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**Strategies used by Mati Soomre in Translating Lewis Carroll's
The Hunting of the Snark
BA thesis**

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ABSTRACT

Lewis Carroll's work is exceptionally rich for its use of various literary techniques, which, coincidentally, makes it very hard to translate. As *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is his most famous story, research done on its translation is plentiful already, but *The Hunting of the Snark*, an epic nonsense poem, has been relatively disregarded. The aim of this thesis is to study translation strategies used by Mati Soomre, especially when translating instances of wordplay and neologisms or portmanteau words in Lewis Carroll's *The Hunting of the Snark* into Estonian ('*Snargijaht*'). My goal is to provide an additional, original viewpoint to help understand Carroll's texts better.

This thesis consists of two main parts: the literature review and the analysis of specific elements by comparing the English and Estonian versions of *The Hunting of the Snark*. In the first part, I will talk about the writer and the translator and what they have said about the poem. I will also discuss the context of Carroll's work, determine how various pieces are linked and, finally, identify problems with their translation. In the second part, I will identify neologisms, portmanteau words and any other forms of wordplay used in the text, analyse them in both the source and the target language and compare the results.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis will focus on one of Lewis Carroll's (hereinafter LC) texts, *The hunting of the Snark: An Agony in Eight Fits* (1876) and its translation into Estonian (2010). My objective is to find out how Mati Soomre (the translator of *Snargijaht: agoonia kaheksas puhus*) approached instances of wordplay, neologisms or portmanteau words and some other interesting aspects in his translation and why he made his creative choices.

The problem with the translation of LC's work was perfectly described by Alice Martin (2008: 16), who has stated that translation is made almost impossible if the translator does not understand the meaning of the text. Kullmann (2015: 48) characterises LC as a master of wordplay and states that spotting occurrences of wordplay and translating them demand a high amount of linguistic attention. If this attention is lacking, some aspects of meaning could accidentally be disregarded and the "magic" of LC's work would automatically be lost in translation. This is what makes his works exceptionally interesting and popular, but it is also the reason why he is among the most difficult authors to translate as well. Soomre, however, accepted the challenge and provided the only translation of the poem in Estonian made thus far along with background information and comments on the story of the Snark hunt.

There is one element that is the key in making the story of the Snark hard to understand, namely, the existence of words created by LC himself for use in his work. In *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* (1871), he wrote a nonsense poem called *Jabberwocky* or *Jorruline* in Estonian (translated in 1993 by Risto Järv), which is a good example of a nonsense poem as most words in it are neologisms or portmanteau words made up by LC. In *The Hunting of the Snark*, eight of those words are used along with two new ones that he created for this poem specifically. *Jabberwocky*,

however, was not translated by Soomre but by Risto Järv and comments on his work are hard to find, which makes researching it all the more interesting.

Another aspect that makes this topic an interesting object of study is the popularity of the poem's words and expressions compared to the unpopularity of the poem as an object of research. As *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is the most popular of LC's works, it is the most translated and often discussed as well. Studies of *The Hunting of the Snark*, however, are rather hard to find although the poem contains as much interesting material as any other piece written by the same author. Searches for articles related to the topic revealed a plethora of unrelated research because 'a hunt for the Snark' has become a popular term for searching for something that is very hard to find, an unknown object or something that does not exist (Soomre 2010: 154). This proves that the epic poem is well-known enough to have inspired an expression that is used outside of literature-related discussions and deserves to be researched further.

This thesis consists of two main parts. In the first one, I will present information that is necessary to understand the topic at hand and has already been gathered by other researchers. First, I will give background information on the author and the translator that is necessary to understand the context of their writing process. Secondly, I will discuss the pieces of writing that this thesis focuses on and analyse *The Hunting of the Snark* and *Jabberwocky* as nonsense poems. Finally, I will identify possible problems that might occur when translating the work of LC using the example of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. The second part, which is divided into two sections, consists of an in-depth analysis of specific forms of wordplay that LC used in *The Hunting of the Snark* and how Soomre conveyed them. The first section will cover neologisms and portmanteau words while other forms of wordplay will be discussed in the second section. Finally, I will highlight the main conclusions that could be from this research.

1. Literature review

This section will provide an overview of academic literature discussing LC's fiction, its translation and some information on LC and Mati Soomre that will help the reader understand their work better. The aim is to establish the background of the study and to reveal gaps in knowledge that is available so far. Sources used in this review discuss *The Hunting of the Snark* and *Jabberwocky* in general and translations of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (*Alice in Wonderland*) into French, Finnish and Estonian because there is a limited amount of research done on the translation of LC's poems.

1.1 Lewis Carroll and Mati Soomre

The website of the Lewis Carroll Society of North America characterises Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (27.01.1832–14.01.1898), better known as Lewis Carroll, as a man of many talents who was interested in both science and the arts. He was exceptionally gifted in mathematics and logic and wrote a lot about the subject, which has influenced the way he created his fiction as well. For example, in *The Hunting of the Snark*, Soomre (2010: 41-2) points out a variety of references LC made to his own mathematical discoveries and formulas.

Gardner (1962: 1) reports that *Alice's Adventures* was first published in 1865 and its sequel, *Through the Looking-Glass* (which contains the poem *Jabberwocky*), came out in 1871. *The Hunting of the Snark* is the story that was published latest out of all of LC's work mentioned in this thesis – 1876. All of these fictional stories were inspired by LC's child-friends with whom, according to the Lewis Carroll Society of North America (n.d.), he spent a lot of his time. The stories about Alice were inspired by Alice Liddell and *The Hunting of The Snark* was dedicated to Gertrude Chataway whose name also appears in an

acrostic poem at the start of the story.

