

Joyce's *Ulysses* in Macedonian: Workshop in Progress

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Translating James Joyce's *Ulysses* is not an easy task in any language. From my personal experience (I have much, much to learn) it proved that translating it into Macedonian and in Cyrillic was (and still is both now and ever) quite a challenge. Oftentimes the texts of *Ulysses* seem unreadable and difficult to interpret, since every episode changes in technique, perspective, style, and register. Joyce does not put the reader at ease, let alone his translators. As a first-time reader, you can never be quite sure where do Stephen's or Bloom's inner thoughts begin or end or simply interrupt the narrator's story. To read and reread it aloud, to translate and metamorphosize *Ulysses* in your own language is surely an enjoyable, exciting, and gratifying experience. Yet, make no mistake, paradoxically, it is never a comfortable adventure. It needs perseverance. "There is nothing that cannot be translated," Joyce assures (qtd. in Ellmann, *James Joyce* 632). If translation is a never-ending process, it is by Joyce himself that we are willed to revamp our versions again and again to ensure Bloom's blooming Immortelles. Thus, this article gives a brief glimpse at life with Joyce and *Ulysses* beneath the blueglancing immortality of his crozier and pen.

Telemachus

Stately, slender Buck Marija came from the library stairhead, bearing a plump, green-covered book, gildedlettered: *Ulysses*. Date of publication 1937. Reprinted 1955 on Little Russell Street. The year my father was born. Curious coincidence. Now the year of the millennium. Aged nineteen. It took me three months to read during the winter. 'The very dead of winter' (Eliot 99).

Nestor

'You Cochrane!' (*U* 2.1) What city sent for you?

Twelve years later, aged almost thirty-two, in the midst of May, I began the project from scratch. A large selection of annotations and comments, always trying not to bypass any

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major issues. However, what I was looking for, and was fascinated by was his lucidness. The joy and rejoicing felt reading and re-reading Joyce and *Ulysses* was an aim to be achieved in my translation. Surprised how entire passages had stayed with me over those twelve years. I dived into the massive greenblue book without thinking if I'd ever make it to the shore. All future plans were locked away in a drawer, only the *snotgreen sea*.

Proteus

'Ineluctable modality of the visible: at least that if no more, thought through my eyes.' (U 3.1-2) Ineluctable task of the translator: be true to the original. Signatures of all things I was here to read. 'Shut your eyes and see' (U 3.9) commands Joyce. He commands and I am obeyed – to paraphrase Philippe Soupault in a review of the 1929 French translation of *Ulysses*: "Il commande et il est obéi" (296; in English: "He commands and I obeyed"). Heeding his command, I vowed to follow his footsteps. I stumbled, floundered, hesitated. I tottered, teetered. I pondered. The original was too clever to be "trapped" within a translation. I took his words very seriously; treated them 'liebend vielmehr und bis ins einzelner' [lovingly and in detail] (Benjamin 18). I was trying not be whimsical like Molly with her 'met him pike hoses' (U 8.112). There was certainly a metamorphosis. The translation must have its own life, its own course of living, ergo, its own struggles in life.

Calypso

'Mr Leopold Bloom ate with relish the inner organs of beasts and fowls' (U 4.1-2). The inner organs of my Macedonian translation of *Ulysses* were divided into two volumes. Editors' decision. In June 2013 the first volume was published (containing episodes 1-13 – I found it amusing to end the first volume with *Cuckoo!*) and the second volume (holding the much more complex episodes 14-18) came out the following December. The day opened wide yet in secret. The overall impression that this was an unreadable book, difficult to follow, untranslatable, concealing as Calypso, ceased. Always remember to play. To his French translator, Jacques Benoît-Méchin, Joyce humorously replied: 'I've put in so many enigmas and puzzles that it will keep the professors busy for centuries arguing over what I meant, and that's the only way of insuring one's immortality' (qtd. in Ellmann, *James Joyce* 521). Every book is an enigma, a labyrinth. The translator, as perhaps the most alert, attentive and careful reader, with a thread of paronomasia tries to escape the labyrinth, takes risks, regenerates and recreates literature.

