

Leonid Livak
“A Thankless Occupation”:
James Joyce and His Translator Ludmila Savitzky

Arriving in Paris in July, 1920, James Joyce and his family did not intend to stay for more than a few weeks but ended up staying for twenty years, largely thanks to the extensive network of devoted and enthusiastic supporters the writer found in Europe’s artistic capital. Some details of Joyce’s early years in Paris are only now coming to light as new information emerges from institutional and private collections, drawing our attention to hitherto ignored figures in Joyce’s entourage. A case in point is Ludmila Savitzky who did much to introduce Joyce to French literary circles and, eventually, to the reader at large by authoring the first French translation of Joyce’s writings — *Dedalus: Portrait de l’artiste jeune par lui-même* (Paris: La Sirène, 1924). Until recently, Savitzky’s name was by and large absent from Joyce studies. But this situation is sure to change with recent discoveries of new documents and the revival of scholarly interest for this writer, literary and theatre critic, translator, and witness to one of the richest periods in Parisian cultural life.¹ Presently, we have enough

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Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from the French are my own. With the exception of Joyce’s letters, reproduced here in the original, all French sources are cited in translation throughout the essay.

¹ I mean the discovery of a trove of documents in Savitzky’s family house, partly published in Guillaume Apollinaire, Mireille Havet, *Correspondance 1913–1917*, ed. Dominique Tiry (Montpellier: Université Paul-Valéry, 2000), and in Mireille Havet, *Journal 1918–1927*, 3 vols., eds. Pierre Plateau, Dominique Tiry (Paris: C. Paulhan, 2003–2008); and the recent publication of Savitzky’s

material to go beyond the cursory mentions of Savitzky in Joyce scholarship, in order to reconstruct an important episode in Joyce's literary career in Paris.²

Like Joyce, Ludmila Ivanovna Savitskaia (1881–1957), better known by an assortment of stage, pen, and married names — Lucie Alfé, Lud, Ludmila J. Rais, Ludmila Bloch-(Savitzky), Ludmila Savitzky — was an expatriate who left her native land in search of cultural and professional freedom. The varied list of her cognomens reflects both the plethora of her activities in Paris — stage acting, literary fiction (poetry and prose, for adults and for children), literary translation from three languages (English, Russian, German), theatre and literary criticism — and the quick succession of three marriages that, at the time, flew in the face of the social and moral conventions from which she had sought liberation in Paris. But this onomastic fluidity also reflects the uncertain identity of an exile who cannot quite settle into a new cultural role, an ambiguity that is also visible in the multiple spellings of her original name (the flickering third l in Ludmil(l)a and all sorts of consonant combinations in the surname).³

Savitzky was born to a family of old landed gentry in Yekaterinburg, in the Urals. Her father, Ivan Savitskii, was a Roman Catholic from Lithuania and a doctor by education; her mother, Anna Alferova (hence Ludmila's first pseudonym, Lucy Alfé) —

correspondence with André Spire, drawn from their archives at the Institut Mémoires de l'Édition Contemporaine (l'Abbaye d'Ardenne).

² Savitzky's autobiography remains unpublished. The present account is based on a combination of sources: the chronology "Ludmila Savitzky (1881–1957)" in the John Rodker Papers (Series V, Box 45, Folder 1) at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin; and the information found throughout her correspondence: Ludmila Savitzky, André Spire, *Une amitié tenace. Correspondance 1910–1957*, ed. Marie-Brunette Spire (Paris: Belles-Lettres, 2010).

³ She writes to Spire (18 April 1923): "In French my name is spelled every which way. I spell it Savitzky, because tz is a better match than ts for the sound of the Russian consonant that is pronounced like the German z or c. It is a Polish name and in Polish it is spelled 'Sawicki' — but try and enunciate this in French!" (*Une amitié tenace*, 427)

a Russian Orthodox from the Ukraine. Both parents espoused radical politics (Anna knew Lenin) that led to their administrative removal to the Russian empire's cultural periphery. In 1889 the family moved to Tiflis (now Tbilisi), where Ivan Savitskii served as a magistrate and Ludmila received her secondary education in a Russian classical gymnasium. She had learned French as a child and early in her life she contracted a dual passion for Russian and French literatures, especially poetry. In 1897, the family moved to Lausanne, one of the centres of Russian political emigration, where they remained for the next three years, the children attending a private *pensionnat*. In 1900 Savitzky saw Paris for the first time as an interpreter for a Russian general touring the Universal Exhibition. From that time on she was always on the move: first came a stay in England, where she studied English literature (1900); then a year-long return to Russia (1901); and a definitive move to Paris (1902), interrupted by another year in England (1903), where she taught French. In Paris, like many other women whose ambitions were frustrated in tsarist Russia, Savitzky enrolled at the Sorbonne. But she was more interested in the bohemian life of Montparnasse, laying the groundwork for her extensive connections in Parisian artistic and literary circles, from Apollinaire and Picasso to Marinetti and Max Jacob. At this time she made her debut as a literary translator, with Maxim Gorky's poems and stories, but then she opted for an acting career and was briefly married to a fellow actor. In 1908 she began to publish poetry and theatre criticism in the French press. Her first collection of poetry and prose, *Les quatre princesses et le coeur fermé*, appeared in 1914, followed in 1920 by another book of literary fiction, this time for children — *La Clairière aux enfants, 1914—1918*.

Savitzky's 1909 meeting with poet and critic André Spire (1868—1966), a friend of her lover and soon-to-be second husband Jules Rais, did much to shape the course of her literary career. Spire became her confidant and advisor who facilitated Savitzky's entry into the world of French publishing, including a number of prestigious reviews (*La Phalange, Les Feuilles libres, Le Mercure de*

France, *La Revue de Paris*, *Les Écrits nouveaux*, *La nouvelle revue française*). Spire also expanded his protégée's circle of literary acquaintances to include such influential figures as Julien Benda, Jean-Richard Bloch (her future brother-in-law), André Fontainas, Daniel Halévy. Crucially for our subject, Spire helped Ludmila establish relations with Anglo-American modernists. A contributor to *The Egoist* and *The Anglo-French Review*, he arranged for Savitzky's collaboration as a literary critic in British and American journals and encouraged her first translations from the works of Richard Aldington, Hilda Doolittle, F. S. Flint, and May Sinclair, a list she expanded to Ezra Pound, John Rodker, Virginia Woolf, and to Joyce himself. It was as a translator and critic that Savitzky met and befriended Ezra Pound who gave her fencing lessons and turned to her when the time came to welcome the Joyces in Paris.

For Pound, who was trying to arrange the publication of Joyce in France, Savitzky was both a translator and a de facto literary agent whose connections and standing in Parisian circles he knew first-hand — she was currently preparing for publication a selection of his poems with an introductory critical essay (printed in *Les Feuilles libres* in August 1920). Better than anyone else, Pound was aware of the linguistic challenges posed by Joyce's texts and his choice of a translator with a multilingual ear and a thorough knowledge of several literary traditions (English, French, German, Russian) could not be more appropriate. Describing later her painstaking stylistic work on *Dedalus*, Savitzky wrote: "Some notes of [the novel's] special music resonate more faithfully in languages other than ours [i.e. French]. A German, a Russian, or an Italian word often springs from under the pen even as one struggles to find a French equivalent. This is not accidental, considering Joyce's striving to overcome the limitations of modern English by seeking, across countries and ages, the words that bring him closer to the fullness of self-expression."⁴

⁴ "Dedalus en France," in James Joyce, *Dedalus. Portrait de l'artiste jeune par lui-même* (Paris: Gallimard, 1943), 14.

