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Klitgård, Ida

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# The unreliable translator's territory: Mogens Boisen's Danish translations of James Joyce's *Ulysses*

IDA KLITGÅRD  
Roskilde University, Denmark

## Abstract

This study investigates the types of fingerprints that the Danish translator Mogens Boisen applies in his first translation (passive retranslation) and subsequent two self-retranslations (active retranslations) of the novel *Ulysses* by James Joyce. Through analysis of the translator's contextual voice in the paratexts and textual voice in two selected passages with striking cultural embedding in the last translation, I argue that Boisen retains *Ulysses* as his personal territory of pleasure and pain by way of bodily signposts in the target text. In this way Boisen paradoxically creates a kind of hybrid foreignization which might have pleased Joyce.

## Introduction

The demand that I make of my reader is that he should devote his whole life to reading my works (Joyce in Ellmann 703).

This may be a bold statement by the Irish author James Joyce, but the life-long dedication seems to be the fate of thousands of readers trying to grapple with Joyce's difficult works. And his prediction has been fulfilled: "I've put in so many enigmas and puzzles that it will keep the professors busy for centuries arguing over what I meant, and that's the only way of insuring one's immortality" (Joyce in Ellmann 521). One does tend to get caught in the texts' complex network of ambiguity, crafted language and numerous learned allusions and intertextuality. And one such dedicated reader was Mogens Boisen (1910-87), the first Danish translator of *Ulysses*. This is how he is epitomized in an interview reproduced in Boisen's autobiography:

Boisen is an ex-soldier, lieutenant-colonel; and the most military thing about him is that he tends to move like a newly fired rocket: broad and lively, a figure that would seem almost brutal, but for the fact that he radiates his inner muses a long way off. A conversationalist, a wit, a social lion, a fine pianist, an epicure in most aspects of life. 'What is the art of living? Not to miss anything' (193) [my translation].

Boisen was indeed a lieutenant-colonel in the Danish army and he enjoyed a lavish life of parties, food and drink. But he is also Denmark's most remarkable translator of all time as he allegedly translated around 800 books from English, German, Swedish and French into Danish.

Whether Boisen intentionally or unintentionally followed Joyce's bold demand quoted above, the task of translating *Ulysses* became a lifelong obsession. He first translated the novel in 1949, then published a revised edition in 1970, in which episodes 1-5 and 9 have been retranslated from scratch. This was followed by a revised edition published in 1980 and by a final revised edition in 1986. Such dedication to self-retranslations is highly unusual, both in the history of retranslations and when compared with other international translations of *Ulysses*. It is usually the case that retranslations are issued by other translators in different periods in

history, rather than by the same translator. But on the other hand, this is what makes the present study of retranslation so interesting: if a translator's voice, or "fingerprints" (Baker 144), can be seen in a translation (Boase-Beier 57), what kinds of imprints does he actually leave in the translations? And why retranslate in the first place?

Where does Boisen belong in Belitt's so-called "parasitology of translation"? As Belitt's explains "there are certain crustaceans which castrate their hosts, others which attach themselves to large aquatic mammals for the ride and prestige, others which strangle and infect" (56). The parasitology of translation is a metaphorical framing device which lends explanatory power to translators' various motives for translating certain texts, or to their translation strategies, but in a rather unfavourable light. In this study I too aim to adopt a framing metaphor from the animal kingdom as Boisen was not only a "social lion", but an alpha male in the history of Danish literary translation. Rather than sucking the life out of James Joyce like a parasite, he turned the playground of translating *Ulysses* into his home range territory which he defended and presided over by way of auditory and visual signposts in the shape of cultural embedding. Like Belitt's parasites, Boisen certainly attached himself to Joyce for the ride and prestige, but his extraordinary translational fingerprints, which this study is about to reveal, have turned into enigmatic territorial marks which may puzzle the reader – and the professors – just as it was intended by Joyce.

Thus, this study is intended to be an example of what Chesterman calls "translaTOR studies" (2009), that is, an example of the socio-biographical interest in the craftsman behind the translation, combined with more traditional textual analysis of their work. But before explaining Boisen's imprints, I will explain my understanding and use of the terms "retranslation" and "voice" in a Joycean context.

