

The “Experience” of *Ulysses* in Romanian

ARLEEN IONESCU AND LAURENT MILESI

Abstract

This essay will look at Ivănescu’s acclaimed Romanian translation of Joyce’s novel from both a practical and a theoretical perspective. Following a general survey of its and the translator’s place within Romanian culture and history, among inchoate earlier attempts by other writers, it will then focus on several “cruxes” or themes (structural discrepancies between English and Romanian grammars, sexuality in Molly’s soliloquy and censorship, the translation of proper names and of networks of motifs) as well as on the styles of different chapters (“Proteus,” “Cyclops,” “Penelope”), using textual close-ups in order to assess the consistency of the rendering. The analysis will be framed at each step by recent approaches developed by Lawrence Venuti and especially Antoine Berman in favour of a more ethical dimension of the experience of translation, whereby the task of the translator is to open up the target language to the foreignness of the original in order to free possibilities within their own language, rather than domesticating or literarizing the original’s alterity both linguistically and culturally.

Joyce published his *Ulysses* in France at a time when French literature was the cultural benchmark in Romania and the national elite were, with a few exceptions,¹ busy praising the *magnum opus* of Marcel Proust. Even amongst the promoters of “English Literature,” few were those who were prepared to see in the Irish writer more than the author of a “monstrous creation”² and of a decadent porn

novel. In a country which produced Brâncuși and Eliade, who both decided to exile themselves to Paris, and in which most up-to-date critics were readers of *La Nouvelle Revue Française* who could not have access to *Ulysses* but through Auguste Morel’s 1929 French translation, it would have been unrealistic to expect a complete Romanian equivalent of Joyce’s English-based *Odyssey* in a then foreseeable future.

The inter-war translations from (rather than of) *Ulysses* into Romanian were so scant that they could fit on a single newspaper page. True to the inclination of Romanian criticism for decades, Al. Philippide’s³ effort appeared with a few general comments on the Irish writer and his narrative techniques, the year (1930) when another “fragment,” translated by I. Holzman, was also published.⁴ There were a mere handful of attempts at translating *Ulysses* after the Second World War: Gellu Naum, the most representative Romanian surrealist, and Simona Drăghici translated the “Telemachus” episode in an anniversary epoch-making issue of the leading journal *Secolul XX* dedicated to James Joyce in 1965. The first scholars to envisage the translation of the whole novel were Andrei Ion Deleanu and Eugen Barbu, the latter an important Romanian novelist, who together signed a contract for a Romanian translation in 1967. The two had already tackled challenging texts; they are the ones to whom we owe three works of Faulkner’s in Romanian: *Intruder in the Dust* (1964), *The Hamlet* (1967), *The Town* (1967). However, their common project on Joyce came to an abrupt end after Deleanu’s demise in 1980. Only a fragment with the first eight pages of “Scylla and Charybdis” in Romanian, followed by extremely elaborate notes on the Shakespearean material, saw the light, in *Secolul XX*, in 1980. The fact that Deleanu started his translation from the intricate Shakespearean intertext created by Joyce was no accident as he nourished a real passion for the Bard: he is to be credited with the most original version of Shakespeare’s sonnets in Romanian.

“Hades” was translated both by Ana Oloș in 1967 – an incomplete version which endeavoured to keep as much as possible Joyce’s syncopated technique but which was characterized, as Romanian postmodern writer and critic Adrian Oțoiu noted, by a reluctance about “Bloom’s fleeting erotic memories, which she toned down beyond recognition”⁵ – and by Mircea Ivănescu in 1973. By that year Ivănescu had become the most important translator of *Ulysses* with his spectacular rendering of “Oxen of the Sun,” published in 1971 also in *Secolul XX*, where subsequent chapters

appeared in instalments: “Aeolus” (1977), “Cyclops” (1982).⁶ The chapter, which remained unchanged in the final version, was followed by Andrei Brezianu’s essay, “Parodie și rodnicie” (Parody and Fruitfulness), in which, among other general comments on the Irish writer, the critic pointed out the different styles used in the original. To be able to transpose into the literary-historical palette of any other language what Joyce defined as a “frightful jumble of Pidgin English, nigger English, Cockney, Irish, Bowery slang and broken doggerel” (*Letters I*, 140) would in itself be a major tour de force, let alone in a language lacking the time span of the literary tradition and varieties of Joyce’s Englishes⁷ – by the time Shakespeare had produced his greatest tragedies, Romanians were barely literate, the oldest attested document in the vernacular, *Scrisoarea lui Neacșu din Câmpulung*, dating from 1521 only. Indeed Ivănescu’s note on “Oxen of the Sun” mentions that “the Romanian version tried to follow the succession” of different periods in Romanian literature, “inevitably more concentrated in the chronological evolution, yet perhaps as rich in nuances as the original, after the first pages, in which the rendering of the style of foreign chronicles does not represent a style of the national language strictly speaking, from the chroniclers through the first literary classical texts in the evolution of the language to the verbal outbursts of colloquial and, as much as possible, slangy idioms.”⁸

Ivănescu’s complete translation of *Ulysses* first appeared in two volumes at Univers Publishing House in 1984, the year when Dan Grigorescu published the only monograph on Joyce in Romanian (*Reality, Myth, Symbol: A Portrait of James Joyce*) at the same press. The translation was hailed as a success – at a time when Romanians were eager to read good literature, including in translation, and the communist regime was sending most talented Romanian writers to hard labour. Printed on a paper not far removed in quality from toilet paper, the wonderfully crafted product soon sold out, despite being gift-wrapped, as was the custom then for reasons of propaganda for all books earmarked as desirable and valuable, either with Ceaușescu’s public speeches at the Communist Party Congresses or with other equally unsellable pamphlets showing how to devote one’s life to the party, to socialist ideas, and to the building of communism, etc. Univers Publishing House was the main outlet for writers from the “enemy countries,” who were seen to speak about taboo subjects such as sex, politics, and religion in a manner which censorship could not approve of. Three years after the

Romanian revolution in 1989, *Ulysses* was reprinted as a joint venture with Venus Publishing House, before an expanded (with preface) one-volume edition, showing clearer-cut demarcations between the book's eighteen chapters and Molly's eight "periods," appeared in 1996, an occasion marked by a book launch featuring several prominent Joyceans during a four-day symposium (23-27 June).⁹

Born in 1931 Ivănescu is a self-taught man who did not even have a degree in any of the main languages that he translated from. He graduated in French from the University of Bucharest in 1954 but instead of embarking on work related to French literature, he took on the translation of most of Faulkner's major novels (*The Sound and The Fury*, *Absalom, Absalom!*; *Sartoris*; *Go down, Moses*; *Requiem for a Nun*; *Sanctuary*; *The Reivers*; *Intruder in the Dust*), Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender is the Night*, and Truman Capote's *Other voices*, *Other Rooms*. A proficient speaker of German, he likewise translated Kafka's letters, essays, short-stories and diary, Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo* and *The Birth of Philosophy in the Age of the Greek Tragedy*, Rainer Maria Rilke's *Stories of God*, and Musil's *The Man Without Qualities*. He is also a much praised poet of discreet fame, ranked as the second most significant contemporary verse writer after the untouchable Nichita Stănescu, and was even put forward for the Nobel Prize by the Association of the Professional Writers from Romania in 1999, a proposal endorsed by the influential Romanian-born theorist of postmodernism Matei Călinescu. Yet, while Stănescu remained a myth for the Romanian poets of the '80s, Ivănescu is nothing but a reference to the generations to come.¹⁰ There is also an uncanny similarity between the common *mopete* (an acronym of the Romanian words for "poem" and "poet"), the protagonist of several poems by a writer also known as "the Joycean recluse," and Joyce's own Leopold Bloom.

