

## Interlingual Metempsychosis: Translating Intertextuality in James Joyce's *Ulysses*

Onno Kusters, Utrecht University

### Abstract

Highlighting in its very title the unlimited dimensions of intertextuality, James Joyce's *Ulysses* selfconsciously establishes itself as a text that seems impossible to translate without losing essential elements. *Ulysses*, (in)famous for its multiple styles that in themselves seem to give shape and content to the various themes at hand, is a text for which the term 'intertextuality' seems to fall short. With a particular eye for the problems that occur when translating intertextual elements of *Ulysses* into Dutch and other languages and following Fritz Senn's coinage of the term 'interdynamism', this article sets out to investigate a handful of examples from *Ulysses* that pinpoint the problematic nature of the various echoes and allusions in it.

Every sign is at a crossroads of varying purpose, and situatedness is integral to our understanding of it. What an establishment advertising 'PAIN' has on offer depends (usually) on whether it is in France or in England. The sign 'PAIN' outside a shop constitutes an invitation to acquire a commodity; on the wall of a derelict building, it is more likely to be a prose poem or a cry for help. *The precise location matters.* (Griffiths par. 8; emphasis mine)

In his article "Intertextual Metempsychosis in *Ulysses*: Murphy, Sinbad, and the 'U.P.: up' Postcard", James Ramey argues that "[. . .] Bloom's observation that his "name was changed" [. . .] resonates with the *metatextual dynamics* of *Ulysses*, since it recalls the transmigration of characters from ancient to modern texts—a process I call *intertextual metempsychosis*—which is so intrinsic to Joyce's methodology. As the "Odysseus" of the novel, Bloom's "name was changed" in the sense that Joyce decided to call him "Bloom", rather than "Odysseus" or "Ulysses" (97; emphases mine). Ramey's words help introduce the salient issue I shall be tackling here: how do translators of *Ulysses* deal with instances of textual 'transmigration' that make any solution they will come up with seem at best flawed; how come, by extension, that translators of *Ulysses* always seem to be 'almosting it' (*U* 3.366-67), rather than ever arrive at an Ithaca where critics will unanimously affirm

their efforts with a resounding ‘Yes’ (*U* 18.1609)?<sup>1</sup> It seems intertextuality is to blame.

*tell a graphic lie*

In the abstract of a seminar on “The Untranslatability of Modernism”, Teresa Caneda-Cabrera suggests that ‘[w]hereas, generally speaking, translation presupposes that content can be dissociated from its linguistic form, the fiction of James Joyce tends to foreground the inextricable relationship between the two, thus making it *impossible* for translation(s) to reproduce the various effects that words have in their immediate contexts’ (par. 1).<sup>2</sup> Indeed, as Samuel Beckett observed in “Dante...Bruno. Vico...Joyce” in 1929, ‘Here [in “Work in Progress”], form *is* content, content *is* form. [. . .] [Joyce’s] writing is not *about* something; *it is that something itself*’ (27). Even if Beckett is discussing ‘Work in Progress’, later to be known as *Finnegans Wake*, what he is addressing here has remained one of the key issues in understanding Joyce’s oeuvre as a whole. After all, it is a short distance from a pun made unwittingly by a character from an early work such as “The Sisters” (‘rheumatic wheels’, Joyce 1993: 10),<sup>3</sup> or by Molly in *Ulysses* (‘met him pike hoses’, *U* 8.112),<sup>4</sup> to seemingly more complicated ones such as in ‘Walk while ye have the night for morn, lightbreakfastbringer,

---

<sup>1</sup> In *Ulysses* (by James Augustine Aloysius Joyce: if ever a name was intertextually charged, it was Joyce’s own), ‘I am almosting it’ (*U* 3.366-67) is part of Stephen Dedalus’s spurring himself on to try and remember his dream the night before.

<sup>2</sup> See also Caneda-Cabrera 2007: *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> ‘If we could only get one of them new-fangled carriages *that makes no noise* that Father O’Rourke told him about—they with the *rheumatic wheels*—for the day cheap, he said, at Johnny Rush’s over the way there and drive out the three of us together of a Sunday evening’ (Joyce 1993: 10; emphasis mine).

<sup>4</sup> Did Molly really say this, though, or is ‘Met him pike hoses she called it till I told her about the transmigration. O rocks!’ (*U* 8.112) Bloom’s mind moulding Molly’s to its own? If so, so much for listening to Molly (or to Bloom, for that matter) in the original. See also Kenner 1987: 82, and Ehrlich /demo/right1.htm.

morroweth whereon every past shall full fust sleep. Amain' (FW 473.23-25) by voices of which it is much harder to recognise the origin.

In addition to the problem of this inextricable relationship between content and linguistic form, *Ulysses* in particular, I shall argue here, can be said to be in fact already a translation in its own right, thus making any translation of the book the *translation of a translation*.

