

UN-SEXING *ULYSSES*: THE ROMANIAN TRANSLATION “UNDER” COMMUNISM



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Abstract

The essay reviews Mircea Ivănescu's Romanian translation of *Ulysses*, in particular the last chapter, “Penelope”, by placing its achievement within its historical context. After outlining the ideological climate during which the translation was being elaborated (censorship of sexual explicit references, xenophobia or xenophobic resistance to experimental foreign novels), the article examines some of the strategies Ivănescu resorted to in order to overcome the strictures imposed on his re-creation of Joyce's work in his language.

Translating under Romanian communism

It may seem strange to those who never experienced life in a former communist country to hear that before the 1989 Revolution in Romania people spent hours queuing for a book. The famous Romanian phrase *a se vinde la pachet*: to be sold gift-wrapped, was invented during communism to designate the widespread practice of selling good books together with other, unsaleable publications (usually Ceaușescu's famous speeches). Thus, a much sought-after tome could open many doors, such as securing medical treatment, or advice in legal or technical matters. Directors of publishing houses were demigods that writers had to pander to in order to get into print. In 1970 Editura Cartea Românească (Romanian Book Press) was set up again after it had been dismantled in the Stalinist era in 1948. Its leader was the well-known writer Marin Preda whose death in

1980 in very dubious circumstances seems to have been the result of his taking the liberty of publishing too much against the communist regime. Equally valuable were Univers Press and Minerva Press, which both published translations of foreign books, the first of which brought out the two editions of Mircea Ivănescu's translation of *Ulysses*.

In July 1971 the political leaders of Communist Romania set up the Council of Socialist Culture and Education (*Consiliul Culturii și Educației Socialiste-CCES*), which was subordinated to both the communist party and the "council of ministers", and whose mission was to supervise any cultural or educational activity within the country. Starting with 1977 CCES was put in charge of approving all projects of cultural institutions, such as the thematic remit of museums, repertoires of theatres, editorial plans, the number of copies of books printed, the production and distribution of films. All publications in communist Romania were thoroughly scrutinized, since CCES was responsible for the content of all printed material, whether literary, academic or journalistic. Ceaușescu's book published in 1971 at Editura Politică urged the Romanian people to focus on their own identity and turn their backs on foreign influences: "An inconsistent practice has developed, comrades, that of looking at what is being produced in other countries, abroad, that of resorting only to imports... We are against grovelling in front of everything that is foreign." (Ceaușescu, 1971, 205-206)

One of Ceaușescu's speeches invoked "the worldwide practices: the right to stop a publication, to suspend it. Democracy should not be understood in a denatured fashion." (see Tismăneanu, 2006, 603)

From 1977 onwards the number of translations from Western countries was significantly lower, and even those originating from other communist countries were carefully selected after being censored. This systematic attempt at censoring anything that dared put forward alternative ways of living rather than the communist life style increased to such an extent that a few years before communism was abolished in Romania the country's self-isolation had become worse than in Albania. (see Tismăneanu, 2006, 604)

As Eugen Negrici rightly pointed out in his excellent study of Romanian literature under communism, the main morale at the end of each text after the 1970's basically concluded that Romanians were superior to other nations. Needless to say that in these conditions translations could not provide any lesson to an already self-sufficient nation. The "shameless national demagoguery", to use Negrici's terms, re-invented the hatred against the Other (the Foreign), who was "either an enemy by intention, or inferior, through moral behaviour or level of intelligence." (Negrici, 2003, 62)

With such ideological constraints Romanian literature transformed itself in such a way as to simultaneously respond to two antagonistic addres-

sees: censorship, ready to stop in its tracks any piece of writing that would even vaguely attack the regime, and the reader who might be prepared to look beyond indoctrinated truths. Therefore there was a “disturbing effect, similar to the one of baroque works”, which made a text “be understood and not be understood in its intention at the same time.” (Negrici, 2003, 74) Translations from foreign works had somehow to adopt a similarly ambivalent line of conduct and the best way to do so was by inserting translator’s introductions or editorial notes which would show for instance the translator’s dislike of, and scorn at, the original context of the literary work. Thus for Mircea Ivănescu to get Joyce’s *Ulysses* published in translation in the ‘80s was possible only if he condemned heavily Molly Bloom’s misdemeanours. Particularly striking is the tone of the very last endnote, dealing with “Penelope,” in which Ivănescu, allegedly presenting other critics’ opinions, seems to concur implicitly with the overall condemnation of Molly’s immorality: “the character’s crudeness of expression, its lack of morality and spontaneous egotism, seem to have made some commentators wonder if the vision of the writer, who entrusted the end of his book to this figure, is not, after all, one of an even harsher condemnation not only of the moral flaws of his contemporaries, but even one invalidating the possibilities of human redemption that the whole book would seem to uphold through its repeated attempts at establishing human communication and valourizing human constants.” (*Ulise*, 700, n. 492). Judging from his overall approach and style as a translator, it is obvious that this was the sacrifice Ivănescu had to make in order to get his translation published.

