

# Croatian

## *Hudodrakija*

Bilo je kuhno i đipahne tovke  
na vabnjaku rovko zadronjaše:  
nemujne sasvim bjehu zorolovke  
i ručkale su šturnjače zdomašne!

„Čuvaj se, sinko, strašnog Hudodraka,  
čeljusti što čapnu, kandži koje kvače!  
Čuvaj se ptice Zlamače ko vraga!  
Nemoj da ljusni Grlograb te nađe!“

Vajtolni mač on zgrabi: s puno nade  
protivnika mašnog tražio je dosta –  
Da počine, uz Gungul-stablo stade  
I, zamisliv se nešto, stajat osta.

Dok stajaše tu, s uzlim mislima na umu,  
Hudodraka evo, s plamenom u oku: v  
ignjeta ti taj kroz stomorovu šumu,  
sve groblohoboće u skoku.

Jen, dva! Hop, cup! I cikete cak,  
vajtolni mač kroz kosti prosvira!  
Drak mrtav pade, bez glave ostade:  
On glavu grabi, natrag galumfira!

„Ubi li, sinko, strašnog Hudodraka?  
U zagrljaj amo, o blistajno momče!  
I belvirno odasvud čuj: „Huja haj! Haj huj!“  
Dokon od likosti sve frkoće.

Bilo je kuhno i đipahne tovke  
na vabnjaku rovko zadronjaše:  
nemujne sasvim bjehu zorolovke  
i ručkale su šturnjače zdomašne!

*Antun Šoljan*

# The Jabberwock, Slain in Croatia, too

*Smiljana Narančić Kovač*

**H**udodrak, Karazub and Gabornik are Jabberwock's Croatian names, "Hudodrak" being the most widely adopted both in translations of the poem and in Croatian culture in general. Together with the title "Hudodrakija", it was introduced in Antun Šoljan's translation of *Through the Looking-Glass* in 1985 and adopted by Borivoj Radaković in his own translation in 2016. "Karazub" (and "Karazubijada") come from the first Croatian translation of the novel (1962) by Mira Buljan, where Ivan V. Lalić translated the verses. Yet another translation "Gaborijada", by Zoran Kučanda, appeared in 2001 on the internet portal *Booksa* as a commentary on an article about "Jabberwocky." It brings newly invented nonce words (for instance, "Gabornik" is derived from the slang word "gabor" for "an ugly woman", turned into a male noun by the suffix "-nik", "tulgey wood" is rendered as "tilgaj", a nonsense word including "gaj" ("grove"), and "vorpall" as "žderni", a combination of the verb "žderati" ("devour"), and the adjective "gladni" ("hungry"). This translation remains close to everyday expression and is easy to grasp because the nonsense words are not too obscure, and the syntax is simple.

The most recent translation by Radaković, an author and translator, takes into account Humpty Dumpty's (Dundo Bumbo's) explanations. He produced some successful portmanteaus such as "gljipki" ("slithy"), combined of "gipki" ("supple", "lithe") and "ljigavi" ("slimy"). This text is a valuable addition to the corpus of four Croatian translations of "Jabberwocky", but its merits in translating nonsense words lie in the choice of syntactically appropriate linguistic expressions rather than in the inclusion of cultural references.

The situation is different in the earliest two translations, especially in Šoljan's.

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<sup>1</sup> "Dundo Bumbo" by Šoljan and Radaković, and "Jajan-baša" in Buljan's translation. The name is a combination of the word "Dundo" "uncle", "mister", typical for the Dubrovnik local speech, and "Bumbo" comes from the verb "bumbiti", to "drink alcohol", found in the local speeches throughout Dalmatia. "Jajan-baša" consists of the invented name "Jajan", which could be translated into English as "a male egg", while "baša" sounds as and recalls "paša"- "pasha" or "bashaw", a rank of officers or governors in the Ottoman Empire. Alternately, "Jajan-baša" sounds very much like "harambaša" 'harambasha', a Turkism referring to the leader of a group of brigands, which comes from Turkish "harami başı" ("harami"- "brigand" and "baş"- "head" or "leader").