As Fritz Senn, for one, has suggested, the different modes of the eighteen episodes function as translations, illustrating 'the idea of a conjugation of all languages' potential and all stylistic ranges' (Senn 1984: 52-53). Secondly, *Ulysses* is Joyce's 'trans-lation', his *Übersetzung*, his passage created from one stage of being to another,<sup>5</sup> by ways and means as various and cunning as Odysseus's own, of Homer's *Odyssey* (in itself disguised in many shapes and forms and, indeed, translations), Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and so on and so forth.<sup>6</sup> Translators of *Ulysses* have the difficult task not only to translate Joyce's sources, a job which *seems* straightforward enough, but also to translate precisely 'the ways and means as various and cunning as Odysseus's own' in which Joyce embedded them, indeed, translated them into his own work. In addition, one of the roads Joyce took in both complicating and enriching the reader's journey in following the many crossroads he encounters was not merely to use 'the *Odyssey* as a template' (Ramey 98), but to become in fact 'a Homerist' (*ibid.*):

Professor Stanislaus Joyce has kindly informed me that his brother had studied the following writers on Ulysses: Virgil, Ovid, Dante, Shakespeare, Racine, Fénelon, Tennyson, Phillips, d'Annunzio and Hauptmann, as well as Samuel Butler's *The*

---

<sup>5</sup> 'translate I. 1. a. *trans.* To bear, convey, or remove from one person, place or condition to another; to transfer, transport', and also, significantly, 'to remove the dead body or remains of a saint, or, by extension, a hero or great man, from one place to another', 'b. To carry or convey to heaven without death; also, in later use, said of the death of the righteous' (*OED*).

<sup>6</sup> Following on from this, it might even be argued that, rather than a translation, *Ulysses* is a 'pseudo-translation' of the *Odyssey* in the tradition of, e.g., Thomas Mallory's *Morte d'Arthur* (see Bassnett 1998, Toury 1985). Murphy's stories in "Eumaeus" certainly give the impression of a pseudo-translation of an *Odyssey* of sorts.

*Authoress of the Odyssey* and Victor Bérard's *Les Phéniciens et L'Odyssee*, and the translations by Butler and Cowper. (Stanford 76, qtd. in Ramey 98)<sup>7</sup>

His brother's message that James did not only read the *Odyssey*, albeit not in the original,<sup>8</sup> *but that he also read those who read the Odyssey* (be it in the original or in translation), adds an extra dimension to his work, a dimension that makes it a phenomenon that exists in the realms *beyond* intertextuality.<sup>9</sup> In *Ulysses*, then, in a subtle gesture of disaffection Buck Mulligan is implicitly disqualified as a mere intertextualist—and, therefore, a traditionalist, doomed to have to say farewell, eventually, to his far more progressive friend: 'Ah, Dedalus, the Greeks! I must teach

<sup>7</sup> At the same time, Joyce's own rather disparaging remark addressed when pressed by Vladimir Nabokov that his use of Homer was 'a whim' and his collaboration with Stuart Gilbert on his guide to *Ulysses* that emphasised in particular the Homeric so-called parallels '[a] terrible mistake [. . .] an advertisement for the book. I regret it very much' (Ellmann 616n\*) underscores the mere *relative* importance of Homer/Odysseus/the *Odyssey* for *Ulysses*.

<sup>8</sup> 'As we know, Joyce learned Latin but not Greek in his Jesuit university [...]. Joyce's Homer would have been multiple Homers. In *Joyce's Voices* [Hugh Kenner] names them, the "fairly business-like translations" of Cowper and Butler, Parry and Lord's "'oral-formulaic' improviser," and "the stained-glass Homer of Butcher and Lang" [Kenner 1978: 65-66]' (Norris 2005: 483).

<sup>9</sup> 'If "texts are part of a great intertextual tapestry" (Bassnett 1993: 42), a tapestry woven with old and new threads by many authors, generally speaking, the direct appeal, the clear and specific allusion to a previous text within a novel, can be taken as one of the various examples of 'markers' of intertextuality that we can identify when reading a literary and cultural text. Intertextuality as a postmodern concept, however, involves "self-consciously foregrounded intertextuality, an intertextuality theoretically conceptualized within the works themselves" (Pfister 217). In contemporary novels, intertextuality is not only a rhetorical device but the kernel of the plot; it implies a redefinition of literary elements, a continuous renewal of meaning in the utilisation of themes, motifs and linguistic modalities. The author, who is always referring to a tradition and to some *topoi* or historical models determined from a cultural, historical and aesthetic point of view, produces in his renewal of these elements a sort of recodification of them. He creates a continuous dialogue between his text and other literary and non-literary texts that exist outside of it' (Federicci 153). These observations make *Ulysses* a postmodern, even a 'contemporary' work.

you. You must read them in the original' (*U* 1.79-80). Not to read them in the original, but to read them in any shape or form you may come across them and incorporate them in your own work, as Joyce recognised, was one of the ways to keep the professors busy for centuries, *and so insure his own immortality* (a light-hearted qualification now often forgotten when referring to these words).<sup>10</sup> But Joyce's now familiar claim does injustice to how, at the same time, he reinvented the novel by reinventing the dynamics of intertextuality, and thus made the genre possible for centuries to come—not only in the English speaking world, but also, by the many translations of his work, all over the globe. After all, 'far from traducing the pure original, the translation injects new life blood into a text by bringing it to the attention of a new world of readers in a different language' (Bassnett 1996: 12). In addition, as Eleonora Federicci has pointed out,

Not only, as the Polysystem theorists affirmed, are translations leading factors in the formation of new models for the target culture, bringing in techniques, literary themes or poetics, but also the continuity of the source text is guaranteed through an enriching negotiation with the target language/culture. Furthermore, translated texts are cultural archives. In fact, as Michael Cronin points out, translation remains a way 'to remember what has been done and thought in other languages and in our own. Without it we are condemned to the most disabling form of cultural amnesia' (Cronin 74). (Federicci 149)

