

Polish

Dżabbersmok

Było smaszno, a jaszmijskie smukwijnie
Świdrokretnie na zegwniku wężały,
Peliczaple stały smutcholijne
I zbłąkinie rykoświstąkały.

Ach, Dżabbersmoka strzeż się, strzeż!
Szponów jak kły i tnących szczęk!
Drżyj, gdy nadpełga Banderzwierz
Lub Dżubdżub ptakojęk!

W dłoń ujął migbłystalny miecz,
Za swym pogromnym wrogiem mknie...
Stłumiwszy gniew, wśród Tumtum drzew
W zadumie ukrył się.

Gdy w czarsmutśleniu cichym stał,
Płomiennooki Dżabbersmok
Zagrzmudnił pośród srożnych skał,
Sapgulcząc poprzez mrok!

Raz-dwa! Raz-dwa! I ciach! I ciach!
Miecz migbłystalny świstotnie!
Łeb uciął mu, wziął i co tchu
Galumfująco mknie.

Cudobry mój; uściśnij mnie,
Gdy Dżabbersmoka ściał twój cios!
O wielny dniu! Kalej! Kalu!
Śmieselił się rad w głos.

Było smaszno, a jaszmijskie smukwijnie
Świdrokretnie na zegwniku wężały,
Peliczaple stały smutcholijne
I zbłąkinie rykoświstąkały.

Maciej Słomczyński

The Polish Translations of “Jabberwocky”

Bogumiła Kaniewska

The history of Polish translations of “Jabberwocky” should have started in 1936, when the first translation of the second part of Alice’s adventures was published. However, its author, Janina Zawisza Krasucka, did not take up the challenge: she translated only the first two lines, completely depriving them of the peculiarities of Carroll’s work. These are two logical, correctly constructed sentences, without a single nonsense word: “Strzeż się Jablerwocka, mój synu! / Bo gdy ziewa to kąsa, gdy się wita, to bije...” (“Beware of Jabberwock, my son! / Because when you yawn it bites, when you greet, it beats...”). The mysterious literary monster therefore stayed in hiding for thirty-six more years, until 1972, when Maciej Słomczyński’s *Through the Looking-Glass* was published. This experienced and prominent translator had previously introduced such works as Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1969) and Faulkner’s *Light in August* (1959) to a Polish audience. He was also the translator of the works of Shakespeare, as well as the first translator of both Alice books. Słomczyński’s translation retains all the features of the original, including the nonsense.

This is no coincidence. In Poland, the 1970s was a time when linguistically inventive poetry flourished, and the possibilities of language were explored, even when (or because) it interfered with the communist reality of the time. Carroll in his poetry shows how you can escape from reality, using language as a medium for the imagination and as a tool for creating new, fantastic worlds. However, Lewis Carroll had precedents in Polish poetry as well. Already in 1921 Julian Tuwim published a cycle of poems *Słopiewnie* (“sło-“ is a part of the word “słowo” (“word”), “piewnie” is associated with the word “śpiewnie” (“in a singing fashion”). Tuwim’s idea was to create a “non-understandable” language (a language beyond reason,

perhaps), building quasi-words without meaning, although their construction resembles existing words (glossolalia). The same poetic device had been used half a century earlier by Lewis Carroll. “Jabberwocky” depends on sound allusions, ambiguity and off-balance meanings. As readers we are dealing not so much with specific words as with overlapping meanings. So, when Maciej Słomczyński translated “Jabberwocky”, he could both draw on a pre-existing Polish model and take advantage of the poetically inventive times. Thus, when the monster from Carroll’s poem appeared in Polish in 1972 it soon became extremely popular.

There are seventeen translations of “Jabberwocky” in Polish, nine of which are an integral part of the second part of Carroll’s two Alice books (M. Słomczyński 1972; R. Stiller 1986; L. Lachowiecki 1995; J. Kozak 1997; K. Dmowska 2009; B. Kaniewska 2010; M. Machay 2010; T. Misiak 2013), while the remaining nine were written outside the strict novel context. These are the translations by: J. Korwin-Mikke (1980); J.W. Gomulicki (1981); S. Barańczak (1993); A. Marianowicz (1998); Alx z Poewiki (2010); G. Wasowski (2015); I. Sadowski (2016); S. Orwat (n.d.a.); M.P. Krystecki (n.d.a.).

The first group are the professional translators who published their work in book form, with at least three of them (Słomczyński, Stiller, Kozak) recognised as masters of their profession. The second group is more intriguing – these are the authors who only reached for the text of the poem from *Through the Looking-Glass*. There are two eminent poets and translators among them, Stanisław Barańczak and Antoni Marianowicz – the latter was the author of one of the very popular translations of *Alice in Wonderland*, and his version of “Jabberwocky” (considered an adaptation) was included in the edition of *Through the Looking-Glass* in Hanna Bałtyn’s translation (2005). There is the essayist and publisher Juliusz Wiktor Gomulicki and the journalist, satirist and actor Grzegorz Wasowski, whose text is a fairly casual paraphrase of the original, composed of 25 stanzas. Four of the translations come from Internet sources, one of which by the sociologist, Ireneusz Sadowski, is interesting since it is accompanied by a detailed analysis of the text, justifying the shape of his proposed version.

Poetry is difficult to translate. The more ambiguous it is, and the stronger it is embedded in the linguistic/ cultural context, the greater the challenge. We should be reluctant to judge translations that are doomed to failure from the outset; because this failure reflects the impossibility to transpose the foreignness of the original text into a different language. “Jabberwocky” is a legendary challenge for translators – hence, paradoxically, a constant urge reemerges to adopt this text into almost every language. Since, congenial translation is even more tricky in this case than in any other, researchers try to establish the “boundary” conditions of

the translation of Carroll's poem. In my opinion, there are three key features to consider:

1. the use of linguistic material (poetics of nonsense based on glossolalia and sound allusions, including archaisms);
2. rhythmic shape of the poem (a metric poem, characteristic of a traditional English ballad);
3. semantics, that is, evoking senses and the mood of horror and triumph, suggesting events that make up the course of action (the convention of the knightly epic).

