



An Analysis of Translation Strategies in *The Square Around Forest* by Ervin Lázár, Translated by Andrew C. Rouse

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Abstract. This paper examines the translation strategies employed by Andrew C. Rouse in his English version of *A Négyszögletű Kerek Erdő* by Ervin Lázár, titled *The Square Around Forest*. Ervin Lázár, a beloved figure in Hungarian children's literature, is known for his inventive use of language, including neologisms, onomatopoeia, paradoxical phrases, and stylized child language. The paper focuses on how these linguistic features are adapted into English, with special attention to the paradox of the title, and the playful, semantically rich names of characters such as Mikkamakka, Vacskamati, and Dömdödöm. Drawing on theories of nonsense literature and sound symbolism, the analysis demonstrates how Rouse uses rhythmic patterns, childlike phrasing, and culturally resonant nonsense structures to recreate the whimsical, surreal tone of the original. The translator's creative decisions reflect a functional and stylistic equivalence, ensuring that Lázár's linguistic play survives and thrives in the English translation.

Keywords: Ervin Lázár, children's literature, literary translation, nonsense literature, Andrew C. Rouse

1. Introduction

In an article written for *Columbia Magazine*, Paul Hond characterizes literary translation as “impossible, mysterious, traitorous, or plain misunderstood” (2022, 25), yet it is still “a powerful vehicle for the transmission of stories and ideas around the globe”. Translating literature is viewed by many as an art form, reaching above the act of simply transmitting a text from a source language to a target language. Much of the translator's work is about accuracy, but for the literary translator, the pleasure of reading the text is also of key importance.

Furthermore, there are times when the sound of languages also comes into play. This is certainly the case in the style of Hungarian writer Ervin Lázár, well known for his wordplay and linguistic innovation in his novels. Lázár (1936–2006) is one of the most influential Hungarian children’s literature writers of the twentieth century, beloved even today. As noted by Zsuzsa Gulyás, Lázár worked as a journalist, but he wrote fiction almost exclusively for children because he found most of his inspiration in childhood experiences. “His style is cinematic, ‘visualizing’ (his texts lend themselves perfectly for radio, stage, and film adaptations); his dialogues are ballad-like in their conciseness.”¹ Moreover, Lázár has the ability to utilize the characteristics of child language (e.g. invented words, simplified grammar, creative rule applications, etc.) in order to further establish the world his characters occupy. Although his books are beloved by Hungarian children and adults alike, they are not well known elsewhere. So, there are not many translations of his works, even though he was translated into Czech, Danish, French, Italian, Russian, etc., and into English as well.²

English academic Andrew C. Rouse translated two of Lázár’s works, *Foci*, published as *Football* in 2014, and *A Négyszögletű Kerek Erdő*, or *The Square Around Forest*, in 2021. The focus of this paper is the English translation of *Négyszögletű Kerek Erdő*, and I aim to analyse the translation strategies Andrew C. Rouse applies in order to capture in English the essence of the Hungarian original.

In the case of *Négyszögletű Kerek Erdő*, the translation challenges are not necessarily those of domestication and foreignization in the literal sense. The world built by Lázár is not strictly Hungarian; the settings themselves are universally recognizable: a forest, a village, a shop, a racetrack, etc. The characters are also common in fairy tales: talking animals, fairies, beasts, and other magical creatures, mostly devoid of specifically Hungarian folklore. However, Lázár is well known for wordplay, inventing words, the use of onomatopoeia, child language adaptation, and various other creative ways of stylizing his writing. In this paper, I aim to analyse translator Andrew C. Rouse’s title, naming techniques, and some examples of nonsense words.

2. Nonsense literature and the challenges of translation

In the world of literary translation, children’s literature presents a specific set of challenges. It must balance accessibility for young readers with fidelity to the playful, often linguistically experimental qualities of the source text. These challenges are particularly pronounced when the text relies on nonsense, which destabilizes meaning and resists straightforward transfer. Jean-Jacques Lecercle

1 <https://pim.hu/p/lazar-ervin/biografia>. Own translation.

2 <https://dia.hu/dia-szerzok/lazar-ervin/bibliografia>.

questions whether it is even possible or necessary to translate nonsense if it is nonsense in the source language too. He notes, “if a text is non-*sense*, you must translate it. If there is even a faint possibility of sense (which the denial of sense presupposes), there is at least a faint possibility of translation” (Lecercle 2019: 2). For him, nonsense posits sense through its withdrawal of meaning, compelling translators to grapple not with lexical equivalence but with reproducing effects of rhythm, play, and dislocation.