However, the question remains how to go about translating this textual monster and lose as little of its intertextual nature as possible. Here, it makes sense to introduce a distinction between two contrasting, rather conflicting translation approaches. Michael Cronin, on the one hand, identifies 'the "classics" of national literatures' (and *Ulysses* is, of course, one of those) as 'immutable mobiles that travelled through the space of the imagined community of the nation to remind present-day

---

<sup>10</sup> 'To translate *Penelope* exactly, [French translator] Benoît-Méchin wished to see the scheme for [*Ulysses*]. Joyce gave him only bits of it, and protested humorously: "If I gave it all up immediately, I'd lose my immortality. I've put so many enigmas and puzzles that it will keep the professors busy for centuries arguing over what I meant, and that's the only way of insuring one's immortality"' (Ellmann 521).

national audiences of the aesthetic pre-eminence of their forebears' (Federicci 149).<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, for Cronin 'the notion of the "mutable mobile" exemplifies the challenge implicit in translation, that is, to convey difference and similarity of meaning through a complex process of translation considered as a "transformative practice"' (*ibid.*). By contrast, Jeffrey M. Green identifies the work of the translator as resembling that 'of an editor, who offers the reader further information in order to fully decipher the text. He also adds a subtle metaphor for translation—business. Actually, translators are professionals, adapters, writers for readers who must be attracted by a story they can easily understand' (*ibid.*). How this latter contention is to be played out in the case of 'mutable mobiles' remains unclear. Both approaches, however, suggest that to translate means to rewrite; to reshape a source text in terms of a target culture which, over time, may need more help identifying the intertextual quality of the source text.

— *It's in the blood, Mr Bloom acceded at once*

Traditionally, and obviously, Homer's *Odyssey* has always been recognized as the supreme intertext informing *Ulysses*, even if other sources (including, as we have seen, sources about or restaging the *Odyssey*) may have been of similar structural and thematic importance to Joyce's scaffolding of his work. I use the word scaffolding advisedly: most (but, in a clever move, not all) of the intertextual analogies Joyce used in preparing *Ulysses* were to be taken down after his cathedral of words had been erected. The Homeric titles, for example, by which we conventionally refer to its eighteen episodes are, and were, never used in any proper edition of *Ulysses*—an irony foreseen by Joyce, who decided to omit them from his work and deliberately circulated them among a choice selection of friends and supporters. By extension, think of the

---

<sup>11</sup> Bruno Latour's term describes 'scientific knowledge/objects as "immutable mobile" in his *Science in Action*. With mobility he refers to an easy transportation of knowledge/object in technoscientific networks; with immutability to the capacity to retain key features of the knowledge/object on its move' (Stöckelová n.p.).

various schemata he provided to offer insight in how he reworked the *Odyssey* (in which those Homeric titles were included)—and then, of course, there are instances in those schemata showing no relation at all to the *Odyssey*. For instance, ‘the schema of Gorman-Gilbert and Linati provide nothing like a parallel between Homer’s account of Odysseus’s doings at the hut of Eumaeus and the doings of Bloom and Dedalus at the cabman’s shelter [. . .] Joyce virtually dropped the parallel to the *Odyssey* at this point’ (Raleigh 101-02). As this last quote (as well as all of the output of the Joyce industry) goes to show, part of the scaffolding will also be re-built by the busy professors.

A more appropriate term than ‘intertextuality’ when referring to how Joyce operated while composing *Ulysses* might be the one coined by one of those busy professors, Fritz Senn: ‘interdynamism’.<sup>12</sup> In ‘In Classical Idiom: *Anthologia Intertextualis*’, Senn suggests that ‘we have not done our conventional homework very thoroughly. Much of Greek and Roman literature that almost by educational reflex went into Joyce’s works has not been researched, or even labelled’ (1995: 197).

Senn goes on to say that

[t]he ‘intertextuality’ invoked [in the title of his article] is not meant to be a bow to current phraseology, but rather to truisms that may be as old as literature. Perhaps the proper term would be ‘interdynamisms’. One aim [of Senn’s article] is to discern, provisionally, the diversified modulations in which older texts, techniques, or insights are transposed. (ibid.)

Senn’s use of the term ‘transposed’ here comes close to my pinpointing *Ulysses* itself as a trans-lation, as a passage from one shore of languages and traditions to another. More importantly perhaps, Senn’s ‘interdynamisms’ would seem to encompass all of Gérard Genette’s subcategories of intertextuality (see, e.g., Allen 97-107). The term underscores the idea of intertextuality as an active, dynamic element in Joyce’s *Ulysses*, suggesting, much like the hypothesis of *Ulysses* being a translation, that for every reader the text’s intertexts, subtexts,

---

<sup>12</sup> Fritz Senn is not a professor in any non-honorary sense or function, of course. He sees himself as ‘at heart a commentator, a scholiast, a provider of footnotes’ (Senn 1995: xiv).

backgrounds, sources, allusions may vary according to each reading—in effect, to each translation; after all, every reading is a translation of potential meanings into an always provisional, temporary meaning. Elsewhere, Senn writes that ‘[a]s commentators we show and analyze underlying patterns of the text. It is also part of our job to recognize that such patterns are limited, and that there are many of them, sometimes at variance with each other, and that none of them is wholly reliable or reliably whole’ (1982: 48).