Prior to Joyce's arrival, Pound gave Savitzky ("forced upon" would be a more precise term) a copy of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, hoping to interest her in translating it.⁵ He simultaneously pitched the novel to another potential translator, Jenny Serruys, who bowed out citing the difficulty of the task. Savitzky's resolution to undertake the same daunting task at the expense of numerous ongoing projects and with no financial prospects — a "difficult" work by an unknown foreign writer was certain to bring little remuneration — owed as much to aesthetic appreciation, for she made the point of translating only the works appealing to her artistic sensibility, as to the novel's resonance with her personal circumstances. After her marriage to Jules Rais had fallen apart during the war, Savitzky lost a protracted legal battle for the custody of her two daughters. Her letters show that she experienced this drama as a failure to protect her children from what she saw as the vulgar and pedagogically unsound environment of the Rais family. It was only natural that she associated the vicissitudes of Joyce's young hero with those of her children, to such an extent, in fact, that describing her work on the translation two decades later she still couched it in terms of child abandonment and care. Reproaching Joyce for ignoring the translation project in favour of *Ulysses*, she writes: "*Dedalus* was my adopted child, abandoned by his/its father, and I cared for him/it to the best of my ability [*Dedalus* était mon enfant adoptif, son père s'en étant détourné, je le soignais de mon mieux]" ("*Dedalus* en France," 13). The same pathos is manifest in the dedication on the copy of *Dedalus* Savitzky presented to her elder daughter Marianne, barely

⁵ This is Savitzky's description: "One day, in the wake of 'the other war,' I was preparing to translate for a Parisian publisher a very beautiful novel whose title does not really matter here. Suddenly, like a breeze — velour jacket, golden goatee flying — rushed in a young writer, an *enfant terrible* of two continents, and literally tore the volume in question out of my hands. — It is Joyce's book that you must translate, and without delay. Nothing in today's world literature and few things in the literature of all ages can compare to his *Portrait of the Artist*. And he vanished, leaving me alone with Stephen Dedalus" ("*Dedalus* en France," 7). The episode took place shortly before July 4, when Savitzky informed Spire about reading Joyce's novel (*Une amitié tenace*, 237).

thirteen at the time (Fig. 1). But before adopting Stephen Dedalus, Savitzky tried unsuccessfully to adopt his creator.

On the day of Joyce's arrival in Paris, she wrote to Pound, expressing great admiration for the novel she had just finished and offering to house the Joyces, free of charge and for as long as necessary (they ended up staying from July 15 through November 1), in the Passy apartment on the rue de l'Assomption she and her new husband, Marcel Bloch, had recently vacated, moving to the adjacent rue de Boulainvillier.⁶

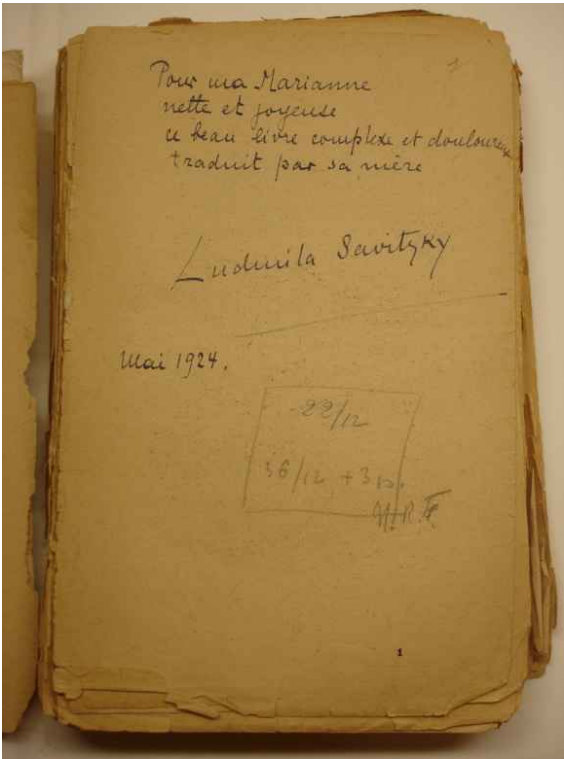


Figure 1. Ludmila Savitzky's dedication on a gift copy of *Dedalus* presented to her elder daughter Marianne. John Rodker Papers (Series V, Box 45, Folder 1), Harry Ransom Center.

⁶ Ludmila Bloch-Savitzky and Marcel Bloch to Ezra Pound (July 9, 1920), XVI. Other Correspondents, The James Joyce Collection, The Poetry Collection, University at Buffalo (SUNY).

The matter of finding a translator for *A Portrait* had already been settled between July 9 and 11.⁷ And now that the question of Joyce's accommodation was also taken care of, the next logical step was the "socialization" of Savitzky's protégé or, as she put it, "her author" ("Dedalus en France," 12). This she did by asking Spire to host a soirée at his Neuilly apartment on July 11, to which they invited Ezra Pound with his wife and the Joyce family.⁸ To ensure Joyce's maximum exposure to Savitzky's network of literary acquaintances, André Fontainas and Julien Benda were also invited (both got involved in the efforts to place *Dedalus* with a publisher), whereas Spire wrote to Andrienne Monnier who, in turn, invited her American friend and colleague Sylvia Beach. And since Spire's acquaintance with Pound had been hitherto limited to a brief epistolary exchange in 1914, the entire event was devised and scripted by Savitzky, hence Spire's recollection of handing over the responsibility for hosting his literary salon on this occasion to Savitzky and Pound.⁹ The soirée of July 11 became famous as the place of Joyce's first meeting with Sylvia Beach whose problematic account of the event — Spire called it "a bit too novelistic" (*un peu trop romancé*; "La Rencontre avec Joyce," 43) — has not been sufficiently challenged by literary historians.¹⁰

⁷ On July 12 Joyce wrote about it to Harriet Weaver (Stuart Gilbert, ed. *Letters of James Joyce* [London: Faber and Faber, 1966], I:142. *Letters* throughout.)

⁸ The request was made in the following terms: "Dear friends, yesterday we saw the 2 Pounds (= 1 kg). They will join us next Sunday. But they are expecting the imminent arrival of their friend Joyce, the Irish writer whose extremely interesting novel I have begun to read. Joyce lives in Trieste and is coming to Paris for a short stay. His wife and two children, 16 and 12, are traveling with him. The Pounds, who will not lose sight of this family throughout their visit, are asking me to ask you whether you prefer a) that they bring along the four Joyces; b) that they bring along just one Joyce; c) that they come without a single Joyce. Please respond to Pound directly at 3 rue de Beaune, he will not mind if you have no room for his friends; he will tell them that he is busy on Sunday and will come to see you with his wife" (4 July 1920, *Une amitié tenace*, 237).

⁹ André Spire, "La Rencontre avec Joyce," in *Sylvia Beach (1887–1962)* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1963), 42–43.

¹⁰ On 23 January 1957 Beach wrote to Harriet Weaver: "M. André Spire tells me that the whole story of the party at his house where I first met Joyce is an

Savitzky rates only a cursory mention in Beach's memoirs which leave out completely her part in the soirée.¹¹ This omission is especially curious in light of Beach's insistence that she had initially refused to join Monnier in Spire's salon because she did not know anyone there; yet she did know Savitzky, who had been among the early subscribing members of Beach's recently launched bookshop-library, Shakespeare and Company. Having interviewed Savitzky and read her unpublished correspondence, Richard Ellmann tried to set the record straight in his biography of Joyce.¹² But despite his best efforts, Beach's casting of Savitzky as an episodic character in Joyce's Parisian years became a pattern in literary scholarship.¹³

It is difficult to ascertain just how accidental was Beach's omission of Savitzky, whose modesty kept her from contesting Beach's account.¹⁴ But literary history is full of such ambiguous

invention of mine [...] I should never have written memoirs without a memory" (*The Letters of Sylvia Beach*, ed. Keri Walsh [New York: Columbia University Press, 2010], 255).