Alexandra Lukes develops the notion of an “aesthetics of discomfort”, arguing that nonsense unsettles readers by oscillating between familiarity and estrangement. She claims that nonsense “functions by using familiarity of form to flout expectations of meaning” (Lukes 2019: 7), creating temporary confusion that nevertheless remains short of incoherence. Lukes further suggests that value lies in “allowing space for a certain degree of not-knowing or nonsense to emerge” (2019: 11) rather than rushing to find sense. Translators of nonsense for children’s literature thus face the dilemma of whether to preserve this discomfort or to soften it for the child reader. Due to the target reader’s age, transmitting nonsense from one language to another can become even more of a challenge. The translation should match the original in style but also communicate the same level of nonsense via sound or look, embedded into a different linguistic environment.

In her study of Hungarian translations of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, Anna Kérchy emphasizes how translators’ cultural constructions of childhood shape their strategies. She argues that translators must decide “if the mature metalinguistic or the infantile trans-verbal registers of literary nonsense will gain pre-eminence” (2020: 162). She exemplifies this with earlier Hungarian translations of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*. For example, in a 1927 edition, Margit Altay “performed a systematic infantilization” (Kérchy 2025: 165) of Carroll’s *Wonderland*, leaving out jokes about death, difficult subjects such as identity crises, and “consistently turned the remaining nonsense into infantile babble, senseless gibberish far from Carroll’s polysemic-polyphonic language games defamiliarizing discourse” (Kérchy 2025: 165). By contrast, later translations reclaim Carroll’s subversive playfulness, aligning with a more empowered view of child readers.

Taken together, Lecercle, Lukes, and Kérchy illustrate that translating nonsense in children’s literature is less about transmitting propositional meaning than about recreating experiential effects: rhythm, discomfort, paradox, and play. This article aims to examine the way Rouse’s translation strategies answer the various challenges posed by Lázár’s novel. Does the translation manage to capture the whimsical, playful nature of the nonsense used so seamlessly by the Hungarian writer in the original?

3. Translating quadrilaterals and directions

In terms of translation, the most obvious challenges posed by the original novel are most likely the naming conventions used by Ervin Lázár. Not only does he use child language adaptation and name coinage techniques to create some of his characters, but he also uses paradoxical imagery and (invented) nonsense words that pose a specific challenge to the transmission into the target language. The first example is noticeable in the Hungarian title of the novel. *A Négyszögletű Kerek Erdő* is a paradoxical expression. The word *négyszögletű* translates to ‘quadrilateral’ or ‘square-shaped’ in English, *kerek* means round, and *erdő* translates to forest. So, the most literal translation of the Hungarian title would be ‘The Square Round Forest’ or ‘The Square-Shaped Round Forest’. Andrew C. Rouse opted to use a different title, shifting the meaning in the process. The English title, *The Square Around Forest*, utilizes the adverb ‘around’, which translates to *körül* in Hungarian.

In the original title, the words ‘square’ and ‘round’ are opposites, clearly demonstrating the oxymoronic nature of the phrase. Comparatively, the English translation maintains some reference to the square shape of the forest, but the fantastical illogic of the title is not as strongly expressed. However, the translator decided to use a grammatically incorrect phrase in the title. There could be two reasons for this. Firstly, Rouse maintains the nonsensical or surrealist nature of the novel by using a nonsensical phrase. Secondly, the incomplete phrase ‘the square around the forest’ would be grammatically correct with the added determiner, and this may be a stylistic choice to imitate child language, namely children’s tendency to simplify language. Furthermore, Rouse’s choice could also reflect a desire to evoke the characteristics of nonsense literature, present in the original Hungarian as well.

Nonsense literature is characterized by its refusal “to accept or conform to the responsibilities of clarity, relevance and coherence” (Barton–Williams 2022: 1). This is achieved by drawing on “the latent pre-semantic pleasures of sound, rhythm, and pattern, without the obligations of rational communication or consistency” (Barton–Williams 2022: 1). Nonsense is particularly represented in children’s literature, be it nursery rhymes or well-known children’s novels such as *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll. Nonsense also hangs on the tool belt of Ervin Lázár, as observed in the title of the book. He creates the norm of nonsense, but the world-building moves within the logical boundaries of the impossibilities he establishes (see Farkas 2002: 28). In the role of the translator, Rouse also follows the rules of nonsense and impossibility provided by Lázár in order to capture the essence of the novel in English.

