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LOST A BOB BUT FOUND A TANNER: FROM A TRANSLATOR’S WORKSHOP

MARIANNA GULA

As Fritz Senn noted four decades ago, translators of Ulysses embark upon “a veritable odyssey,” so they need “the skill, the resourcefulness of Odysseus himself, as well as his perseverance and, if possible, some help from a kindly disposed goddess of wisdom.”1 What Senn’s writings have amply demonstrated, however, is that no matter how endowed with the above mentioned merits translators are, the language of Ulysses ineluctably resists or evades their kindly efforts. As a Joyce scholar, I wholeheartedly subscribe to Senn’s opinion that to translate Ulysses is to fail as no other literary translator dare fail. However, as a participant in a project launched and led by András Kappanyos (2003-2012), the aim of which is to provide a more satisfactory Hungarian version of Ulysses by thoroughly re-working Miklós Szentkuthy’s 1974 translation2 and creatively using Endre Gáspár’s earlier 1947 translation where possible,3 I have been obliged for a while now to redirect my mental energies, to mute my scepticism and mobilise scholarly perspicacity in the name of the practical task at hand.

Thus, it is the perspective of the translator that will dominate my present inquiry. Much inspired by Senn’s writings and being fully aware of the heavy losses that translating Ulysses inescapably entails, I will focus on the work of salvage, removal of debris, and the concomitant occasional gains. Since András Kappanyos, who conceived of the necessity of a partially new Hungarian translation in 1997, has already outlined the

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