

## “A stride at a time” (*U* 3.11): Thoughts on Translating Critical Readings of *Ulysses*

JOLANTA WAWRZYCKA

“...the love that might have been” (*U* 348)

*Abstract:*

Translators of Joycean criticism are a potent link in the overall reception of Joyce's works. In this essay, examples from critical readings by John Bishop and Fritz Senn serve to illustrate the point that translating critical readings of *Ulysses* into Polish, Russian, French and Italian, is an obstacle-fraught labor, especially if the existing translations of *Ulysses* in those languages do not support the claims raised by the critics. Often a critical essay centers on a phrasing or a language effect that is vastly different or even absent in the published translation, which forces the translator to supply a re-translation of the phrase/effect at hand – if at all possible – and/or to provide an explanatory footnote. The task becomes a Janus-faced undertaking that oscillates between working on essay-under-translation and its re-languaged derivative; between Joyce-in-translation, Joyce's critics and Joyce in the original.

**E**nigmas in *Ulysses* continue to generate ample critical commentary and, as Joyce had predicted, keep the Joyce scholars perennially busy. Consider, for instance, Bloom's "I. AM. A." (*U* 381) at the end of Nausicaa. The phrase has received some critical attention; Fritz Senn has commented that: "The abortive

message that Bloom writes into the sand and effaces immediately (...), happens to contain, besides himself, the Latin root *ama-* love, no doubt outside his own consciousness and yet somehow ‘done half by design’ (U 382).<sup>1</sup> Senn’s critical comment points to a larger textual effect of Bloom’s letters and, by extension, to a broader issue of thematic inter-relations between alphabetical, lexical, and semantic levels. Certainly by design, Senn’s reading also draws attention to the surplus and over-determination of Joyce’s language and to deep correspondences between multilayered language effects. That translations of *Ulysses* cannot always preserve some of these effects is rather obvious, as is the fact that they *do* nevertheless strive to replicate salvageable approximations.

For example, the French and Italian translations render Bloom’s writing as: “JE. SUIS” (F/Morel 434),<sup>2</sup> “JE. SUIS. UN” (F/Aubert 550),<sup>3</sup> and “IO. SONO. UN” (I/De Angelis 370),<sup>4</sup> respectively. In the Polish *Ulisses*, Bloom’s message reads: “JA. JESTEM” (P/Słomczyński 296),<sup>5</sup> or “I am/I exist.” In Russian, Bloom’s letters are rendered as: “Я. ... ЕСТЬ. А” (R/Hinkis-Horužij 296)<sup>6</sup> and they back-translate as “I. AM. A.”<sup>7</sup> All five translations echo the graphic/semantic sense of Bloom’s letters that reinforce “being/existence” but they leave the tenor of Senn’s reading largely untranslatable. With the Latin echoes for “love” irreproducible, the translations rely soberly on the Latin *est*. Quid pro quod. Senn’s focus on the connotations of Bloom’s beach lettering would have to be footnoted for the readers of his commentary in other languages.

Senn playfully reads the Latin *ama-* in Bloom’s letters by recycling Joyce’s phrase “done half by design.” In Polish, the phrase reads as “jest w tym przeznaczenie,” (P/Słomczyński 297), or “there’s destiny in it,” a rendition identical to that of Joyce’s *earlier* phrasing, “Still *there is destiny in it*” U 373; P/Słomczyński 290). Now, semantically, Joyce’s two phrases overlap ever so slightly while they share no common lexical material.<sup>8</sup> The Russian translators rendered them as “С другой стороны, судьба” (R/Hinkis-Horužij 290; On the other hand, fate) and “Как будто нарочно сделано” (R/Hinkis-Horužij 296; done as if on purpose). In Morel’s French *Ulisse*, we find “Mais c’est la fatalité qui vent ça” (F/Morel 424) and “Il y a de la providence là-dedans” (F/Morel 434). Aubert’s text translates the phrases as “Encore qu’il y ait de la fatalité en cela” (F/Aubert 537) and “En bonne partie le destin” (F/Aubert 550). Finally, in Italian, we find “Ma anche lì è destino”

(I/De Angelis 362) and “Fatto quasi apposta” (370). Only the Polish *Ulysses* treats the two phrases as identical, rather inexplicably.