In his studies, Rickard (1975: 46) mentions that people mainly regard LC's work as being written for children, which would be a logical assumption based on their mystical content and the fact that they were inspired by and dedicated to children as well. Rickard goes on to say that many have, in fact, found that the stories have much to offer both adults and children depending on the perspective and this has warranted, in some cases, the creation of separate translations for people of different ages. According to Aas (2004: 23), LC made the second and most popular version of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* to suit both child and adult readers, which means that the story never becomes irrelevant and everyone can reread it and discover something new for themselves – a double meaning or a pun that they completely missed when they were younger or first read the book.

In *The Annotated Snark*, Gardner (1962: 15) comments that LC wrote the poem about the Snark hunt as a story for children, but Gardner is very doubtful that many children, even in the Victorian era, actually enjoyed the nonsense poem. He quotes Chesterton who has said that *The Hunting of the Snark* should be read by “sages and gray-haired philosophers” rather than children. Soomre most likely targeted his 2010 translation, *Snargijaht*, specifically towards adults as he has annotated the book, providing background information on interesting aspects about the poem itself and LC's life in general. In *Snargijaht*, the poem's Estonian and English versions are printed side-by-side, which is inviting to researchers and people interested in the translation process.

Mati Soomre (10.03.1944–14.06.2015) was an experienced translator and *Snargijaht* was one of his last translations published in 2010. It is the only translation of *The Hunting of the Snark* in Estonian that has been made so far. In an interview given in 2010 for the webpage ‘Teatritasku’, Soomre mentioned that his interest in LC and this specific poem had begun 30 years before writing the translation while researching for his

own thesis. It took him six months to translate the poem fully and the amount of effort he put into his work in the form of comments and explanations is essential to my research.

1.2 *The Hunting of the Snark and Jabberwocky*

To better understand the texts at hand, it would be beneficial to establish some context first. Many researchers have tried to find out what LC's works mean, what his motive was for writing them or what he was influenced by at the time. In this part, I will discuss *The Hunting of the Snark* (1876) and *Jabberwocky* (1871) individually and establish the style they have been written in. After that, I will talk about some elements of the stories along with their meaning and how the two poems are linked together.

Gardner (1962: 21) defines *The Hunting of the Snark* as an epic nonsense poem that “describes with infinite humor the impossible voyage of an improbable crew to find an inconceivable creature”. That sentence alone already explains why it is also called a mock-epic or a mock-heroic poem. Instead of actual heroes doing incredible deeds, the crew of this Snark-hunting ship only includes weird, fearful and clumsy characters on a search for a creature they know nearly nothing about.

There are a plethora of theories regarding LC's motives for writing about the Snark hunt and about what a ‘Snark’ actually is. According to Mayer (2009: 429), for example, the topic that *The Hunting of the Snark* is trying to bring light to is very serious: it protests against experimenting on animals by depicting people's never-ending quest for knowledge and power as a surreal sea-adventure. This conclusion, however, has only been made by one group of people while there are a number of other possible meanings out there. Soomre (2010: 154) comments on that as well, saying that the author has not specified the meaning of the elusive Snark and that it has been surmised to be a variety of concepts including “bliss, wealth, church conflict, death, a woman's orgasm, The North Pole, tuberculosis, an

infamous court case, vivisection, luck...”. According to Gardner (1962: 22), LC himself, however, has said that “[he’s] very much afraid [he] didn’t mean anything but nonsense!” and that he probably just wanted to depict a search for something completely meaningless.

Jabberwocky is a nonsense poem Alice reads at the start of her adventures in *Through the Looking-Glass*. Eight of the nonsense words LC made up for *Jabberwocky* are used in *The Hunting of the Snark*, which inevitably links the two tightly together. Both of them are nonsense poems, but *Jabberwocky* could be considered more nonsensical because nearly every word used in it requires some explanation to understand it fully. Some of the words were explained by Humpty Dumpty later on in *Through the Looking-Glass* and some of those explanations differ slightly from LC’s own initial definitions, which creates multiple levels of meaning. In *The Annotated Alice*, Gardner (1960: 197) explains that, when Alice first reads the poem, she puts the essence of the poem into words perfectly, stating that “it seems to fill my head with ideas - only I don’t exactly know what they are!”. The poem is filled with words that do not actually mean anything, but it still manages to paint a powerful picture in the mind of the reader using familiar sounds.

Gardner (1960: 192) expresses that *Jabberwocky* is the greatest nonsense poem ever written in English and that it was very popular among late 19th century schoolboys, in particular. In fact, some of the neologisms became common in people’s vocabulary very quickly, which is partly why the crossover of neologisms into the Snark story is such an interesting object of study. In *The Annotated Alice*, Gardner (1960: 191) mentions that LC wrote the first stanza of *Jabberwocky* in 1855, naming it “Stanza of Anglo-Saxon Poetry”. He uses medieval-looking lettering and the character combination ‘y^e’ instead of the word ‘the’ to make the reader feel like they are reading something in Middle or Early Modern English. This is an effect that adds difficulty to the already daunting task of translating a poem that barely includes any real words. In his translation of the poem, Risto Järv chose

to add elements of old Estonian folk songs or runic songs (*'regilaulud'*) and use runic verse (*'regivärss'*) in order to domesticate the medieval look and feel. Only his 1993 translation, *Jorruiline*, will be used for this discussion because Soomre wrote *Snargijaht* based on this specific translation.

