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THE POLYLOGUE PROJECT

SHORTMIND

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Abstract: The aim of this collaborative project [edited by F. Senn, E. Mihálycsa and J. Wawrzycka], the work of ten authors and covering more than ten languages, is to chart the possibilities of translation to recreate in the TL texts, the anomalous, elliptic, pre-grammatical, inchoative forms that became almost a signature mark of the Joycean interior monologue, and which here are called 'shortmind'. It therefore addresses such issues as indeterminacy, (anomalous) word order, punctuation, ellipsis, polysemy, ungrammaticality, linguistic sub-standards etc., and examines the (un)willingness of translation texts to breach ingrained rules and norms of (syntactic, narrative) control, correctness and coherence, in the TL culture.

Keywords: Anomalous Structures; James Joyce; Linguistic Sub-standards; Non-normative Syntax; Sliding Signification.

Resumo: O objetivo deste projeto colaborativo [editado por F. Senn, E. Mihálycsa e J. Wawrzycka], trabalho de dez autores e que cobre mais de dez línguas, é catalogar as possibilidades de tradução ao se recriar nos textos da língua alvo as formas anômalas, elípticas, pré-gramaticais e incoativas que se tornaram como que uma marca distintiva do monólogo interior joyceano, chamadas aqui de "shortmind". Trata, portanto, de tópicos como indeterminação, ordem (anômala) das palavras, pontuação, elipse, polissemia, agramaticalidade, sub-padrões linguísticos, etc, e examina a (má)vontade de textos em tradução de romper com regras e normas de controle, correção e coerência (sintáticas e narrativas) arraigadas na cultura alvo.

Palavras-chave: Estruturas anômalas; James Joyce; sub-padrões linguísticos; sintaxe não normativa; significação moveda.
Globally, most readers of Ulysses – and their name must be legion – do not face it in its original (mainly) English guise but in some linguistic transformation. It is worth speculating what those foreign readers actually absorb in content, mood, overtones, vibrations. Two statements live in open conflict side by side: Literature cannot be translated. Literature has been and is constantly being translated – and it may be true of Ulysses, only more so. What are the results of translating Ulysses? What remains, somehow, the same, and what changes? The paradox is that everything has to change and yet is intended to be the same.

Some perennial issues of translation are intensified in Joyce and demand our renewed attention. In this context we decided to convene practitioners as well as critical onlookers for a translation workshop (“TransWork”) that would focus on specific, possibly extreme, Joycean niceties. For once, the workshop was not to consist of a series of presentations, but concrete problems and examples, sent out in advance, would be intently discussed. In their nature all issues selected for our analysis were tricky ones to start with. The existing solutions were to be scrutinized and possibilities considered. Special emphasis would be laid on the opportunities as well as on the handicaps of the various languages – such as syntactic constraints, inflexion, word order, compounds, neologisms, idioms, etc.

The workshop took place from May 8 to 11, 2010, and gathered Joyce translators and scholars from Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania and Switzerland for intensive sessions on textual features that, we thought, had so far been given relatively little attention in Joyce translation scholarship: “Shortmind”, Musical/Sound Effects, Quotations and Errors. The discussion of two of those issues, Shortmind and Errors were continued in correspondence between various participants who addressed them here in written commentaries.

“Shortmind” is a term devised by Fritz Senn to designate a salient feature of Joyce's interior monologue where a thought is seen emerging in its pre-grammatical, pre-syntactic, inchoative, groping, associative semi-shape. Translators tend to smooth out and change such a provisional assembly of thoughts in statu nascendi, an initial jumble, into neat, grammatical, punctuation-controlled sentences. Some of the examples are discussed here as “impact sentences” (whether they are actual sentences or not).

The second category relates to the very Joycean feature of errors, mistakes, misunderstandings that are often embedded in the intricate structure of Ulysses: “Throwaway”, “word/world”, “tender Achilles”, etc.

The editors of the enterprise, Erika Mihálycsa, Jolanta Wawrzycka, and Fritz Senn, invited the original participants as well as a few additional recruits to contribute their observations and commentaries on the pre-selected phrases, sentences and passages. Since the Zurich workshop participants included re-translators of Ulysses whose work appeared in the course of 2012 – Erik Bindervoet and Robbert-Jan Henkes’s Dutch Ulixes, Enrico Terrinoni’s Italian Ulisse, Leevi Lehto’s Finnish Ulysses, and the new Hungarian Ulysses (the work of a four-strong team of Joyceans whose co-ordinator András Kappanyos

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1 Regrettably, there was no French participation since Bernard Hoepffner, one of the members of Jacques Aubert’s translation team of Ulysse (2004), was detained by an untimely accident.

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and chief Joycean scholar, Marianna Gula, brought their own dilemmas and translation versions to the Zurich dissection table) – we have good reasons to believe that many of the points raised during the workshop eventually fed into the final form that Joyce’s Weltalltag-novel took in those respective languages.

**Shortmind**

In this section, a few samples will be offered non-systematically to show how translations deal with pre-formulated or as yet inadequately formulated thoughts and phrases, with the implied questions of whether adequate reproductions of such structures in target languages are possible, and to what degrees of accuracy. A book like *Ulysses*, notoriously not conforming to precedents, thereby offers a wide scope for innovative ventures.

One handicap of translation is that what looks, at first blush, uncoordinated, *in statu nascendi* (or *cogitandi*) will be attributed to a translator’s lack of command in the target language. Something may strike reviewers (on the lookout for gaffes) as “not correct German”, or Finnish or Russian, unaware that Joyce’s English, as early responses testify, might not have passed the muster of the critical eyes of purist schoolmasters or editors. Reviewers are more tolerant about deviations from norm by a creative writer like Joyce than about those of his translators who are not generally given the analogous benefit of doubt. Translators of Joyce, moreover, are beset by so many problems and intricacies that the rendering of pre-formulated phrases need not be, and certainly has not been, a priority or even worth consideration. In the attempt to “get things right” that were originally not right or normal become almost automatically prone to apparent improvement. So now we move to the examples and language-by-language discussions.

1. **O! Exhausted that female has me.** (13.1253)

   In what we will call here “impact” and “process” sentences, Joyce skirts traditional syntax and prefers to *front* certain words/structures that impinge on the mind, as is the case with the example below, when Bloom at the end of his long day, and following his physical relief at the sight of Gerty MacDowell, internally exclaims: O! Exhausted that female has me (13.1253). The stimulus seems to be a feeling of exhaustion, which triggers off the rest of the thought. If “exhausted” is at the end of the sentence, the (pre?)articulated expression is turned into a distanced reflection. Could these, in themselves correct, sentences be amended?

**GERMAN(ic) and Romance languages (Fritz Senn)**

It seems – in my own subjective and perhaps debatable reading – that an initial physical awareness of exhaustion (almost in an original sense of “emptied out”, Lat. *ex-haurire*, that is to say, “drained”) finds expression before