## Retranslation

Numerous studies are dedicated to exploring the nature of and motivation behind retranslation which may be defined as "subsequent translations of a text or part of a text, carried out after the initial translation that introduced this text to the 'same' target language" (Susam-Sarajeva 2). Typically, iconic texts are retranslated to improve the first translation, which may be either outdated, flawed or otherwise not up to the standards of a given period or culture (Alvstad and Assis Rosa 11). Hence, a general tendency in retranslation studies is, unsurprisingly, the discussion of retranslation both in terms of the effect of time (Robinson 15-16) and the so-called "Retranslation Hypothesis", namely "the idea that the first translations' inherent assimilating qualities create a need for source-oriented translations" (Paloposki and Koskinen 30). In other words, the first translation tends towards domestication, whereas the subsequent translations are more foreignizing in nature, or "respecting otherness" (Susam-Sarajeva 5). The hypothesis originates in Goethe's writings, followed by Antoine Berman's claim that only subsequent translations can be truly great (Paloposki and Koskinen 31). However, Paloposki and Koskinen's survey of previous case studies of this phenomenon demonstrates that the hypothesis does not seem to hold water (30). Furthermore, their empirical compilation of a Finnish database of retranslations made it clear that retranslation can be anything "from a slight editing of a previous translation to a completely different text" (37). This is also the case with the Danish retranslations. As explained above, Boisen undertook numerous revisions and only retranslated six out of 18 episodes from scratch.

The ageing cause is however not the only one according to Pym, as the struggle to find the ultimate translation may also be based on competing perceptions of translational norms, especially when it comes to highly complex texts (82). Thus, Pym speaks of 'active' and 'passive' retranslation, where passive retranslation refers to retranslations remote from the source text in time, while active retranslation refers to retranslations which share the same

cultural location or generation, otherwise known as ‘hot’ and ‘cold’ retranslation in Alvstad and Assis Rosa (18). Pym explains:

A comparison between two or more passive retranslations [...] would tend to provide information about historical changes in the target culture [...]. Quite apart from being often redundant (the information thus revealed could have been obtained without doing translation history), such a procedure can only affirm the general hypothesis that target-culture norms determine translation strategies. The comparative analysis of active retranslations, however, tends to locate causes far closer to the translator, especially in the entourage of patrons, publishers, readers and intercultural politics (although clearly not excluding monocultural influences from any side). The study of active retranslations would thus seem better positioned to yield insights into the nature and workings of translation itself, into its own special range of disturbances, without blindly surrendering causality to target-culture norms (83).

Nowhere does Pym define the time range for either of these types of retranslations, but in Boisen’s case, his first translation may be categorised as more or less passive as it is produced 27 years after the publication of the novel. The subsequent retranslations, on the other hand, are active as they take place only few years apart.

What are the motivations, then, behind either passive or active retranslation? Vanderschelden enlists five typical reasons:

1. The existing translation is unsatisfactory and cannot be revised efficiently.
2. A new edition of the ST [source text] is published and becomes the standard reference.
3. The existing TT [target text] is considered outdated from a stylistic point of view.
4. The retranslation has a special function to fill in the TL [target language]
5. A different interpretation of the ST justifies a new translation (4-6).

Some of these reasons may be behind two recent Scandinavian translations, such as a Swedish translation by Erik Andersson, which was published in 2012, and a Danish translation by Karsten Sand Iversen in 2014. Some of these reasons may also be among the motives behind Boisen’s retranslations as the source edition he used had turned out to be unreliable, and as Boisen expresses many concerns with the inadequacy of the first translation, the need to update the style, and that Joyce scholarship had exploded over the years and led to new interpretations of the seminal work. But since most of it was revised, and only some episodes retranslated from square one, Boisen’s self-retranslations are both “assimilative” and “confrontational” (Alvstad and Assis Rosa 10). Such causes reflect Pym’s ‘material’ cause (the source text, technology, etc.) and ‘efficient’ cause (the translator’s preferences) which have received little attention in translation studies (Pym 149). The translator is by far merely a mechanistic abstraction, Pym says, but a person of flesh and blood:

A third kind of translator, by far the least elegant for respectable theorists, is the one that has a material body [...]. In fact, the material body, as a mobile biological unit, is all I really need in order to break with the form of abstract anonymity. [...] A human body does several things. It consumes resources, it affords pleasures and pains, it interrelates and reproduces, and it moves (161).