In an interview with János Nagy, Rouse claims that the most difficult part of translating *Négyszögletű Kerek Erdő* was finding the English equivalent to

non-existent, made-up Hungarian words. He likens this translation experience to solving puzzles. “I do not mean traditional crossword puzzles but cryptic crosswords” (Nagy 2021: 108).³ However, Rouse does not only solve such cryptic puzzles when he finds a word that does not exist in the English language. He uses the stylistic characteristics of the source material expertly to provide the English reader with a similar experience of nonsense and impossibility, even though he uses different tools to achieve a similar result.

4. From Mikkamakka to Muckle Mecky

Some of the most distinctive features of Ervin Lázár’s work are the naming conventions he utilizes, especially when picking first names for his characters. Most Hungarian children who grew up with Lázár’s work remember Mikkamakka, Vacskamati, Nagy Zoárd, and, of course, Dömdödöm. Many of the names are not necessarily special due to their meaning but rather due to their sound, phonetic approximations of child language, onomastic derivations, and so on. I will group together the names based on the strategy Lázár uses and analyse the translator’s solution to transmit these names into the English version of the book.

4.1. Mikkamakka and Vacskamati

The Hungarian and English versions of the books feature illustrations by László Réber, helping children visualize the characters described. However, in the case of Mikkamakka and Vacskamati, most Hungarian children would likely discern that these are catlike creatures. This is supported by a study conducted by Gecsey Sándorné Papp Katalin. For her thesis, Papp asked two groups of children between the ages of 9 and 14 to define what kind of creatures some of the characters are (see Papp 2009: 64–65). In the case of Mikkamakka, both groups of children identified him as a cat, among other animals. This may be obvious to Hungarian children because in each name the Hungarian word for cat, *macska*, is hidden in the name.

Mikkamakka is a phonetic approximation of the words *Miska macska*. The name was changed because Lázár’s young daughter could not pronounce it (Komáromi 2011: 13). Thus, the new name reflects typical features of child speech such as phonological simplification and reduplication. For the translation, Rouse opted to keep the sound of the original name similar in the English version. So, Mikkamakka becomes Muckle Mecky.

Although long compound names sound natural in Hungarian, they are not as common in English. The translation loses the reference to a cat but keeps a

3 Own translation.

similar playful sound. Furthermore, in English children's literature, it is quite common to see alliterating or rhyming two-name structures such as Humpty Dumpty, Amelia Bedelia, Severus Snape, Willy Wonka, etc. Rouse's choice to keep the sound of the name similar also aligns the translation with the style of nonsense literature. The English name Muckle Mecky does not mean anything but still keeps the playful alliterating and rhythmic style of the original.

Vacskamati is a blend of the author's wife's name (Vathy Zsuzsa) and the word *macska* (Papp 2009: 92). The last name *Vati* (simplified from *Vathy* but retaining the same pronunciation) is combined with the word *macska*, and the first letter of each word is exchanged. While this is an interesting piece of information, it is not something a child reader would discern, and it does not add much to the understanding of the name. Vacskamati, just like Mikkamakka, is a rhythmic musical name.

Translator Andrew C. Rouse uses the name Kattykit, which cleverly embeds the feline association by combining the English words 'cat' and 'kitty'. In this case, he uses a similar tactic to Lázár, but no longer keeps the sound similar to the original. Rouse prioritizes the meaning of the original name and captures it in the translation while also keeping the musicality of the name.

4.2. Dömdödöm, Tumtertum

Dömdödöm is one of the most iconic characters created by Ervin Lázár, easily remembered and endlessly quotable. This is not surprising, as all he says in Hungarian is *dömdödöm*, sometimes divided into shorter syllables, such as *döm* or *dödöm* (see Lázár: 2024: 20–23). Dömdödöm's decision is one of resistance. One day, he decided to tell someone that he loved her but as he made his way towards her, he overheard people callously use the word 'love' in various, inaccurate ways (Lázár 2024a: 18–20), which ultimately led him to decline saying anything other than *dömdödöm*.

