

Processes and Strategies of Translating Joyce: Stephen Hero as a Case in Point

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Abstract: *This essay was read by the author as the second Maria Helena Kopschitz Annual Lecture, delivered at The University College, Dublin, James Joyce Centre, on 25 February 2016. The piece starts from an overview of Joyce's translations in Brazil and proceeds to draw on thoughts stemming from the author's own experience translating James Joyce's fiction, especially Dubliners and Stephen Hero into Brazilian Portuguese.*

Keywords: *James Joyce; Stephen Hero; translation in Brazil.*

First of all, I wish to thank very much The University College Dublin James Joyce Centre, as well as Professors Anne Fogarty and Margaret Kelleher, for honoring me with the invitation to speak here at UCD to mark both the centenary of the publication of James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and the 2016 Maria Helena Kopschitz Annual Lecture. I am especially grateful that Anne and Margaret have offered me the opportunity to discuss my own work, when they kindly suggested that I speak about my translations in general and about *Stephen Hero* in particular. And I am honored to mark Professor Kopschitz's second Annual Lecture. The first time I heard about Maria Helena was back in 1985, when my PhD supervisor at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, Professor George Lensing, in our very first meeting, told me Maria Helena had taught him in the late 1960s, when he was a Peace Corps volunteer in Niterói, a city across the bay from Rio de Janeiro, and that she had been instrumental in his decision to teach literature. Later, I had the pleasure of meeting Maria Helena and of hearing her speak quite a few times – always a gentle, modest and, at the same time, rock-solid scholar and speaker.

Introduction

Before offering you an overview of the highlights of James Joyce in translation in Brazil and addressing challenges faced and strategies devised in my rendering of *Stephen Hero* into Brazilian Portuguese, I will accept Anne and Margaret's friendly challenge to say something about my translation work generally. My PhD dissertation, defended

at UNC-Chapel Hill in November, 1989, and titled “*Wise Blood* as *Sangue Sábio: A Literary Translation into Brazilian Portuguese*”, encompassed a critical study of Flannery O’Connor’s short and long fiction, as well as a review of translation history and theory applied to my own translation of O’Connor’s novel *Wise Blood*. Shortly after defending, I went back to Brazil, and the same publisher that printed my translation of *Wise Blood* promptly commissioned me to translate O’Connor’s ten short stories collected in the book *A Good Man Is Hard to Find*.

So, twenty-six years ago I started my career as a literary translator working with prose fiction, long and short. More or less at the same time, I started receiving commissions for non-fiction prose relating to Critical Theory, for instance, by W. H. Auden, R. W. B. Lewis, and Harold Bloom; and History by Robert Wistrich, Tony Judt, and Thomas Cahill – in Cahill’s *Como os Irlandeses Salvaram a Civilização [How the Irish Saved Civilization]*, Rio de Janeiro, Objetiva, 2002, I was able to do arguably the first Portuguese translation of “Saint Patrick’s Breastplate Prayer”. Proceeding to work with prose fiction, both long and short, I have translated Sheridan Le Fanu, Joseph Conrad, D. H. Lawrence, Christopher Isherwood, Richard Yates, Pat Conroy, and, of course, James Joyce.

My work as a translator of drama has centered on Shakespeare’s plays. In the early 1990s I got a research grant from the Brazilian Ministry of Science and Technology for a project I had submitted whose aim was – and still is – to do annotated, verse translations of Shakespeare’s plays into Brazilian Portuguese. Since then, I have completed annotated translations of seven plays – *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter’s Tale*, *Pericles*, *The First Quarto of Hamlet*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, and *Troilus and Cressida*. The first five have been published, while the last two are forthcoming. The next play will be *Timon of Athens*.

As regards poetry translation, by far, my most noteworthy work is the rendering of 49 poems by Kathleen McCracken into Brazilian Portuguese, for a book organized by Beatriz Kopschitz, published as a bilingual edition, in São Paulo, by Editora Ex Machina, in 2014. We had a memorable launch of the book at the No Alibis bookstore in Belfast last year.

Lest some of what I’ve said so far may come across as brazen self-promotion, let me quickly move to share with you an overview of the highlights of Joyce’s non-fiction, poetry, drama, and prose fiction in translation in Brazil.

Non-fiction

Cartas a Nora – [letters to Nora]. Trans. Mary Pedrosa. São Paulo: Massao Ohno, 1982, 1988; trans. Sérgio Medeiros and Dirce Waltrick do Amarante. São Paulo: Iluminuras, 2013.

