

## Interview with Tamar Gelashvili,<sup>1</sup> Georgian translator of *Finnegans Wake*

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*Tamar, can you tell us about yourself and about your relationship with literature before discovering Joyce?*

I was born in one of the toughest times in modern Georgian History: the 1990s. The collapse of the Soviet Union led to numerous moments of civil unrest and wars in the post-Soviet countries. Despite the turmoil, and spending my whole childhood surrounded with tanks, gunshots and memories of the civil war, my childhood was one of the best times in post-Soviet Georgia. Having just gained independence, people had the illusion that we could truly be independent and neutral like Switzerland (not thinking about our geographical location and being surrounded by such countries) and built a great country. I come from a family which has strong ties with literature, my great-great grandfather Ioseb Kipshidze was one of the founders of Tbilisi State University. My great grandfather – David Chkheidze – was a famous writer and the head of Writers’ Union in Kutaisi, who was caught and executed during the 1937 purges along with other important figures of Georgian culture. My grandfather on my father’s side was a writer and is regarded nowadays as a Georgian classic, and my father is an essayist and documentary prose writer. My grandfather (grandmother’s brother) on my mother’s side – Revaz Chkheidze – was a world famous film director, who became the first Soviet to win the Palme d’Or prize at the Cannes Film Festival in 1957. My mother is a Professor of English, the Head of the Institute of West European Languages and Literature, and Director of the Centre of Shakespeare Studies in Georgia. Thus, literature, art and culture have always been part of our family for generations.

I studied at a German school, where I was taught not only German, but German literature and culture as well. I also had a private Russian tutor, who again taught me not only

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<sup>1</sup> Researcher Tamar Gelashvili, who is a faculty member at Tbilisi State University in Georgia, was the first person to translate chapters of *Finnegans Wake* into Georgian. In this conversation, which started in July 2021 on Facebook and ended in August 2022, she talks about her translation experience with the book, which she is now translating entirely into her language.

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language, but literature as well. Therefore, from my early years, literature has been part of my life. Especially because we had a huge and great library both in Tbilisi and in our mountain house as well; and being able to read in four languages (Georgian, Russian, English, and German) enabled me to get to know many writers around the world.

The books that influenced me the most were *Der Steppenwolf* by Hermann Hesse, because I could always identify myself with Harry Haller, and always had the sense of being one of those people who demand the utmost of life and yet cannot come to terms with its stupidity and crudeness. *Der Zauberberg* by Thomas Mann, with the development and spiritual growth of the mediocre Hans Castorp at the beginning, and Naphta, who loathed the bourgeois state and its love of security. *To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf, because killing the main character in the middle of the book and then being able to continue writing the book was something of a real shock; and, with Mrs. Ramsey being the main character, I always identified myself with Lily Briscoe, the painter surrounded by numerous Mr Tansleys whispering in her ear, “Women can’t paint, women can’t write ...”. *As I Lay Dying* by William Faulkner, with its multiple narrators and varying chapter lengths, the story of the death of Addie Bundren and her poor, rural family’s quest and motivations— noble or selfish — to honour her wish to be buried in her hometown of Jefferson, Mississippi is both dark and humorous. Addie, with her sins, mistakes and wrong doings has always reminded me that you’ve got to live, no matter how many skies have fallen and that “People to whom sin is just a matter of words, to them salvation is just words too”. *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy, which shows how small, seemingly insignificant things shape people’s behavior and their lives. But what has inspired me the most as a writer myself was that “It didn’t matter that the story had begun, because Kathakali discovered long ago that the secret of the Great Stories is that they have no secrets. The Great Stories are the ones you have heard and want to hear again. The ones you can enter anywhere and inhabit comfortably. They don’t deceive you with thrills and trick endings”.

At university I studied International Relations and did my BA on Security Studies. Then I moved on to do my MA on Conflict Studies and presumably I would have gone in that way, if not one day there had been a call from the head of the Language Center at Tbilisi State University, Professor Rusudan Dolidze, who told me that there was a vacancy at Shota Rustaveli Institute of Georgian Literature to do some translations. Having private pupils in English and no official job by that time, I applied for the position and that is how everything began. I abandoned my MA studies and applied to the first independent MA programme in English Literature, which appeared that year. Afterwards, I moved on from

the Institute of Georgian Literature to Tbilisi State University, doing translations for their bilingual publications and conferences.

