

# Lithuanian

## *Taukšlys*

Lankšliaują bukau pietspirgai  
Sau gražtėsi ant pieplatės;  
Greit rainelaiši šluotpūkai,  
Šmūlydę čiukai švilpčiaublės.

„Tu Taukšlio saugokis, sūnau,  
Jo žnyplių ir kandžių nasrų!  
Venk plastplast paukščio, aš manau,  
Taip pat ir aitvarų!“

Pagriebęs kardą kirskirdurk,  
Jis vijos priešą atkakliai.  
Sustojo po medžiu kažkur,  
Mąstydamas giliai.

Ir kai jis mąstė ne juokais,  
Liepsnojančiom akim Taukšlys  
Atskrido švilpdamas miškais  
Ir šnypstė kaip kvailys.

Viens, du! Viens, du! Ir vėl – viens, du!  
Čia smigo kirskirdurk ašmuo!  
Nukirtęs galvą jam kardų,  
Jis grįžo šokdamas namo.

„Tu Taukšlį įveikei, sūnau?  
Aplėbsiu aš tave už tai!  
Kokia diena! Plunksnuok! Pluksnau!“  
Jis džiūgavo karštai.

Lankšliaują bukau pietspirgai  
Sau gražtėsi ant pieplatės;  
Greit rainelaiši šluotpūkai,  
Šmūlydę čiukai švilpčiaublės.

*Judita Vaičiūnaitė*

## *Džambaliūnas*

Tai una druna duku Džambaliūnas.  
Aplipęs krupiais trinka miela kūnas.  
Tai isla misla jo sparnai – malūnas.  
Tai kompaciela vybur Džambaliūnas.

– To Džambaliūno saugokis, sūneli,  
Jo letenos tave sučiupti gali.  
Ir pasisaugok paukščio Abudžabo,  
Tasai plėšrus klastūnas medy kabo.

Jis paėmė į ranką aštrų kardą,  
Kuris kaip mat negailestingai kerta,  
Ir po medžiu ūksmingojo Tamtamo  
Jis kantriai laukė priešo, kol sutemo.

Ir štai netrukus jaunas karžygys  
Išvys siaubūno degančias akis.  
Jis tintaluoja brisdamas per liūną,  
Baisi gyvatė rangos apie kūną.

Tik viens ir du – paėmęs aštrų kardą,  
Jis iš peties labai ryžtingai kerta.  
Todėl dabar pavargęs, bet ramus  
Sugrįžta ten, kur buvo – į namus.

– Ar tu tą Džambaliūną nužudei?  
Sūneli, mielas, kuo greičiau atėik.  
Kokia puiki dienele, iki miki.  
Tai viską išklausk dar vieną sykį.

Tai una druna duku Džambaliūnas.  
Aplipęs krupiais trinka miela kūnas.  
Tai isla misla jo sparnai – malūnas.  
Tai kompaciela vybur Džambaliūnas.

*Violeta Palčinskaitė*

# “Jabberwocky” in Lithuanian

*Agnė Zolubienė*

Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* was first introduced to the Lithuanian readers in the late fifties. In 1957 the State Publishing Agency of Fiction (Valstybinė grožinės literatūros leidykla, later renamed Vaga) published the translation of *Alice in Wonderland* by Kazys Grigas. In 1965 Vaga published a Lithuanian version of *Through the Looking-Glass* by Julija Lapienytė with a footnote on page 6 informing that “texts in verse were translated by J. Vaičiūnaitė”. In 1991 the first combined edition of *Alice in Wonderland* by Grigas and *Through the Looking-Glass* by Lapienytė and Vaičiūnaitė was published by Vyturys, a publishing agency mostly dedicated to children’s literature. For more than five decades the two translations remained the only full-text Lithuanian versions of *Alice*, repeatedly published in combined editions. There were also numerous abridged editions of a widely varied quality.

The 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Alice in Wonderland* saw a renewed interest in Carroll’s work with two new competing Lithuanian translations of the book appearing in 2015: Obuolys published a translation by Liuda Petkevičiūtė, while Nieko Rimto published a translation by Vilija Vitkūnienė, with verse translation by Violeta Palčinskaitė. A fresh translation of *Through the Looking-Glass* by Vitkūnienė and Palčinskaitė soon followed in 2016, which means that today there exist at least three full-text versions of *Alice in Wonderland* and two versions of *Through the Looking-Glass* in Lithuanian. The latter was both translated by experienced translators in tandem with famous Lithuanian poets. Well, probably, that’s what it takes to render Carroll’s verse – a poet.