In the next part, the most popular and, consequently, the most translated and often researched work of LC, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, will be discussed. Studies that featured *The Hunting of the Snark* as a translatable work of fiction very rarely focused on it and, in most of them, it was only mentioned in relation to Alice's adventures. The story of the Snark is linked to that of Alice in a very minor way, as discussed above, but the writing itself in both works is similar because of LC's unique style. As the objective of this thesis is to discuss the translation of wordplay, using the example of the translation of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is the best option because it has many examples of wordplay and is most widely studied.

1.3 Translation problems in LC's work exemplified by Alice's Adventures

As translation studies often only include *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and exclude other works by LC, research to support and guide making new observations about the translation of *The Hunting of the Snark* is hard to find. LC, however, uses similar techniques for creating wordplay in each of his works, which is why I will be able to make generalisations on problems regarding LC's translation using the example of Alice's adventures. The context for those stories is fairly well-established because the author himself has made a considerable amount of comments on it, but although many authors have translated and commented on LC's work, scholars do not always agree on specific methods of translation, leaving room for subjectivity. When it comes to relaying poems, numerous translators have even been criticised for the choices they made (explained

below).

The studies most often referred to in this section research the translation of *Alice in Wonderland* into a variety of languages. In “Alice in France or Can Lewis Carroll Be Translated?”, Rickard (1975) studied the book’s French translation and Martin (2008) did the same in Finnish with “Looking-Glass Reflections: Norms in translating Lewis Carroll”. The works of both Aas (2004) and Naarits (2014), “The Reception of *Alice in Wonderland* and *Winnie-the-Pooh* by Estonian Children: Issues of Translation and Translatability” and “*Lewis Carrolli „Alice imedemaal“ valitud luuletuste tõlgete analüüs*”, respectively, are based on the book’s Estonian translation, but they focus on different aspects. In her thesis, Naarits (2014) examines the translation of parodied poems. Both her and Aas used Jaan Kross’ 1971 translation, but Naarits compared the translations of poems made by Linda Bakis and Ants Oras (1940) and Orvi Käsper and Eve Osa (2002) as well.

As mentioned above, Aas studies the translation Jaan Kross made in 1971 and attempts to find out why *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* was not as well-received among children as *Winnie-the-Pooh*. Her hypothesis is that the translation was too literal and should have focused less on the actual meaning and accuracy because children value simplicity, playfulness and jokes. This leads to some inconsistency between researchers’ opinions because Martin (2008: 20), a Finnish translator who comments on the norms of translating LC’s works at length, states that a good translation does not require sacrifices or including less of one aspect to make room for another.

According to Kullmann (2015: 47), *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* combines in itself many linguistic characteristics that are notoriously hard to translate or even to understand. Aas (2004: 11) notes that, after publishing the story, LC himself thought that it was untranslatable. Rickard (1975) records instances of double meanings, gibberish, puns, wordplay, parody and many more. All of these will hereinafter be discussed as wordplay if

referred to as a whole since all of them, to some degree, involve being playful with words.

Rickard (1975: 45) states that the goal of a translator should be to convey the “spirit” of a text. All instances of wordplay in LC’s texts inevitably do not have exact translation matches and here, Rickard (1975: 46) emphasises the importance of finding good equivalents, which is a sign of a good translator. He mentions instances of gibberish and fallacies in logic as easy to translate because there are no hidden meanings involved and using word-for-word translation is possible. Issues start arising when discussing the translation of characters’ names, especially in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, as most of them are from English nursery rhymes or have a double meaning. Aas (2004: 15) refers to the Estonian translation made by Jaan Kross where he left some of the names completely untranslated and resorted to annotations in order to make things clearer for the reader. According to Rickard (1975: 50-51), however, various French translators opted to either translate the names directly or to explain the nature of the character in its name. It is important to note that the first people to attempt translating LC’s work were French and received aid from the writer himself (Aas 2004: 12). According to Aas (2004: 12), it is very noticeable that instances of wordplay are harder to translate into Estonian than they are into French because of similarities between English and French.

A particularly interesting factor regarding *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, which is somewhat related to *The Hunting of the Snark*, is the translation of poems or nursery rhyme parodies, which was the focus of Naarits’ research. Rickard (1975: 53) explains that the translators had to consider many equally important aspects: rhythm, rhyme, meaning and parody, all of which, in the ideal realm, have to be adequately translated. According to him, LC had advised French translators to disregard the literal meaning of the poems and opt for parodying nursery rhymes that are well-known in their own country and language.

Rickard (1975: 53-54), Aas (2004: 24) and Naarits (2014: 42) all note similar trends in

this regard as most of the translators they discussed chose not to take the advice; Rickard and Aas even criticised the translators for the same reason. Rickard (1975: 54) mentions a few translators who tried to follow LC's advice, but, according to him, some of them just gave up halfway through or did not manage to parody the poems they found in their own language well enough. Naarits (2014: 30) made a similar observation for the Estonian translations and noted that only one of the latest poems made by Käsper and Osa in 2002 featured a well-known Estonian nursery rhyme although no aspect of it was actually parodied. Here, Aas (2004: 24) highlights the necessity of using translators who are writers themselves for this kind of work. Since LC had considered the most important thing to be that translations use domestic poems and parody them, translation alone is not enough any more and actual writers might be better-equipped to use their creative liberty and find fitting equivalents to each poem. As *The Hunting of the Snark* is itself a long series of nonsense poems, it creates similar challenges for conveying rhythm, rhyme and meaning as *Alice in Wonderland*. Problems regarding parodied domestic nursery rhymes, however, are not as important because they do not have an important role in the Snark Hunt.