That fact complicates matters for the Polish translator of critical commentary. To wit, in his essay, “A Metaphysics of Coitus in ‘Nausicaa,’”<sup>9</sup> John Bishop uses Joyce’s “Still there’s destiny in it” as a section title. The phrase, followed by “falling in love,” reflects Bloom’s thoughts about Molly in the context of other wives, marriages, fateful unions, et cetera. However, “[d]one half by design” appears as Bloom deems sand hopeless, infertile, and dangerous for big ships other than Guinness barges. If Bishop’s subtitle contextualizes for the English-language reader the thematic preoccupation of that section of his essay, its translation into Polish refers the Polish reader to two instances of the same phrasing and potentially skews, if not obliterates, the critic’s point.

My current translation project has prompted me to revisit the topic of obstacles embedded in translating Joycean criticism into foreign languages, notably into Polish, because the existing Polish translations of Joyce’s works do not always support the claims raised by the critics.<sup>10</sup> If a critical essay centers on a phrasing or a language effect that is absent (or vastly different) in the published translation, that essay will be translatable only if its translator supplies re-translation of the phrase/effect at hand (if at all possible) and offers explanatory footnotes. Joyce scholars who read English have an upper hand over scholars who work from translated texts; they not only reap the benefits of the English-language Joycean criticism but also are free to enter critical debates, an option not really available to critics who read and research Joyce in translation.

Lexical and stylistic complexities taken up by the critics are likely to present quite a few obstacles for the translator of criticism. Both Senn’s and Bishop’s readings of *Nausicaa*, separated as they are by a quarter of a century, share the common thread of philological attention to language that has been arguably overshadowed by more recent theoretical readings of Joyce. Senn is a legendary *filos* of *logoi* among Joyceans and his criticism, like Joyce’s writing, is polytropic, intertextual, subtle in its densely woven referentiality, and not easy to translate. Bishop’s virtuoso analysis of *Nausicaa* demonstrates that a theorized, gendered reading of Joyce does not have to forgo minute philological close reading. Reading *Nausicaa* in terms of its investment in pairing, doubling and

“A STRIDE AT A TIME” (U 3.11): THOUGHTS ON TRANSLATING  
CRITICAL READINGS OF *ULYSSES*.

twinning, Bishop sees the two episode sections, Gerty’s and Bloom’s, as *the* fundamental coupling:

Having ‘gone together’ in Joyce’s conception and writing of the chapter, certainly—or, to give the verb its Latin equivalent, *coitus* (“having gone together”)—the two parts of ‘Nausicaa’ arguably require analysis together, as surely do any two partners in any two-body relation.”<sup>11</sup>

Bishop notes that “[t]he chapter itself highlights its thematic interest in pairing and doubling by focusing on twins in its opening pages – indeed, in the narrator’s insistently tautological phrasing, on ‘two twins’ (U 13. 41, 13.363, 13.492, 13.505).”<sup>12</sup>

The Polish translation of *Ulysses* does not preserve the tautology, however, and out of four instances cited by Bishop, only the first one gestures towards rendition of “two twins” – “para bliźniąt” (P/Ślōmczyński 269-70; a *pair* of twins—but not *two* twins). The remaining occurrences refer simply to twins (“bliźnięta”, P/Ślōmczyński 276, 279, 280). It has to be noted that even though the Polish *Ulysses* is unharmed by the erasure of redundancy, it does not support *Bishop’s* critical reading. Upon reflection, it becomes obvious that the absence of tautology misrepresents what Joyce has written. The Russian translators opted for “близнецы” (twins) in the first and third instance listed by Bishop (R/Hinkis-Horužij 269, 279), but they preserved the tautology in the second and fourth instance: “оба близнецы” (both twins), and “с двома близнецами” (with two twins) (RU R/Hinkis-Horužij 292, 279). As a rhetorical figure of speech, tautology in this case plays up the structure of the episode and links to other thematic redundancies (psychological, linguistic) that constitute the fabric of Gerty’s (and Bloom’s) thinking.