In the following sections I argue that Boisen's territorial textual imprints in *Ulysses* are in fact bodily as they express pleasures and pains.

### **Voice**

I first refer to voice as the abstract concept of authorial or translational presence in the literary text:

Since the text is the only immediately visible part of the narrative, it is only by studying the language of the text that the style of the author or translator might really be identified and hence the voice(s) present in the discourse be determined. Voice is therefore to be approached through the analysis of style (Munday 19).

Style, on the other hand, is a complex concept. As such, I extend Munday's definition of style to include:

the perceived distinctive manner of expression in writing or speaking, just as there is a perceived manner of doing things, like playing squash or painting. We might talk of someone writing in an 'ornate style', or speaking in a 'comic style' (Wales 371).

Hence, it is through linguistic choices that a certain style is created, and it is the translator's task to perceive the distinctive manner of the distribution and pattern of these choices and recreate them in his or her own language accordingly.

Whether the author's voice tends to dominate in such translation, or whether the translator can be truly heard by perhaps changing the form or meaning of the stylistic items, or perhaps a mix of the two, the outcome will only be revealed to the reader through a comparative analysis: "Any alteration, muffling, exaggeration, blurring, or other distortion of authorial voice will remain hidden until and unless some element of the TT reveals the mediation or until the TT is compared to its ST" (Munday 14). Such alteration or distortion of the authorial voice is exactly what I set out to reveal in my examination of the traceable manifestation of a distinct voice – or territorial imprints – in two cases of Boisen's translations compared to the ST.

The fact that the translator's voice may be seen deliberately in the TT through a blurring of the author's style may give translators some power over the text if they wish to leave their personal fingerprints, or signposts, in the work. The translator turns into an 'unreliable translator' (Munday 14). Hermans proposes that we can see such blurring or alteration at its best when translators have to 'come out of the shadows and directly intervene in a text which the reader had been let to believe spoke only with one voice' (28). This may also be referred to as a kind of "positioning" or "manipulation" of the reader (Boase-Beier 110). Hermans suggests two significant cases of such intervention. First, "the cultural embedding of texts" in the shape of historical or topical references and allusions. Here the translator's voice often disrupts and intervenes to ensure a communicative positioning of the new target audience. Hermans notes "this can lead to hybrid situations in which the discourse offers manifestly redundant or inadequate information, or appears attuned to one type of Reader here and another there, showing the Translator's presence in and through the discordances" (28-29). Second, cases of "untranslatability", such as polysemy and wordplay. As Hermans argues, "sometimes translations run into contradictions and incongruities which challenge the reader's willing suspension of disbelief, or the translated text may call on the explicit intervention of a Translator's Voice through the use of brackets or of notes, and they then remind the reader of this other presence continually stalking a purportedly univocal discourse" (29). Thus, both

cases are situations where the translator steps in to help the reader understand the text. In my comparative textual analysis below, I test the first case of cultural embedding by tracing Boisen's manifestation of his voice through the linguistic choices of his translational style. In the selected samples discussed below, I reflect on how Boisen does not really "come out of the shadow" to help the reader, but rather aims to leave his immortal stamp on the translation.

Since Joyce crafts many styles in *Ulysses*, the exploration of the translator's voice in translation and retranslation becomes more complicated. *Ulysses* is constructed on a poetics of cultural and linguistic hybridity, giving the novel several mixed voices of recreated idiolect, sociolect and dialect. This poetics is based on three factors. First, in Joyce's view, there was no such thing as a fixed Irish identity, for the Irish nation was a vast fabric of diverse cultural traits from all over the world. Second, the English language to which Joyce and his fellow Irishmen had been forced to succumb had to be avenged by revolutionising the words. Third, the resulting hybridity in Joyce's fiction is the fruit of the many cross-cultural encounters Joyce made during his nearly lifelong nomadic exile all over Europe. Thus, Joyce was a keen polyglot and celebrated multilingualism. As such, *Ulysses* is based on the poetics of translational hybridity, foreignization and polyphony as the vast fabric of styles in the novel incorporates an array of foreign words and phrases making the novel a truly multilingual book.