Poetry

Música de câmara [Chamber Music]. Trans. Alípio de Franca Neto. São Paulo: Iluminuras, 1998.

Pomas, um tostão cada [*Pomes Penyeach*]. Trans. Alípio de Franca Neto. São Paulo: Iluminuras, 2001.

Giacomo Joyce. Trans. Paulo Leminski. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1985; trans. José Antônio Arantes. São Paulo: Iluminuras, 1999.

Drama

Exilados [*Exiles*]. Trans. Alípio de Franca Neto. São Paulo: Iluminuras, 2003.

Prose Fiction

O Gato e o Diabo [*The Cat and the Devil*]. Trans. Antonio Houaiss, illustrations by Roger Blanchor. Rio de Janeiro: Record, 1995; trans. Dirce Waltrick do Amarante, illustrations by Michaella Pivetti. São Paulo: Iluminuras, 2013.

Os Gatos de Copenhague [*The Cats of Copenhagen*]. Trans. Dirce Waltrick do Amarante, illustrations by Michaella Pivetti. São Paulo: Iluminuras, 2014.

Dublinenses [*Dubliners*]. Trans. Hamilton Trevisan. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1964; trans. José Roberto O'Shea. São Paulo: Siciliano, 1992; trans. José Roberto O'Shea. São Paulo: Hedra, 2012.

Retrato do Artista Quando Jovem [*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*]. Trans. José Geraldo Vieira. Porto Alegre: Globo, 1945; trans. Bernardina Silveira Pinheiro. Rio de Janeiro: Siciliano, 1992; trans. Elton Mesquita. São Paulo: Hedra, 2013.

Stephen Herói [*Stephen Hero*]. Trans. José Roberto O'Shea. São Paulo: Hedra, 2012.

Ulisses [*Ulysses*]. Trans. Antônio Houaiss. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1965; trans. Bernardina da Silveira Pinheiro. Rio de Janeiro: Objetiva, 2005; trans. Caetano Galindo. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2012.

Panaroma do Finnegans Wake [*Finnegans Wake*, fragments]. Trans. Augusto and Haroldo de Campos. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1986; *Finnicius Revém* [*Finnegans Wake*]. Trans. Donald Schüler. São Paulo: Ateliê, 2001-2003.

As this brief catalog indicates, Joyce is, of course, a deeply admired author in Brazil. We can see that his non-fiction, poetry, drama, and prose fiction (both short and long) have been consistently translated in the country, some works with as many as three different translations. Perhaps, no other work by Joyce invokes the notion of challenge, or even untranslatability, as *Finnegans Wake*. Writing in 1962, Haroldo de Campos, one of the deans of Concrete Poetry and of Translation Studies in Brazil, begins his introduction to the first edition of *Panaroma do Finnegans Wake*, fragments translated and commented, by affirming the difficulty of translating Joyce, in general, and *Finnegans Wake*, specifically:

Translating James Joyce is a workout with words: a job for the perfectionist. Something that can never become static and definitive, but that remains in movement, a constant and open trial, always begetting new solutions, new “tips” that magnetize the translator, forcing a periodical return to the text and its labyrinths. (21, my translation)

Forty-three years later, in 2005, in the fine collection of essays titled *Irish Studies in Brazil*, edited by Munira Mutran and Laura Izarra, Donaldo Schüler, the daring translator of the full version of *Finnegans Wake* into Brazilian Portuguese, introduces his essay, titled “A Alquimia da Tradução” [the alchemy of translation], raising three fundamental, if rhetorical, questions: Is it possible to translate *Finnegans Wake*? Is it possible to read *Finnegans Wake*? How was it possible to write *Finnegans Wake*? (247). Fortunately, for Schüler, the answer to all three questions is “yes”. Moreover, whereas, in Schüler’s view, legible texts are similar to “small talk” and “don’t offer more than the comfort of banality” (248), ostensibly illegible texts, paradoxically, lend themselves to creativity, to invention, and hence are highly translatable. No doubt, creativity and invention abound in Schüler’s *Finnicius Revém*, just as they do in the Campos brothers’ earlier translation of fragments from *Finnegans Wake*.

But let me begin to move towards *Stephen Hero* and *Stephen Herói*. An inspiring post that popped up in my Facebook page a few weeks ago caught my attention, making me “like” and “share” it right away. The post was a seven-word poem signed by “Anna Rusconi, translator”, and it read:

“Words
travel
worlds.
Translators
do the
driving”.
Anna Rusconi, translator

As announced, I would now like to discuss challenges I met and strategies I devised as I “drove” Joyce’s words from the world of Ireland to the world of Brazil, specifically, as I rendered *Stephen Hero* – the *Ur-Portrait* – into Brazilian Portuguese, based on the 1963 New Directions edition whose text is fixed by Theodore Spencer, under the editorship of John Slocum and Herbert Cahoon.