But for Bishop, the “two twins” redundancy adds another salient point to his critical reading:

The redundancy calls attention to the cognate relations of the word “twins” to the number “two,” and in turn to the chapter’s setting at “twilight,” “between” two agents also states of illumination: all three of these words – “twins,” “twilight,” “between” (Derrida’s *entre*) – derive from a common proto-Indian European root designating “two” (Bishop’s emphasis).<sup>13</sup>

The proto-Indian European root designating “two” is present Polish as *dw-* (“dwa,” “two”) and in Russian as *дв-* (“два,” “two”); both pronounced as *dva*). The absence of “*dwa/два*” from the Polish and Russian translations of *Ulysses* makes this part of Bishop’s argument difficult to render for the respective reading audiences without footnoting and re-translating of the existing translations. The French and Italian translations replicate Joyce’s “two twins” meticulously: in Morel’s *Ulysse*, “*deux jumeaux*” are repeated three out of four times listed by Bishop (F/Morel 394, 404, and 408), with the last instance appearing as just “*jumeaux*” (409). Aubert’s *Ulysse* preserves all four “two twins” as “*deux jumeaux*” (F/Aubert 498, 511, 516, and 517), as does the Italian translation, “*due gemelli*” (I/De Angelis 337, 357, and two instances on 349).

**“...correspondence between...” (U 735)**

The matters get a bit more complex when Bishop introduces “twins” and “between” into his discussion. He notes, and Skeat confirms, that “between” derives from the old English *be tweonum* (literally, “by twain”) and is etymologically related to the words *twin* (O.E. *twin*) and *twilight* (from the Middle English *twi-* and *light*), whose earliest sense seems to be “the light between.”<sup>14</sup> In Polish and Russian, the words for “twins” and “between” share no common etymology nor do they derive from the same root as “two.”<sup>15</sup> That Bishop’s footnote would have to be footnoted in the Polish and Russian version of his essay is self-evident.

But the fact that the existing Polish and Russian translations of *Ulysses* do not replicate Joyce’s tautology poses an interesting translation dilemma of how to handle repetition. Repetition in Joyce is almost a trope, a stylistic/semantic strategy that enhances representation while it often calls attention to itself as a figurative, non-standard language. Some languages, Slavic among them (and Polish in particular) favor semantic rather than lexical repetition, that is, synonyms and lexical variants are more likely to appear where Joyce had used identical words. Joyce’s repetitions (of such words as “nice” or “whip/whipping,” or the phrase about Maria’s “very very long nose,” or Molly’s “because,” or numerous three/four-word adjectival strings, etc) point to a deliberate stylistic, thematic and narrative strategy that bears on representation and characterization as

it inscribes mimetic patterns, gestures, and behaviors. Translators of Joyce who overlook Joyce’s precise wording and render by paraphrasing what they deem redundant and/or repetitious misrepresent Joyce’s work on the one hand, and on the other, contribute to the difficulties faced by translators of Joyce’s criticism.

“...on parade...” (U 5. 57, 66)

Case in point: Senn’s essay “In Full Gait: Aesthetics of Footsteps” offers a sustained tour de force discussion of all manners of walking performed by Joyce’s characters. One such manner, sauntering, read closely by Senn for the word’s situational reverberations, would pose a dilemma for the Polish translator of Senn’s essay. Senn writes:

The pace of movement changes when Bloom approaches the post-office, where a clandestine letter awaits him: “He turned away and sauntered across the road” (U 5.47). Sauntering is a particular, leisurely sort of walk, often self-conscious one. Here it marks Bloom, the potential lover, in his role as a Henry Flower affecting nonchalance. He is also imitating a walk he has already noticed, as his thoughts indicate: “How did she walk with her sausages?” “She”, the girl next door whom he was keen on following home, had “sauntered lazily to the right” (U 4.174).<sup>16</sup>