***Ulysses* in Romania in translation(s)**

In a previous article focusing on the reception of James Joyce in Romania, I gave an account of the long “enduring history of misinterpretation of *Ulysses* in pre-WW 2 Romania, built on aesthetical confusions (Beza, Protopopescu) or on personal idiosyncrasies (Petrescu).” (see Ionescu, 2004, 214-218) Before the Romanian translation of *Ulysses* actually appeared, many critics wrote about Joyce’s novel in different literary journals after they had accessed it either directly in English or via the French translation. The overview of *Ulysses* in Romania was that of a revolutionary novel whose cultural challenge could have been considered a serious threat to the moral values upheld by the establishment. The most heavily attacked chapter of the book was by far ‘Penelope’, the overall image of Molly was similar to the first reactions in Britain immediately after the original publication of *Ulysses*

in 1921¹. In 1928 Marcu Beza insisted that the novel's "pornographic style" abounding in "sexual perversions" would indicate that modernists wanted to show that "nothing was to be spared, nothing was considered so indecent that the writer would avoid it in his novel." (Beza, 1928, 117) In 1930 Lucian Boz saw 'Penelope' as written 'with no punctuation', "the interior monologue of Bloom's wife – associations between the erotic past and present life, numerous lovers (Bloom, the husband, enumerates about twenty four), dream revelations, memories from her youth when a lieutenant used to masturbate in his handkerchief. Sodom and Gomorrah." (Boz, 1930)

It took a long time before Romanians had their first and, still today, only complete translation of *Ulysses*, authored by a Romanian poet and seasoned translator, Mircea Ivănescu. After being partially serialised in the least politicised literary journal of the communist era, *Secolul XX* ("Oxen of the Sun" (1971), "Hades" (1973), "Aeolus" (1977), "Cyclops" (1982)), the full translation of *Ulysses* appeared in two volumes at Univers Publishing House in 1984, the year when Dan Grigorescu published the only monograph on Joyce in Romanian (*Reality, Myth, Symbol: A Portrait of James Joyce*) at the same press. Ivănescu would have been at work on this translation for some twenty years while translating from other writers as well (Faulkner, Scott Fitzgerald, Capote; Nietzsche, Rilke, Musil). Three years after the 1989 revolution, *Ulysses* was reprinted as a joint venture with Venus Publishing House, before an expanded (with preface) one-volume edition, showing clearer-cut demarcations between the book's eighteen chapters and Molly's eight "periods," appeared in 1996, whose occasion was marked by a book launch featuring several prominent Joyceans during a four-day symposium (23-27 June).² The translation remained practically unchanged, the new volume contained a few additional notes and corrections were made of typos in the previous edition, among which the one intrusive comma in 'Penelope' that had crept undetected into the previous incarnation of Ivănescu's translation. The translation of *Ulysses* was assessed by Adrian Oțoiu as displaying "an unprecedented awareness of the intricacies of the Joycean text, professional exploration of its openings, intellectual rigour and a vast cultural hori-

¹ For instance, in the *Daily Express*, the anonymous reviewer vented his "sheer disgust", "irritability", "boredom at the continual harping on obscenities. [...] Reading Mr. Joyce is like making an excursion into Bolshevik Russia: all standards go by the board: reading Mr. Coleridge's excellent selections is to be soothed into sanity again". (1922, p. 95) Molly was considered "a female gorilla who has been corrupted by the contact with humans" (Mary Colum). Even critics of the 50's and 60's openly referred to Molly as a *bitch* (Richardson), a *whore* (O'Brien, Morse), a *slut* (Adams), suggesting that she is *an embodiment of evil and deconstruction* (Kenner, Morse).