Such hybridity is challenging to translators who operate in a completely different cultural context. Are they to domesticate or foreignize an already foreignized style to the foreign reader, to borrow Venuti's often used terms? According to British translator Fiona Doloughan, "polyvocality", as we may term the principle of Joyce's novel, basically removes:

a necessary hierarchy between the voice of the author and/or characters and the voice of the translator, since the translator is of necessity recontextualising the word which has already been transferred 'from one mouth to another, from one social collective to another, from one generation to another generation' (30).

According to Doloughan, the degree to which the translator's voice can be heard in such recontextualization "will depend partly on the choice of a foreignizing or domesticating translation strategy and partly on the expectations and expertise of the target readership" (32). As shown in my analysis, the translator's voice may also be heard through truly "unreliable" stylistic interventions in the mediation, breaking down the hierarchy of authorial or translational presence in the target text as Boisen retains and advertises the literary work as his home ground. In the sections that follow, I scrutinise Boisen's "contextual voice" in the paratexts and the "textual voice" (Alvstad and Assis Rosa 4) in the translations themselves.

### **The paratexts**

In Boisen's 1949 translation, no foreword, introduction, notes or any exterior text had been included. The translation speaks for itself. However, in the 1970 retranslation, Boisen added a number of items. First, a list of episode titles (list of contents) with a note explaining that even though Joyce in the last moment decided to abandon the inclusion of these titles in the publication, Boisen nevertheless decided to include them in the present list since the international Joyce scholars constantly refer to them. Second, an eight-page long preface and a one-page list of last-minute corrections. Third, a 13-page addendum containing mostly translations of Latin references in the novel. Boisen explains that the translations are primarily based on Weldon Thornton's book *Allusions in Joyce* (first published in 1961). The 1986 edition contains reprinted paratexts, along with two more pages clearly signalled as additions to the 1970 preface; and a 2-page afterword apologising for having consistently used the Random House edition of *Ulysses* rather than the new critical and synoptic Hans Walter Gabler

edition from 1984 as it “is mainly aimed at scholars of literature and language” (my back-translation). By doing so, Boisen clearly sends the signal that he is no philologist.

I now turn to the two versions of the preface. Boisen opens his introduction with the assertion that the first translation was well received by the critics and that it has sold well, so why retranslate only two decades later? He explains that the new translation now appears in such a revised form that it might be called a retranslation, while maintaining that the first translation is still generally acceptable [“acceptabel”]. Yet, *Ulysses* called for a second try to allow the translator to make stylistic changes “which makes the text’s rhythm and structure more in correlation with the original”; and to tighten the web of leitmotifs “which is essential to an understanding of the book and to its aesthetic phenotype” (Boisen in Joyce 1970, 9, my back-translation). Boisen argues that the 10,000 changes he made did not change the meaning of the text.