*Ulysses*, then is a translation in its own right, and so the way in which signifiers and signifiants overlap, reinforce, cancel out one another plays a special role. After all, what is a translation? A translation is, like any other text, an inter-text; a text reciprocally between, among, amidst its source text and its target text; amidst its actual form and its potential other forms. Like any other text, a translation actively engages with its readers, questioning the translator’s decisions while at the same time staging them; always failing to invoke what the source text invokes while at the same time always aiming to come close to the source text’s invocations. ‘Aiming to coming close’ is the appropriate formula: there’s always a difference. Like Stephen Dedalus quoted before, translators will always be ‘almosting it.’ Similarly, in translations of the translation known as *Ulysses*, the source text will always shine through, join the target text and at the same time, this shining through will almost always be obscured by the intervening language and all that it entails.

*There he is himself, a Greek*

As I suggested earlier, translators of *Ulysses* have the difficult task not only to translate Joyce’s sources, but also to translate the ways and means as various and cunning as Odysseus’s in which Joyce has embedded them—has translated them into his work. Starting from the assumption that *Ulysses* itself is already a translation and that any translation is a dynamic inter-text, this article will discuss a number of examples from *Ulysses* that yield particular translation problems that are informed by their textual interdynamism. In my epigraph I quoted Eric Griffiths’ article “Dante, Primo Levi and the Intertextualists”, in which he emphasises the *locus* of the text as a signifier in itself. The location of most of my examples will be the bridge between *Ulysses* and its two



existing Dutch translations, in 2012 to be usurped by a third, to be executed by Erik Bindervoet and Robbert-Jan Henkes, who also completed the much acclaimed Dutch translation of *Finnegans Wake* in 1996.

But where to begin? At the beginning, where Malachi ('Buck') Mulligan 'declares his [character's] penchant for blasphemy and [his] facetious approach to all that's serious' (Fulford par. 13):<sup>13</sup>

Stately, plump Buck Mulligan came from the stairhead, bearing a bowl of lather, on which a mirror and a razor lay crossed. (*U* 1.1-2)

It has long been recognized that the opening sentence of *Ulysses*, while introducing the mockery of the Roman-Catholic mass that is to be celebrated by Buck Mulligan (bowl equals chalice, etc.), incorporates two of the novel's most important themes, both interdynamically introduced her: bracketed at one end by 'Stately', invoking the British State, the colonial power dominating Ireland at the time, and at the other end by 'crossed', signifying the Roman-Catholic Church embodying the religious suffocation of Ireland's people, it would seem to be of the utmost importance for a translator to represent both echoes as fully, and in the same positions, as in the source text.<sup>14</sup> There is more, however, for the translator to take into account. With its six stresses the first clause of the opening sentence of *Ulysses* echoes the hexametrical opening line of Homer's *Odyssey*: 'Státely, plúmp Búck Múlligan cáme from the stáirhead'. And then there is an echo from *Hamlet*, a play Stephen Dedalus, as we shall find, has a specific theory about, and a character he models himself on:

---

<sup>13</sup> Fulford in fact says that in the opening line 'Joyce declares his characters' penchant for blasphemy and their facetious approach to all that's serious', which is a sloppy generalisation: what the sentence says, by its Uncle Charles principle-like ('the narrative idiom need not be the narrator's', Kenner 16) invisible but, once you get to know Buck Mulligan, clearly audible undertones, is *this* particular character's penchant for the non-serious.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. also episode 10, "Wandering Rocks", which reverses the pattern, situating the Roman-Catholic Church first in dedicating the first section, or vignette, of the episode to the person of Reverend John Conmee, and the nineteenth to the Earl of Dudley, the viceroy representing the British King in Ireland.

*Horatio*: Two nights together had these gentlemen,  
 Marcellus and Bernardo, on their watch  
 In the dead waste and middle of the night  
 Been thus encounter'd: a figure like your father  
 Armed at point exactly, cap-à-pie,  
 Appears before them, and with solemn march  
 Goes slow and stately by them [...]. (Shakespeare, I.2.196-202)

Buck Mulligan's appearance is silently compared to the dead King (who, other than a statesman of some aplomb, is it given to move *statelily*, after all?)<sup>15</sup> in *Hamlet*; an uncanny role to be assigned to Mulligan in such an early stage of the book: the usurper he will become (as Stephen makes abundantly clear in the last word directed to but unheard by Mulligan: 'Usurper', *U* 1.744), is himself (*will* himself, it is implied) be usurped (by fatherish Leopold Bloom—for a brief moment in time only, though: between say 11 at night on June 16 and 2 in the morning of June 17, 1904). The King is dead: we all know what that means.

There are, moreover, apart from more intertextual issues, such as the silent link between Buck Mulligan's physique and Oscar Wilde's, a number of strong intratextual relationships that can be established. First of all, for instance, there is the circularity started (or completed) here when we see the S of 'Stately' as an echo (or a foreshadowing) of Molly Bloom's final 'Yes' (*U* 18.1614)'s s, a word in which we can also detect, in reverse, Buck Mulligan's 'Stately'.<sup>16</sup> Then there is Buck Mulligan's likeness to Molly: both are 'plump', Buck in his Wildean physique, Molly in the 'mellow yellow smellow melons of her rump' (*U* 17.2241),

---

<sup>15</sup> Another royal by proxy in *Ulysses* is William Brayden, owner of the *Weekly Freeman and National Press*—he, too, is described as a 'stately figure'; having been greeted obsequiously by a subject, he is reduced to a face and seen to move 'statelily': 'Mr Bloom turned and saw the liveried porter raise his lettered cap as a stately figure entered between the newsboards of the *Weekly Freeman and National Press* and the *Freeman's Journal and National Press*. Dullthudding Guinness's barrels. It passed statelily up the staircase, steered by an umbrella, a solemn beardframed face' (*U* 7.42-45).