His is the most influential and most widely acclaimed rendering of “Jabberwocky” in the Croatian context. It invites readers to ponder the meanings and origins of nonce words and nonsense. Šoljan’s translation of *Through the Looking-Glass* has been the only one to be reprinted (1989, 2004 and 2012). The translation “Hudodrakija” is widely used in Czech popular culture. There is also an instrumental piece called “Hudodrakija” by Igor Savin on his CD *Montse* (2012).

Antun Šoljan approached the task with exceptional skill and knowledge. He belongs to the most prominent Croatian authors of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He understood the notion of nonsense well due to his scholarly work and ample experience in translating literature from English into Croatian. Šoljan published influential essays revealing his theoretical and critical interest in translation, some inspired by his own work. In “Jabberwocky in Two Traditions” (1988, in Croatian), he compares Lalić’s “Karazubijada” and his own “Hudorakija” and concludes that Lalić’s translation largely draws on associations with folk literature and Turkish lexical heritage typical of the “Eastern tradition”, whereas in “Hudodrakija” connotations of Carroll’s “nonsense” resonate with Western courtly, chivalric tradition involving allusions to the Latin historical past. As Šoljan points out, the parodic elements in the source text are grounded in the literary tradition of the medieval writings of Arthurian legends. He preserves the original content of the poem in translation and painstakingly explores the tradition in creating his nonsense words and portmanteaus, so that “Hudorakija” becomes a culturally rich text.

A comparison of the monster’s name in these translations supports such findings. “Karazub” (“Blacktooth(ed)”) is a combination of “Kara” and “zub” (“tooth”), where “Kara” (“black”) is of Turkish origin. Words of Turkish origin often appear in Bosnian and Serbian, the languages spoken in the territory that was under Ottoman rule for about 400 years, until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. On the other hand, Šoljan explains that words such as “Hudodrak” could easily be found in Croatian 17<sup>th</sup> century literature, when the Kajkavian dialect was prominent. The word “hud” (“evil”, “bad”), comes from this Croatian dialect, and the word “drak”, “drakon” is an archaic word derived from Latin “draco” and Greek “δράκων”, meaning “dragon”, “serpent”. Hudodrak is an Evil Dragon.

When Šoljan mentions the “Eastern tradition”, he tentatively refers to politics and ideology. During the Second Yugoslavia (1945–1991), the language politics was directed towards combining Serbian and Croatian into a hybrid (and Serbian-dominated) language. The intention was legally proclaimed in 1954 and the 1960s brought additional directives to combine features of these two languages in order to neutralise their differences. The reaction by Croatian

intellectuals and cultural institutions came in the form of a public declaration in 1967. Yet, it was popular to talk about “Eastern and Western variants” of the hybrid language imposed by the state. This problem was fully resolved only in 1991. The two “variants” also pointed to the co-existent traditions in former Yugoslavia: “Eastern” cultures as closely connected with folklore traditions and Turkish linguistic influences, and “Western” cultures as based on the European tradition and culture, including the Latin language. Literature in Latin belongs to the Croatian culture; the greatest Croatian authors of the past used it in their writings, and it was the official language until the mid-nineteenth century.

Besides references to the Latin foundations, Šoljan clarifies many translations of Carroll’s nonce words as references to historical texts of Croatian literature. For example, he explains that “vorpāl” is rendered as “vajtolni”, where the word “tolvaj” (“thief”) from older texts is transformed by reordering its syllables and adding an adjective-forming suffix. Then again, his own portmanteau “galumfira” for “galumphing” combines the same international words as the originals “triumphantly” and “gallop”.

Šoljan also adapts the form to the Croatian context. He keeps the ABAB-rhymed quatrains, but changes the meter. Based on his expertise in Croatian versification and the specific features of Croatian, he mostly replaces the iambs with dactyls and trochees, and thus achieves a naturally paced rhythm. The resulting poem flows easily and recalls the verse patterns of much of contemporary Croatian poetry.

Looking at the wider picture, Lewis Carroll is fully recognised as the author of children’s classics in Croatia. The three translations of *Through the Looking-Glass*, and the nine translations of *Alice in Wonderland* have been published in over a hundred editions and dozens of adaptations. The status of nonsense literature, however, can hardly compete with the popularity of *Alice*, despite the appreciation of “Jabberwocky”. There are (children’s) authors and poets who use nonsense, just as there are scholars interested in this phenomenon, but a relevant understanding of nonsense is less common. Yet, the trends are promising.

## Translations into Croatian

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## Secondary Sources

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