

# Greek

## *Φλυαρούδημα*

Σουρδείπνωνε, σουρδείπνωνε. Τα μυζερά σασβάνια  
γύρβυναν στ' αποστάχορτα μέσα, κι ανοιχτηρίζαν.  
Κι ήταν λιγνάθλια πολύ τα σφουγγαρασχημάνια,  
τ' απόλα γουρουνόπρασα δίπλα σφυροφτελίζαν.

-Το Φλυαρούδι τρέμε το, τρέμε το, παληκάρι!  
Τα νύχια που άρπάζουνε, τα σαγώνια που δαγκώνουν!  
Το Τζούμπτζουμπ τρέμε το πουλί, μην έρθει και σε πάρει,  
πορτοφολάδες όρζαλλους, ληστές που σε σιμώνουν.

Ξεκίνησε και κράταγε το γλωκτικό σπαθί του.  
Κι απόκαμε τον ανθρωρό εχθρό να κυνηγεί.  
Κάτω απ' το δέντρο Ταραρά ζάπλωσε το κορμί του,  
συλλογισμένος έμεινε, ο νους του φτερουγεί.

Η σκέψη αλαζοτραχιά τον τύλιγε ολούθε. Ξάφνου  
με μάτια φλογερά το Φλυαρούδι βγαίνει,  
φτόνει φωτιές, και τσουρουφλά το λειραίο δάσος που 'ρθε,  
κι εκρηγνοβραζοσκάζεται, και πάνω του πηγαίνει!

Το παληκάρι μια και δυο του δίνει, να το, να το!  
Το γλωκτικό του το σπαθί σκίζει, χτυπά, τρυπάει!  
Το σκότωσε, και του 'ριξε την κεφαλή του κάτω.  
Τώρα, θριαμβολπάζοντας, κρατώντας την, γυρνάει.

-Το Φλυαρούδι σκότωσες, του πήρες το κεφάλι;  
Α, ξυπνερό αγόρι μου, έλα στην αγκαλιά μου!  
Τι μέρα λαμπροφέγαλη! Χαλί, χαλί, χαλάλι!,  
Του φώναζε θαμπόκθαμπος. Δεν λέγεται η χαρά μου!

Σουρδείπνωνε, σουρδείπνωνε. Τα μυζερά σασβάνια  
γύρβυναν στ' αποστάχορτα μέσα, κι ανοιχτηρίζαν.  
Κι ήταν λιγνάθλια πολύ τα σφουγγαρασχημάνια,  
τ' απόλα γουρουνόπρασα δίπλα σφυροφτελίζαν...

*Sotoris Kakisis*

# “Jabberwocky” in Greek

*Petros Panaou & Tasoula Tsilimeni*

It has been reported that Lewis Carroll himself had requested a classical Greek “Jabberwocky” translation from Robert Scott – the classicist who wrote the first German translation – but he refused for unknown reasons (Imholtz 215). A published classical Greek version was indeed authored several decades later by Ronald Arbuthnot Knox – former scholar of Eton and Balliol College, Oxford – and was published in the Shrewsbury School magazine the *Salopian* in 1918 (Imholtz 223).

Surprisingly, though, Greek children’s literature scholars and bibliographic sources do not indicate any Modern Greek translations of “Jabberwocky” or *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* prior to the 1970s. Additionally, looking at the translation history of the two Alice books in Greece from the 1970s onwards, it is evident that *Alice in Wonderland* has been translated and published to a much greater extent than *Through the Looking-Glass*. The online database *Biblionet* lists thirty-nine Greek editions of *Alice in Wonderland* from 1979 to 2019, a 2003 combined edition of both works into a single volume, and only seven Greek editions of *Through the Looking-Glass* between 1979 and 2016 (“Carroll, Lewis, 1832-1898”). It is notable that the most recent Greek publication of *Through the Looking-Glass* coincided with the release of Disney’s film version of the story in Greece in 2016. If we count the joint edition under both stories, we can then say that there have been forty Greek editions of *Alice in Wonderland*, compared to only eight of *Through the Looking-Glass*.