Dömdödöm is always perfectly understood by every other character, even though he never utters a different word. This invented word mimics the rhythm and patterns of the Hungarian language but lacks any lexical meaning. Even so, every character Dömdödöm interacts with can understand him perfectly. His speech pattern is characteristic of nonsense literature. Nonsense literature makes use of "the latent pre-semantic pleasures of sound, rhythm and pattern, without the obligations of rational communication or consistency" (Barton–Williams 2022: 1). Aranka Farkas also connects Dömdödöm to Dadaist literature. Dadaists invented their own language, devoid of lexical meaning that only expresses their perceived reality with the use of onomatopoeia and sounds that express their emotions (see Farkas 2002: 27).

Dömdödöm's unique vocabulary reflects the Dadaist worldview. Words do not need semantic meaning to be understood. Farkas notes that the creation of nonsense words or gibberish is both a playful act and a critique of language (2002: 28). In order for gibberish to work, the writer has to play with the linguistic conventions of the language, breaking and respecting the rules of the language at the same time.

Although there is indeed no lexical meaning to *dömdödöm*, there are clues as to why Lázár chose these specific sounds. In László Réber's illustration, Dömdödöm is a bearlike creature, with round ears on top of his head. In Hungarian, one of the onomatopoeias that invokes the sound a bear makes is *dörmög*, which sounds a lot like *dömdödöm*.

Andrew C. Rouse translated *dömdödöm* as 'tumtertum'. There is an obvious need for change of the Hungarian nonsense word because the *ö* sound does not exist as a native vowel in the English language. Like *dömdödöm*, 'tumtertum' is a made-up, nonsense word, so in that regard it follows the naming convention set by Lázár. However, there is no explicit connection made to the sound a bear might make. In English, bears usually growl, one might even use the words 'rumble' or 'mumble'. So, 'tumtertum' is not an onomatopoeia in the strict sense, but it draws on English sound conventions that evoke low-pitched, rhythmic mumbling that could be associated with bear-like characters. The soft, repetitive syllables suggest a steady, deep vocalization reminiscent of a bear's lumbering presence and growly tone. In this way, 'tumtertum' functionally parallels the Hungarian *dömdödöm*. Thus, the translation maintains a subtle sound-symbolic link to the character's animal identity.

5. Peculiar names and alliteration

Some of the names in the novel pose less of a challenge to translate into English because they do not necessarily mean anything in the source language either. Such an example would be Aromo, the rabbit, whose name is followed by a description. The name 'Aromo' is wholly made up, there is no real meaning behind it. However, in the Hungarian original, the description is *a fékezhetetlen agyvelejű nyúl* (Lázár 2024a: 10), which lends the name a pseudo-scientific undertone. This results in a mock-seriousness that stands out from the regular, expected names of characters in children's literature. The Hungarian word *agyvelő* translates to 'brain matter' or 'cerebrum' in English, and it is not normally used to describe someone's intellectual capacity. Rouse translates this as 'Aromo, the unstoppable cerebrum' (Lázár 2024b: 10), opting for the more scientific-sounding Latinate term rather than the more straightforward English version. This choice

amplifies the original's tone of comic defamiliarization, allowing nonsense to emerge through exaggerated pseudo-scientific language.

Lázár includes a chapter where the names of the characters are the source of humour. In Hungarian, the names alliterate, and he chooses rare or archaic names to add to the humour. Such names include *Medve Medárd*, *Gepárd Géza*, and *Vadkan Valdemár*, which all heavily rely on alliteration and rhythm. The first part of each name is an animal: *gepárd* translates to 'cheetah', *medve* is 'bear', etc. In English, Rouse opts to translate the words for animals and give them a completely different name to replicate the linguistic play Lázár used in the original. This way, *Gepárd Géza* becomes Charlie Cheetah, *Vadkan Valdemár* is translated to Wilhelm Wildboar, and *Medve Medárd* to Bunyan Bear. Rouse prioritizes phonetic correspondence and character typology over literal meaning. The English names still alliterate, even though the proper names themselves differ. By choosing uncommon English first names such as Wilhelm and Bunyan, Rouse maintains the contrast and slightly archaic tone of Lázár's originals.