² For a more detailed presentation of the translation's historical context, see Geta Dumitriu's review in *James Joyce Quarterly* 35.1, Fall 1997.

zon, doubled by that linguistic resourcefulness, musical ear and ludic spirit that Joyce himself always favoured when supervising the translation of his work.” (Oțoiu, 2004, 203)

As recently as March 2010, after a protracted silence, Mircea Ivănescu, who had withdrawn from the literary scene since the death of his wife in 1997, bluntly declared from his secluded abode in Sibiu that he never read *Ulysses*.³ He explained to the perplexed interviewer that Andrei Brezianu, one of the greatest promoters of Joyce in communist Romania and author of many studies on Joyce published in *Secolul XX* between the ‘70s and the ‘80s, would simply place an order for a new chapter to be translated. Ivănescu’s seemingly irreverent but frank confession is not the only one in this line; he also declared that he read only about twenty books in his whole life and that he had never intended to become a writer. My own conclusion is that we cannot give credit to Ivănescu’s own self-debunking from the pedestal to which Romanian commentators on his translation work had raised him. Indeed it is hard to take for granted that he would not have read *Ulysses* from cover to cover before embarking on the mammoth task of rendering it into Romanian, even though some of the inconsistencies from one chapter to the next, inevitable as they may otherwise be over such a lengthy period of gestation, might also be imputed to that more ad-hoc approach to Joyce’s masterpiece.

As shown in greater detail in an essay jointly written with Laurent Milesi and published in *Papers on Joyce*, “for a long time *Ulysses* represented for Romanian literary critics – and unfortunately still does so to some extent – nothing but an isolated borderline experiment whose main value was to be found in Joyce’s literary techniques, especially his use of the interior monologue.” (Ionescu, Milesi, 2008, 89) Ironically enough, the Romanian translation cannot precisely render the ambiguity of the interior monologue, or rather its admixture of free indirect style and third-person narration, since the grammatical structure of the Romanian language does not allow the sequence of tenses or the lack of referent (especially in verb endings, which, unlike in English, have different endings for each person, making it thus impossible to keep the original’s deliberate pronominal indirections), to name but these. From this point of view, one of the hardest tasks Ivănescu had to perform was to translate ‘Penelope’, as in addition to the use of salacious or taboo words that communist censorship would not have been too keen to condone, he had to impart more structure to Joyce’s interior monologue than the original had.

³ See the whole interview on http://www.observatorcultural.ro/Nu-stiam-niciodata-ce-se-va-produce-in-poezie*articleID_23406-articles_details.html

Censoring Molly's soliloquy

Since Molly's speech usually hovers on sex and around sex, and her "memories and evaluations are primarily sexual", since the moment she considers her achievements, "most are based on relationships, all involving sexual desirability or childbearing" (Henderson, 1989, 521), her only nonsexual gift being, as Henderson noted, the singing voice that we as readers cannot possibly hear, Ivănescu's final rendering of the text into Romanian is perhaps the best a translator could possibly have achieved in communist Romania. In 1984 *Ulysses* must have been one the most tolerated books by the Romanian censorship. Without wishing to overstate the case (since unfortunately it is impossible to corroborate it factually), at the time *Ulysses* appeared in Romanian, it must have been one of the novels most heavily laden with explicit sexual talk or allusions.⁴

In spite of Paul Ricoeur's view that "it is texts, not sentences, not words, that our texts try to translate" (Ricoeur, 2006, 31), I will have no choice in the present study but to sacrifice the text for the sake of words, since the harsh literality of words was very often the reason why a book did not pass the test of censorship. Any word with a sexual meaning, be it slang or even a scientific term, was frowned upon by puritan communist mentalities; passages were liberally expunged from published books and even Romanian classics were sanitized and shorn of their "pornographic" productions.

Thus offensive terms like "fuck" or "spunk" barely stood a chance in translation, and Ivănescu even occasionally went to great lengths of unrecognizability in his semantic workarounds. For instance 'spunk' was de-slanged into its scientific equivalent (sperm) in all three occurrences in Joyce's text:

1. "I had to halfshut my eyes still he hasnt such a tremendous amount of spunk in him when I made him pull out" (*U* 18.153-5)⁵ becomes "a trebuit aproape să-mi închid eu ochii și cu toate astea uite nici n-are așa grozav de multă spermă în el când l-am făcut s-o scoată afară" (*Ulise*, 604; lit.: I had to almost close my eyes still he doesn't have such a lot of sperm in him when I made him pull it out)

⁴ The '80s were years when censorship was so powerful that not even Romanian classic writers were published because they used taboo subjects. For instance, an extremely famous 19th century Romanian novel written by Liviu Rebreanu, *Răscolă* (*The Uprising*), dealing with the peasants' revolt against the bourgeoisie, otherwise a hackneyed topic well exploited by communist propaganda, ceased to be studied at school as it contained, among others, a cruel sexual scene, when the wife of a very rich owner is raped by the head of the peasants.