Thus, God works in mysterious ways and that is how I ended up doing my PhD in English Literature.

***How did you come to Joyce's work and what was the epiphany that led you to continue reading and studying Joyce?***

Joyce and I share a birthday and somehow unconsciously, even when I was too small to read or understand Joyce, he was part of my life. During my MA studies, I was working at the Faculty of Humanities doing some translations for various journals, conferences and other things. I did not know what I was going to do afterwards, when the Dean of the Faculty, Professor Darejan Tvaltvadze offered me to continue doing my PhD. She was also the one who gave me a reference letter for the Trieste Summer School, which won me a scholarship and enabled me to go to Trieste in 2015. As I wanted to do something outrageous that everyone would be talking about for years, I decided to do my PhD on *Finnegans Wake*, the book, which was the only untouched one in Georgian Joyce Studies and Translation. That is how *Finnegans Wake* became part of my life.

***In your social network you call yourself Anna Livia Plurabelle. Tell us a little about your identification with this character of Finnegans Wake. Did you also name other members of your family after the characters in the book?***

Anna Livia, the river, the ever-moving and ever-changing has always been someone I could identify with. Early in my childhood, even without any knowledge of *Finnegans Wake* I had always imagined my life to be like that of Anna Livia's: an elderly husband, twin sons and a daughter. In the end of the day it did not turn out like that and I married a guy younger than me (whom I can call Shem the Historian, because he is a Historian), and gave birth to two girls, but still the ever-changing notion of Anna Livia Plurabelle is something I cannot run away from. She was the one whom I enjoyed painting the most, in blue and green colours and the curves and movements.

I did not name other members of the family after other characters, because I do not identify them with either this or that character. It is only me, as Anna Livia, and my husband, as Shem the Historian.

***How was your first contact with the Finnegans Wake? And what were the reasons that led you to translate it?***

On the third shelf of our library at home, there was a plain, black book with green letters on it, and all my childhood I used to hear my mother say that this was the only book by Joyce which she couldn't cope with. She also liked to retell the famous story from Ellmann's biography, of how once or twice Joyce dictated a bit of *Finnegans Wake* to Beckett, though dictation did not work very well for him; in the middle of one such session there was a knock at the door which Beckett couldn't hear. Joyce said, 'Come in', and Beckett wrote it down. Afterwards he read back what he had written and Joyce said, 'What's that 'Come in'?' 'Yes, you said that,' said Beckett. Joyce thought for a moment, then said, 'Let it stand'. He was quite willing to accept coincidence as his collaborator. That tale, whether it was true or not, was my very first contact with the *Wake*.

The reasons that led me to translate were simple: Nearly all of Joyce's major works have been translated in Georgian (except his last novel *Finnegans Wake*); there are even two different translations of *Dubliners* and *Giacomo Joyce*, translated within a gap of 40 years. Thus, having written my PhD on *Finnegans Wake*, I regarded it as my duty to translate it; otherwise it would have remained untouched for how many years no one knows.

***Regarding the translation and the translation process: is your translation full or partial? How long did it take you? If it is partial, will you continue?***

At present my translation is a work in progress. The first book of *Finnegans Wake* has been published by PrintGeo and currently we are working on the revised edition of Book I, which will come out later this year by Artanuji. Next year, I am planning to continue working on Book II. The first book took me two pregnancies, i.e. roughly 18 months. I had two kids while working on Book I and my mum even jokes that if I continue translating, I will have three more kids before the translation finishes.

***Can you talk about the book's editorial project? Was it you who designed the cover and conceived the graphic project? Are there other visual specificities? Does the English text accompany the translation? Did you follow the original pagination? Does the edition have critical texts or notes? What was the number of printed copies? Is there a Kindle version too? Did other people participate? Can you talk about the publisher, editors and other professionals involved?***

