

Swedish

“Jabberwocky”

En slidig ödling borvlade
i bryningen på solvis ples.
Och lumpingen var brynklig,
och den villa grutten fnes.

Ack, akta dig för Jabberwock!
Han biter och han klöser hårt!
Och jubjubfåglen är så hemsk,
och gripen griper svårt!

Han tog sitt stridssvärd fast i hand
och sökte länge fienden.
Så kom han till ett tumtumträd,
stod där rätt länge sen.

Han stod där, gränkte, tubblade.
då kom med väldigt eldig blick
igenom skogen Jabberwock
med girigt vilddjursslick.

Ett, två! Ett, två! Han högg och högg
han högg med svärdet kors och tvärs!
Ett huvud som trofé--så kom
han hem i nästa vers.

Och har du dödat Jabberwock?
Kom i min famn, min gosse god!
O, glädjedag! Hurra, hurra!
Hurra för mannamod!

En slidig ödling borvlade
i bryningen på solvis ples.
Och lumpingen var brynklig,
och den villa grutten fnes.

Gösta Knutsson



Robert Högfeldt, 1945

Gösta Knutsson's Swedish Translation of "Jabberwocky"

Björn Sundmark

There are five complete Swedish translations of *Through the Looking-Glass*; these are by Louise Arosenius (1899), Gösta Knutsson (1945), Eva Håkanson (1963), Harry Lundin (1977), Eva Westman and Karin Sandberg (2015)¹. Arosenius was the first to translate both Alice books – and hence “Jabberwocky” too – into Swedish. Almost fifty years later Gösta Knutsson made the translation for the 1945 prestige publication of both Alice books in one volume. It was a large format book (octavo) printed on quality paper, and furnished with lavish illustrations by Robert Högfeltd. As a testimony to the high level of the artwork, Högfeltd's illustrations were also used in two English Alice-editions (1946 and 1949). Together with the 1966 edition of *Alice in Wonderland*, translated by Åke Runnquist and illustrated by Tove Jansson, the Knutsson and Högfeltd Alice marks the elevation of the Alice books to classic status in Sweden.

Gösta Knutsson (1908-1973) was a legendary Swedish radio producer (the first to do quiz programs in Swedish radio), children's writer, and translator. He is most famous for his twelve books about the cat *Pelle Svanslös* (“Peter No-Tail”), which are strongly connected to his hometown Uppsala, but the books about the dogs Tuff and Tuss as well as the books about the Teddy bear Nalle Lufs are also well-known in Sweden. Besides the Alice books, Knutsson translated, among others, Richard Scarry and a Disney version of “The Ugly Duckling.”

Robert Högfeltd (1894-1986) was a Swedish illustrator, mainly of children's books. His designs are simple but lively. He leans towards stereotype and exaggeration. Two of his Alice illustrations have a bearing on “Jabberwocky”: a full colour plate depicting the Jabberwock running through the Tulgey wood. The Jabberwock resembles a muscular green demon, which is interesting since most

¹ For a comparative analysis of the five published Swedish translations, see Sundmark “Some Uffish Thoughts”

visual representations tend towards the avian or dragon-like. Högfeldt has also contributed a pen drawing of a cork-screw-bodied slithy tove.

Unlike some of the other translators, Knutsson keeps Carroll's metre intact: three lines of iambic tetrameter followed by one line in trimeter (4-4-4-3). Carroll alternates his rhyme scheme between ABAB (1, 2, 4, 7) and ABCB (3, 5, 6); Knutsson employs the ABCB-pattern consistently. When it comes to phonological repetitions one notes that Knutsson employs even more sound repetition than Carroll: "Ett, två! Ett, två! Han högg och högg / Han högg med svärdet kors och tvärs!" In this case, he uses the word "högg" (to cut with one's sword) three times in a row. With the "Callooh! Callay!"-exclamation, Knutsson even adds a third hooray: "O, glädjedag! Hurra, hurra! / Hurra för mannamod!" ("O, happy day! Hooray, hooray! / Hooray for manly valour").