Doubtless the greatest achievement of the translation is in its overall feel and the successful transposition of the idiosyncratic "technique" of the most overtly experimental chapters: the breathing of sentences in "Aeolus," the musicality of rhyming jingles and reprises in "Sirens," the demotic speech and vernacular cadences in "Cyclops," the namby-pamby mock-literary prose of "Nausicaa," the ontogenetic evolution of the Romanian language in "Oxen of the Sun," the quasi-scientificity of "Ithaca." Adrian Oțoiu listed among Ivănescu's translation skills "an unprecedented awareness of the

intricacies of the Joycean text, professional exploration of its openings, intellectual rigour and a vast cultural horizon, doubled by that linguistic resourcefulness, musical ear and ludic spirit that Joyce himself always favoured when supervising the translation of his work.” (Oțoiu 2004, 203). Among the shortcomings, one could perhaps point to the slight loss of the pulse in “Hades” to recreate the heart’s systole-diastrale, the less convincingly jaded style of “Eumaeus,” as well as the stylistic unevennesses in Molly Bloom’s verbal outpourings in “Penelope.”¹¹

The first, two-volume edition contained extensive, yet oddly disproportionate annotations, based on Gifford and Seidman, Zack Bowen, Darcy O’Brien, and Richard Ellmann. Ivănescu may have had to rush through his translation since the initial intention was to bring out the book on Joyce’s centenary; the discrepancy between the first, heavily annotated volume and the second volume starting with “Nausicaa” is uncannily huge: no fewer than 337 notes to a mere six, the latter of a generic nature. Particularly striking is the tenor of the very last endnote, dealing with “Penelope,” in which Ivănescu, allegedly presenting other critics’ opinions, seems to concur implicitly with the overall condemnation of Molly’s immorality: “the character’s crudeness of expression, its lack of morality and spontaneous egotism, seem to have made some commentators wonder if the vision of the writer, who entrusted the end of his book to this figure, is not, after all, one of an even harsher condemnation not only of the moral flaws of his contemporaries, but even one invalidating the possibilities of human redemption that the whole book would seem to uphold through its repeated attempts at establishing human communication and valourizing human constants.” (*Ulise*, 700, n. 492, translation ours).

For a long time *Ulysses* represented for Romanian literary critics – and unfortunately still does so to some extent – nothing but an isolated borderline experiment whose main value was to be found in Joyce’s literary techniques, especially his use of the interior monologue.¹² What seemed to annoy French people in 1924, as Giraudoux put it – since, “what intrigued Paris at this time certainly wasn’t death, it was the interior monologue”¹³ – was still in a large measure a critical novelty in Romania in the ‘80s. When the complete translation of *Ulysses* came out, Joyce’s famous alleged borrowing of this narrative technique from Dujardin was therefore foregrounded in many Romanian critics’ accounts, together with the well-advertised fact that the book spans a single day in the

characters’ lives and is a modern parody of Homer’s *Odyssey*. Ironically enough, it was precisely the interior monologue, or rather its mixture with free indirect style and third-person narration, sometimes in the course of a single sentence or paragraph, that proved resistant to a smooth Romanianization since, even more than English, Romanian does not follow the sequence of tenses and Romanian verbs have different endings for each person, making it thus impossible to keep the original’s deliberate pronominal indirections. Thus, Joyce’s interior monologue seems occasionally too structured in Romanian, those gaps of the text left intentionally by Joyce needing to be filled in by Ivănescu so that Joyce’s referential, syntactical ellipses give way to well turned, unambiguous sentences.¹⁴

Such structural discrepancies between languages make it ultimately awkward to confidently assess the idiosyncratic mark left by the translator on his recreation of an original. Referring to Lawrence Venuti’s debunking of the myth of the translator’s invisibility as the criterion of a successful, transparent translation, Rodica Ieta had noted in her earlier assessment that

Ivănescu’s translation renders the strangeness of Joyce’s language quite faithfully, which paradoxically makes him a both visible and invisible translator. His intervention is visible in that he preserves the strangeness of the novel’s language and invisible in that he also tries to remain faithful to the original.¹⁵

However – and without wishing to detract from what is indisputably overall a stunning achievement – it should be pointed out that Ivănescu’s *Ulise* is characterized more often than not by a tendency towards making the original explicit, even to the point of overstepping the limit of the translator as, partly, necessarily a reader-interpreter, as when Bloom’s name is changed to Blooma in the section in “Circe” when Joyce’s character undergoes feminization, on a par with Bella conversely becoming Bello in the original, and even though an explanatory endnote sheds light on the hallucinatory transformation.¹⁶ Possibly as a compensatory strategy for what is irremediably lost elsewhere, Ivănescu channels interpretation into his recreation but also smuggles in clarifications which should have been confined to the editorial apparatus and arguably go against Joyce’s spirit of indirection. For instance, to

Bloom's unfocused thought "All the way from Gibraltar" in "Calypso," referring to Molly's bed brought from that location, Ivănescu adds a first-person-singular present perfect: "Tocmai de la Gibraltar l-am adus" (i.e. I brought it all the way from Gibraltar). Such textual manipulations bring us to a generic problem: how to assess the translator's semantic overdeterminations against the Romanian language's inability to fully keep the polysemic fabric resulting from flexible English morphology.

gramma's grammar

In the same chapter Milly's letter to her father makes Bloom think of her childhood turning into adolescence:

Milly too. Young kisses: the first. Far away now past. Mrs Marion. Reading, lying back now, counting the strands of her hair, smiling, braiding.

A soft qualm, regret, flowed down his backbone, increasing. Will happen, yes. Prevent. Useless: can't move. Girl's sweet light lips. Will happen too. He felt the flowing qualm spread over him. Useless to move now. Lips kissed, kissing, kissed. Full gluey woman's lips. (*U* 4.444-50)

Here is how Ivănescu renders the fragment into Romanian:

Și Milly, și ea. Pupicuri copilărești; primele. Acum, departe s-au dus demult. Doamna Marion. Citește acuma, răsturnată pe spate, numărându-și bucele după degete, împletindu-și-le.

Un regret molatec, calm, îi aluneca pe șira spinării, tot mai pronunțat. Are să se întâmple, da. Să-mpiedic asta. N-are rost; nu mă pot mișca de aici. Buze dulci ușoare de fecioară. Și are să se întâmple. Simțea ca o strângere de inimă cuprinzându-l. Inutil să mai încerc acum. Buze sărutînd, sărutînd sărutare. Buze pline lipicioase de femeie. (*Ulise*, 68)

Romanian knows two types of indefinite subjects: *subiect inclus* (the subject "included" in the ending of the verb) and *subiect subînțeles* (the implied subject, a verb in the third-person singular or plural referring to a subject previously mentioned). The former refers to the

subject expressed by a first-person or second-person pronoun, as in “Să-mpiedic asta” for “Prevent,” lit.: I will/need to prevent this (here Ivănescu feels the need to add a direct object (*asta*: this), although the sentence could have done without it). The next *subiect inclus* appears in “useless to move now,” which becomes “nu mă pot mișca de aici,” lit.: I cannot move from here (incidentally the adverb of time is replaced by an adverb of place: *aici*). The second type of subject appears in the translation of “far away now past,” which becomes literally “Now, [they, i.e. the kisses] are long gone far away;” in this sentence Ivănescu supplies not only the subject of the sentence but also the predicate, inexistent in English: “Acum, departe s-au dus demult,” lit.: Now, they have long gone far away. If, as Molly proudly recalls, “a noun is the name of any person place or thing” (*U* 18.1473), the versatile English verb may refer to its own comparable amount of unspecified referents, which Romanian will often have to identify.

