

consequence, Gottfried makes closer readers of us all, while assuring us that we may never fully understand what we have read.

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NOTES

¹ Wyndham Lewis, *The Letters of Wyndham Lewis*, ed. W. K. Rose (Norfolk: New Directions, 1963), p. 466.

² John F. Byrne, *Silent Years: An Autobiography with Memoirs of James Joyce and Our Ireland* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1953), p. 147.

³ Sylvia Beach, *Shakespeare and Company* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1959), p. 185.

⁴ See Herbert S. Gorman, *James Joyce* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1939); J. B. Lyons, *James Joyce and Medicine* (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1973); and Stanislaus Joyce, *The Complete Dublin Diary of Stanislaus Joyce*, ed. George Harris Healey (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1971). Further references to the Gorman and Stanislaus Joyce works will be cited parenthetically in the text.

⁵ Stanislaus Joyce, *Trieste Diary*, photocopy, Richard Ellmann Collection, McFarlin Library, University of Tulsa.

⁶ See Kevin Sullivan, *Joyce among the Jesuits* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1958), p. 40.

⁷ See Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother's Keeper* (New York: Viking Press, 1958).

ULYSSES, by James Joyce, translated by Paul Claes and Mon Nys.
Amsterdam: Uitgeverij De Bezige Bij, 1994. 859 pp. \$65.00.

In the afterword to their new translation of *Ulysses*, Paul Claes and Mon Nys quote the original Dutch translator of the great "Blue Book of Eccles" (FW 179.27), John Vandenberg, to the effect that "a translation of James Joyce's *Ulysses* is still considered a daring act" (853).¹ Vandenberg penned this remark back in 1969 as his work, the first ever translation of *Ulysses* into Dutch, was going to press. But the act of Claes and Nys is doubly daring since, in addition to enduring the inevitable slings and arrows of outrageous critics, they happen to be Belgian, and their translation of Joyce's epic into Flemish (as opposed to "standard" Dutch) has ignited a linguistic civil war between the northern Dutch and the southern Belgian speakers of Dutch.

The first salvo in this scholarly spat came in the form of an article by Christine van Boheemen, of the University of Amsterdam, in *De Gids*, one of Holland's most venerable literary journals.² Referring

to an interview with the translators in the Dutch weekly *Vrij Nederland*, van Boheemen explains that Claes and Nys believed that they had translated *Ulysses* into "standard" Dutch, except for certain Hiberno-English expressions that were rendered with Flemish equivalents, and she quotes the translators from the *Vrij Nederland* interview:

The entire text of *Ulysses* [has] an Anglo-Irish tint. . . . In the beginning, we thought about giving our translation a Flemish tint in the same way, but the effect was overdone. That's why we decided on standard Dutch. We realize that we as southern Dutch choose other terms in the standard language than someone from Amsterdam, so that in the end our translation has as many strange effects as *Ulysses* itself. (38)³

Van Boheemen points to an inherent contradiction in this statement. "On the one hand," she writes, "[Claes and Nys] translate into standard Dutch, on the other hand they use expressions that someone from Amsterdam would not employ" (39). The implication here is that anyone who uses expressions not current in Amsterdam cannot be using standard Dutch.

Van Boheemen's article then takes a peculiar twist. Instead of turning to the text to see how this strategy actually works in practice—to see if, indeed, the Claes and Nys translation is "standard" Dutch—she recounts her reaction when a Flemish acquaintance informed her that the term "house party" is translated as "huisfuij" in Flemish. Upon hearing this, van Boheemen's reaction was one of "surprise, disbelief (they must be kidding?), and, eventually, poetic endearment" (39). Van Boheemen follows this revelation with the question, "To what extent is a translation with the 'strange effects' of a Flemish accent still a standard Dutch translation?" (39). Again, the implicit criticism here seems to be that such "strange effects" as the use of "huisfuij" in Flemish for "house party" disqualify the Claes and Nys translation from being considered "standard" Dutch. Nevertheless, Van Boheemen concludes her article with the statement: "Southern Dutch, though different, is standard Dutch too. Vive la différence" (39).

A Belgian response arrived in the April 1995 issue of *De Gids* in the form of an article by Geert Lernout of the University of Antwerp.⁴ First, Lernout states categorically that neither he nor any of his immediate friends refers to a house party as a "huisfuij." With this important semantic point neatly dispatched, he goes on to lament that Claes and Nys did not go further in making their translation more Flemish. "It's a shame that the translators missed the chance to turn the Irish English . . . that many characters speak in *Ulysses* into Flemish," he writes (314).

