

Translating Joyce

A Basque Perspective

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This article addresses major issues involved in translating the work of James Joyce, with particular reference to his first major work, the short story collection *Dubliners*¹ and the specific response from the Basque language translation to the challenges involved. Comparisons are also made with translations from other Peninsular languages and the merits of the Basque translation are properly evaluated in an effort to situate *Dublindarrak* in the canon of contemporary Basque letters.

It was Harry Levin who first stated, with reference to Joyce, that the period of probation facing a writer when, ceasing to be a contemporary, he becomes a classic, is a long and hazardous one². A probation that contemplates such rigour is, of course, a cross more lightly borne with the aid of a number of independent factors – evidence of genius on the writer’s own part, enthusiastic reception on the part of his original readership, and recognition of his works’ merits on the part of the critics – each of these factors alone, or some powerful combination of all three.

Our own conviction is that there is a fourth factor, and one of measurable significance in the transition from contemporary to classic – the relevance of translation. In this respect, the overall standing of Joyce’s work, a cause powerfully driven by decisive contributions from the first three factors listed above, has also been admirably served by the fourth. These contributions from translation can be graphically expressed, first of all, in numerical terms alone, and they show that Joyce’s cause, by any standards, has been remarkably well served by his transla-

1. Quotations from the English-language edition are taken from *Dubliners*, Scholes, R., and A. Walton Litz (eds.), (1969), The Viking Press, New York, hereinafter *D*.

2. Levin, H. (ed.), (1946), *A James Joyce Reader*, The Viking Press, New York, Editor’s Preface, p. 1.

tors. One recently published count³ records translations of all or parts of Joyce's works into at least 40 different languages, with *Dubliners* having been translated into a total of thirty-seven, including *euskera*⁴, *Ulysses* into thirty-two, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* into thirty-one, including *euskera*⁵, *Exiles* into fourteen, and even the supposedly 'untranslatable' *Finnegans Wake* translated in its entirety into French, German, Japanese and Dutch, with significant fragments translated into at least ten further languages. For the purposes of the present article, we have selected Irene Aldasoro's award-winning⁶ translation into *euskera* of *Dubliners* to illustrate the challenges facing the translator of Joyce's texts and, hopefully, to mark out important guidelines in translation *praxis* when addressing the author's later works.

The numbers of published translations and the languages into which they have been translated reveal, however, only one side of the question of worldwide translation response to Joyce. Numbers alone are no guarantee of quality, for an approach to Joyce via translation, often on the part of professional writers themselves whose sympathy, admiration, or mere curiosity concerning his work are first engaged, remains a linguistic and intellectual challenge with few parallels in the field of literary translation. Yet the challenge has been faced and, to illustrate from one particular perspective, that of the languages of Spain (Castilian, Catalan, Galician and Basque), it has been responded to with an imagination that reflects particular credit on the engagement of the translators involved, an engagement that now spans a period of just over 80 years, begun in 1926 with Dámaso Alonso's sensitive and ground-breaking translation into Spanish of *A Portrait of the Artist*⁷, and given fresh impetus in the more recent Peninsular geographical and linguistic contexts with Francisco García Tortosa's accomplished new Spanish translation of *Ulysses*⁸.

Expressed in its most general form, and with particular, though by no means exclusive, application to translating *Ulysses*, the difficulty for the translator approaching the works of Joyce may aptly be summarised as follows:

‘... once we acknowledge that a translation cannot, in the nature of language, be all things to all readers (as *Ulysses* seems to be), we may come to realize that we do not know what can reasonably be expected of a translation. What are its prime requirements? If principles like correctness, accuracy, internal consistency, preservation of motifs, correspondences, overtones, symbolic superstructures,

3. O'Neill, P. (2005), *Polyglot Joyce: Fictions of Translation*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, p. 26.

4. *Dublindarrak* (translation by Irene Aldasoro), (1999), Alberdania, Irun, the translation that forms the object of the present work.

5. *Artistaren Gaztetako Portreta* (translation by Irene Aldasoro), (1992), Ibaizabal, Amorebieta.

6. *Dublindarrak* was awarded the 'Euskadi' Literary Prize in 2000 for the best literary translation of the year in the Basque language. In the words of the jury: '... Irene Aldasoro ha traducido con gran precisión (*zehaztasuna*) el mundo complejo y la escritura milimétrica de Joyce, poniendo especial interés en todos los matices y detalles de la obra original'.

7. This first appeared, translated under the pseudonym, Alfonso Donado, (1926), as *El artista adolescente (retrato)*, Biblioteca Nueva, Madrid.

