

Translating Joyce

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***Abstract:** This article aims at providing a general view on translation according to Friedrich Schleiermacher and José Ortega y Gasset, extending to a discussion on the translation of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, centered on the adaptation to Brazilian Portuguese of James Joyce's poetic style. Being aware of the diversity of both languages with their own melody, cadence, and rhythm, an attempt was made to transfer to Portuguese, as much as possible, Joyce's peculiar and outstanding style. The preservation of the repetition of words and connectives used by Joyce was essential, for not only does it help to suggest the psychic development of Stephen Dedalus, but it also lends greater musicality to his language.*

In "On the Different Methods of Translating" Friedrich Schleiermacher finds only two possible paths to be followed in translating: "either the translator leaves the writer alone as much as possible and moves the reader toward the writer, or he leaves the reader alone as much as possible and moves the writer toward the reader".¹ After discussing the two possibilities, he concludes that the second option "is far higher and more nearly perfect when compared to the former," and counsels the true translator to use it more often so as to replace the other which, in his opinion, "is of a dubious nature and in many ways ineffective".²

In "The Misery and Splendor of Translation", José Ortega y Gasset agrees with Schleiermacher in this respect, in spite of considering "the act of translation a utopian exercise".³ Yet he proceeds by saying that, since "man's existence has a sporting character, with pleasure residing in the effort itself, and not in the results", which accounts for "man's continuous inexhaustible capacity to invent unrealizable projects", the wedding of "reality with the demon of what is impossible supplies the universe with the only growth it is capable of". To Ortega, "everything worthwhile, everything truly human is difficult, very difficult; so much so, that it is impossible". Nevertheless, "to declare its impossibility is not an argument against the possible splendor of the translator's task. On the contrary, this characterization admits it to the highest rank and lets us infer that it is meaningful".⁴

Ortega y Gasset's words helped me to understand why, after having always considered impossible any translation of Joyce's works, I have faced the challenge, by

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accepting to translate *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* as *Um retrato do artista quando jovem*, when invited to do so by the Brazilian publishing house Siciliano. And now I am doing a translation of *Ulysses*, having the same idea in mind.

In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Joyce presents us the development both psychic and physical of his character, Stephen Dedalus, from his early childhood to the end of his adolescence. To reach his aim, he invites us to plunge into the boy's consciousness, so that we may follow his discoveries, or, according to Joyce, observe him achieving his epiphanies, concerning the outside world and the people around him, so different from his idealized image of them.

We are, then, led to follow the processes of repression and castration to which the little boy is submitted, threatened as he is to have his eyes pulled out by the eagle if he does not apologize, which reminds us of the myth of Prometheus, up to the moment in which, as a young man, he manages to set himself free. Then, as the mythic artificer Dedalus, whose prophetic name he has inherited, he will make his own wings to escape from the chains that have kept him stuck to the ground and take flight in search of the creative freedom of art.

Language, Joyce's tool and greatest concern, is artistically handled to show Stephen's psychic evolution. In fact, he will start with the most elementary syntactic constructions: repetition of words, short sentences, and the use of coordination with the resulting juxtaposition of ideas, so proper to little children, as we may observe in the first chapter.

Once upon a time and a very good time it was there was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow that was coming down along the road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo [...].⁵

Era uma vez e uma vez muito boa mesmo uma vaquinha-mu que vinha andando pela estrada e a vaquinha-mu que vinha andando pela estrada encontrou um garotinho engrachadinho chamado Bebê tico-taco [...].⁶

From this kind of language Joyce moves to more elaborate syntactic arrangements in his sentences, until his language acquires its most refined form and style, at the end of the novel, when Stephen finds out his real vocation amidst an orchestration of sounds, or when, as an artist, he dialectically expounds his own aesthetic theory to one of his classmates.