⁵ All textual references will be given parenthetically in the text as *U* followed by chapter and line numbers.

2. “Poldy has more spunk in him” (*U* 18.168) becomes “Poldy are mai multă spermă-n el” (*Ulise*, 605; lit.: Poldy has more sperm in him)

3. “theres the mark of his spunk on the clean sheet I wouldnt bother to even iron it out that ought to satisfy him” (*U* 18.1512-3) is translated by “uite și urma spermei lui aici pe cearceaful curat n-am să-mi dau osteneala nici măcar s-o scot la spălat așa că asta ar trebui să-l convingă” (*Ulise*, 638; lit.: here is the mark of his sperm on the clean sheet I will not even bother to wash it out this would have to persuade him)

The same happened in the case of Molly’s unrestrained desire to have sex or speak dirty, which finds its verbal outlet in her using the word “fuck” three times in the chapter:

1. “O Lord I wanted to shout out all sorts of things fuck or shit or anything at all only not to look ugly” (*U* 18.588-9) becomes a tamer, generic “îmi venea să țip în gura mare tot felul de porcării haide sau așa orice lucru mai porcocos numai să nu i se fi părut murdară” (*Ulise*, 615; lit.: I felt like shouting out loud all kinds of smut come on or any smuttier thing like that only not to look dirty)

2. “Ill let him know if thats what he wanted that his wife is fucked yes and damn well fucked too up to my neck nearly not by him 5 or 6 times handrunning” (*U* 18.1510-2) is urbanized into “am să-l și anunț dacă asta vrea să afle că nevasta lui e servită da și-ncă al dracului de bine servită umplută pînă aproape sus la gît nu de dumnealui de cinci sau șase ori la rînd” (*Ulise*, 638; lit.: I will let him know his wife is well-served, yes, damn well served up to the neck but not by him five or six times in a row.) “Al dracului de bine servită” (damn well served), in spite of the mild, yet common expletive, sounds odd in Romanian and suggests to the reader something more in line with the vexed issue of who will serve breakfast to whom at the Blooms in the morning of June 17th, as mentioned before. (see Ionescu, Milesi, 2008, 105) To this meaning, I could add the reference to a poker game, when somebody is well served (*a fi bine servit*) and does not need to take any more cards from the deck.

Similarly Molly’s reference to Bloom’s sexual abstinence, “he couldn’t possibly do without it that long,” (*U* 18.76) which is translated as “nu e el în stare să stea atîta fără să așa” (*Ulise*, 602; lit.: he couldn’t possibly stay like that without [doing] so”). The use of the Romanian adverb *asa* (so) here instead of a verb of action betrays a reticence to name what would offend sensibilities and was still in Romania of the ‘80s a coded linguistic ellipsis substituting for the unmentionable. Ivănescu’s choice still seems strange since the Romanian language can easily solve in a similar way to English what Joyce meant by “it”. Instead of using “să așa”, which definitely indicates self-censorship with regard to the initial text, Ivănescu could have

opted for “*să o facă*” (lit. without doing it), since *o* (it) is extremely ambiguous in Romanian and readers who did not want to interpret it sexually could have chosen to think of any other meaning but its sexual one. Unlike English, Romanian contains countless syntactical structures which must be reduplicated in a sentence. While English does not have double negation, Romanian does; while English cannot construct a double, juxtaposed subject for emphasis (e.g. *Mary, she, came), Romanian can, and same goes for the direct object, indirect object, and prepositional object. Syntactically speaking, Romanian has two direct objects: anticipated direct object (*complement direct anticipat*) and repeated direct object (*complement direct reluat*), two indirect objects: anticipated indirect object (*complement indirect anticipat*) and repeated indirect object (*complement indirect reluat*), etc. Therefore, Romanian contains unaccentuated pronominal forms (*pronume personal, formă neaccentuată*) which are meant to reduplicate and strengthen the accentuated pronominal forms (*pronume personal, formă neaccentuată*) – “I saw **her**” becomes *Am văzut-o (pe ea)*. Both *-o* and *(pe) ea* are both direct objects that correspond to one single word in English: “her”. *-O*, the unaccentuated pronominal form, can stand also for “it” – I saw it (the cat): *Am văzut-o*.