Way before even starting to translate the *Wake*, I started illustrating it. I had always liked painting, I used to paint during lectures, on books, notebooks, walls, tables, whatever I found handy, and painting always helped me stay focused, and illustrating the book helped me in many ways: it was a good pastime, as well as aided in understanding the

book better. Thus, the cover was entirely of my design. I was also against commentaries at the end of the book, because I think it is not handy and convenient reading the book and jumping to and for and that is when my husband brought home a newly-published book by a historian on medieval history, which had side notes and that is when my mum suggested doing the same with our publication of *Finnegans Wake* and that's what we did. We put small commentaries or hints on sides and the continuation of them or the long versions we transferred to the back, which was a great thing, because everybody who has seen the book, has always stressed the visual side and said how helpful the side notes are. The text is not accompanied with the English Text, but maybe one day we will do a bilingual edition as well. The text does not follow the original pagination: that was an impossible task, because of the Georgian language and the complexity and the flexibility of the Georgian verb, which can include in it so many things: what needs five or six words in English can be said in one word in Georgian. Thus, following the original pagination would mean that the Georgian Text would look queer and unusual. But if one day we make a bilingual edition, I will follow the original pagination and that would also show the difference in languages. We printed 100 copies and distributed them among a very narrow circle. Publishing House *Artanuji* now plans to print 500 copies. Unfortunately, there is no kindle version of the translation. My students participated somehow in the translation, although indirectly, but had a great influence on the final result.. They were always eager and interested in hearing out either about the book or my translation, to listen to the translation and how it was progressing. They were a great force in a sense that gave me motivation. When in the dark and gloomy days I thought to myself, “Ok, Georgians are only three million, out of which how many are going to read Joyce? Is it worth the trouble?”, my students with their sparkling eyes – eager to hear more about *Finnegans Wake*, was a reminder that I was not doing something in vain and that there would always be someone, even one single person, for whom it would change the world.

### ***What were the translation methods and research instruments you used?***

As Fritz Senn wisely and wittily put it, “Translations should be admired, not trusted”<sup>3</sup> and those words have always been my inspiration, that I always had in mind while doing the translation. I believe that there are no translation methods or research instruments when you deal with a text like *Finnegans Wake*. You just have to go with the flow and reshape

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<sup>3</sup> From “Transluding off the Toptic; or, The Fruitful Illusion of Translatability” by Fritz Senn. In: SENN, Fritz. *Joyce's Dislocutions: Essays on Reading as Translation*. Ed. John Paul Riquelme. Baltimore; Londres: The John Hopkins University Press, 1984, p. 37 (capítulo 2). [Interviewer's note]

it according to the target language. If you overthink or overdo it, it will lose its charm and fluidity. Again as Senn put it, “In fact, as I always say, I had one great disadvantage: I never took a Joyce course. And I had one great advantage: I never took a Joyce course”<sup>4</sup>, and that somehow applies to me as well. Having done my BA in International Relations and then moving on to Transformation and Conflict Studies in South Caucasus (MA), Joyce came into my life spontaneously and while reading it, I was not overloaded with too many academic articles/books telling you what was behind this or that word or phrase. I somehow steered myself. Research and studies came later, but again by me. Thus, I was also not aware of translation methods and yet, when you are dealing with a text such as *Finnegans Wake* no method can be applied.

***What are the main aspects of your translation? Did you highlight any element, such as orality, neologisms, literality, rhythm etc.?***

As Joyce himself said, “You are not Irish, and the meaning of some passages will perhaps escape you. But you are Catholic, so you will recognize this or that allusion. You don’t play cricket; this word may mean nothing to you. But you are a musician, so you will feel at ease in this passage. When my Irish friends come to visit me in Paris, it is not the philosophical subtleties of the book that amuse them, but my memories of O’Connell’s top hat”<sup>5</sup>. Thus, I have never highlighted any elements. I’ve always tried to make the text more accessible for the Georgian reader and by it add a value to Georgian language and culture as well.

***What are the challenges of the river of portmanteau words and multi-referential puns that runs through Finnegans Wake in your translation?***

From the translator’s point of view presumably some of the greatest technical obstacles are the various types of word-play: play on one word in different senses; on different words similar in shape; the multilingual puns; the slight change in proverbs and other fixed phrases; prosodic features involving metre, rime, alliteration, assonance, and the like. Some of these difficulties are exemplified in my article. Thus, to begin from the very start of Chapter 7, which at a glance seems a relatively simple and understandable sentence, compared to many others one has to face while dealing with Joyce’s “Book of the Dark”:

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<sup>4</sup> From “Interview with Fritz Senn”, by Vitor Alevato do Amaral. *Qorpus*, v.9 n. 3 dez 2019, p. 175. [Editors’ note.]

<sup>5</sup> From Jacques Mercanton’s recollection of Joyce (*Portraits of the artist in Exile. Recollections of James Joyce by Europeans*. Edited by Willard Potts, University of Washington Press, 1979, p. 234). [Editors’ note.]