In Polish *Ulysses*, sauntering is not rendered consistently enough to allow for an easy translation of Senn’s discussion. In Polish, Słomczyński’s Bloom *slowly crossed* the street (“z wolna przeszedł przez ulicę” (P/Słomczyński 56) and the girl with her sausages *started/moved lazily* to the right (“ruszyła leniwie w prawo,” P/Słomczyński 47). In Russian the solutions are similar: Bloom *crossed* the street *without hurry* (“неспешно перешел через улицу,” R/Hinkis-Horužij 57) and the girl *moved* in a *lazy stride* to the right (“двинулась ленивой походкой направо,” R/Hinkis-Horužij 48). The French Bloom *moved* and *crossed* the street (“Il s’*éloigna* et traversa la rue”, F/Morel 78; F/Aubert 106), whereas the girl, as she took/moved to the right, did so nonchalantly and in *slow pace* (“nonchalante, à pas lents”, F/Morel 64; “s’*éloigna* d’un pas nonchalante”, F/Aubert, 88). Curiously, the Italian Bloom turned and

crossed the road *thoughtlessly* or *absent-mindedly* (“Si volto e attraverso *svagato* le strada”, I/De Angelis 72), and the girl with sausages took/charged *lazily* to the right (“prese *pigramente* a destra”, I/De Angelis 60). Thus all languages render “sauntering” through descriptive and interpretive means; except for the Italian Bloom, the contextual *sense*, however, is preserved well and in keeping with Senn’s reading that the “act of sauntering in itself fits the placidity of the Lotuseaters episode, which from then on describes Bloom as ‘strolling’ (*U* 5.76, 183, 919 [sic]<sup>17</sup>).<sup>18</sup>

But “strolling” would have the translators of Senn’s essay into Polish or Russian stumble because in Polish and Russian texts of *Ulysses*, the three instances of “strolling” evoked by Senn (out of post office, towards Brunswick Street, and out of Sweny’s) show up as only tentative approximations of Joyce’s precise wording. Thus the first and third instance (Bloom strolling out of post office and Sweny’s) is normalized in Polish into “[he] left/exited” (“wyszedł” P/Słomczyński 56, 66), whereas the second instance approximates “strolling” by using “kroczać” (59), a participle that implies taking deliberate and/or dignified steps. In Russian, Bloom left/exited the post office with *cautious steps* (“Беспечной походкой он вышел...” R/Hinkis-Horužij 58), though from Sweny’s, he just exited (“он вышел” 69), and, approaching Brunswick Street, he walked *without haste* (“неспешно шагал” 60). In the absence of lexical equivalence, translators’ best strategy was, indeed, to emphasize slowness of the steps in order to differentiate between various other manners of perambulation. In the French and Italian translations Bloom also “exited” the post office and Sweny’s (sortit; uscì);<sup>19</sup> he approached Brunswick Street by walking with tranquility or nonchalance in French and, in Italian, he did so “passeggiando” – by strolling.<sup>20</sup>

Senn continues his reading of “sauntering” by reminding us that the word is “amplified later on, in the similarly placid Sirens episode, where the focus for one short paragraph is on a momentary dejection” in the following lines:

Miss Kennedy sauntered sadly from bright light, twining a loose hair behind an ear. Sauntering sadly, gold no more, she twisted twined a hair. Sadly she twined in sauntering gold hair behind a curving ear (*U* 11. 81)

As in English, the tone of the passage in Polish is one of dejection, courtesy of the somber repetition of “sadly” as well as of

the adverbial rendition of the three instances of sauntering qualified by “heavily:” in Polish “sauntered sadly” reads as “*heavily slid* away” from bright light (“*ociężale* wysunęła się” P/Słomczyński 199); “sauntering sadly” overlooks “sauntering” and describes the act of twining hair as done “sadly and *heavily*” (“*smutno i ociężale*”); the last “sauntering” is also erased in favor of qualifying the act of twining hair as “heavily” (“*ociężale*”).<sup>21</sup> As Senn’s discussion illustrates, textual memory of “sauntering” commands attention. Joyce in translation cannot compete – the limits of lexis and usage map out different textual dynamics. A successful translatorial approximation aims at salvaging salient aspect of the original text – maybe the tone/mode, or rhythmic/alliterative dimensions (often in the alternative register). If Miss Kennedy’s sauntering, as Senn notes, conveys mannered, purposeless, unhurried acting, the Polish translation, in contrast, emphasizes resigned heaviness of her movements. But “unhurried acting” is preserved in Russian thanks to the near equivalent of sauntering, прогуливаться.<sup>22</sup> Likewise, French translations are fortunate to rely on derivatives of “flâner”<sup>23</sup> for “saunter,” though in Italian an altogether different register is introduced that has Miss Kennedy trot sorrowfully.<sup>24</sup>