Many of the conclusions that the researchers discussed above have made on this topic are useful for analysing Soomre's translation. Among other things, their thoughts on character translation are important to note because LC often enriches his characters' names with multiple meanings or implications. Proposed meanings to the Snark hunt as a whole are useful to keep in mind as well because hidden meanings to the story might change the translator's mind and make him less inclined to translate literally. Finally, because retaining rhythm and rhyme is an important aspect about *The Hunting of the Snark*, it might be interesting to see whether it influenced Soomre's translation. The next section will be analysing Soomre's translation of specific words or phrases associated with wordplay.

2. Discussing the translation of *The Hunting of the Snark*

2.1 Methodology

I have divided the aspects of translation to be discussed into two groups. The first and larger group includes neologisms and portmanteau words that have been either borrowed from *Jabberwocky* or created for *The Hunting of the Snark*. I will explain the neologisms, give examples of their use by citing the text and analyse their etymology in both Estonian and English. After that, I will compare the original to its translation and attempt to explain how the translator made his choices according to my own conclusions.

The second group is not as clear-cut as the first because it consists of a variety of elements. There are many neologisms in the story that can all be discussed together, but the other forms of wordplay would not all fit under the same specific subcategory. For that reason, I will discuss them as completely individual instances and only draw parallels between them when a comparison can be made. I will analyse them in the same way as the neologisms (if applicable) by providing background information, analysing the method of wordplay in the original language and discussing how the translator managed to convey it. Finally, I will provide some conclusions that can be drawn from this research.

2.2 Neologisms and portmanteau words

The Oxford English Dictionary defines neologisms as new words or words that have recently been coined. Portmanteau words, on the other hand, consist of two or more already existing words melted together. All of the words I will discuss in this chapter are (or were thought of by the writer as) neologisms and most of them are portmanteau words as well. ‘Snark’ and ‘Boojum’ are words original to *The Hunting of the Snark* and others were borrowed from the poem *Jabberwocky*, which is included in LC’s *Through the*

Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There. As *Jabberwocky* was translated into Estonian by Järv and not Soomre, there is little information about the thought process that went into creating the words, but a variety of assumptions can be made based on the meaning and etymology of the neologisms.

For ease of understanding, I will quote stanzas from the poem in both English and Estonian and highlight the specific neologisms I am going to discuss in bold. All of the stanzas will be taken from ‘*Snargijaht*’ because the book provides both LC’s original poem and Soomre’s translation side-by-side. After that, I will point out the meaning and etymology of these words in the original language based on previous research and point out the same for the translation based on my own research and opinion.

But oh, **beamish** nephew, beware of the day,
If your **Snark** be a **Boojum**! For then
You will softly and suddenly vanish away
And never be met with again (70)

Kuid tea, **erav** õepoeg, ja see pole luul,
kui **Snark** on sul **Kõmak**, siis peagi
sa pehmelt ja äkitselt lakkad kui tuul
ja rohkem sust keegi ei teagi. (71)

As mentioned before, the meaning of the word ‘Snark’ is very elusive, just as the writer intended it to be. For example, LC (2010: 56-58) describes the Snark with vague details in the second part of the poem that he titled “Fit the Second” through the words of one of the Snark hunters, mentioning its tendency to get up late, its distaste towards humour and its “fondness for bathing machines”. LC grants the reader little insight about the Snark’s appearance as well, implying only that there are multiple types of Snarks who vary in appearance. Soomre (2010: 37) relays the words of LC’s childhood friend, according to whom LC had revealed that ‘Snark’ is a portmanteau word from ‘snail’ (*tigu*) and ‘shark’ (*hai*). Another option Soomre (2010: 37) mentioned is that ‘Snark’ could be a mixture of ‘snarl’ (*lõrisema*) and ‘bark’ (*haukuma*). Here, he highlights the option of translating ‘Snark’ as ‘*lõrk*’, a combination of the last two words in Estonian, however, he still opts for leaving the Snark as it is. In terms of continuity, that is the best option because many other translators left ‘Snark’ unchanged as well (*Чарк* or ‘Snark’ in Russian, *Snark*

in French, *Schnark* in German and so on).

In “Fit The Second”, LC (2010: 58) first revealed that the Snark who the crew was looking for might turn out to be a Boojum instead. This creature is even more mysterious than the Snark since LC gives no specific information on its appearance or personality. Context clues indicate, however, that the Boojum is a specific kind of Snark and a fearsome creature who the crew does not want to run into. Gardner (1962: 61) mentions some theories about the word’s etymology and suggests that it most likely includes the exclamation ‘boo!’. He notes that some researchers have thought that ‘fee, fi, fo, fum!’ and ‘boohoo’ or ‘boogieman’ might have been an influence as well. In any case, LC probably used expressions or onomatopoeias in the portmanteau word in order to highlight the creature’s unimaginable nature and the word ‘boo!’ or ‘boogieman’ in order to show how much the creature scares the Snark hunters. If the word ‘Boojum’ does originate from the onomatopoeic ‘boo!’ in English, it is only logical to think of an equivalent in Estonian as well. Järv and Soomre both used ‘*Kõmak*’, which, according to the online dictionary of Mulgi dialect (“*Mulgi sõnastik*”), signifies a loud bang. ‘Boo!/boogieman’ and ‘*kõmak*’ definitely do not have the same meaning, but the effect of the word has been preserved as a loud bang can scare people as well. The word ‘*kõmakas*’ in Estonian means the same thing, but it is clear why Järv used ‘*Kõmak*’, because he favoured words with an archaic feel and as the use of dialects is decreasing, they could be considered less modern than the official Estonian language. This time, Soomre did not change Järv’s ‘*Kõmak*’ into a modern version (‘*kõmakas*’), perhaps because the original word contained just the right amount of syllables he needed for the rhythm to work.

