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DEATH AND THE SNOW: TRANSLATING AN INCONSPICUOUS RELATION IN JAMES JOYCE'S "THE DEAD"

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Abstract: The present paper claims that, in James Joyce's short story "The Dead" (*Dubliners*, 1914), the verb "lie" – used both for the lying snow and the lying body of Michael Furey – and the noun "snow" are associated in a way that strengthen the recurring presence of death in the narrative. The aim of this paper is both to show how that association works for the creation of a sense of unity in the narrative and to discuss the translations of the pair lie-snow by the Brazilian Joyce translator Caetano Galindo (2013 and 2018).
Keywords: James Joyce; *Dubliners*; Literary Translation

A MORTE E A NEVE: A TRADUÇÃO DE UMA RELAÇÃO INCONSPÍCUA EM "OS MORTOS", DE JAMES JOYCE

Resumo: O presente artigo argumenta que, no conto de James Joyce "Os mortos" (*Dublinenses*, 1914), o verbo *lie* (jazer) – ao se referir tanto à neve quanto ao corpo de Michael Fury – e o substantivo *snow* (neve) se associam de forma que reforçam a constante presença da morte na narrativa. O objetivo deste artigo é demonstrar como essa associação opera em prol da criação de um sentido de unidade na narrativa e discutir as traduções do par *lie-snow* pelo tradutor brasileiro Caetano Galindo.
Palavras-chave: James Joyce; *Dublinenses*; tradução literária

O, the rain falls on my heavy locks
And the dew wets my skin,
My babe lies cold …

(From *The Lass of Aughrim*,
quoted by Joyce ((a) 210) in "The Dead")

It is unarguable that James Joyce's *Dubliners* (1914) constitutes a case of unity rather than a collection of short stories whose similarities in form and theme are either nonexistent or only revealed by painstaking scholarly reading. In 1905, while Joyce was still fighting for the publication of *Dubliners*, Filson Young, who worked for Grant Richard's publishing house as a reader, approved the manuscript sent by Joyce after having discerned in them, among other qualities, "an order and symmetrical connection between the stories making them one book" (*Apud* Magalaner and Kain 65). Although the book was not published until 1914, Young's early apprehension of the connection between the twelve stories initially submitted proved correct. Brewster Ghiselin's classic "The Unity of *Dubliners*" (1968) would show how Joyce's fifteen published short stories relate to one another; and Seamus Deane (21) would refer to the "monotonous grammar" of these narratives and the abundance of "twilit, half-lit, street-lit, candle-lit, gas-lit, firelit settings" as just some of the elements that reveal the well-knit texture of the work.

The sense of total apprehension, of wholeness, of relation between parts inhabited Joyce's thoughts about writing as early as in 1903-1904, when his brief and fragmented aesthetic ideas were written down in what came to be known as "Paris Notebook" and "Pola Notebook", forming part of the attempt to create his "own aesthetic", according to Mason and Ellmann, the first editors of Joyce's critical writings (Joyce, (b) 141). "Rhythm seems to be the first or formal relation of part to part in any whole or of a whole to its part and parts, or of any part to the whole of which it is a part.… Parts constitute a whole as far as they have a common end" Joyce ((b) 145) wrote in his "Paris Notebook".

It is true that the short narratives of *Dubliners* form a whole and fit perfectly under the one-word title. However, each of them is also a finished work in its own right. So, the reader had better welcome that tension. Although the short stories interconnect by means of grammar, moods, settings, characters etc., their qualities as individual works cannot be obviated. We assert that as important as the elements linking the individual stories in the book are the features that grant each story its own unity.

The unfinished sentences in "The Sisters", the silence of the protagonist in "Eveline", the velocity in "After the Race", the disdain for women in "Two Gallants", the shrewdness of the mother (and perhaps the daughter as well) that traps Bob in "The Boarding House", the failure of Maria's methodical actions in "Clay", the colloquial speech in "Ivy Day in the Committee Room", and the business-oriented mind of Mrs. Kearney in "A Mother" are some characteristics that serve as internal cohesion factors for each of the mentioned stories. But they are, so to say, easily noticeable.

It is our aim in this paper to approach one less conspicuous relation between two elements in the last short story of *Dubliners*, "The Dead", which together convey cohesion to the narrative and trigger a thought of death, central to the narrative from the title to the last phrase, both actually the same. We refer to the association between the verb "lie" and the noun "snow". For this essay, the two translations by Caetano Galindo (2013, 2018) are going to make our cases. The 2013 version was published in pocket format with a translation of "Araby" and the final episode of *Ulysses* (1922). It was revised and published in Galindo's full translation in 2018.

