

**IRELAND – EUROPE**  
*CULTURAL AND LITERARY ENCOUNTERS*

*Edited by Plamen Gaptov, Maria Georgieva  
and Jonathan McCreedy*

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# THE ODYSSEY OF MY MACEDONIAN TRANSLATION OF JAMES JOYCE'S *ULYSSES*

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Translating James Joyce's *Ulysses* is not an easy task in any language. Oftentimes the text of *Ulysses* seems unreadable and difficult to interpret, since every episode changes in technique, perspective, style, and register. Yet, the translator strives to do his or her best not to interpret, but to translate, to transfer, to carry, and to bear the intent of the original text into the second text – the translation. To quote Walter Benjamin's "Aufgabe", the "task" or the "defeat" of the translator is certainly never-ending and unremitting.<sup>1</sup> Otherwise, everything turns out to be "met him pike hoses" (*Ulysses* 211) in the words of *Ulysses*'s heroine Molly Bloom. Translating *Ulysses* is nothing similar to any experience you will have with any other English novel. Every translation may be said to confirm the capacity of a given language to convey multiple and manifold layers of meaning, incorporating innumerable subtle word-formations, broken syntax and magnificent style. It challenges Macedonian and puts to the test the one's ability to deconstruct Joyce's method of writing.

## "Telemachus"<sup>2</sup>

Stately, Buck Marija came from the library stairs, bearing a plump green-covered book of *Ulysses*. Date of publication 1937. Reprinted 1955 on Little Russell Street. It was in the year of the millennium. I was a freshman at college and it took me three months to read during winter. "The very dead of winter" (Eliot 99). I had been drawn to Joyce's encrypted texts over the previous decade and a half. I felt a personal connection with him, even imagining meeting this grand literary figure walking with his ash-plant or drinking his wine, as Woody Allen later did with Dalí and T. S. Eliot, and with the Fitzgeralds in his movie *Midnight in Paris*. When I did my master's thesis research on the reception of the Surrealistic movement in England, it was thought-provoking to come across the notion that Eugène Jolas' *transition* – where Joyce serialized *Finnegans Wake* in the 1920s and 30s – was one of the key literary journals that published Surrealistic texts in English. And yet Joyce never met with André Breton, the

Magus of Surrealism, in Paris in the 1920s; but he did meet Philippe Soupault with whom he worked on the French translation of *Anna Livia Plurabelle* – the “elusive dream”. Although not quite the same, Breton’s idea of automatic writing somehow reflects Joyce’s “interior monologue” style in *Ulysses*, and later in *Finnegans Wake*. Although Breton insisted on spontaneity, and Joyce was all about being the “master-mind” or “puppeteer”, they were working on similar ideas simultaneously. Indeed, literature can, in the end, be viewed as an unceasing process of mutual interweaving, entwining and pervasions, continually being renewed.

### “Nestor”

“You Cochrane!” (*Ulysses* 20). In 2012, the Macedonian writer and the Translation Project editor Mr Mitko Madzunkov decided to commission *Ulysses*, and I, albeit terrified and overwhelmed, accepted the task with a merry heart. In the midst of May, I began the project from scratch. I decided to do it in full form, and incorporate a large selection of annotations, comments and allusions (amounting to 2717 footnotes), always trying not to bypass any major issues. You may, of course, enjoy reading the entire corpus of texts without them; however, I kept them since they prove very helpful in deconstructing the author’s intentions, decoding his personal world and his thoughts on how to create a novel. 1) What were his philosophical and religious motifs? 2) How did Joyce pull his writing strings, and 3) what were his main discoveries as a writer? The streams of consciousness and interior monologues of Dedalus, Bloom and Molly and his links to Biblical texts and mythology? Finally, what reverberates within Western culture of the twentieth century because of him? However, what I was looking for, and was fascinated by was his lucidness. The joy and rejoicing felt reading and re-reading Joyce and *Ulysses* was an aim to be achieved in my translation.

### “Proteus”

“Ineluctable modality of the visible” (*Ulysses* 31). Ineluctable task of the translator: be true to the original. Signatures of all things I was here to read. “Shut your eyes and see” (ibid.) commands Joyce. He commands and I am obeyed (Soupault, “Sur *L’Ulysses*” 296).<sup>3</sup> Heeding his command, I vowed to follow in his footsteps. I stumbled, floundered, hesitated. I tottered, teetered. I pondered. The original was too clever to be “trapped” within a translation. The author was dead. I could not consult him personally. I took his words very seriously; treated them lovingly and in detail. I was not whimsical like Molly.

The translation must have its own life, its own course of living, ergo, its own struggles in life.