The snares of the world were its ways of sin. He would fall. He had not yet fallen but he would fall silently, in an instant. Not to fall was too hard, too hard: and he felt the silent lapse of his soul, as it would be at some instant to come, falling, falling but not yet fallen, still unfallen but about to fall.⁷

As ciladas do mundo eram suas formas de pecado. Ele sucumbiria. Não sucumbira ainda mas sucumbiria silenciosamente, num instante. Não sucumbir era difícil demais, demais: e sentia o declínio silencioso de sua alma, como o

seria em algum instante futuro, sucumbindo, sucumbindo mas ainda não sucumbido, ainda não sucumbido mas prestes a sucumbir.⁸

And still regarding his vocation:

Now, at the name of the fabulous artificer, he seemed to hear the noise of dim waves and to see a winged form flying above the waves and slowly climbing the air. What did it mean? Was it a quaint device opening a page of some medieval book of prophecies and symbols, a hawklike man flying sunward above the sea, a prophecy of the end he had been born to serve and had been following through the mists of childhood and boyhood, a symbol of the artist forging anew in his workshop out of the sluggish matter of the earth a new soaring impalpable imperishable being?⁹

Agora, ao som do nome do fabuloso artífice, ele parecia ouvir o barulho de ondas escuras e ver uma forma alada voando por sobre as ondas e se elevando lentamente no espaço. O que queria dizer aquilo? Seria aquele um recurso curioso introduzindo uma página de algum livro medieval de profecias e símbolos, um homem como um falcão voando acima do mar em direção ao sol, uma profecia do fim que ele nascera para servir e que viera perseguindo através das névoas da infância e da meninice, um símbolo do artista forjando de novo em sua oficina da matéria informe da terra um novo ser a planar nas alturas impalpável e imperecível?¹⁰

It is also convenient to keep in mind the importance Joyce attaches to sound. Such is the part it plays in his writings that we may accompany Stephen Dedalus's psychic progress through the effects he lends to this literary device. Besides showing a monophonous quality, in the first chapter, as Joyce depicts the mind of the little boy who is awakening to life, his language becomes polyphonous, orchestral, when the young man discovers he is not to be a priest, but wants instead to become an artist.

But he was not sick there. He thought that he was sick in his heart if you could be sick in that place [...] He wanted to cry. He leaned his elbows on the table and shut and opened the flaps of his ears. Then he heard the noise of the refectory every time he opened the flaps of his ears. It made a roar like a train at night. And when he closed the flaps the roar was shut off like a train going into a tunnel.¹¹

Mas ele não estava doente ali. Ele achava que estava doente em seu coração se fosse possível ficar doente naquele lugar [...]. Ele tinha vontade de chorar. Apoiou os cotovelos na mesa e apertou com os dedos e soltou as abas de suas orelhas. Fazia um barulho de ronco como o de um trem à noite. E quando ele apertava as abas o ronco era interceptado como um trem entrando em um túnel.¹²

Sound may also be used repeatedly by Joyce with different connotations as in the case of “pick, pack, pock, puck”, when these words appear in the sentence: “and

from here and from there came the sounds of the cricketbats through the soft grey air. They said: pick, pack, pock, puck like drops of water in a fountain slowly falling in the brimming bowl".¹³ When first used they suggest the boy's isolation and undesired remoteness from his colleagues, deprived as he is of his spectacles, which had been broken. When repeated at the end of the chapter, they will reveal the isolation sought by Stephen himself, so that he may enjoy "alone", because he is now "happy and free",¹⁴ his successful meeting with the rector and taste delightedly his celebration as a winner by his fellowmates. In between, the repeated separate sounds will disclose fear: "pick, pock"¹⁵ and pain: "pock" since, according to the boy "there were different kinds of pains for all the different kinds of sound".¹⁶

Furthermore, rhythm is so significant to Joyce that he makes a distinction as to the one which is more typical and suitable to each of the three stylistic forms lyric, epic, and dramatic, as he discusses his aesthetic theory with his friend Lynch. Afterwards, in *Ulysses*, he will confer his three main characters Stephen Dedalus's, Leopold Bloom's and Molly Bloom's inner monologues quite distinct rhythms, which will fit their own personalities. Stephen Dedalus's monologue will be slower, alternating longer sentences, phrases, and words with shorter ones in order to impart the complexity of his philosophic and metaphysical questionings:

Wombed in sin darkness I was too, made not begotten. By them, the man with my voice and my eyes and a ghostwoman with ashes on her breath. They clasped and sundered, did the coupler's will. From before the ages He willed me and now may not will me away or ever. A *lex eterna* stays about Him. Is that then the divine substance wherein Father and Son are consubstantial?¹⁷

Concebido na escuridão do pecado eu também fui, feito não gerado. Por eles, o homem com a minha voz e os meus olhos e uma mulherfantasma com cinzas no seu sopro. Eles se abraçaram e se separaram, fizeram a vontade do acoplador. Desde antes dos tempos Ele me quis e agora não pode me querer fora daqui ou jamais existente. Uma *lex eterna* permanece à volta Dele. É essa então a substância divina pela qual Pai e Filho são consubstanciais?¹⁸

Leopold Bloom's monologue will consist in predominantly short phrases and words, frequently monosyllabic, sometimes even reduced by the loss of the first or of the last syllable, projecting in this way, by means of a staccato rhythm, the objectiveness of his scientific mind.

I was happier then. Or was that I? Or am I now I? Twentyeight I was. She twentythree. When we left Lombard street west something changed. Could never like it again after Rudy. Can't bring back time. Like holding water in your hand. Would you go back to then? Just beginning then. Would you?¹⁹

Eu era mais feliz então. Ou será que eu era? Ou será que eu sou agora eu? Eu tinha vinteoitoanos. Ela vinteetrês. Quando partimos de Lombard Street oeste

alguma coisa mudou. Nunca pôde ser a mesma coisa depois de Rudy. Não se pode trazer o tempo de volta. É como segurar água na mão. Você voltaria para aquela época? Apenas começando então. Voltaria?²⁰

Molly Bloom's monologue, however, devoid of any kind of punctuation, will flow uninterruptedly, unrestrained and uncontrolled, pouring from a mind completely free from any chain of whatsoever kind.

the sun shines for you he said the day we were lying among the rhododendrons on Howth head in the grey tweed suit and his straw hat the day I got him to propose to me yes first I gave him the bit of seedcake out of my mouth and it was leap year like now yes 16 years ago my God after that long kiss I near lost my breath yes he said I was a flower of the mountain yes so we are flowers all a woman's body yes that was one true thing he said in his life and the sun shines for you today yes that was why I liked him because I saw he understood or felt what a woman is²¹

o sol brilha para você ele disse no dia em que estávamos deitados entre os rododendros no topo de Howth com aquele terno de tweed cinza e seu chapéu de palha o dia em que eu fiz ele se declarar a mim sim primeiro eu lhe dei um pedacinho do bolo de sementes aromáticas que eu tinha na boca e era um ano bissexto como agora sim 16 anos atrás meu Deus depois daquele longo beijo eu quase perdi a respiração sim ele disse que eu era uma flor da montanha sim assim somos todas flores o corpo de uma mulher sim isso foi uma coisa verdadeira que ele disse em sua vida e sol brilha para você hoje sim foi por isso que eu gostei dele porque eu vi que ele compreendia ou sentia o que uma mulher é²²

Music being such a paramount trait in Joyce's writings, it is not surprising to notice the significant role it plays in *Finnegans Wake*. This is the reason why, when asked by Terence White Gervais if the book was "a blending of literature and music", Joyce replied, flatly: "No, it's pure music".²³

Having all these elements in mind, and realizing the importance and beauty of Joyce's language, I felt even more frightened at the defying task of translating *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, with its innovating style, the remarkable relevant sonority of its words, the melody, cadence and rhythm of his sentences and phrases. Quoting, however, again, Ortega y Gasset's words that "everything truly human is very, very difficult" and, what's more, that "to declare its impossibility is not an argument against the possible splendor of the translator's task",²⁴ I decided to carry my reader to Joyce's language.