‘Beamish’ is the first neologism taken from *Jabberwocky*, which, according to Gardner (1962: 64), is actually not an entirely new word but a very rare or archaic one instead. Gardner points out that *The Oxford English Dictionary* has traced the word back to

1530 as ‘beamyshe’, a variant of ‘beaming’, meaning “shining brightly” or “radiant” and that is evident from the OED’s website as well. Some other dictionaries, like Merriam-Webster, for example, credit LC with the first known use of the word since it is so rare. The Estonian version of the word in the translation is ‘erav’, which does not actually mean anything, contrary to its English equivalent. Since ‘erav’ is not an already existing word, the translator chose to make an Estonian portmanteau out of words that have a similar meaning to ‘beamish’. Those words might include ‘elav’, ‘elevil’ and ‘särav’ (lively, excited and shining), which are all great matches to represent the meaning of ‘beamish’.

The Bellman looked **uffish** and wrinkled his brow.
 “If only you’d spoken before!
 It’s excessively awkward to mention it now,
 With the Snark, so to speak, at the door! (78)

“Miks seni ei kostnud sa mitte üks torts?
 Nüüd hilja on rääkida, mees,”
 (näis Kellamees **sürge**, tal otsa ees korts)
 “kui Snark nagu värava ees! (79)

Gardner (1962: 67) reports that, in one of his letters to a young friend, LC defined ‘uffish’ as “a state of mind when the voice is gruffish, the manner roughish, and the temper huffish”. Gruffish and roughish both essentially mean ‘slightly rough’ or ‘hoarse’. The Oxford English Dictionary, however lists ‘huffish’ as the only origin word of ‘uffish’ and defines it as “arrogant, insolent” or “petulant” (rude, immodest or bad-tempered). Thus, the word has a variety of meanings and it is hard to find an appropriate Estonian equivalent. Since there seems to be a play on the suffix -ish, finding a similar suffix in Estonian would have been an option as well, but the translator has not taken that route. The best assumption would be that we are dealing with a portmanteau word again and one of its parts could be ‘sünge’. Although it is not the best match definition-wise (meaning dark/grim), ‘sünge’ only has a one-letter difference with ‘sürge’. Regardless, ‘sürge’ is a functional word here because it sounds much like it would be a real word in Estonian, which could be one of the main goals of the translator.

The Beaver went simply **galumphing** about,
At seeing the Butcher so shy:
And even the Baker, though stupid and stout,
Made an effort to wink with one eye. (86)

Kus Kõõsner nii argles, seal Kobras just kargles
siis **hõissides** ette ja taha.
Ja koguni Kokk, kel tõllakil moka,
sai peaaegu muigega maha. (87)

According to Gardner (1960: 196), as a true neologism, ‘galumphing’ was first used by LC and added to the OED in 1871. The most valuable information about the word’s presumed origin is available on the OED’s website, which speculates that it combines the words ‘gallop’ and ‘triumphant’. The OED provides a disclaimer as well, stating that ‘galumphing’ varies in meaning and is often used to signify heavy galloping or moving in a clumsy manner. According to Gardner (1960: 196), however, LC most likely intended its definition to be “to march on exultingly with irregular bounding movements”. Soomre (2010: 91) explains that, in *Jorruline*, the word is translated as ‘*hõissidessa*’ by Järv in order to mimic an archaic way of speaking, but Soomre provides a contemporary version: ‘*hõissides*’. Soomre modernised another one of the neologisms originally translated by Järv (‘*viugusivad*’), which will be discussed below, in the same way. The words that come to mind first when looking at ‘*hõissides*’ are ‘*hõisates*’ (joyfully shouting/exclaiming) and ‘*marssides*’ (marching). This solution fits well with the definition of the word ‘galumphing’, but not so well with its presumed origin: there is nothing to suggest galloping and being victorious is only slightly associated with the word ‘*hõisates*’.

"As to temper the **Jubjub**'s a desperate bird,
Since it lives in perpetual passion:
Its taste in costume is entirely absurd -
It is ages ahead of the fashion: (102)

“Natuurilt on **Riksraks** üks meeletu liik,
sest lõputus kires ta kulgeb,
kostüümide poolest on täielik friik -
moest sajandeid ees olla julgeb. (103)

No source mentions why LC might have used the repetition of the syllable ‘jub’ to create this creature’s name, which leads to the conclusion that it was created randomly. This leaves translators with a lot of creative freedom with the only requirement of using repetition in their original word. Apart from the couple of archaisms that Soomre converted into contemporary versions, the Jubjub (along with another word that will be discussed

below) is unique because it is one of the only words Soomre fundamentally changed from Järv's original translation (from '*Lag-Lag lind*' to '*Riksraksu lind*'). Soomre (2010: 91) mentions that he had to change the creature's name in order to preserve the rhythm of the poem. Järv made an interesting choice by using '*Lag-Lag*' as the bird's name: it has no meaning similarly to 'Jubjub', but, keeping in mind that "*Jorruline*" ("Jabberwocky") is written in a way that mimics traditional Estonian folk songs and runic verse, the word sounds very foreign. Soomre's version, on the other hand, actually means something in Estonian. 'Riks-raks' and 'rigin-ragin' are onomatopoeic words that signify a crackling or crunching noise and are used when breaking tree branches, for example.