<sup>16</sup> And, as Fritz Senn has pointed out, 'Stately' links up, in retrospect, with *Portrait*'s final word 'stead' (1985: 348).

where poor Bloom is, in a sense, unwittingly kissing Stephen's friend (with the likes of whom Stephen does not need any enemies). To put insult to injury, as the opening scenes of "Eumaeus" emphasise, there are many similarities between Bloom and Mulligan. Even the opening sentence, for instance, describes Bloom's actions in definite Mullinesque terms: 'Preparatory to anything else Mr Bloom brushed off the greater bulk of the *shavings* and handed Stephen the hat and ashplant and *bucked him up* generally in orthodox Samaritan fashion which he very badly needed' (*U* 16.1-3; emphasis mine). Furthermore, in "Eumaeus" Bloom echoes Mulligan's physical *Hamlet* echo by echoing, or so it can be inferred, a line from the best-known soliloquy from *Hamlet*, 'To sleep, perchance to dream—ay, there's the rub' (III.1.65): 'But how to get there was the rub' (*U* 16.11). Also, like Mulligan in "Telemachus", Bloom whistles in "Eumaeus"—not as eloquently as Mulligan, though, whose whistles seem to attract the attention of the morning mailboat, while Bloom's efforts remain unanswered:

He peered sideways up and gave a long slow whistle of call, then paused awhile in rapt attention, his even white teeth glistening here and there with gold points. Chrysostomos. Two strong shrill whistles answered through the calm. (*U* 1.24-27)

But as he confidently anticipated there was not a sign of a Jehu plying for hire anywhere to be seen except a fourwheeler, probably engaged by some fellows inside on the spree, outside the North Star hotel and there was no symptom of its budging a quarter of an inch when Mr Bloom, who was anything but a professional whistler, endeavoured to hail it by emitting a kind of a whistle, holding his arms arched over his head, twice. (*U* 16.27-30)

Finally, Stephen's Telemachia (like Hamlet's) starts on top of a tower, and Stephen himself is being conjured up ('Come *up*, Kinch! Come *up*, you fearful Jesuit!', *U* 1.8; emphasis mine) and subsequently bossed around by Mulligan:

He came over to the gunrest and, thrusting a hand into Stephen's upper pocket, said:—Lend us a loan of your noserag to wipe my razor. Stephen *suffered him* to pull out and hold up on show by its corner a dirty crumpled handkerchief'. (*U* 1.67-71; emphasis mine).

Conversely, Bloom's Odyssey starts down in his basement kitchen, the only space in the Blooms' home Leopold seems to have any power to wield, while 'Mrs Marion Bloom' (*U* 4.244)<sup>17</sup> is enthroned in the marital, soon to be desecrated bed, that seems to be as one with the top floor it is located on as Penelope and Odysseus's never-to-be dishonoured one is with the olive tree it is made of,<sup>18</sup> and is bossing Bloom about ('Poldy! [. . .] Scald the teapot', *U* 4.270; 'What a time you were', *U* 4.302).

*Anyhow he was all in*

The inter- and intratextual mesh, the fabric of fabrications comprising the opening sentence and scenes in *Ulysses* functions as the cradle of much of the dynamic of *Ulysses*; Senn's 'interdynamism' does, indeed, seem to be a most useful term to describe how that cradle is being rocked throughout the text.

---

<sup>17</sup> This should be 'Mrs Leopold Bloom', of course: Boylan's letter to Marion is addressed in a '[b]old hand' (*U* 4.244), as it is indeed a bold thing to do to address a married woman by her first name.

<sup>18</sup> Penelope/Odysseus lovebirds' nest is made from the olive tree planted in the centre of their house. In the final recognition scene between the two it serves as the key to their reunion (cf., of course, the bed as the be-all and end-all in episode 18 of *Ulysses* in which the two spouses mutually recognize one another as their mutual be-all and end-all): 'Then Odysseus said to her, speaking in anger: 'How comes it that my bed can be moved to this place and that? Not a bed of that kind was the bed I built for myself. Knowest thou not how I built my bed? First, there grew up in the courtyard an olive tree. Round that olive tree I built a chamber, and I roofed it well and I set doors to it. Then I sheared off all the light wood on the growing olive tree, and I rough-hewed the trunk with the adze, and I made the tree into a bed post. Beginning with this bed post I wrought a bedstead, and when I finished it, I inlaid it with silver and ivory. Such was the bed I built for myself, and such a bed could not be moved to this place or that.' Then did Penelope know assuredly that the man who stood before her was indeed her husband, the steadfast Odysseus—none other knew of where the bed was placed, and how it had been built. Penelope fell a-weeping and she put her arms round his neck' (Colum 39.html).

