Portuguese

Dżabbersmok

Grilhente era, e os lagrolhos agilentos
Giropyavam e broquyavam en atranta;
Mimejosos erã os urzilentos,
E os espin-laros en grã gragriganta.

Guarda-te, filho, do Rarrazoado!
A garra aguçada, o dente raivoso!
Guarda-te do pássaro Juju, cuydado
Cõ o Banderpega fumyoso!

Desembaynhou sua espada vorpal;
Muy tempo buscou seu mãssimo rival.
Sentou-se entom junto à árvore Tumtum,
E ficou y algo tempo a pensar.

E, cogitãdo assi routadamente,
O Rarrazoado cõ fero olhar,
Veyo silvando plo bosque silhente,
Sem parar de balmurgear!

Um, dous! Entrou, entrou!
A espada vorpal o trecepou!
Bem o matou, e com a cabeça
Vãglopyando regressou.

«Mataste o Rarrazoado?
Abraça-me, meu filho amado!
Dia de dita, bendito dia!»
Casquisgou elle na sua alegria.

Grilhente era, e os lagrolhos agilentos
Giropyavam e broquyavam en atranta;
Mimejosos erã os urzilentos,
E os espin-laros en grã gragriganta.

Margarida Vale de Gato

"Jabberwocky" in Portuguese Translation

Patricia Odber de Baubeta

While there have been numerous Portuguese translations and adaptations of *Alice in Wonderland* aimed at different age-groups and readerships, only four translations of *Through the Looking-Glass* have been published (listed in Puga and Rêgo's 2015 catalogue). The reprints of the first three translations seem to have been timed to take advantage of the appearance of the fourth, done by Margarida Vale de Gato.

Critical commentary focusing on Portuguese Alice translations is not abundant and tends to focus on *Alice in Wonderland*, ignoring *Through the Looking-Glass*. Glória Bastos' survey of the history of Portuguese Alice translations makes some fairly harsh critical remarks on their shortcomings: "Looking at the editions as a whole, we find different types of faults, that range from, at worse, inadequate translation of the original terms, with flagrant and unpardonable errors that even an average reader of English will have no trouble identifying--- we note some questionable, if not incomprehensible translation options" (122). After a detailed analysis of translation errors, Bastos concludes that "we continue to await a truly accurate translation of *Wonderland.* Because, up to the present moment [1999], no one has *discovered* Alice" (123).

José António Gomes, in "Lewis Carroll's adventures in Portugal", offers examples of Portuguese nonsense writing, and takes a generally more tolerant line vis-à-vis the translations of Alice. Regarding the three translations to date [1999] of *Through the Looking-Glass*, he judges: "Of an acceptable standard, and including the indispensable 'translator's notes', these translations do not reveal any especially noteworthy aspects. In all of these, any translational problems that have not been resolved have been substituted" (130).

Conceiçao Pereira explores the Anglo-Saxon phenomenon of nonsense writing, and identifies nonsense precursors in Portuguese literature, including Fernando Pessoa's "Poema Pial". However, she fails to mention a prominent example of the genre, Joane the Fool's speech in Gil Vicente's *Auto da Barca do Inferno* (Play of the Ship of Hell, 1517), in which nonsense wordplay is responsible for many comic effects. As Aubrey Bell observes, "many still appear to believe that Vicente wrote in a kind of gibberish" (7).

While Isabel Pedro dos Santos explored the translations of poems in *Alice in Wonderland*, nonsense scholars Conceição Pereira and Margarida Vale de Gato reviewed the current Portuguese Alice landscape from the perspective of linguistics and translation practice.

It was Vale de Gato's translation of "Jabberwocky" that achieved a canonical status, based both on its longevity (the most reprints) as well as its positive critical reception. Paul Melo e Castro praised *Alice no País das Maravilhas* e *Alice do Outro Lado do Espelho* "as a faithful translation---generally ingeniously accomplished---difficult to improve on---an attempt to retextualise Lewis Carroll's original in Portuguese--- [and] an intellectual feat of no mean distinction" (96).

Before looking more closely at Vale de Gato's translation, however, certain questions should be posed. How do we account for the discrepancy in the numbers of translations of *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*? Perhaps the nonsense verses in the latter volume were deemed unappealing or perhaps even incomprehensible to juvenile (and adult) Portuguese readers. Yet, by the same token, they are equally difficult to grasp for current generations of contemporary English readers who are likely unable to identify and decode the parodic elements without detailed annotations. Even when explanatory notes are supplied, there is no guarantee that readers will take the time to peruse them. Poems like "Jabberwocky" are enjoyed on different levels, through the sound of the words – rhythm and rhyme with repetitions and assonance – then by filling in gaps – guesswork based on analogies, even intuition. So, every reading will constitute a different experience for the reader.

Any translator doing their research can access Carroll's notes, published in the magazine *Mismatch*, and read Humpty Dumpty's 'exegesis', in *Through the Looking-Glass*. But neither of these interpretations is the "last word" on the subject, and neither guarantees a successful translation into Portuguese (or any other language). Vale de Gato incorporates both of these sources in her own translator's notes and clarifies the rationale for some of her choices and neologisms; but since these are probably only perused after the main reading event, they can only exercise a retroactive effect. It is the initial impact that matters. Her technique is

perhaps best understood through a comparison of source and target texts.