Shem is as short for Shemus as Jem is joky for Jacob. (*FW* 169.01)

Even though four out of twelve words are names, translating them into Georgian still creates a number of difficulties: firstly, the alliteration which is in the original. The first part “Shem is as short for Shemus” can be rendered unaltered because “short” in Georgian is “shemoklebit” (შემოკლებით), fitting perfectly with “Shem” and “Shemus” and creating a sense of alliteration “*Shemi shemoklebit igive shemusia*” (შემი შემოკლებით იგივე შემუსია). Nevertheless, the Georgian translation fails to bring in the notion of “shame”, which is apparent in the original text. The second part of the sentence becomes quite tricky because “joky” is “xumrobit” (ხუმრობით) in Georgian and “Jacob’s” Georgian equivalent is “Iakobi” (იაკობი). Thus, the question arises whether to leave “Jacob” as it is or use its Georgian version, and even if one leaves “Jacob” untouched what should one do with “joky”, whose Georgian equivalent destroys the sense of alliteration of the original text? Thus, after several attempts (and sleepless nights), another word struck my mind for “joky”, although it is not exactly the same, but still gives the reader the essence of “joke” but a bit in a “clownish” way. This word is *jambazi* (joker/clown). Therefore, the sentence in the last version of my translation sounds as following:

შემი შემოკლებით იგივე შემუსია, როგორც ჯემია ჯამბაზურად ჯეიკობი.  
(shemi shemoklebit igive shemusia, rogorc jemia jambazurad jeikobi)

As one can notice from the sentence above, the Georgian script makes no distinction between upper and lower case. However, some Georgian fonts include capitals, which are just larger versions of the letters, and certain modern writers have experimented with using the obsolete *Asomtavruli* letters as capitals. Thus, while rendering this passage from *Finnegans Wake*, the decision to change the font came instantly to mind:

“Feel his lambs! Ex! Feel how sheap! Exex! His liver too is great value, a spatiality!

Exexex! COMMUNICATED.]” (*FW* 172.8-10)

აძონ კრავნი ჩემნი! ეჰეი! დამწყსენ ცხოვარნი ჩემნი!  
ეჰეჰეი! მისი ღვიძლი დიდად ფასობს, როგორი  
განსასივრცულია! ეჰეჰეჰეი! განკვეთილია.

Although the current alphabet is *Mkhedruli*, a number of people are familiar with *Asomtavruli* letters. Another reason why the change in font can be justified is that the passage is an allusion to John 21:15-17, “Feed my lambs... Feed my sheep” and as the Georgian language would not have allowed to transfer all the “possible” meanings that Joyce had meant, because “wordplay” in Georgian would not have worked properly in this case, because “sheep” is *cxvari* (ცხვარი) and cheap – *iapi* (იაფი), so I decided to use the “Feed my lambs... Feed my sheep” as it appears in the Georgian translation of the Bible. Another difficulty is posed by the recurrence of the prefix “ex”, which is doubled and tripled after its first appearance. The “ex” is preparing the reader for the last word of the passage “communicated” giving it a negative connotation, but in Georgian “excommunicate” is *gankvetilia* (განკვეთილია) and writing “gan”, “gangan”, “gangangan” would have made absolutely no sense, that is why I used “ehei” (ეჰეი), an exclamation used by shepherds, which goes nicely with the allusion of “feeding the lambs and sheep”. And using the *Asomtavruli* letters at the end of the passage continues the general sense of antiquity that prevails in the translation.

***What is your relationship to translation theories? Do you have a preference for any? Why?***

With having no philological education, I do not have any kind of relationship to translation theories. They simply do not exist for me. I have never been taught them and I have always thought that translation is a kind of art and craft. It is something that you can either do or not. That is why I have never had any kind of interest in translation theories. I know how to do the job, and that is what matters the most.

***Do you think any translation theory could be applicable to the *Finnegans Wake*?***

As Senn put in one of his interviews, “In some odd way, I think it [*Finnegans Wake*] is even easier to translate because the normal kind of... criteria don’t apply. It’s futile to say, ‘but there’s a meaning you didn’t get’. Of course, there are many meanings you don’t get”.<sup>6</sup> So I do not think that any translation theory could be applicable to the *Wake*. It is a book beyond all kind of logic or rules. When I was a little girl, I used to go to an Art School and my teacher used to tell me all the time “You cannot put the pencil in such a way”, “You cannot combine colours and graphics”, “Do not put your hand on the painting or it will get ruined” and many other rules, and I was never good at drawing, until one day

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<sup>6</sup> From “Interview with Fritz Senn”, by Vitor Alevato do Amaral. *Qorpus*, v.9 n. 3 dez 2019, p. 172. [Editors’ note.]