¹¹ "Through Pound, Joyce had met Madame Ludmilla [sic] Savitzky, and she had turned over her flat in Passy to the Joyces for a few weeks [sic], giving them time to look for a place of their own. Madame Savitzky was one of Joyce's first friends in Paris and translated *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*" (Sylvia Beach, *Shakespeare and Company* [London: Faber and Faber, 1959], Chapter 5 "Ulysses in Paris," 47).

¹² Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce*, new revised edition [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982], 488-89. Ellmann mistakenly thinks that Spire invited only James and Nora; in reality, Giorgio and Lucia were also present (Savitzky, "Dedalus en France," 12; Spire, "La Rencontre avec Joyce," 42).

¹³ See, for example, Noel Riley Fitch's *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation* (New York: Norton, 1983), 61-63; and Laure Murat's *Passage de l'Odéon: Sylvia Beach, Andrienne Monnier et la vie littéraire à Paris dans l'entre-deux-guerres* (Paris: Fayard, 2003), 134.

¹⁴ See the terms in which Savitzky reports to Spire (19 December 1922) her impressions from a reception in honour of Konstantin Stanislavsky at the Cercle Littéraire International: "To make a long story short, this was a very interesting day for me and I owe it to the angelic kindness with which you obsessively 'put in the spotlight' my humble persona. Clearly, when I am in my shell I do nothing to leave it for lack of self-confidence. But when I am forced to go out I am quite comfortable in the company of others, and this makes me think that

omissions. After all, Savitzky's own account of the soirée, in her preface to the 1943 re-edition of *Dedalus*, is extremely elliptical ("Dedalus en France," 12). As she later explained, this was a bow to censorship in occupied France — many people in attendance were either Jews (her husband Marcel Bloch, André Spire and his wife, Julien Benda), or subjects of the Allied powers (the Pounds, Beach).¹⁵ But one cannot rule out a form of rivalry between Beach and Savitzky for the honour of going down in history as the person who played Virgil to Joyce's Dante in France's literary world, as suggested even by the parallelism of the titles of Savitzky's and Beach's memoirs about Joyce: "Dedalus en France" (1943) vs. "Ulysses in Paris" (1950). This possibility transpires in the logical twists of Savitzky's account which implicitly compares Beach's successful marketing of *Ulysses* to her own, in her view insufficient, efforts on behalf of *A Portrait*. And in the middle of this self-castigation she describes herself as the adoptive mother of a novel she cared for to the best of her ability after its father had abandoned it ("Dedalus en France," 12–13).

These notes of disappointment, still resonating in Savitzky's recollections twenty years after the fact, had much to do with the frustration of her initial expectations with the *Dedalus* project. Having appreciated *A Portrait* so intensely, she clearly wanted the translation job to be an experience of artistic collaboration and spiritual bonding with the author. In reality, however, the project sent her into depression and made her furious with Joyce (Spire, "La Rencontre avec Joyce," 44). While the psychological toll of *Dedalus*, whose subject matter she superimposed on her family

I am not so dumb after all and it fills me with a bit of ambition necessary, no doubt, for productive work." (*Une amitié tenace*, 372).

¹⁵ She wrote to Spire on May 16, 1945: "Did you know that Gallimard reissued *Dedalus* last year? I had to revise and correct the book throughout, and even wrote a preface in which I made a point of speaking about you; but since that was 'during the occupation,' I could not mention your name, and I felt that I was committing a vile deed, but, on the other hand, it was important to publish the book, and the preface as well. In that 'take it or leave it' situation it was amazing enough that Gallimard managed to publish a book from across the English Channel — under the pretext that its author was Irish!" (*Une amitié tenace*, 619).

drama, weighed heavily on Savitzky but remained a private matter, the ups and downs of the challenge of conveying Joyce's style in French spilled into a semi-public conflict between translator and author. She insisted that Joyce was not involved enough in a translation process that he did not take seriously ("Dedalus en France," 11). He blamed Savitzky for delaying the translation he needed quickly to launch his career in France. The simmering tension came to the surface in February 1921, when Savitzky learned that Joyce had complained about the unnecessarily slow pace of her work. She must have fired back, accusing Joyce of spreading false rumours and not doing enough to help her.¹⁶ Joyce's evasive and conciliatory response (see letter 7 below), hardly conveys his true feelings on the matter — witness his remark to Frank Budgen about "a hysterical letter from the translatress of the *Portrait*" (undated, February 1921, *Letters* I:159). Stung by Savitzky's accusation, Joyce advanced a counter-accusation, announcing to Harriet Weaver (24 June 1921): "One woman here originated the rumour that I am extremely lazy and will never do or finish anything" (*Letters* I:166). In this he was wrong, as Savitzky did her best to contain the public fallout of their spat: she handled the situation with professional patience.¹⁷

The bulk of Savitzky's work on the translation of *A Portrait* was completed by April 1921, and she felt so exhausted by the project, emotionally and physically, that after handing the typescript over to Joyce (Figs. 2-3), in the vain hope of "never having to deal with it again except for proof-reading" (15 April 1921, *Une amitié tenace*, 271), she fled from Stephen Dedalus, his creator, and the French

¹⁶ Although the location of Savitzky's letters to Joyce is unknown, the contents of this missive can be reconstructed from her correspondence with Spire (*Une amitié tenace*, 263–64; see fn. 53 below).

¹⁷ She wrote to Spire (15 March 1921): "No, do not tell Ezra [Pound] anything about Joyce, we must suffer patiently the annoyances that geniuses inflict upon us, and Joyce really is a genius. I was angry with him the other day, but deep down I admire him, and what does it matter to the rest of humanity that the translation of Joyce is an aggravating experience??!!... " (*Une amitié tenace*, 265)

publishing world to “enjoy a well-deserved rest in Brittany.”¹⁸ But her efforts to see *Dedalus* into print were far from over. She began looking for a publisher in the summer of 1920, hoping to serialize the translation in a review before issuing it in book form. But contrary to her expectations, the journals and editors she had been working with — from the conservative *Mercure de France* to the omnivorous *Action* and *Écrits nouveaux* and to the nominally daring *Nouvelle revue française* (which would later become an advocate of Joyce’s art, but now repeated its embarrassing initial rebuff to Marcel Proust) — returned the manuscript with various excuses: the novel was too crude; obscene; too original; too long; or even “too Sinn Féin.”¹⁹ So by the time she finished the translation, Savitzky had to resume her marketing efforts from scratch (*Une amitié tenace*, 265). And even after she had convinced Félix Fénéon, who ran the struggling publishing house La Sirène, to accept the manuscript (Joyce signed the contract on 11 August 1921), *Dedalus*’s troubles continued. As Fénéon wrote to Savitzky, “this beautiful book you so subtly translated” had no fixed publication deadline.²⁰ It took almost three years and a takeover by G. Crès & Cie before La Sirène finally issued the book on 22 March 1924.

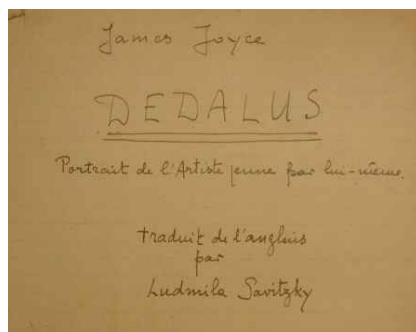


Figure 2. The cover of the typescript of *Dedalus*, written in Ludmila Savitzky’s hand. John Rodker Papers (Series V, Box 43 Folder 7), Harry Ransom Center.

¹⁸ Ludmila Savitzky, “John Rodker.” John Rodker Papers (Series IV, Box 42, Folder 3).

¹⁹ Savitzky, “Dedalus en France,” 11. Spire, “La Rencontre avec Joyce,” 44.

²⁰ Letter of March 1, 1922. John Rodker Papers (Series V, Box 44, Folder 13).

