"Elsinore's tempting flood": the Hamletian Presence in the Brazilian Translations of *Ulysses*

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Abstract

In Brazil, James Joyce's *Ulysses* was translated by Antônio Houaiss (1966), Bernardina da Silveira Pinheiro (2005) and Caetano Galindo (2012), and each stand for different perspectives about his work. Translating a literary text is not only about decoding different languages, but also bringing into another culture aspects of a certain literary tradition. Joyce's masterpiece, for instance, contains a noteworthy presence of William Shakespeare's work. The Shakespearean intertext in Joyce's work contain several layers, which are reflected in the translations of the novel and must be taken into consideration in their study. In view of the foregoing, this paper introduces the starting considerations of an ongoing doctorate research that aims to examine how the Brazilian translators of *Ulysses* dealt with the Shakespearean references in Joyce's novel. The focus will rely on examples from the episodes "Telemachus" and "Proteus".

Keywords: Joyce; Shakespeare; *Ulysses*; Translations.

James Joyce and William Shakespeare are landmarks of our literature for several reasons. As a dramatist from the transition between Middle Ages and the Renaissance and living in the golden age of theatre in England, Shakespeare stood out in history as the most prominent writer of his time among several other playwrights, and, as Ben Jonson announces in the elegy in the *First Folio* – "He was not of an age but for all time!". Joyce, by his turn, is mostly known by his work in prose, although he had also written poetry and drama. His last work – *Finnegans Wake* – has

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achieved such degree of experimentalism of the possibilities of language that is hardly to fit into some literary genre. Joyce's masterpiece, *Ulysses*, which celebrates the hundredth year of its publication, became "the novel to end all the novels" (Levin 1960: 171).

Ulysses unquestionably meant a rupture in the model of literary prose that predominated so far, mostly in virtue of the profound exploration of a technique called "interior monologue" – which has not been invented by Joyce, but certainly he was the one who employed it in its utmost. The "interior monologue" intends to reproduce the flow of consciousness of the character, breaking up with the focus on the narrator and going beyond the free indirect speech. It is an attempt to catch up with and convey the characters' thoughts at the moment they are being processed, breaking up the hierarchy between what is relevant and what is banal – one of Joyce's goals when he published his modern, parodical rewriting of the Homer's *Odyssey*.

Literary tradition relates to the construction of a cultural and collective memory in which the past is reinterpreted though the perspective of the present. As a rewriting of literary texts from the past, translation contributes to the expansion of some author's horizon through diverse cultures and into distinct historical times.

In view of the foregoing, this paper introduces the starting considerations of an ongoing doctorate research that aims to examine how the Brazilian translators of Ulysses dealt with the Shakespearean references in Joyce's novel. This study considers that they translate into a system that does not hold Shakespeare's work as part of its cultural and collective memory in the same level as in English-speaking language cultures in general. The focus is on the presence of *Hamlet* and its literary effects on the novel and how such effects are transposed into Brazilian Portuguese on the episodes "Telemachus" and "Proteus" as both are primarily focused on the character of Stephen Dedalus, developing a connection between the events of these chapters and *Hamlet.*

The discussion over intertextuality is related to cultural and collective memory because the access to some intertext demands a previous knowledge of literary tradition of a specific culture. In case of Shakespeare and Joyce, we are referring to the culture of literature in English language. Joyce's masterpiece – *Ulysses* – contains a noteworthy presence of William Shakespeare's work. Harold

Bloom (1994) calls *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* "Shakespeare-Soaked epics". Laura Pelaschiar (2015) points out that the shakespearean intertext in Joyce's work contain several layers, and this presence is "unearth to access because it is non-systematic and covert", i.e., scattered all over the novel, unlike the allusions to *Odyssey* which are made visible through other resources like the title and the Homeric schemata.

According to several researchers who focused on this relationship, Joyce views Shakespeare as a kind of rival, a father or even a divine figure. Harry Levin (1960) contends that Joyce seeks a father in Shakespeare. Harold Bloom (1996) argues Shakespeare is the ideal writer that Joyce searches for himself: a writer that has no precursor or successor, he is not haunted by dead writers, nor will he be overcome by those who follow him – Shakespeare is a divine figure in that sense.

Hamlet contains several allusions and references throughout the novel, as well as echoes that are only heard through deep textual and literary analysis, as the correspondence between Mulligan's rejection of Dedalus' feelings towards the offence about his mother – "it's a beastly thing and nothing else" – and Claudius' criticism over Hamlet's grief about his father's death: "It shows a will most incorrect to heaven, / A heart unfortified, a mind impatient, / And understanding simple and unschooled" (I.ii.89-97)

The Shakespeare's iconic tragedy thus plays a major role in the construction of meaning in the novel. Hugh Kenner argues that Hamlet works as one of the myths – along with Dedalus and Homer - that reinforce the Homeric situation:

> The shift from the Odyssey into Hamlet is accompanied by a great increase in psychological intensity, and by a displacement of the centre from errant father to tortured son. Hamlet is in this sense simply the Odyssey narrated from the point of view of a tortured Telemachus (p. 101).