The challenges and strategies of translation in general, be it technical or literary, have been studied in depth by the wide-ranging discipline of Translation Studies, which nowadays combines work in linguistics, philosophy, anthropology, psychoanalysis, cultural history, and literary studies. And the discipline has come a long way in its investigation of challenges and strategies. Presently, common knowledge in the field establishes that translation scholars no longer attempt to understand the craft by means of an “evaluative approach that simply set[s] translations alongside one

another and discuss[es] differences in a formalist vacuum”, as Susan Bassnett submits (*Studies* xii).

In fact, since the appearance of the now classic collection of essays edited by Theo Hermans back in 1985 entitled *The Manipulation of Literature*, in which, as the title implies, contributors argued that “translation, like criticism, editing and other forms of rewriting, is a manipulatory process” (Bassnett xii), the discussion about the complexities pertaining to the challenges and strategies of translation has been duly problematized. To a great extent such complexities stem from the fact that translation is much more than mere re-textualizing; in fact, it’s a re-*contextualizing*, because in their traveling from world to world lexical items need to be reinserted in new linguistic and cultural contexts, not to mention new editorial and marketing practices – new contexts that are quite often widely separated in time and space, that is, in History and Geography.

Whenever speaking about translation, I make it a point to clarify that I am not a translation scholar; I am a translator – and a teacher of literature. Years ago, a generous colleague, Maria Lucia Vasconcellos, herself a translation scholar, introducing me as a member of a PhD viva committee – and in Brazil, PhD vivas are held in front of a live audience – said that I might not be a translation scholar, but I was a “scholarly translator”. I have tried to live up to that expectation. Be that as it may, based upon my professional practice as a translator along almost three decades, I have come up with my own, working definition of the craft, a definition which I share with you, hoping it’s not too trite:

The ultimate act of close reading and interpretation, translation is a complex intellectual activity that involves reading, rereading, researching, interpreting, writing, revising, and rewriting, all of which take into consideration not only texts but also contexts.

Never fear: I shall not dwell on each of these seven elements now. But, before turning to the specific challenges and strategies of close-reading, researching, and translating *Stephen Hero*, however, I’d like briefly to address challenges that pertain to the translation of literary prose in general, as opposed to poetry translation, for instance. It’s readily noticeable that less time has been spent studying the specific problems of literary prose in translation than of poetry in translation. Some think that this is probably due to the widespread misconception that a novel is somehow a simpler structure than a poem and, consequently, less of a challenge for translators (Bassnett 109). Moreover, if we consider the relative formal strictness of a poem *vis-à-vis* the apparent formal laxness of a novel, it may seem easier for a *prose* translator to consider content as *separable* from form. Alas, a damaging effect of this short-sightedness is that, in prose, too often, sentences end up being “translated at face value, rather than as component units in a complex overall structure” (Bassnett 115).

Part of the trouble is that translating is not paraphrasing, much less textual explication, a good reminder for those of us who make a living explicating literary texts. Perhaps, the greatest difficulty in translating literary prose relates to the fact that

some of us “still adhere to the principle that a novel consists primarily of *paraphrasable material content* that can be translated straightforwardly” (Bassnett 115, emphasis in the original). And if back in 1947 we learned from Cleanth Brooks’s *The Well-Wrought Urn* about the heresy of paraphrasing a poem, there is no such consensus about the heresy of paraphrasing prose. Unfortunately, over and over, translators of literary prose take pains to create *readable* texts in the target culture/language, avoiding allegedly stilted, or unpalatable effects that can follow from adhering closely to syntactical structures or stylistic features found in the originary text – the word “originary” having been used in Translation Studies in lieu of “original” because for quite some time now a translation has rightly been considered an original work.

I. Challenges

The challenges of translating Joyce’s prose (or poetry, for that matter) would fill many pages, and we have already looked at what two experienced Brazilian translators have said about such difficulty. But in terms of Joyce’s *Stephen Hero*, what would be some such challenges, textually and contextually? Textually, *Stephen Hero* – in the light of later prose works such as *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* – is as deceptively simple as *Dubliners*. Surely, one of the translator’s greatest challenges has to do with Joyce’s style: his syntactical structures, the marked cadence of the prose, the sparse or idiosyncratic punctuation, the deliberate mix of literary styles, etc., etc. I won’t even try to sort out Joyce’s sophisticated prose style in this talk, but I would like to say that perhaps the most vital element of his style is the masterful control of polyphony, especially evidenced in the richness of inflections present in the characters’ speeches. Contextually, the greatest challenge in making *Stephen Hero*’s words “travel” from Ireland to Brazil has been to capture, preserve, and transfer the local color and flavor of early twentieth-century Dublin.