### **“Calypso”**

“Mr Leopold Bloom ate with relish the inner organs of beasts and fowls” (*Ulysses* 45). The editors divided up the inner organism of the Macedonian translation of *Ulysses* into two volumes. In June 2013 the first volume was published (containing episodes 1–13) and the second volume (holding the much more complex episodes 14–18) came out the following December. In regards to my source texts, I used Hans Walter Gabler’s 1986 corrected text of *Ulysses*, Don Gifford’s *Ulysses Annotated*, and Sam Slote’s 2012 *Ulysses with Annotations*. Richard Ellmann’s *James Joyce* was also of great assistance, alongside the Macedonian translation of the Bible by Archbishop Gavril, *Shakespeare’s Complete Works* by Dragi Mihajlovski and Homer’s *Odysseus* by Mihajlo Petruševski. The day opened wide and I began to climb the mountain.

### **“Lotus Eaters”**

By rory<sup>4</sup> along the Stone Bridge I walked soberly, past the river, with three crimson hardbound copies of the first volume on June 5, 2013. All those sleepless nights, “with voices singing in [my] ears that this was all folly” (Eliot 99), came to an end. “This birth was hard and bitter agony for me, like Death” (ibid.), my death. “[The day] was (you might say) satisfactory” (ibid.). Befuddled by Bloom’s theological musings, I strived hard to decode his inner monologues, yet another instance of firm refusal by Joyce to succumb to English syntax.

### **“Hades”**

At first it was like walking in the dark, but I was very enthusiastic and stubborn. Then you begin to see quite clear, as your eyes adjust to the darkness. When I re-read the text, my memories from that winter return, particularly those concerning the struggles I experienced. The original language tormented me and I tumbled into an abyss of language. Sometimes its unanswerable questions were nerve-racking. Who is the mysterious Macintosh in chapter 6? Is Bloom is part of the twelve apostles? Is he Christ? Is it Joyce himself?

It is a test, that’s what it is – *Ulysses* tested confirmed the capacity of my mother tongue. The translation decidedly strove to convey the entire complex inner orchestration of *Ulysses*, which was invisible, and it proves that even

though I come from a small country, the Macedonian language is not essentially insignificant; instead, it is rich and has the capacity to express everything that is essentially important in this master work: to trace and articulate every nuance, shade, tone or touch. Überleben.

## “Aeolus”

### IN THE HEART OF THE MACEDONIAN

Compared to English, it is quite difficult to create ambivalent meaning or create homonyms or homophones as they are quite rare in my mother tongue. There are at least a dozen synonyms for *glow* in English, but only a few in Macedonian. Hence, new ones were invented in my translation. Do as the Master does. “ОМНИУМ ЗБИРШТИУМ” (*Ulysses I* 176). So, following Benjamin’s “instructions” – “liebend vielmehr und bis ins Einzelne”, (“lovingly and in detail”) (“Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers” 18) – I tried to form a text of *Ulysses* according to the manner of meaning of the original (*Art des Meinens*): “to make both recognizable as the broken parts of the greater language, just as fragments are broken parts of a vessel” (“The Monstrosity of Translation” 84). Since every translation is essentially a fragment, an absolute or definite meaning can never be fully realised. Instead, it must resound according to its own character and intentions.

## “Lestrygonians”

“Pineapple rock. Lemon platt, butter scotch” (*Ulysses* 124).

Reading closely. Stay faithful to the original, yet stay free. As Paul de Man states, “[translation] can only be free if it reveals the instability of the original [...]” (33). For instance, the message given to the hapless Denis Breen in this chapter – “U.P.: up?” (*Ulysses* 131) – is tremendously ambiguous and difficult to translate. In chose “П.Д” (*Ulysses I* 204), the Cyrillic transliteration of “P.D.”, which if pronounced “pe-de” or “peder” has the pejorative meaning “a jerk” in Macedonian, or a “gay” or “homosexual”. I am aware that this choice is not a perfect one, as “U.P.: up” suggests many other connotations. However, improvements on translation can be infinite. According to Benjamin, the translator by definition always fails – cf. “Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers” (“The Task [*Defeat*] of the Translator”). As Paul de Man puts it:

The translator can never do what the original text did. Any translation is always second in relation to the original, and the translator as such is lost from the very



beginning. He is per definition underpaid, he is per definition overworked, he is per definition the one history will not really retain as an equal, unless he also happens to be a poet, but that is not always the case (20).

We, as translators, are looking for the “intent” that is in general similar to the modes of the thought in the original text. To quote Benjamin: “To set free in [one’s] own language the pure language spellbound in the foreign language, to liberate the language imprisoned in the work by rewriting it” (“The Translator’s Task” 163). Non-native speakers read the original from the perspective of the translation. For sure, to translate *Finnegans Wake* one *must* rewrite it in his or her own language.