Poets and translators Judita Vaičiūnaitė (1937-2001) and Violeta Palčinskaitė (b. 1943) both grew up and went to school in post-war Kaunas, then moved to Vilnius to study at the Faculty of History and Philology of Vilnius University. As Palčinskaitė mentions in her memoir, the two poets not only met each other as part of the common circle of authors, but they were actually close friends. By the time she tackled “Jabberwocky”, the young Vaičiūnaitė had already published

three collections of poems and a few translations (mostly from Polish and Russian) and was starting to gain critical acclaim as a modernist poet. Vaičiūnaitė was among the first Lithuanian poets to move away from natural and rural settings to the city: using the architectural detail, the geometric shape, she created an urban landscape where nature also had a place, and Vilnius became one of the prominent themes in her poems. Palčinskaitė, who is a very famous children's poet, playwright, and author of numerous books, took up translation in the latter half of her career. While Vaičiūnaitė never considered translation an important aspect of her work, Palčinskaitė's translations from English include the works of such authors as Roald Dahl, Donald Bisset, Kate DiCamillo, and Lemony Snicket.

The two poets and translators of "Jabberwocky" worked under different conditions. In 1965 under Soviet rule publishing agencies were owned and controlled by the state and access to information from the West was limited, while in 2016 in the independent Lithuanian translation was driven by the commercial interest of the publishing industry, and access to information was not only free but also facilitated by modern technology. It is not surprising then that translations of Carroll's nonsense poem produced in different contexts differ both in terms of form and content. The full texts of both translations are presented above.

In her version of "Jabberwocky", Vaičiūnaitė faithfully reproduces the meter and rhyme of the Carrollian accentual-syllabic verse, the iambic tetrameter (and iambic trimeter in certain lines) and the ABAB rhyme pattern. Although this type of short rhythmical line is not uncommon in Lithuanian poetry, it is not an easy task to recreate it in translation from English as Lithuanian words tend to be longer, which means certain omissions need to be made to retain the same number of syllables. Vaičiūnaitė does just that by leaving out some descriptive adjectives and keeping nouns and verbs that drive the narrative of the ballad. Incidentally, most of the nonsense adjectives such as "manxome" and "tulgey" are dropped without any attempt to compensate but the nouns they modify are respectively translated as "priešas" ("foe") and "miškas" ("wood").

In contrast, by using the longer (mostly) eleven-syllable line with accent on the penultimate syllable and rhyming parallel lines (AABB), Palčinskaitė gives herself more space to preserve some of the expressive details of the poem. More importantly, this particular form of syllabic verse is quite typical of the nineteenth century Lithuanian and Polish poetry, which every reader of Lithuanian would have studied at school. In this way, while the form of the verse is changed in translation, Carroll's intention of creating a mock Middle-Ages poem is conveyed to the reader of the translation who would recognize it as a piece of mock nineteenth-century verse.

In terms of Carroll's nonsense words, most of the original neologisms are recreated – and quite predictably so – in the first stanza of the poem. In both translations, the first stanza contains 10 neologisms while the rest of the poem just 3 (in Vaičiūnaitė) or 4 (in Palčinskaitė). Vaičiūnaitė coins her nonsense words based on Humpty Dumpty and Alice's dialogue in Chapter 6. For example, Carroll's "slithy" (meaning "lith and slimy," according to Humpty Dumpty) is rendered as a portmanteau "lankšliaują" ("supple" and "slithering") where the adjective "**lankstūs**" ("supple," "flexible") and the present tense participle "šliaužiojantys" ("crawling," "slithering") are blended together. The temporal adverb "pietspirgai," i.e., "the time when people broil their dinner" ("**pietūs**" means dinner and "**spirginti**" is "to broil"), the noun with preposition indicating place "ant pieplatės," i.e., "on a wide meadow" ("**pieva**" is "meadow and "**plati**" is "wide") are other examples of Vaičiūnaitė's portmanteaus, where the reader, following Humpty Dumpty's explanations, can experience the 'now-I-get-it' moment: the roots of real Lithuanian words become recognisable and the nonsense words start making sense.

In Vaičiūnaitė's translation the first stanza of "Jabberwocky" consists almost entirely of nonsense words but the grammatical meanings, which in Lithuanian are expressed by morphological means (mostly suffixes and inflections), are quite clear. Reading the first sentence, it is possible to notice, that "bukai" is the subject expressed by a masculine plural noun and "gražtėsi" is the predicate expressed by a verb in the past tense. Respectively, in the second part of the same sentence, "šluotpūkai" and "čiukai" appear to be two subjects, while "švilpčiaublys" is the predicate expressed by a verb in the future tense. In this way, even with the actual meaning of words remaining opaque (until Humpty Dumpty's explanation), the syntax is rendered and a vague sense of a narrative with a descriptive scene and an anticipation of future events is created.