The relationship between Flanders and Holland resembles that between Ireland and England in many respects. The English spoken in Dublin deviates slightly but recognizably from standard English, and in many cases makes use of English words that have disappeared from the standard language or are considered old-fashioned. (314-15)

To illustrate his point, Lernout cites a number of instances in which the Irish syntax used in *Ulysses* (in the first episode, the scene with the milkwoman, for example) could have been mirrored in Flemish.

While his theory of Flemish parallels—both historical and linguistic—might be something of a stretch, Lernout does note that many of the allegedly Flemish words found in the Claes and Nys translation are actually “good old blunt” Dutch (P 251). He compares this state of affairs with the scene in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* in which the dean of studies is surprised by Stephen’s use of the word “tundish” (P 188-89). Lernout then quotes Stephen’s diary of 13 April to good effect:

That tundish has been on my mind for a long time. I looked it up and find it English and good old blunt English too. Damn the dean of studies and his funnel! What did he come here for to teach us his own language or to learn it from us? (317, P 251)

Lernout saves his harshest criticism, however, for the patronizing tone of van Boheemen’s remarks:

In her postmodern abhorrence of discrimination, hierarchies and ontological priorities, . . . van Boheemen throws the baby out with the bath water. . . . There could be more openness in Holland for . . . Flemish variants. The openness is there and is becoming greater: I notice less and less poetic endearment when I’m in Holland. (317)

Lernout closes with a last bit of advice: “Dutch readers of the new *Ulysses*: Beware of the tundish! And in God’s name use a dictionary before you make statements about your own language” (317).

Given all this cross-border controversy, the reader could very well be distracted from a proper consideration of the translation itself. In their afterword, Claes (who is the author of a collection of poems and short stories as well as a novel and who has translated Sappho, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Ezra Pound) and Nys (who has written about Joyce, Samuel Beckett, and Gertrude Stein and has translated from Chinese and old Irish) write:

Ulysses is in a certain sense a compendium of styles. . . . We have tried to follow Joyce in his most Baroque poeticism and driest prosaicism. Close attention was paid to the innumerable sound effects, especially

in the musical eleventh chapter. . . . *Ulysses* is one of the world’s most comical books. A translation that doesn’t make the reader laugh is a failure. (858)

Claes and Nys thus set out to express something of *Ulysses*’ stylistic plurality, its multitudinous sound effects, and its rollicking humor in Dutch. It seems only fair, then, to examine the work based on what the translators themselves set out to accomplish.

Regarding style, as good a place as any to start is with “Nausicaa.” What follows is this episode’s opening paragraph from the original, from the 1970 Vandenberg translation, and from Claes and Nys’s work:

Far away in the west the sun was setting and the last glow of all too fleeting day lingered lovingly on sea and strand, on the proud promontory of dear old Howth guarding as ever the waters of the bay, on the weedgrown rocks along Sandymount shore and, last but not least, on the quiet church whence there streamed forth at times upon the stillness the voice of prayer to her who is in her pure radiance a beacon ever to the stormtossed heart of man, Mary, star of the sea. (U 13.02-08)

Verweg in het westen was de zon aan het ondergaan en de laatste gloer van een al te snel vervlietende dag toefde teder op zee en strand, op het fierre voorgebergte van Howth dat oud en dierbaar als immer de wateren van de baai schutte, op de met zeewier overdekte rotsen langs het strand van Sandymount en, zeker niet te vergeten, op het rustige kerkje waaruit van tijd tot tijd de stilte verbrekend een gebedstem uitstroomde naar haar die in haar zuiver stralend wezen een eeuwig baken is voor het door de stormen heen en weer geslingerde mensenhart, Maria, sterre der zee.⁵

In het westen zonk de zon ter kimme en teder talmde de laatste gloed van het al te vluchtige daglicht nog over zee en zand, over de koene kaap Howth, die trouw als immer waakte over de wateren van de baai, over de met weer begroeide rotsen langs het strand van Sandymount en, niet het minst, over het stemmige kerkje waaruit bij tijd en wijle een biddende stem uit de stilte opklonk tot haar die in haar reine glans een eeuwig baken is voor het door stormen geteisterd mensenhart, Maria, ster der zee. (367)

Here, Claes and Nys succeed beautifully—and surpass Vandenberg—in matching the elegant gooeyness of Joyce’s overwrought and purple prose. In this sentence, Vandenberg’s translation of “the sun was setting” with “zon aan het ondergaan” is perfectly accurate. Yet, given the overriding sentimentality of the episode, it is also too bald, too prosaic. While technically inaccurate, Claes and Nys use a more exaggerated variation, “zonk de zon ter kimme”—literally “the

sun sank below the horizon"—which captures both the bathos and the melodrama that characterizes the episode as a whole. Similarly, Vandenberg's translation of "her pure radiance" with "zuiver stralend wezen"—literally "her pure radiant being"—is too theological and abstract in tone. Claes and Nys's version—"reine glans" or "pure splendor"—fits much better into the dime novel romance mold on which this episode was modeled. But Claes and Nys themselves admit that they were unable to follow Joyce in all his stylistic vagaries. Due to the fact that Dutch literature has had a very different evolution than English literature, the translators were unable to find complementary variants for the literary pastiche of episode 14.