Meanwhile, Savitzky had to defend her manuscript against editorial scissors. Joyce's narrative style, which discouraged more than a few Parisian publishers and which Savitzky took great care to convey in French, sparked suspicion at La Sirène as to the translator's linguistic qualifications.²¹

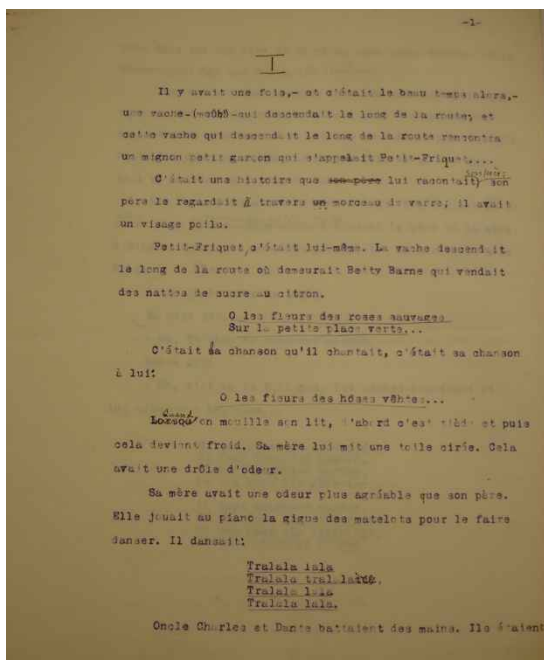


Figure 3. The first page of the typescript bearing Ludmila Savitzky's hand-written corrections. John Rodker Papers (Series V, Box 43 Folder 7), Harry Ransom Center.

On 10 April 1922, Joyce wrote to Harriet Weaver about a meeting with a proofreader from La Sirène who had told him that “the

²¹ Reviewing *Dedalus*, Henri Hertz mocked common translation practices and lauded Savitzky for “spurning elegant simplifications” and staying “faithful to the spirit of this lavish and jagged work [...] to convey the most profound nuances constituting its unforgettable originality. This is why Mme Ludmila Savitzky deserves the gratitude of all those who prefer honesty to complacency in translation. It is possible that, in this form, *Dedalus* will be less popular with lazy readers than if it had been made a smoother read. This would explain many current objections and reactions to it” (“*Dedalus*.” *Europe* [October, 1924], 246–49).

whole work must be revised by a competent translator of their own choosing and he wants the original text [...] Goodness knows what they will make of it between them" (*Letters* I:183–84). It befell Savitzky to make sure nothing bad happened to her adoptive child. One episode from her battle with La Sirène's editors even became an in-joke in her dealings with Joyce (see letter 9 and fn. 59). Ever mindful of the book's market chances with the average reader, Fénéon suggested that the original title could "repel the French public" and suggested a replacement, *Un oiseau s'envole* (A bird is flying away), which, in his opinion, "corresponded exactly to the [novel's] subject matter. Besides, we are dealing with a portrait, and portraitists, when working with a child, traditionally use this phrase to draw the child's attention. Thus we would also allude to the work's English title." Savitzky rejected this "watch the birdie" suggestion outright and, after some consideration, proposed *Dedalus* as the title, retaining the original one in the subtitle — a solution Joyce accepted.²²

To judge by Joyce's final messages to her (letters 10 and 11 below), and contrary to Spire's vision of Joyce as "devoid of human warmth" in personal relations ("La Rencontre avec Joyce", 44), the patience and perseverance of "the translator" did not go unappreciated. Nevertheless, the experience of *Dedalus* darkened Savitzky's view of translation, which she described at this time as a "thankless occupation" (20 April 1922; 20 June 1922; in *Une amitié tenace*, 318, 329). The thought of the projects she had to set aside or delay for the sake of *Dedalus* did not make things any easier. She complained that her own novel "about pre-revolutionary Russia as seen by a young French woman" was not progressing due to the pressures of the Joyce project (21 September 1920; 20 August 1921; *Une amitié tenace*, 247, 292).²³ But throughout the *Dedalus* saga she still managed to have a noticeable presence as a short prose writer

²² Felix Fénéon to Savitzky (1 March 1922), John Rodker Papers (Series V, Box 44, Folder 13). See also Savitzky, "Dedalus en France," 12; Ellmann, *James Joyce*, 486, 787 fn. 10.

²³ This novel, dated in manuscript August 1920 — December 1925, remains unpublished.

in *Le Mercure de France* and *La Revue européenne*; she published yet another novel for children, *Jean-Pierre* (1924); and, after handing the typescript to Joyce, took on a series of new translations from English and Russian. Savitzky's turn to contemporary Russian authors was informed by Paris's growing importance as the centre of Russian émigré literature. She was naturally drawn to offer her exiled compatriots — poet Konstantin Bal'mont and novelist Boris Zaitsev in particular — the same services she had extended to Joyce.

But Joyce's presence haunted Savitzky even during her "well-deserved" flight from *Dedalus* to Brittany in the late spring of 1921. There she received a parcel with a manuscript entitled *The Switchback*. At first she refused to translate the novel, having "imagined the pangs that would torture me" when trying to convey its "unusual style — so exceedingly honest, so strict and condensed, not allowing the least bit of laxity in the translation."²⁴ Coming from the translator of *A Portrait*, this remark reads like a resolution not to repeat the same mistake. What Savitzky did not know at the time was that the novel's author, John Rodker (1894—1955) — already a recognized poet and novelist of *The Egoist* circle — was playing a key role in the complex arrangement that would see into print that very *Ulysses* she blamed for Joyce's "abandonment" of *Dedalus*. When Rodker, whom she had not met before, showed up later that summer in Savitzky's Clamart home, his affable personality and flattering insistence changed the translator's mind (she published *The Switchback* in 1923 as *Montagnes russes*). In Rodker, Savitzky found what she had missed in Joyce — a responsive collaborator and a friend — and their friendship-collaboration, punctuated by Rodker's marriage to Savitzky's daughter Marianne after World War II, lasted until the English writer's death.

²⁴ Ludmila Savitzky, "John Rodker" (1955; English in the original). John Rodker Papers (Series IV, Box 42, Folder 3). In this obituary, Savitzky incorrectly dates the episode as taking place in 1923. In fact, on 30 August 1921, she informs Spire about agreeing to translate *The Switchback* (*Une amitié tenace*, 290).

Savitzky's efforts on Joyce's behalf did not end after the publication of *Dedalus* in March 1924, which despite its long delay still ended up being Joyce's first publication in French. Well aware of the uphill battle facing an unknown foreign author in the French book market, Savitzky launched a flurry of activity to promote the novel by placing numerous copies with influential critics and asking her literary acquaintances to write or secure reviews.²⁵ By her own admission ("Dedalus en France," 13), it was not until reading first responses to *Dedalus*, both informal and printed, that she finally put to rest her nagging doubts about the success of her efforts to translate such a challenging text. But the best confirmation is the test of time — Savitzky's translation of *A Portrait*, which she revised for the 1943 edition, remains canonical in the French-speaking world.²⁶ Even if one were to dismiss the praise lavished on the translation by Savitzky's correspondents as a form of politeness, one cannot miss an observation unwittingly shared by such different authors as Georges Duhamel and André Spire. Both recognize that the *Dedalus* project goes well beyond translation, no matter how challenging in itself, and marvel at Joyce's sheer luck with encountering such a translator, as Spire puts it — the last surviving representative of "that altruistic type destroyed by the 'war to end all wars'" (undated, April 1924, *Une amitié tenace*, 472).²⁷ As for Joyce, he expressed his opinion of the translation in a letter to Harriet Weaver (30 July 1924): "You say you have seen a great many French notices of *Dedalus*. I have seen

²⁵ She used the occasion as a pretext for promoting her new protégés and translation projects. See, for example, the attempt to find a publisher for Boris Zaitsev in her correspondence regarding *Dedalus* (Pierre Mac Orland to L. Savitzky [30 June 1924], John Rodker Papers, Series V, Box 44, Folder 14).