8. García Tortosa, F. and M^a Teresa Venegas, (1999), *Ulises*, Ediciones Cátedra, Letras Universales, Madrid.

tone, music, and many others are at variance, as they undoubtedly are, what are the preferences? The translator is really left to fend for himself as best he can ...

Translation, too, is the art of the possible, and the perpetual squint at the original cannot do justice to its full achievement. The only facts it brings out are the deficiencies'.⁹

It may well be that Joyce presents particularly significant challenges to the translator on a series of fronts that are less demanding when translating other authors, yet, in the translator's defence, it must be recognised that with reference to Joyce in general, and *Ulysses* in particular:

'Translators not being omniscient, errors ... of this kind are hard to avoid. In fact the translator is in a much worse position than critics or commentators are. They can afford to be highly selective and parade their scraps of insight and erudition with an air of being at home equally well in any place of the book – but the translator cannot shirk a single issue'.¹⁰

Translators of other authors, of course, face some, or all, of these same problems, but usually not in the extreme forms or with the density confronting translators of Joyce – and this is intriguingly true of the *earlier* Joyce. Right from the first page of *The Sisters* in *Dubliners*, with its opaque, if homely, reference to distilling processes via *faints and worms* (*D:10*), we soon discover that we have already entered a world that, on the richly evocative levels of its socio-cultural referents, its authorial stance of detached irony, and its style of what may best be termed quasi-journalistic *reportage* – in the author's own words on the collection as a whole, expressed in a letter to the publisher, Grant Richards: *I have written it, for the most part, in a style of scrupulous meanness*¹¹ – presents a challenge of the first order to translator awareness and ingenuity, that of responding adequately to the multi-layered suasions of Joyce's own language without resorting to over-writing, explication or elision. Expressed in O'Neill's apt approach to negotiating the differences, explicit and implicit, in translating ('carrying across') any literary text:

'The central issue facing any translator and any attempted translation is therefore the necessity to adopt a series of strategies for negotiating the difference between one language and another, one culture and another, one text and another, while still reproducing the 'same' text. Translation, in other words, consists of a series of negotiations between attempted sameness and necessary difference'.¹²

The response on the part of translators in the geographical and multi-lingual context of the Iberian Peninsula is of particular relevance to the above, for a variety of reasons that bear most

9. Senn, F. (1984), *Joyce's Dislocations: Essays on Reading as Translation*, John Paul Riquelme (ed.), Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore MD, p. 20. In the debate that follows, the authors recognise their profound debt to Fritz Senn's pioneering researches into the translated Joyce as an intellectual and linguistic challenge in its own right.

10. Senn, (1977), 'Seven against *Ulysses*', *James Joyce Quarterly*, University of Tulsa, Tulsa OK, Vol. 4, p. 176.

11. Ellmann, R. (ed.), (1975), *Selected Letters of James Joyce*, Faber and Faber, London, p. 83.

12. O'Neill, *op. cit.*, p.98.

interesting scrutiny in the parallels that they establish between the tensions already perceptible, even in Joyce's earliest work, between the English and Irish languages, and the not dissimilar tensions that have plagued the linguistic and cultural relations between the centralist hegemony of the Castilian language in Spain and the often antagonistic cultural agendas of Spain's peripheral language communities, such as Catalonia, Galicia and the Basque Country, where the political, cultural and linguistic 'imperialism' perceived to emanate from the geographical centre has for centuries been actively resented and resisted.

Joyce, like all educated writers in search of the widest possible readership, wrote his narratives in Standard English and followed the novel tradition, in his early works at least (*Dubliners* and *Portrait of the Artist*), in representing his characters' thoughts and speech, as well as actions, mainly in Standard English. Nevertheless, his Irish origins are revealed, even in the neutral voice of the narrator, by occasional Anglo-Irish features, even if the use of these forms in his work at large is not uniform – it is more prominent, for example, in *Ulysses* and the *Wake* than in *Dubliners* or *A Portrait*, and the fact that it is completely absent from *Chamber Music*, yet massively employed in the *Wake*, gives some idea of the extent to which Joyce's interest in the dialect, and use of it, increased as he matured and his style evolved.

Even in such an early text as *Dubliners*, however, Joyce consciously evokes the tensions between the English and Irish languages by a regular and pointed use of Anglo-Irish lexical and grammatical features. In fact, only three of the fifteen stories in the collection – *Eveline*, *After the Race* and *A Painful Case* – do not record overt illustrations of dialectal usage. While the rendering into such languages as Castilian, Catalan, Galician and Basque of non-standard grammatical forms of English with an Irish substrate – 1) the free *and* construction operating as a pronominal relative clause, 2) omission of the relative pronoun in the nominative, 3) the *do/does be* construction for habitual present tense, or 4) un-introduced dependent questions, alongside the massive use of Dublin slang – is a challenge practically impossible to meet, it is to be lamented that any translation loss thereby perceived removes from the text the vividness of Joyce's extraordinary ear for bantering dialogue, as well as the important function such dialogue fulfils of discriminating between the characters on Dublin's never stable social ladder.