These different myths, therefore, shape an intertextual web which contributes to the form of the novl. David Weir (2015), for instance, states that Joyce reconciles three traditions to transform his work into a new, modernist form of expression: the medieval through a Dantesque design; the

classical through a Homeric narrative; and the Renaissance through a Shakespearian plot. Weir argues that the plot complications of *Ulysses* derive from Joyce's sense of Shakespeare.

Considering the relevance of this intertextuality, I pose the following research question: how have the Brazilian translations approached this intertextuality into Portuguese? As an example of a similar research, Fritz Senn, Jolanta Wawrzycka and Veronika Kovacs (2016) have examined how the Shakespearean allusions and references achieved the *Ulysses* translations in several languages: French, German, Spanish, Italian, Polish and Hungarian. They concluded that German translations proved to turn Shakespeare's quotations more visible in their respective target texts, while translations into Polish or Hungarian hid the Shakespearean presence mostly because there are no canonical translations in this culture just like it does in Germany.

Translations have their limits, they are limited by their sociocultural context, by the historical background of the receiving culture, so this research does not intend to say that this translation is better because the translator paid more attention to the Shakespearean reference than the other – the limits of the translations must be also object of research not to elucidate the translator's limit, but to make visible an aspect of the reception of *Ulysses* in Brazil through translation.

In Brazil, *Ulysses* received three different translations. The first translation in Portuguese in the world was published in Brazil in 1966, a very complex period in Brazil because of the military dictatorship that has took the power through two years earlier, and Antônio Houaiss, who worked as a diplomat and was fired because of his political opinions, was invited to translate the novel by Civilização Brasileira, a well-known publishing house at the time. He took one year long to translate the whole novel, and his translation had a good reception at first. At the same time, however, it ran down in history as a hermetic translation because of the formal character of his text that, according to criticism, didn't consider the differences of register in the novel. In addition to his background as a diplomat, Antônio Houaiss also stood out as a lexicographer and literary critic, and his Dictionary of Portuguese Language remains as a reference in our country these days.

The other two translations of *Ulysses* were published more recently. Nearly forty years later, in 2005, the second translation by Bernardina da Silveira Pinheiro was published by Objetiva. She

was a professor of English literature of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. The reception of Bernardina's translation was viewed as a version that wanted to turn Joyce's text into a more fluid text in Portuguese, as a reaction to Houaiss's translation. Her translation was well received because of her proposal in producing a more accessible version of this work, although it was criticized as well for the same reason because it would have changed the original text.

In 2012, Caetano Galindo's translation came up as the third version of *Ulysses* in Brazil by Companhia das Letras. Galindo is a professor of Historical Linguistics at the Federal University of Paraná. His translation is commonly considered as intermediary between the previous translations, as he concerned the fluency of the text to achieve the Brazilian common reader, not only the specialist, but without changing the formal aspects of the novel (Vargas 2018).

In the first episode of the novel – "Telemachus" – Stephen Dedalus's state of mind is strictly related to the Hamletian theme of paternity and usurpation – both important themes in Joyce's work. In the very beginning of the novel, Buck Mulligan is shaving at the top of Martello tower, one of the defensive forts which were built by British Empire during the 19th century and now expresses a specific moment of the historical connection between England and Ireland, another major theme in this chapter because of Haines, the 'Oxford man' whose presence in the tower bothers Stephen Dedalus.

Both setting and action of this chapter recall the early scenes of Hamlet, as evidenced in the way that Haines describes the Martello tower, this legacy of the British Empire. He characterizes it as similar to the tower and cliffs of Elsinore, the castle where the whole plot of the Shakespeare's play is set: "[…] this tower and these cliffs here remind me somehow of Elsinore. *That beetles o'er his base into the sea, isn't it?*" (15). The sentence in italics is a direct quote by Horace from Hamlet's first act of the play, referring to the castle when trying to persuade Hamlet not to follow his father's ghost, dreadful of the possibility that the apparition led him to drown in the sea:

> HORATIO:
> What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord,
> Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff

> *That beetles o'er his base into the sea*,
> And there assume other horrible form
> Which might deprive your sovereigny of reason,
> And draw you into madness? Think of it.
> (I, iv, 69-74, italics added)

It is worth recalling that there are two versions of Horace's speech because of the different versions of the play. The play in the Folio excludes 222 lines – four of them from this Horace's speech from the Second quarto (Q2), which essentially changes the interpretation of his warning:

> HORATIO:
> What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord,
> Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff
> That beetles o'er his base into the sea,
> And there assume other horrible form
> Which might deprive your sovereigny of reason,
> And draw you into madness? Think of it.
> [*The very place puts toys in desperation*
> *Without more motive, into every brain*
> *That looks so many fathoms to the sea*
> *And hears it roar beneath*]
> (I, iv, 69-74, italics added)

According to Phillip Edwards (2003), the continuation of the speech provides that idea that "the place, not the Ghost, puts the idea of suicide into people's minds. Hamlet doesn't need a cliff to put thoughts of suicide into his head" (13). Haines wanted to praise the tower and emphasize its presence just like the Elsinore castle symbolized a relevant presence in the Danish coast, as the center of all events of the play as well as it denotes the center of power for which there is a lot of struggle and bloodshed.