The language functions in both poems are, as expected, identical: the verses set out both to tell a story and elicit an emotional response from the reader, namely one of admiration and awe. The original "Jabberwocky" may echo elements associated with the epic genre, but following this tradition in the Portuguese context might mistakenly point us towards Camões. Instead, the translator has introduced pseudo-medieval / Galician-Portuguese elements that somehow have more in common with the alliterative verse of *Beowulf* than the classicism of Portugal's national epic, *Os Lusíadas* [*The Lusiads*]. Of course, the suspension of disbelief and the values of courage, audacity and fearlessness are by no means unfamiliar in twenty- first century popular culture, indeed they are now embodied in the protagonists of the Star Wars franchise or the characters who populate the Marvel Universe.

The formal features of the original poem have been retained, by copying structures and in some cases, words. The Portuguese poem follows the structure of the original, with seven quatrains (the final stanza repeating the first), and the ABAB rhyme scheme, albeit with some deviations: 1. ABAB 2. CDCD 3. EEFG 4. HGHG 5. IIJI 6. CCKK 7. ABAB

Prosodic equivalence, on the other hand, is not easy to accomplish. English meters do not automatically map on to Portuguese poetry, which deals with syllables rather than feet. Paulo Henriques Britto points out the mismatch in "The Translation of the English ballad metre into Portuguese." In "Jabberwocky" the first three lines of each stanza are written in iambic tetrameter while the last line is written in iambic trimester, a variation on English common metre. If an appropriate Portuguese verse form does not immediately present itself, the translator must be prepared to bridge the gap with creative solutions, expressing the ideas and sentiments of the source text in ways that are not too 'alienating' for the Portuguese reader.

The Portuguese "Jabberwocky" relies on precisely the same literary devices as the original, though not necessarily in the same places or the same parts of speech. What stands out most clearly are the different 'sound effects', brought about by repetitions of consonants and vowel sounds. There is some overlapping between the categories. We find alliteration and consonance ("**gr**ilhente, la**gr**olhos, **gr**ã, **gr**a**gr**iganta"), assonance ("girop**yavam**, broqu**yavam"**), internal rhyme ("mimejos**os**, urzilent**os**, espin-lar**os**, desembaynh**ou**, busc**ou,** S**entou**-se"), end rhyme ("atr**anta**, gragrig**anta"**, "Rarrazo**ado,** cuyd**ado"**; "raiv**oso**, fumy**oso"**; "vorp**al**, riv**al"**; "d**ia,** alegr**ia").** The presence of so many types of rhyme imposes a cohesiveness that may just counterbalance the possible

confusion about meanings.

Onomatopoeia as a device is more difficult to evaluate since we cannot be certain of the meanings of the words or whether the sound effectively echoes them. Here, perhaps, sound becomes meaning. For example, the name Jabberwock with its hard sounds "**Ja"** and "**ock"** may suggest a large, fierce creature, while "Rarrazoado" may be intended to duplicate the roaring sound that the creature makes.

With regard to individual lexical items or phrases, the translator employs a range of strategies, including: word-for-word translation (**Bandersnatch** becomes "**banderpega");** loan translation or calque (his **vorpal** sword becomes "sua espada **vorpa**l"; and **the Tumtum tree** "**a árvore Tumtum")** (The Tumtum tree with its consonantal cluster brings to mind the South American ombu); modulation is combined with synecdoche as in "The **jaws** that **bite"** ("o **dente raivoso");** metonym, ie the part, here the tooth or "**dente"**, represents the whole, the **jaws**. The verb **bite** is replaced by the adjective "**raivoso**."

The poem is full of neologisms, the coining of new words or phrases. For example, "**snicker-snack"** (already a neologism) is rendered by "**trepeçou"**. Peter Newmark argues that it is not only the translator's right to create neologisms, but also a "duty to re-create any neologism he meets on the basis of the source language neologism". Vale de Gato does not shy away from her duty and translates a neologism with another neologism in the target language. In her notes she explains that "trecepou" is a hybrid of "trespasser" and "decepar". In fact, the word before us may prompt a back-translation leading to the phrasal verb "ran through". The dynamism of this verb helps compensate for the loss of onomatopoeia.

Another strategy Vale de Gato adopts is substitution as compensation. Translating "O **frabjous** day! Callooh! Callay!" as "**Dia de dita, bendito dia**!" eliminates the alliteration and onomatopoeia. Since **Frabjous** reminds the native English speaker of "joyous", "**dita"** (happiness) is a logical choice, and also connects to "**alegria"**. "Ben**dit**o **dia"** repeats sounds and perhaps adds in a hint of hyperbole, which is not out of place when describing an epic battle. In rhetorical terms, the English bears some relation to commutation, because terms are interchanged. At the very least, a baroque wordplay compensates for some loss of onomatopoeia. As seen in the preceding paragraphs, compensation may involve different linguistic procedures, but it can also be factored into a translation through a translator's notes and prefaces.

Received wisdom has it that nonsense poetry, so quintessentially English, so profoundly culture-bound, defies translation. This is not necessarily the case, since

various translators – of Carroll and other authors – have tackled nonsense. The question is how far they have succeeded in their aim. Vale de Gato has succeeded in her rendering. Her translator's repertoire comprises the procedures mentioned above, and more, but the list does not adequately reflect her inventiveness. Her new word coinages could almost be correct Portuguese but are not entirely so. A playfulness characterises her work, and "Jabberwocky" in particular. The *Alices*, written for children and read by adults, are cross-over works in reverse; most often novels are written for adults and later become appropriated by a juvenile readership. *Alice do outro lado do espelho* is no less accessible to its various readers than *Through the Looking- Glass*, due to the translator's creative linguistic choices, based on a thorough knowledge of both languages and cultures, and backed up by the illustrations and the translator's notes.

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