

# Ex-(Ec)centric Blooming of Names: Echoing Multilingual Layers of Names from Joyce's Works to (South) Slavic Cultures

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## RESUMO

Este artigo tem como objetivo pesquisar os aspectos das transposições de nomes das obras de James Joyce em suas traduções (sul) eslavas, bem como em textos escritos após a leitura da prosa de Joyce em países (sul) eslavos. Como as traduções (sul) eslavas mantêm as formas de ecoar as camadas multilíngues do nome no título do *Ulisses* de Joyce? Esses modelos de transferência de intertextualidade polifônica de nomes em culturas (sul) eslavas têm influência criativa em obras posteriores que estão conscientes do paradigma Homero/Joyce em diálogos? Como as perspectivas do florescimento de nomes das obras de Joyce nas transformações (sul) eslavas abrem novas possibilidades para interpretar os ecos (ex-)cêntricos dos diálogos criativos entre as tradições de traduções e sua reflexão sobre estudos futuros? Estes são alguns dos pontos articulados neste artigo para provar como mesmo no nível micro dos nomes, as camadas multilíngues da globalização na recepção criativa de uma obra dependem de respostas autênticas e excêntricas nas posições culturais (ex-)cêntricas, especialmente quando enfatizam que ecoar as obras de Joyce tem importância significativa para seus pontos de vista.

Palavras-chave: *James Joyce, traduções (sul) eslavas, recepção criativa de nomes.*

## ABSTRACT

This paper aims to research the aspects of the transposition of names from works by James Joyce in their (South) Slavic translations, as well as in texts written after the reading of Joyce's prose in (South) Slavic countries. How do (South) Slavic translations maintain the ways of echoing the multilingual layers of the name in the title of Joyce's *Ulysses*? Do these models of the transfer of polyphonic intertextuality of names in (South) Slavic cultures have a creative influence on further works that are conscious of the Homer/Joyce paradigm in dialogues? How do the perspectives of the blooming of names from Joyce's works in the (South) Slavic transformations open up new possibilities for interpreting the ex-(ec)centric echoes of the creative

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dialogues between the traditions of translations and their reflection on future studies? These are some of the points articulated in this paper to prove how even on the micro level of the names, the multilingual layers of globalization in the creative reception of one work depend on eccentric, authentic answers in the (ex-)centric cultural positions, especially when they emphasize that echoing Joyce's works holds significant importance for their viewpoints.

Keywords: *James Joyce, (South) Slavic translations, creative reception of names.*

Choosing names for titles, protagonists, or places in the novel can be one of the main strategies in writing. This strategy can emphasize the stronghold of literary poetics and actualize many questions regarding the choice. Does the elected name belong to the heritage of the tradition, or does it anticipate the future of the literary circulation? Does it bear a local or universal color? Should it be translated, accommodated in the new transcultural context, or kept unchangeable? Does it influence the creative process of constituting the names in the literary center or beyond? Those are some of the questions that will be analyzed from the perspective of the blooming of names from Joyce's works to its transpositions in (South) Slavic cultures, relying on the ideas of global literature perspectives recreated from the traces of "ex-centric" transcultural transformations through the translations (cf. LIMA, 2017, pp. 461-481).

The transpositions of multilingual layers of names from Joyce's works (CULLETON, 1994) into (South) Slavic cultures begin with the intercultural transfer of the title of Joyce's novel *Ulysses* (JOYCE, 1922). Examining examples of *Ulysses* in Slavic translations reveals how the Slavic context recreates the crucial network of intertextuality between Homer and Joyce,<sup>2</sup> particularly regarding the title. A detailed comparison of (West and East) Slavic translations of *Ulysses* underscores the notable variations. In Czech, the title closely echoes the Greek version of the name – *Odysseus* (JOYCE, 1930; JOYCE, 1976; JOYCE, 2012a), while in Polish and Russian, it echoes the polyphonic aspect of the combination of the Latin over the Greek version of the name – *Ulisses* (JOYCE, 1969) and *Uliss* (JOYCE, 1993). This suggests that in some West and East Slavic countries, translations of the name *Ulysses* are more or less evidently recognized as a kind of intertextual transformation of Homer's hero name, marking the first step in the introduction of the polyphonic system of names and its multilingual layers in the Slavic translations of Joyce's works.