One of the more striking examples in this sequence is the Hungarian *Szirénfalvi Szürkevarjú Szeréna* (Lázár 2024a: 50), translated by Rouse as 'Serena Graycrowe of Claxonville' (Lázár 2024b: 51). Here, Rouse forgoes the option to replicate the alliteration in order to capture a cultural equivalent instead. In Hungarian, *szürkevarjú* is a specific species of crow, and the invented word *Szirénfalvi* is a compound word between *szirén* or siren in English, a mythical creature known for its voice, and *falvi*, which in English would translate to 'village'. If each word was translated literally, the final name would be 'Serena Gray Crow of Siren Village'. Rouse changes his approach and opts for a more creative solution in order to match the fanciful, mock-nobility of the original name. Firstly, he translates *Szürkevarjú* as 'Graycrowe', combining the two words to form a name. He also chooses to add the letter *-e* to the end of the name, which fits well in English orthography. The added *-e* works as a graphic marker of a surname such as Greene, Crowe, or Clarke. This spelling is only used for names in the English language, not for common nouns. Furthermore, both names are sound-based: while *szirén* refers to a mythical creature, Claxonville is made up of the word 'claxon', or a type of horn, and 'ville', referring to the location. With this solution, Rouse formulates a name that seamlessly embeds itself into the English tradition, whilst also following the lead of the Hungarian original. The translator opted to omit the alliteration, but with the form and sound of the name, he achieves a culturally accurate representation of a noble name in the English tradition.

6. *Hőzönbőzön* and ‘Snapper-Jackers’, or how to translate nonsense words

One of the most well known characteristics of Lázár’s work is the use of nonsense words. He commonly pairs this strategy with an excess through accumulation, using repetition and sound-rich expressions, focused more on the sound of the language rather than the meaning. Lázár adheres to the principles of nonsense, so his words follow a familiar form but lack specific meaning (see Lukes 2019: 7). Lázár invents onomatopoeia and leans heavily on the sound of the Hungarian language, but he also creates completely new phrases, which prove to be a challenge for translators.

In one passage, the narrator lists an exaggerated number of foods that the character Szörnyeteg Lajos (translated as Louis the Brute) ate. “Egy órája ugyanis megevett egy sült kappant, két rittyentett hőzönbőzönt, három nyárson pirított úri tököt, négy almás pitét, öt bőralmát, hat ringlit és hét habos tortát” (Lázár 2024a: 32). The humour arises from the exaggerated amount of food, but Lázár chooses uncommon words mixed in with well-known dishes and nonsense words. The juxtaposition of these nouns together with the numbered list is the source of humour.

Rouse’s English translation, “Because an hour before he had eaten a roast capon, two slapped-up snapper-jackers, three spitted vegetable marrows, four apple pies, five russet apples, six smoked sardines and seven cakes” (Lázár 2024b: 32–34), captures this linguistic play through the invention of words that have a similar effect in English. His coined term ‘snapper-jackers’ does not correspond to any real food in English but reproduces the sound pattern and comic redundancy of *hőzönbőzön*. Like Lázár’s original, it plays with reduplication, rhythm, and a hint of rhyme to evoke culinary nonsense. The modifier ‘slapped-up’ effectively mirrors the Hungarian *rittyentett*, which colloquially means to slap something together quickly.⁴ This way, the principles of literary nonsense are respected and coherence is maintained at the level of syntax, while semantic stability is undermined in the translation, too. By translating nonsense with newly coined English nonsense, Rouse preserves the spirit of Lázár’s comic defamiliarization, demonstrating that the play of sound and rhythm can transcend linguistic borders.

Lázár commonly uses enumeration and repetition as the basis of humour in the novel. In most cases, he also plays with the way the Hungarian language sounds, creating rhyming or rhythmic structures. At times, Lázár also implements different pronunciations of the same word. In the example below, he uses the nonstandard, dialectal version of the word *lyuk*, playing with the different versions, diminutives, and made-up versions of the same sounds.

4 <https://www.arcanum.com/hu/online-kiadvanyok/Lexikonok-a-magyar-nyelv-ertelmezo-szotara-1BE8B/r-46B74/rittyent-48144/>. Downloaded on 01. 09. 2025.

- Hát bizony, ez kilyukadt – mondta borzongva Mikkamakka.
- Egy lyuk – bólogatott Vacskamati.
- Lik – mondta Ló Szerafin.
- Likacska – toldotta meg Nagy Zoárd.
- Liki-luki – mondta bánatosan Maminti, és akkor Bruckner Szigfrid szörnyűségesen felüvöltött:
- Még egy szójáték, és ütök, vágok, harapok... (Lázár 2024a: 76–77)

This short dialogue changes the standard Hungarian word for ‘hole’ into various different versions, such as the dialectal *lik*, the morphological diminutive *likacska*, and the nonsense word *liki-luki*, which uses a rhyming scheme and connects the standard and nonstandard versions of *lyuk*. This poses a great challenge for the translator because this sequence most likely cannot be replicated in English. Rouse’s translation offers a creative solution that makes use of the characteristics of the English language.

