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# Sailing between ‘comprehensible forms’: The Danish translations of neologisms in Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick*

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## Abstract

This study sets out to analyse the translation of neologisms in the two Danish translations of the American author Herman Melville’s major novel *Moby Dick* (1851). Melville’s poetics is characterised by a largely idiosyncratic style containing many new coinages, also called Melvillisms, which have found their way into dictionaries of today. Based on methodology in previous works on the translation of wordplay, the analysis seeks to uncover which strategies the translators use to represent such new words in the target language. The results are clear: the most prominent strategy is to translate neologisms into non-neologisms followed by the strategies of either translating into equivalent Danish neologisms or transferring the source text neologism into the target text without translation.

Keywords: Literary translation; *Moby Dick*; Herman Melville; neologism; Danish

## Introduction

The great American author Herman Melville’s epic masterpiece *Moby Dick—or, the Whale* was published in 1851. It is an encyclopedic novel of tremendous spiritual, allusive, nautical, poetic and symbolic dimensions, and it has numerous layers of different styles, tones of voice, language, levels of narration, levels of reflection versus levels of sheer action-packed drama. It is the novel of the former school-teacher Ishmael boarding the ship Pequod to go on a three-year whale-hunt with the terrifying, fanatical Captain Ahab and his colourful crew of shipmates. The voyage from home into the unknown world of the mighty sea becomes a double-edged quest of the soul meeting with ultimate beauty and rejuvenation in the wonders of the natural life at sea as well as a meeting with the darkest horrors and obsession in the realisation of the somber nature of the human soul.

The simple whale-hunt turns out to be Ahab’s final vendetta for blood-thirsty revenge on the big white whale called Moby Dick, which had previously escaped in a battle with Ahab while depriving him of one of his legs. It is also a tale of the dilemma of staying home and going

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abroad, of the constant urge to sail, or wander, the world of the ocean between the old, familiar world and the new, unfamiliar world out there on the other side of the horizon. The quest to 'hunt' something is a drive that brings the characters to a border territory where the old and the new take on strange, incomprehensible forms, and this is powerfully reflected in a unique stylistic trait of the novel's language: We sail in unknown territory between comprehensible words.

In a chapter on language in the novel Lee (2006) draws our attention to chapter 42 in the book, 'The Whiteness of the whale', where Ishmael reflects on the impossibility of explaining the tremendous power of the quality of whiteness of the whale. Lee argues that Ishmael's trepidation in putting the description into 'comprehensible form', i.e. describing it in comprehensible terms, is significant for the entire scope of the language in the book. Ishmael says:

Aside from those more obvious considerations touching Moby Dick, which could not but occasionally awaken in any man's soul some alarm, there was another thought, or rather vague, nameless horror concerning him, which at times by its intensity completely overpowered all the rest; and yet so mystical and well nigh ineffable was it, that I almost despair of putting it in a comprehensible form. It was the whiteness of the whale that above all things appalled me. But how can I hope to explain myself here; and yet, in some dim, random way, explain myself I must, else all these chapters might be naught. (Melville 2001: 204)

The elusive quality of whiteness is beyond words, and so is the awe-inspiring encyclopedic project of the entire novel. It is the narrator's enterprise to find the right words, even though words fail him. The narrator must sail incomprehensible waters between comprehensible forms as it were and transmit the strangeness to the readers—'else all these chapters might be naught'. And this mission becomes doubly challenging to a translator as the various forms must be transformed into a new language containing all the strangeness of the source language. I shall now try to make sense of the incomprehensible forms of Melville's language, and for this purpose it will be useful to scrutinise the vocabulary.

#### *Idiosyncratic language in Moby Dick*

According to Berthoff, Melville consolidates a so-called 'signature' of writing, which pervades all the forms and conventions of his mature

work, such as *Moby Dick*: ‘It justifies these forms and these conventions and renews the life in them; it becomes, in a way, their reason for being’ (Berthoff 1962: 159). But as the comprehensible words evade Ishmael in the novel, this signature also evades Berthoff as ‘what exactly it consists of can only be suggested rather abstractly’ (Berthoff 1962: 160). Based on previous readings of the novel, Berthoff reaches the conclusion that the idiosyncratic diction mainly consists of:

1. Favourite words and epithets conjuring up major themes and atmospheres, such as:  
wild, moody, mystic, subtle, wondrous, nameless, intense, malicious, calm, fair, mild, serene, tranquil, cool, indifferent, noble, grand
2. New coinages/improvisations or transpositions of parts of speech, such as:  
verb-nouns, noun-adverbs, adjective-nouns (e.g. “concentrating brow”; “immaculate manliness”), participial modifiers—e.g. serving as favourite epithets (such as “preluding”, “foreshadowing”); pluralised substantives, etc. (Berthoff 1962: 161).
3. Exaggerated repetition in specific passages, e.g. of the words “old”, “savage”, or the series “pitiable”, “pity”, “pitied”, “piteous” in an account in chapter 81.