I sent every rule to hell and started painting the way I wanted. I have the same sense about Joyce and the *Wake*. As if Joyce had always been told the rules for novel writing and one day he simply discarded all of those rules and wrote the *Wake*. Therefore, no theory can be applicable to the *Wake*.

***Do you think the Finnegans Wake translator can be considered a co-author of the book? Why?***

As Senn suggested, “translations should be admired, not trusted”, meaning that each and every literary text is a mere interpretation of the translator. He stresses the same idea in “Transmutation in Disgress”, suggesting that “translation is inevitably based on preliminary interpretation: one must determine beforehand what a passage ‘means’ even if ‘meaning’ can never be defined. The question then becomes – which of the multiple interpretations to be preferred?”<sup>7</sup>. Hence, each new translation is somewhat a new approach to the text. Therefore, the task of the translator is not only to convert words from one language to another, but at the same time convey the meaning behind each word, which becomes rather tricky when dealing with *Finnegans Wake* and especially while translating it into the Georgian language.

The idea on the importance of interpretation can be traced in Finn Fordham’s book *Lots of Fun at Finnegans Wake* (Oxford University Press, 2007) where Fordham argues that “*Finnegans Wake* for Fritz Senn is what we do with it. But it is also what it does with us. We produce a *Wake* by the way we steer, but we also steer by the *Wake* that we produce”. Although it is arguable whether the translator should interpret or merely render the sentences from one language into another, Salman Rushdie with his *Imaginary Homelands* comes to one’s mind, where Rushdie suggests that “The word ‘translation’ comes, etymologically, from the Latin for ‘bearing across’. Having been borne across the world, we are translated men. It is normally supposed that something always gets lost in translation; I cling obstinately to the notion that something can also be gained.”

Hence, the translator becomes somehow the co-author of the *Wake*. You lose something, but at the same time the target language, culture and literature gains so much from the translation.

***Can you talk about the inherent characteristics of the Georgian language and how was the encounter between Wakean language and Georgian?***

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<sup>7</sup> From “Transmutation in Disgress”, by Fritz Senn, *James Joyce Quarterly*, vol. 47, no. 4, 2010, p. 550. [Interviewer’s note.]

Translating Joyce’s “*édition de ténèbres*” into Georgian is a rather hard and complicated task. Let’s have a look at several examples: one “normal” sentence on page 485 reads: “Are we speachin d’anglas landadge or are you sprakin sea Djoytsch?” (FW 485.12-13). Even with a basic knowledge of French and German the reader can understand what Joyce is implying, and thus when translating it either in French or German it is possible to render the wordplay. However, this wordplay gets lost no matter how creative and inventive a Georgian translator might be. In Georgian “speachin/sprakin” is *saubari/laparaki* (საუბარი, ლაპარაკი), “d’anglas” *inglisuri* (ინგლისური), “landadge” (land, language) *mitsa/ena* (მიწა, ენა), “Djoytsch” *germanuli* (გერმანული). What is more, “sea” on the one hand is “sea” and on the other refers to the German word “Sie”. To show another example, in the word “grandsumer” (FW 152.21), “sumer” can be understood as Sumerians as well as summer, whereas in Georgian Sumerian is *shumeri* (შუმერი) and summer *zapkhuli* (ზაფხული), and therefore the translators task is to find an adequate translation – or namely to invent a new word that will fit in Georgian. These are just two mere examples, whereas *Finnegans Wake* is full of such words, creating a nightmare for the Georgian translator.

