

Dutch

Zwateldrok

Het was midvond en de slijvere toven
freesden en fretten in de gruit.
Zeer mimsig waren de borogoven
en de dolrafs giepten luid.

‘Pas op, mijn zoon, voor de Zwateldrok,
sterk van kaak en scherp van klauw.
Ook de Jubjub-vogel maakt amok
met de fure Beendergrauw.’

Hij nam zijn spitsig zwaard ter hand
om die mankse gruw te verslaan.
Eenmaal bij de Tumtumboom aangeland
bleef hij peinzend een tijdje staan.

Grommig denkend stond hij daar
toen de Drok, met vuur in de ogen,
door het tuigele woud kwam aangewaard,
al gorbelend op vol vermogen.

Een, twee! Een, twee! Erbovenop!
Rits-rats, ging het spitsig zwaard.
De Drok was dood, en met de kop g
alomfeerde hij snel huiswaarts.

‘En, is de Zwateldrok er geweest?
Kom dan hier, mijn jubele jongen!
Wat een frolle dag! Hoeza, wat een feest!’
gnirkte vader, met blijde sprongen.

Het was midvond en de slijvere toven
freesden en fretten in de gruit.
Zeer mimsig waren de borogoven e
n de dolrafs giepten luid.

Sofia Engelsman

Jabberwocky in Dutch: Zwateldrok by Sofia Engelsman

Jan Van Coillie

“Wauwelwok” (1947), “Koeterwalski” (1965), “Krakelwok” (1982), “Koeterwaals” (1994, 2009²), “Wauwelwok” (1994), “Zwateldrok” (2006), “Beuzelzwans” (2015) and “Klepperjaks” (2018)—“Jabberwocky” has been published in Dutch translation eight times.³

The first Dutch translation of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, published in 1947 and translated by Kossmann and Reedijk,⁴ has since attained canonical status and has been reprinted many times (13 reprint in 1992). “Wauwelwok” even became the title of the journal of the Lewis Carroll Society of the Netherlands in the 1970s and 80s. Reedijk succeeded in retaining both the rhyme scheme and the metre of Carroll’s original. Notably, the translation was directed towards adults. The cover blurb calls it “an exceptionally attractive book, a book for adults and children alike.”

The 1994 translation, by Nicolaas Matsier, was also warmly received. This was partly due to Matsier’s prestige as a translator and novelist for adults. His translation was reprinted several times. In *Alice in Verbazië (Alice in Amazia)*, a volume of essays in which Matsier recounts his experience translating Carroll’s classic, he makes the case for Alice as a children’s book but also “as [a book] belonging to that rare class which not only keeps the adult reader, follower reader or aloud reader fully engaged, but also allows them to read the book on its own merits, without the special mediation of a necessarily preconceived childrens’ psyche” (Matsier 34).⁵ Like Reedijk, Matsier attempted to retain as much of the prosody of the original as possible, both in terms of rhyme scheme and metre. In 2009, he produced a new translation clearly meant for a younger readership with illustrations by Anthony Browne.

¹ Translated from the Dutch by Jack McMartin

² The 2009 edition is a retranslation by Nicolaas Matsier of his 1994 version.

³ Two of the eight Dutch translations appeared in periodical form. Additionally, the poem has twice been translated into Afrikaans: Brabbelwoggel (1968) and Flabberjak (1992). Notably, there is no Flemish version.

⁴ *De avonturen van Alice in het wonderland en in het spiegelland* was the first translation of both Alice books in Dutch. The first part was translated by Alfred Kossmann, the second by Cornelis Reedijk (Koksma and Stapel 31). The first Dutch ‘Alice’ appeared in 1875. *Lize’s avonturen in ‘t Wonderland* was a heavily abridged adaptation (Buijnsters and Buijnsters-Smet 2001, 257).

⁵ All Dutch quotations have been translated to English by Jack McMartin.

Sofie Engelsman's translation – the central focus of this contribution – is even more tailored to young readers. In contrast to Matsier, Engelsman is an experienced translator of books for children. She has translated works by Lynne Reid Banks and Anna Dale and has become an important fixture at the Haarlem-based publisher Gottmer, for which she translated popular series including the *Dork Diaries* by Rachel Renée Russel and *Legend* by Marie Lu.