Lotus Eaters

By lorries along the Stone Bridge in Skopje I walked soberly, past the Vardar River, with three crimson hardbound copies in my hands. June 5, 2013. All those sleepless nights, ‘with voices singing in [my] ears that this was all folly’ (Eliot 99), came to an end. ‘This birth was hard and bitter agony for me, like Death. [The day] was (you might say) satisfactory’ (Eliot 99).

Befuddled by Bloom’s theological musings, I strived hard to decode his inner monologues, yet another instance of firm refusal by Joyce to succumb to English syntax. ‘Who is my neighbour?’ (*U* 5.341). By June 5, 1917, Joyce had finished ‘Lotus Eaters’ (Ellmann *James Joyce* 416). And ninety-one years later my *Ulysses* was born anew.

Hades

At first it was like walking in the dark. Then you begin to see quite clear, as your eyes adjust to the underdarkworld night. The original language torments you and you tumble into the abyss of both languages. At times its unanswerable questions are nerve-racking. Who is the mysterious chap in the macintosh?

It is a test, that’s what it is – *Ulysses* tested the capacity of my native language. The translation decidedly strove to convey the entire complex inner orchestration of *Ulysses*, which is invisible, and it proves that even though I come from a small country (yet a Biblical country!), the Macedonian language is not essentially insignificant; instead, it is rich and has the capacity to express everything that is essentially important in this master work: to trace and articulate every nuance, shade, tone or touch. *Überleben*.

Aeolus

IN THE HEART OF THE MACEDONIAN METROPOLIS

Aeolus, the keeper of the winds, brings you a bit nearer to newspaper format parodies. The original lies open before you, and the translation struggles not to move from its railhead surrounded by the “right and left parallel clanging ringing” (*U* 7.10) of ambivalent meanings and orthographical errors.

Do as the Master does. ‘Omnium Gatherum’ (*U* 7.604). ‘ОМНИУМ ЗБИРШТИУМ’ (*Y* 154). But instead of imitating the sense of the original, you begin to mould your own language. According to the manner of meaning of the original (*Art des Meinens*), you make ‘both the original and the translation recognizable as the broken parts of the greater language, just as fragments are broken parts of a vessel’ (Benjamin 21). Since every

translation is essentially a fragment, an absolute or definite meaning can never be fully realised. Instead, it must resound according to its own nature, its own kind of *intentio*.

Lestrygonians

‘Pineapple rock, lemon platt, butter scotch’ (*U* 8.1). Lemon, caramel, scoopfuls of creams. Laestrygon, the son of Poseidon, the forefather of Lestrygonians, the wild tribe. Bloom feeds the seabirds. Mana. (*U* 8.79)

Reading closely. ‘I want the reader to understand always through suggestion rather than direct statement,’ admitted Joyce to Budgen (Budgen 21). Stay faithful to the original, yet stay free by liberating your own language. To quote Benjamin: ‘It is the task of the translator to release in his own language that pure language which is under the spell of another, to liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his re-creation of that work. For the sake of pure language he breaks through decayed barriers of his own language’ (22). With Joyce, translation is never finished, only abandoned. ‘Everything worth translating should be translated as many times as possible.’ (Weinberger 118). You can never step the same text twice.

Scylla and Charybdis

‘Urbane, to comfort them’ (*U* 9.1) – these linguistic monsters – you creepcrawl in the shadow pass Scylla and Charybdis. ‘Hold on to the now, the here, through which all future plunges to the past.’ (*U* 9.89). You wander and you wonder. Then you weep alone. And alone you rejoice.

Wandering Rocks

The superior, the very reverend my father, came to my room in our country house, that late August afternoon, so warm, and walked into the church with Bloom. ‘The cold smell of sacred stone called him.’ (*U* 5.338). He took the printed sheet of paper with the passage of Bloom’s entering All Hallows and started reading my translation. ‘The priest was rinsing out the chalice: then he tossed off the dregs smartly.’ (*U* 5.385) Wandering and wondering through the pages of my Bible. Putting sticky notes.