It goes without saying that for a translator to be aware of the interdynamicism of *Ulysses* is essential. At the same time, it must always be admitted that not all echoes will also be (or can allowed to be) heard in any translation of *Ulysses*. To focus only one of the elements mentioned above: it seems to be impossible for the grammatically perfectly acceptable English first sentence of *Ulysses* to be translated into grammatically perfectly decent Dutch and keep the translation of 'crossed' in the same position as the source text's. Neither of the two existing Dutch translations has managed to do so.<sup>19</sup> Hardly any recent translations from other languages I have investigated have seen the Stately-crossed implications or been able to put the respective equivalents in their relevant positions. One notable exception is the latest French translation, by Jacques Aubert, who, as a Joyce scholar, will have been aware of the significance of the Stately-crossed bracketing of the first sentence—but even then, apparently, is forced to have his translation of 'Stately' begin with 'En': 'En majesté, dodu, Buck Mulligan émergea de l'escalier, porteur d'un bol de mousse à raser sur lequel un miroir et un rasoir reposaient en croix' (Joyce 2004: 11). Auguste Morel's 1936 translation, 'revue par Valery Larbaud, Stuart Gilbert et l'auteur' (Joyce 1936: title page), no less, does not manage to follow Joyce's original plan: 'Majesteux et dodu, Buck Mulligan parut en haut des marches, porteur d'un bol mousseux sur lequel reposaient en croix rasoir et glace à main' (*ibid.*, 7). Could not a hybrid be possible and give full credit to Joyce's interdynamic intent? 'Majesteux et dodu, Buck Mulligan émergea de l'escalier, porteur d'un bol de mousse à raser sur lequel un miroir et un rasoir reposaient en croix'?

The interdynamic problems start earlier than the first sentence of Joyce's masterpiece. As we know, Joyce decided to cut all the Homeric episode titles from the final destination of his seven-year odyssey of writing *Ulysses*, but of course the one Homeric title to survive his pruning was the title of the book itself: *Ulysses*. But is it a 'Homeric' title? In *Ulysses*, Bloom, like the Odysseus he interdynamically is and is not similar to, however tenuously, however 'almostly', can join Stephen,

---

<sup>19</sup> To add insult to injury, the latest Dutch translation has split the smoothly flowing opening sentence into two.

who is and is not like Telemachus; there can be some kind of ‘atonement’ (*U* 17.2058)<sup>20</sup> between the two: an at-onement, achieved, and at the same time, never to be achieved: same difference. But of course not one of the characters in *Ulysses* is aware of having a Homeric counterpart and it is far from Bloom’s mind that he might be a latter day Odysseus. So who is this *Ulysses* anyway? *Not* Homer’s hero, that is for sure. Dynamically, Joyce’s *Ulysses* is an Anglo-Irish hybrid translation of a Latin translation (*Ulixes*) of a Greek name (*Odysseus*) belonging to a character from Homer’s epic, Joyce’s favourite hero whose rumoured Phoenician, i.e., Semitic background (‘though in reality [Bloom is] not [Semitic]’, *U* 16.1085) Joyce found particularly interesting,<sup>21</sup> and whose name, according to popular etymology, suitably combines ‘*Outis*’, ‘nobody’ and ‘*Zeus*’, chief of the Greek gods, whose multiple impersonations and metamorphoses make him a precursor of Bloom’s successor HCE in *Finnegans Wake: Here Comes Everybody*. The deliberate length and complexion of the previous sentence aims to show what it is trying to tell: Bloom’s moniker has a long and complicated history. ‘There he is himself, a Greek’ (*U* 16.679): like the ‘Antonio’ that pseudo Odysseus Murphy wears on his chest in “Eumaeus”, Bloom is *not* a Greek. And much like the character and most of the evidence to support stories, incidents, cups of coffee and buns in the same episode, it is unlikely that any of Joyce’s interdynamic echoes are ‘strictly accurate gospel’ (*U* 16.829). Which is what makes them so endlessly flexible.

In short, Bloom is *not Ulysses*, let alone Odysseus. Significantly, the *OED*’s definition of *Ulysses* emphasises a type, rather than a name: ‘Used as the type of a traveller or adventurer; occas. also, of a crafty and clever schemer.’

*Ulysses*, then, is as interdynamic a title as you can possibly think, and Joyce made full use of its potential. The significance of a title like

---

<sup>20</sup> ‘What past consecutive causes, before rising preapprehended, of accumulated fatigue did Bloom, before rising, silently recapitulate? [. . .] nocturnal perambulation to and from the cabman’s shelter, Butt Bridge (atonement)’ (*U* 17.2042-58).

<sup>21</sup> Joyce found the 19<sup>th</sup>-century French Hellenist Victor Bérard’s ‘discovery’ of *Ulysses*—or rather, of *Odysseus*—as a Phoenician sailor roaming the Mediterranean—most appealing; see, for instance, Ellmann 408.

*Ulysses* for a text that is primarily, as we have seen, a translation of interdynamic echoes in its own right, is enormous; come to think of it (and many translators *do not* come to think of it), to find the 'correct' translation of such a title is hideously difficult, as the Dutch translators of *Ulysses* have proven.

