

Armenian

ՄՌԹԱԳԱՄՓ

Շմուլսանում էր և ճլպոտ փզերը
Ցապկում, վլում էին խարքում:
Եվ մզմելի էին ճալփերը,
Որ փարփասում էին սահճում:

«Մռթագամփից զգույշ կաց, տղաս,
Սուր ճանկերից ու երախից:
Խալչիր, թե Չանթաստին տենաս
Ու խուսափիր Ջուբջուբ թռչնից»:

Իր սուրը հառ նա ձեռքն առավ,
Փնտրեց իր ոսոխին զազլի:
Գնաց, Թումթում ծառին հասավ
Ու գիրկն ընկավ իր մտքերի:

Ու մինչ խորհում էր նա վիհուն
Մռթագամփի աչքերը վառ
Կայծակեցին քուլ անտառում
Ու վրա հասավ նա հրահառ:

Ու մեկ, երկու, զարկեց հուժկու
Ու սուրը հառ վիզը կտրեց:
Կտրած գլուխը թշնամու
Առավ ու տուն նա թռպոտեց:

«Դու սպանեցիր Մռթագամփին:
Արի ինձ մոտ, աստղուն տղաս:
Տոն զմայչելի, հուրայ-հուրի»,-
Բացականչեց նա հռճվահաս:

Sergey Sargsyan

“Jabberwocky” in Armenian Translations

Gohar Melikyan

Alice in Wonderland and *Through the Looking-Glass* were first translated into Armenian in 1971, then in 1994 and 2012 a revised second and third edition appeared respectively. The translator was Sona Seferyan (1940-2017) a linguist and translator, professor at Yerevan State University, whose contribution to translating British literature has been greatly appreciated in Armenia. (In 2014 an adaptation of *Alice in Wonderland* translated by Alvard Jivanyan was also published by Zangak publishing house.)

Although Seferyan’s translations of the Alice tales are widely enjoyed she did not translate the verses embedded in the novels. As she used to say she wanted the Alice tales to be perfectly rendered into Armenian, and therefore she chose to collaborate with others specialized in the translation of poetry.

There are three translations of “Jabberwocky” into Armenian. The first one appeared in the first translation of 1971 published by Hayastan publishing house (prose translated by S. Seferyan, verses translated by G. Banduryan). G. Banduryan translated the fabulous creature’s name as “Փնթփնթան” / sounding as “pnt-pn-
tan” / literally meaning mumbler, presumably based on the hypothesis that the name originates from the word “jabber” or “gibber” which means to talk rapidly and inarticulately and “wocky” which brings to mind “rocky.” The translator of the verses was changed in the second revised edition. Seferyan argued that the name “Pntpntan” has a definite meaning in Armenian meanwhile in Carroll’s tale it does not carry a specific meaning.

G. Banduryan did a good job in his reconstruction of the poem: he created nonsense words in the first quatrain, but kept their original parts of speech, the endings and the structural organization of words, allowing readers to make

guesses about individual word components and sentence structure alike. But for the first quatrain, the rest of the poem strives for accuracy, remaining as truthful as possible to the meaning of the poem in the English original. This translation might seem simple for many readers: intended perhaps rather for a child audience, it risks losing the sophisticated intentions of Carroll.

In the second revised edition of 1994 the poem was translated by a well-known Armenian translator S. Mkrtchyan who went deeper playing with some sounds and translated “Jabberwocky” as “Փրչրթան” /Pr-chr-’tan/, a nonsense word in Armenian. The English voiced consonants / dʒ, b, w/ which produce the effect of a frightening beast, are replaced with Armenian aspirated consonants /փ (p^h), շ (tʃ^h), which also aim to create some horrendous onomatopoeic effects causing discomfort and frustration. In this variant there are more portmanteau words, the subtle irony and humour are better conveyed and the overall style is much closer to the original. The same version is found in the third revised edition.

In 2005 Armenian showman and linguist S. Sargsyan, came up with his translation of “Jabberwocky.” He confessed that he loved Alice tales since his childhood, and while being a student and having read the original Carroll tales had a desire to translate the “Jabberwocky” in order to help the Armenian readers to experience the same atmosphere as the English readers enjoy while reading nonsense poetry. His version is translated as “Մոթագամփ”

/mrta-’gamp/ which can be deciphered as “մոթմոթան գամփո”, literally a large and powerful mumbling creature. The reference to noise gives the readers a clue that the poem is about some scare-mongering monster.

Sargsyan created new characters who evoke horror, permeating the original verse’s poetic style, while they also stimulate laughter and humorous effects by recreating nonsense words and exclamations. The translator’s intention was to create a frightening and funny creature. Armenian readers were meant to feel the combination of horror, humour, and irony while reading the poem. “Jabberwocky” is all about a playful imitation of language through the invention of meaningless words and a stress on sounds which play perhaps the most important role in (un) doing meanings.

Translations into Armenian

- Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Through the Looking-Glass*. Yerevan: Hayastan Publishing House, 1971. Translated by Sona Seferyan, verses translated by G. Banduryan. (Լուիս Քերոլ, «Ալիսը հրաշքների աշխարհում», «Ալիսը հայելու աշխարհում», «Հայաստան» հր., Երևան, 1971, անգլ. թարգմ.՝ Ս. Սեֆերյանի, չափածո թարգմ.՝ Գ. Բանդուրյանի):
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