Another minor interpretive spin Ivănescu gives to his translation is for “Lips kissed, kissing, kissed,” which becomes “Buze sărutînd, sărutînd sărutare.” (lit.: Lips kissing, kissing a kiss) since the Romanian participle and gerund do not have corresponding functions and meanings to their English equivalents. Thus Ivănescu privileges the action (kissing) as the focus of the sentence, unlike Joyce who concentrates on the result and participle of the verb: kissed lips. Soon afterwards attention turns to the cat at the door waiting to get out:

She looked back at him, mewling. Wants to go out. Wait before a door sometime it will open. Let her wait. Has the fidgets. Electric. Thunder in the air. Was washing at her ear with her back to the fire too. (*U* 4.456-9)

Mai privi îndărăt spre el, mieunînd. Vrea afară. Sta și-așteaptă în fața ușii, mai devreme sau mai tîrziu, cîndva, tot are să se deschidă. Las-o s-aștepte. E cam agitată. Ele sînt electrice. E-o furtună în aer. Și se spăla și după ureche cu spatetele spre foc. (*Ulise*, 68)

“Wants to go out” obviously refers to the cat, so Ivănescu likewise uses an implied subject: “Vrea afară.” However, the next sentence starts with “Wait,” i.e. without the third-person singular marker, but Ivănescu infers that the subject is still the cat: “Stă și-așteaptă în fața ușii, mai devreme sau mai tîrziu, cîndva, tot are să se deschidă.” (lit.:

[She] is standing there and waiting in front of the door, sooner or later, sometime, it will still open). “Let her wait” has no clear referent either: it may mean “I will let her wait” or, in a more Bahktinian dialogic form of self-address, “you, Bloom, let her wait.” In any case this imperative has a slightly different nuance than the one in “Wait” above. Ivănescu prefers the second possibility: “Las-o s-aștepte.” lit.: “[You] let her wait,” a choice he usually makes, especially in “Penelope” when Molly plays roles and tells herself things which are fairly systematically translated in the second-person singular. At the same time Ivănescu introduces a detailed explanation of what “sometime” would mean in this context in English, adding an unnecessary “mai devreme sau mai târziu” (sooner or later). Likewise, the one-word sentence, “Electric,” is padded out into “Ele sînt electrice.” lit.: They are electric, just after the translation of “Has the fidgets” as “E cam agitată,” yet the translator does not feel like explaining who this “they” (*ele*), following a singular referent, is, nor does he mind jumping from the unidentified plural – either cats (generic) or storms – to “E-o furtună în aer.” (lit.: There is a storm in the air), then back to an implied subject in the third-person singular: “Și – [*ea*, i.e. *pisica*: she, the cat] – se spăla și după ureche cu spatele spre foc.” lit.: And she was washing behind her ear too, with her back to the fire.

A similar mismatch in the polyvalence of parts of speech mars the end of what is otherwise a well-executed score in “Sirens.” Various interpretations as introducing the fragments of leading themes and refrains to be reprised in the chapter’s main “performance,” or as the tuning-up of an orchestra, the overture brings together in a raw state syncopated elements whose consistency of rendering, once they are built into the text’s main action, is the key to ensure recognition of the compositional stratagem. Here are the very last introductory beats, those with which Bloom will sign off the chapter:

My eppripfftaph. Be pfrwritt.

Done.

Begin! (*U* 11.53-63)

Si eppripfftappful. Fi-va pfrvrîtt.

Gata.

Începem! (*Ulise*, 238)

Compare with:

THE “EXPERIENCE” OF *ULYSSES* IN ROMANIAN

[...] *Let my epitaph be. Kraaaaaa. Written. I have.*
Prrpffrrppffff.
Done. (U 11.1291-4)

[...] *Fie epitaful meu. Karaaaa. Scris. Eu am.*
Prrpffrrppffff.
Înfăptuit. (Ulise, 269)

One and the same tiny word (“Done.”), which in English can either do duty as a shorthand stage/musical direction or be injected into a compound verbal form... but a world of difference in Romanian, between the adverb “Gata.” (lit.: Ready) and the impossibility of its echo: “*Eu am [...] Înfăptuit.*” lit.: I have carried out (one should also note the asymmetrical depersonalization of the epitaph in the translated overture).

The (Un)translatability of proper names

Much of the inimitable atmosphere of Joyce’s masterpiece lies in his meticulous recreation of idiosyncratic accents, a feel for the unmistakable realism and locality of topographical landmarks – to the point of timing characters’ itineraries through Dublin as part of his fictional strategy for shaping “Wandering Rocks” or ascertaining whether a man of Bloom’s stature could conceivably vault over the railing at 7 Eccles Street (*Letters I*, 175). The translator is thus faced with a specific instance of the double bind which Antoine Berman and Lawrence Venuti, to name but these, described respectively as the translator’s incontrovertible choice between an ethnocentric and a literal-ethical approach, or between domestication and foreignization:¹⁷ conveying to the reader the localized ambiance of June 16th 1904 while doing so in a language where those Dublin pointers will inevitably sound foreign and out of place.

In “Des Tours de Babel” Derrida emphasized the necessity, yet impossibility – the necessity *as* impossibility (Walter Benjamin’s “task” as giving-up [*Aufgabe*] “of the translator”) – to translate, within which proper names (mainly people’s names but also toponyms) occupy a special place as they cling to a single referent.¹⁸ Bloom’s in particular lends itself to all manners of polytropic manipulations and fares predictably differently depending on the lexical surroundings: in the truncated sequence “Blew. Blue bloom is

on the.” in “Sirens” (*U* 11.6), where it becomes a prosy, almost meaningless, literal “Plaf. Bum albastru-nflorind în.” necessary for each leitmotif part to be semantically recyclable into the later narrative (*Ulise*, 237) – just as “flow” cannot be saved as a syncopated form of his pen name, Henry Flower; likewise in “Seabloom, greasebloom” (*U* 11.1284), which is rendered as “Bloommarinul Bloomunsurosul” (*Ulise*, 269), whose first element introduces the hint of an unwanted pun on *bleumarin*: marine blue; in Josie Breen’s puns on Molly’s married name: “M Bloom youre looking blooming” (*U* 18.842-3). This is rendered in a successful mixture of Anglicized Romanian and explanatory gloss so as to preserve the punning mediation between common and proper: “M Bloom arăți ca o blumică înfloritoare” (*Ulise*, 622), where *floricică*: little flower (i.e. *floare*: flower + Romanian diminutive suffix *-ică*) is “bloomianized” and made more explicit by *înfloritoare*: in bloom, soon after the “bloomers” had been blown into “pantalonii bufanți bloomerși” (lit.: baggy Bloom trousers), etc.

Molly then derides names with a “bottom” in them, like Ramsbottom, before ranting on her friend’s own married name:

well its better than Breen or Briggs does brig or those
awful names with bottom in them Mrs Ramsbottom or
some other kind of a bottom (*U* 18.843-5)

oricum e mai bine decât Breen sau Briggs cu brizbrizuri
sau numele astea groaznice care au câte un popo în ele
doamna Ramspopo sau cine știe ce alt fund (*Ulise*, 622)

The alliterative play on Breen and Briggs gives way to a creative adaptation in “cu brizbrizuri,” with *brizbizuri*: short window curtains (cf. French *brise-bise*) or (more recently) (women’s) frills, being distorted into “brizbrizuri” in order to bring out Molly’s lack of education (the incorrect form *brizbrizuri* is often heard in popular parlance). Ramspopo does keep the funny bottom (*popo*) part but at the cost of an implausible family name in the target language. Another approach could have been to opt for a “cultural translation” based on a native *cur*: arse, thus making it possible to enlist the attested “Curăvale” to match Molly’s single instance. In such micrological decisions as well as at the macro-structural level, the ethical dilemma is therefore between letting the foreign original through to the detriment of verisimilitude and curbing it into a

domesticated frame of reference through an equivalence which Berman sees as working against the “spokenness” (*parlance*) of the original (Berman 1999, 65).

The author of *Sweets of Sin* meets with a less felicitous fate in order to retain his name’s “cocky” homophony; it is left as “Kock” in Romanian (since it is a proper name), yet is adorned with a common *cocoș*, i.e. rooster but also, sexually, cock only in “Penelope.” So we have “domnul de Kock cocoș” (*Ulise*, 625), mixing translation and annotation into an ungainly creation of a proper name (and though the syntactical flow of Molly’s thought partly helps its lexical integration), whereas it is left untouched (and unglossed in the endnotes) when Molly pointedly notes his “nice name” earlier in “Calypso” (*U* 4.358; *Ulise* 66).