The Beaver had counted with scrupulous care,
Attending to every word:
But it fairly lost heart, and **outgrabe** in despair,
When the third repetition occurred. (96)

Küll kõigest väest Kobras - ei aidanud muu -
ükshaaval neid loendada püüdis,
kuid **viugatas** juhmilt, kui Kõösneri suu
veel kolmast kord kinnitust hüüdis. (97)

Through the words of Humpty Dumpty, LC (1960: 272) offers a fun explanation to the word 'outgrabe': "something between bellowing and whistling, with a kind of sneeze in the middle". Gardner (1960: 191) mentions that the first edition of *Jabberwocky* included LC's explanation of the word 'outgrabe', past tense of the verb 'to outgribe', meaning 'squeaked'. Gardner states that the word is derived from 'grike' or 'shrike', better-known today as 'creak' or 'shriek'. This might explain the second part of the word ('-grabe'), but 'out-' creates associations with the verb 'to cry out' or the noun 'outcry' which would be good matches considering the meaning of the word as well. In *Snargijaht*, Soomre (2010: 113) mentions that Järv's translation of 'outgrabe' was '*viugusivad*', which is another archaism, and that he changed it to '*viugus/viugatas*'. The difference between the suffixes just indicates the length of the activity, the former signifying a longer period of time while the latter signifies a short burst. The words that Soomre most likely melted together to make '*viugus/viugatas*' are '*vingus/vingatas*' ('whined') and '*niugus/niugatas*' ('whimpered'), which create a concise meaning because they are nearly synonymous and

fit the intentions of LC as well.

But while he was seeking with thimbles and care,
A **Bandersnatch** swiftly drew nigh
And grabbed at the Banker, who shrieked in despair,
For he knew it was useless to fly. (130)

Sel ajal kui otsis, käes kahvlid ja hool,
ta juurde üks **Krahmatümp** sigis
ja haaras. Mees karjus kui kaotaja pool,
sest taipas end olevat pigis. (131)

In the seventh chapter (“Fit the Seventh”), LC (2010: 130-132) describes how a Bandersnatch attempts to grab the Banker with its “frumious jaws” and that is all of the information the reader is ever given about the characteristics of the creature. As for its name, Gardner (1962: 89) refers to Eric Partridge, who has speculated that the first part, ‘bander-’, might be derived from ‘bandog’ (‘watchdog’) or ‘bandar’ (a Hindustani word for ‘rhesus monkey’). The OED, however, defines ‘bander’ as an archaic way to refer to a person who has joined a band or a league of some sort. The first explanation would refer to the beastly qualities of the creature whereas the second would reference the people who it might snatch, so translators are left with multiple choices of interpretation. Once again, Soomre (2010: 139) explains that, in order to preserve the poem’s rhythm, he had to change Järv’s version of the name of the creature fundamentally. He mentions that Järv translated the monster as ‘Viiruvilbus’ while he opted for ‘Krahmatümp’ in order to reduce the number of syllables. Järv’s ‘Viiruvilbus’ is clearly derived from the word ‘vilbus’ which means both ‘viirastus/kummitus’ (apparition/ghost) and ‘temp/paha komme’ (trick/prank/bad habit) in the Mulgi dialect. Both of these definitions fit the creature’s mysterious character and actions according to the plots of *Jabberwocky* and *The Hunting of the Snark*, but there is no correlation between the origins of ‘Bandersnatch’ and ‘Viiruvilbus’. Soomre’s ‘Krahmatümp’ seems more connected to the etymology of ‘Bandersnatch’ because ‘krahmama’ (from ‘krahma-’) is a possible translation match for ‘snatch’. ‘Tümp’ does not have a clear meaning and is not directly connected to ‘Bandersnatch’, but it is sometimes used as an onomatopoeia in order to describe a thumping sound.

Without rest or pause - while those **frumious** jaws
Went savagely snapping around -
He skipped and he hopped, and he floundered and flopped
Till fainting he fell to the ground. (132)

Kui kaua sa jõuad... sest **vihkjalt** lööb lõuad
su poole too hirmkuriloom!
Mees kargas ja keksles ja rapsis ja peksles,
siis kukkus kui üleküps ploom. (133)

In the preface to the Snark hunt, LC (2010: 15) comments that ‘frumious’ is a portmanteau word derived from ‘fuming’ and ‘furious’, so the word essentially just means ‘very angry’. Since this explanation is in the preface of the story, Soomre (2010: 15) has translated it and had to provide his own reasoning for how ‘*vihkjas*’ was made although its original translation is from Järv. Soomre regards ‘*vihkjas*’ as a mix of ‘*vihane*’ (angry) and ‘*süinkjas*’ (darkish or gloomy) which differs slightly from the original meaning. There are some fitting synonyms for ‘*vihane*’ in Estonian, but some, for example ‘*tige/kuri*’, are probably too short to make a portmanteau word that looks similar to ‘frumious’. ‘*Raevukas*’ would have been an option, but Järv used a word with the suffix ‘-jas’, probably in order to mimic the English ‘-ous’ instead.