Thus, although I was quite aware of the diversity of both languages, with their own melody, cadence, and rhythm, I have attempted to transfer to Portuguese, as much as possible, Joyce's peculiar and outstanding style. I have, then, preserved Joyce's

repetition of words and connectives, which he used either to suggest the psychic development of Stephen Dedalus, or to lend greater musicality to his language.

In the case of repetition, Joyce often uses the *ing* form – which in English stands for both the present participle and the gerund – on account of the rhythm and the melody of its sound. In my translation I have turned it into either the present participle or the gerund, which confers different forms in Portuguese. For the sake of preserving the original cadence and sound in the Brazilian context, where Joyce used *opening, closing, locking, unlocking*, I used our gerund “*abrindo, fechando, trancando, destrancando*”, or still where he made use of *sobbing and sighing, gurgling and rattling in the throat* I turned it into “*soluçando e suspirando, gorgolhando e chocalhando na garganta*”. Yet for Joyce’s *a hot burning stinging tingling blow*, I have used our present participle, which I considered, then, more musical and rhythmic: “*um golpe formigante, ardente, escaldante e quente*”.

To my surprise, there were situations in the text in which the typical English poetic alliteration turned up spontaneously in my Brazilian version, in spite of not being present in the original, as for instance the initial sibilant Brazilian sound of *c* in “*seu terno cinzento cingido por um cinto*” – *his belted grey suit* – or the labial initial sound in “*lendo uma lenda em um livro*” – *reading a legend out of the book*.

I have also preferably placed the Portuguese objective pronouns before the verbs, not only because it is a softer Brazilian usage, but also because I have occasionally found such measure necessary to make the narrative more melodious, harmonious and rhythmic. The same was also done in regard to the position of the adjective in the sentence, either preceding or following the noun, for the sake of retaining the music and cadence of the linguistic construction.

Seeing that rhythm was always of such importance to Joyce, for in his unpublished essay “A Portrait of the Artist” of 1904 he had already referred to the “individuating rhythms” of his characters, I decided to keep his punctuation whenever I could, in spite of some difference of usage in Portuguese, for in my opinion his long sentences without any coma, alternating with shorter ones full of comas, meant his way of bringing his own rhythm into his language.

In my translation, I have intended to respect what was fundamental to Joyce, that is, the music of his words, combining it with fidelity to his style. I could not forget what he once said to a Danish lady, Mrs. Kastor Hansen, when it was suggested to him that she was to translate *Ulysses*. Calling upon her without notice, he introduced himself to her by saying: “I am James Joyce. I understand that you are to translate *Ulysses*, and I have come from Paris to tell you not to alter a single word”²⁵. (*James Joyce* 692). Thus I should not think it fair to incur Joyce’s displeasure or disapproval by creating upon his work.

Notes

1 Schleiermacher, in Schulte, 1992, 42.

- 2 Idem, 48
- 3 Ortega Y Gasset, in Schulte, 1992, 100.
- 4 Idem, P. 99
- 5 Joyce, 1968,7
- 6 Joyce, 1992, 17
- 7 Joyce, 1968, 162
- 8 Joyce, 1992, 164
- 9 Joyce, 1968, 169
- 10 Joyce, 1992, 170
- 11 Joyce, 1968, 13.
- 12 Joyce, 1992, 23.
- 13 Joyce, 1968, 41.
- 14 Idem, 59.
- 15 Idem, 41.
- 16 Idem, 45.
- 17 Joyce, 1986, 32
- 18 The translation is mine although not yet published.
- 19 Joyce, 1986, 137
- 20 Mine the translation.
- 21 Joyce, 1986, 643
- 22 Mine the translation.
- 23 Ellmann, 1983, 703.
- 24 Ortega y Gasset, opus cit., 99
- 25 Ellmann, opus cit, 692

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