

Finnish

Monkerias

Jo koitti kuumon aika, ja viukkaat puhvenet
päinillä harpitellen kieruloivat,
haipeloina seisoksivat varakuhvenet,
ja öksyt muovut kaikki hinkuroivat.

Varo, poikaseni, varo Monkeriasta,
sen napsuvia leukoja ja kättä kynterää.
Jukjukilintua väistä, ja kauas kavahta
kun Panttareisku kohti hörmäjää.

Poika otti aseensa käteen, miekan jänkköisän,
ja etsi metsän huumuloista vihollistansa.
Pompompuu soi varjoa ja levon hetkevän,
hän viipyi siinä aatoksissansa.

Seisoi poika siinä jumot mietteet mielessään,
kun yllättikin Monkerias tulisilmäinen!
Sen vuuhausa soi kimeänä metsään melkeään,
se porlottaen ryntää kohti tanner tömisten!

Yks kaks! Yks kaks! Yhä puolikkaammaks
leikkoi jänkköisä rauta, niks eli naks!
On päätön, kuolias koko Monkerias,
käy poika kotiin kunkkuillen, kainalossa pää.

”Monkerias surman suussa! Poikani, sen teit!
Paisteikas poika, sua syleilen!
Oi kirluntaipäivä! Luroo ja lurei!”
näin mykerteli isä iloiten.

Jo koitti kuumon aika, ja viukkaat
puhvenet päinillä harpitellen kieruloivat,
haipeloina seisoksivat varakuhvenet,
ja öksyt muovut kaikki hinkuroivat.

Alice Martin

The Visual Carnival of the Finnish Monkerias

Riitta Oittinen

*A text is never not in a context. We are never not in a situation.
(Stanley Fish)*

Translation is a many-splendored thing, and translation of illustrated stories is no exception. We may look at translation from many different angles. It may be intralingual rewording or interlingual “translation proper.” There is also intersemiotic transformation where verbal signs are translated into signs of nonverbal sign systems, as Jakobson suggests. This signifies that interpreting verbal texts depicted into images, or shown along with images, can be understood as one way of translation, translation between two different modes, words and images, the verbal into the visual or the other way around.

I have visited Wonderland innumerable times, ever since my reading the stories as a little girl, then from the master’s degree to the doctoral dissertation and other books and articles. I have also illustrated the story several times for different purposes. I created my first Alice illustration, *Liisa, Liisa ja Alice* (1997), a scholarly book based on three Finnish Alice translations. My latest illustrations include *Alice in Wonderland* (created in 2017–fall 2020) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (created in 2018–fall 2020).

The poem “Jabberwocky” interests me from two angles: my own carnivalesque illustrations of Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking-Glass* and the carnivalesque Finnish-language translation of the work by Alice Martin. Even though there are several Finnish translations of *Alice in Wonderland* there are only two full Finnish renderings of *Through the Looking-Glass* (Lång 50–51). Here I reflect on the material from the viewpoints of intersemiotic translation, dialogics, and carnivalism.

As I have argued elsewhere, Carroll's two Alice books can be described as carnivalesque works (see Oittinen 1993, 2000). They are characterized by what Bakhtin calls the love for the grotesque: anything that is scary or holy is ridiculed, such as school and religion or babies and old age. As Bakhtin points out, "carnivalism involves curses as well as praise and abuse," which "play the most important part in the grotesque" (1984, 7).

Translation may be described as a dialogic process "where different meanings and words interact and new ways of speech and communication are born" (Bakhtin in Morson and Emerson 130). Dialogue may be internal, external, or both, and it always includes human beings and their situations. Nothing is understood as such but as a part of a greater entity. There is also an ongoing interaction between meanings. The words *I* and *you* meet in every discourse. Moreover, the situation of a whole and its parts might also be depicted as heteroglossia. Bakhtin writes about heteroglot words and the dialogic set of conditions, which are different and changing every time a word (or image) is uttered: "At any given time, in any given place, there will be a set of conditions" ensuring that a word or an image "uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions" (1987, 202).