Senn reminds us also that in “Two Gallants” Corley too “sauntered across the road swaying his head from side to side” (*D* 55),<sup>25</sup> in a mannered fashion designed to project unhurried “coolness.” Predictably, the two Polish Corleys just “cross the street”,<sup>26</sup> though, as we saw, the Polish Bloom at least crossed it *slowly*. Russian Corley walked across the street unhurriedly,<sup>27</sup> the French one crossed the street with a casual step,<sup>28</sup> and the Italian one – just slowly.<sup>29</sup> Only the Polish translations forgo recreating the manner of Corley’s steps and the Polish readers and critics never miss them while reading the Polish *Dubliners*. But critical readings such as Senn’s go a long way towards restoring not only the textual and semantic subtleties discussed here, but also towards recognition on the part of all readers of translations that even the seemingly negligible textual alterations in Joyce’s “presentment” of what he had seen (*L* May 5, 1906) skew his artistic endeavor and go against his declaration that he *himself* would never “alter what [he has] written” lest he falsifies the very fabric of representation.

As the examples from Senn’s and Bishop’s readings demonstrate, zooming one’s critical lens on a particular lexical element brings to focus complexities of Joyce’s larger textual design.

If English-language Joyce criticism – considered here as the primary tier of critical engagement – expounds Joyce to its readers, translators of Joyce’s works enable a secondary tier of critical engagement where un-Englished critics comment on de-Englished Joyce. Clearly the latter can, and do, profit significantly from the insights of the former via the agency of translators of Joyce criticism who, as I have argued here, encounter some formidable obstacles in their efforts to provide the bridge between the two tiers of critical enterprises, particularly if aspects of the existing translations of Joyce’s texts are at variance with Joyce’s original thereby cancelling out the tenor of critical commentary. Translating Joycean criticism becomes a Janus-faced double-decked undertaking that oscillates between working on essay-under-translation and its re-languaged derivative; between Joyce-in-translation and Joyce in the original. A potent link in the overall reception of Joyce’s works, the translators of Joyce criticism are also hyper-readers – arguably almost more so than translators of Joyce’s primary texts whose creative textual solutions don’t always aid the work of the translators of critical commentary. This exercise is designed to pay homage to their impasse-fraught labors.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Fritz Senn, “Nausicaa.” In *James Joyce’s Ulysses*. Clive Heart and David Hayman, eds. (Berkeley: California UP, 1974) 281.

<sup>2</sup> *Ulysse*, trans. Auguste Morel (Paris: Adrienne Monier, 1930). Hereafter F/Morel.

<sup>3</sup> *Ulysse*, trans. Jacques Aubert et al (Paris: Gallimard, 2004). Hereafter F/Aubert.

<sup>4</sup> *Ulisse*, trans. Giulio de Angelis (Milano: Mondadori, 1988). Hereafter I/De Angelis.

<sup>5</sup> *Ulisses*. Trans. Maciej Słomczyński (Bydgoszcz: Pomorze 1992). Hereafter P/Słomczyński

<sup>6</sup> *Uliss*, trans. V. Hinkis and S. Horužij (Moscow: Republic, 1993). Hereafter R/Hinkis-Horužij.

<sup>7</sup> Because in Russian (as in other Slavic languages) there are no articles, the semantic range of “A” can only assume phraseological meaning as either a particle (“and” or “so”), a conjunction (“and” or “but”), or an interjection that marks emotions (oh!, ah!). “A” appears after a full stop,

“A STRIDE AT A TIME” (U 3.11): THOUGHTS ON TRANSLATING  
CRITICAL READINGS OF *ULYSSES*.

which invites a range of semantic possibilities: it could announce an aborted question, a statement of resignation, or just a sigh.

<sup>8</sup> Webster’s Third International Dictionary (Unabridged) lists verb *destinate* as a cognate of the archaic form of *to design* or *to intend*.

<sup>9</sup> John Bishop, “A Metaphysics of Coitus in ‘Nausicaa.’” In *Ulysses; Engendered Perspectives*. Kibmerly J. Devlin and Marilyn Reizbaum, eds. (Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 1999) 206.