The striving after idiomatic equivalence at any cost, however, cannot be too boldly questioned. For what proves in *Dublindarrak*, for instance, to be perhaps the most noticeable area of translation loss¹³, that of the racy popular idiom of Dublin's streets, Fernando and Flavell properly warn us against the almost desperate search for colloquial equivalence and almost at

13. In a personal communication to the authors, Irene Aldasoro feels that one of the successes of her translation of *Dubliners* is that she achieved a more standardised, 'normal' level of Basque for the narration proper and a 'more colloquial level' of Basque for the collection's dialogues. We subscribe to both premises, yet feel that a dimension in the original has been lost, given Joyce's extraordinary 'ear' for the cut and thrust of a dialogue coloured throughout by the Dublin popular idiom.

any cost to the impact of the original text: ‘... the strong unconscious urge in most translators to search hard for an idiom in the receptor language, however inappropriate it may be’¹⁴

Illustrative of this striving after the almost impossible colloquial effect are Pat Keegan’s ribald aside on Dublin’s new Lord Mayor in *Ivy Day in the Committee Room: He’d live on the smell of an oil rag* (D:128) - “Belea egondako hesola aski luke horrek bizitzeko” - Old Jack’s lament over his prodigal son in the same story: *Sure, amn’t I never done at the drunken bowsy ever since he left school?* (D:120) - “Jakina, eta zertan ari naiz, bada, bestela, mozkor tzar horrekin eskolatik irten zenetik?” - or *Ivy Day*’s rich catalogue of Dublin’s political ‘deviants’ generally as: *tinkers* (D:121) - “eltze-konpontzaile” - *shoeboy* (D:123) - “Zapata-garbitzaile” - *shoneens* (D:121) - “kokots-larri” and *hunker-sliding* (D:121) - “ipur-zurikeriarik gabekoa”, where several well-rendered colloquialisms such as “zurtz utziko” for *leave us in the lurch* (D:121), “katu-larruarekin” for *the spondulics* (D:122), or “Gazteluaren saripekoak” for *Castle hacks* (D:125) are somewhat put into perspective by comparison with other, rather bland, alternatives. Examples such as these contribute, in our view, to making the devastating impact of the protagonists’ censure of Dublin political graft - in a story, exceptional in *Dubliners* for being almost entirely composed of dialogue and the one, significantly, closest to its author’s own heart - less censorious to an appreciable degree.

If the reputation of few of the stories is effectively enhanced in the competing Spanish translations of *Dubliners*¹⁵, this may be due less to an inadequate rendering of the popular and Anglo-Irish substrates than to a flawed response to the suasions of Joyce’s rhetorical purposes behind the collection as a whole. Written in a flat, quasi-journalistic style of *reportage* that - it must be said immediately in their defence - proves the bane of translators universally, and one which responds extraordinarily well to the author’s stated intentions of drafting his text ‘in a style of scrupulous meanness’, *Dubliners* issues a challenge to translator ingenuity for “underwriting”, and in particular to a recognition of Joyce’s rhetorical purposes in the use of devices such as ‘repetitio’, ‘dispositio’, ‘imitatio’ and verbal etymologies.

Humour aside, there is a great deal of truth in Hugh Kenner’s seeing Joyce as literature’s ‘Lone Arranger’¹⁶, for it is the author’s deliberate choice, placement and repetition of lexical elements in *Dubliners* that contribute most markedly to its consciously contrived sense of ‘flatness’, one that makes no recourse as yet to the metaphorical ‘extravagance’ present in Joyce’s later works. Indeed, a translation approach to an early work like *Dubliners* that is coloured by familiarity with the later works will find it hard to resist the temptation to introduce at least

14. Fernando, C. and R. Flavell, (1981), ‘On Idiom: Critical Views and Perspectives’, in *Exeter Linguistic Studies*, University of Exeter, 5, p.85.

15. a) Abelló, I. (1942), *Gente de Dublín*, Editorial Tartessos, Barcelona, b) Muslera, O. (1961), *Gente de Dublín*, Compañía General Fabril Editora, Buenos Aires, c) Cabrera Infante, G. (1972), *Dublinese*, Editorial Lumen, Barcelona, d) Chamorro, E. (1993), *Dublinese*, Ediciones Cátedra, Letras Universales, Madrid.