Joyce’s Dublin abounds in characters with popular nicknames preceding their family names, in which the translator’s decision to either domesticate or leave as foreign in a partly transplanted geo-linguistic setting intersects with issues of (un)translatability. Ivănescu fairly systematically chooses the former, more traditional method, where a more flexible, discriminatory approach, based on how “loaded” the semantic determinacy and effect of the nickname is in a given thematic context, might have worked better. Thus, while the character variously known as P/pisser Burke or, for short, Pisser, becomes Pipilică Burke, a great find Romanianizing the vulgar tag albeit into an un-native compound, the decision to translate Bantam Lyons into Lyons Cocoșul appears less imperative since its semantic motivation, hence its intended effect, is less strong – and the result triggers off in the hypermnesic reader or back-translator an unwanted association with Molly’s mention of Mr de Kock in “Penelope.”¹⁹

Ivănescu’s more haphazard dealings with toponyms reveal more fully the extent of the translator’s quandary, especially when proper place-names also double as, or contain, common nouns. The following passage from “Ithaca” will give an idea of the inevitable effect of hybridity achieved in any attempt at translating what is translatable, which cannot avoid turning the Dublin surroundings into a quaint pseudo-Romanian no man’s land:

A scheme to connect by tramline the Cattle Market (North Circular road and Prussia street) with the quays (Sheriff street, lower, and East Wall), parallel with the Link line

railway laid (in conjunction with the Great Southern and Western railway line) between the cattle park, Liffey junction, and terminus of Midland Great Western Railway 43 to 45 North Wall, in proximity to the terminal stations or Dublin branches of Great Central Railway, Midland Railway of England, City of Dublin Steam Packet Company, Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company, Dublin and Glasgow Steam Packet Company, Glasgow, Dublin and Londonderry Steam Packet Company (Laird line), British and Irish Steam Packet Company, Dublin and Morecambe Steamers, London and North Western Railway Company, Dublin Port and Docks Board Landing Sheds and transit sheds of Palgrave, Murphy and Company [...] (*U* 17.1726-38)

Un plan pentru legarea prin tramcaruri a târgului de vite (șoseaua North Circular și strada Prusia) cu cheiurile (strada Sheriff jos și Meterezelor Est), paralelă cu calea ferată de joncțiune care deservește (în conjuncție cu calea ferată Great Southern și Western) târgul de vite, gara Liffey și gara terminus a liniei ferate Midland Grand Western, North Wall 43-45, pînă la stațiile terminus sau gările locale din Dublin ale companiilor Great Central Railway, Midland Railway of England, City of Dublin Steam Packet Company, Lancashire Yorkshire Railway Company, Dublin and Glasgow Steam Packet Company, Glasgow Dublin and Londonderry Steam Packet Company (linia Laird), British and Irish Steam Packet Company, Dublin and Morecamb [*sic*] Steamers, London and North Western Railway Company, Dublin Port and Docks Board Landing Sheds și gărilor de tranzit de la Palgrave, Murphy and Company [...] (*Ulise*, 583)

Similarly, in “invite some other woman for him who Mrs Fleming and drove out to the furry glen or the strawberry beds” (*U* 18.947-8), Ivănescu juxtaposes a well-known or popular toponym, left unchanged but capitalized (unlike “Cattle Market” above, turned into a common *tîrg de vite*), and a (capitalized) translation: “și să invităm încă-o femeie pentru el cine madam Fleming și să mergem cu mașina pînă la Furry Glen sau la Frăget” (*Ulise*, 624), a felicitous, slightly alliterative choice in the target language mixing domestic adaptation and adaptability.

Joyce himself may also have constrained the translator, regardless of the latter’s own strategies. Thus Bachelor’s Walk may

sound quaint as a literally translated Romanian place-name (a pluralized “Promenada Burlacilor”) until one remembers its association with unmarried Boylan tripping lightly on his way to the Blooms’ in “Sirens:” “By Bachelor’s walk jogjaunty jingled Blazes Boylan, bachelor” (*U* 11.524), hence, by thematic necessity (yet leaving aside the change from “Promenada” to “Calea”), “Pe Calea Burlacilor birja lejer legănându-se clinchetea Blazes Boylan, burlac” (*Ulise*, 249).

Less accountable, however, is the lack of consistency for one and the same place-name, as when City Arms Hotel is (un)identifiable as either “Hotelul Armele Oraşului” or “Hotelul City Arms,” Green street and Little Green street get a different treatment (strada Verde, strada Little Green), or, perhaps more subtly, when Featherbed Mountain, itself the end product of a famous chain of transformations in “Proteus” – “God becomes man becomes fish becomes barnacle goose becomes featherbed mountain” (*U* 3.477-9): “Dumnezeu se face om se face peşte se face găscă cu pene [lit.: goose with feathers] se face munte de perne cu puf [lit.: mountain of pillows with down]” (*Ulise*, 55) – becomes “Muntele cu Pene” (*Ulise*, 218; lit.: the Feather Mountain) becomes “muntele de puf” (*Ulise*, 337; lit.: the down mountain) becomes even a plain “munte” in its final appearance in “Penelope” (*Ulise*, 611), mixing *pene* and *puf* in different lexical collocations and thematic networks.

Morphing language: “Proteus”

The first more experimental chapter in Joyce’s *Ulysses* displays various instances of metamorphic language, such as trans-linguistic neologisms or its famous crux in underworld cant, apt to defy any translator grappling with the limits of expressivity across languages:

His lips lipped and mouthed fleshless lips of air: mouth to her moomb. Oomb, allwombing tomb. His mouth moulded issuing breath, unspeched: ooeehah: roar of cataractic planets, globed, blazing, roaring wayawayawayawayaway. (*U* 3.401-4)

Buzele lui se mişcau cuprinzând buze netrupeşti de aer: gura pe pîntecul ei. Pîntec, mormînt atotecuprinzând ca

un pîntec. Gura lui plămădea răsuflarea ieșind, nerostită:
 uiihah: mugetul planetelor cataractante, globulare, în
 flăcări, mugind departedepartedeparte. (*Ulise* 53)

Here we see Ivănescu, translator but also poet, who elsewhere is not averse to producing *belles infidèles*, overstepping the call of literality towards that of literarization (cf. Berman 1999, 39), as when he sets to verse the unrhymed “*The curse of my curses* [...]” doggerel in “Cyclops” (*U* 12.740-7; *Ulise*, 287), cringing in front of the inventive pliability of English grammar, where monosyllabic “lip” and “mouth” can easily metamorphose into verbs – the Romanian offers a literal gloss: His lips moved covering fleshless lips of air – before being defeated by the portmanteau “moomb” (i.e. mouth + womb), a plain “womb” in the target language. The following, strongly assonantal string, “Oomb, allwombing tomb,” ghoulishly redolent of the *mer-mère* phobia soon “roaring” for Stephen, is equally normalized and dilated/diluted into (literally) “Womb, all-covering tomb like a womb,” shedding its sonorous grip altogether in the process.

A few lines above, the language turns into cant as it introduces the second stanza of “The Rogue’s Delight in Praise of His Strolling Mort” in Richard Head’s *The Canting Academy* (1673):

Buss her, wap in rogues’ rum lingo, for, O, my dimber
 wapping dell! A shefiend’s whiteness under her rancid
 rags. Fumbally’s lane that night: the tanyard smells.

*White thy fambles, red thy gan
 And thy quarrons dainty is.
 Couch a hogshead with me then.
 In the darkmans clip and kiss. (U 3.378-84)*

Strînge-o în brațe, fă dragoste cu ea după chipul și vorba
 celor de jos, căci, O, iubăreață ești și bună. Albeață de
 demon femeiesc sub zdrențele-i rîncede. Pe maidanul
 Fumbally în noaptea asta: mirosul tăbăcăriilor.

