

# Georgian

## ტარტალოკი

მიმწუნარშდა. მოქნიალა სლუკები  
ზილობდნენ და ძვრიალებდნენ მარეხვში,  
საბუდავად ცხოვდნენ ბარდალუკები,  
ვით ფშუნები სურდაბილის გარეშე.

“ტარტალოკის გეშინოდეს, შვილოსა –  
კბილმკბენია, კლანჭკაწრა და ვერაგი;  
ჯანჯაფრინვიც უკვე ფრთისრებს ილესავს,  
ზარდალტაცს ვერ დაუსხლტება ვერავინ.”

მუსრიბული მოიმარჯვა ხრმალი მან,  
გმირს ქიშპანთან მულლალობა ეწადა;  
ციხესრიდან განერილტვა მალი-მალ,  
ტუმტუმ ხის ქვეშ დაჯდა საფიქრელადა.

და როს იქ ჯდა სვიურ ფიქრით აღსავსე,  
საღნი ტყიდან, სად იყო და სად არა,  
გამოიჭრა ტარტალოკი თავნასი –  
ფინფინებდა ავი, თვალეზარვარა.

ერთი-ორი და მთა-გორი შედიგდა.  
სხიპ-სხაპ! ყრმის ხრმალს ბჟვიალაპი გაჰქონდა.  
ჟრიკი-ფრიკი, ელდა-ნრიკი, ჩეხი და –  
ურჩხის თავი უფსკულანში გაგორდა.

“შენ განგმირე ტარტალოკი წყეული,  
მო, ჩაგიკრა გულში, ძევ სხივიერო!  
ვაშა ვაჟმაჟს, დღე გათენდა რთხეული,  
სამარჯვებლო ერთად ვადიდხმიერო!”

მიმწუნარშდა. მოქნიალა სლუკები  
ზილობდნენ და ძვრიალებდნენ მარეხვში,  
საბუდავად ცხოვდნენ ბარდალუკები,  
ვით ფშუნები სურდაბილის გარეშე.

*Gia Gokheli*

# Translating “Jabberwocky” into Georgian

*Giorgi Gokieli*

For anyone translating Lewis Carroll’s Alice books into their native language, one of the most challenging tasks they meet on their way is the nonsensical poem “Jabberwocky.” At first, this task seems daunting or even impossible to accomplish. First and foremost, translators need to define the range of tasks they are facing as clearly as possible.

The very first task for me was to determine which way to follow: to try to create a more or less approximate Georgian analogue on the scheme of the English original, or to find a suitable sample of Georgian poetry and process it accordingly. Both of these choices involve specific challenges. Since I had followed the first principle when translating other poems from the Alice books, I decided to follow the same path in the case of “Jabberwocky” as well. So, my job from the very beginning was to create a poem from imaginary Georgian words and give it the epic character of an ancient, Anglo-Saxon ballad. The Georgian language belongs to the Kartvelian family of languages and its phonetic as well as syntactic structures are very different from those of Indo-European languages. That said I had to pay special attention to the acoustic side of the words, as well as their nuanced meaning. It goes without saying that the more carefully a word is chosen, the more difficult it is to translate it adequately, because in addition to the meaning of the words, attention must also be paid to the sound of those words. In my translation of “Jabberwocky,” I tried to avoid particular laryngeal consonantal sounds that are not found in Indo-European languages.

Second, the translation of nonsense also refers to so-called untranslatable

areas. Indeed, how do you translate something that “doesn’t make sense!” into your native language? However, this is not entirely impossible, especially in the case of Carroll. His nonsense is not arbitrary absurdity, but the nonsense of a mathematician based on a fairly discernable logic. The interpreter’s job is to grasp this logic as much as possible and, based on the “rules of the game,” to construct a text that does not look like a pile of incoherent words. The task is complicated also by the fact that the translator has to take into account the sixth chapter of *Through the Looking-Glass*, “Humpty Dumpty”, where Alta-Balta (Humpty Dumpty) explains those portmanteau words so that his comments should become the part of the narrative there.