²⁶ Savitzky's impact on the practice of literary translation in France is discussed in several obituaries (*Carrefour* [29 January 1958]; *La Croix* (6 January 1958); *Le Figaro littéraire* [4 January 1958]; *Les Nouvelles littéraires* [2 January 1958]).

²⁷ Georges Duhamel's letter to Savitzky (1 June 1924) and a number of other private reactions to *Dedalus* (Jacques Calmy [29 April 1924], Charles Vildrac [10 May 1924], etc.) are in John Rodker Papers, Series V, Box 44, Folder 14.

several but not many as yet. The translation seems to be good" (*Letters* I:218–19).

James Joyce's Letters to Ludmila Savitzky.²⁸

1.

Chère Madame: j'espère que les oiseaux sont arrivés en bon état — ils semblaient plutôt silencieux.²⁹ J'ai reçu une lettre ce matin selon lequel [sic] il paraît que M. Lugné-Poe acceptera ma pièce pour son théâtre.³⁰ Je suis allé au *Mercure*.³¹ M. Davray était à Paris

²⁸ The originals of the letters, written in French with the exception of the last two, are preserved in the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center (University of Texas at Austin), John Rodker Papers, Series V. Ludmila Savitzky Personal Papers 1920–55, Box 44, Folder 12. The location of Savitzky's letters to Joyce is presently unknown, with the exception of an undated note (summer 1924) accompanying letters of thanks for gift copies of *Dedalus* (XI. Correspondence to James Joyce, the James Joyce Collection, The Poetry Collection, University at Buffalo-SUNY). **The letters are published here in accordance with the passage of the works of James Joyce into the public domain as of 1 January 2012.** I would like to thank the executor of the John Rodker Papers, Dr. Ian Patterson (Queens' College, Cambridge), and the administration of the Harry Ransom Center for their kind permission to publish the materials.

²⁹ In the letter to Ezra Pound placing her apartment at Joyce's disposal (9 July 1920; XVI. Other Correspondents, The James Joyce Collection, The Poetry Collection, University at Buffalo [SUNY]), Savitzky says that one of the rooms is used for storage and proposes to ship its contents to her summer residence. She mentions specifically "our 'Velázquez.'" Joyce must be referring to this item.

³⁰ The play in question is *Exiles*, translated by Jenny Serruys who on Joyce's behalf also lobbied the director of Le Théâtre de L'Oeuvre, Aurélien-Marie Lugné-Poë (1869–1940). Lugné-Poë ultimately decided against the production. Joyce wrote to Harriet Weaver (24 June 1921): "The director of *L'Oeuvre* theatre who was so enthusiastic about *Exiles* and bombarded me with telegrams has just written a most insolent letter in slang to say that he was not such a fool to put on the piece and lose 15,000 francs. My consolation is that I win a box of preserved apricots — a bet I made with Mr. Pound (who was optimistic) after a cursory inspection of the director aforesaid" (*Letters* I:166).

³¹ *Le Mercure de France*, one of the most authoritative literary venues in contemporary France, published Savitzky's prose and criticism. She had good con-

le mois passé : il est resté peu de temps parce que sa femme est souffrante et il ne revient plus cet été.³² Alors, je lui ai écrit à Londres et j'espère avoir sa réponse un de ces jours.³³

Je suis immobilisé ici à cause d'un ami qui doit passer par Paris en route pour Londres.³⁴ Il vient de Zurich et peut être restera ici seulement un après-midi. Mais il ne m'écrit pas et je crains de m'éloigner de chez moi. Il s'est arrêté, je crois, à Bâle pour disposer de ces toiles (il est peintre) mais malheureusement j'ignore son adresse ! C'est bien fâcheux mais en tout cas j'irai chez vous lundi ou mardi pour discuter de prénoms et d'autres choses.³⁵

Autre contretemps. J'avais écrit à New York pour les exemplaires de mes livres. Hier j'ai reçu une lettre de mon éditeur américain³⁶ m'annonçant son départ pour le 12 août (aujourd'hui). Il se rend à Londres et après à Paris. En tout cas j'ai répété ma demande dans une lettre que j'envoyai à son adresse temporaire à Londres,

nections in its editorial offices, including her friend André Fontainas (see fn. 42).

³² Henry H. Davray (1873–1944), an editor and literary critic at *Le Mercure de France*, also edited the French part of *The Anglo-French Review*. Ezra Pound suggested him to Joyce (17 July 1917) as a potential reviewer for *A Portrait* in the French press (*Pound/Joyce: The Letters of Ezra Pound to James Joyce*, ed. Forrest Read [New York: New Directions, 1967], 121–22). Savitzky also knew Davray who facilitated the publication of her and Spire's critical writings in Britain (*Une amitié tenace*, 206–9).

³³ See letter 4.

³⁴ English painter Frank Budgen (1882–1971), who made portraits of James and Nora Joyce and who wrote a memoir about Joyce's Zurich years (*James Joyce and the Making of 'Ulysses'* [1934]). Joyce wrote to Budgen (27 July 1920) from Savitzky's apartment: "I remain at above address till October at least. Have a small flat, partly furnished, which a friend put at my disposal. Try to stop a few days in Paris. [...] *The Portrait* is being translated into French and perhaps the play will be put on at *L'Oeuvre*" (*Letters* I:143–44).

³⁵ The names of characters unexpectedly came up as an issue in the early stages of the translation project. Savitzky later recalled: "Or else he [Joyce] would propose ideas that I found bizarre: for example, he wanted to translate the names of characters: Etienne Dedalus, Jean Lawton... — 'And Jacques Joyce, then?' — 'But of course, why not?' ("*Dedalus en France*," 11).

³⁶ Benjamin Huebsch (1876–1964), Joyce's first publisher in the United States, came to Paris in October to discuss new plans for *Ulysses* in response to the lawsuit against the novel (*Letters* I:148).

mais il la lira au plus tôt vers la fin du mois et les livres seront ici vers le milieu du mois prochain. C'est aussi une histoire — mais le nôtre n'est pas le meilleur des mondes possibles.

Bien d'amitiés de ma part à Monsieur Bloch.³⁷

Agrééz, Madame, mes salutations amicales

James Joyce

Le 12 août 1920

P. S. Je cherche en vain le confiseur philologue.³⁸ Du reste on se passe pas mal de connaissances. Je demandai l'autre jour à un bou-tiquier "Où est l'hôtel des invalides ?" Il répondit qu'il savait où étaient les invalides mais qu'il ne savait pas où se trouvait cet hô-tel-là!³⁹

Dear Madam: I hope the birds have arrived in good shape — they seemed rather silent. This morning I have received a letter which makes it sound as if Mr. Lugné Poe might accept my play for his theatre. I went to the *Mercure*. Mr. Davray was in Paris last month: he did not stay long because his wife was ill; and he will not be back this summer. So I have written to him in London and hope to hear from him one of these days.

³⁷ Marcel Bloch (d. 1951), Ludmila Savitzky's third husband, a chief engineer of the Paris-Orléans railroad and a brother of the writer and journalist Jean-Richard Bloch.

³⁸ This post scriptum is a follow-up to the anecdote Joyce told André Spire's guests at the soirée of July 11: "Fresh from a long stay in Trieste, he occasionally mixed some Italian words into his French, which was otherwise excellent. With laughter, he told us how he had gone to see a friend in Paris and, learning from the concierge that the gentleman may not be at home, calmly declared, to the good woman's horror: 'All right, I'll soil the stairs anyway!' [*Eh bien, je vais toujours salir l'escalier* — 'salire' is 'to climb, go up' in Italian, but 'to soil, make dirty' in French] (A portent of the multilingual word games we would later find in abundance in *Ulysses* and elsewhere)" (Savitzky, "Dedalus en France," 12).

