

Māori

E Hapawauki

I muri i te ahiahi me ngā 'Towe' pāremoremo
I kōriipo me i wiri ki te taha mākū o te puke
Ko whakapōuri katoa ngā 'Porohowe',
Me i koekoe ngā 'Rawh' toimaha.

“Kia tūpato o te 'Hapawauki' tāku tama!
Ko ngā kauae ka kakati nei, ngā matimati ka hopu!
Kia tūpato ki te manu 'Huhup', me kia whātuturi
Te 'Pantenati'tino riri.”

I whāwhā ia tāna hoari koi;
Kua roa kē e rapu ana ia i te hoa kākari no te motu o Manx -
Nā ka okioki ia ki te taha o te rākau 'Tumtum'
A tu ana i tētahi wā i roto i te whakaaro.

Kātahi, ka tū ia i roto ano i te whakaaro hōhonu,
Te 'Hapawauki', ki ngā mata o hana
I haere ki te whakatītaha nā roto te ngahere mākū me pururua,
Me ka pupū ia i te taenga mai!

Tahi, rua! Tahi, rua! Nā roto hoki, nā roto
I haere te whakaripi enanga nei ki he whawhai māripi!
I mahue atu i a ia kua mate, me ki te mähunga
I hoki mai ano ia i runga i te taonga.

“Kua patua e koe te Hapawauki?
Haere mai ki tāku ringa, tāku tamaiti ki te kata ao!
Wehi nā te rā koa whakamīharo! Hūrē! Hūrē!”
E pukukata ana ia ki tōna koa.

I muri i te ahiahi me ngā 'Towe' pāremoremo
I kōriipo me i wiri ki te taha mākū o te puke
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Vaughan Rapatahana

A Māori “Jabberwocky”

Vaughan Rapatahana

I have written previously about what Ludwig Wittgenstein called incommensurability, “No translation can ever hope to convey all the nuances and meanings of the original tongue, which are meant to be relayed into another language” (Rapatahana, 2018:28.) In other words, languages cannot ever be translated one into another completely and vice-versa. English, for example, cannot convey all the many nuances of Māori words, many of which are based on divergent epistemological and therefore, ontological premises.

So, when it comes to this poem, replete with words that do not even exist in the English language lexicon, incommensurability almost becomes impossibility! If there are no ‘actual’ ‘Bandersnatch’ or ‘Jujub’ birds ‘out there’, there are certainly no words for these imaginary beasts in te reo Māori. ‘Hapawauki’ and so on are – then – mere transliterations, and I have made no effort to somehow parallel them with ‘real’ animals, because they are somewhat unconjurable, even given Lewis Carroll’s visions of them, as adumbrated in *The Annotated Alice* (2000).

Speaking of which, I have made a determined attempt to match from my own tongue, as best I can, the other non-proper nouns and adjectives from that list, given I had to approximate in places or deliver phrases rather than words. One example of the latter would be the ‘word’ ‘wabe’, which describes the wet side of a hill!

In a couple of cases also I could find no ‘equivalent’ in *The Annotated Alice*. ‘Tulgey’ is one such ‘word’. I had to google guess for such...and agreement was somewhat negligible there. In the end, I went for wet and dense.

More, of course, some Carrollian words now are found in an English language dictionary such as galumph and chortle, although they are not to be found in my first tongue.

Importantly also, this ‘no equivalent translation’ situation is accentuated by the fact that in the Māori language, with 13 letters and just two digraphs, there

are no consonants b c d f g j l q s v x y z, while the five vowel sounds do not reflect English speakers' articulation of them either. More, in te reo Māori, adjectives follow nouns and do not precede them. There is, then, no rhyme in my version, while – of course – traditional Māori mōteatea or song-poetry does not generally, contain rhyme anyway.

Ultimately, I reckon my own poem below sums up everything I have written here!

e hapawauki!

hey jabberwocky

e hapawauki
he aha koe?
he taniwha tino whanokē koe.

hey jabberwocky
what are you?
you are a very strange creature.

me he upoko whakahara
me ngā niho koi!

with a huge head
and sharp teeth!

me ngā whatu pāwhara
me he arero tino roa!

with wild eyes
and a very long tongue!

auē! me e rua ngā pākau.
auē! me he whiore whekewheke.

wow! with two wings.
wow! with a scaly tail

e hapawauki
he aha koe?

hey jabberwocky
what are you?

kāore ngā kupu i tāku reo
hei whakaahua i a koe!

there's no words in my language
to describe you!

ngā kupu anake ki tētahi atu
reo rerekē
hei whakaahua i a koe –

there's only words in another strange language
to describe you.

*frumious manxome slithy tulgey
galumphing bandersnatch*
e hapawauki!

*frumious manxome slithy tulgey galumphing
bandersnatch*
hey jabberwocky!

Secondary Sources

Carroll, Lewis and Gardner, Martin (annotator) (2000.) *The Annotated Alice*. New York: WW Norton and Company.

Rapatahana, Vaughan (2018.) *Translation between languages*. New Zealand Author, Winter, 28-29.