic and rhythmic re-creation of the source texts. Readability, as Riitta Oittinen suggests, is a fundamental element of children's books, to the extent that translated texts are: "responsible for contributing to the aloud-reader's enjoyment of the story in every way possible."<sup>27</sup>

What distinguished the adapters was the re-creation strategy they adopted. From this point of view, a clear dichotomy can be identified between the poetic versions produced by Hannah and Pitzorno and Piumini's prose text. These two divergent adaptation approaches gave rise to diametrically different texts. The Italian book covers distinguish in fact between the "adattamento in versi di Bianca Pitzorno" and the "adattamento di Roberto Piumini."<sup>28</sup>

In their poetic adaptations Hannah and Pitzorno re-create the poetic lay-out, rhyme scheme and rhythmic structure of the original texts. Tove Jansson's 12-line rhymes in *Vem ska trösta knyttet?*, for example, were generally rendered by Pitzorno with 12-line poems and by Hannah with 10-line poems, while the English version of *Den farliga resan* maintained the same number of lines as the original. As far as the rhyme scheme is concerned, the dominant rhyming couplet sequences of Tove Jansson's poems were systematized all throughout Hannah's versions, while Pitzorno tended to adopt alternating patterns. The metric structures of the Swedish originals, with their dominating iambic sequences, again found a parallel in the English poems, while the Italian versions tended to privilege the use of trochaic sequences.

On the contrary, in his prose version of *Hur gick det sen?*, Piumini rewrote Cangemi's literal translation through the addition of some literary touches in terms of lexical and stylistic choices. At the very beginning of the story, for example, when Moomin is going home from the dairy with a full milk-can, Piumini introduced a personification, explaining that "il latte cantava nel bidone..."<sup>29</sup> Throughout the text, he frequently added alliterative structures to the literal translation – for example changing "buia foresta" into "buio bosco," or replacing "non era la casa della sua mamma" with "non era il camino della casa della sua mamma"<sup>30</sup> – and he often substituted alternative verbs

such as “annunciò” and “salutò”<sup>31</sup> for the verb “disse.” Piumini’s stylistic preferences also emerged in his way of systematically avoiding the diminutive forms of the literal translation. “Il piccolo Troll Mumin”, for example, became “il troll Mumin,” “gli angolini” was translated with “angoli,” and “una lucina” with “una luce.”<sup>32</sup> It must be pointed out, however, that the diminutive morphemes used in the literal Italian version cannot be considered as literal equivalents of the original “vrår” and “ljus;”<sup>33</sup> they were most probably used by the translator to create the idea of Moomin’s journey through small and strange places.

The only trace left of Jansson’s poems in Piumini’s adaptation is the rhyming couplet at the end of each page “E ora prova a immaginare: / cosa sta per capitare?,”<sup>34</sup> which is repeated consistently throughout the book, thus recreating the refrain effect of the original “Vad tror du att det hände sen?”<sup>35</sup> It should be noted, however, that the refrain in the source text is limited to the last line of each rhyme, which in turn forms a different rhyming couplet with the preceding line. In this sense, Hannah’s version is more effective in emphasizing the variations of the original thanks to a series of slightly different options such as: “Now, guess what happens after this.”; “Now guess what happens in a minute.”; “Now guess what happens to them now.”; “Now guess what happens. Fingers crossed.”<sup>36</sup>

The adaptation of Tove Jansson’s picture books also involved fundamental decisions with respect to the verb tenses used in storytelling, the choice of direct vs. indirect speech and the characters’ proper names. While the source texts were narrated in the past tense, both Hannah and Pitzorno opted for the historical present in their adaptations. This choice offered the double advantage of adding a dynamic effect to the story and, at the same time, bypassing the problem of the past tense endings, which had a slightly monotonous effect both in the Italian and English poems. Piumini, on the contrary, kept the past tense, as this is perfectly in line with traditional storytelling and it was not his intention to create a rhyming text.

