

Spanish

Galimatazo

Brillaba, brumeando negro, el sol;
agiliscosos giroscaban los limazones
banerrando por las váparas lejanas;
mimosos se fruncían los borogobios
mientras el momio rantas murgiflaba.

¡Cuidate del Galimatazo, hijo mío!
¡Guárdate de los dientes que trituran
y de las zarpas que desgarran!
¡Cuidate del pájaro Jubo-Jubo y
que no te agarre el frumioso Zamarrajo!

Valiente empuñó el gladio vorpal;
a la hueste manzona acometió sin descanso;
luego, reposóse bajo el árbol del Tántamo
y quedóse sesudo contemplando...

Y así, mientras cavilaba firsuto.
¡¡Hete al Galimatazo, fuego en los ojos,
que surge hederoso del bosque turgal
y se acerca raudo y borguejeando!!

¡Zis, zas y zas! Una y otra vez
zarandéó tijereteando el gladio vorpal!
Bien muerto dejó al monstruo, y con su testa
¡volvióse triunfante galompando!

¡¿Y haslo muerto?! ¡¿Al Galimatazo?!
¡Ven a mis brazos, mancebo sonrisor!
¡Qué fragarante día! ¡Jujurujúu! ¡Jay, jay!
Carcajeó, anegado de alegría.

Pero brumeaba ya negro el sol;
agiliscosos giroscaban los limazones
banerrando por las váparas lejanas;
mimosos se fruncian los borogobios
mientras el momio rantas necrofaba...

Jaime de Ojeda

“Jabberwocky” in Spanish

Juan Senís

According to the BNE (Spanish National Library) catalogue, more than 40 translations of *Through the Looking-Glass* have been published in Spanish since its first appearance in Spain. This means two important things: one, that Carroll’s work has had a constant presence in Spain, and, second, that every translator who adapted into Spanish the whole book had to confront the creature.

Translating (what is considered as) children’s poetry can be a many-splendored thing but also tough and demanding work. The translator must deal not only with the words, the rhythm and the sense, but also with the sound of tradition. The translated poem must sound natural and rhythmical in the new version – and maybe childlike. Thus, the translator cannot do whatever he or she wants, of course, and has to adapt her or his version to what Even-Zohar calls repertoire, that is the aggregate of rules and materials which govern both the making and use of any given literary product. In the case of children’s poetry, these rules are clear. Children’s poetry is characterised by simple rhymes, close structures, clear stanzas and a penchant for humour and parody.

If translating children’s poetry in general can be hard work, this is even truer when dealing with a legendary nonsense poem that is considered nearly untranslatable. Perhaps the difficulty is particularly great in Spanish, a language that differs from to English in its structures, its prosody and especially its literary background, where nonsense does not have a strong and canonical tradition. It is hard to choose one of the Spanish versions of “Jabberwocky” without feeling that one is betraying the original one. The curious and impatient reader can visit the Spanish entry of the poem on *Wikipedia* in order to find a few versions to compare. Already the titles differ. But, even if the choices of the translators (*Jerigóndor*, *Guirigayero*, *Galimatazo*) are apparently different, they all have something in common. The first part of the word tries to reply in Spanish the meaning of “jabber” (*jerigonza* is an old and rather outdated Spanish word that means more or

less jargon; *guirigay* designates a situation full noise and confusion; and *galimatias* is a message hardly comprehensible), while the second part tries to insist in the beastly and aminated condition of the creature by adding a suffix ad hoc. For the rest of the poem, the reader can expect anything.

Jaime de Ojeda's by now classic version created back in 1973 might not be the best, nor the most accurate adaptation. Moreover, it is clearly not the most childlike, probably because it was first published within an edition that did not aim to target child audiences at all, and at a time when Children's Literary research and criticism have not yet become a consistent academic discipline in Spain. This explains, in my opinion, several of the risky and personal decisions de Ojeda takes. For example, he does not make a rhyming version, the verses are irregular and, in some places, do not respect the four-verse stanzas of the original. Moreover, he does not use octosyllabic verses, although they are the most common in Spanish children's poetry and would have been the natural choice, but rather pays special attention to the sonority of the words and there correspondences with the original text, as we can see in the first stanza, especially when reading it aloud and even though you do not understand Spanish. *Agiliscosos*, for example, a neologism that de Ojeda has invented, is a combination of *ágil* (lithe), and *baboso* (slimy), so here he has managed to offer the Spanish reader a literal version of the original word but also a sonorous one. It happens also with *murgiflaba* (outgrabe) or *limazones* (toves). In other cases, such as *momio* (mome), *rantas* (raths) or *borogobios* (borogoves) he created more similar phonetical options to the original ones, while *mimosos* (mimsy) is an existing word that means literally cuddly and that can stand phonetically and semantically for the original one.

Nevertheless, this translation is included in the most popular, widespread and enduring edition of *Through the Looking-Glass* in Spanish, and, even though new and more child-friendly editions have been published since, the publishing house keeps reediting this one with the same version that has become integrated within the Spanish literary canon.

The second (and probably more important) reason is that the translated poem is complemented by a seven-page endnote. There de Ojeda explains in great detail the decisions and difficulties linked to his work, and includes the original versions of the poem along with French and German translations, so that the polyglot reader can compare. He tells the readers how he chose to invent words, how he dealt with the contradictory explanations that Carroll himself proposed for his own invented words, and considered the contradictory explanations that Humpty Dumpty later gives to these expressions. Bearing in mind these difficulties, he decided to invent Spanish words that evoked the original English ones (the

aforementioned *agiliscosos*, *momio* or *rantas*, but also *giroscar*, *firsuto* or *fragarante*) while they were coherent with Carroll's and Humpty Dumpty's metalinguistic commentaries on the poem, and, last but not least, he strived to frame these considerations within a lyrical form, that is to say, maintaining the rhythm and the verse pattern along the whole text, so it works as a real poem. This is the case of the first verse of the translation, which is maybe the riskiest and of them all. "Brillaba, brumeando negro, el sol" translated and obviously amplified "Twas brilling". The literal translation of this verse could be "The sun was shining with a black mist". There de Ojeda seemed to integrate both Carroll's and Humpty Dumpty's explanations in one sentence that amplifies the original way and draws the setting of the poem.

De Ojeda's long commentary is the living (or reading) proof that translating the "Jabberwocky" is undoubtedly a tough fight from which it is hard to get out unhurt... or without being forced to jabber. So, translators of the world, be careful. Beware the "Jabberwocky"!

Translations into Spanish

Carroll, Lewis. *Alicia a través del espejo*. Transl. Jaime de Ojeda. Madrid: Alianza, 1973