

## Jabowocky or: Lipolating Nonsense

Tikki Saram      Dublin, Ireland

*'Twas stimmig, and the stivy toves  
Did gyne and gimbey in the wabe;  
So mimsy stood the bomogoves,  
And the mome caths outscabe.*

For some time now I have been engaging in writing lipolations of the greater poetic works of the English language — that is to say, rewriting them to eliminate all instances of the letters 'l' and 'r'.<sup>1</sup>The process of lipolating a poem is fundamentally the same for the vast majority of works, and I soon became comfortable with the routine. Then I decided to tackle Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky", and suddenly I was thrown; back to being but a babe in the Woods of Poesy. It was time to put my thesaurus away and come up with a completely new approach.

Typically, writing a lipolation involves finding suitable synonyms for offending words and then shaping the entirety in accordance to the poetic form employed, which includes ensuring correct rhythm and rhyme. But what does one do when the words are simply the author's fancy, when they cannot be found in any thesaurus or dictionary? If the meaning of these words is derived exclusively from their form — the way they sound and their resemblances to other words — the only manner of proceeding is to base the lipolation on those same elements.

I decided to leave the opening/closing stanza for last due to its apparent difficulty — it contained next to no lexical meaning; it was, for the most part, complete nonsense. I began to work my way through the other stanzas in an unsystematic manner, reading through them repeatedly, jotting down ideas and piecing the lipolation together. I decided that 'badumpling' sounds like the same kind of jumpy movement as "galumphing"; I liked the repetition of 'oo' in "whooming in the toogey wood" and figured that replacing 'frabjous' with 'fabjous' is acceptable and strengthens the 'fabulous' element. The titular

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1 Or more correctly the sounds /l/ and /r/, so a silent 'l' like that in 'palm' is acceptable. This is due to the difficulty that Japanese speakers have with those sounds, since in Japanese they are a single phoneme. For more information about lipolations, see: Saram, Tikki. "Goodbye Lenore." Tikki's Thoughts, 16 August 2019, <https://tikkisaram.tumblr.com/post/187038449593/goodbye-lenore>

Jabberwock sounded similar to 'Jabbowock', especially when using a British pronunciation, so I went with that.

My lipolatory work required some sacrifices, however. I couldn't save the wonderful 'vorpal'; since I struggled to work around 'sword' and 'blade' I decided to replace it with an axe, which lent itself to a heavy adjective like 'womping'. This also meant I had to change 'snicker-snack'; I settled on 'smock and smack', which has the sadly sensical 'smack' but otherwise works well. I considered replacing 'burbled' with 'gadunking', but since that would be too similar to 'badumphing' I went for a screechy 'sheeded' instead, which isn't quite as good as the original onomatopoeia. I changed the 'Tumtum tree' to a 'Bombom bush' — not a problem in itself but it loses the internal rhyme. I struggled with "eyes of flame" (A common problem in lipolations is the unavailability of words relating to fire; the only reasonable one seems to be 'ignite') and decided to introduce a new nonsense word, 'abame', which I thought sounded appropriate.

After finishing up the body of the poem (I spent a long time on the final word, 'chortled'; I decided on 'chufted' due to its resemblance to 'chuffed'<sup>2</sup>) I went back to the opening stanza. Before writing anything, I decided to turn to Humpty Dumpty for help — this poem first appeared in *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There*, where Alice asks Humpty Dumpty to explain the first stanza to her. It turned out that "'brillig' means four o'clock in the afternoon — the time when you begin broiling things for dinner." Replacing broiling with steaming, I got 'stimmig'. 'Slithy' means "lithe and slimy", so replacing 'lithe' with 'active' we get something along the lines of 'stivy'; I liked the sound of 'stivy toves' and so I decided to keep it. Humpty Dumpty says "To 'gyre' is to go round and round like a gyroscope. To 'gimble' is to make holes like a gimlet." I tried to limit my changes to the sounds of those words, justifying the 'gyne' in a rather oblique way — since the 'gyro-' comes from the Greek 'gyros' for circle or ring,<sup>3</sup> we can take the 'n' from the Latin 'anulus' (ring) and replace the 'r' with it. Since a 'borogove' is a "thin shabby-looking bird" I decided on 'bomogoves', which reminded me slightly of flamingoes. 'Rath' is obviously reminiscent of 'rat'; I was going to use 'baths' but due to its existing meaning I settled on 'caths'. 'Outgribing' is "something between bellowing and whistling, with a kind of sneeze in the middle"; since I saw no connection there, I felt safe rendering it as

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2 Informal British: "Very pleased" — *OED*

3 According to the Online Etymology Dictionary, etymonline.com

'outscape', especially since the letters 'sc' fit well with the Old English feel of the stanza — and with that, this lipolation adventure of mine drew to a close.

So, after all that, here is my attempt at a lipolation of "Jabberwocky"; it is in no way definitive, but I hope that — at the very least! — it will pave the way for more skilled lipolators:

'Twas stimmig, and the stivy toves  
Did gyne and gimbey in the wabe;  
So mimsy stood the bomogoves,  
And the mome caths outscabe.

'And heed the Jabbowock, my son!  
The jaws that bite, the fangs that catch!  
Avoid the Jubjub beast, and shun  
The tumious Bandingsnatch!'

He took his womping axe in hand:  
Ages the manxome foe he sought —  
And then he stopped by the Bombom bush  
And stood sometime in thought.

And as in uffish thought he stood,  
The Jabbowock, its eyes abame,  
Came whooming in the toogey wood,  
And sheeded as it came!

One, two! One, two! And bam and bam  
The womping axe went smock and smack!  
And with it dead, he took its head  
And went badumpling back.

'Didst thou defeat the Jabbowock?  
Give me a hug, my beamish boy!  
O fabjous day! Ahoo! Ahay!  
He chufted in his joy.

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