Down he sank in a chair - ran his hands through his hair
And chanted in **mimsiest** tones
Words whose utter inanity proved his insanity,
While he rattled a couple of bones. (136)

Ta toolile viskus ja juukseid seal kiskus
ning **härmetu** lalina hulka
puht jaburdust ajas (jah, ravi ta vajab),
käes klõpsumas paar kõlapulka. (137)

Gardner (1960: 191) mentions that, in his first edition of *Jabberwocky* (1855), LC defines the word ‘mimsy’ as ‘unhappy’ and says that it is similar to ‘mimserable’ and ‘miserable’. In *Through the Looking-glass*, however, LC (1960: 272) speaks through the words of Humpty Dumpty, saying that ‘mimsy’ is a mix of ‘flimsy’ and ‘miserable’. The OED traces the origins of ‘mimsy’ as far as the 18th century to the word ‘mim’ meaning “reserved or restrained /.../ modest, demure”. With the suffix ‘-sy’ (clumsy, flimsy), the OED dates ‘mimsy/mimsey/mimzy’ back to LC’s time defining it as “careful; affected” or “weak” whereas Gardner (1960: 195) reports the definition to be “prim, prudish” and “contemptible”. Keeping all of these meanings in mind, it seems that the translator felt inclined towards the word ‘mim’ and LC’s own comment because ‘*härmetu*’, in Estonian, according to Soomre (2010: 141), is a clear portmanteau word combining ‘*hädine*’ and

‘*armetu*’ (both can be translated as ‘weak’, ‘pathetic’ or ‘miserable’).

2.3 Acrostics, double meanings and more

In this section, I will discuss a variety of instances of wordplay identified in *The Hunting of the Snark* by Gardner and analyse how Soomre managed to convey them. In my discussion, I will include the acrostic poem at the start of the book, a few words with double meanings, a parodied poem and character names. First, I will identify the specific nature of the wordplay in English and explain how it was translated into Estonian. If necessary, I will provide background information such as hidden meanings or details from LC’s personal life that might have influenced Soomre’s translation. Finally, I will attempt to explain why Soomre chose these specific translation options over others.

An acrostic poem is typically a poem where the first letter of each verse spells out a word or a phrase. Gardner (1962: 20) mentions that LC wrote around 80 inscriptions for his first editions of *The Hunting of the Snark* and many of them were acrostic poems spelling the names of the young girls to whom he sent the books. The official version of *The Hunting of the Snark* is dedicated to Gertrude Chataway, but, in addition to spelling out her name with the first letters of each verse, he began each stanza with a word that sounds or looks like a part of her name (‘girt’, ‘rude’, ‘chat’ and ‘away’). Translating this poem and keeping it acrostic must have been a difficult task because the girl’s name contains letters that are very rarely included in Estonian words (c, w and y), but Soomre found a solution. He used foreign words for ‘C’ (*cum laude*) and ‘Y’ (*yin-yang*) and the name of an island (Wight) for ‘W’. The latter was included because Soomre (2010: 11) mentioned that LC met Gertrude Chataway while he was vacationing on the Isle of Wight. The Estonian version of the poem did not, however, include parts of the girl’s name in front of its stanzas because leaving them unchanged would have looked too awkward and

there are no good equivalents in Estonian that would at least sound like her name.

As the book's extended title implies, LC relays the story of the Snark hunt in eight parts that he calls 'fits'. In his comments to *The Hunting of the Snark*, Gardner (1962: 43) mentions that the word 'fit' could signify both a part of a poem or a "convulsion". This double meaning is important because, as Soomre (2010: 37) comments, LC wrote this poem while he was staying in Guildford with his cousin and godson, Charlie Wilcox, in 1874. According to the website Exploring Surrey's Past, Wilcox was ill with a lung inflammation and passed away later that year. The "agony in eight fits" that LC was describing could very well have been his cousin's although LC never admitted that. The OED lists a number of definitions for the word 'fit' that would be suitable to describe this traumatic event. These definitions include "conflict", "a painful /.../ experience", "a bodily state [ending in] death" and "a sudden /.../ attack of illness". Soomre (2010: 37) translated 'fit' as 'puhk', which, according to the Dictionary of Standard Estonian, could mean 'juhtum' ('case/instance') or 'hetk' ('moment') or be short for 'puhang' ('burst'), which could also be associated with illness: 'tõvepuhk' ('bout of illness/ fit'). The word's association with illness is clear, but it only remotely signifies a section of a poem. Nevertheless, the double meaning is effectively conveyed.

Another double meaning Gardner (1962: 94) noted was when the Baker was "wagging his head" as he found the Snark. Commenting on that action, the Butcher jokingly says: "He was always a desperate wag!". According to the OED, combined with referring to the action of wagging his head, the other definition of 'wag' that could have been implied here is "mischievous boy" or "habitual joker". Soomre translated "wagging his head" as "*noogutab pead*" and "He was always a desperate wag!" as "*Tal muud pole pealuus kui pahn!*" ("He doesn't have anything but junk in his head!"). The double meaning of 'wag' is not conveyed in this translation and the Baker being mischievous or a

joker is not apparent either. The only aspect of meaning that is present in both the original and the translation is the negative connotation of being “a desperate wag” as having a “head full of junk” could not be considered a good trait either.

A defining feature of *The Hunting of the Snark* is the names of its characters: all of the human names and two of the creatures start with the letter ‘B’. When asked why LC made the decision to start the names of most characters with ‘B’, Gardner (1962: 53) reports that LC’s answer was simply “Why not?”. Although LC himself did not have anything particular in mind with that letter, some researchers, including Gardner (1962: 28), think that it signifies the word ‘be’ and reveals that the whole hunt was about “existential agony” and the fear that human life is meaningless. In Estonian, keeping the letter ‘B’ would have been very hard or even impossible because very few words begin with that letter. The double meaning is inevitably lost in translation because there are no letters that would sound like the equivalent of ‘be’ in Estonian. Even if Soomre had used the letter ‘O’ (for ‘olema’), the association that the letter ‘O’ in front of every character’s name stands for ‘olema’ would be difficult for a reader to make.