The same “it” used by Joyce in a similar context is translated by Ivănescu this time as “thing” in “Gardner said no man could look at my mouth and teeth smiling like that and not think of it” (*U* 18.888-9) (trans.: Gardner zicea că nu există bărbat care să se uite la gura mea și la dinții mei când zîmbesc așa și să nu se ducă cu gândul exact la lucrul ăsta) (*Ulise*, 623, lit.: Gardner said that no man could look at my mouth and my teeth when I smile like this and not think of this thing). Once more, Ivănescu’s choice betrays the fear of censorship which led to an unusual syntactic relation in the Romanian text, since as long as somebody says “this thing”, the reader should be informed what the referent for “this” is, even though, if we want to do justice to Molly, who seems blissfully unaware she can be eavesdropped on by the reader, she can use as many “this”es and “it”s in Romanian as she wants without making clear what she is referring to.

A third, similar example can be found in the sequence where Molly becomes so desperate that she imagines having sex with a sailor whom she does not know:

“by the Lord God I was thinking would I go around by the quays there some dark evening where nobodyd know me and pick up a sailor off the sea thatd be hot on for it and not care a pin whose I was only do it off up in a gate somewhere or one of those wildlooking gipsies in Rathfarnham had their camp pitched near the Bloomfield laundry to try and steal our things if they could I only sent mine there a few times for the name model laundry sending me back over and over some old ones odd stockings that blackguard-

looking fellow with the fine eyes peeling a switch attack me in the dark and ride me up against the wall without a word” (*U* 18.1410-8) - “Doamne Dumnezeule nu mă gîndeam să nu ies pe acolo pe chei în vreo seară mai întunecoasă să nu mă cunoască nimeni și să agăț un marinar tocmai sosit de pe mare care să fie dorit după așa ceva și să nu-i pese nici atîtica a cui sunt numai s-o facem repede printr-un gang pe undeva sau vreunul din țiganii ăia mai sălbatici lăptoși la Rathfarnham care se puseseră cu corturile lîngă spălătoria Blomfield să încerce să fure din lucrurile noastre dac-or putea mi le-am trimis și eu de cîteva ori c-am văzut că se cheamă spălătorie modei și-mi tot trimiteau înapoi niște ciorapi vechi ai cine știe cărei băbătii ăla cu fața de bandit cu ochii frumoși care cojea o nuia să m-atace pe întuneric și să mă călărească pe lîngă vreun zid fără să scoată o vorbă” (*Ulise*, 636).

“Thatd be hot on for it” is translated by Ivănescu in a very strange and ungrammatical Romanian, where the lexical bluntness of the original is deflected onto the morpho-syntactical plane: “care să fie dorit după așa ceva” (lit.: who would be wanted/wished for such a thing.) Yet “to ride me up against a wall” is given correctly as “să mă călărească pe lîngă vreun zid” and this time Ivănescu did not seem to find the verb “to ride”, used metaphorically in this context, too explicit for communist sensibilities.

However, other comments Molly makes are surprisingly kept undiluted and carried across without loss of force into Romanian. For instance, Ivănescu keeps the same degree of obscenity in

1. “if he wants to kiss my bottom Ill drag open my drawers and bulge it right out in his face as large as life he can stick his tongue 7 miles up my hole as hes there my brown part” (*U* 18.1520-22): “dacă vrea să mă sărute în fund am să-mi desfac pantalonașii și am să i-l scot bine drept în față în mărime naturală poate să-și întindă limba șapte mile în sus în gaura mea dacă tot e-acolo în partea mea întunecată” (*Ulise*, 639).

2. “Ill tighten my bottom well and let out a few smutty words smell-rump or lick my shit or the first mad thing comes into my head” (*U* 18.1530-2): “am să-mi strîng bine fundul și-am să las cîteva vorbe mai porcoase mirositoare sau să-mi lîngă treaba mare sau prima chestie mai nebunească care să-mi treacă prin cap” (*Ulise*, 639)

3. The biological term “vagina”, used in the free indirect speech in which Molly reproduces the gynaecologist’s words while giving it a negative spin as she refers to those fastidious women of Dr. Collins’s who would get an appointment with him for no reason, is kept as such⁶: “made me go to that