<sup>10</sup> I took up some of these issues in “Transcultural Criticism: ‘jenglish janglage’ Joyce in Polish.” See *A Collideorscape of Joyce: Festschrift for Fritz Senn*. Ruth Frehner and Ursula Zeller, eds. (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1998) 436-443.

<sup>11</sup> Bishop 186.

<sup>12</sup> Bishop 186

<sup>13</sup> Bishop 186.

<sup>14</sup> Bishop 186, footnote 3.

<sup>15</sup> The Polish word for “twins” is “bliźniak,” for “twilight” – “zmiarzch,” and for “between” – “pomiędzy;” they share no common root with “dwa” or with one another. The same goes for Russian, where the words are “близнец,” “сумерки,” and “между” respectively. Incidentally, as is the case with Polish and Russian, Bishop’s point about the derivation of “twins,” “twilight,” and “between” could not be carried into French or Italian, either, because they do not share etymological roots: the words in French are “jumeau,” “crépuscule,” and “entre,” and in Italian, “gemello,” “crepuscolo” and “tra.” It is evident, though, that the French/Italian words for “jumeau/gemello,” “crepuscule/ crepuscolo” and “entre/tra” share a common ancestry.

<sup>16</sup> Fritz Senn, “In Full Gait: Aesthetics of Footsteps.” In *Ulyssesean Close-ups* (Rome: Bulzoni Editore, 2007) 27-28.

<sup>17</sup> The typographical error points to a non-existent line 919 instead of line 517.

<sup>18</sup> Senn, “In Full Gait,” 28-29.

<sup>19</sup> In Morel: “Il sortit nonchalamment...” (79), “sortit sans se presser” (94). In Aubert: “sortit nonchalamment” (107) and “sorti tranquillement” (125). De Angelis repeats “uscì” without qualifiers (78, 85).

<sup>20</sup> In Morel: “M. Bloom, toujours flânant vers Brunswick Street, sourit” (83); In Aubert: “M. Bloom, se dirigeant tranquillement en direction de Brunswick street...” (111); in de Angelis: “Mr Bloom, passeggiando verso Brunswick street...” (76)

<sup>21</sup> Polish passage: “Panna Kennedy smutno i ociężale wysunęła się z jaskrawego blasku, zakładając niesforny włos za ucho. Smutno i ociężale,

już nie złota, zaplotła założyła włos. Smutno ułożyła ociężale złoty włos za zaokrągleniem ucha” (P/Słomczyński 199).

<sup>22</sup> In Russian, Miss Kennedy “slowly sauntering, left/exited the strip of light” (“печально прогуливалась, выйдя из полосы света”) and “slowly sauntering ... twined [hair] strand” (“печально прогуливаясь ... закручивала ... прядку”, R/ Hinkis-Horužij 199)

<sup>23</sup> Morel: “Miss Kennedy ... flâneuse, tortillant un cheveu... Flâneuse, triste ... elle tord ... un cheveu. Triste, elle tirebouchonne en flânant un cheveu... (291); Aubert: “Mlle Kennedy quitta tristement le grand jour, d’un pass nonchalant, entortillant une mèche... Tristement nonchalante, ... elle tortillait entortilant une mèche. Elle entortillait tristement ses nonchalants cheveux...” (372).

<sup>24</sup> De Angelis: “Miss Kennedy trotterellò tristamente via dalla fulgida luce ... Trotterellando tristamente ... ritorceva ... un capello. Tristemente atrocceva trotterellando capelli...” (251)

<sup>25</sup> Senn, “In Full Gait,” 29.

<sup>26</sup> “Przeszedł przez jezdnię” ([He] crossed the road”). *Dublińczycy*, trans. Kalina Wojciechowska (Warszawa: who, 1958) 47; “Przeszedł na drugą stronę ulicy” ([He] crossed the street”). *Dublińczycy*, trans. Zbigniew Batko (Kraków: Znak, 2005) 47.

<sup>27</sup> “Он не спеша зашагал...” *Дублинцы (Dublincy)* (Moskva: Znak, 1993) 49.

<sup>28</sup> “Il reaversa la rued’un pas désinvolte”, *Dublinois*, trans. Jacques Aubert (Gallimard, 1976) 109.

<sup>29</sup> “Traverso lento la strada”, *Gente di Dublino*, trans. Franca Cancogni (Mondadori, 1978) 87.