The thing is that Georgian Language belongs to the Kartvelian languages, which does not belong to the Indo-European family. The Kartvelian language family consists of four closely related languages – Georgian, Svan, Megrelian (chiefly spoken in Northwest Georgia) and Laz (chiefly spoken along the Black Sea coast of Turkey, from Melyat, Rize, to the Georgian frontier) —, which form a dialect continuum. Thus, it is no wonder that Georgian grammar is remarkably different from those of European languages and has many distinct features, such as split ergativity and a polypersonal verb agreement system, which makes translating *Finnegans Wake* a nightmaze of “Catchecatche and couchamed!” (FW 502.28)

What makes the translation linguistically difficult into Georgian are the following topics:

1. Georgian grammar is remarkably different from those of European languages and has many distinct features, such as split ergativity and a polypersonal verb agreement system;
2. Georgian script also makes no distinction between upper and lower case;
3. in the case of the personal pronouns he/she/it, in Georgian there is only one equivalent, *is* (ის), without specifying the gender; and the same happens in the case of the possessive pronouns, where his/her/its equals to *misi* (მისი).

All those topics mentioned above play an important role in *Finnegans Wake* and one has to be rather creative in order to find a way out from this maze. The several

following examples in English and Georgian would serve better in illustrating the problems named above:

1. He lifts the lifewand and the dumb speak (*FW 195.5*)

ბიჭი ხელში იღებს სიცოცხლის კვერთხს და მუნჯი ლაპარაკს იწყებს.

Georgian is unable to specify gender, thus instead of “he” I had to write “lad”, so that the Georgian reader would see that it is a “he” who “lifts the lifewand”.

2. The Mookse and The Gripes. (*FW 152.15*)

ამბავი მელიისა და ყურძნის შესახებ.

მელია კუდაგრძელია სივრცეში დაკარგულია, თითქოს რომ ქვად ნაქცევია, ალბოელი ნიკოლაუსი ჰაჰანდრიად მოჰდა ვატიკანში, ლათინურად ქადაგებს, ქადაგებს და ღაღადებს, უინდემ ლუისი მარჯვნიდან აშკარად მისი მტერია და ყურძენუშკა დროში გაბნეული, ხეზე მიბნეული, ერეტიკული აზრებით, ბერძნულად რაღაც ბჟუტურობს, დუბლიდან გარბის, მარცნიდან თუ შეხედავ ჯიმი არის მარდი.

The classical fable by Aesop, *The Fox and the Grapes*, is retold in chapter VI of *Finnegans Wake*, but both the Fox and the Grapes are loaded with allusions: a) Mookse: fox, space, stone, bishop’s apron, Latin/Roman, right bank, Adrian IV, London, deaf, pope; moocow, mouse; b) Gripes (gripe, grasp, seizure, fast hold) + gripes (pinching and spasmodic pain in the intestines + spasmodic stomach cramps, constipation and diarrhoea, possibly the result of nervous tension, which had been Hitler’s curse since childhood and only grew more severe as he aged) + grapes, time, tree, handkerchief, Greek/Russian, left bank, Barbarossa, Dublin, blind, heretic.

In the Georgian translation one could not have simply put *Melia da Kurdzeni* (*მელია და ყურძენი*) and thus it needed to be accompanied by a small paragraph conveying all the possible meaning that Joyce used.

3. all **her** rillringlets shaking, rocks drops in **her** tachie, tramtokens in **her** hair, all waived to a point and then all inuendation.... (*FW 194.30-32*)

მდინარესავით დატალღული თმები აეწეწა, ჩანთა მხარზე ჩამოუკონწიალებია, აბრეშუმის ძაფები ჩაუმაგრებია თმებში, ყველა ერთ წერტილშია შეერთებული და შემდეგ იშლება....

Joyce extensively uses the repetition of “her” in this sentence, which I have omitted in the translation, because the description of the shaking “curled lock or tress of hair” gives the reader the sense that the author is talking about a female and it does not need to be highlighted (at least when one cannot render it stressing “her”, it is a better idea not to complicate the sentence).

4. “Shyr **she**’s nearly as bad**her** as **him herself**” (*FW 198.9*)

რა თქმა უნდა ისიც ისეთივე ცუდია, როგორც ეს თავის თავად

This sentence was much harder to translate than the previous example, because it is mainly based on pronouns, with she (female), her (female), him (male) and her (female), which cannot be merely transformed into Georgian, thus my choice in this case was to translate the contents of the sentence and what Joyce meant (or presumably what I think Joyce meant).