In the adapted poems the narrating voice underwent significant shifts when indirect speech was transformed into direct speech. Tove Jansson’s stories are generally narrated in the third person: the

protagonists' adventures are told from an external point of view and direct speech is not very frequent. Both Pitzorno and Hannah, however, repeatedly let the protagonists' voices emerge in dialogue. From the beginning of *Vem ska trösta knyttet?*, for example, the literal translator's description of the little creature's loneliness was transformed by Pitzorno into a direct statement: "Sono solo e senza amici."<sup>37</sup> Similarly, in *Den farliga resan*, the literal translation "For the cat was dreadfully old / and he (or she) was lazy too / one of those cats / who only like their food"<sup>38</sup> is replaced by a direct expression of Susanna's point of view in the adapted version: "Cat, you are always eating! / You munch, then snore for hours! / You're old, Cat, and you're lazy."<sup>39</sup>

As far as the characters' proper names are concerned, both the Italian and the English publications adopted a conservative approach, in that they generally maintained the solutions of previously translated works. It is interesting to note, however, what happened in *Vem ska trösta knyttet?* with "knytt" and little "skrutt." The Italian literal translator suggested two different approaches: a transcription – "Knitt" – and non-translation with a literal equivalent in brackets – "Skruitt (Torsolo)". Pitzorno, however, came up with a different solution in the published version, and her choice was to translate "knytt" as a proper name "Knitt (questo è il suo nome),"<sup>40</sup> and "skrutt" as "Knittola," an invented feminine form for the word "knytt;" This last solution, in particular, does not seem to be quite in line with the meaning of Tove Jansson's original characters' names. "Knytt," which literally means 'knot,' and "skrutt," literally 'fruit core' are in fact used by parents as terms of endearment for their children. In the new English edition, on the other hand, Kingsley Hart's names were maintained with "knytt" being called "Toffle" and "skrutt" being called "Miffle," both matching the cherishing tone of the original names.

Book titles are another aspect of the adaptation process, since it is quite common for them to be changed in translation. In this case, too, Kingsley Hart's previous translations determined the English titles, while the Italian translations were free from this kind of influence. Pitzorno changed the question *Vem ska trösta knyttet?* – which was translated literally by Cangemi as *Chi consolerà il piccolo Knitt?* – into a descriptive sentence: *Piccolo Knitt tutto solo;*<sup>41</sup> while Piumini opted for *E*

*adesso, che succede?* instead of the literal *E dopo, come andò?*<sup>42</sup> for *Hur gick det sen?*, thus creating a contraposition between the use of the present tense in the title and rhyming refrains and the use of the past tense in the narration itself.

Comparative text analysis finally proves that another important task performed by the adapters was to create a harmonious dialogue between the verbal and the visual dimensions of the picture books. In a discussion of the second draft for *Who Will Comfort Toffle?*, for example, Mazzarella analyzed the problem posed by the repetition of the word “boat” in two contiguous lines of the story. In his opinion, this repetition posed a stylistic problem in translation, but the term “boat” could not be changed, as it was the only possible match for Jansson’s picture:

Filijonk is in a boat but the word ‘boats’ is needed in the next line and there’s no other suitable monosyllabic word. But you can’t ever call a boat a ‘ship’. In any case, Sophie calls the same object a boat in the very last verse.” The final adaptation solves the problem by substituting the object with its action, “boat” with “float”: “Fillijonk, in her party frock, waves as she floats nearby.”<sup>43</sup>

A certain uneasiness remains, on the other hand, in the Italian version of the same book, when Jansson’s picture shows a character standing in a flowery bay and playing the flute, and the text describes him as “seduto sul pontile della baia.”<sup>44</sup> This translation choice was determined by the fact that it was necessary to find a rhyme for the word “gentile” and “pontile”<sup>45</sup> most probably turned out to be the right match, even though, unfortunately, there is no pier in the picture. In comparison, in *Hur gick det sen?*, Piumini seems to be very careful with the interaction between text and iconography. At the end of the story, for example, he used the word “tuba” (i.e. ‘top hat’) instead of the literal “cappello” (i.e. ‘hat’), to describe the exact kind of object into which Mamma Moomin is putting her blackcurrants.

The fact that it was the adapter’s task to create an harmonic dialogic correspondence between the verbal and the visual storytelling dimensions is confirmed by the question added in square brackets by Mazzarella in his literal translation of *Hur gick det sen?*: “But it wasn’t his Mamma’s house, only Mymble, who in a striped tunic/blouse/top [NB Or what? See pictures!] was sitting on an old tin can and crying.”<sup>46</sup> In this case, the literal translator deliberately left different options open for

the description of Mymble's clothes, as he expected that the adapter would clarify the character's aspect. What actually happened, however, was that the final text focused just on Mymble's hairstyle rather than on her outfit: "That's not a roof or chimney pot – It's Mymble's hair, tied in a knot! She's weeping on a big tin can, Poor thing,' thought Moomintroll, and ran."<sup>47</sup>

This last example, among others, proves that poetic adaptations generally pose stricter constraints than prose adaptations as far as word choice and word order are concerned. The necessity of creating rhyming and rhythmic lines, in fact, has a remarkable impact on the final text, thus determining inevitable shifts and adjustments in the storytelling sequence and contents.