When the latest Dutch translators of *Ulysses*, whose in many ways admirable work was published in 1994, were publishing separate translations of a number of episodes in various literary journals and spreading publicity to promote their work, they suggested that the title of their translation would become *Odysseus*, not *Ulysses*. Their argument to do so ran as follows:

Our choice to do so is most significant for how we approach our translation. Our predecessor John Vandenberg, whose translation appeared in 1969, and the German translator Wollschläger copy, as it were, the original title. In doing so they overlook the significance of the fact that in the English language Ulysses is the usual name to refer to the Greek hero. (Claes 58; my translation)

'The Greek hero': quite apart from the fact that in *Ulysses* there is, of course, no true Greek hero to be spotted anywhere, E.V. Rieu's 1946 English translation of *The Odyssey* uses the name Odysseus, rather than *Ulysses*. The translators go on to argue that

[i]n Dutch, this name sounds uncommonly solemn or has a Latin ring to it. This is why the French have opted for *Ulysse* and the Italians for *Ulisse*. 'Literal' translations often give rise to a wrongly alienating effect. Our option is to translate *idiomatically*. (Claes 58; my translation; emphasis mine)

But of course, as I hope to have made clear, part of the attraction of *Ulysses* over *Odysseus* is exactly that: its alienating effect, its Latin ring. Quite apart from this, the very title of Joyce's book had of course since long been part even of Dutch *idiom*. Perhaps the only true option for the translators would have been to opt for *Ulixes*, rather than for *Ulysses*. *Ulixes*, for one, is the name the Dutch translator of Dante's *Divine Comedy* chooses when the Greek hero appears in the Inferno section.

*Give us a squint at that literature, grandfather*

The arguments for translations of the title *Ulysses* to remain as close to its Latin ring in English as possible have perhaps been formulated best by Lenn Platt. In an analysis of the “Circe” episode of *Ulysses* and the Irish Literary Theatre, he argues that

the first irony of *Ulysses* is that it is an authentic Irish epic, partly by virtue of its hopeless and inevitable cultural contamination. The title of the book, which is every bit as complex and ambiguous as ‘Finnegans Wake’, would suggest as much. Forget, for a moment, Joyce’s admiration for Odysseus, and assume that the title refers not to Bloom, *but to the book as a book*. To call a book ‘Ulysses’ is to invite the status of the epic. But why call a book about Ireland *Ulysses*? [. . .] why use the Romanised form, rather than the authentic Greek form? This, it seems to me, is the point about the title. In the Romanised form, ‘Ulysses’ signifies cultural appropriation, or, if, you like, theft. [. . .] It signifies a cultural practice, and carries the realisation that the new Irish epic cannot be ‘created’, but must be stolen. (61-62; emphasis mine)

Stolen, or trans-lated, transposed from elsewhere: *Ulysses* is a purloined letter; any translation of *Ulysses* doubly so. Bloom, blissfully unaware of his Homeric, his Odyssean, his Ulyssean qualities throughout his 18 hours or so in the book entitled *Ulysses*, embodies, literally, that is to say, as a construct of letters, as the sum of the amount of ink spent on describing him as fully as any allroundman in literature, all the problems translators of *Ulysses* come up against. Bloom is a translation, an *Übersetzung*, a crossing actively engaged in by the translated, the *Übersetzte*, the crosser himself. Always in between texts, inter- and intradynamically embedded in the echoes of our minds, the case of Bloom should serve as an informant to translators of *Ulysses*. There is no such thing as one proper translation of *Ulysses*; or of any other text, for that matter, and ‘[. . .] no two translations are going to be alike, as we all know, because fragments of our individualistic readings will drift through our reading and our translating. Difference is built into the translation process, both on the levels of the readerly and the writerly’ (Bassnett 1997: 27). As I suggested at the outset of this foray into translating the interdynamics of *Ulysses*, in translating literary texts, there are only possibilities, almostings. In the case of the Dutch translation of *Ulysses*, so far the optimal translation of the title would seem be *Ulysses* which, in the end, the most recent translators had to



acknowledge.<sup>22</sup> Here, interdynamically speaking, writing, reading and translating, in the case of *Ulysses*, sameness marks the difference Joyce looked for. By offering in a different language the same spirit—by providing a literary, interlingual metempsychosis of *Ulysses*, the interdynamism Joyce sought and found is best served.<sup>23</sup>

### References

- Allen, Graham. *Intertextuality*. London: Routledge. 2000.
- Bassnett, Susan. *Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell. 1993.
- . “The Meek or the Mighty: Reappraising the Role of the Translator”. *Translation Power Subversion*. Ed. R. Alvarez & C. Africa Vidal. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters. 1996.
- . “When Is a Translation Not a Translation?”. *Constructing Cultures: Essays in Literary Translation*. Ed. Susan Bassnett and André Lefevre. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters. 1997: 25-40.
- Beckett, Samuel. “Dante...Bruno. Vico..Joyce”. *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment*. Ed. with a foreword by Ruby Cohn. London: John Calder. 1983.
- Caneda-Cabrera, M. Teresa. “The Untranslatability of Modernism”. *Eysteinson and Liska 2007*: 675-92.
- . “The Problematics of Translating Modernism: The Case of James Joyce”. Seminar on Literature and/in Translation, 23/04/2008 and 24/04/2008.

---

<sup>22</sup> In recent publications the projected translators of the third Dutch version of *Ulysses* have suggested that their own title in Dutch is going to be *Odysseus*. Resistance is being rallied as we speak. Quite apart from its success or failure, it is very unlikely that the Dutch publisher will accept a commercially unattractive title such as *Odysseus*; after all, over the past 50 years or so, *Ulysses* has become, to all intents and purposes, James Joyce's *Ulysses*.

<sup>23</sup> ‘metempsychosis 1. Transmigration of the soul, passage of the soul from one body to another; esp. (chiefly in Pythagoreanism and certain Eastern religions) the transmigration of the soul of a human being or animal at or after death into a new body of the same or a different species’ (*ibid.*).