“Jabberwocky” is a dynamic and noisy text. It has been built from short verses ending in male rhymes (monosyllabic), which by its very nature evokes resistance in Polish, an inflectional language with a paroxytonic (penultimate) stress (hence the predominance of female rhymes), and a predominance of long words. Polish translations therefore make the most of the sound potential: they use consonant clusters irritating to the ear, an accumulation of hard, rustling sounds, and they build an atmosphere of horror and fear. It is therefore difficult for translators to maintain the rhythm of an old English ballad. All the translators – with the exception of Wasowski's adaptation – abandon the four-verse rhythm. Some (Słomczyński, Stiller, Kozak) try to keep the eight-syllabic verse (but not always consistently), while Barańczak (consistently) imposes a different, more comfortable (because more generous) measure (9+9+9+7). In my own translation, I too decided to use the more capacious verse metre of nine syllables. There is no doubt, however, that the most important challenge for translators is on the semantic level and the basic dilemma: sound or meaning? This can already be seen at the title level. Titles are either translations of sound, or of meaning, or hybrids trying to combine both choices. Translation, as Edward Balcerzan once wrote, is a “war of the worlds.” It is the reader who decides on the victory or defeat of the translator.

Translations into Polish

- Alx z Poewiki. “Bełkotliszek.” 2010 http://tp://poewiki.vot.pl/index.php?title=Strona_osobista:Alx/Bełkotliszek
- Barańczak, Stanisław. “Dziaberliada.” Idem, *Fioletowa krowa. 33 najstawniejsze okazy angielskiej i amerykańskiej poezji niepoważnej od Williama Shakespeare’a do Johna Lennona. Antologia*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo, 1993. a5, 286.
- Dmowska, Katarzyna. “Dzabertok.” *Ilustrowane przygody Alicji w Krainie Czarów i Po drugiej stronie lustra*, based on Lewis Carroll’s works, adapter by Wesley Sims, trans. K. Dmowska. Ożarów Mazowiecki: Wydawnictwo Olesiejuk, 2009. 173–174.
- Gomulicki, Juliusz W. “Żubrołak.” Idem, *Żygzakiem. Szkice, wspomnienia, przekłady*. Warszawa: PIW, 1981. 625.
- Kaniewska, Bogumiła. “Dzabrołak.” Lewis Carroll, *Alicja w Krainie Czarów. Po drugiej stronie lustra*. Trans. B. Kaniewska. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Vesper, 2010. 200–202.
- Korwin-Mikke, Janusz. “Żubrołak.” *Literatura na Świecie* (1980):7: 346.
- Kozak, Jolanta. “Dziaberlak.” Lewis Carroll, *Alicja po tamtej stronie lustra*. Trans. J. Kozak. Olsztyn: Wydawnictwo Plac Słoneczny, 1997. 23–24.
- Krystecki, Michał Robert. “Dzabrojad.” nda. <https://home.agh.edu.pl/~szymon/jabberwocky.shtml>
- Lachowiecki, Leszek. “Dzabbasmok.” Lewis Carroll, *Poprzez lustro, czyli co Alicja odkryła po Tamtej Stronie*. Trans. L. Lachowiecki. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo STERNIK, 1995. 16–17.
- Machay, Magdalena. “Dzabertok.” Lewis Carroll, *Alicja po drugiej stronie lustra*. Trans. M. Machay. Kraków: Wydawnictwo GREG, 2010. 16–17.
- Marianowicz, Antoni. “Dziwołęki.” Lewis Carroll, *Alicja w Krainie Czarów*. Trans. A. Marianowicz, *Alicja po drugiej stronie zwierciadła*. Trans. H. Bałtyn. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo “Nasza Księgarnia”, 2005. 119–120.
- Misiak, Tomasz. “Plotwór.” Lewis Carroll, *Alicja w Krainie Czarów. Po drugiej stronie lustra*. Trans. T. Misiak. Łódź: Wydawnictwo Edukacyjne Res Polona, 2013. 16–17.
- Orwat, Sergiusz. “Papłolak.” nda. <https://home.agh.edu.pl/~szymon/jabberwocky.shtml>
- Sadowski, Ireneusz. “Bełkotnik.” 2016. <http://www.spoleczenstwo.pl/poprawne-tlumaczenie-jabberwocky>
- Słomczyński, Maciej, “Dzabersmok.” Lewis, Carroll, *O tym, co Alicja odkryła po drugiej stronie lustra* / Lewis Carroll ; trans. Maciej Słomczyński Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1972, s. 22.
- Ireneusz. “Bełkotnik.” 2016. <http://www.spoleczenstwo.pl/poprawne-tlumaczenie-jabberwocky>
- Stiller, Robert. “Żubrołaki.” Lewis Carroll, *Po drugiej stronie lustra*. Trans. R. Stiller. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo “Alfa”, 1986. 123–124.
- Wasowski, Grzegorz. Rozróbballada “Dziabiezwłoki” (bełkotniki). Lewis Carroll, *Perypetie Alicji na Czarytorium*. Trans. G. Wasowski. Warszawa: Wasowscy, 2015. 175–179.

Secondary Sources

Balcerzan, Edward, *Tłumaczenie jako wojna światów*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2008.

Krasucka, Janina Zawisza. Lewis Carroll, *W zwierciadlanym domu*. Warszawa, Wydawnictwo J. Przeworskiego, 1936, 22.