16. Kenner’s delicious pun plays on the verbal association with ‘The Lone Ranger’, the title of a popular Western radio and television serial of the 1950s.

some ‘over-writing’ of the original. While several of the stories in *Dubliners* are clearly, as yet, apprentice pieces, most are emphatically works of genius in miniature, and would stand on their own as testimony to Joyce’s art without the confirmation from the later works. Yet there is ample evidence, particularly on the part of the Spanish-language translations of *Dubliners*, that Joyce’s careful use of repetition and placement are discarded in favour of lexical experimentation and a most marked recourse to synonym. It is to Irene Aldasoro’s credit, therefore, that she clearly recognises Joyce’s rhetorical insistence on the subtle ‘positioning’ and frequent repetition of key lexical elements, without some awareness of which a translation may fall into the trap of ‘over-writing’ of the original text, or failing to deliver on the basis of Joyce’s stated principle of stylistic ‘averageness’¹⁷.

Peninsular translation responses to the noticeably crepuscular atmosphere pervading many of the stories may serve as a good illustration. In the introduction to *Araby*, for example, Joyce makes much use of repetition for stylistic effect, in an attempt to create a sombre, almost alienating, atmosphere. The foregrounding of the theme of darkness and light in the collection as a whole is conveyed via the repeated use of *dusk*, *sombre*, *dark*, *shadow*, *gloomy* and *darkness* (D:31-35), thereby reinforcing the utter drabness of the setting. This starkly oppressive atmosphere is greatly diluted by Joyce’s translators in Spanish. We may observe Cabrera-Infante’s changing of *shadow* to *hiding-place* (Spanish *escondite*), Chamorro’s altering *shadow* to *penumbra*, and Abelló’s various renderings of *shadow* by elliptical alternatives and synonym. Joaquim Mallafrè in Catalan¹⁸ properly keeps close to Joyce’s lexis throughout, but makes recourse to omissions perhaps in an attempt to alleviate the ‘intrusive’ weight of Joyce’s repetition, and the Galician translation¹⁹ also fails to respect Joyce’s triadic *shadow* motif by introducing synonym throughout. It is to Irene Aldasoro’s credit in the Basque translation of *Araby* that she recognises the need to reproduce Joyce’s insistence on the telling uses of one and the same lexical element, rather than cast about for synonyms. Thus, we have Joyce’s *dark muddy lanes* (D:30) translated as “bidexka ilun lokaztuetatik”, *the dark, dripping gardens* (D:30) as “baratze ilun bustietako”, or *we hid in the shadow ... we watched her from our shadow ... and we left our shadow* (D:30) rendered, successively, as “ilunpetan ezkututzen ginen”, ... “begira egoten gintzaizkion ilunpetatik”, ... and “ilunpetatik irten”.

In any translator’s defence, it should be said immediately that a limited perception of original author intent is perhaps the most frequent shortcoming of the translated text, but it is understandably so – translators, however much they should be, are not necessarily such close readers of discourse as, say, Joyce critics. They may not always be sensitive enough, either, or else they may simply not be able to afford the time to cross-reference everything the way the

17. In a personal communication to the authors, and in response to our question as to whether she consciously exploited Joyce’s use of repetition, she states: ‘Sí, es algo que se hace muy evidente. ¿Cómo lo afronté? Pues, manteniendo la repetición, cuando es posible’.

18. Mallafrè, J. (1989), *Dublinesos*, Edhasa, Clàssics Moderns, Barcelona.

19. Ramonde, D., Rafael Ferradáns and Xela Arias, (1990), *Dublinesos*, Edicións Xerais de Galicia, Vigo.

informed critics do so exhaustively. They ought to do, for the demands Joyce made of his readership were pitched high, of course, but reality, publishers' deadlines and the survival principle have a way of interfering. If any stated translation principle should be applied here in the face of Joyce's conscious rhetorical motivations, Peter Newmark may well be given the last word: 'Any word, whether key-word or *leitmotif* repeated in the source language text, should be repeated, never replaced by a synonym, in the translation.'²⁰

The Spanish-language translations, in this particular case, by 'diluting' the original, serve as evidence in support of our view that translations are another reading of the original as well as serving as a running commentary on it, and that by manipulating it by over-writing, they are actually enhancing the rhetorical value of the original by drawing it more obtrusively into the forefront of the reader's attention. This deliberate pointing to lexical repetition and deliberate positioning of the telling adjective, we are pleased to report in the case of the Basque-language translation, is noticeable already in such an early story as *Araby*.