*Albe cazmalele, roșu și-e botul
 Și trupul tău iubăreț mi-e.
 Întinde-te-aici cu mine cu totul
 În strînsoarea și pupatu' de întunecime. (Ulise 52)*

While the colloquial diction and matching choice of lexical units (e.g. *cazmalele*) capture the semantic flavour of the original, the Romanian reader will not undergo a similar experience of “defamiliarization” as even a cultured Anglo-Saxon would, who is not likely to be conversant with seventeenth-century underworld cant. Ivănescu in all likelihood applies the age-old principle of conservatism when faced with linguistic, literary eccentricity, let alone one bordering on “intra-linguistic translation.” Rather than venturing into *limbajul lumii interlope*, or the contemporary Romanian equivalent of underworld cant (e.g. *zotcă* for the merely colloquial *bot – gan*), and in spite of the forced reference to “celor de jos,” i.e. of those from below, which further clashes with the Biblical echo of “după chipul” (Genesis 1:27), Ivănescu “plays it safe,” possibly for consistency of tone, but falls short of the perlocutionary impact of Joyce’s text, losing the snappiness of the original cadences as well (“wap in rogues’ rum lingo” is drawn out into “fă dragoste cu ea după chipul și vorba celor de jos;” note also the reduplication of *iubăreață/iubăreț*, for the more varied “dimber” (pretty) and “dainty”). If, as Berman contends, only the *koinai* or “cultured languages” have the ability to be carried across or translated into one another, and the exoticization of external foreignness (source language) into an internal one (target language) merely travesties the original (Berman 1999, 64), the issue of the latter’s wilful obscurity and alterity in some passages opens up a slightly different problematic that brings it closer to his emphasis on respecting the literality of the letter.

Soon after, Joyce’s Protean prose translates itself into polyglottal coinages before conjuring up its own version of the Homeric epithet (signalled by the Greek *oinopa ponton* and its literal translation): “myriadislanded,” a felicitous *nemăsuratinsulate* in Ivănescu’s rendering:

She trudges, schlepps, trains, drags, trascines her load. A tide westering, moondrawn, in her wake. Tides, myriadislanded, within her, blood not mine, *oinopa ponton*, a winedark sea. (*U* 3.392-4)

Pășește, se împinge, se tirîie. se înverșunează, își trage după sine povara. Fluxul amurgind, atras de lună, în urma ei. Fluxuri, nemăsuratinsulate, în ea, sînge nu al meu, *oinopa ponton*, o mare întunecată ca vinul. (*Ulise* 53)

German *schleppen*, French *traîner*, Italian *trascinare*, all Anglicized for smoother integration, “drag” out the meaning of the initial “trudges” in an intra-linear translation which famously expresses language’s all-too-slippery nature – hence Stephen’s “Put a pin in that chap, will you?” (*U* 3.399), which doubles up as a self-conscious remark about his own uncertain morning literary exercise on Sandymount Strand. Although two of these foreign equivalents belong to a Romance language, thus closer to Romanian than they would be to English, Ivănescu curiously does not translate the effect of translation, plumping instead for a lengthening/quickening of the rhythm and the presumably deliberate unusual reflexive “se împinge” (she pushes herself) so as to suggest the accumulation in the scene (lit.: She steps, pushes herself, drags herself, gets insistent, pulls her load behind herself).

Cyclopean garrulity

The Romanian text does a brilliant job at capturing the wide spectrum of narrative styles and addresses, from the demotic pearls of the vituperative citizen (with their quaint but apposite Biblical archaisms in the translation instead of such Hibernianisms as “begob” and “arrah”) to his cronies – featuring such delightful lingo as “Sfinte Sisoie” (*Ulise*, 287) for “Holy Wars” (*U* 12.765) – to the pseudo-loftier accents of the intrusive catalogues, right to the bathetic finale when Bloom hastily departs “like a shot off a shovel” (*U* 12.1918), which Ivănescu adapts to a perfectly punchy “precum piatra dintr-o praștie” (*Ulise*, 316), suggestive of *a-și lua hamul și praștia*: to pack up and go (lit.: to take one’s harness and sling) while adding a further alliterative twist to the stock phrase *ca o piatră dintr-o praștie*.

Though not reaching the stylistic, literary amplitude of “Oxen of the Sun,” the chapter is so rife in verbal pyrotechnics that it would deserve a separate study to fully do it justice. We shall therefore limit ourselves to one specific dense passage: the spoof on the Apostles’ Creed, as it raises complex issues of “intertextual translation” – the original prayer in the source language versus the specific, slightly more archaic version used in the target language (the Nicene Creed), and Joyce’s own parody:

THE “EXPERIENCE” OF *ULYSSES* IN ROMANIAN

They believe in rod, the scourger almighty, creator of hell upon earth, and in Jacky Tar, the son of a gun, who was conceived of unholy boast, born of the fighting navy, suffered under rump and dozen, was scarified, flayed and curried, yelled like bloody hell, the third day he arose again from the bed, steered into haven, sitteth on his beamend till further orders whence he shall come to drudge for a living and be paid. (*U* 12.1354-9)

Cred în varga, pedepsitoarea atotputernică, creatorul iadului pe pământ și în Jacky Catran, fiul de tîrfă, care-a fost zămislit dintr-o lăudăroșenie blasfematorie, născut din marina militară, care a suferit sub ciozvrîte și bastonade, a fost sacrificat, jupuit și uns, a zbierat ca un blestemat al iadului, și a treia zi s-a înălțat iarăși din pat, mînat în port, și a stat pe raza fundului său pînă la noi ordine de unde va veni să mai trudească pînă iese untul din el ca să-și țină zilele și să primească plată. (*Ulise*, 302)

(Lit.: They believe in (the) rod, the almighty punisher, creator of hell upon earth and in Jacky Tar, son of a bitch, who was conceived of an unholy boast, born of the military navy, who suffered under hunks and beatings, was scarified, flayed and greased/anointed, yelled like a cursed from hell, and the third day he arose again from the bed, driven into port, and sat on the ray of his behind till further orders whence he shall come to toil till the fat comes out of him to make a living and to get his pay.)

An endnote informs the reader that the sequence is a parodic version of the Creed based on corporeal punishment in the British Navy, and clearly this was the semantic angle privileged by Ivănescu, to the detriment of the competing religious vein. Thus the barely disguised Jack Tar, personifying a seaman but with no equivalent in Romanian except the common *lup de mare*, is transposed literally (in keeping with the prevalent strategy used by Ivănescu to adapt a mixture of nickname and proper noun) but meaninglessly for a Romanian reader (though there is arguably a catchy feel to the coinage). An even greater degree of semantic literalism was used for both “rod” (instead of “God”) and “unholy boast” (instead of “[un]holy ghost”), the latter being turned into an unwieldy mouthful in Romanian. The travesty of “Was crucified, dead and buried” into “was scarified, flayed and curried” is similarly rendered more literally, as “a fost

sacrificat [*possibly a typo for* scarificat], jupuit și uns.” The choice of “uns:” greased, but also (religiously) anointed and (slang) well beaten, for “curried” is in itself problematic, despite potentially carrying across the punitive element, since the religious undertones are positive rather than in tune with the negative, parodic environment, and it is later echoed in an unjustified accretion “pînă iese untul din el,” lit.: until the grease/fat [*unt*] comes out of him,” to convey a less convoluted “to drudge for a living and be paid,” which in the original puns on “to judge the living and the dead.” Conversely, the anticipatory echoes of the spoof earlier in the chapter (*U* 12.1329, 1338) are not retained: “marina de război” becomes here “marina militară” and the otherwise graphic “Ciozvrta și duzina” is emended to “ciozvrte și bastonade,” possibly in keeping with “bataie cu bastonul,” the (plain) Romanian translation of the citizen’s own “translation” into what “the modern God’s Englishman calls it:” “caning on the breech” (*U* 12.1339-40) – one should note here that Ivănescu unfortunately translates the text’s metalinguistic fold literally into a non-sequitur since the “engleza modernă de acuma” (modern English of nowadays) ushers in a *Romanian* syntagm... Finally, “a stat pe raza fundului său,” lit.: he sat on the beam (i.e. ray: *raza*) of his behind, gets the wrong beam or end of the stick and, in trying to keep to the letter of Joyce’s humorous Navy-based description, provides a fairly opaque translation.

A more satisfactory rendering moving between Joyce’s own colloquial parody and the more formal Romanian orthodox liturgy, for the sake of recognizability, could yield something like the following:

Cred în dumnebătu,^a biciuitorul^b atotputernic, creatorul iadului pe pămînt, și în Lupu Marinărescu,^c fiul de tîrfă, care dintr-un duhă^d sînt fost-a zămislit, născut din marina de război, care sub ciozvrte și ciomăgeli^e a pătimit,^f fost-a scarificat, jupuit și tăbăcit,^g a zbierat ca un blestemat al iadului, și a treia zi s-a înălțat iarăși din pat, mînat în port, și pe ciuci șade^h pînă la noi ordine de unde va să vinăⁱ să mai trudească din greu ca să-și țină zilele și să-și ia plata.