Boisen then lists several more detailed reasons for undertaking this task. First, the 20-year span of intensive translation tasks had given him new insights into English words and their frequency. Since every word in Joyce’s work carries so much weight, Boisen’s urge to invite his readers into this newfound knowledge became so persistent over the years that “one day this feeling became so strong that it had to be released in action” (Boisen in Joyce 1970, 9, my translation). This makes him appear as a considerate and dedicated translator. Second, the Danish language, especially colloquial language, has developed to such a degree, mainly influenced by journalism, advertising, radio and television (which he bemoans) and by American English and Swedish, that a retranslation is required. Boisen has no regard for slang, though, which only blossoms for a short while leaving the reader with an “embarrassingly false” [“pinligt forlorne”, my back-translation] impression. Are we, then, to assume that Boisen has not improved this side of the language? Third, in 1949 the international ethical-literary debate about *Ulysses* had silenced, and this also manifested in the space of Danish reviews, Boisen laments. Only one reviewer was exhilarated by the Danish publication. Since then, Joyce scholarship has expanded enormously and thus prompted new interpretations of the novel. Boisen tried to keep abreast with all the developments, especially with Weldon Thornton’s *Allusions in Ulysses* and Miles L. Hanley’s *Word Index to James Joyce’s Ulysses* (1937). Boisen claims that he managed to successfully solve many of the puzzles that German and French translators had not (Boisen in Joyce 1970, 11). Every time a new enigma has been explained, it might result in new textual changes, such as the replacement of a comma, a different word order, etc. This portrays Boisen as a translator tormented by a reverse “anxiety of influence” (Koskinen and Paloposki 25), which indicates his fear that he may have not been sufficiently influenced by the new ground in Joyce studies. Boisen was obsessed with getting the leitmotifs right. In the process of his first translation of *Ulysses* he created a box of index cards with leitmotifs accompanied by page references. This box is now owned by the Danish James Joyce Society. I had the pleasure of inspecting the box myself, but sadly it is not as impressive as Boisen himself seemed to indicate in the preface, where he asserts that it is probably the most exhaustive index of leitmotifs there is worldwide. The compilation however is rather meagre. Boisen also claims that Hanley’s index did help him with “a few (and minor) extra ones” (my back-translation). Fourth, the source text edition of the translations is the erroneous Random House edition, so for the copyediting process of the retranslation, he managed to get hold of the 1939 Odyssey Press edition, which, he claims, was arguably the best edition at the time. Boisen clearly goes to great length to accomplish an excellent index. Fifth, the revision also enabled him to make use of recent Danish translations of the Bible and Shakespeare’s works to improve all such allusions, despite the fact that the selected Danish Shakespeare translation is not really that good, as Boisen deplores in an afterthought (Boisen in Joyce 1970, 15).



After such lengthy explanations, Boisen apologises for the inclusion of the preface in his translation. He would have preferred that the translation speak for itself, but he felt he owed the ten thousand readers of his first translation, as he himself puts it, a full explanation of the translation process. In the same preface Boisen also acknowledged a few people, including the well-known Joyce scholar Fritz Senn from The James Joyce Foundation in Zürich. The acknowledgement is followed by a short reader's guide to understanding *Ulysses* and a few words about the book cover. Boisen notes that the first three episodes are the most difficult to translate, and he invites readers to consult several international biographies and reference works to assist with the understanding of the work.

The 1980 addendum to the preface says that Boisen can obviously never finish the job since he has learnt more English by translating approximately 150 books in the decade, and since more enigmas have been solved, primarily in the publication of Gifford and Seidman's seminal *Notes for Joyce* (1974) which later became *Ulysses Annotated*. The translator discovered "without gloating" that even this majestic work has not been able to solve more than one hundred puzzles in the novel (Boisen in Joyce 1986, 15, my back-translation). Boisen then deplores the many typos in the 1970 version, and if there are any translation errors at all, it is no surprise since the British Joyce scholars also disagree on the meaning of certain words. Finally, Boisen declares that he does not know whether this is the ultimate translation. It has been his duty to research this incredibly fascinating book, and if the reader detects any flaws, Boisen can only humbly say "*Ultra posse nemo obligatur*" ["No one is obligated beyond what he is able to do", my translation] (Boisen in Joyce 1986, 16).

Boisen does indeed apply all of Vanderschelden's five typical reasons for retranslation in translators' prefaces - the existing translations are unsatisfactory; a different edition of *Ulysses* has been used; the first translation appears outdated; the new translation has a function to fill in the target language; and the growing industry of Joyce scholarship has provided new insight into the work. Thus, Boisen appears as a translator truly dedicated to helping his reader understand Joyce's complex work. Boisen not only fulfils Joyce's wish for his readers to dedicate themselves to his works as long as they live, but also aims to keep up with the conclusions of the studies on Joyce to avoid embarrassment when readers might come to see his shortcomings as a philologist. Clearly, the translator's process has been an experience of both pains and pleasures, as Pym refers to above. My impression of him as a translator with double standards corresponds with the findings in Klitgård in which direct plagiarism from the German and Swedish translations is documented – unfortunate sloppy short cuts, too, as he actually plagiarises the other translators' gross errors which he should have been able to detect (128-31). Thus, Boisen manipulates his reader: the both openly supportive and self-congratulatory nature of his voice in the paratexts makes him come between the author and the reader to profit from the task, and in this way, it is uncertain to whom he actually feels allegiance in the entire translation project: Joyce or the Danish reader. And in this way, he appears as an unreliable translator.