### **“Scylla and Charybdis”**

“Urbane, to comfort them the quaker librarian purred” (*Ulysses* 151).

You need a fresh perception. I was fortunate. I had the best helper I could have ever imagined. His thoughts were formed in a very similar way as Jim’s. Certain passages prefer a male perception of things.

### **“Wandering Rocks”**

The Superior, the Very Reverend my father read the “Lotus Eaters” episode when Bloom visits All-Hallow’s church. He adhered to the lines at first, but then mildly protested against those same words, telling me to be careful about what and how I translated. What Joyce wrote and mocked, I could soon recognize with my own eyes at the Seminary. Yes, because, as Swinburne sings in “The Garden of Proserpine”: “even the weariest river/ winds somewhere safe to sea” (78). *Pro domo sua* – always return to yourself. Khoruzhy was right. Joyce himself wrote in *Ulysses*: “Every life is in many days, day after day. We walk through ourselves, meeting robbers, ghosts, giants, old men, young men, wives, widows, brothers-in-love. But always meeting ourselves” (175).

### **“Sirens”**

Browse and burn in “Sirens”. That is what you do. You burn. This was the most particular piece of translation in the book. The music. The word play. The alliteration. “Jingle” (*Ulysses* 210). Yet, the Macedonian language survived. “Bronze by gold” (210). Hard, but tried to make the text sound as close as possible to the original. I hope I have achieved that harmony spoken of by Benjamin : “the translation’s language can, indeed must free itself from bondage

to meaning, in order to allow its own mode of *intentio* to resound, not as the *intentio* to reproduce, but rather as harmony, as a complement to its language in which language communicates itself” (“The Translator’s Task” 161).

### **“Cyclops”**

I was just passing the time of day when the Association of the Macedonian Literary Translators decided to pay tribute to *Улус*, whereupon I received a “Golden Pen” Award in September 2013. However, the Cyclop-like eyes of the readers seem to be blind in Macedonia. Time passes slow in this region.

### **“Nausicca”**

“The summer evening had begun to fold the world in its mysterious embrace” (*Ulysses* 284).

The second volume of *Улус* was nearly completed. “Cuckoo” (313). It reminded me of the beautiful melody of the 13<sup>th</sup> century medieval English rota: “Sumer Is Icumen In”, “Lhude sing cuccu!” (Quiller-Couch 1). “Sing cuccu”. Seeking not to “obscure the original” by mistranslating, I consulted both the (authorised) French and German translations. As for the Russian version, I believed that some of the translational solutions contained too much freedom, whereas the Serbian manuscript unfortunately had some mistranslations. I tried to follow my own path in accord with the law of fidelity in the linguistic development of the original.

### **“Oxen of the Sun”**

*Ulysses* is a conglomerate comprising various linguistic and syntactical variations, complex compounds, changes in register, slangs and jargons, and idiomatic phrases. It parodies the entire corpus of English and European literary tradition, including Homer, Chaucer, Dante, Shakespeare, and English Gothic novelists (such as Horace Walpole and Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu). In addition, the historical and political background of Ireland, (at the time of Parnell and the British Empire), is discussed in detail, as well as unavoidably his religious background with the Roman Catholic Church.

“Oxen of the Sun” was one of the most challenging episodes to translate. The literal English translation of Latin texts with references to Tacitus and Sallust. Twenty five pieces of parodies of Anglo-Saxon literary tradition. A selection of 335 footnotes. A constant transfer from one register to another.

## “Circe”

The marvellous dramatic piece, episode 15: “Circe”. The dream land of *Ulysses* wherein layers of reality constantly change, and foreshadow and prefigure *Finnegans Wake*. Humour. You encounter everything you know about literature in *Ulysses*: prose, poetry, drama. The translator’s responsibility is enormous. The challenge is colossal as a volcanic mountain. It extends beyond the limits of what we consider by definition to be a novel, or a strategic narrative. Understanding his strategy requires a deliberate strategy of our own.

## “Eumaeus”

“Preparatory to anything else” (*Ulysses* 501).

The Joyce translator has to prepare him or herself extremely well before embarkation. Read his entire corpus, enter his world, penetrate his way of thinking, his way of creating sentences, his syntax and pauses. If you are gifted with perceptiveness, all you need is the wherewithal, dedication and determination to treat every sentence with due respect and love so that the original text becomes alive in one’s translation. This is what gives life to the original text in a non-native culture.

## “Ithaca”

What parallel courses did the original text of *Ulysses* and the translation of *Ulysses* follow?

Starting united both at normal walking pace they followed the intention of the author. The translator followed the sound of the words, and consecutive sentences; she strived to disclose the meaning of the words, especially the meaning hidden in idiomatic phrases; deconstructing the layers of multiform meanings, always digging deeper. It never is what it seems. Always approaching. Never fully catching, but always approaching.