NOTES:

^a A pun on *Dumnezeu*: God, incorporating *băț*: stick, allowing to keep the same grammatical gender throughout

^b Based on *a biciui*: to flog, less common than *a pedepsi*, therefore more appropriate to translate “scourger”

^c *Lupu de mare*: (old) seaman, turned into a mock-Romanian, yet plausibly a native proper name

^d *Duhán* (regional): tobacco, punning on *Duhul Sfânt*: Holy Ghost, in a similar way as Joyce does, i.e. the meaning of the literal distortion is deemed to be less relevant and dropped

^e The alliterative locution tries to partly recoup the loss of the colourful historical flavour of “rump and dozen.” Like *duhán*, *ciomăgeli* is of Hungarian origin (the latter markedly so to a native Romanian ear) and would help recast the ironic tensions between the citizen’s bellicose nationalism and the mock-bombastic deflations of a more impersonal narrative voice into a Romanian context, introducing a note of Hungarian “dissidence” into the dominant language – and providing a localized equivalent to the shift from the original polyglottism to dialectal polyphony in Joyce’s own Italian adaptation of “Anna Livia Plurabelle,” praised by Berman in conclusion to his study (142).

^f Unlike the more common *a suferi* used by Ivănescu, the more formal *a pătimi* appears in the Nicene Creed

^g *A tăbăci*: to curry (skins) or, slang, tan (hides), keeps the two most relevant meanings, though it still cannot suggest “buried” from the Apostles’ Creed

^h *pe ciuci șade* combines a humorous, colloquial phrase for “on one’s bum” and the verb used in the Nicene Creed in the right (present) tense, as in the original’s heterogeneous mix of archaism and nautical slang (“sitteth on his beamend”)

ⁱ A slightly more formal version of the future tense used in the Nicene Creed, followed by a more literal, lighter rendering of the end.

Translation, tradition and censorship: Taming Molly’s soliloquy

The “scandal of *Ulysses*” on grounds of its alleged obscenity would prove a natural challenge to translation, a craft which has long blushed more readily on “calling a spade a spade” than its immodest originals, let alone in the more morally restrained former communist countries. While the mildly lewd doings of its protagonists on June 16th cannot be excised without incurring the charge of basic semantic

infidelity, the graphic wording and occasional use of salacious or taboo words offers more scope for placating vigilant censorship.

It is no surprise therefore that some of Molly Bloom's "veritable psychological peaches" (C. G. Jung in *JJIII*, 629) in "Penelope" are toned down, sometimes excessively, as when her bluntly direct "O Lord I wanted to shout out all sorts of things fuck or shit or anything at all only not to look ugly" becomes a tamer, generic "îmi venea să țip în gura mare tot felul de porcării haide sau așa orice lucru mai porcos numai să nu i se fi părut murdară" (*Ulise*, 615; lit.: I felt like shouting out loud all kinds of smut come on or any smuttier thing like that only not to look dirty), or when her comment on Bloom's sexual abstinence, "he couldn't possibly do without it that long," is translated as "nu e el în stare să stea atîta fără să așa" (*Ulise*, 602; lit.: he couldn't possibly stay like that without [doing] so"). The use of the Romanian adverb *așa* (so) here instead of a verb of action betrays a reticence to name what would offend sensibilities and was still in Romania of the '80s a coded linguistic ellipsis substituting for the unmentionable. Likewise, Molly's foul-mouthed "to make his micky stand for him Ill let him know if thats what he wanted that his wife is fucked yes and damn well fucked too up to my neck nearly not by him 5 or 6 times handrunning theres the mark of his spunk on the clean sheet" (*U* 18.1510-2) is urbanized into "așa ca să se scoale mititica aia a lui și-am să-l și anunț dacă asta vrea să afle că nevasta lui e servită da și-ncă al dracului de bine servită umplută pînă aproape sus la gît nu de dumnealui de cinci sau șase ori la rînd uite și urma spermei lui aici pe cearceaful curat" (*Ulise*, 638). "Al dracului de bine servită" (damn well served), in spite of the mild, yet common expletive, sounds odd in Romanian and would readily suggest to the reader something more in line with the vexed issue of who will serve breakfast to whom at the Blooms on the morning of June 17th, and only because the correct, if deslanged (sperm for spunk) translation of "his spunk on the clean sheet" can one reconstruct what this top-notch service actually involves...²⁰

Conversely, and possibly making up for the diminution of the vulgar sexual vein, words are occasionally put in Molly's mouth which are more colloquial in Romanian than what she actually says in English, as when a perfectly straightforward "I gave her her weeks notice" (*U* 18.70) becomes a stylistically hybrid "i-am pus în vedere să-și ia papucii într-o săptămînă" (*Ulise*, 602; lit.: I made it clear to her she'd get the boot in a week): "a pune în vedere," a phrase which

is more elevated than the downright colloquial “a-și lua papucii” (lit.: to take one’s slippers – when one is sacked) and the mixture of formality and informality sits awkwardly with the more homogeneously spoken register of a somewhat uneducated Mrs Bloom, despite her odd pretension to class and culture. In that respect, the translation usually endeavours to capture how a gabby, loud-mouthed Romanian might spontaneously vent out her feelings to herself in a comparable situation, even if it implies supplying the extra idiomatic touch, as when “a dirty barefaced liar and sloven” is reworked into “o mincinoasă de-asta ordinară și nerușinată și o tîrîtură” (*Ulise*, 602; lit.: one of those ordinary, barefaced [shameless] liars and a strumpet [*tîrîtură*; cf. French *trainée*]). The (out)spoken orality of Ivănescu’s Molly Bloom might not be quite as consistent as Joyce’s, yet it eschews the trap of veering into the excessively demotic (cf. Berman 1999, 58).²¹

“curios of signs”

If home would be incomplete without Plumtree’s Potted Meat, a critical examination of a *Ulysses* translation would be equally so without looking at some of those memorable motifs and punning delights which keep even the most demanding reader on their toes after prolonged acquaintance with the novel but equally put the translator’s skills of linguistic innovation and literary expressiveness to the utmost test as s/he endeavours to redeploy the structural imbrications of underlying signifying networks into the target language.

- Plumtree’s Potted Meat

The reiterated Plumtree meat advertisement first appears in “Lotus Eaters” as “*What is home without Plumtree’s Potted Meat? Incomplete. With it an abode of bliss*” (*U* 5.144-7; *Ulise*, 74), then when Bloom is deciding on his lunch: “What is home without Plumtree’s potted meat? Incomplete. What a stupid ad! Under the obituary notices they stuck it. All up a plumtree. Dignam’s potted meat.” (*U* 8.742-5). There are later ruminations on the Plumtree Potted Meat motif, among which the one in “Ithaca:”

What is home without Plumtree’s Potted Meat?

Incomplete.

With it an abode of bliss.

[...]

The name on the label is Plumtree. A plumtree in a meatpot, registered trade mark. Beware of imitations. Peatmot. Trumplee. Moutpat. Plamtroo. (U 17.597-605)

Ivănescu manages to retain consistency, turning the promotional rhyme (“Meat / Incomplete”) into a catchy alliterative pattern, but imparts a quaint literal twist to the language in an attempt to retain the proximity between the brand name and the common tree, as in the passage from “Lestrygonians:”

Ce este un cămin fără conservele de carne Plumtree? Un cămin incomplet. Ce stupidă reclamă! Sub anunțurile mortuare s-au găsit s-o plaseze. Hai să ne suim cu toții într-un plumtree, într-un prun din ăștia. Conserve din carnea lui Dignam. (*Ulise*, 161)

The word “plumtree” is kept as well as translated/expanded upon: “într-un prun din ăștia” (lit.: one of those plumtrees), yet the deathly proximity to an obituary column, which prompts Bloom’s dismissal and ironic comment “All up a plumtree” (cf. up a tree), still remains unaccounted for.²² The rendering of the “Ithaca” fragment carries across the alliterative slogan²³ as well as boasts an ingenious jingle matching the four verbal “imitations:”

Ce-i un cămin fără cutiile de conserve de carne Plumtree? Un cămin nedesăvârșit. [...] Numele pe firmă este Plumtree. O cutie Plumtree este o cutie de conserve de carne, marca înregistrată. Feriți-vă de imitații. Plumcutie. Trumplutree. Cutitrie. Plamtutree. (*Ulise*, 551)

- Met him what?