Also, an underlying image-making strategy seems to be the pervasive coordination of a sensuous vocabulary with a categorical vocabulary of objects and phenomena which particularises certain ways of happening rooted in both human character and in the surrounding habit of universal nature, such as in the expressions ‘the half-known life’, ‘desolate vacuity of life’ (Berthoff 1962: 162).

The idiosyncratic vocabulary does not stop here. Melville employs novel modifications of existing words, such as ‘Leviathanism’; uses words in new ways, such as when the whale ‘heaps’, ‘tasks’ or ‘swerve(s)’; and invents a vast number of neologisms. Lee takes up on Melville’s reviewers’ characterisation of the style as ‘wordmongering’

with 'extravagance' as the bane of the book and notes how the novel's characters for instance are 'befooled' or 'predestinated' (Lee 2006: 39), or cry 'like a heart-stricken moose' (Lee 2006: 396).

Melville also applies specialised terms, such as 'fossiliferous' and the then little-known term 'a gam' about a social meeting of whalers at sea. Ishmael explains:

But what is a *Gam*? You might wear out your index-finger running up and down the columns of dictionaries, and never find the word. Dr. Johnson never attained to that crudition. Noah Webster's ark does not hold it. Nevertheless, this same expressive word has now for many years been in constant use among some fifteen thousand true born Yankees. Certainly, it needs definition, and should be incorporated into the Lexicon. With this view, let me learnedly define it.

GAM. Noun—a social meeting of two (or more) Whale-ships, generally on a straining-ground; when, after exchanging baits; the exchange visits by boats' crews: the two captains remaining, for the time, on board of one ship, and the two chief mates on the other. (Melville 2001: 262-63)

The word is now available in dictionary.com where one of the definitions seems to fit with Ishmael's.

This cannot, however, be said of the word 'slobgollion'. According to Lee's findings in *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word was first put to print in *Moby Dick* and refers to the residue left in a tub after whale sperm is broken up and decanted (Lee 2006: 406). This is symptomatic of Melville's style: 'The language of *Moby-Dick* shares the oozy and alien richness of slobgollion; and though nothing is thin about Melville's prose, it contains the residues of variously ruptured literary forms that, despite an uneven stringiness, do indeed coalesce. Or rather act in the process of coalescing, for slobgollion suggests how language and literature are never stable or completely representative' (Lee 2006: 406-7).

On the other hand, it is not just all uncertainty and abstractions. Even though the language may consist of 'incomprehensible forms', the language paradoxically gives evidence to an underlying drive towards registration of determinate, but hitherto generally unknown meaning as

in Ishmael's scorn for Dr. Johnson and Webster's shortcomings as lexicographers. In a rarely mentioned study on 'The Vocabulary of *Moby Dick*', C. Merton Babcock presents a vast collection of words that have actually contributed to the English and American languages and seeks thus to document words and expressions which either antedate the earliest cited evidence in the historical dictionaries or simply do not appear in any of the dictionaries. Babcock divides his long lists of vocabulary into the following criteria (Babcock 1952: 90-91) (to which I add examples from the various lists in the article):