Sirens

Browse and burn in Sirens. To allow the resound of the original in your translation, not so much as a reproduction but as a harmony.

‘Miss Dunne clicked on the keyboard: 16 June 1904.’ (*U* 10.375-76)

Lying in hospital, Joyce scrawled in his notebook: ‘Today 16 of June 1924 twenty years after. Will anybody remember this date’ (qtd. in Ellmann, *James Joyce* 566). Yes, dear Jim, we do remember the date. *Sláinte!*

Cyclops

I was just passing the time of day with the Irish Polyphemus, the one-eyed giant abounding in songs and legends. A cyclopic conglomerate of thirty-three parodic passages comprising various linguistic and syntactical variations, complex compounds, changes in register, idiomatic phrases, hyperboles, parodies of Irish mythology – all gathered *en masse* – the fashionable international world of Miss Fir Conifer. Trapped in the cave of Cyclops and one-eye presence, ben Bloom the outsider, just like the prophet Elijah, who was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind and was lifted up by a chariot of fire (2 Kings 2:11-12), ascends to Sandymount ‘like a shot off a shovel’ (*U* 12.1918).

Nausicca

‘The summer evening had begun to fold the world in its mysterious embrace’ (*U* 13.1-2). The ‘Cuckoo’ (*U* 13.1304) at the end of this ‘namby-pamby jammy marmalady drawersy’ (Ellmann, *Selected Letters* 246) styled episode reminds me of the 13th century medieval English rota: *Sumer Is Icumen In*: ‘Lhude sing cuccu!’ [Summer is coming in, loudly sing cuckoo] (Quiller-Couch 1). ‘Sing cuccu!’.

Oxen of the Sun

Deshil Linguae Eamus. The literal English translation of Latin texts with references to Tacitus and Sallust. Twenty-five pieces of parodies of Anglo-Saxon literary tradition. A selection of 335 footnotes. A constant transfer from one register to another. Nightmare.

Circe

The marvellous dramatic piece, the dream land of *Ulysses* wherein layers of reality constantly change, and foreshadow and prefigure *Finnegans Wake*. Humour. Pain. Pleasure. Dream. While living in Trieste, he writes about the *nighttown* of Dublin. You encounter everything you know about literature in *Ulysses*: prose, poetry, drama. It extends beyond the limits of what we consider by definition to be a novel, or a strategic narrative. Understanding his strategy requires a deliberate strategy of our own.

Eumaeus

‘Preparatory to anything else’ (*U* 16.1), the translator had better be gifted with perceptiveness. The wherewithal, dedication and determination are necessary in order to be able to recreate all the pauses and noises of the original and to ensure the *afterlife* of their ‘secondbest’ text.

Ithaca

What parallel courses did the original text of *Ulysses* and the translation of *Ulysses* follow? Starting united both at normal walking pace they followed the intention of the author. The translator followed the sound of the words, and consecutive sentences; she strived to disclose the meaning of the words, especially the meaning hidden in idiomatic phrases; deconstructing the layers of multiform meanings, always digging deeper. It never is what it seems. Always approaching. Never fully catching, but always approaching.

Did the translator obey the signs of Joyce?

Yes, entering softly, she strived to grasp his carefully formed thoughts, his vigilantly monitored lapses of syntax, his nonsensical phrases, his puns, his “farts”, his “yawns”, his clever cunnings, his passion, his diligence, his persistence.

Penelope

‘Yes because I never did a thing like this before’ (*U* 18.1) yes because the rhythm here is in a sense unrepeatable not in a sense that it is unique but in a sense that even if the passages are read a thousand times each time they are read they are read differently somehow the rhythm of joy prevails always towards the end it is not musical but something completely different yes I will do it again once again yes I will yes

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