Molly’s legendary puzzlement at the sesquipedalian for “the transmigration of souls” presents a double challenge: finding a plausible distortion or “reduction” (met him what?) within which some of the character’s own concerns of the day (a meeting with a(nother) pike in hoses) would still show through, and keeping those across the motif’s several iterations:

Met him what? (*U* 4.336)
 Mă tu-n-pe ce? (*Ulise*, 65)

[M]et him pike hoses (*U* 8.112, 11.1062, 13.1280-1)
 Mă tu-n pizoză (*Ulise*, 145)
 mă-tu-n-pizoză (*Ulise*, 266, 347)

Though, strictly speaking, “mă-tu-n-pizoză” is meaningless in Romanian, a native ear would not only intuitively pick up a burlesque distortion of *metempsihoză* but also parse it as a dismissive variation on *du-te-n mă-ta* (go to hell, lit.: to your mum) and *pisoi + pizdă* (kitten; tomcat + cunt); neither him, pike, nor hoses, therefore, but possibly the contiguous female sex instead. Meanwhile the shorter version of Molly’s “Met him what?”, “Mă tu-n-pe ce?”, convincingly keeps the truncated word/locution and the question ([*pe*] *ce*: [on] what).

But then what happens to the motif when it is recycled one last time by Molly herself in “Penelope,” as “that word met something with hoses in it” (*U* 18.565), i.e. barely retaining the phonetic framework of “metempsychosis”? There we see Ivănescu changing tacks between the two editions, from the totally disconnected, literal “cuvîntul ăla să te-nfîlnești cu ceva care parcă are un furtun”²⁴ (lit.: that word met something which it seems has a hose [i.e. not hoses as breeches]) to a more contiguous “cuvîntul ăla mă tu-n pizoză ceva care parcă are un furtun” (*Ulise*, 615), from the unfortunate effect that Bloom’s several musings about his wife’s garbling of the word during the day were out of synch with the way Molly herself rearranges it in the final chapter, to the successful re-tuning of the motif.²⁵

- Rose of Castile

Lenihan’s riddle “What opera is like a railwayline?” in “Aeolus” which produces the punning solution: *Rose of Castile* / Rows of cast steel (*U* 7.588, 591), returning in slightly curtailed form in “Oxen of the Sun” as “Rose of Castile. Rows of cast.” (*U* 14.1510-1) – and lost in translation: “Roza din Castilla [*sic*]. Ce mai distribuție” (*Ulise*, 385) – is adapted into a more appropriately sexual joke in order to attempt preserving a near-homophonic pun: “Ce operă e ca o femeie frigidă?” (lit.: What opera is like a frigid woman?): “*Rosa din*

Castilia. Nu vă prindeți? Roza de casta Lia.” (*Ulise*, 128; lit.: The Rose of chaste Lia).

Still in “Sirens” one of the most amusing sexual-musical *double entendres*, triggering off a sequence of verbal effects: “Tenors get women by the score. Increase their flow. Throw flower at his feet. When will we meet?” (*U* 11.686-7), is rendered somewhat flatly but also erroneously by Ivănescu as “Tenorii au la femei cu grămada. Le face vocea mai amplă. Le-aruncă flori la picioare, când ne-nțîlnim?” (*Ulise*, 253, lit.: Tenors get loads of women. Makes their voice more ample. Throw(s) flowers at their feet, when will we meet?), i.e. Bloom’s imperceptible refocusing from a general statement to the particular situation irking him (at *his* feet), the impending meeting between Boylan and his wife, is obscured, as is the double semantic vein so prominent in the chapter – if anything the Romanian reader has to be more sophisticated than the original reader to think of a sexual innuendo in “Le face vocea mai amplă.”

- “U.P. UP”

The terse postcard sent to Mr. Breen represented, by Ivănescu’s own admission, one of the difficulties for the translator, one he “solved” by turning the original liquidity into solid matter in order to keep the play on letters as a noun: “K.K.: caca.” (e.g. *Ulise*, 148, 150; 275). The explanatory note sums up the various ways U.P. has been interpreted by criticism – its sexual innuendoes, its ominous note via an allusion to *Oliver Twist*, even the supposedly “kinder” French (Morel’s) translation as *Fou-tu* – yet fails to mention the play on secretions in the letters (“you pee”), which would thus seemingly have found its way into the Romanian version owing to the fortuitous fact that *k* was the only letter which, if reduplicated, could yield a derogatory message (*Ulise*, 666, n. 193).

“Conclusion” – Translation as an experience of the limits

In a work of such magnitude as *Ulysses*, and with such deep local moorings, translation is at times indissociable from transplantation in ways that subtly relativize Berman’s and Venuti’s categorizations and plea for an adherence to the letter of the original. Thus syncretism, which Berman identifies as a feature of ethnocentric translations (Berman 1999, 31), is hardly avoidable as

soon as the necessity to adapt, rather than adopt, becomes a guiding principle if no systematic strategy can hope to command the multitude of trans-linguistic issues, and literality (the letter as signifying residue) and sense come into conflict.

In that respect, and although her practical examples and brief commentaries fail to live up to her overall theoretical outlook, it is worth returning to Rodica Ieta’s Benjaminian take on the relation of any translation of *Ulysses* to the nature of Joyce’s work as itself already in a state of intra-linguistic translation manifesting the full plenitude of a *reine Sprache*:

My premise is that the English of *Ulysses* is itself governed by the law of translatability, that is, it derives from, echoes, and aims at pure language, at expression outside the confines of meaning. The novel sounds like a translation in both languages [...], from a pure language into an English and a Romanian that experience a strange purifying metamorphosis, namely that of both being and not being themselves any longer. (Ieta 2007, 124)²⁶

This desirable status is also what for Berman any good translation should aspire to: beyond the specific task required in “Oxen of the Sun” (which can therefore be taken as a literary precursor of this approach), “*to give back to the language the memory of its history back to its origin, to open it up to a future of unsuspected possibilities*” (Berman 1999, 137; translation ours). Such an “experience” of translation – from Latin *experiri*: to put to the test, by going beyond (*ex-*) a risk or danger (*periculum*, related to Greek *peras*: limit) – ultimately aims at the manifestation of the origin of the original (Berman 1999, 95), and to translate is “*to look-for-and-find the non-normative [le non-normé] in the mother tongue in order to introduce into it the foreign tongue and its way of saying [son dire]*” (Berman 1999, 131, and also 75; translation ours).

Notes

¹ See e.g. Ion Biberi, “James Joyce,” *Revista Fundațiilor Regale* 2 (May 1935) 393-401, a year which also saw the publication of his Joyce-influenced novel, *Proces*. For an account of the literary influence, see

Arleen Ionescu, "Ion Biberi - A Romanian Joycean writer," forthcoming in the proceedings of the XXth International James Joyce Symposium on "Joycean Unions," Budapest-Szombathely, June 2006, eds. Brandon Kershner and Tekla Mecsnöber.

² Al. Philippide, "James Joyce," *Adevărul literar și artistic* 502 (20 July 1930) 5. For a compendium of critical grievances typical of the period, emanating from one of Romania's major prose writers of the time (who sets off Proust's genius against Joyce's numerous shortcomings), see Camil Petrescu, *Teze și antiteze* (Bucharest: Editura Cultura Națională, 1936). A fuller account of the national antipathies raging against Joyce can be found in Arleen Ionescu, "Inter-war Romania: Misinterpreting Joyce and Beyond," *The Reception of James Joyce in Europe*, vol. I, eds. Geert Lernout and Wim Van Mierlo (London and New York: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004) 214-8.