***Did you try to bring Georgian culture into your translation? Can you give examples?***

In a lecture held at Cornell University, on March 4, 1983 dealing with Walter Benjamin’s *The Task of the Translator*, Paul de Man argued, that “The translation belongs not to the life of the original, the original is already dead, but the translation belongs to the afterlife of the original, thus assuming and confirming the death of the original [...] translation also reveals the death of the original”<sup>8</sup>. The idea of “the death of the original” at a glance seems quite plausible, because sometimes translations are unable to convey the style or the depths of the original work, but at the same time a good translation becomes “an afterlife” of the original, enriching the culture of the translating country. Vakhtang Chelidze, Georgian literary critic and translator, in his article “About Translation” argues that “translated work becomes somewhat the ‘property’ of the target language, because it becomes an inseparable part of its literature”<sup>9</sup>. The same idea is explored by Benjamin, who viewed that “the task of the translator consists in finding that intended effect [*Intention*] upon the language into which he is translating which produces in it the echo of the original”<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> From “‘Conclusions’ Walter Benjamin’s ‘The Task of the Translator’”, by Paul De Man, *Yale French Studies*, March 4, no. 69, 1985, p. 38. [Editors’ note.]

<sup>9</sup> From “About Translation”, by Vakhtang Chelidze apud Tamar Gelashvili, Transforming Shem into Shermadin (Some Difficulties of Translating Chapter VII of *Finnegans Wake*), in: International Conference JAMES JOYCE AND THE WORLD, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Tbilisi, 2020, p. 67. [Interviewer’s note.]

<sup>10</sup> From “The Task of the Translator”, by Walter Benjamin, translated by Harry Zohn, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, edited by Hannah Arendt, Schocken Books, 1968, p. 76. [Editors’ note].

Thus, my answer is YES. I tried to bring in Georgian Culture into my translation, because it would make the text more accessible for the Georgian readers. My task as a translator was not only to be a new chapter in the History of Translating Joyce, but to enhance the Georgian language, culture and literature as well. Moreover, while translating *Finnegans Wake*, the translator should not aim at conveying all the possible meanings that Joyce might have meant, but to interpret the text in such a way that it becomes understandable for the readers in the target language. As Joyce himself outlined “One should not pay any particular attention to the allusions to place names, historical events, literary happenings and personalities, but let the linguistic phenomenon affect one as such”.

For example, I have inserted some Georgian dialects, Aphorisms, extracts from Georgian writers’ poems or novels or short stories. It is arguable, whether I had the right or not, but I am pretty sure Joyce himself would have liked all the world-play that fit naturally and did not create a sense of artificiality.

***Do you have a favourite part of the work? Can you comment on the reason and quote it?***

A rather hard question, it is. I would say chapter VIII, because of its musicality and fluidity. Another reason why I love this part is because of the illustrations that I have done for this chapter. Moreover, it was the first chapter that I translated and printed as a separate book.

***How was the reception of your translation by the general public and by the academy?***

Unbelievably good. During the whole working process, I used to hold public readings of various extracts that I had been working on. I remember the first time I announced such a reading, I was quite sceptical, and my mom even joked there will be only three of us there: you, me and the translation. But to our amazement a lot of people showed up: students from various faculties, professors, writers, translators, even clergymen. They listened, had absolutely sincere and adequate reactions, and that was when I thought that I had been doing something right, when “normal” people suddenly started to understand *Finnegans Wake* in Georgian. I held many of such readings afterwards and it was always met with great interest. Of course, not everybody was in favour of me or my translation, some ‘established’ critics and literary figures were against “a young girl” translating *Finnegans Wake* and I even had harsh debates with them, but throughout the whole translation process there were more supporters and encouragers than jealous, angry, little men.

***In this context, how is the research and reception not only of the *Finnegans Wake*, but also of the rest of Joyce’s work (*Bloomsday, incentives, etc.*)?***

All of Joyce's works have been translated into Georgian, some even twice, as already noted. There is a Joyce Reading Group at Kutaisi State University under the supervision of Professor Eliso Pantskahava and a Joyce Reading Group at Tbilisi University under my supervision. There is a James Joyce Georgian Association, with Professor Irakli Tskhvediani being the President of the association.

We have been holding Bloomsday Celebrations for over 5 years already and we do hope to continue it in the future.

***Are there other Finnegans Wake translations (excerpts, chapters etc.) into Georgian? Are there projects? Which Joyce books are translated?***

There is no other *Wake* translation, but I intend to continue translating it.

Now we can proudly say that nearly all of Joyce's works have been translated into Georgian and that *Finnegans Wake* is a work in progress, which I do hope to continue as soon as I get either a grant or a scholarship.