The variations in the South Slavic translations of *Ulysses* add an intriguing layer to the discussion. In Bulgarian, it is titled – *Odisej* (JOYCE, 2011), while in Macedonian, it is – *Ulis* (JOYCE, 1977); in Croatian and Serbian, it is referred to as – *Uliks* (JOYCE 1957; JOYCE 1991; JOYCE 2001) and in Slovenian, it becomes – *Ulikses* (JOYCE 1967). Comparing these titles prompts consideration of how the Homer versus Joyce template is perceived in translations (KOSTERS, 2009, p. 57-76). Additionally, it raises questions about the typology of the resonance of multilingual name variations. Why, for instance, do Slovenian, Croatian, and Serbian translations include the letter "k" – *Ulikses* (JOYCE 1967) and *Uliks* (JOYCE 1957; JOYCE 1991; JOYCE 2001), while the Macedonian translation does not have it – *Ulis* (JOYCE 1977)?

In the following segment of the text on the translation process, Zoran Paunović, the translator of *Ulysses* in Serbian (JOYCE, 2001), attempts to elucidate the difference in the variation of the title's form:

"Regarding the title, it is pertinent to address the question: why *Uliks*, and not *Ulis*, which would be closer to the English version of Odysseus' name – *Ulysses*? The answer is simple: *Uliks* not only sounds sharper and bolder than the slightly softer *Ulis* (which is crucial for the novel's parody level), but it also aligns more closely in pronunciation with the Latin variant of Homer's hero's name – *Ulixes* – from which the English *Ulysses* is derived. That summarizes the rationale behind the title" (PAUNOVIĆ, 2004, p. 437).

2 For some analyses regarding the complexity of intertextuality in Joyce's novel, emphasized by its title, see KOSTERS, 2009, p. 57.

In terms of the poetics of translation within the Serbian cultural and academic sphere, Paunović's commentary on the translation of the title indicates that, on a phonetic level, a discussion could be held between the ways of translating the name of the hero and keeping multilingual symbolism of the title as a semiotic recognition of cultures (Greek, Latin, English) in a polylogue of translations (cf. PAUNOVIĆ, 2004, p. 437). By articulating a name that carries historical tradition within translational variants, Joyce creatively influenced his translators to emphasize transferring the possibility of debate to a metapoetic context across different translation traditions (cf. ĐURIĆ, 2020, p. 173). The above illustrates how (South) Slavic translations, by defining the sound symbolism of the single consonant "k," corresponding to the Latin version of the name – *Ulixes* (PAUNOVIĆ, 2004, p. 437), maintain the practice of echoing the multilingual layers inherent in the polyphonic combination of Greek and Latin variants of the name in Joyce's title in some South Slavic countries.

However, the analyzed choices of polyphonic combinations in translations of *Ulysses* in (South) Slavic countries also reveal the profound role of these models in the continuity of intertextual transfer of names in (South) Slavic cultures. Do these models creatively influence further works that are conscious of the Homer/Joyce paradigm in dialogues? Is a hero in the later works Uliś or Uliks? An avant-garde poet like Rade Drainac chose to have a book of poems called *Uliś* in 1938 (DRAINAC, 1938). The modernist writer Jovan Hristić in 1954 published *Dnevnik o Uliśu* [*The Diary about Ulysses*] (HRISTIĆ, 1954).<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the titles of direct works of Joyce in Serbian have the consonant "k" in translations. For example, there is Derrida's *Ulyśse gramophone, deux mots pour Joyce* (DERRIDA, 1987), transposed as *Uliks gramofon: da-govor kod Džojśa* (DERIDA 1997), or the script *Uliks*, written by Puriśa Đorđević, which developed the plot according to motifs taken from *Ulysses* and *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (ĐORĐEVIĆ, 2021). It means that the "ex-centric" echoing of the names from Joyce's works activates different aspects of the Homeric or Joycean layers of the text, which on the metapoetical level shows consciousness of the new text or the translation of the poetical tradition of previous dialogues and dynamism between Joyce's reading of Homer and Homer transformed after new readings of Joyce in some (South) Slavic cultures (MIHÁLYCSA, WAWRZYCKA, SENN, 2012, p. 209; cf. ĐURIĆ, 2018, p. 22).