Joyce does not arrange merely for atmospherics, of course, as in the introductions to *Araby* or *Two Gallants*, or the justly celebrated coda to *The Dead*. As an instance of his teasing way with grammar and lexis in combination, take his repeated and devastating use of the simple nominative *the man*, in his description of Farrington, the hapless scrivener in *Counterparts*. With a total of 29 references to Farrington in the first and third *tableaux* of the story as *the man*, thus underscoring his depersonalised status both in the office and at home, it is unlikely that even the most unwary translator could miss the point – yet the Muslera Spanish translation modulates up to one quarter of these references into nominal or ellipted variants such as *un individuo*, *el otro*, *el empleado* or even pronominal *lo*, thus looking innocently enough for equivalent effect, but mistaking the occasion when none is called for, and the Abelló Spanish translation actually succeeds in repeating Joyce's 29 references only 6 times and actually omits another 6, further compounding his mutilation of the original by mistakenly translating the reference to Farrington as *the consignor* in Kelly's pawn shop as *el cajero* (= the cashier) (D:93), the reader being left to reflect on the absurdity of Farrington apparently trying to pawn his watch back to himself. In the Basque translation, 'Elkarren Kideak', Aldasoro very pointedly respects all 23 references in the first *tableau* and all 6 in the third, further illustration of her close reading of the original and clear respect for Joyce's poetics.

With Farrington finally elevated to 'proper name' status in the second of the story's three *tableaux*, added emphasis is provided by Joyce now switching the 'encoded' references and now naming Farrington's 'cronies' as both *the boys* and, ironically, *the men*. This reversal of 'roles' is dramatically missed by Abelló translating the *the boys* variously as *los amigos*, pronominal *ellos*, and later as *los muchachos*, and *the men* as *los amigos*, *los hombres* and ellipted *todos*, the only *man* actually mentioned in the whole central section – the *curate* (= barman) (D:96) who witnesses the trial of strength between Farrington and Weathers – also being consigned to nominal

20. Newmark, P., (1997), 'Paragraphs on Translation – 48', *The Linguist*, Vol. 36, N° 2.

oblivion via another pronominal form. Aldasoro, by contrast, underscores her ability to read and translate Joyce's insistence on repetition for contrast by translating *the boys* throughout as "mutilak" and *the men* as "gizonak".

Constraints of space forbid further detailed analysis of the challenges issued by Joyce's text and the lukewarm responses on the part of his Spanish translators to its rhetorical dimension. I shall, however, point to specific challenges not adequately addressed in other translations, yet often addressed very professionally in *euskera*, which act as signposts to Joyce's subtle poetics and enhance the reputation of the writing in his earliest great text. Among these textual challenges we may point to:

- 1) The description of the street scene in the introduction to *Two Gallants*, almost unique in the collection for its use of a whole layer of concentrated rhetorical figures. In *Dublindarrak*, Joyce's *grey warm evening* (D:49) – "arrats gris epela" – is properly contrasted with his *warm grey evening air* (D:49) – "arratseko aire gris epeletara", the poetically repetitive *changing shape and hue unceasingly* (D:49) – "forma- eta ñabardura-aldaketa etengabea" is well contrasted with *an unchanging unceasing murmur* (D:49) – "murmurio aldagaitz etengabe", but the possibility of delivering the repetitive and rhetorically juxtaposed ... *in the streets. The streets ...* (D:49) loses its force in Basque translation somewhat via "kaleetean (...). Kaleak,".
- 2) The inarticulate nature of the female protagonist's thoughts in *Eveline*, conveyed in Joyce's deliberate lexical repetition and verb patterning. We illustrate via Joyce's ... *Her head was leaned against the window curtains and in her nostrils was the odour of dusty cretonne* (D:36), which is well translated as "Leihoko errezelaren kontra zuen burua, eta kretona hautsezatuaren usaina sudur-zuloetan", almost as if Eveline is not in active control, or even aware, of her own physical movements or sensations.
- 3) The insistent lexical repetitions in the descriptions of Maria, the female protagonist of *Clay*, when referring to her physical body as follows: *She found it a nice tidy little body* (D:101) – "gorputz ñimiño hainbat aldiz apaindu izan zuen hari" – or *Maria was a very, very small person* (D:99) as "Emakume txiki-txikia zen Maria".
- 4) The perceptible translation loss recorded in addressing the lexical 'sophistication' of the boy narrator in *The Sister*. In personal correspondence with the authors, Irene Aldasoro states that she was aware of the telling use of lexical elements such as *paralysis, gnomon and simony* (D:9), but we miss here the reference to the dead priest's words as being *idle* (D:9) – "hutsak" – just as the chalice placed on his breast in the coffin is also described as *idle* (D:18) – again, "hutsak" – the priest's red handkerchief surprisingly described as *inefficacious* (D:12) – "alfer-alferrik" – or the fathers of the Church with their ability for *elucidating all these intricate questions* (D:13) with the verb translated as "argitzeko",

thus maintaining the idea of ‘light’ being shed, but missing the heightened lexical gradation in moving from the more prosaic *illumination* to the more ‘erudite’ *elucidation*.