“No doubt about it, there’s a hole there,” said Muckle Mecky, shuddering.
 “A hole,” nodded Kattykit.
 “A holey,” said Seraphim horse.
 “A tiddly hole,” so went Louis the Brute.
 “Iddly-tiddly,” said Mamminty dolefully, and at that point Siegfried Bruckner roared, “Another play on words and I’ll bash and I’ll slash and kill...” (Lázár 2024b: 76–77)

Rouse’s translation of this short exchange demonstrates his sensitivity to the gradation of linguistic play in Lázár’s original. The Hungarian passage unfolds through a stepwise series of variations on the word *lyuk*. The humour arises from the cumulative distortion of the base word, which moves from a neutral description to a dialectal variation (*lik*), to a diminutive form (*likacska*), and finally to full nonsense reduplication (*liki-luki*). Rouse recreates this escalation in English by prioritizing sound and rhythm over strict semantic correspondence. His sequence goes from the neutral ‘a hole’ to ‘a holey’, ‘a tiddly hole’, then ‘iddly-tiddly’, mirroring the gradual shift from sense to nonsense. The use of the word ‘holey’ introduces a mild semantic slippage, as the word typically means ‘full of holes’ rather than ‘a small hole’. However, Rouse chooses this specific form because the *-y* (or *-ie*) suffix is a diminutive, and it also expresses affection (e.g. *mommy*, *doggy*, etc.). Similarly, ‘a tiddly hole’ substitutes the Hungarian diminutive suffix *-acska* with the English adjective ‘tiddly’, meaning tiny. Finally, ‘iddly-tiddly’ reproduces the rhythm and reduplication of *liki-luki*, preserving the sound-based humour that culminates in Siegfried Bruckner’s comic outburst. In this way, Rouse’s translation respects the formal pattern of Lázár’s linguistic

escalation, using the resources of English childlike and colloquial speech to evoke the same descent from the literal to nonsense.

Through these examples, it becomes clear that Rouse approaches Lázár's nonsense not as an obstacle but as an opportunity for similar linguistic creativity in English. His translations of *hőzönbőzön* and *lyuk* demonstrate a consistent strategy: he prioritizes rhythm, playfulness, and phonetic resonance over direct equivalence or omission and simplification. By inventing English forms that mimic the sonic and emotional texture of the original, Rouse preserves Lázár's childlike humour and the text's underlying logic of imaginative excess.

7. Conclusions

Upon first glance, Ervin Lázár seems to be one of those writers whose style appears to resist translation. His wordplay, sound symbolism, and inventive linguistic constructions form such an integral part of his storytelling that they seem bound to the Hungarian language. Translating *A Négyyszögletű Kerek Erdő*, therefore, presents a challenge that extends far beyond cultural adaptation or lexical accuracy. It requires the translator to navigate the delicate boundary between sense and nonsense, to preserve the musicality and rhythm of the original, and to recreate the emotional and imaginative effects for a new linguistic audience.

Andrew C. Rouse's English version, *The Square Around Forest*, demonstrates that this can indeed be done through a combination of creativity, intuition, and linguistic sensitivity. As Rouse himself notes, the task of translating Lázár is "like solving a cryptic crossword" (Nagy 2021: 108), a metaphor that aptly captures the literary translator's dual role as both interpreter and inventor. His creative solutions, as presented in this article, reveal a translator willing to embrace nonsense as a creative resource rather than a limitation.

In doing so, Rouse's translation aligns with Lukes's (2019) "aesthetics of discomfort", maintaining Lázár's playful tension between familiarity and estrangement when reading nonsense words. The English reader is invited into a linguistic world that feels at once accessible and off-kilter, echoing the original's sense of surreal delight. Moreover, in accordance with Kérchy's (2020) argument that translations of children's nonsense oscillate between the metalinguistic and the infantile, Rouse's choices balance both: they preserve the sophistication of linguistic play while remaining attuned to a child reader's ear for rhythm and sound.

Ultimately, Rouse's translation shows that the spirit of Lázár's nonsense can successfully be showcased in a different language. His creative reimaginings, whether names like Muckle Mecky or Kattykit or in the nonsense words like snapper-jackers, bridge linguistic and cultural gaps through sound, humour, and invention. Rouse's *The Square Around Forest* thus stands as an example of how

literary translation can function not as replication but as reinvention, an art of echoing rhythm, emotion, and imagination rather than mere words.

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