This line is also interesting since it shows that although Knutsson adheres quite strictly to the sounds of "Jabberwocky," he is not so much concerned with its (non)sense. After all, "Hooray for manly valour" seems a far cry from "Chortled in his joy." Not only is it a very free translation, but it also shifts the original poem's balance between the heroic and parodic. Another example can be found in Knutsson's translation of the lines "He left it dead, and with its head / He went galumphing back" with "Ett huvud som trofé--så kom / han hem i nästa vers" ("A head as trophy—then he / Returned in the next verse"). Of course, these are all perfectly viable translations of "Jabberwocky," if it is only to be regarded as a funny poem.

In his translation, Knutsson comes up with equivalents to 16 of the 29 nonsense words and expressions found in the original. Thus, in the opening (and closing stanza), which is the most dense in terms of neologisms, "brillig" is translated with "bryningen". In Swedish, this sounds much like "gryningen" ("dawn") which makes Alice think it has to do with break of day. However, it is "almost the opposite," according to Humpty Dumpty (172); it is the time of day when you prepare dinner and "brown the steak" (of the Swedish verb "bryna"). "Slithy toves" is translated with "slidig ödling," where *slidig* is a compound of "slemmig" (slimy) and "smidig" (lithe), and "ödling" comes from "ödlä" ("lizard") and "grävling" ("badger"). Knutsson translates "gyre" as "borvlade," and has Humpty Dumpty explain the verb as a combination of "vrída och vränga" ("twist and turn"). "Gimble" is left untranslated. "Wabe" is rendered as "solvis ples," from "solvisare" ("sun-dial") and, curiously, "ples" as an approximation of English/French "place"; the Swedish word is "plats", but the exotic pronunciation and idiosyncratic spelling makes it mildly nonsensical. "Mimsy" is given as "brynklig", a portmanteau word made up of "bräcklig" ("fragile") and "ynklig"

(“pathetic”), while “borogove” has become “lumpingen” – “a poor, ruffled bird” (173). It can be added, that Knutsson ingeniously translates “portmanteau” with “pelikanariefågel” (“pelicanary”), a word that unlike the English “portmanteau word” has not gained currency in Swedish, unfortunately. The final expression from the first stanza explained by Humpty Dumpty is “den villa grutten fnes” (“the mome raths outgrabe”), where “grutten” is “ett slags grön gris” (“a kind of green pig”). “Villa” is associated with the verb “villa” (“to stray or get lost”) and “that he cannot find his villa/house, although he wants to.” The final part of the punning exercise here is that “he wanted to” is “han *ville*” (“he wanted to”). The last word Humpty

Dumpty explains in his conversation with Alice is “fnes” (of “fnysa,” “to snort”) – “a kind of more interesting snort, performed while you bellow and whistle at the same time” (173).

There are far fewer neologisms in the other stanzas by Carroll, something that is even further reduced in Knutsson’s translation. Presumably, the relative faithfulness to the source language in the first stanza is because Humpty Dumpty’s explanations in the sixth chapter make them necessary. In fact, there are hardly any nonsense words at all in the other stanzas, except for names such “Jabberwock,” “jubjub,” and “tum-tum”, which have simply been carried over from the original. In many other cases, a nonsensical word is neutralized. Accordingly, “Bandersnatch” is translated as “gripen” (“the griffin”), “vorpal sword” as “stridssvärd,” (“battle sword”); “beamish boy” as “gosse god” (“good boy”); “frabjous day” as “glädjedag” (“day of joy”), “snicker-snack” as “kors och tvärs” (“hither and thither”); “Calloo! Callay!” as “hurra, hurra.” There is also the zero option, that is, no translation is offered, as in the case of “frumious,” “manxome,” “whiffling” “Tulgey wood”, “galumphing,” and “chortled.” By way of reparation, perhaps, Knutsson offers two new words for “uffish thought” with “gränkte, tubblade”. These two words have been formed by jumbling the existing words “tänkte” (“thought”) and “grubblade” (“pondered”). “Burbled,” finally, is somewhat mystifyingly translated with the semi-nonsensical “villdjursslick” (“wild animal lick”).

All in all, the translation is close to the rhythms and sound patterns of the original poem. The nonsensical elements, especially on the verbal level, have been toned down, however. Admittedly, the first/last stanza works with Humpty Dumpty’s nonsense explanations in chapter six, but the quest itself – stanzas 2-6 – does not strive to balance the (mock)heroism with nonsense. The result is a more child-oriented Jabberwocky than the original.

Translation into Swedish

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Secondary Sources

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Robert Högfeltdt, 1945