- 5) The overtly paradoxical references to Polly Mooney as a *little perverse Madonna* (D:62-63) and her circumstantial *wise innocence* (D:64) in *The Boarding House*. These are both well translated in Basque as “madonnatxo gaizto” and “inuzentean, zuhurki”.
- 6) Mr Duffy’s *odd autobiographical habit* (D:108) in *A Painful Case*, which runs the risk of passing almost unrecognised in careless translation, is nevertheless, properly recognised and rendered in Basque. Among the more noteworthy examples of his habit of composing ... *a short sentence about himself containing a subject in the third person and a predicate in the past tense* (D:108), which then comes to obsessively dominate his existential disintegration in the story’s final paragraph, we may cite: ... *He turned back the way he had come ...* , ... *He began to doubt the reality of what memory told him ...* , or ... *He felt that he was alone ...* (D:117), literally, and therefore tellingly, rendered in Basque, successively, as ... “Etorri zen aldetik itzuli zen berriro”, “zalantzan jartzen hasi zen”, and “Konturatu zen bakarrik zegoela”.

The deliberate and subtle deployment of the telling word or phrase, particularly with reference to the social, cultural, political and religious life of Dublin is a particularly challenging acid test for translator ingenuity, yet *Dublindarrak* again proves to be the fruit of considerable research on its translator’s part²¹. Again, for brevity’s sake, we list some of the most significant illustrations:

- 1) Notice the lukewarm responses on the part of the Castilian versions to the connotative force of the *strangers* (D:54) listening to the harpist playing in Kildare Street in *Two Gallants*. If this is shorthand for the English invader, it will hardly do to render the original as if it meant mere *listeners*, *new-comers*, *spectators* or even *gate-crashers*. How much more satisfying to read, for example, in the Catalan translation, a rendering like *forasters*, which aptly merges overt sense and hidden significance, and “arrotzen” in Basque, with its sense not only of *strangers* but also of *outsiders* – and unwelcome ones, at that.
- 2) The understated, but loaded, political reference to *the troubles in our native land* (D:31) mentioned by the boy narrator in *Araby*. Contemporary reader expectations would have extended to full sympathy with the justice of Ireland’s claims to nationhood and to political independence, yet again there is a most marked translation loss here, with Spanish-language translations offering the ambiguous *los líos de la tierra*, or *las desdichas*

21. In a personal communication to the authors, Irene Aldasoro states that the collection’s socio-cultural references and their connotations were easily the most difficult challenge presented by the translation. In our view, and unlike other translators of the collection, particularly into Spanish, Aldasoro has responded to the challenge magnificently.

de nuestra tierra natal. Muslera's translation is better, with *las luchas de nuestra tierra natal*, and Abelló combines a forceful *nuestra patria* with a completely understated *acontecimientos* for *troubles*. Interestingly, it is the Catalan translation, followed by its Galician counterpart, that does real justice to the political inference, the former with *les dissorts del nostre país natal*, the latter with *as loitas da nosa terra*, although only one of the six translations that we have studied manages the clear patriotic reference to *patria*. *Dublindarrak*, in this instance, proves to offer a somewhat diluted response too, with "gure jaioterriko arazoei" perhaps failing to capture the ominous inference of the political struggle for Irish national independence.