⁶ In ‘80s Romania there were no private surgeries, only state hospitals. Ceausescu’s Decree no. 770/1966 stated that abortions were illegal in Romania and banned all methods of contraception; gynaecologists were condemned to imprisonment (between 1 and 3 months) if they failed to announce the ‘organs responsible’ – the secret police – when performing an

dry old stick Dr Collins for womens diseases on Pembroke road your vagina he called it I suppose thats how he got all the gilt mirrors and carpets getting round those rich ones off Stephens green running up to him for every little fiddlefaddle her vagina and her cochinchina theyve money of course so theyre all right I wouldnt marry him not if he was the last man in the world” (*U* 18.1153-8): “m-a făcut să mă duc la babalîcul ăla ramolit dr Collins boli de femei pe Pembroke Road vagina dumitale așa îi zicea el așa și-a făcut cred toate oglinzile alea aiurite și covoarele tot trăgîndu-le pe sfoară pe alea bogate din Stephens Green care dau fuga la el pentru orice fleac vagina ei și cochincina ei alea au bani sigur așa că lor le merge bine nu m-aș mărita cu el nici dacă ar fi ultimul bărbat din lume” (*Ulise*, 629)

In communist times, sexual education was completely absent from school curricula. Young girls were not even told about menstruation and thus even a perfectly natural subject such as a woman’s period was taboo. This is probably why in *Hades*, Ivănescu transformed Bloom’s reference to Martha’s period to such an extent that Bloom’s words: “Such a bad headache. Has her roses probably.” (5.285) are unrecognizable in Romanian: “E vremea ei periodică probabil. (*Ulise*, 78, lit.: I have such a bad headache. It is her periodic time probably)

When it comes to Molly, Ivănescu cannot possibly change the passages on her menstruation beyond recognition. Thus, Joyce’s “pooh” (which refers to Molly’s period) is translated by *porcărie* (lit.: filthy thing, from *porc*: pig): “damn it damn it and they always want to see a stain on the bed to know youre a virgin for them all thats troubling them theyre such fools too you could be a widow or divorced 40 times over a daub of red ink would do or blackberry juice no thats too purply O Jamesy let me up out of this pooh sweets of sin whoever suggested that business for women”(U 18.1125-30) (la dracu la dracu și-ăștia vor totdeauna să vadă o pată în pat să fie siguri că ești fecioară pentru ei numai asta-i tot ce-i doare tîmpiți mai sînt poți să fii văduvă sau divorțată de 40 de ori ajunge să te dai nițel cu cerneală roșie sau

abortion in hospital, whether legal or illegal. Women did not go to gynaecologists but for regular check-ups, imposed by the state, in order to control and increase birth rate. In many cases women who had to have obstetrical interventions performed in hidden locations by doctors in totally unhygienic conditions and who did not have the luck to abort safely were left to die unless they revealed the name of the one who had helped them. According to the New Penal Code from 1973 (which replaced the one published in 1957) the period of detention for the doctors who performed such surgeries outside the medico-sanitary institutions changed from 1 to 2 years to 1 to 3 years. The detention period was increased to 7 to 12 years in the case in which the improper conditions in which the abortion was made led to the death of the woman. Therefore Molly’s scorn in these lines for gynaecologists and fastidious rich women who would check up their health problems regularly would have met with approval in communist propaganda.

cu zeamă de mure nu asta-i prea purpurie închisă O Cristoase să mă scol din porcăria asta plăcerile dulci ale păcatului cine dracu' a mai scornit și treaba asta la femei [*Ulise*, 629]) A striking omission of Ivănescu's is one of the central metafictional remarks in the whole chapter, since the Jamesy who is being appealed to is none else than the author of the book, who is asked to get the character out of the book. Molly herself pretends not to like books with a Molly in them (with reference to the book Bloom had bought for her: *Moll Flanders*). Ivănescu construes "O Jamesy" as "O Jesus", in Romanian: "O Cristoase" (lit: O, Jesus). A possible justification may be that Joyce himself, who trapped Molly in the book she does not like, is well known (via Stephen Dedalus, his earlier fictional alter ego) for his God-like theory of artistic creation, although there is no footnote evidence that Ivănescu grounded his translator's choice on such an interpretation.

In another occurrence referring to Molly's period, Ivănescu translates Joyce's "bloody pest of a thing" as *chestia asta nenorocită* (lit: this bloody thing) in "I was forgetting this bloody pest of a thing pfooh you wouldn't know which to laugh or cry were such a mixture of plum and apple" (18.1534-1535): "O uite că uitasem chestia asta nenorocită care mi-a venit pfui nici nu știi să râzi sau să plîngi suntem o amestecătură ca o marmeladă de prune și mere" (*Ulise*, 639). The mixture of plum and apple is gratuitously changed into a mixture like a marmalade of plum and apple. In this particular instance, Ivănescu proceeds by explicitation, albeit of a culturally receivable kind (marmalade), possibly in order to help the Romanian reader grasp what Molly's comparison is aimed at.