The fact that the characters’ names are indicative of their occupations makes translating even more of a challenge. Soomre (2010: 40) highlights the Beaver’s character as an example because the name of the animal can be translated in two distinct ways - as *Piiber* (archaic version) or as *Kobras* (modern version). Soomre chose *Kobras*, which means that other characters had to start with the letter ‘K’ as well, although ‘P’ would have been a natural fit for a few of them: *Pankur* for the Banker and *Pagar* for the Baker. Ultimately those characters became *Kassiir* (‘the cashier’) and *Kokk* (‘the cook’) instead, so the bases of their occupations (money and food) were retained. The actual motive for using the letter ‘K’ could have been the character of *Köösner* (the Butcher) who had to be associated with animals in a negative way for the Beaver to be afraid of him, as LC (2010:

34) insinuates. ‘*Lihunik*’ (‘butcher’) would not have been a viable option since it starts with the wrong letter, but ‘*Köösnar*’ is a good alternative because it signifies a person in the fur trade.

2.4 Results of the analysis

It is clear that Soomre had to do extensive research in order to translate *The Hunting of the Snark* and considered a variety of different sources of information before deciding how to translate the words or phrases discussed in this thesis. This is why a single factor that his translation was most influenced by cannot be pinpointed. Research did, however, uncover a few elements and sources that Soomre seemed to have focused on more than others.

One of those elements was continuity – the knowledge of how specific words and characters had been translated before and the intent to preserve as much of the previous translations as possible. This was important to consider for the neologisms, in particular, because Järv had already provided a translation for them in *Jabberwocky* and for the word ‘Snark’ as well because it had been kept the same in a variety of foreign translations. In some cases, however, continuity was secondary when it would have affected the original rhythm of the poem, which Soomre meticulously preserved throughout his translation.

In terms of the actual meaning the translated neologisms conveyed, Järv and Soomre seemed to favour the etymology specified by LC or by Gardner in his *The Annotated Snark*. Any additional meanings or aspects of etymology that could have been found in the OED, for example, were not noticeable in the final translations of the words. An interesting aspect of Soomre’s translation is that he slightly changed some of Järv’s neologisms to their more modern version as well.

In the second part, which included the analysis of other forms of wordplay besides

neologisms and portmanteau words, it is hard to make generalisations since all of the instances were inherently different. It is safe to say, however, that Soomre attempted to convey the multitude of meanings LC had contained in each of his uses of wordplay as effectively as possible. Every facet of meaning, however, cannot be translated because a perfect equivalent to each word in English simply does not exist in Estonian. The acrostic poem remained acrostic, although, inevitably, not to its fullest extent, and one of the two discussed double meanings was effectively conveyed in the translation as well. Character translations required an entirely unique approach because they had to start with the same letter and represent the characters' occupations. Although the first letter had to be changed and the sense that 'B' could represent 'be' was lost, the characters' jobs were closely related to the original text and their relationships stayed the same.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to highlight instances of wordplay that LC included in *The Hunting of the Snark* (1876), compare it to Soomre's translation, *Snargijaht* (2010), and analyse why the translator made his creative choices. The first section of the thesis provided an overview of the research that has been done on this topic before and the second section discussed specific instances of wordplay that were divided into two groups. The first group included neologisms and portmanteau words that LC used in this poem and the second group combined in itself all of the other types of wordplay.

The main conclusion that could be drawn from Soomre's translation of neologisms and portmanteau words was that he was familiar with a number of sources that defined or speculated on the etymology and meaning of the words. The aspects that most influenced him in making the final creative decisions were continuity, rhythm and the definitions provided by LC and Gardner.

The results of the analysis were more mixed in the second part that included other types of wordplay. In some cases, Soomre managed to find translation matches that accurately conveyed the multitude of meanings and fit the intentions of LC. Every single facet of meaning or form, however, could not be translated and, in some cases, Soomre had to resort to providing a literal translation instead.

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RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL
ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

Saskia Tullino

**Strategies used by Mati Soomre in
Translating Lewis Carroll's *The
Hunting of the Snark* (Mati Soomre
kasutatud strateegiad Lewis Carrolli
"Snargijahi" tõlkimiseks)**

Bakalaureusetöö

2021

Lehekülgede arv: 32

Annotatsioon:

(Eesmärk, ülesehitus, metoodika, sisukokkuvõte, peamised tulemused)

Käesoleva bakalaureusetöö eesmärk on leida ja lahti seletada peamised strateegiad, mida Mati Soomre kasutas Lewis Carrolli "Snargijahi" (ingl. k. "*The Hunting of the Snark*") tõlkimiseks.

Töö koosneb kahest peamisest osast: kirjanduse ülevaatest ja tõlkeanalüüsist, millest viimane on omakorda jagatud kaheks. Esimene osa arutleb üldiselt nii autori kui tõlkija üle, annab vajaliku tausta "Snargijahi" mõistmiseks ning tutvustab võimalikke tõlkeprobleeme teose "Alice imedemaal" näitel. Teine osa vaatlleb eraldi neologisme/sumadansõnu ja muid sõnamängu tüüpe.

Bakalaureusetööst selgub, et Soomre on oma tõlkes valikute tegemisel lähtunud peamiselt eelnevatest tõlgetest, luule rütmi säilitamisest ning Carrolli ja Gardneri kommentaaridest.

Märksõnad: tõlketeadus, Inglise kirjandus, Lewis Carroll, "Snargijaht", "Alice imedemaal", sõnamäng, etümoloogia.

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