"The Dead" is unmatched by any of the other *Dubliners* stories in its artistry. The transcendental beauty of the last paragraph, the thoroughly painted setting of the scene in the hotel room, the consuming doubts of Gabriel about his supper speech, the filmic party at the Misses Morkans' house at Usher's Island introduce an aesthetic dimension absent from the previous fourteen stories. Reading *Dubliners*, one has the impression that Joyce decided to *take his time* as he wrote "The Dead". According to David Daiches

(27), "The Dead" differentiates from the other stories because in this Joyce replaced "level objectivity" for "lyrical quality". The critic also remarks that it "was added later, at a time when Joyce was becoming increasingly preoccupied with the problem of aesthetics". On his turn, Deane (33-34) affirms that it is with "The Dead" that Joyce becomes a "characteristically modernist writer" by "surrender[ing] [political] critique for aesthetics". The critic also highlights the use that Joyce made of repetition in *Dubliners*: from granting it a "critical and disturbing function" in all the stories until "Grace" to a universalizing and aestheticizing application of it in the last story, where the political is aestheticized and lyricism prevails (Deane 35-36).

When dealing with a text as such, the reader must be very attentive to nuances – even the possibly unintended ones – still more if this reader is translating it.

In "The Dead", the couple Gabriel and Gretta Conroy go to the Misses Morkans' annual party, where, during supper, Gabriel is expected to deliver a speech. His superciliousness is put to test a few times, until he is alone with Gretta in the Gresham Hotel, in the end of the story, and learns that, years ago, a certain Michael Furey had died for his wife, a memory which had just been brought to her by the song *The Lass of Aughrim*, sung a little before they left the Misses Morkans' (Gabriel's aunts') house.

The irony found in passages such as "but they forget that my wife here takes three mortal hours to dress herself" (177)[1], and "Close the door, somebody. Mrs. Malins will get her death of cold" (206) anticipates the revelation of the fact that Gretta's young beau did "get his death in the rain" (221). By resorting to the image of death, Joyce was investing the story with irony and cohesion. However, despite its effectiveness, this kind of irony is obvious. In the present essay, we contend that such clear evocation of death may be covering a more poetic, piercing, subterranean form of irony.

[1] References to the short story in English are made by page number only; references to Galindo's translations follow the pattern author/year/page.

"Lie" (in the forms "lies", "lay" and "lying") appears seven times associtaed with the noun "snow". These are the occurrences, with our italics and square brackets:

a. A light fringe of *snow lay* like a cape on the shoulders of his overcoat (177).
b. The *snow* would be *lying* on the branches of the trees and forming a bright cap on the top of the Wellington Monument (192).
c. The air was pure there. In the distance *lay* the park where the trees were weighted with *snow* (202).
d. It was slushy underfoot; and only streaks and patches of *snow lay* on the roofs, on the parapets of the quay and on the area railings (212-213).
e. Gabriel pointed to the statue, on which *lay* patches of *snow* (214).
f. It [the *snow*] was falling, too, upon every part of the lonely churchyard on the hill where Michael Furey *lay* buried. It *lay* thickly drifted on the crooked crosses and headstones, on the spears of the little gate, on the barren thorns (223-224).

Unlike what happens in the other references to death, the one materialized in the pair lie-snow is nearly inconspicuous, having manifested itself to the author of this essay in the last paragraph of "The Dead", where the unmissable repetition of "lay" appears: "where Michael Furey *lay* buried. It [the snow] *lay* thickly" (223; *our italics*). This repetition shows that both the snow and the dead body of Michael Furey *lie* somewhere. From that, it was only a matter of realizing that the image of the snow lying in several parts was recurrent in Joyce's last short story.

We propose the homogeneous (or quasi-homogeneous) rendition of the verb "lie" in Portuguese as a means to maintain the relation. In Portuguese, *jazer* would fit for the dead body of Michael Furey but would sound too contrived for the snow, thus practically unearthing for the readers what in the original lives unnoticeable.

We suggest the use of *repousar*, maybe more poetic than the English "lie", but definetely less likely to foreground the intention behind the choice. Here follow our suggestions of translations for the above excerpts with our italics and square brackets:

a. Uma leve franja de *neve repousava* como capa sobre a ombreira de seu sobretudo.
b. A *neve* estaria *repousando* nos galhos das árvores e formando uma brilhosa capa no topo do Monumento a Wellington.
c. O ar era puro lá. À distância *repousava* o parque onde as árvores suportavam o peso da *neve*.
d. Estava lamacento sob os pés; e apenas rastros e pequeninos montes de *neve repousavam* nos telhados, nos parapeitos do cais e nos gradis das casas.
e. Gabriel apontou para a estátua, na qual *repousavam* pequeninos montes de *neve*.
f. Caía [a *neve*], também, sobre toda parte do solitário cemitério da colina onde Michael Furey *repousava* enterrado. *Repousava* espessa acumulada nas cruzes tortas e nas lápides, nas pontas do pequeno portão, nos espinhos nus.