### **The Editors' Task**

The Italian and English versions of Tove Jansson's picture books not only represent the fruitful co-operation between a professional translator and a writer or poet, but they were also the result of contributions by the editing staff. Natania Jansz, in particular, the publisher of Sort of Books played a fundamental role in the adaptation process and overall discussion about the various translation stages of the English volumes.

Hannah's first draft of *Hur gick det sen?*, for instance, offered a surreal alliterative description of the strange landscape where Moomin is wandering: "Beyond the forest, bathed in light / the grass is glowing blue and bright."<sup>48</sup> In the publisher's opinion, however, a problem emerged with reference to the strange colours of the pictures, where the grass and the trees actually appear in a bluish-violet hue. "I like the tone/lyricism a lot," she commented in a short e-mail sent to Sophie Hannah, "but it seems odd to state that the grass is glowing BLUE and bright without a comment." She therefore suggested a "less contentious" alternative: "...the grass is glowing fresh and bright."<sup>49</sup> Sophie Hannah, at this point, offered another solution, which, however, contradicted the visual information: "...the grass is glowing green and bright." Apparently, this was just one of a series of successive re-writings, destined to lead to the final published version, which eventually bypassed the problem by avoiding any reference to the strange colours of the picture: "Beyond the forest, bathed in light / the air tastes fresh. The grass glows bright." This example proves the intricate recursive movement in

Hannah's poetic adaptation of Tove Jansson's picture books – a process which corresponds to what Christiane Nord described as the “looping” movements of translation. In Nord's model, in fact, “translation is not a linear, progressive process leading from a starting point S (=ST) to a target point T (=TT), but a circular, basically recursive process comprising an indefinite number of feedback loops.”<sup>50</sup>

Since Pitzorno and Piumini adopted two completely different adaptation strategies, although both volumes were published by Salani in the same mini-collection dedicated to Jansson's picture-books, they appear to have been free, undoubtedly because of their literary experience, to re-write the source text according to their taste and inspiration, which virtually excludes the hypothesis of a heavy intervention by the editorial staff. This is indirectly confirmed by the fact that Laura Cangemi herself was neither involved in the adaptation process nor informed about it after handing in her literal drafts, and just saw the books after publication.<sup>51</sup>

Last but not least, it is worth mentioning the professional calligraphers' contribution to the final aspect of the Italian and English picture books. Tove Jansson's stories, in fact, were not just translated and adapted, but they were also transcribed in handwritten format by Gigi Cavalli Cocchi and Peter Blegvad, whose texts were characterized by the presence of especially designed fonts and graphic creations. This editorial choice added to the overall effect of the translated books, which had a more artistic aspect than the previous volumes by Kingsley Hart, printed in a plain font style.

## **Conclusion**

After analyzing the small translation corpus selected for this case-study,<sup>52</sup> there seems to be much in common between the various phases of the Italian and English translation/adaptation projects and the process of reading, re-writing and recreating described by Susan Bassnett in a discussion about her professional experience as a writer and translator:

When I [...] I translate any extended work, whether play, novel, story, essay, my first stage is a crude hand-written draft that I often never refer to again. I see this as a necessary stage, a stage of ‘writing the reading’ in some palpable form... The next stage, which I see as translation proper, involves writing and rewriting, crafting sentences, using dictionaries, thesauruses and encyclopedias. By the time I have a finished translation, I may have several drafts including the initial handwritten scrawl.<sup>53</sup>

As far as the picture books analyzed in this article are concerned, the first reading was delegated to Laura Cangemi and Silvester Mazzarella and so were the initial phases of the translation process. In this sense, the literal translation might be regarded as some form of written documentation of the translators' specialized reading and of the following initial "crafting" stage, which was destined to be taken over and completed by Bianca Pitzorno, Roberto Piumini and Sophie Hannah.