- [http://www.kuleuven.be/cetra/events/Documents/20080423\\_seminar%20Teresa%20Caneda.pdf](http://www.kuleuven.be/cetra/events/Documents/20080423_seminar%20Teresa%20Caneda.pdf). Accessed 21 June 2009.
- Claes, Paul, and Mon Nys. "Een lectruur van *Ulysses*". Interview with Paul Claes and Mon Nys by Frans Denissen and Chris van de Poel. *Yang*. Vol. 29. No. 4-5: 47-58.
- Colum, Padraic. *The Adventures of Odysseus and the Tale of Troy*. <http://www.bartleby.com/75/>. Accessed 21 June 2009.
- Cronin, Michael. *Translation and Globalization*. London: Routledge. 2003.
- Ehrlich, Heyward, JJTM: The James Joyce Text Machine. <http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~ehrllich/jjtm/>. Accessed 21 June 2009.
- Ellmann, Richard. *James Joyce*. Rev. ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1982.
- Eppstein, E.L. *A Starchamber Quiry: A James Joyce Centennial Volume 1882-1982*. London: Methuen. 1982.
- Eysteinson, Astradur, and Vivian Liska, eds. *Modernism. A Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 2007.
- Federici, Eleonora. "The Translator's Intertextual Baggage". *Forum for Modern Language Studies*. Vol. 43. No. 2. doi:10.1093/fmls/cqm005. Accessed 21 June 2009.
- Green, J. M. *Thinking through Translation*. Athens GA: University of Georgia Press. 2001.
- Griffiths, Eric. "Dante, Primo Levi and the Intertextualists". *Times Literary Supplement*. May 7 2008, [http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts\\_and\\_entertainment/the\\_tls/article3886607.ece](http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/the_tls/article3886607.ece). Accessed 21 June 2009.
- Joyce, James. *Ulysses*. Tr. Auguste Morel. Paris: Gallimard. 1936.
- . *Ulysses*. Tr. John Vandenberg. Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij. 1969.
- . *Ulysses*. The corrected text. Ed. H.W. Gabler. New York, Vintage Books, 1986. The convention in referencing Gabler's edition of *Ulysses* as established by the *James Joyce Quarterly* has been followed here (*U* episode number.line number).
- . *Finnegans Wake*. Ed. Seamus Deane. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992. The convention in referencing *Finnegans Wake* as established by the *James Joyce Quarterly* has been followed here (page number.line number).
- . *Dubliners*. New York: Vintage. 1993.

- . *Ulysses*. tr. Paul Claes and Mon Nys. Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij. 1994.
- . *Ulysses*. tr. Jacques Aubert. Paris: Gallimard. 2004.
- Kenner, Hugh. *Joyce's Voices*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1978.
- . *Ulysses*. Johns Hopkins University Press. 1987.
- Latour, Bruno. *Science in Action. How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press. 1987.
- "metempsychosis, n." *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 1989. *OED Online*. Oxford University Press. <http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/00307633>. Accessed 2 June 2009
- Norris, Margot. "Reading Modernism, after Hugh Kenner (1923-2003)". *Modernism/Modernity*. Vol. 12. No. 3 (2005): 483-86.
- Pfister, Manfred. "How Postmodern is Intertextuality?" *Intertextuality*, ed. H. F. Plett. Berlin: De Gruyter. 1991: 207-224.
- Platt, Lenn. "*Ulysses* 15 and the Irish Literary Theatre". *Reading Joyce's 'Circe'*. Amsterdam: Rodopi. 1994: 33-62.
- Raleigh, John Henry. "On the Way to Ithaca: The Functions of the 'Eumaeus' Section in *Ulysses*". *Irish Renaissance Annual*. Ed. Zack Bowen (Newark: University of Delaware Press.1981). 13-114.
- Ramey, James. "Intertextual Metempsychosis in *Ulysses*: Murphy, Sinbad, and the 'U.P.: up' Postcard". *James Joyce Quarterly*. Vol. 45, No. 1 (Fall 2007): 97-114.
- Senn, Fritz. "Weaving, Unweaving". *A Starchamber Quiry: A James Joyce Centennial Volume 1882-1982*. E.L. Epstein, ed.: 45-70.
- . *Joyce's Dislocutions: Essays on Reading As Translation*. Ed. John Paul Riquelme. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press. 1984.
- . "'Stately, plump', for Example: Allusive Overlays and Widening Circles of Irrelevance". *James Joyce Quarterly*. Vol. 22, No. 4 (Summer 1985): 347-54.
- . *Inductive Scrutinies. Focus on Joyce*. Ed. Christine O'Neill. Dublin: Lilliput Press. 1995.
- . "In Classical Idiom: *Anthologia Intertextualis*". Senn 1995: 197-215.
- Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins. The Arden Edition of the Works of William Shakespeare. London: Methuen. 1984.

- Stanford, W. B. *The "Ulysses" Theme*. Dallas: Springs Publications. 1968.
- Stöckelová, Tereza. "Mutability and Mobility of Social Science Knowledge: The Case of Roma expertise". *socialtechnology.files.wordpress.com/2009/06/stockelova.doc*. Accessed 17 July 2009.
- "translate, v." *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 1989. *OED Online*. Oxford University Press. <http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50256320>. Accessed 2 June 2009.
- "Ulysses". *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 1989. *OED Online*. Oxford University Press. <http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50261570>. Accessed 2 June 2009.