³⁹ A pun on the historical and modern meanings of the word *hôtel* which used to designate a private residence or an institution: for example, l'Hôtel des Invalides, a military hospice built under Louis XIV and known in colloquial usage as "Les Invalides" — hence the misunderstanding in Joyce's exchange with the shopkeeper.

I am not budging from here because of a friend who is supposed to stop by in Paris on his way to London. He is coming from Zurich and will probably be here for an afternoon only. But he has not written back and I am afraid to leave the house. He has stopped in Basel, I believe, to make arrangements for his paintings (he is an artist) but unfortunately I do not know his address! I am very sorry but, in any case, I will come to see you on Monday or Tuesday so we can discuss the names and other matters.

Another complication. I have written to New York to request copies of my books. Yesterday I received a letter from my American publisher announcing his departure on August 12 (today). He is traveling to London and then to Paris. All this notwithstanding, I have repeated my request in a letter sent to his temporary address in London, but he will read it by the end of the month at the earliest and the books will be here by the middle of next month. That also is a saga — but we are not living in the best of all possible worlds.

Kind regards from me to Mr. Bloch.

Yours truly,

James Joyce

12 August 1920

P. S. I am still looking in vain for a philologically-inclined confectioner. In other regards we make do just fine on our own. The other day I asked a shop-keeper, "Where is L'Hôtel des Invalides?" He replied that he knew where Les Invalides were, but did not know where one could find this hotel!

2.

Chère Madame Bloch : je vous remercie de votre lettre bien aimable. Il est très fâcheux que la chose (je ne parle pas naturellement de votre travail) procède si lentement. J'ai pris l'adresse de M. Romains à la N.R.F.⁴⁰ mais je ne peux lui écrire jusqu'à ce que le *Mercur*e n'ait pas donné sa décision. Je suis toujours sans mes livres. À ce qu'il paraît, la cassette envoyée de Trieste c'est égarée.⁴¹ Mais aussitôt que j'aurai reçu vos chapitres j'irai chez M. Fontai-

⁴⁰ Jules Romains (1885–1972), poet, novelist, critic, and one of the pillars of *La nouvelle revue française*.

nas.⁴² J'apprécie beaucoup votre intérêt à mes écrits spécialement dans les circonstances actuelles à cause desquelles je ne voulais pas trop faire l'intrus. Je suis toujours à Votre disposition quand vous aurez besoin de mon aide.

To look sharp = se dépêcher

Collywobbles = mal à l'estomac (tremblote va bien je crois parce que "wobble" signifie vraiment "trembler")

Bien d'amitiés de notre part à M. Bloch et à vous-même.

James Joyce

27/8/[1]920

Dear Madam Bloch: thank you for your very kind letter. How irritating that the thing (naturally, I am not speaking about your work) is moving along so slowly. I have obtained Mr. Romain's address at the N.R.F. but I cannot write him before I know the *Mercure's* decision. I remain without my books. It looks like the case sent from Trieste has gone astray. But the moment I get your chapters, I will go to see Mr. Fontainas. I truly appreciate your attention to my writings, especially in the present circumstances which have made me reluctant to bother you too much. I am always at your disposal whenever you need my help.

To look sharp = to hurry

Collywobbles = stomach ache (*tremblote* is a good fit, I think, because "wobble" really means "to tremble")

Kind regards from us to Mr. Bloch and yourself.

James Joyce

⁴¹ Joyce wrote to Harriet Weaver (10 November 1920): "*Circe* has been very much delayed by a number of causes [...] and also the fact that the case of books and documents which I sent to Paris from Trieste on 28 June to enable me to write the two episodes *Circe* and *Eumeus* here went astray [...] It was at last discovered at a station on the Franco-German frontier. It arrived a few days ago after its odyssey [...]" (*Letters* I:149).

⁴² André Fontainas (1865–1948), poet, novelist, literary critic, and a good friend of Savitzky and Spire. A key figure in *Le Mercure de France*, Fontainas served as Savitzky's inside man and lobbyist in the review.

Rue de l'Assomption 5
Paris

Chère Madame : je suis entièrement de votre avis, étant moi-même d'une lenteur formidable dans mon travail.⁴³ Il n'est pas du tout nécessaire que le roman soit traduit en trois mois mais, à ce qu'il paraît, M. Fels n'a aucune intention de le publier.⁴⁴ Quant au *Mercur* Miss Beach⁴⁵ rentre à Paris demain (elle était en Italie) et je ferai expédier un exemplaire du roman à M. Fontainas. Avant de lui porter le premier chapitre vous pourriez peut-être fixer un rendez-vous avec moi afin d'éclaircir les points douteux s'il y en aura. Je suis pourtant de l'avis que, donnés la lettre de M. Davray et la

⁴³ In her letter of August 29, Savitzky refused to hurry the project and offered to abandon the work in favour of a more expedient translator (Ellmann, *James Joyce*, 486).

⁴⁴ Florent Fels (1891–1977), editor, journalist, literary and art critic. Joyce wrote to Harriet Weaver (12 July 1920): "Mr Froment [sic] Fels, editor of *L'Action*, wishes to begin the serial publication of the French translation (to be made by Mme Ludmilla Savitsky [sic] who has an article on Mr Aldington in the last issue of the *Anglo-French Review*), in the next number [...] He also wishes to draw up a contract for the publication of the novel in book form when the serial publication is complete. You may remember that he wrote to me about this a year and a half ago in Zurich" (*Letters* I:142; see also Joyce to Weaver [26 October 1918], *Letters* I:120). Contrary to Joyce's opinion, Fels wrote to Savitzky (3 September 1920): "Madam, James Joyce has told me in a recent conversation that you are translating his *Portrait of the Artist*. Because of all sorts of difficulties experienced by a young publishing venture, I cannot make a definitive offer for publishing this work, nor can I propose a firm publication schedule. But I will attend to these questions after the holidays and will share with you and Joyce my thoughts on how to realize this project. I commend your decision to translate this magnificent work and I wish to assure you that I will do my best to produce an edition worthy of both the author and the translator" (John Rodker Papers, Series V, Box 44, Folder 13).

⁴⁵ After meeting Sylvia Beach (1887–1962) at André Spire's on July 11, 1920, Joyce paid a visit to her bookshop-library Shakespeare and Company in the rue Dupuytren (it moved to 12 rue de l'Odéon a year later) which soon became a focal point of his social and artistic life in Paris.

recommandation de M. Fontainas⁴⁶, il est dans notre intérêt commun d'accorder seulement un bref délai pour la décision de M. Valette [sic].⁴⁷ Il peut l'accepter ou non mais il faut qu'il ne nous fasse attendre. Vous comprenez que je ne peux parler avec M. Romains avant de connaître la décision de M. Valette.⁴⁸

Je vous remercie de votre intérêt bienveillant à mon œuvre aussi bien que des souhaits que vous exprimez à l'égard de la traduction française du roman. Je tiens beaucoup à ce que votre nom y soit associé.

Bien d'amitiés de notre part à M. Bloch et à vous-même.

James Joyce

31/VIII/[1]920

Dear Madam: I agree with you completely, being myself a formidably slow worker. It is not at all necessary for the novel to be translated in three months but, it seems, Mr. Fels has no intention of publishing it [anyway]. As for the *Mercure*, Miss Beach is returning to Paris tomorrow (she was in Italy) and I will have a copy of the novel sent to Mr. Fontainas. Before showing him the first chapter [of the translation], we might want to schedule a meeting to smooth out the rough spots, should there be any. I am nonetheless of the opinion that, given Mr. Davray's letter and Mr. Fontainas's recommendation, it is in our common interest to allow Mr. Valette only a short time to make up his mind. Whether he accepts it [the novel] or not, he should not be slowing us down. As you know, I cannot speak with Mr. Romains before I know Mr. Valette's decision.