Ex-centric echoing of the multilingual layers between Homer/Joyce's conversion of the title is not just the case in 20<sup>th</sup>-century South Slavic literatures. The next quotation comes from Elena Ferrante's novel *The Story of a New Name* (*Storia del nuovo cognomen*) and is articulated as an intertextual investigation of the ex-centric transposition of the title, following the metapoetical architecture and the spirit of the leitmotifs of the episodes usually called "Ithaca" and "Nestor":

<sup>3</sup> For the analyses of those texts in the flow of the creative reception of Joyce's works through 20<sup>th</sup>-century Serbian literature, see also ĐURIĆ, 2017; ĐURIĆ, 2018, p. 22.

“‘Cos’è?’

Lila s’innervosì. La maestra era cambiata nell’aspetto, nella voce, in tutto, tranne che negli occhi e nel tono brusco, lo stesso di quando le rivolgeva una domanda dalla cattedra. Allora anche lei non si mostrò cambiata, le rispose indolente e insieme aggressiva: ‘S’intitola *Ulisse*’.

‘Parla dell’*Odissea*?’

‘No, parla di quant’è terra terra la vita d’oggi’” (FERRANTE, 2012);

“‘What is it?’

Lila became nervous. The teacher’s looks had changed, her voice, everything about her, except her eyes and the sharp tones, the same tones as when she had asked her a question in the classroom. So, she, too, showed that she hadn’t changed, she answered in a lazy yet aggressive way: ‘The title is *Ulysses*.’

‘Is it about the *Odyssey*?’

‘No, it’s about how prosaic life is today.’” (FERRANTE, 2015, p. 365).

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According to Italian translations of Homer and Joyce – *Odissea* (OMERO, 1926), *Ulisse* (JOYCE, 1960; JOYCE, 2012b; JOYCE, 2013) – the segment mentioned in Ferrante’s novel incorporates the multilingual echoes of the historical line of translations. The change between the transposition of the name of the hero Ulysses and the name of the book *Odyssey* (FERRANTE, 2015, p. 365) proves how the metanarrative and intertextual perspectives related to Joyce’s work demonstrate the depathetization of the status of the models of interactive reading and intertextual interpretation in the time of contemporary culture. Excentric blooming of names is both a readable and an unreadable code for the whole history of reception and translations of texts in the target culture.

### **From *Belgradija* to *Pulisej***

It was also observed that Joyce ascribed importance to the words that belong to the corpus of Slavic toponyms, religion, and ways of greeting in everyday life, that is, words that determine Slavic people in general and their perception of language, time, and space (ENGELHART, 2002, p. 44-47). The research carried out to date



has shown that Joyce's reliance on Slavic languages, religious and cultural heritage grew stronger in fields of interest concerned with spiritual *otherness* compared with the tradition he belonged to, so that some of the keywords from Slavic languages in *Finnegans Wake* are also emphasized as *concepts* of other people's culture, relating to the *soul, faith, house, brother, letter, river, or specific names of rivers* (FOMENKO, 2012). The names of (Slavic) cities and rivers in *Finnegans Wake* naturally echo multilingual layers (for example, "moravar" [Morava] (FW 172.11, 213.9), "Boyana" [Bojana] (FW 198.5), "draves" [Drava] (FW 214.35), "sava" [Sava] (FW 205.22), "Save" [Sava] (FW 208.2)), and the question is what happens to the polyphony of those layers when (re) translated in Slavic languages (cf. ĐURIĆ, 2020, p. 165-178). The example "in Belgradia" (FW 534.22), a possible allusion to Belgrade (Beograd), the capital of Serbia, in Serbian translation becomes not grammatically expected "u Beogradu," but emphasized as a neologism with the incorporation of the perspective of the multilingual otherness – "in Belgradiji" (JOYCE, 2017, p. 129; cf. ĐURIĆ, 2020, p. 177).