Did the translator discover common factors of similarity between their respective like and unlike reactions to the reception of the book in Ireland and in Macedonia?

Both were sensitive to their own endemic reception. The literary critics prefer to be dead in Macedonia. There are no specialities on Joyce in our universities – not in the whole country. This is of course part of a general situation in Macedonia. There are still big sections of the humanities that are underdeveloped. Sergei Khoruzhy in a 2014 interview for *The Moscow Times* said in regards to the Russian translation of *Ulysses*, not far from the truth:

“Joyce is a special world and a special profession. Quite different from that of a translator of English novels” (“An Epic Journey: Translating ‘*Ulysses*’”).

Did the translator obey the signs of Joyce?

Yes, entering softly, she strived to grasp his carefully formed thoughts, his vigilantly monitored lapses of syntax, his nonsensical phrases, his puns, his “farts”, his “yawns”, his clever cunning, his passion, his diligence, his persistence.

Did the translator and Joyce find their educational careers similar?

My father went to the Seminary as Stephen did and as Joyce did. If I were a boy, I would probably have gone too to my Belvedere. As Leopold Bloom said, life can be stranger than fiction. I started teaching English related theology in the Seminary the same year as I started translating *Ulysses*.

Did the translator attribute this homonymity to information or coincidence or intuition?

Coincidence.

## “Penelope”

“Yes because I never did a thing like this before” (*Ulysses* 608).

Yes because the closing “Penelope” monologue is odd and peculiar. Most critics emphasize the lack of punctuation and the stream of consciousness. Its rhythm is in a sense unrepeatable; not in a sense that it is unique, but in a sense that even if the passages are read a thousand times, each time they are read, they are read differently. Somehow the rhythm of joy prevails, always towards the end. It is not musical, but something completely different. Yes. Madzunkov’s great acumen.

The struggles with the translation of this episode were partly mollified by Angeline Ball’s and Marcella Riordan’s filmic renditions of Molly’s soliloquy. Their recordings were effective in capturing and distinguishing the shorter or longer flows of thought and the transfer from one thought to another. I shall conclude with my Macedonian translation of the iconic final passage of Molly’s monologue in “Penelope”. For the purpose of this essay I have made alterations in my own published translation of this paragraph. “бродот во Алгесирац” is altered to “бродот за Алгесирац”, (the preposition “за” denoting movement), and “моите цицки сети намирисани” is now “моите мирисни гради”, a shortened and more melodic version, and thus closer to the original “my breasts all perfume”. This final note of the essay goes back to (or towards) its introductory premise: the “ineluctable modality” (*Ulysses* 31) of the process of translation.

и стариот замок стар илјадници години да и оние zgodни Маври сети во бело и турбани како кралеви те канат да седнеш малку во тие нивни минијатурни дуќани и Ронда со старите прозорци на оние *posadas* 2 пламнати очи зад решетката се кријат за либето нејзино да го бакне железото и винарниците на крчмите ноќе полуотворени и кастанетите и онаа ноќ кога го испуштивме бродот за Алгесирас стражарот спокоен проаѓаше со фенерот и О оној ужасен порој долу О и море море темноцрвено понекогаш како оган и оние величествени зајдисонца и смоквините стебла во градините на Аламида да и сите оние чудни улички и розовите и сините и жолтите куќички и градините со рози и јасмините и гераниите и кактусите и Гибралтар како девојче каде што бев планински Цвет да кога ја ставив розата во косата како оние андалузиски девојки или дали да ставам црвена да и како ме бакнуваше под Маварскиот сид и помислив тој или некој друг сеедно и потоа со очи го помолив уште еднаш да ме праша да и тогаш тој ме праша дали јас би да да кажам да мој планински цвети и првин го прегрнав да и го повлеков надолу кон себеси за да може да ги насети моите мирисни гради да и срцето му чукаше како лудо и да реков да сакам Да (*Улис II* 533).

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> “Task” meaning problem and “defeat” representing surrender, and capitulation.
- <sup>2</sup> Joyce's personal titles for the episodes of *Ulysses* respectively structure this article.
- <sup>3</sup> Paraphrasing Philippe Soupault's words in a review of the French translation of *Ulysses* (1929): “Il commande et il est obéi” (“He commands and he is obeyed”).
- <sup>4</sup> Cf. “By Lorries along Sir John Rogerson's Quay Mr Bloom walked soberly, past Windmill lane, Leask's the linseed crusher's, the postal telegraph office” (*Ulysses* 58). 'Rory' (*obsolete*) defines something which is 'covered with dew'.

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