### **The text**

In the analysis below of two unparalleled cases in the translations of 1949, 1970 and 1980/1986, Boisen makes his mark by way of visual and auditory imprints. The samples are two instances of cultural embedding, that is, historical and topical references and allusions in the text, as suggested by Hermans.

The cases do, however, not show Boisen as a translator who steps in to secure the reader's understanding of the text, as Hermans explained. Boisen "comes out of the shadow" (Hermans 28) to take it upon himself to add rather than solve a riddle in *Ulysses*. In the first

case from the episode “Aeolus” we are presented with the following humorous parody of newspaper headlines as they might have looked in antiquity:

SOPHIST WALLOPS HAUGHTY HELEN SQUARE  
ON PROBOSCIS. SPARTANS GNASH MOLARS.  
ITHICANS VOW PEN IS CHAMP

(Joyce 1986: 7.1032-34)

Boisen translates and retranslates the headlines into:

SOFIST STANGER HOVMODIGE HELENE ÉN  
LIGE PAA TUDEN. SPARTANERE SKÆRER  
KINDTÆNDER. PEN FAVORIT HOS ITHACA

[Sophist hits haughty Helen right on the nose. Spartans grind their molars. Pen  
favourite with Ithaca, my back-translation]

(Joyce 1949 154; 1970 146)

Sofist stanger hovmodige Elena én  
lige på tuden. Spartanere skærer  
kindtænder. Pen er kåret favorit hos Ithaca

[Sophist hits haughty Elena right on the nose. Spartans grind their molars. Pen  
has been elected favourite with Ithaca, my back-translation]

(Joyce 1980/1986 180)

Besides the minor communicative change in the last headline, the domestication of “proboscis” into “tuden” [nose/conk] and the uncalled-for visual and auditory changing of capitals to lower case (the loudness has been downplayed), the most striking change here is the substitution of Helen of Troy [“Helene” in Danish] with Elena. Who is she? I propose that it is a secret reference to Boisen’s wife Elena Stoiloff of Bulgarian-Turkish descent who died in 1984. The present reader may wince, but I see no other explanation so far, and my proposition will be supported in the next case. In this fashion, Boisen really tears down the hierarchy between author, translator and reader. As Hermans pointed out, “This can lead to hybrid situations in which the discourse offers manifestly redundant or inadequate information, or appears attuned to one type of Reader here and another there, showing the Translator’s presence in and through the discordances” (28-29). In short, in his last translation, Boisen comes between the author and the reader to speak on his own behalf in his own territory and presumably derives pleasure or thrill from the situation. But this is not all.

The flower motif in *Ulysses* is under scrutiny - a leitmotif Boisen was careful to note in his index cards (Klitgård 2007, Klitgård 2012). In the episode of “Lotus Eaters” the protagonist Leopold Bloom is about to immerse himself in a hot bath. I have italicized and back translated the significant phrase of study here:

He foresaw his pale body reclined in it at full, naked, in a womb of warmth, oiled by scented melting soap, softly laved. He saw his trunk and limbs riprippled over and sustained, buoyed lightly upward, lemonyellow: his navel, bud of flesh: and saw the dark tangled curls of his bush floating, floating hair of the stream around *the limp father of thousands*, a languid floating flower.

(Joyce 1986 562-72)

Boisen translates this as follows:

I aanden saa han sin blege krop ligge lænet tilbage i det, nøgen, i et skød af varme, salvet af duftende, smeltende sæbe, blidt beskyllet. Han saa sin krop og sine lemmer sagte overrislet og baaret oppe, let opadstræbende, citrongule: hans navle, en kødknop: og saa de mørke, filtrede lokker i haarene svæve, strømmens svævende haar om *den slappe tusindfader* [the limp father of thousands], en træg, svævende blomst (Joyce 1949 91).