- 3) The devastating incursion into the story's otherwise placid progress of the coroner's inquest into the death of Mrs Sinico in *A Painful Case*, several translations of which, in their inability to change register from description to reportage, only serve to emphasise even further Joyce's brilliant journalistic parody. The Basque version here admirably captures what Joyce himself describes in the original's newspaper report as ... *The threadbare phrases, the inane expressions of sympathy ...* (D:115) via ... "Esaldi josi gabe haiek, elkartasunezko adierazpen tentel haiek" ... in a deliberately understated style that resists the temptation to turn the flat, prosaic reportage of the original into some glorified dramatisation of an otherwise sordid and unglamorous death by suicide.
- 4) The references to *Castle hacks* and to *Major Sirr* (D:125), among others, in *Ivy Day in the Committee Room*. While political polemic is not a major thematic issue in the collection, it will still not do for translators to misread this reference to *the Castle* (Dublin Castle) as clear shorthand for the British Administration in Ireland. Even otherwise connotatively apt translations like *a sueldo de la Corona, pagados por el gobierno inglés* or *mercenarios de la Corona* still miss the relevance of *the Castle* as a building with almost mythical significance for Irish Nationalist sympathisers. How refreshing, once again, to note the Basque translation of ... *those little jokers? Half of them are in the pay of the Castle* (D:125) as "... txilibitu horiei? Uste dut erdiak Gazteluak pagatuta daudela ..." or ... *They are Castle hacks ...* (D:125) as "Gazteluaren saripekoak dira horiek ...", but it is disappointing to see only two connotatively forceful translations of the reference to the notorious *Major Sirr* of Nationalist demonology as *Judas*, those of Cabrera Infante in Spanish and the competing Galician version. The Basque translation offers only "Horra hor Sirr komandantearen ondorengo zuzena" ... for ... *There's a lineal descendant of Major Sirr for you if you like!* (D:125), which, in the absence of any explanatory footnote, may well leave the Basque reader no wiser as to the mordant satire of the original.
- 5) The glorious pastiche of threadbare poetic rhetoric in the patriotic Nationalist ode to the memory of Charles Stuart Parnell recited by Joe Hynes in *Ivy Day in the Committee Room*. Here is possibly the supreme translation challenge in the whole collection – that

of rendering the rhetoric of verse that is deliberately “badly”, yet brilliantly, written. The Catalan translation, for example, drawing on the fact that the patriotic ode was a staple of Catalan versification, is brilliantly successful in playing up to the overblown rhetoric of the original, where the competing versions in Spanish manage to ‘deflate’ the original almost to a passing, and prosaic, quasi-journalistic commentary on the death of Parnell. *Dublindarrak*, by contrast with the competing Spanish versions, offers a splendid translation. Although in the final words of Mr Crofton it is only, yet ironically, described as ... *a very fine piece of writing* ... (D:135), it is clear, from Joyce’s own reference to *Ivy Day* as his particular favourite in the collection as a whole, that the author knew this to be the case. How worthy of the original it is, then, to measure it alongside Aldasoro’s translation, which harmoniously wedds a certain archaic diction in Basque to a well-resolved rhyme scheme (an *abab* scheme in *euskera* almost throughout, which successfully imitates Joyce’s *abcb* in the original) and a lexical precision that would be hard to fault. Let the last two, climactic stanzas serve as a most eloquent testimony to what, to our mind at least, is a superbly resolved piece of translation practice:

*They had their way: they laid him low.
But Erin, list, his spirit may
Rise, like the Phoenix from the flames,
When breaks the dawning of the day*

*The day that brings us Freedom’s reign.
And on that day may Erin well
Pledge in the cup she lifts to Joy
One grief – the memory of Parnell (D:135)*

«Berena eginda, beheratu dute,
Baina erne, Erin, zeren haren hatsa
Fenix sugarraren artetik bezala
Egun argi batez jaikitzen ahal da»

«Askatasunaren egun argi hartan
Kopa altxatzean, pozari lotuta
Erinen bihotzak erakutsiko du
Nahigabe handi bat: Parnellen gomuta.»

- 6) Lastly, the *Irish Revival* (D:137) and *language movement* (D:138) references in *A Mother*. It will not do to translate the former grandiloquently as if it were a reference to a Renaissance of the arts generally, as happens with the Spanish translations, and it is unfortunate that Aldasoro translates *the Irish Revival* too as “Irlandar Berpizkundea” as if it were something akin to a Renaissance of the arts generally, when it was a liter-

ary movement attempting a redefinition, and a Celtic redefinition at that, of the Irish national *ethos*. Once again, other peripheral languages like Catalan and *Galego* provide more adequate responses. Mallafrè translates these most brilliantly into Catalan as *la Renaixença irlandesa* and the reference to Kathleen Kearney's being ... *a believer in the language movement...* (D:138) as *era partidària del moviment de defensa de la llengua*, and the Galician version follows suit with *o Rexurdimento Irlandés* and *cría no renacer da lingua*. With the Basque translation respecting the *language movement* reference as "... eta hizkuntza-mugimenduaren aldekoa", we may well draw the inference that it is the peripheral language translations in the Peninsular context that are deserving of the highest praise for their awareness of the resonances uniting these languages of 'minority' cultures in the face of the monolithic, and often threatening, presence of Castilian in the Peninsula, no less than the threat to the Irish language from English.