II. Strategies

Given such challenges, what strategies can a translator devise? Overall, an early decision needs to be made as regards the degree of non-literality, that is, domestication, as opposed to the degree of literalness, that is, foreignization. Domestication is a term used by Lawrence Venuti in a now classic study titled *The Translator’s Invisibility* (1995) to describe the translation strategy in which a transparent, fluent style is adopted in order to minimize the strangeness of the foreign text to target-language readers (19-20). The concept can be traced to Schleiermacher’s notion of translation, as expressed in his essay “On the Different Methods of Translating”, first published in German back in 1838. Schleiermacher writes about one type of translation that “leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him” (74). Venuti sees negative implications in the notion of domestication, as the strategy tends to be identified with policies common in dominant cultures which are, according to him, “aggressively

monolingual, unreceptive to the foreign”, a notion which he describes as being used to qualify and value “fluent translations that invisibly inscribe foreign texts with [target language] values and provide readers with the narcissistic experience of recognizing their culture in a cultural other” (15).

By contrast, foreignization is a concept also proposed by Venuti to designate the type of translation in which a target text is produced that breaks target-culture conventions by retaining something of the foreignness of the originary text (19). Again, the concept can be traced back to Schleiermacher, who addresses this *preferable* type of translation in which “the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him” (74). Interestingly, using “travel imagery” that confirms the idea expressed in Anna Rusconi’s poem that serves as epigraph to this section of my talk, Venuti sees the positive role of foreignizing translation as being to “register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, *sending the reader abroad*” (20, my emphasis).¹

In “sending my Brazilian readers abroad to Ireland” I wanted to allow them, as much as possible, a foreign reading experience, in terms of flavoring both Joyce’s textual and contextual reality. Therefore, I opted for a predominantly foreignizing strategy. In practice – and here by way of illustration – I can say that such strategy is hopefully achieved mainly by translation choices that have to do with punctuation marks, forms of address, toponyms, and cultural items.

Joyce’s punctuation can be interestingly personal. He seems intolerant of unnecessary commas. We know that when he revised the proofs for the first edition of *Dubliners*, for instance, he removed hundreds of commas that the typesetter had inserted. In my translation of *Stephen Hero* (as I had previously attempted to do in my translation of *Dubliners*), I aim at sticking to the original punctuation.

For example, early in *Stephen Hero*, referring to Stephen’s reading habits, Joyce writes, and I quote: “People seemed to him strangely ignorant of the value of the words they used so glibly”. Then, he proposes: “And pace by pace as this indignity of life forced itself upon him he became enamoured of an idealising, a more veritably human tradition” (26). Preserving Joyce’s punctuation, the translation reads: “*E passo a passo à medida que tal indignidade da vida lhe era imposta ele se enamorava de uma tradição idealizada, mais verdadeiramente humana*” (20). Strictly speaking, given Portuguese punctuation rules, the clause “as this indignity of life forced itself upon him” would be considered non-restrictive and, hence, inserted between commas.

Still as regards punctuation, the translation attempts to preserve Joyce’s idiosyncratic use of the colon, oftentimes, more than one set of colons in the same sentence. In *Stephen Hero*’s chapter XX, for instance, referring to Stephen being “subjected to the fires of six or seven hostile speakers” (102) in the aftermath of his talk before the Literary and Historical Society, Joyce writes: “Ancient art loved to uphold the beautiful and the sublime: modern art might select other themes: but those who still preserved their minds uncontaminated by atheistic poisons would know which to choose” (103). The translation, again, stays close to Joyce’s punctuation, however alien the two sets of colons will seem to the Brazilian reader: “*A arte da Antiguidade se aprazia em*

defender o belo e o sublime: a arte moderna podia optar por outros temas: mas aqueles que ainda mantivessem suas mentes imunes aos venenos ateus saberiam escolher” (81). I might add that, besides attempting to keep the text’s “foreignness”, the preservation of the punctuation, in fact, is a means to try to reproduce Joyce’s masterful control of the cadences of his prose.