1. Words listed as Americanisms in the *DAE* [*A Dictionary of American English*, 1938], but for which Melville supplies earlier evidence—such as 'bill', 'canaller', 'deacon's meeting', 'hard-scrabble' and 'marbleized'.
2. Words listed as questionable Americanisms in the *DAE*, but for which Melville supplies earlier evidence—such as 'country schoolmaster', 'meatmarket' and 'spring carriage'.
3. Words which are listed in the *NED* [*A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, 1888-1928] or *NEDS* [*Supplement to NED*, 1933], but for which Melville supplies earlier evidence—such as 'albino', 'cheesery', 'dead' (as an adjective: 'You'll have the nightmare to a dead sartainty'), 'dumfounded', 'gallied', 'hish', 'knock off', 'manhandle', 'squilgee' and 'teetering'.
4. Words for which Melville's use is the earliest or only citation in either the *NED* or the *DAE*—such as 'cannibalistically', 'death-tube', 'japonica', 'gamming', 'keyhole-prospect', 'muffledness', 'telltale' and 'slobgollion'.
5. Words used by Melville which appear neither in the *NED* nor in the *DAE*, i.e. neologisms, or sheer 'Melvillisms', nonce words, onomatopoeic words or provincialisms—such as 'blackling', 'blang-whang', 'crappo', 'crescentic', 'curvicues', 'isolato', 'lobtailing', 'twisketee be-twisk' and 'wrapall'.
6. Words listed in the *NED* or in the *DAE*, but for which Melville supplies a sense not defined in the dictionaries—such as 'alow', 'baronial', 'candy', 'drugged', 'pinny' and 'trance'.
7. Words listed in the *NED* with no historical evidence, which evidence may be supplied by quoting from *Moby Dick*—such as

‘cetological’, ‘chancery wards’ and ‘hamstring’—which are the only words on the list.

Babcock concludes that Melville’s language testifies to an enormous lexicographical interest which contributes greatly to the English and American language, and his ‘sensitivity to the elemental aspects of language formation is attested by the flexibility of word functions he employs, by his unique combination of familiar elements in words, by his use of reduplicated forms, and by his displayed interest in compounding words’ (Babcock 1952: 101). In this way, the incomprehensible forms of life at sea as a zone of wondrous strangeness in fact tugs at a residue of familiar comprehensible forms of conventional English. As Ishmael says: ‘But how can I hope to explain myself here; and yet, in some dim, random way, explain myself I must, else all these chapters might be naught’.

But if Melville thus contributed significantly to the American English lexicon, then what can be said about the Danish translator’s contribution to the Danish language? Thus, my research question reads: Are the Danish translations consistent with Melville’s preoccupation with an original style heavily relying on neologisms?

### *Neologisms*

Before turning to the translators and their translations, an explanation of neologisms is called for. My interest here lies within the neologisms in item 5 on Babcock’s list, also called actual Melvillisms. Since Melville was so skilled in lexical innovation in word formation that it was actually recorded in dictionaries afterwards, or never even recorded before or after, this is a feature a translator cannot touch lightly upon. New coinages are one of the most difficult challenges when translating as there is most often no aid to be found in any bilingual dictionary, and therefore we need to understand how neologisms are constructed in order to determine how they can be re-created in another language.

New word formation may be based on these principles (Ayto 1996; Maxwell 2006):

Compounding:	The combination of existing words, such as <i>speed-dating</i> and <i>fast food</i>
Blends:	The combination of parts of existing words, such as <i>brunch</i> deriving from <i>breakfast</i> and <i>lunch</i>
Semantic change:	New ways of using existing words, such as <i>mouse</i> , <i>gay</i>
Abbreviation:	Using the initial letters of existing words, such as <i>DVD</i>
Affixation:	New ways of using recognised affixes by attaching them to established words, such as <i>edutainment</i> and <i>frankenfood</i>
Borrowings:	Loans from other languages, such as <i>latte</i> and <i>tsunami</i>
Functional shift:	An existing word takes on a new syntactical function, such as <i>a second</i> and <i>to second</i>
Nonce word:	A word coined and used for only one particular occasion, such as the many nonsense words in <i>Alice in Wonderland</i>

Melville uses such new formations, which is on a par with the overall encyclopedic scope of his novel as a border territory where old and new take on strange, incomprehensible forms. It is a challenge to the translator to try to respect this mission in his or her struggle with the novel and to try to give life to Melville's idiosyncratic words in such a way that they generate the same effect in the foreign language.

Studies of the translation of neologisms are sparse. The issue tends to be briefly mentioned in studies of non-literary texts, for instance in a discussion of the development of lexicography (Ayto, 1996), the translation of scientific terms (Cheshire and Thomä 1991), and the translation of technological and institutional terms (Newmark 1988). As neologisms are similar to puns in the sense that they also play with double meanings and contain a kind of creative freshness and image-making power, I argue that the translation strategies available to a literary translator are the same as the ones available when having to translate puns. Thus, I propose that a comparative analysis of the translation of neologisms may benefit from the same methodology as that of analysing the translation of puns, so this is what I set out to do in this study.