***Do you know translations of the Finnegans Wake to other languages? Which ones and what do you think of them?***

Yes. First of all, Fritz [Senn] has most of them at the Zurich James Joyce Foundation and it is always a pleasure looking at other translations in various languages, even if you do not understand the language, I do think it is a rather enjoyable task.

My favourite one is the Italian Translation of *Finnegans Wake* by Enrico Terrinoni, whom I have met in Rome many times and with whom I have had a chance to talk a lot about Joyce, translation and other things.

I am also very fond of Dirce Waltrick do Amarante. I have read many articles by her about Joyce and translation, and despite not knowing the language I have always had the sense that her translation would have been a really enjoyable thing to read.

The Turkish translation of *Finnegans Wake* also seems quite interesting, in a sense that there are a great deal of references or allusions on Turkey, which in a sense would have made the task for the Turkish translator a bit easier.

I am really interested in the Chinese translation of *Finnegans Wake*, where the translator to re-create some of the sounds of the novel, had to create new Chinese characters — a notable hoop to jump through considering Chinese already has tens of thousands of characters.

I personally think that all those translations and the interest towards *Finnegans Wake* around the world is that everyone and every nation can find something for them in the book.

Moreover, as Amarante put it “translation always makes something new emerge from the text and brings to light aspects of interpretation, for we cannot translate without interpreting. To translate *Finnegans Wake* means working with interpretations. Choosing one interpretation and making it emerge, we often end up obscuring others. Translation also makes the text emerge as a mirage, because the original text is and is not there”<sup>11</sup>.

***What is your opinion on the translation of Finnegans Wake itself, which for a long time was considered by the critics as untranslatable?***

George Steiner in *After Babel* talks about the “plurality of languages” and suggests that it “embodies a move away from unison and acceptance — the Gregorian homophonic — to the polyphonic, ultimately divergent fascination of manifold specificity. Each different tongue offers its own denial of determinism. ‘The world’, it says, ‘can be other’. Ambiguity, polysemy, opaqueness, the violation of grammatical and logical sequences, reciprocal incomprehensions, the capacity to lie these are not pathologies of language but the roots of its genius”<sup>12</sup>. This plurality of languages makes the translation of *Finnegans Wake* at the same time a rather hard as well as a tricky task. The notion that *Finnegans Wake* is “untranslatable” has become some kind of a cliché in Joyce scholarship. Umberto Eco even claimed that *Finnegans Wake* is “pointless to translate”<sup>13</sup> because, by virtue (or vice) of its multilingualism, it is already translated. Nevertheless, *Finnegans Wake* has been translated into numerous languages.

Translators of Joyce in general and particularly *Finnegans Wake* need to strive in particular against two tendencies that are apparent in the process of translation: the tendency to homogenise the source text, especially where the target language is present as an embedded language within the source text<sup>14</sup>, and the tendency to correct ‘errors’ in the source text.

As Fritz Senn notes, “apparent flaws are ironed out in translations; arrangements become more orderly. [...] Errors are prone to being inertly rectified”. Therefore, we can argue that to correct is to homogenise.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> From FINNEGANS WAKE: A Tentative Crossing in Portuguese....., by Dirce Waltrick do Amarante. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/mehprrnh>. Accessed in: 15 July 2024. [Interviewer’s note]

<sup>12</sup> From *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, by George Steiner, Oxford UP, 1976, p. 234-235. [Editors’ note.]

<sup>13</sup> From *Experiences in Translation*, by Umberto Eco, Toronto University Press, 2001, p. 108. [Interviewer’s note.]

<sup>14</sup> From *Multilingualism and Translation*, by Rainie Grutman, Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies, ed. Mona Baker and Kirsten Malmkjaer, London: Routledge, 1998, p. 160 [Interviewer’s note.]

<sup>15</sup> From “Transmutation in Disgress”, by Fritz Senn, *James Joyce Quarterly*, vol. 47, no. 4, 2010, p. 537. [Interviewer’s note.]

*After bringing HCE and ALP to life in Georgia, what will be your next steps in the Joycean chaosmos?*

Currently I have applied for a grant at Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation entitled *Political Discourse in Irish Modernist and Post-Modernist Literature (James Joyce, Flann O'Brien, Frank McGuinness)*, and if I get it, it will enable me to do my research on this topic, go to various research centres and publish a monograph. So let's see what the future holds.