During a dramatic reading of Joyce's work at the 1994 Joyce Symposium in Seville, David Norris likened the acoustic effects of "Sirens" to an orchestra warming up. If this is so, then the "steelyringing" in the opening line "Bronze by gold heard the hoofirons, steelyringing" (U 11.01) is the sound of a tuning fork being struck. Vandenberg captures this effect nicely with "Brons naast goud hoorden de hoefijzers, klingklangstaal" (297). Claes and Nys copy him in everything but the last word: "Brons naast goud hoorden de hoefijzers, staalgekleter" (273). Vandenberg's "klingklangstaal" captures well the sharp light sounds of horses' hooves striking the cobbled pavement while remaining within the episode's musical framework. If not a tuning fork exactly, "klingklangstaal" is at least a fair approximation of a triangle or a cymbal being struck. One would expect to hear Claes and Nys's "staalgekleter," however, in a steel works rather than an orchestra. It is a much harsher, heavier sound and—given the guttural pronunciation of the Dutch "g"—decidedly unmusical. In the opening passages of this episode, Vandenberg scores better as a composer of acoustical effects.

Claes and Nys make good on their promise to carry over some of the humor of *Ulysses* into Dutch. A minor but telling example of this is that, unlike Vandenberg, Claes and Nys translate Joyce's pseudo-Sanskrit in "Cyclops" into funny Dutch equivalents. Thus, Joyce's original "talafana, alavata, hatakald, wataklasat" (U 12.354) become "talafana, laftkabana, waramwata, wataklasat" (320) in the Claes and Nys translation. "[T]alafana" and "wataklasat" already work well in Dutch. But Claes and Nys demonstrate deftness and enormous attention to detail in coming up with "laftkabana" (lift cabin or elevator in Dutch) and "waramwata" (warm water in Dutch).

In summary, the new Claes and Nys translation is a welcome and much needed addition to existing Dutch translations of Joyce's work. Apart from modernizing language usage and adding a Flemish touch, this new translation corrects many of the mistakes of transla-

tion and interpretation that marred the Vandenberg edition. In this respect, Claes and Nys acknowledge their debt to the Joyce critics and textual scholars who have published so much since 1970. But perhaps the translation's greatest achievement is that it has sparked a lively debate between the Dutch and the Flemish about the common language that separates them. It thus seems likely that Joyceans in the Low Countries will be fretting in the shadow of their own language for some time to come.

Reviewed by James Geary

NOTES

¹ John Vandenberg, *Aantekeningen bij James Joyce's "Ulysses"* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij De Bezige Bij, 1970), p. 212.

² Christine van Boheemen, "Bij de nieuwe vertaling van *Ulysses*," *De Gids* 158 (January 1995), 38-39. All translations from the Dutch are my own. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

³ Paul Claes and Mon Nys, "*Ulysses* is een Feest van Taal," interview by Geert Lernout, *Vrij Nederland* (5 November 1994), 86-87.

⁴ Geert Lernout, "Over huisfuien en houseparty's: de nieuwe vertaling van *Ulysses*," *De Gids* 158 (April 1995), 314-17. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

⁵ James Joyce, *Ulysses*, trans. John Vandenberg (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij De Bezige Bij, 1970), p. 401.

JAMES JOYCE. *BZZLLETIN: Literair Magazine*, edited by Onno Kusters. 219 (October 1994). 96 pp. f12,50.

DUBLIN, *DIE DUBLINER, JOYCE IN DUBLIN LESEN*. *du: Die Zeitschrift der Kultur*, edited by Dieter Bachmann. 647 (March 1995). 108 pp. sFr. 18; DM 18; öS 130.

These two special Joyce issues of magazines published in the Netherlands and in Switzerland serve to remind us that *Ulysses* belongs not only to scholars and native speakers of English but also to everyone's cultural patrimony, from translators and playwrights to the simplest tourist visiting Dublin who has never read a word of Joyce.

The publication of a new Dutch translation of *Ulysses* on 10 November 1994 was heralded by a special Joyce issue of the popular literary journal *BZZLLETIN* under the guest editorship of Onno Kusters. The new translation, by Paul Claes and Mon Nys, was