Houaiss translated this excerpt into the following way: “Que salta das suas bases sobre o mar” (1967: 21), which is shortly similar to Galindo’s version: “Lançando-as da base sobre o mar” (2012: 117). Both convey the idea of castle’s movement, giving it the status of an autonomous subject that comes up from the sea and stands by itself. Both concerned the Shakespearean iambic pentameter, translating into the decasyllabic verse to produce the same effect of Shakespearean speech. Bernardina, by her turn, translated the sentence more literally and in prose: “Que se projeta acima de sua base sobre o mar” (2007: 29). Her decision left aside the intensity and vigor that is attributed to the place in Horace’s utterance, which softens the exaltation of the tower intended by Haines, that by his turn evoked Horace’s anguish towards it.

In the third episode, “Proteus”, Stephen roams throughout the Sandymount strand in a deep, reflective monologue as he heads towards Dublin. The following reflection comes up to his mind when he approaches the sea and starts to stare at the Martello tower: “Take all, keep all. My soul walks with me, form of forms. So, in the moon midwatches I pace the path above the rocks, in sable silvered, hearing Elsinore’s tempting flood” (37). In *Hamlet*, ‘Sable silvered’ refers to the description given by Horace to Hamlet regarding the beard’s hue of the appearance he had seen in the early scenes of the play: “It was as I have seen it in his life, a sable silvered” (I.II.240-2) after Hamlet asked about this - “His beard was grizzled, no?” (I.II.238).

Houaiss translated this whole passage this way: “Assim aos meios-quartos da lua palmilho o trilho acima das rochas, em areia prateada, ouvindo a maré aliciante de Elsinore (1967: 50)”. He chooses “areia preateada” just like Bernardina: “Assim sob as meias-vigílias da lua eu ando a passos largos pelo caminho acima das rochas, de areia prateada, ouvindo a torrente tentadora de Elsinore (2007: 66)”. Otherwise, Galindo decided for “sable argentado”: Assim nos turnos da lua transponho a trilha sobre as pedras, em sable argentado, ouvindo a maré tentadora de Elsinore (2012: 151).

Houaiss’s and Bernardina’s choice connects with Stephen’s scenery in this episode, as he is walking through the sands: “areia prateada” is a literal translation of “silver sand”. This reference, however, may also imply that he considers himself a ghost wandering in a lonely pace, watching in the distance a tower inhabited by people that he despises – if we assume that he refers to the Shakespearean play. Galindo’s option keeps the ambiguity, as ‘sable’ – a “sable argentando”

would be a literal translation of "argented sable" - may refer to a kind of sand, which relates to Joyce's scenery, and is also a tone of black, which in its turn regards to Horace's description.

The "Elsinore's tempting flood" mentioned by Stephen recalls the moment of the first act of the play in which Hamlet follows the ghost's calling. Horace alarms him: "What if tempt you toward the flood my lord" (I.II.69). This passage was translated into "a maré aliciante de Elsinore" by Houaiss (50); "a torrente tentadora de Elsinore" (51) by Bernardina; and "a maré tentadora de Elsinore" by Galindo (151). Houaiss and Galindo softened the expression by using the word 'maré', which is literally "tide" in Portuguese and Bernardina drew attention to a certain power of the sea as the word "torrente" – the equivalent to 'torrent' in Portuguese - conveys the sense of violence and abundance, as if the flood could have the power of pulling. We can point a noteworthy distinction here: Stephen says that the flood is 'tempting', but Horace meant that the ghost could tempt Hamlet towards the flood, and not the flood itself. Not only Joyce brings up Shakespeare but also transforms the meanings of the play in his novel.

Hamlet plays a major relevance in the novel because it helps us to understand the state of mind of Stephen in different moments of the novel through the connection of Elsinore – the scenery of the play – with his feeling of usurpation from his own residence. Understanding Joyce then implies understanding the Shakespearean intertext that lies behind it. As we could see, the translators took different decisions in their approach to Shakespearean presence and thus produced different ways of viewing the English poet in their versions. Sometimes it connects to Shakespeare, sometimes it keeps some distance to the play, hiding the Shakespearean presence in the target text. This approach will be applied to the episodes that follow in order to find out how the hamletian theme arises in Joyce's text in his translations – considering that studying Joyce's translation in other culture which is built on another historical memory means to reveal new ways of interpreting his text.

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