Yiddish

דער יאָמערוואָך — *Der Yomervokh*

ס׳איז בריליק געווען. די שליכטינקע טאָוועס
האָבן געווירט און געווימלט אין וואָבן.
גאַנץ מימזיש געווען די באָראָגאָוועס;
די מאָמע־רעט האָט אויסגעגראָבן.

S'iz brilik geven. di shlikhtinke toves
hobn gevirt un gevimlt in vobn.
gants mimzish geven di borogoves;
di mome-ret hot oysgegrobn.

„דאָך היט זיך פֿארן יאָמערוואָך!
צײן וואָס זיי כאפּן; קרעלן־שפּיץ!
פֿארן יובױוב פֿױגל היט זיך;
ווײַכט פֿון פֿרױמדיקן באַנדערשניץ!"

— dokh hit zikh farn yomervokh!
tseyn vos zey khapn; kreln-shpits!
farn yubyub-foygl hit zikh;
vaykht fun froymdikn bandershnits!

ער נעמט אין האַנט דעם וואָרפּלען שווערד.
דעם שונא האָט ער לאַנג געזוכט.
גערוט אַרום אַן עץ־תּומתּום,
פֿאַרטראַכט, האָט עס געדוכט.

er nemt in hant dem vorplen shverd.
dem soyne hot er lang gezukht.
gerut arum an eyts-tumtum,
fartrakht, hot es gedukht.

בעת שטײט ער אין געדאַנקן אױף,
דער יאָמערוואָך, מיט פֿײַער־אױגן,
מיט וויפֿעק קומט דורך טולגיקן וואַלד,
געבורבלט בעת געפֿלױגן.

beys shteyt er in gedanken oyf,
der yomervokh, mit fayer-oygn,
mit vifek kumt durkh tulgikn vald,
geburblt beys gefloygn.

יאײנס, צוויי! אײנס, צוויי! מיט ווי, מיט ווי,
דער וואָרפּלער קלינג מאַכט שנאָקער־שניק.
ער שעכט אים אָפּ, און מיט זײַן קאָפּ
געלאָמפּיק גייט צוריק.

eyns, tsvey! eyns tsvey! mit vey, mit vey,
der vorpler kling makht shnoker-shnik.
er shekht im op, un mit zayn kop
gelompik geyt tsurik.

„געטײט האָסטו דעם יאָמערוואָך?
נעם מיך אַרום, מײַן בײמיש קינד.
אָ יום־טוב גרױס! כאַלײן, כאַלױס!"
ער טשאָרטלט און ער זינגט.

— geteyt hostu dem yomervokh?
nem mikh arum, mayn beymish kind.
o yontef groys! khalayn, khaloys,
er tshortlt un er zingt.

ס׳איז בריליק געווען. די שליכטינקע טאָוועס
האָבן געווירט און געווימלט אין וואָבן.
גאַנץ מימזיש געווען די באָראָגאָוועס;
די מאָמע־רעט האָט אויסגעגראָבן.

S'iz brilik geven. di shlikhtinke toves
hobn gevirt un gevimlt in vobn.
gants mimzish geven di borogoves;
di mome-ret hot oysgegrobn.

Raphael Finkel

"Jabberwocky" in Yiddish

Raphael Finkel

My Yiddish translation of Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky" was based, in part, on the well- known German translation by Robert Scott in 1872. After the first verse, though, my Yiddish translation is completely new. The German version starts this way:

> Es brillig war. Die schlichte Toven
> Wirrten und wimmelten in Waben;
> Und aller-mümsige Burggoven
> Die mohmen Räth' ausgraben.

My translation, in Romanized Yiddish (following the YIVO transcription standard) starts this way:

> S'iz brilik geven. di shlikhtinke toves
> hobn gevirt un gevimlt in vobn.
> gants mimzish geven di borogoves;
> di mome-ret hot oysgegrobn.