The different ways in which Joyce denominates the male sexual organ are preserved by Ivănescu: *chestia* for "thing", *mititica* for "micky":

1. "I wished I was one myself for a change just to try with that thing they have swelling up on you so hard and at the same time so soft when you touch it my uncle John has a thing long I heard those cornerboys saying passing the comer of Marrowbone lane my aunt Mary has a thing hairy because it was dark and they knew a girl was passing it didnt make me blush why should it either its only nature and he puts his thing long into my aunt Marys hairy"(U 18.1381-7) -> "și eu am vrut să fi fost bărbat să mai schimb doar așa să-ncerc cu chestia aia a lor care ți se umflă deodată așa tare și în același timp așa moale cînd pui mina pe ea nenea John are o chestie lungă i-am auzit pe golani ăia de la colț cînd dădeam colțul la pasajul Mar-rowbone tanti Mary are o chestie păroasă pentru că se făcuse întuneric și știau că trece o fată nici n-am roșit de ce să fi roșit chiar e doar ceva natural și el își bagă chestia aia lungă în aia păroasă a lui tanti Mary." (*Ulise*, 635)

2. "to make his micky stand for him" (U 18.1510): "așa ca să se scoale mititica aia a lui" (*Ulise*, 638). *Mititica* is a substantive Ivănescu de-

rives from the homonymous adjective in Romanian, meaning “small”, “little”, which adds a quaint twist to what is a perfectly common colloquialism in English.

Thus Ivănescu can be seen to be over-reliant on *așa* (thus, so) and *ceva* ((some)thing) as generic recipes for solving (toning down) salacious cru-xes in translation, although on so many occasions he displays treasures of verbal inventiveness, almost unsuspected in the Romanian language, for translating himself (and Joyce) out of an ideological quandary. Ultimately Ivănescu’s choices of *așa* and *ceva*, probably made deliberately in order to sound almost clumsy in Romanian in such tricky contexts, may have been his way of pointing out to a shrewd readership that something was amiss in the original that could not be verbalized more literally without incurring the censors’ wrath, hollowing out the difficulty through some sort of pyrographic act of translation.

Conversely, and whenever it was possible, Ivănescu may have had in his mind the compensatory idea of somehow recouping the loss or diminution of the original’s vulgar sexual vein, and therefore chose to put in Molly’s mouth words which sound occasionally more colloquial in Romanian than what she actually says in English, as when a perfectly straightforward “I gave her one weeks notice” (*U* 18.70) becomes a stylistically hybrid “i-am pus în vedere să-și ia papucii într-o săptămână” (*Ulise*, 602; lit.: I made it clear to her she’d get the boot in a week): “a pune în vedere,” a phrase which is more elevated than the downright colloquial “a-și lua papucii” (lit.: to take one’s slippers – when one is sacked) and the mixture of formality and informality sits awkwardly with the more homogeneously spoken register of a somewhat uneducated Mrs. Bloom, despite her odd pretension to class and culture. In that respect, the translation usually endeavours to capture how a gabby, loud-mouthed Romanian might spontaneously vent out her feelings to herself in a comparable situation, even if it entails supplying the extra idiomatic touch, as when “a dirty barefaced liar and sloven” is reworked into “o mincinoasă de-asta ordinară și nerușinată și o târîtură” (*Ulise*, 602; lit.: one of those ordinary, barefaced [shameless] liars and a strumpet [*târîtură*; cf. French *trainée*]). The (out)spoken orality of Ivănescu’s Molly Bloom might not be quite as consistent as Joyce’s, yet it eschews the trap of veering into the excessively demotic (cf. Berman 1999, 58).⁷

In “The ‘Experience’ of *Ulysses* in Romanian”, we stressed that “much of the inimitable atmosphere of Joyce’s masterpiece lies in his meticulous recreation of idiosyncratic accents, a feel for the unmistakable rea-

⁷ The appeal to consistency, as opposed to the mismatching of registers, is not to be confused with a call for homogenization versus prose’s native heterology; cf. Berman 1999, 60, 66.