The specificity of the translation/adaptation process consists in the fact that the dialogue between the original author and the target readers was mediated by two different agents. The literal translators' dialogic relationship was focused especially towards Tove Jansson, while the adapters' dialogic relationship was focused especially towards the audience of the translated books. In this sense, adaptation can somehow be considered as a second-hand or derivative product in comparison to the literal translation, although readers tend to experience the text as a polyphonic whole and not to make any special distinction between Kingsley Hart's books, for example, and Silvester Mazzarella and Sophie Hannah's adapted translations.

In conclusion, it must be underlined that it is usually a single translator who covers the whole transposition process of a picture book into another language, both as far as the translation of the original contents and the literary re-creation are concerned. The extensive experience and well established reputation of the Italian and English literal translators is proof enough that they would have perfectly been able to complete the whole translation/adaptation process themselves, as Kingsley Hart did with the previously published English editions of Tove Jansson's picture books. The special significance of the present study, however, lies in the fact that the four-handed performances selected for analysis allow us to identify the different priorities implied in the roles performed by the translators and the adapters, and to explore the peculiar mechanisms at work within the fascinating borderline of translation and adaptation. In particular, the comparative analysis of the literal drafts and the published books proves that the literal translators Laura Cangemi and Silvester Mazzarella were principally involved in a dialogue with the verbal level of Tove Jansson's narration. Bianca Pitzorno, Roberto Piumini and Sophie Hannah were primarily

involved in a dialogue with the audience while they were constantly aiming, at the same time, to achieve a harmonic development of the storytelling event, both as far as the verbal and the visual levels of narration are concerned.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Riitta Oittinen, “The Verbal and the Visual: on the Carnivalism and Dialogics of Translating for Children,” *Compar(a)ison* no. 2 (1995), pp. 49-65.

<sup>2</sup> These titles were first published in Swedish by Schildts: Tove Jansson, *Hur gick det sen? Boken om Mymlan, Muminrollet och lilla My* (Helsinki: Schildts, 1952); Tove Jansson, *Vem ska trösta knyttet?* (Helsinki: Schildts, 1960). The Italian translations are: Tove Jansson, *Piccolo knitt tutto solo* (Milano: Salani, 2003); Tove Jansson, *E adesso, che succede? Un libro su Mimla, il troll Mumin e la piccola My* (Milan: Salani, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> See Tove Jansson, *Den farliga resan* (Helsinki: Schildts, 1977). The English translations of the three books are: Tove Jansson, *Who will comfort Toffle? A tale of Moomin Valley* (London: Sort of Books, 2003); Tove Jansson, *The Book about Moomin, Mymble and little My* (London: Sort of Books, 2001); Tove Jansson, *The Dangerous Journey* (London: Sort of Books, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> See Tove Jansson in <<http://www.sortof.co.uk/books/who-will-comfort-toffle/>>, website consulted 10<sup>th</sup> June 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Photos of the covers compliments of the publisher Schildts.

<sup>6</sup> Zohar Shavit, *Poetics of Children's Literature* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1986), p. 111.

<sup>7</sup> Riitta Oittinen, *Translating for Children* (New York: Garland, 2000), p. 74.

<sup>8</sup> Gideon Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies and beyond* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1995), p. 31. Toury's emphasis.

<sup>9</sup> Susan Bassnett, *Translation Studies* (London: Routledge, 1980/1991), p. 79.

<sup>10</sup> “Traduzione di Laura Cangemi – Adattamento di Roberto Piumini” (“Translation by Laura Cangemi – Adaptation by Roberto Piumini”, translation mine); Tove Jansson, *E adesso, che succede? Un libro su Mimla, il troll Mumin e la piccola My*, front cover. “Traduzione di Laura Cangemi – Adattamento in versi di Bianca Pitzorno” (“Translation by Laura Cangemi – Adaptation in verse by Bianca Pitzorno”, translation mine); Tove Jansson, *Piccolo knitt tutto solo*, front cover.

<sup>11</sup> Tove Jansson, *The Book about Moomin, Mymble and little My*, inside back cover. Tove Jansson, *Who will comfort Toffle? A tale of Moomin Valley*, inside back cover; Tove Jansson, *The Dangerous Journey*, inside back cover.

<sup>12</sup> Comments included in the translation file provided by the translator.

<sup>13</sup> Email message from Mazzearella to Galletti dated 27<sup>th</sup> February 2012.

<sup>14</sup> Email message from Mazzearella to Galletti dated 27<sup>th</sup> February 2012.