When translating the names of various beasts and monsters found in the poem, I decided to give them different names from the English, more characteristic and expressive specifically for the Georgian reader. Here are some examples. Jabberwocky has been renamed into ტარტალოკი (“t’art’alok’I”) which consists of the following components: ტარტაროზი (“t’artaroz”) meaning “hell” in old Georgian, “devil” in modern Georgian; also “loki” aims to introduce allusion to the Scandinavian deity Loki whose name also can allude to “fire”.

სლუკები (“sluk’ebi”) and ბარდალუკები (“bardaluk’ebi”) stand for “toves” and “borogoves” which if left unchanged in the translation would sound rather dull and uninteresting for Georgian readers. Although, naturally, no such words exist in Georgian language, any person would tell you that ტარტალოკი (“t’art’alok’I”) is a more dangerous beast than სლუკი (“sluk’I”)<sup>1</sup> and that the ბარდალუკი (“bardaluk’I”) sounds like a funny creature<sup>2</sup>. Two more appalling creatures of the poem are ჯანჯაფრინვი (“janjafirivi”), for “Jubjub bird”, assembled from the following words: ჯანჯაფილი (“janjapili”, meaning “jinger”), ჯანდაბა (“jandaba,” meaning “hell”), ფრინველი (“prinveli,” meaning “bird”); and ზარდალტაცი for “Bandersnatch”, composed from ზარი (“zari,” meaning “terror”), ზარალი (“zarali,” meaning “loss”), სარდალი (“sardali,” meaning “warlord”), and ტაცი (“tatsi,” meaning “snatch”).

I will conclude with a few excerpts from the back-translation of the conversation between Ellis (“Alice”) and Alta-Balta (“Humpty Dumpty”), where the latter comments on “Jabberwocky.” Here some samples of the translation of portmanteau words can be found.

“Enough!” - Alta-Balta interrupted - “we have a lot of difficult words for the beginning. So, “mimts’ukharshda” (მიმწუხარშდა)<sup>3</sup>, that is, it was half past seven in the evening, the time to cook things for dinner.

“Excellent,” said Elisi, “what does მოქნიალა (mokniala)<sup>4</sup> mean?”

<sup>1</sup> Singular for სლუკები (“sluk’ebi”)

<sup>2</sup> Singular for ბარდალუკები (“bardaluk’ebi”)

<sup>3</sup> This word contains the parts of the words მწუხრი (“mts’ukhi,” meaning “evening”) and ხარშვა (“kharshva,” meaning “cooking”)

<sup>4</sup> Complied with მოქნილი („moknili”, meaning “flexible”) and სრიალა („sriala”, meaning “slippery”)

“Mokniala means flexible and slippery; mokniala also means restless. You see, the word is like a wallet: open and fold at your will: fold in it as much as your heart rejoices!

Then, when you need it, you can open it again.

“I think it’s clear,” said Elisi thoughtfully, “and - who are სლუკები (“slukebi”)?”

“სლუკები (“slukebi”)”? They are partly badgers, partly lizards and partly corkscrews. “I can imagine how ridiculous they look!” Exclaimed Elisi.

“Yes, very much,” Alta-Balta agreed.

“In addition, they have a den under the sundial and they feed on cheese.”

“And what does - ზილობდნენ (“zilobdnen”) და ძვრიალებდნენ (“dzvrialebdnen”) mean?”

“ზილობდნენ (“zilobdnen”), that is, they tried, but they were very lazy. ძვრიალი (“dzvriali”) means to revolve around something, as well as ძრომიალი (“dzromiali,” meaning “clambering”) and კოტრიალი (“kot’riali,” meaning “turning over,” “somersaulting”).

“And - Marekhvi is probably grass around the sundial, right?” Said Elisi, and wondered herself how she knew.

“Yes, that’s right. - It is called მარეხვი (“marekhvi”), because it extends from there to a good distance to the right (მარჯვნივ, “marjvniv”) and a good distance to the left (მარცხნივ, “martskhniv”)...”

“... and is evergreen” (მარადმწვანეა, “maradmzvanea”), added Elisi.

## Translations into Georgian

Carroll, Lewis. *Elisi's Adventures*. Transl. Giorgi Gokieli. Tbilisi: Bakur Sulakauri, 2013.