Her translation of “Jabberwocky” first appeared in an edition with illustrations by Helen Oxenbury. In her “translator’s note” accompanying part one, she writes that the publisher had asked her to tailor her translation to the illustrations in order to “enable young children to enjoy the story too. Thus, the translation had to be made extra accessible, without detracting from the original” (Engelsman 7). She goes on to motivate her translation choices on a lexical (and personal) level: “As a child – and I think many children would agree – I found difficult words that I couldn’t quite understand to be exciting and mysterious. I used that idea as the guideline for my word choice. I’ve striven to make a translation that, although simple, is not unduly so.”

That Engelsman strives to make her translation accessible is clear from the opening lines. She translates “brillig” as “midvond”, a portmanteau combining the Dutch words for midday (“middag”) and evening (“avond”). This is more transparent than Cornelis Reedijk’s “bradig”, which evokes the Dutch word “braden” (to roast). (According to his Hompie Dompie, bradig is “the time of the evening when you begin roasting meat for dinner.”) It is also more straightforward than Nicolaas Matsier’s “schiewerde”, which conjures the Dutch word “schemering” (dusk). Elsewhere, in Humpty Dumpty’s poem and explanation, Engelsman opts for a translation solution that is less complex than Matsier’s. She translates “portmanteau” as “een soort vlecht” (a kind of braid) because “the meaning of two words are braided together in one word.” Matsier opts for the neologism “kofferwoord” (suitcase word). He also retains the difficult word “gyroscop” (gyroscope), which Engelsman replaces with “ploeg” (plough), and uses more dated, formal language (“verschoon”, “al tot verweer”, “terneer”, “ontzield”).⁶

In contrast with her predecessors, Engelsman frees her translation from the strict metre of the original. She does, however, retain the ABAB rhyme scheme and actually applies it more consistently than the source text does. Only in the fourth and fifth stanza does she use a slant or imperfect rhyme (“daar” – “aangewaard”; “zwaard” – “huiswaarts”). Although she is unable to reproduce the internal rhyming in the fifth and sixth stanzas, on several occasions she not only retains the alliterations and assonances but adds some, as in her translation

⁶ Matsier also calls on the reader’s broad vocabulary in his translation of the title. “Koeterwaals” is an existing but uncommon synonym for gibberish. With “Zwateldrok”, Engelsman probably was led by the interpretation Carroll himself gave to the students of the Girl’s Latin School in Boston, that is, that “Jabberwocky” is “the result of much excited discussion” (Carroll and Gardner 153, note 26). “Zwatelen” is literary language for pompous chatter and “drok” is a regional or antiquated form of “druk” (busy). “Drok” is similar to “draak” (dragon); in the fourth and fifth stanza, Engelsman uses this shortened form.

of “The jaws that bite, the claws that catch”, which she renders as “sterk van kaak en scherp van klauw”. See also “The vorpal blade went snicker-snack”, which she translates as “Rits-rats ging het spitsig zwaard”. It is clear that Engelsman opts for a rhythmic and sonorous translation that lends itself well to reading aloud.

Unlike Matsier, Engelsman makes more use of lone or calqued translation. Most often this involves names of strange creatures and things, which she incorporates unchanged or changed slightly to correspond with the morphological or phonological rules of the target language. “Toves” becomes “toven,” “borogoves” “borogoven,” “the Jubjub bird” “de Jubjub vogel,” “the Tumtum Tree” “de Tumtumboom”⁷ and “the tulgey wood” “het tuigele woud”. The result is a translation that remains closer to the timbre of the original.

A second reason to highlight Engelsman’s translation here is that it is the only Dutch translation with its own, Dutch-produced illustrations. Publisher Gottmer commissioned Floor Rieder to illustrate the jubilee edition of *Alice in Wonderland en Alice in Spiegelland* in 2014. Rieder had won the Gouden Penseel (the most important prize for illustrators in the Netherlands) the previous year for her illustrations in *Het raadsel van alles wat leeft* (*The Riddle of All that Lives*) by Jan Paul Schutten. Her cover was selected as Best Book Cover for 2014. The jury also singled out the book as one of the “Best Produced Books” of the year and it made the Honour List of the International Board on Books for Young People. Rieder’s technique is quite elaborate: she etched her illustrations on glass plates painted in black gouache laid on a light box, limiting herself to only four colours (black, white, orange and green). The result is entirely unique and is reminiscent of woodcuts. Her *Zwateldrok* is clearly inspired by John Tenniel’s *Jabberwocky* – she retains the wings, the claws and the distinct head. At the same time, the cloak evokes the dementors of the Harry Potter series or the Nazgûl from J.R.R. Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*.