In contrast, Palčinskaitė makes her words work double shifts for the money, not just in "Jabberwocky" but also in Humpty Dumpty's explanations. In the first stanza, she uses neologisms that, in their form, resemble onomatopoeic words often found in Lithuanian nursery and counting-rhymes as well as choruses of children's songs. Word sequences like "una druna duku" or "isla misla" are not just meaningless soundplay. Since they are not inflected it is not possible to identify their function in the sentence. Moreover, Humpty Dumpty proves to be a very unreliable translator and confuses things further. For example, he tells Alice that "duku" means "tuzinti" and "puzinti," which are obscure Lithuanian verbs meaning to shake and to feed respectively. "**Trinka**" according to Humpty Dumpty is the present tense third person form of the verb "**trinkuliuoti**"

meaning “**trinkuliais trinksėti** aplink kaip kokiam **trinkalui**,” which is gibberish based on the repetition of the onomatopoeic root “trink-“, related to the sound of two things bumping or knocking together. Since the supposed verbs like “trinka,” “duku,” “miela” and “vybur” are not inflected when they appear in the poem, their function is unclear and Humpty Dumpty’s translation does not even start making sense whatsoever. In this way, the reader remains in the dark as to the exact meaning of the first stanza even after reading Humpty Dumpty and Alice’s dialogue. However, Palčinskaitė provides a possible solution: leaving out nonsense words, each line in her translation contains at least two actual words, which allows the reader to construct a basic – although fragmented – picture of the Jabberwock (translated as “Džambaliūnas”) itself as a creature who has “windmill” (“malūnas”) wings (“kūnas” means “body” and “sparnai” “wings”).

The rest of the poem in both translations simply narrates a story of a hero who fights – and wins against – a dangerous mystical creature, aptly summarised by Alice as “aišku, kad kažkas kažką užmušė” (“somebody killed somebody”) or as “aišku, kad *kažkas kažką* nukirto...” (“somebody killed somebody with a sword”). Carroll’s nonsense language is either left out or neutralized. In Vaičiūnaitė, the few neologisms that appear in stanzas two through six are semantically transparent. For example, “the Jubjub bird” is rendered as “plastplast paukštis” where “paukštis” is standard Lithuanian for “bird” and “plast plast,” normally written as two words and used as an adverb not adjective, is an interjection denoting the sound of bird wings flapping. “The frumious Brandersnatch” is translated as “aitvaras,” which is a standard Lithuanian word for a mythical winged creature who often appears in fairytales and when tamed can bring riches to its master. Palčinskaitė interprets some of the remaining nonsense words as proper names. When treated as proper names, such words do not require translation and are transferred with only necessary adaptations. In this way, “the Jubjub bird” becomes “the bird named Abudžabas”, “the Tumtum tree” becomes – quite curiously – “medis ūksmingojo Tamtamo,” where “medis” means “tree,” and “ūksmingasis” refers to “dark, shady” (as in “shady woods”) and “Tamtamas” then is treated as a place name.

Neither of the two translators differentiate between the word “Jabberwocky” that could be treated as an adjective in the title and “a Jabberwock”, the creature in the poem. Palčinskaitė sees it as a proper name and partially imitates its sound in “Džambaliūnas.” Vaičiūnaitė does not try to recreate the sound but rather the meaning. She names the poem and the creature “Taukšlys.” The noun “**taukšlys**” in Lithuanian is used to describe a person who talks too much. However, the root “taukš-“ is also present in the verb “**taukšėti**” which may mean to make a

sound by clicking teeth (as “in dangerous animals clicking teeth”). In this way, “Taukšlys” implies a creature which talks a lot without making much sense and which can also be perceived as threatening.

So the two Lithuanian editions of Carroll’s “Jabberwocky” published five decades apart are quite “Lithuanianised” but in subtly different ways. Vaičiūnaitė faithfully recreates the form of the Carrollian poem and tries to make sense of the nonsense language by relying on Humpty Dumpty’s translation. Vaičiūnaitė’s reader, first shocked – together with Alice – by the vagueness of the “difficult words,” is later rewarded with a fun word-and-sense-making exercise and a fairytale of a hero slaying a dragon. Palčinskaitė, on the other hand, changes the form of the ballad to achieve the effect of 19<sup>th</sup> century Lithuanian verse and tries to preserve the strangeness and nonsense of the content. Even in the context of Humpty Dumpty’s explanation, the opening and ending stanzas of “Džambaliūnas” remain playfully opaque and proper names used in the translation transport the reader to a far-away place.

## Translations into Lithuanian

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