lism and locality of topographical landmarks” (Ionescu, Milesi, 2008, 94), another area where Ivănescu had to make loaded choices, steering his way between what Antoine Berman and Lawrence Venuti call domestication versus foreignization. (see Berman, 1999, Venuti, 1998, 240-44). In “Des Tours de Babel” Derrida emphasized the necessity, yet impossibility – the necessity *as* impossibility (Walter Benjamin’s “task” as giving-up [*Aufgabe*] “of the translator”) – to translate, within which proper names (mainly people’s names but also toponyms) occupy a special place as they cling to a single referent. (Derrida, 1985, 165-207)

However, several critics have argued that Ivănescu is sometimes inconsistent with proper names (see Ionescu, Milesi, 2008, Oțoiu, 2004) and in ‘Penelope’ he chooses to translate some and to leave others in the original. Thus, for instance, when Molly looks down on other women’s family names in “they had the devils queer names there father Vilaplana of Santa Maria that gave me the rosary Rosales y OReilly in the Calle las Siete Revueltas and Pisimbo and Mrs Opisso in Governor street O what a name Id go and drown myself in the first river if I had a name like her” (*U* 18.1464-7), Ivănescu does not translate and leaves the aural perception of Pisimbo and Opisso unexplained to non-speakers of English who would not comprehend Molly’s temptation to drown in a river, had she been graced with such an awful name: “aveau nume ale dracului de nostime acolo părintele Vial plana de Santa Maria care mi-a dat rozariile Rosales y OReilly de pe Calle las Siete Revueltas și Pisimbo și Madam Opisso pe strada Governor O ce nume m-aș duce și m-aș îneca în primul râu care mi-ar ieși în cale cu un nume ca al ei” (*Ulise*, 637). In Romanian Pisimbo and Opisso are too remote from the equivalent of the word “piss”, which Molly alludes to, to generate an equivalent reaction in the reader. Yet the oversight cannot be explained away through fear of censorship, as in a different part of the book, Ivănescu does translate the name of the character variously known as P/pisser Burke or, for short, Pisser, as Pipilică Burke, a great find Romanianizing the offensive Hiberno-English moniker, albeit by a slight euphemism (lit.: Little Piss Burke).

In another sequence Ivănescu translates “bottom” in the family name Ramsbottom, playing with the synonymy *popou/fund* available in Romanian, unlike in English: “M Bloom youre looking blooming Josie used to say after I married him well its better than Breen or Briggs does brig or those awful names with bottom in them Mrs Ramsbottom or some other kind of a bottom (*U* 18.842-5).” (“M Bloom arăți ca o blumică înfloritoare îmi spunea Josie după ce m-am măritat cu el oricum e mai bine decât Breen sau Briggs cu brizbrizuri sau numele astea groaznice care au câte un popo în ele doamna Ramspopo sau cine știe ce alt fund.” (*Ulise*, 622) Ramspopo does keep the funny bottom (*popo*) part but at the cost of an implausible family name in the

target language. Another approach could have been to opt for a “cultural translation” based on a native *cur*: arse, thus making it possible to enlist the attested “Curăvale” in order to match Molly’s preposterous example. In fact, the only instance in which Ivănescu works a native *cur* into his Romanian “Penelope” is also when he skips the middle vowel since Joyce himself had made a reticent Molly truncate the word in “Master François Somebody supposed to be a priest about a child born out of her ear because her bumgut fell out a nice word for any priest to write and her a—e as if any fool wouldnt know what that meant I hate that pretending of all things” (*U* 18.488-91) -> “François nu ştiu mai cum se zicea c-ar fi fost popă cu un copil care I s-a născut din urechea ei pentru că îi căzuse maţul de la popo frumos cuvânt la un preot şi c-rul ei ca şi cum n-ar şti orice prostălău ce-nseamnă nu pot să sufăr când se prefac.” (*Ulise*, 613)

Attempting to marshal the whole spectrum of sexualized situations, discourse and language, even when lexical items are banalized by being encased in nominal referents, required an all-round agility and a range of strategies - of avoidance, rerouting, toning down, and even, as we saw, pointing out through absence - that ultimately testify to the adaptability of the translator working under such ideological duress. And, when judging the overall quality and fidelity of the finished product, it is well worth bearing in mind how such stringent contexts impose procedures of recreation that could potentially curb the translator’s genius, unless – a politicized twist on the Oulipian use of self-imposed constraints to enhance creativity – they indirectly contribute to making him/her discover unsuspected resources...

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