Rieder chose to dress Alice in modern dress with cool sneakers, a backpack and glasses. According to the artist, this ensemble is meant to portray Alice as “adventurous” and “a bit of a smarty-pants” (Rieder). According to Janne van Beek, it also signals that Engelsman’s Alice is a product of her times: “Just like Carroll’s heroine, she is active, intelligent and curious, but she is also more adventurous, more direct and more wilful. Her personality is in line with the image of the young girl that typifies today’s gender-aware children’s literature” (Van Beek).

As the discussion above suggests, Engelsman’s language games in “*Zwateldrok*” evolved with her times as well; she too has created her own contemporary *Jabberwocky*. In their essay on the poem, Jur Koksma and Joep Stapel venture

⁷ Dorine Louwerens translates the “Tumtum tree” as “snoepjesboom” (candy tree), a much clearer adaptation for young readers. Her “Beuzelzwans” is, in terms of word choice and timbre, much more playful and lightfooted than the other “*Jabberwocky*” translations (e.g. words such as “hoetsievark”, “Roversnaai”, “flits en flop” and “floepervlug”).

an explanation for why that is: “The very point is to play because this game has endless variations – and translators are its most zealous participants” (Koksma and Stapel 14).

Translations into Dutch

- Carroll, Lewis. “Zwateldrok.” *Alice in Spiegelland*. Transl. Sofia Engelsman. Ill. Helen Oxenbury. Haarlem: Gottmer, 2006.
- Carroll, Lewis. “Zwateldrok.” *Alice in Wonderland en Alice in Spiegelland*. Transl. Sofia Engelsman. Ill. Floor Rieder. Haarlem: Gottmer, 2014.
- Carroll, Lewis. “Wauwelwok.” *De avonturen van Alice in het Wonderland en in het Spiegelland*. Transl. Alfred Kossmann and Cornelis Reedijk. Ill. John Tenniel. Rotterdam and Antwerpen: Ad Donker, 1947.
- Carroll, Lewis. “Beuzelzwans.” *Alice in Wonderland & Alice in Spiegelland*. Recounted and illustrated by Tony Ross. Transl. Dorine Louwerens. Amsterdam: Memphis Belle, 2016.
- Carroll, Lewis. “Koeterwaals.” *De avonturen van Alice in Wonderland & achter de spiegel*. Transl. Nicolaas Matsier. Ill. John Tenniel. Amsterdam: Van Goor, 1994.
- Carroll, Lewis. “Koeterwaals.” *De avonturen van Alice in Wonderland & achter de spiegel*. Transl. Nicolaas Matsier. Ill. Anthony Browne. Amsterdam: Van Goor, 2009.

Secondary Sources

- Buijnsters, P. J. and Buijnsters-Smets, Leontine. *Lust en Leering. Geschiedenis van het Nederlandse Kinderboek in de negentiende eeuw*. Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 2001.
- Carroll, Lewis and Gardner, Martin (annotator). *The Annotated Alice. The Definitive Edition*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000.
- Koksma, Jur and Stapel, Joep. Win gevecht met de Jabberwock: een onzinnige onderneming. Ed. Henri Ruizenaar. *Jabberwocky: Het nonsensgedicht Jabberwocky van Lewis Carroll in een nieuwe Nederlandse, zes bestaande Nederlandse, twee Afrikaanse vertalingen, met begeleidend essay*. S. 1.: Lewis Carroll Genootschap, 2018, 10-31.
- Matsier, Nicolaas. *Alice in Verbaas*. Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 1996.
- Rieder, Floor. “De Alice van Floor Rieder.” *Boekenkrant*, 1-10-2015. Retrieved from <http://www.boekenkrant.com/de-alice-van-floor-rieder/>
- Van Beek, Janne. Engelsmans Alice, *Filter*, week 40. Retrieved from <https://www.tijdschrift-filter.nl/webfilter/vrijdag-vertaaldag/2018/week-40-janne-van-beek/>

HET SPIEGELHUIS