Similar types of this "ex-centric" polyphony of the translation of the naming of the place and hero are also part of some postmodern examples of creative receptions of Joyce's works in South Slavic literatures. Croatian author Boris Senker created *Pulisej*, whose name is constructed as the symbolic transfer of the idea of the wanderings of Homer's Odisej (Odysseus) and the status of the city of Pula for Joyce (SENKER, 2007, p. 217-260). The eighteen different intermedial representations, inspired by Joyce's life in Pula, are written using *Ulysses'* techniques of linguistic experiments, so they have evident intertextual, polyphonic values (SENKER, 2007, p. 217-260). It is a story of the hero who "is escaping into words, into small and big lies, into stories, into make-believes that he offers for two or three pennies per line, as street vendors offer small and big portions of roasted chestnuts, and he thinks he is different, he is special, extraordinary, unique..." (SENKER, 2007, p. 257; trans. Grgić, Pavlović). Many referential connections to Joyce's biography, and also the polyphony of names and places in *Finnegans Wake* evoke perspectives of Senker's ex-(ec)centric blooming of names as the rich vision of strategies of Joycean polyphonic intertextuality in translation. With the question, is the name of Senker's work in English transposed as Pulisseus?

Another type of the "ex-(ec)centric" climax of creative reception of *Finnegans Wake* in South Slavic cultures is "Život i rad Šimuna Frojdenrajha, hrvatskog Džojša (1900–1975) i njegovo kapitano djelo *Buđenje Smail-age*", *Hrvatski Joyce i druge igre*, ["The Life and Work of Simon Freudenreich, the Croatian Joyce (1900–1975) and His Masterpiece *Wake of Smail-Aga*", *Croatian Joyce and Other Games*, whose author is Antun Šoljan (ŠOLJAN 1989), the translator of Joyce's *Giacomo Joyce* (JOYCE, 1981, p. 275-291). Intertextual reference is made here not only to Joyce but also to the (MAŽURANIĆ, 1911) ironical resemantization of the epic tradition of Ivan Mažuranić's work *Smrt Smail-age Čengića – The Death of Smail Aga*, written in 1846 (MAZURANIC, 1918). In the incompleteness of action and realization of annotations, comments, or intertextual elements of the prepared work

with postmodern metanarrative distance, Šoljan indirectly raises the question of reception possibilities and limits through the cultural polyphony of the names Joyce and Freud (cf. ĐURIĆ, 2023, p. 120). The editor's introduction emphasizing the biographic and poetic echoes between transcultural fact and fiction of the authors, especially in constituting the conceptual relationship of meaning and sound and modes of dealing with textual templates, shows how the creative reception of Joycean names becomes a theme for new works in (South) Slavic cultures (cf. ĐURIĆ, 2023, p. 120).

**Leopold Bloom/Lejla Begić; Molly/Margo**

The reception of the creative plays with Bloom's name in *Ulysses* brought some refreshing solutions to understanding naming in Lana Bastašić's novel *Uhvati zeca* [*Catch the Rabbit*] (first edition 2018, revised edition 2020), which leads to an implicit creative dialogue with Joyce's opus (BASTAŠIĆ, 2020). Joyce's birthday is the date of the end of Lana Bastašić's novel, and in its *Afterwords*, she mentions *Dubliners* as a significant book for the intertextual dialogues (BASTAŠIĆ, 2020, p. 237). Like in *Finnegans Wake*, the end of the novel *Catch the Rabbit* completes a circle, *riverrun* (FW 3.1), with its beginning (BASTAŠIĆ, 2020, p. 229, 7). That represents the metatextual consciousness of the book, like the new possibility for the polyphonic identity of names. The eccentric palindromic blooming of the name in *Ulysses* also reflects an essential aspect of the duality between identity and intertextuality:

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“Did he find four separating forces between his temporary guest  
and him

Name, age, race, creed.

What anagrams had he made on his name in youth?

Leopold Bloom

Ellpodbomool

Molldopeloob

Bollopedoom

Old Ollebo, M. P.” (U 17.403-409).