Moreover, in an attempt to keep local flavor, a foreignizing strategy was adopted to avoid the translation of names, forms of address and toponyms, the latter mainly as regards names of streets, parks, etc. Hence, already in the title, the choice has been *Stephen Herói*, instead of *Estevão, o Herói*, not only keeping the protagonist’s name untranslated but also the peculiar, interestingly ambiguous, word order, in which the name Stephen seems to qualify “hero”, an adjective, as it were, a certain type of “hero”. And throughout the translation the hero’s name remains foreign – Stephen Dedalus – as opposed to Estevão Dédalo, which would be as accessible as... awkward. Likewise, we have Mr. Dedalus, Mrs. Dedalus, Mr. Whelan, Mr. Daniel, Mr. Casey, Mr. Wilkinson, Miss Reeves, and Miss Clery, and not Sr. Dédalo, Sra. Dédalo, Sr. Whelan, Sr. Daniel, Sr. Casey, Sr. Wilkinson, Srta. Reeves, and Srta. Clery. And, again, the forms of address are kept intact not only to preserve the book’s foreignness and “fictional reality”, but also to avoid macaronic formulations, such as, “seu” Dedalus, “dona” Dedalus, etc.

And for the sake of what hopefully imparts the translation enticingly foreign local color, street and park names were left as they are: Marlboro Street, O’Connell Street, North Richmond Street, Saint Stephen’s Green, and Phoenix Park. Not even in the cases of Patrick’s Close and Dunphy’s Corner does the translation domesticate “close” and “corner”, as, respectively, “*largo*” and “*esquina*”. And the Irish capital remains Dublin throughout, as opposed to the Portuguese translation *Dublin*.

My further examples of foreignizing strategy relate to cultural items, which, in general, were left alone, with added paratext, that is, footnotes, as opposed to “writing” the note into the text itself. In chapter XVI, for instance, referring to Stephen’s mate McCann as “a blunt brisk figure, wearing a Cavalier beard and shooting-suit”, Joyce adds that “[t]he students of the college did not understand what manner of ideas he favoured and they considered that they rewarded his originality sufficiently by calling him ‘Knickerbockers’” (39). Instead of domesticating the cultural item “Knickerbockers” and substituting it for a note written into the text (i.e., “*chamando-o de calção-folgado*”), the translation renders: “*Os alunos da universidade não compreendiam o tipo de ideias que ele abraçava e achavam que compensavam a contento a originalidade do rapaz chamando-o de ‘Knickerbockers’*”. The strategy has been to keep the foreign term – preserving Joyce’s own single quotes – and to resort to a footnote, explaining (for you here in back translation): “Loose short-pants, tied slightly below the knee, worn at the time as a part of a shooting-suit” (29).

Still in chapter XVI, portraying the Daniels sisters, Joyce writes: “The Miss Daniels were not so imposing as their father and their dress was {illegible word} somewhat colleen” (44). The translation – “*As irmãs Daniel não eram tão imponentes*

quanto o pai e seus vestidos eram {palavra ilegível} um tanto colleen” – keeps again the foreign term as is and adds the following footnote, for you here, in back translation: “That is, the sisters’ dresses were typically Irish. The Irish word *cailin* means ‘girl’, at times with a ‘countrified’ connotation (the translator acknowledges Professor Weldon Thornton’s clarification)” (33).

And in chapter XVII, discussing Madden’s vain attempt to “infect Stephen with nationalistic fever”, Joyce writes that “The Roman, not the Sassenach, was for him [for Stephen, that is] the tyrant of the islanders” (53). Once again, the translation – “*O romano, não o Sassenach, era a seu ver o tirano dos ilhéus*” – leaves the alien item alone and explains in a footnote: “a typical Englishman or something considered typical of England – often used disparagingly by Scots and Irish” (40).

Conclusion

However difficult – or delicate – it is to detach oneself from one’s own work and theorize one’s own practice, I think I could offer more examples of foreignizing as a translation strategy in my rendering *Stephen Hero* in Brazilian Portuguese. But I will stop, lest I belabor the point. Evoking, one last time, Anna Rusconi’s poem, I hope I have been able to explain that in “driving” Joyce’s words from Ireland to Brazil, instead of domesticating his writing and attempting to render it more familiar or palatable to the Brazilian reader, I have attempted to move the Brazilian reader closer to my foreign author, closer to Joyce’s foreign text and context. After all, the translator is lucky enough to be invited to travel to Ireland, but the average Brazilian reader is not.

Note

- 1 Classic examples of foreignizing strategy in English include many of Ezra Pound’s translations, and Nabokov’s famous “literal” translation of Pushkin’s *Eugene Onegin*.

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