We tried to keep the relation as inconspicuous as possible, for it is the task of the literary translator to attempt to supply, in the first place, a text to be interpreted by the reader and not, primarily, their interpretation. Yes, indeed translations are interpretations – just as originals are interpretations of something only less palpable; just as *Dubliners* encompasses an interpretation of Dublin only artistically transformormed –, but this is so often passively accepted that one usually forgets that translations are not only *outcomes* of interpretations; they are also texts *written* by translators to *be interpreted*.

Let us examine Galindo's treatment of the pair lie-snow. Below are his translations, with our italics and square brackets:

a. Uma frágil franja de *neve pousava* como capa nos ombros de seu sobretudo (Joyce, (c) 9; (d) 206).

b. A *neve* estaria *acumulada* nos ramos das árvores e formaria um claro capuz sobre o monumento de Wellington (Joyce (c) 24). A *neve* estaria *pousada* nos ramos das árvores e formaria um claro capuz sobre o monumento de Wellington (Joyce (d) 223).
c. O ar lá era puro. À distância *ficava* o parque, onde as árvores restavam pesadas de neve (Joyce, (c) 35; (d) 234).
d. O chão estava empapado, e apenas faixas e trechos de *neve restavam* nos tetos, nos parapeitos do cais e nas grades das casas (Joyce, (c) 46). O chão estava empapado, e apenas faixas e trechos de neve *repousavam* nos tetos, nos parapeitos do cais e nas grades das casas (Joyce (d) 246).
e. Gabriel apontou para a estátua, em que repousavam montes de neve (Joyce, (c) 48; (d) 248).
f. Caía [a *neve*], também, sobre todo o solitário cemitério da colina em que enterrado Michael Furey *repousava*. Espessa *pousava* deposta em rajadas nas cruzes contorcidas e nas lápides, nas pontas do estreito portão, nos espinheiros nus (Joyce, (c) 57-58; (d) 257).

In a, e and f, Galindo, aware of the repetition of "lie", used different forms of the Portuguese verbs *pousar* and *repousar* both in his translation and retranslation. In b and d, the translator benefited from the retranslation opportunity to replace *acumulada* for *pousada* and *restavam* for *repousavam* – forms of *pousar* and *repousar* respectively, thus stressing the repetition and keeping the lie-snow relation. Only in c did Galindo use a verb – *ficava* – that deviates from the close sounds of *pousar* and *repousar*.

Gabriel longs for the snowy landscape outdoors when he is looking through the window in the Misses Morkans' house. He "*tapped* the cold *pane* of the window" (192; *our italics*) as if silently calling the snow that would eventually appear in the "few light *taps* upon the *pane*" (223; *our italics*) in the last paragraph. It is not irrelevant that "tapped" and "tap" are used in the two moments Gabriel directs his eyes to a window. In contrast, the

snow that for Gabriel at first represented pleasure and freedom from the constraints of a social event, in the end conveys a though of death – which can, too, be a kind of freedom.

"The Dead" is a narrative roughly divided in two parts: the party and all that happens outside the house of the two hostesses. The image of the snow lying on different places is insistently present in both, and Gabriel is fully aware of it. When Lily asked him if it was snowing, he answered, "I think we're in for a night of it" (177). The snow had been lying on his own overcoat. Yet Gabriel, the intellectual, the person above all others, above the Irish, was unable to read the fact beyond literality. But, in the end, the snow was "general all over Ireland" (223), over Gabriel as much as over Michael Furey, putting both, figuratively, at the same footing. It lies everywhere, on the roofs, on the branches, on the monuments. It accompanies Gabriel's journey through the night and is even desired. The snow, at first a mere natural phenomenon of a Dublin night, ascends to become a metaphor.

In one occasion the use of "lie" by Joyce, although not directly associated with the presence of the snow in the narrative, integrates the chain of sense formed by the other seven occurrences already mentioned. When Gabriel, his wife sleeping, observes some objects in the hotel room, a pair of boots among them, the following description takes place: "One boot stood upright, its limp upper fallen down: the fellow of it *lay* upon its side" (222; *our italics*), which can be translated as "Uma bota estava de pé, com o cano mole caído: sua companheira *jazia* a seu lado". It can be noted that by an act of anthropomorfization, the boots are pictured as two fellows, one standing up, the other lying on its side. Given that in this case there is not a clear association with the snow, the Portuguese verb *jazer*, which unmistakably evokes death, is suitable. But *repousar* would have been a good choice as well. Galindo does not use either but prefers "seu par *se estendia* de lado" (Joyce (c) 56; (d) 256; *our italics*), using the verb *estender(-se)*. Of course, the word "fellow" may be used in phrases such as "fellow glove" or "fellow shoe", but, in "The Dead", together

with "lie", it becomes another instance of irony by Joyce, who denaturalizes the use of that noun.