Thank you for your kind attention to my work and your hopes for the novel's French translation. I very much want it to bear your name.

Kind regards from us to Mr. Bloch and yourself.

James Joyce

⁴⁶ André Fontainas, who had previously read and appreciated *A Portrait* in the original, was very excited about the high quality of the novel's French translation. See, for example, his letter to Savitzky of May 4, 1924 (John Rodker Papers, Series V, Box 44, Folder 14).

⁴⁷ Alfred Vallette (1858–1935), the founder and editor-in-chief of *Le Mercure de France*.

⁴⁸ After *Le Mercure de France* decided against *Dedalus*, an unsuccessful attempt was made to publish it in *La nouvelle revue française* (*Une amitié tenace*, 270).

4.

[8.09.20]

Chère Madame: Voilà la réponse de M. Davray. Il parait maintenant le moment de battre le fer pendant qu'il est chaud.

Salutations empressées

James Joyce

P. S. Je vous prie de me renvoyer la lettre de M. Davray quand vous l'aurez lue.

Dear Madam: Here is Mr. Davray's response. It looks like the moment has come to strike while the iron is hot.

Hasty regards

James Joyce

P. S. Would you please return to me Mr. Davray's letter after reading it.

5.

Rue de l'Assomption 5, Paris

Cher Monsieur Bloch: M. André Suarès⁴⁹ m'a envoyé M. Paul Budry, directeur des "Ecrits Nouveaux" et intéressé de la maison Emile Paul.⁵⁰ À ce qu'il parait, il désire acquérir pour la revue les droits de mon roman et pour la maison après les droits de publication en forme de livre. Pour les premiers il offre, si j'ai bien compris, frs. 2500, pour ceux-ci il y aura un autre contrat. Il me demanda si le roman était traduit et de qui. J'ai fait le nom de Mme Bloch

⁴⁹ André Suarès (1868–1948), poet, critic, and a key figure in *La nouvelle revue française*. Suarès gave Joyce some practical help and advice about publishing as well as apartment hunting in Paris.

⁵⁰ Paul Budry (1883–1949), the co-founder (with André Germain) and editor-in-chief of *Les Écrits nouveaux* (which became *La Revue européenne* in 1923).

et il en semblait très content.⁵¹ Il me pria alors (mais je lui avais exposé l'impasse Fels-Mercure) de lui accorder un délai de 15 jours et de rien conclure autre part sans lui en parler préalablement.

Voulez-vous peut-être communiquer ça à Mme Bloch dont j'ignore l'adresse en Bretagne. Il m'a fait une bonne impression. Comme j'ai déjà expliqué à madame je suis de l'avis [*illegible*].

Bien d'amitiés de nous tous

James Joyce

24/IX/[1]920

Dear Mr. Bloch: Mr. André Suarès has dispatched to me Mr. Paul Budry, the editor in chief of *Les Écrits Nouveaux* and associate of the publishing house Emile Paul. It looks like he wishes to acquire the rights to my novel for his review and then, for the house, the rights to publication in book form. For the former he is offering, if I have understood him correctly, 2500 francs, and there will be another contract for the latter. He asked me whether the novel was translated and by whom. I gave him the name of Mrs. Bloch and he seemed very happy to hear it. He then asked me (although I did explain to him the Fels-Mercure impasse) for a period of fifteen days during which I cannot commit to anything elsewhere without notifying him beforehand.

Would you be so kind to pass this on to Mrs. Bloch, whose address in Brittany I do not know. He made a good impression on me. As I have already explained to Mrs. Bloch, I am of the opinion [*illegible*].

Kind regards from us all

James Joyce

⁵¹ Savitzky knew well the editorial board of *Les Écrits nouveaux* and collaborated in the journal as a literary critic and a translator (of Hilda Doolittle, among others). Paul Budry informed her on 11 September 1920: "Madam, in a conversation with Mr. Joyce, I had the pleasure to learn about your project to translate his book, *A Portrait of the Artist*, which has been highly recommended to *Les Écrits nouveaux* for potential acquisition. The fact that you are the translator makes this book all the more attractive for us" (John Rodker Papers, Series V, Box 44 Folder 13). In the same letter, Budry asks to see the translated chapters. A month later (October 4), he wrote to Savitzky declining to serialize the novel as too long for the review's purposes, but promised to recommend the translation to Emile-Paul Publishers (Idem.)

6.

Rue de l'Assomption 5
 Passy
 Paris
 [undated]

Dear Mrs Bloch: Voilà les explications que m'a données Mgr Léna, prêtre de la Congrégation du S. Esprit, rue Lhomond. Il est, comme moi, ancien élève des pères jésuites:

Free study	= la veillée
The classes:	
elements	
rudiments	= les élémentaires (1, 2)
3rd of grammar	
2nd -//-	= les grammaires (1, 2, 3)
1st -//-	
poetry	
rhetoric	= les humanités (1, 2, 3)
philosophy	
prefect	= préfet
rector	= recteur
minister	= vice-recteur
lines	= sections
cards for 1st place etc.	= 1) la palme 2) la croix
white rose	
red rose	= les camps

J'ai vu M. Benda⁵² mais Mlle Beach n'a pas eu de réponse, à ce qu'il paraît, ni de Poe ni de Valette. Elle part le 9 courant et je lui écris ce soir.

⁵² Julien Benda (1867–1956), novelist, essayist, critic, editor, first met Joyce at the soirée of July 11, 1920. Benda regularly corresponded with Savitzky who must have asked for his help in finding a publisher for *Dedalus*. In a letter to Spire (15 March 1921), she comments on the translation project: "Now I have to start all over again that business with publishers. The typescript will be ready in 15 days"; and then immediately mentions Benda (*Une amitié tenace*, 265).

Salutations cordiales aussi de [la] part de ma femme à M. Bloch et à vous-même.

James Joyce

Dear Mrs Bloch: Here are the explanations I received from Mgr. Léna, a priest at the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, rue Lhomond. He is, like me, a former student of the Jesuit fathers:

Free study	= la veillée
The classes:	
elements	
rudiments	= les élémentaires (1, 2)
3rd of grammar	
2nd -//-	= les grammaires (1, 2, 3)
1st -//-	
poetry	
rhetoric	
philosophy	= les humanités (1, 2, 3)
prefect	= préfet
rector	= recteur
minister	= vice-recteur
lines	= sections
cards for 1st place etc.	= 1) la palme 2) la croix
white rose	
red rose	= les camps

I have gone to see Mr. Benda but Miss Beach has not heard back, it seems, either from Poe or from Valette. She is leaving on the 9th of this month and I will be writing to her tonight.

My wife also sends her warm regards to Mr. Bloch and yourself.

James Joyce

Boulevard Raspail 5
Paris VII
Tel : taxe 36—33

Chère Madame: je ne suis pas l'auteur de la rumeur dont vous parlez.⁵³

"Cette paisible rumeur-là
Vient de la ville"⁵⁴

Du reste le meilleur moyen de la démentir serait, à mon avis, de faire publier mon livre que la France avec ses colonies d'outre-mer attend avec impatience.

Ayant moi-même beaucoup et même trop de difficultés matérielles je crois pouvoir apprécier les embarras auxquels vous faites allusion. Je regrette que ma prose bi-cornue y ait ajouté quelque chose de plus.

Quant à la révision de certains passages de votre traduction je serai tout à fait à votre disposition après lundi prochain et jusqu'au 4 juin quand, très probablement, je quitterai Paris. La traduction sera sans doute publiée par MM Fels, Valette, Budry, Emile Paul, mais unanimes et unanimes.