<sup>15</sup> Email message from Mazzearella to Galletti dated 27<sup>th</sup> February 2012.

<sup>16</sup> Comments included in the translation file provided by the translator.

<sup>17</sup> Zohar Shavit, *Poetics of Children's Literature*, pp. 111-130.

<sup>18</sup> In his translation of *The Dangerous Journey* he explicitly added a preliminary remark in this sense: “I have numbered the pages to help matching text accurately to pictures.” Translation file provided by the translator.

<sup>19</sup> Translation file provided by the translator.

<sup>20</sup> “At the bottom under the empty box,” translation mine. Translation file provided by the translator.

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<sup>21</sup> “(Literally fruit syrup mixed with water),” translation mine. It is interesting to notice that the English translator simply rendered this with “fruit-juice”. Translation files provided by the translators.

<sup>22</sup> Translation file provided by the translator.

<sup>23</sup> Comments included in the translation file provided by the translator.

<sup>24</sup> Tove Jansson, *The Dangerous Journey*, p. 9.

<sup>25</sup>

<[http://www.icilondon.esteri.it/IIC\\_Londra/Menu/La\\_Biblioteca/Information+for+librarians.htm](http://www.icilondon.esteri.it/IIC_Londra/Menu/La_Biblioteca/Information+for+librarians.htm)>, website consulted 10<sup>th</sup> June 2013.

<sup>26</sup> See inside back cover of *Who Will Comfort Toffle?* and *The Dangerous Journey*.

<sup>27</sup> Riitta Oittinen, “The Verbal and the Visual: on the Carnivalism and Dialogics of Translating for Children,” p. 60.

<sup>28</sup> “Adaptation in verse by Bianca Pitzorno,” “Adaptation by Roberto Piumini,” translations mine.

<sup>29</sup> “The milk was singing in the can...,” translation mine.

<sup>30</sup> “Dark forest,” “dark wood,” “it wasn’t his mother’s house,” “it wasn’t the chimney of his mother’s house,” translations mine.

<sup>31</sup> “S/he said,” “s/he announced,” “s/he greeted,” translations mine.

<sup>32</sup> “Little Troll Moomin,” “troll Mumin,” “the little corners,” “the corners,” “a little light,” “a light,” translations mine.

<sup>33</sup> “Corners,” “light,” translations mine.

<sup>34</sup> “Now try to imagine: / what is about to happen?,” translations mine.

<sup>35</sup> Translated by Mazzarella as “What do you think happened next?”

<sup>36</sup> Tove Jansson, *The Book about Moomin, Mymble and little My*, pp. 2, 7, 20.

<sup>37</sup> “I am lonely and without friends” is the direct-speech version of the original “Han var nog långt mer ensam än han trodde” [“He was far more lonely than he thought”], translations mine.

<sup>38</sup> Translation file provided by the translator.

<sup>39</sup> Tove Jansson, *The Dangerous Journey*, p. 1.

<sup>40</sup> “Knitt (this is his name),” translation mine.

<sup>41</sup> “Who shall comfort the little knytt?,” “Little Knytt all alone,” translations mine.

<sup>42</sup> “And now, what’s happening?,” “And then, what happened?,” translations mine.

<sup>43</sup> Comments included in the translation file provided by the translator.

<sup>44</sup> “Sitting on the pier of the bay,” translation mine.

<sup>45</sup> “Gentle,” “pier,” translations mine.

<sup>46</sup> Translation file provided by the translator.

<sup>47</sup> Tove Jansson, *The Book about Moomin, Mymble and little My*, p. 5.

<sup>48</sup> Translation file provided by the translator.

<sup>49</sup> Comments included in the translation file provided by the translator.

<sup>50</sup> Christiane Nord, *Text Analysis in Translation. Theory; Methodology, and Didactic Application of a Model for Translation-Oriented Text Analysis*. Trans. Christiane Nord and Penelope Sparrow (Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi, 1991), p. 34.

<sup>51</sup> Private conversation with Laura Cangemi.

<sup>52</sup> I am indebted to Bianca Pitzorno, Laura Cangemi, Silvester Mazzarella and Natania Janz for their generous and active co-operation in this case study and for their invaluable contribution to my research.

<sup>53</sup> Susan Bassnett and Peter Bush, eds. *The Translator as Writer* (London: Continuum, 2006), p. 178.

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