In particular, I borrowed "brilik" from "brillig"; "shlikhtinke" from "schlichte", albeit with a Yiddish/Slavic diminutive ending; the verbs "gevirt" and "gevimlt" from "wirrten" and "wimmelten", with the Yiddish present perfect construction (it has no simple past, unlike German); "mimzish" from "mümsige"; "borogoves" from "Burggoven", but with a feminine plural '-es', and the past participle "oysgegrobn" from "ausgraben." I think my Yiddish keeps to the original English meter better than the German, with a 4/4/4/3 ictus pattern.

The next verse in Yiddish:

— dokh hit zikh farn yomervokh!
tseyn vos zey khapn; kreln-shpits!
farn yubyub-foygl hit zikh;
vaykht fun froymdikn bandershnits!

I borrowed the German "Jammerwoch" as "yomervokh"; it would mean
something like "a week of lamenting", although I set the gender as masculine
("vokh" is feminine). Instead of the English "claws that catch" I just had metrical
room for "kreln-shpits" (claws'-point). Instead of "beware" or the German
"bewahr'" I used the idiomatic "hit zikh" (protect yourself). The last line captures
"shun" as "vaykht fun" (distance yourself from). "Frumious" became "froymdik",
an invented word with obvious adjectival morphology. I was unable to avoid an
extra ictus in this line.

The third verse:

er nemt in hant dem vorplen shverd.
dem soyne hot er lang gezukht.
gerut arum an eyts-tumtum,
fartrakht, hot es gedukht.

The "manxome foe" must became "dem soyne" (the enemy). I was able to
capture the internal rhyme in the third line by substituting "eyts" (tree: Hebraic
origin) for "boym" (tree: Germanic origin), allowing me to put the rhyming word
"tumtum" after the noun; Yiddish, like German, puts most adjectives before
nouns, but using "eyts" gave me liberty to reverse that order. I could have said
"tumtum boym", but that didn't sound right, and I didn't see a good way to
force an internal rhyme. The last word "gedukht" (appeared) doesn't quite fit the
English, but it does fit the rhyme scheme.

beys shteyt er in gedanken oyf,
der yomervokh, mit fayer-oygn,
mit vifek kumt durkh tulgikn vald,
geburblt beys gefloygn.

Yiddish provides "beys" (while: Hebraic origin) as a one-syllable translation
of "as"; the Yiddish "az" doesn't quite work semantically. The "oyf" at the end

of the first line acts as an adverbial complement to "shteyt"; it doesn't capture "uffish" at all except in sound (it is spelled "oyf" but often pronounced "uf"). "Tulgey" came out as "tulgik". Grammar forces a suffix, which interferes a bit with the meter. Again the last line uses "beys" to good effect.

> eyns, tsvey! eyns tsvey! mit vey, mit vey,
> der vorpler kling makht shnoker-shnik.
> er shekht im op, un mit zayn kop
> gelompik geyt tsurik.

In this stanza, the first and third lines show internal rhyme, both in the English and the Yiddish (but not the German). To get the rhyme in the first line, I had to depart from "and through and through" in favor of "mit vey, mit vey" (woefully, woefully).

> —— geteyt hostu dem yomervokh?
> nem mikh arum, mayn beymish kind.
> o yontef groys! khalayn, khaloys,
> er tshortlt un er zingt.

Here the third stanza again shows internal rhyme, in English, German, and Yiddish, but using different concepts: "day", "tag" (day), and "groys" (great). The English "Callooh! Callay!" comes out, like the English, as an apparent, although nonsensical, pair, "khalayn, khaloys", making use of the opposition of "ayn" (in) and "oys" (out).

The last verse returns, of course, to the first:

> S'iz brilik geven. di shlikhtinke toves
> hobn gevirt un gevimlt in vobn.
> gants mimzish geven di borogoves; d
> i mome-ret hot oysgegrobn.

If I were to translate this poem again, I'm sure I would change some of the decisions in order to be more faithful to the meter. But as it stands, the Yiddish version sounds authentic[1], in that it uses words and morphemes common to Yiddish and drawn from the Slavic, Germanic, and Semitic components of the language.

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[1] Version set to music at https://www.cs.uky.edu/~raphael/yiddish/jabber.html

Translations into Yiddish

Finkel, Raphael. "Der Yomervokh." Yugntruf, February 1976, p. 16. https://yugntruf.
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