In conclusion, we find evidence in the Basque translation of Joyce's earliest great work illustrated herein, and particularly when compared with its competing translations in other Peninsular languages, of the inescapable need for translators to make the closest possible of readings of the original, to believe in the convictions sustained thereby and to deliver on the basis of these. While this may be stating the obvious, it is no less applicable to Joyce's texts merely because one hears it stated so often. One could go further and state that the translator of Joyce should, of course, know *and* understand the original, which is *not* always to state the obvious (several of the Spanish translations of *Dubliners* fall into some very misleading ambiguities at certain points, if not a complete breakdown in understanding) and this is something which reviewers of translations (we ourselves being no exception) often gleefully point out. To insist on leaning *too* heavily for assistance on Joyce scholarship may, conversely, lead the translator to risk interpretation, and interpretations can foster both the irrelevant and the fanciful.

With Joyce, of course, there may be a further danger, as Fritz Senn has knowingly insisted throughout his career – not the danger of *not* understanding what a Joyce passage is about, but the danger, paradoxically, of *understanding* it – of understanding it 'completely', always assuming that such a thing is possible. It is not simply that every word has its function and is in its proper place, but that the function of words, phrases, metaphors and all the rest is multiple and complex. We usually talk of the literary text as "operating on different levels" and Joyce's style is characterised by an "over-determination" that translators have an almost Herculean task to try to emulate.

Yet the challenge has to be addressed. Translating Joyce is no more difficult than translating any other writer worth preserving in another language. As translators we should therefore resist any inclination to imagine ourselves in some world apart from more "ordinary" literature, a failing that the Spanish translations of *Dubliners* amply illustrate, but which the peripheral language translations, particularly the Basque and Catalan versions, strive to avoid.

Senn, in concluding his analysis of different translations of *Ulysses*, has the following to say on the value of the translated text as both a commentary on the original and a work that aspires to broadening the literary canon of the target language culture:

This is not to deny the immense value of all the translations from which specimens have here been submitted and scrutinised, if on occasions rather unfairly. All of them, as far as I know, have proved their worth ... they have influenced the literature of their country and helped to shape the climate of their time. All of them illuminate and interpret a book that requires such interpretation in order to bring it out of the shadow cast by the later works. Their study is of absorbing interest. Their errors, too, become portals of discovery²².

Our final contention is that the same must surely be said of *Dublindarrak*. As a translation, it well merits consideration not only for bringing Joyce's earliest great work of fiction out of the shadow cast by his later works but also for its significance in influencing the literature of its target-language culture. If translation for these reasons alone were necessary, it would be no less necessary for being an implicitly 'impossible' undertaking. In fact, it may well be held that just because translation of *Dubliners* – or any other work by Joyce – is in a way impossible, it is for that reason alone, in Senn's proper estimation²³, so eminently worth doing.

22. Senn, (1967), 'Seven against *Ulysses*', *James Joyce Quarterly*, University of Tulsa, Tulsa OK, Vol. IV, p.192.

23. Senn, *op.cit.*, p.192.

Joyce itzultzen: ikuspuntu euskaldun bat

Artikulu honetan, James Joyceren obra itzultzeak planteatzen dituen gai nagusietariko batzuk tratatzen dira, bereziki kontuan izanik haren lehendabiziko obra garrantzitsua, *Dubliners* kontakizun-bilduma, eta euskarazko itzulpenak erronka horren aurrean eman duen erantzuna. Konparaketak ere egin dira penintsulako beste hizkuntza batzuetan egindako itzulpenekin, eta euskarazko itzulpenaren merezimenduak behar bezala balioesten dira, *Dublindarrak* euskal letra garaikideen kanonaren barruan kokatzeko ahaleginean.

Traducir a Joyce: un punto de vista vasco

Este artículo aborda las principales cuestiones implicadas en la traducción de la producción escrita de James Joyce, con especial referencia a su primera gran obra, la colección de cuentos *Dublineses*, así como la respuesta específica dada por la traducción en lengua vasca a los desafíos que ello implica. Se compara también con las traducciones a otras lenguas peninsulares, y los méritos de la traducción vasca son convenientemente evaluados dentro de un esfuerzo por situar *Dublindarrak* en el canon vasco de las letras contemporáneas.

Traduire Joyce: Un point de vue bascofone

Cet article aborde des questions fondamentales qui se posent lors de la traduction de l'œuvre de James Joyce, avec un accent particulier sur son premier travail important, le recueil de nouvelles *Dubliners*, et la réponse spécifique donnée dans la traduction basque aux défis rencontrés. Par ailleurs, des comparaisons sont établies avec des traductions dans d'autres langues d'Espagne et les mérites de la traduction basque sont évalués à leur juste valeur dans leur effort d'intégrer *Dublindarrak* dans les canons de la littérature contemporaine basque.