Han forudså sit blege legeme liggende fuldt udstrakt i det, nøgent, i et skød af varme, salvet af duftende, smeltende sæbe, blidt beskyllet. Han så sin krop og sine lemmer omrislet og båret oppe, løftet let opad af opdrift, citrongul. Hans navle en kødblomst. Og så buskens mørke filtrede krøller flyde, flydende hår af strømmen om *den slappe tusindfader* [the limp father of thousands] [and in the 1980/1986 retranslation this reference is translated into the word *bimbaschi* as the only alteration], en træg flydende blomst.

(Joyce 1970 91; Joyce 1980/1986 109)

The 1949 and 1970 translations are direct translations of “the limp father of thousands” which, at first, reads as a description of Bloom’s penis in the water, but it is in fact also a culturally embedded reference to the common houseplant called ‘mother of thousands’ (*Saxifraga*) which spreads its runners that seem to float in flowers (Gifford and Seidman 100; Thornton 88). Thornton also refers to Thomas Inman’s *Ancient Faiths Embodied in Ancient Names* (1868-69) in which it says: “Whilst attending hospital practice in London, I heard a poor Irishman apostrophise his diseased organ as ‘You father of thousands’”, and he adds that it simply might have been a common term in Dublin at the time. As in the “Aeolus” episode, Boisen chooses to circumvent things in the 1980/1986 translation by exchanging “tusindfader” [father of thousands] with the most peculiar “bimbaschi”.

Fagerberg refers to a talk given by Boisen at Copenhagen University where Boisen explicitly says that this a greeting from him to his reader, and a greeting from him to his wife Elena whose father had been an officer in the Bulgarian army often stationed abroad (40). Fagerberg searched for the term and discovered that there was no such word in Bulgarian. Instead, in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* he found the definition: ‘bimbash’i - Turkish military captain or commander; British officer in Egyptian service. (Turk. = head of a thousand)’ (40). Also, Mikkelsen notes that Boisen told her personally that ‘bimbaschi’ not only means military commander, but also ‘penis’. According to Boisen, ‘bimbaschi’ was once his nickname in the army (82). Finally, Povlsen suggests that this intervention puts Boisen in Bloom’s place, by identifying himself and his wife Elena with Bloom and his wife Molly in the novel (4).

This is a rather anarchistic visual intervention in the source text indeed, but Joyce might have approved of such recklessness. Boisen inserts an enigma as a territorial signpost rather than solving one for the reader, which signals that he is not as helpful as his self-image in the paratexts would have it. As in “Aeolus”, he adds to the polyvocality by positioning himself between Joyce and the Danish reader in order to speak with his own voice, resulting in a highly manipulated and thus “unreliable” and “hybrid” passage with misleading information to the reader who is looking to understand Joyce’s universe. Instead, Boisen retains his turf as an alpha male exposing his male organ to secure his personal mate Elena’s and his own immortality.

## Conclusion

So why did Boisen revise and retranslate *Ulysses* several times? What were his reasons? As my study suggests, translating the novel became a life-long obsession with him, perfectly on a par with Joyce's dictum opening this article. Even though Boisen implies in the 1986 afterword that he is neither a literary person nor a linguist, he seems nevertheless obsessed to such a degree that his own life and even that of his wife materialised in bodily form and manifested themselves in the identities of the main characters of the work, thus positioning the reader. The slightly conceited preface and his subsequent public explanations of "bimbaschi" as a greeting to his reader and his wife suggest that he is a somewhat unreliable translator even though these are two singular *ad hoc* cases. "What is the art of living? Not to miss anything", he said (193). In his last self-retranslation, in at least two cases which I have been able to detect, he certainly comes out of the shadows by distancing himself from the translator's voice of the first translations in the creation of a foreignized and culturally embedded voice of his own - and in this way he actually fathers a cross-cultural and multilingual hybridity which I have demonstrated is a cornerstone trait of Joyce's poetics. To conclude, even though Boisen's intentions may appear self-conceited, he in fact happens to contribute to the enduring enigmas and puzzles which Joyce had secured in his work - "and that's the only way of insuring one's immortality", as Joyce himself put it (Joyce in Ellmann 521).

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