We can safely postulate that *Alice in Wonderland* is significantly more popular in Greece, having been published in multiple formats that address diverse age groups, including abridged versions and publications illustrated by contemporary artists. *Through the Looking-Glass*, on the other hand, is only found in the form of classic editions, which feature the original John Tenniel illustrations. As some of the eight editions we have identified are re-publications of the same translation,

there only seem to have been five distinct Greek translations of *Through the Looking-Glass* and, by extension, of “Jabberwocky.”

Even though all five translations are worthwhile, we have chosen to include in this volume the translation by Sotiris Kakisis. Kakisis’ text seems to be the first translation of “Jabberwocky” in Modern Greek. It was first published by Ipsilon Publications in a 1979 translation of *Through the Looking-Glass*, which was then re-published by Erato Publications in 1999 and 2010. His translation is both important and interesting.

Sotiris Kakisis himself is an interesting and prolific Greek author and translator. He has authored more than twenty poetry collections, as well as several song lyrics, short stories, movie scripts, comics, and journalism. Kakisis has translated numerous poetry collections by such poets such as Sappho and Alcaeus from Classical to Modern Greek, as well as three Edward Gorey poetry collections. He has also translated widely varied prose texts, including works by Marcel Proust, Woody Allen, Carlo Collodi, L. Frank Baum, and James Thurber.

Kakisis translates the English title “Jabberwocky” as “Φλυαρούδημα.” Carroll explained the meaning of the invented English word in a letter as follows: “[T]he Anglo-Saxon word ‘wocer’ or ‘wocor’ signifies ‘off-spring’ or ‘fruit.’ Taking ‘jabber’ in its ordinary acceptance of ‘excited and voluble discussion,’ this would give the meaning of ‘the result of much excited discussion’” (Collingwood 274). Kakisis’ title is a Greek invented word that takes the word “φλυαρία” [chatter] and transforms it into a non-existent diminutive form. He thus captures the “result-of-a-discussion” meaning of the English title but also alludes to incessant discussion about trivial (or perhaps “nonsense”) matters. The Greek title might also refer to playful childish blabbering.

Incorporating words and techniques from children’s playground songs and the Greek oral tradition, the Greek translator manages to follow Carroll in his playful linguistic experimentation and enjoyment. The invention of new Greek words through the fusion of words and linguistic elements that are not usually found together is another technique that allows Kakisis to match the English text’s playfulness. In the first verse of the poem, for instance, Kakisis translates “’Twas brillig” into “Σουρδείπνωνε, σουρδείπνωνε.” The Greek translator merges the nouns “σούρουπο” [dusk] and “δείπνο” [dinner] to come up with a new verb and translate Carroll’s invented verb “brillig,” which alludes to the time of the day when people are broiling/preparing dinner.

Interestingly, the creative fusion of words in Kakisis’ translation often sounds like the word fusions found in the Greek dialect Kaliarnda, which is a coded language created by members of the LGBTQ community in Greece during

the 1940s, so they could communicate with each other in a society that for the most part was hostile towards them (Moustakis). The first and only dictionary of this dialect (which has now evolved into a more widely known street lingo) was published eight years before Kakisis wrote his translation of “Jabberwocky,” and the dictionary’s author was imprisoned in 1972 by the Greek dictators because of his writings (Petropoulos).

Kakisis’ translation stays true to the source text’s form and rhyming throughout. The Greek poet and translator also pays close attention to the meanings attributed to the English imagined words both by Carroll and by one of Carroll’s characters (Humpty Dumpty), wordsmithing Greek counterparts that allude to similar meanings while creating a similar style and ambiance. The three different editions of Sotiris Kakisis’ translation of *Through the Looking-Glass* and the “Jabberwocky” – spanning from 1979 to 2010 – testify to the appreciation of his rendition of Carroll’s classic both by publishers and readers in Greece.

## Translations into Greek

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