In the discussion of dialogics, we cannot overlook carnivalism. According to Bakhtin, carnivalism is "festive laughter" for all people and in literature this carnivalistic laughter belongs "to the low genres" (1984, 7), as may be the case with sometimes still underrated children's literature in translation (Oittinen 1993, 2000). In the very core of carnivalism all things scary are mocked to make the terrible less terrible, less overwhelming. The ritualized speech and carnival free the language and new forms of speech arise. We can interpret "The Jabberwocky" as a carnivalistic poem and its translation as a feat of defeating the fear of the original text.

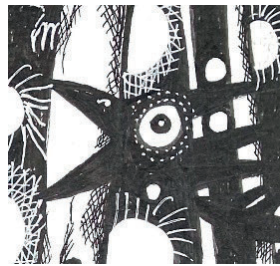
The terrible aspect of the Jabberwock is underlined in the 2010 Finnish translation by Alice Martin. The Finnish name for the Jabberwock is Monkerias. While in Carroll's original, "Jabberwocky" refers to the entire poem and Jabberwock to the monster itself, Monkerias is both the title of the poem and the name of the monster. This is a portmanteau word made of the parts "mongertaa", "to speak in a slurred, mumbling way" + "ankerias", "eel" + "-as," which is a Greek ending also used in Finnish for epics, as in *Ilias* – *The Iliad*. In this way Martin combined two opposite meanings: the huge monster is both ridiculous (it cannot speak properly) and, at the same time, fearfully high-brow (through its connection to Greek mythology).

In the Jabberwock's case, scariness is a primordial attribute of the monster

itself: it looks horrid and speaks (and is spoken of) in a language that is impossible to understand, which is quite a challenge for a translator. This is why I depicted in my illustration the monster with evil eyes and terrifying teeth. My illustration is based on Carroll's original verse and Martin's Finnish translation, which are both full of mind-boggling word-play. To me, Martin's translation is full of ridicule and benevolent laughter. I have followed a similar path in my visualization of the Jabberwock/Monkerias: the monster is both scary and funny. While illustrating, I have combined the words in a dialogue with the carnivalesque laughter by Bakhtin.

We can find a similar mock-terribleness in Martin's interpretation and my illustration. I have found the character so awful that it has become funny. The cover image of the monster is meant to reflect its undangerous nature inducing "safe fears." While translating the monster Jabberwock visually, it has been my intention to create such a horrible monster that it goes overboard and gets funny instead of being frightening. In this case, through laughter, the terrible is ridiculed and the monster becomes less horrifying.

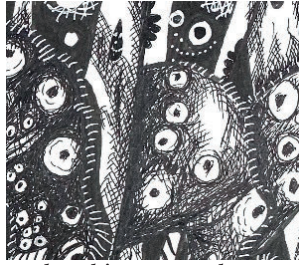
To illustrate the heteroglot quality of images, I shall match "Jabberwocky's" individual stanzas with respective image fragments that are cut-out parts of the original bigger image you will find after the fragments. To help the reader, I have added the very first lines of the original verses.



'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves



Beware the Jabberwock, my son!



He took his vorpal sword in hand



And, as in uffish thought he stood



One, two! One, two! And through and through



And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?



'Twas brillig and slithy toves

Finally, the full image below shows the entire situation and, with a careful look, the reader can find the image fragments in the bigger picture. Here again, this is heteroglossia: while the context changes, the way we look at the images changes, too. In other words, the fragments do not form an entire story – nor do they tell a different story – but the full image gives a new purpose to the verbal and visual fragments to be figured out by the reader.



In the entire *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*, there are many characters. In the Jabberwocky, there are three protagonists, the brave boy, the boy's proud father, and the monster. Unlike in the original story by Carroll and Tenniel, in my illustration, the Jabberwock-slayer is the female Alice. In other words, with my visual solution, I have made the poem more clearly a part of the whole storytelling of the book. Now the Jabberwock is one among the many characters Alice meets on her way. On the cover image of this volume, Alice is sitting on the carnivalized monster's knee with no fear whatsoever.

Translations into Finnish

- Carroll, Lewis. *Alice Peilintakamaassa* [*Alice in Looking-Glass Land*]. Transl. Alice Martin. Illustration by John Tenniel. Helsinki: WSOY, 2010.
- Carroll, Lewis. *Liisan seikkailut peilimaailmassa* [*Liisa's Adventures in Mirrorworld*]. Transl. Kirsi Kunnas and Eeva-Liisa Manner. Ill. John Tenniel. Jyväskylä-Helsinki: Gummerus, 1974.

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