Je suis allé deux fois à Clamart⁵⁵ avec mon fils, d'abord à votre ancienne demeure et puis à l'actuelle, mais sans succès. On m'a dit

⁵³ A reference to Joyce's complaints about the slow pace of Savitzky's progress. We find an echo of this conflict in her letter to Spire (7 March 1921): "I am furious with Joyce who, without ever coming to see me, complains everywhere about the slowness of my translation work, — Miss Beach mentioned it to Claire Gonon, Budry to Benda; now imagine how this makes me feel even as I devote all my time to this job which has never had a formal deadline!" (*Une amitié tenace*, 263—64).

⁵⁴ Lines from Paul Verlaine's poem "D'une prison" ("Le ciel est, par-dessus le toit..." ; in *Sagesse* [1880]).

⁵⁵ Savitzky divided her time between Paris and Clamart (218, avenue Victor Hugo). The attempted visits were prompted by her plea for help (the "hysterical letter from the translator of the *Portrait*" Joyce mentions to Budgen [*Letters* I:159]) with the remaining 65 pages of the novel Savitzky saw as "the most difficult ones" (21 February 1921, *Une amitié tenace*, 260). They finally met on March 14 (*Une amitié tenace*, 265).

que vous étiez là et que vous n'étiez pas là. En tout cas les volets étaient fermés. C'est l'agent de location près de la gare qui m'a donné votre adresse.

À propos, est-ce que j'ai laissé chez vous un numéro de la "Dublin Review"?

Bien d'amitiés de notre part à M. Bloch et à vous-même. Vous pouvez me téléphoner toujours entre 10—11 et 2—3.

Salutations distinguées

James Joyce

1/III/[1]921

Dear Madam: I am not the author of the gossip you mention.

"That quiet murmur
Is coming from the city"

Besides, the best way to refute it, in my opinion, is by publishing my book which France with its overseas colonies is eagerly expecting.

Since I myself face many and even too many material hardships, I believe I can appreciate the difficulties you are describing. I am sorry that my rebarbative prose may have exacerbated things.

As for the review of some passages in your translation, I will be at your full disposal after next Monday and until June 4, when I will most likely leave Paris. The translation will probably be published by Mssrs. Fels, Valette, Budry, Emile Paul, albeit as one and unanimous.

My son and I have gone to Clamart twice, first to your former residence and then to the current one, but in vain. I was told that you were there and that you were not there. In any case, the shutters were closed. It was the real estate agent near the train station who gave me your address.

By the way, did I leave an issue of *The Dublin Review* at your place?

Kind regards from us to Mr. Bloch and yourself. You can always reach me by phone between 10—11 and 2—3.

Yours truly,

James Joyce

8.

Rue de l'Université 9
Paris
[30.12.1921]

Chère Madame: La séance eut lieu le 7 déc[embre].⁵⁶ Je suis terriblement occupé par les dernières épreuves d'*Ulysse* et ne peux pas pour le moment m'occuper d'autres.⁵⁷ Vous pourriez l'écrire franchement à la Sirène. Le prix total étant 2500 francs je crois que la moitié est *au moins* votre part. Mes amitiés et meilleurs souhaits pour 1922 à M. Bloch et à vous-même.

James Joyce

Dear Madam: The event took place on December 7. I am terribly busy with the final proofs of *Ulysses* and cannot presently turn my attention to another set [of proofs]. You could say so frankly to La Sirène [publishers]. The total royalty amount being 2500 francs, I think *at least* half of it is your share. My greetings and best wishes for 1922 to Mr. Bloch and yourself.

James Joyce

9.

26 avenue Charles Floquet
Paris VII

Dear Mrs Bloch : je suis depuis quinze jours de retour mais pas encore en état de travailler.⁵⁸ *Square ditch* va très bien — fosse à pu-rin. *Prof* signifie — coach, trainer, joueur vétérân professionnel (au

⁵⁶ Valery Larbaud's (see fn. 61) lecture on *Ulysses* and the reading of translated passages from the novel at Adrienne Monnier's La Maison des Amis des Livres. On December 6, Joyce wrote to Harriet Weaver: "Since Saturday there has been endless confusion about the non-arrival and mistranslation of the passages to be read tomorrow night. However, with the aid of two typists, Mr Larbaud, Mr Fargue and myself have at last set everything right. Mr Larbaud, it seems, went to bed at 7 this morning having finished his part. There never was such a tiresome book." And on December 10: "The séance went very well" (*Letters* I:177–78).

⁵⁷ A reference to the final preparations for the publication of *Ulysses* on 2 February 1922.

cricket) qui instruit les jeunes gens. *Jesus and Papa* (le père éternel pas le pape).

Alors cet oiseau-là va sortir ? Si vous avez besoin de moi ne manquez pas de m'écrire. Et à propos de sortie d'oiseaux est-ce que la grand'mère de l'oiseau prévoit à pondre des œufs d'or ?⁵⁹ Je l'espère.

Bien d'amitiés de notre part à Monsieur Bloch et à vous-même.

James Joyce

10/XII/[1]922

Dear Mrs. Bloch: I came back fifteen days ago but I am not yet in a state to work. *Fosse à purin* is an excellent fit for *square ditch*. *Prof* means — coach, trainer, former professional player (of cricket) charged with teaching young people. *Jesus and Papa* (the Eternal Father, not the Pope).

So, should I be watching the birdie? If you need me, do not hesitate to write. And speaking of birds taking off, is the birdie's grandma planning to hatch some golden eggs? I hope so.

Kind regards from us to Mr. Bloch and yourself.

James Joyce

10.

Dear Mrs Bloch: Many thanks for your kind letter and the good news. I hope it is true though from Miss Beach's letter it does not seem so.⁶⁰ In any case I am not so indifferent as I may seem and

⁵⁸ From mid-October to mid-November, Joyce and his family lived in Nice, hoping that a change of climate would alleviate his eye condition (*Letters* I:187).

⁵⁹ A jocular reference to the publisher's suggestion, rejected by Savitzky, that the translation be entitled *Un oiseau s'envole* (A bird is flying away) because, among other things, the phrase recalled the line a photographer would say to a child ("Le petit oiseau va sortir!" — "Watch the birdie!"). Joyce builds on the joke by exploiting the flight motif in the novel's final French title, *Dedalus*, and linking it to Aesop's fable about the goose that laid the golden eggs — a playful way of inquiring about the overdue royalties La Sirène contractually owed him.

⁶⁰ Joyce reacts to Savitzky's announcement of the long-delayed publication of *Dedalus* (22 March 1924). Sylvia Beach requested several copies from the

am very grateful to you for the interest you have taken in my book and for all the labour its translation has cost you. For your sake also I hope it will really come out soon and be well received.

Kind regards from us all to yourself and Mr. Bloch
Sincerely yours

James Joyce

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P. S. Your pneumatique has just arrived. I shall write to Larbaud⁶¹ and I shall telephone tomorrow either to you or to Mr. Bloch. Many thanks. J. J.

11.

[On a blank calling card, probably used as a book insert]

To Ludmilla Savitzky-Bloch with many thanks for the long and kind labour.

James Joyce
"Dedalus"

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publisher and, upon receipt, forwarded them to Joyce to be autographed (letter of 19 April 1924, in *James Joyce's Letters to Sylvia Beach, 1921–1940*, eds. Melissa Banta, Oscar A. Silverman [Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1987], 36).

⁶¹ Valery Larbaud (1881–1957), poet, critic, and translator first met Joyce in December 1920 through Sylvia Beach. After reading the chapters of *Ulysses* serialized by *The Little Review* (1919–20), Larbaud became Joyce's ardent promoter (*Letters* I:159) and collaborated on the translation of *Ulysses*, whose earliest excerpts appeared in Adrienne Monnier's review *Commerce* several months after the publication of *Dedalus*. Savitzky asked Larbaud to write a review of *Dedalus* and he promised to do so for *La Revue de France* (see his letter of 15 April 1924, John Rodker Papers, Series V, Box 44 Folder 14).