The name is also the semiotic representation of creative pluralities and cultural dualities, which shows some new insights into positions of the ex-centric echoing of multilingual layers of names as the literary diplomacy between East and West, both in the diachronic manner of the complexity of historical and in modern perspectives on national, transnational, and world



heritage. This means that changing the name from Joyce's *Ulysses* to Bastašić's novel *Catch the Rabbit* is an attempt to constitute the polyphonic intertextuality of names as a personal history of missing (geopoetic) possibilities: "Ich bin Lela' [...] 'Ich bin Leja. Ich bin Lili.' [...] 'Ich bin Lulu. Ich bin Lala.' [...] 'Ich bin Lo'" (BASTAŠIĆ, 2020, p. 215, 216).

The vowels from Leopold Bloom's name and its transcriptions (U 17.403-409) are connected in the echoes of creative reception in the area of South Slavic cultures (BASTAŠIĆ, 2020, 215, 216).<sup>4</sup> The polyphony of identity traces inscribed in musical variations of Bloom's name, echoing differences of its origin in many traditions (Jewish, Hungarian, Irish), is transposed in Bastašić's novel as the construction of a presence written in German because that is the language of the vast Yugoslavian diaspora in Switzerland, Austria, or Germany (cf. U 17.403-409; BASTAŠIĆ, 2020, p. 215, 216). Metapoetical consciousness evoked in Bastašić's *Afterword*: "But Leopold Blum is not a writer. Neither is Lejla Begić" (BASTAŠIĆ, 2020, 232), underlines how creative reception of Joyce's *Ulysses* in the 21st century guides the concept of polyphonic intertextuality of names through the points of transition across cultural borders and translation as the main idea of connecting different entities of traditions.

From Molly to Margo, between Dublin and Belgrade (especially its part called Novi Beograd), starting in 1914 and finalizing in 1994, "ex-centric" echoing between polyphonic intertextuality of names connects Joyce and Serbian postmodern and contemporary short-story writer Mihajlo Pantić (cf. ĐURIĆ, 2022, p. 600-601):

"I know, I better guess, that the *silencer's* name is somehow quite ordinary, so common. It doesn't matter what her name is, but how she would like to be called. Something like Maggie, Margo, or Molly. In any case on M. The letter M is so elegant, somewhat closed, dark, and mysterious, like the dusty velvet of a theater curtain. My perfect Margo. [...] and earning pocket money at theater performances by silencing loud guys is sometimes really boring and uninteresting. But, my God, something has to be done, something has to be said YES to, although the best questions are the ones you can answer with YES and with NO. YES because it is NO – NO because it is YES. YES, sort of, actually NO. Although NO, although YES" (PANTIĆ, 2016, p. 65-66).

Pantić's creative answer shows polyphonic reflections of the connections between "ex-centric" positions of city atmospheres and timelines, the famous code of Molly's inner monologue – „yes I said yes I will Yes" (U 18.1609),

<sup>4</sup> Regarding the traces of the Joycean paradigm in the contemporary Serbian, (South) Slavic, and world literatures, see ĐURIĆ, 2022, p. 591-606; ĐURIĆ, 2023, p. 105-127.

but also Derrida's theoretical readings of one of the key echoing words of *Ulysses* (DERRIDA, 1987; cf. ĐURIĆ, 2022, p. 600-601), which indicates how the name makes possible this polyphonic intertextuality of the complex history of literature, its translations, theoretical approaches and creative reception in the other culture.

## Conclusion

The polyphonic intertextuality of the "ex-centric" blooming of Joycean names in translation and the creative reception of Joyce's works in (South) Slavic cultures show the possibilities of the extensive readings of Joyce in the history of translating literature written in English into another culture, as well as a look back on the previous achievements in translation.

The analyzed dynamics of echoing multilingual layers of names from Joyce's works in (South) Slavic cultures is implicit and metatextual and represents a special kind of trace of world and global contemporary literature in which modernism and Joyce make one of the crucial standpoints for the creative dialogues. Through the interpretation of impacts, influences, elements of polyphony of multilingual layers, intertextuality, and creative reception, Joyce, in "ex-centric" translations and receptions, may become the global paradigm in the discussions of the role of literature in the contemporary world.

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