³ "James Joyce *Ulysses*," trans. Al. Philippide, *Adevărul literar și artistic* 502 (20 July 1930) 5.

⁴ "Ulysses," trans. I. Holzman, *Hasmonaea* 4 (September 1930) 14-16. Interestingly, and in spite of the prevalent Anglophobe cultural climate, an early attempt to translate from *Finnegans Wake* appeared in 1931, a mere three years after the serial publication of the original: "Considerații asupra Annei Livia Plurabelle" [Considerations on Anna Livia Plurabelle], *Cuvântul* 2352 (6 November 1931) 2.

⁵ Adrian Oțoiu, "'Le sens du pousser.' On the Spiral of Joyce's Reception in Romanian," *The Reception of James Joyce in Europe*, I, 202.

⁶ See "Oxen of the Sun," *Secolul 20* (October 1971) 55-98; "Hades," *Secolul 20* (December 1973) 169-97; "Aeolus," *Secolul 20* (September 1977) 59-92; "Cyclops," *Secolul 20* (April 1982) 5-47.

⁷ Irena Grubica makes a similar point about Croatian in "Ulysses in Croatian," *Joyce Studies in Italy*, 10: "Joyce and/in Translation," eds. Rosa Maria Bollettieri Bosinelli and Ira Torresi (Roma: Bulzoni, 2007) 115.

⁸ James Joyce, *Ulise*, ed. and trans. Mircea Ivănescu, Foreword by Ștefan Stoescu (Bucharest: Editura Univers and Editura Fundației Culturale Române, 1996) 691, n. 407 (translation ours); thereafter cited as *Ulise* with page references in the text. In her review of Ivănescu's translation, Geta Dumitriu mentions the felicitous rendering of the famous snatch of alliterative Anglo-Saxon prose "Before born babe bliss had. Within womb won he worship." (*U* 14.60) as "Naintea născătorii noroace avea pruncșorul. Prins încă în pînțece prețuire prea mare precîștiga." (*Ulise*, 349, and 692, n. 409, quoting Gifford and Seidman's explanation), lit.: Before the birth luck(s) did the small nursling have. Still (taken) in the womb(s) all too much valuing did he pre-win. See *James Joyce Quarterly* 35.1 (Fall 1997) 203.

⁹ For a more detailed presentation of the translation’s historical context, see Geta Dumitriu’s review referenced above.

¹⁰ Cf. Alexandru Cistelean, *Mircea Ivănescu, Monografie* (Braşov: Aula, 2003) 7.

¹¹ Thus we wish to nuance Geta Dumitriu’s appreciative remark that “[a] part of the [...] episode’s great charm is that the cadence of Molly’s monologizing mind brings it closer to the speaking voice or rather to a voice that has gender and cultural determinations” (Dumitriu, 1997, 204).

¹² See e.g. C. George Săndulescu, *The Joycean Monologue: A Study of Character and Monologue in Joyce’s Ulysses against the Background of Literary Tradition* (Colchester: Wake Newsletter Press, 1979), who also translated part of *Giacomo Joyce* into Romanian.

¹³ Jean Giraudoux, *Juliette au pays des hommes* (Paris: Émile-Paul, 1924) 149.

¹⁴ A similar point was made both about Romanian and Hungarian translations by Erika Mihálycsa, who, starting from Fritz Senn’s earlier leads and critical nonce words, especially in *Joyce’s Dislocutions. Essays on Reading as Translation* (1984), notes that “[e]ven a superficial glance at the translation texts reveals how far they turn the Bloomian *sents* into well-rounded, grammatically complete sentences.” (“Translating the Gap: The Hungarian and Romanian ‘fillings-in’ of Bloom’s ‘I AM A’ in ‘Nausicaa,’” forthcoming in *Joyce Studies Annual 2009*).

¹⁵ Rodica Ieta, “James Joyce’s *Ulysses* in Romanian: An Uncanny and Foreign Language,” *Joyce Studies in Italy* 10, 124-5. See Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London and New York, 1995).

¹⁶ Thus, in view of its overall excellence, it might sound churlish to object that, while Ivănescu’s translation concentrates usually successfully on the novel’s stylistic purple patches and notorious cruxes, it is occasionally still guilty, even in its slightly revised form, of blinking at details, as in “on the occasion [...] of the interment of Mrs Emily Sinico, Sydney Parade” in “Ithaca” (*U* 17.1453-4), which becomes “cu prilejul [...] înmormântării domnişoarei [i.e. of Miss] Emily Sinico, din Sydney Parade” (*Ulise*, 576) – followed in the first edition by a wayward “Esplanada Sinico.”

¹⁷ See e.g. Antoine Berman, *La Traduction et la lettre, ou l’auberge du lointain* (Paris: Seuil, 1999) and Lawrence Venuti, “Strategies of Translation,” *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, ed. Mona Baker (London and New York: Routledge, 1998) 240-44.

¹⁸ Jacques Derrida, “Des Tours de Babel,” trans. Joseph F. Graham, *Difference in Translation*, ed. and intr. Joseph F. Graham (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985) 165-207.

¹⁹ Similarly the supposed no-hoper of a horse that is the indirect cause of Bloom’s undoing in “Cyclops” is translated as *Zvirluga*, based on a

verbal equivalent of the English “throw away” (*a zvîrli*), lit.: groundling, a small vivacious fish but also (for a person) a “will-o'-the-wisp,” hence more readily suggestive of vivacity, though the consistency of the motif is not adhered to throughout, especially in the crucial exchange with Bantam Lyons where the more common synonym *a arunca* is used: “Eram tocmai să-l arunc” / “Eram cât pe-acî să-l arunc în clipa asta.” (*Ulise*, 84, 85), whereas the same verb is used in other contexts, as in the editor’s “Throw him out and shut the door” in “Aeolus” – in Romanian: “Zvîrle-l afară și închide ușa.” (*U* 7.399; *Ulise*, 122).

²⁰ Yet a similar degree of obscenity in “if he wants to kiss my bottom Ill drag open my drawers and bulge it right out in his face as large as life he can stick his tongue 7 miles up my hole as hes there my brown part” (*U* 18.1520-22) is carried across into Romanian: “dacă vrea să mă sărute în fund am să-mi desfac pantalonașii și am să i-l scot bine drept în față în mărime naturală poate să-și întindă limba șapte mile în sus în gaura mea dacă tot e-acolo în partea mea întunecată” (*Ulise*, 639).

²¹ The appeal to consistency, as opposed to the mismatching of registers, is not to be confused with a call for homogenization versus prose’s native heterology; cf. Berman 1999, 60, 66.

²² Compare with Ira Torresi’s analysis of De Angelis’s Italian translation in “Domesticating or Foreignizing Foreignization? Joyce Translation as a Test for Venuti’s Theories,” *Papers on Joyce* 13 (2007): 104-6.

²³ Indeed Ivănescu’s poetic talent comes to the fore in such musical passages, as in his rendering of the Ulyssean variation on the Mother Goose rhyme of Peter the Piper in “Scylla and Charbydis,” to which he freely adds “L-a picnit,” lit.: it gave him a snuffle:

—Piper! Mr Best piped. Is Piper back?

Peter Piper pecked a peck of pick of peck of pickled pepper. (*U* 9.275-6)

—Piper? pică-n vorbă domnul Best. S-a-ntors Piper?

Peter Piper a picat un pic de piper pe pipa lui. L-a picnit. (*Ulise*, 180).

²⁴ James Joyce, *Ulise*, ed. and trans. Mircea Ivănescu (Bucharest: Editura Univers, 1984), vol. II, 407.

²⁵ Compare with Jolanta W. Wawrzycka’s compendium of polyglottal solutions in “‘Tell Us in Plain Words:’ Textual Implications of Re-Languaging Joyce,” *Joyce Studies in Italy* 10, 41-2.

²⁶ See also 131-2 where, taking her cue from Patrick O’Neill’s approach in *Polyglot Joyce: Fictions of Translation* (2005), she adds that the inter-text of *Ulysses* in translation enriches the work’s interpretive experience.