Fritz Senn (108 (b)) identified in Joyce some "traits [that] begin low-key, almost unnoticed, and then increase, become magnified and varied, diverted or changed, grow out of proportion". He called them "provections". The phenomenon of provection would come to light when the writer is carried away: for example, it happened, according to Senn (37 (a)), when Joyce added "The Dead" to *Dubliners*, "chang[ing] scope, dimension, reverberation" of the collection. In the present case, the pair lie-snow appears six times – once accompanied by a nearly blatant repetition – and the verb "lie" is used with the noun "fellow" – which primarily applies to people – in order to render a pair of boots in human form ("the fellow of it lay). We are facing a case of provection.

These repetitions, either unnoticed or possibly taken by some translators as an exaggeration to be corrected or as a monotony to be avoided, become loud and visible in the short story. Have most of the translators deliberately avoided the repetition for aesthetic constrains of the translating language? We are being speculative, of course. But it is considered bad writing in Portuguese to repeat the same word where synonims can be applied, especially in the same paragraph, let alone with only two words separating the first and the second occurrence. But in Joyce there is a clear aesthetic purpose, which Galindo's retranslation captures.

Both translations by Galindo exemplify how a subtlety in Joyce's writing can inform the work of a translator. Specifically, the differences between the translation of 2013 and the retranslation of 2018 seems to portray a development of the comprehension of the source text by the translator, which resulted in the fine adjustment observed above (cases b and d).

Joyce scholar Jolanta Wawrycka (82) "advocate[s] scholarly, *philological* attention to Joyce's lexical layer whose structures (repetitions, alliterations, rhythm) inform the semantic layer, which in turn informs all the remaining dimensions of the text: aesthetic, symbolic, historical, political, and so on". The critic is aware that

"whereas no translation can render all of those layers adequately, to mistreat (change, eliminate) Joyce's text on the *lexical* level is to fail famously on all the remaining levels" (82). The literal translation trend – mainly associated with Antoine Berman – would put it in terms of reaching the flesh of the words, as Paul Ricoeur explains ((b) 38):

> Now the *meaning* is extracted from the unity it shares with the flesh of words, that flesh which we call the 'letter'. Translators gladly removed it, so as not to be accused of 'literal translation'; translating literally, is that not translating word for word? What shame! What disgrace! Now excellent translators, modelled on Holderlin, on Paul Celan and, in the biblical domain, on Meschonnic, fought a campaign against the *isolated meaning*, the meaning without the letter, contrary to the letter. They gave up the comfortable shelter of the *equivalence of meaning*, and ventured into hazardous areas where there would be some talk of tone, of savour, of rhythm, of spacing, of silence between the words, of metrics and of rhyme[2].

The notion according to which the translated language (with its syntax, sounds, rhythm etc.) must surrender to what is presumably acceptable in the translating language results in what Antoine Berman (5) called "*déffaillance*" (weakness; flaw), or, in other words, fear to be literal. But such repetitions are part of Joyce's

[2] Or le *sens* est arraché à son unité avec la chair des mots, cette chair qui s'appelle la « lettre ». Les traducteurs s'en sont débarrassés joyeusement, pour ne pas être accusés de « traduction littérale » ; traduire littéralement, n'est-ce pas traduire mot à mot ? Quelle honte ! Quelle disgrâce ! Or d'excellents traducteurs, sur le modèle de Hölderlin, de Paul Celan et, dans le domaine biblique, de Meschonnic, ont fait campagne contre le *sens seul*, le sens sans la lettre, contre la lettre. Ils quittaient l'abri confortable de *l'équivalence du sens*, et se risquaient dans des régions dangereuses où il serait question de sonorité, de saveur, de rythme, d'espacement, de silence entre les mots, de métrique et de rime (Ricoeur, (a) 67-68).

mot juste, which in *Dubliners* is associated with what Joyce called "scrupulous meanness" in a well-known letter to the editor Grant Richards on 5 May 1905. As Katie Wales (38) explains, "the phrase suggests [among other things] Joyce's concern to choose his language with care, and also with restraint ('meanness' = 'miserliness'): not for these stories the florid or exuberant style (hence a 'middle' or 'mean' style)". For Joyce, the scrupulously mean writer of "The Dead", the shape, or rather, the shaping of words mattered more and more, and such way of writing offers a lot for translators to explore.

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