Delabastita (1996) has devised a list of translation strategies of translating puns: Pun → pun, pun → non-pun, pun → related rhetorical device, pun → zero, pun ST → pun TT, non-pun → pun, zero → pun and editorial techniques. As this list has proven very fruitful in analysing translations of puns (Klitgård 2005; Klitgård 2018), I here adapt Delabastita's list to the context of neologisms:

1. NEOLOGISM → NEOLOGISM: the source-text neologism is translated by a target-language neologism, which may be more or less different from the original in terms of formal structure, semantic structure, or textual function
2. NEOLOGISM → NON-NEOLOGISM: the neologism is translated into a non-neologism
3. NEOLOGISM → RELATED RHETORICAL DEVICE: the neologism is replaced by some neologism-related rhetorical device (repetition, wordplay, alliteration, rhyme, referential vagueness, irony, paradox, etc.), which aims to recapture the effect of the source-text neologism
4. NEOLOGISM → ZERO: the neologism is simply omitted
5. NEOLOGISM ST = NEOLOGISM TT: the translator reproduces the source-text neologism and possibly its immediate environment in its original form, i.e. without actually "translating" it
6. NON-NEOLOGISM → NEOLOGISM: the translator introduces a neologism in textual positions where the original text has no neologism, by way of compensation to make up for source-text neologisms lost elsewhere, or for any other reason
7. ZERO → NEOLOGISM: totally new textual material is added, which contains a neologism and which has no apparent precedent or justification in the source text except as a compensatory device
8. EDITORIAL TECHNIQUES: explanatory footnotes or endnotes, comments provided in translators' forewords, the 'anthological' presentation of different, supposedly complementary solutions to one and the same source-text

problem, and so forth (adapted from Delabastita 1996: 134).

In the following comparative analysis of the translations I will analyse each example according to this list. But first I want to provide a brief presentation of the translations and their translators.

*The translations: critical analysis*

The very first rendering of *Moby Dick* in Danish was a severely abridged adaptation in 1942 by Peter Freuchen (1886-57) who was a Danish explorer, anthropologist, writer and journalist primarily of the Arctic areas (Klitgård 2015). The first full translation followed 13 years later by the Danish Lieutenant Colonel and internationally renowned self-made translator Mogens Boisen (1910-87) in 1955. However, by close inspection it turns out that several passages and chapters have been left out, so it is not the first complete translation after all. It contains an afterword by Danish author Martin A Hansen (1909-55). Boisen is the translator of more than 800 books, including many of world literature's finest classics from mainly English, German, French, Swedish and Norwegian (Pedersen 2001: 391). His most famous translations are his three translations of James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) in 1949, 1970 and 1980 (Klitgård, 2005).

An unabridged retranslation was published in 2011 by Danish journalist, author and translator Flemming Chr. Nielsen (1943-) containing an introduction by Danish author Carsten Jensen (1952-). Flemming Chr. Nielsen has translated the collected works of Melville and books by Noam Chomsky, Bertrand Russell and Henry David Thoreau.

In the following I have collected translations by Mogens Boisen (TT MB) and Flemming Chr. Nielsen (TT FCN) of a selected list of words on Babcock's list of vocabulary which exists in neither *A New English Dictionary of Historical Principles, 1888-1918 (NED)* nor *A Dictionary of American English, 1938 (DAE)*, i.e. neologisms, Melvillisms, nonce words, onomatopoeic words or provincialisms. These words have been categorised according to the various types of new word formation presented above, and each translation will be analysed according to Delabastita's translation choice taxonomy of translating puns.

## Compounding:

1.

ST	'our beset boat was like a ship mobbed by <b>ice-isles</b> in a tempest' (Melville 2001: 421)
TT MB	'kunne vor både lignes ved et skib, der i storm presses inde mellem <b>isbjerge</b> ' (Melville 2008: 392)
TT FCN	'da lignede vor martrede både et skib, der under en storm er omringet af <b>isbjerge</b> ' (Melville 2011: 367)

'Ice-isles' is a name given by sailors to a great quantity of ice collected into one huge solid mass, like an ice island. According to oxforddictionaries.com, the earliest recording is found in the explorer James Cook's writings (1728-79). So, it is not Melville's invention after all. However, according to my search on Google, not many hits can be found to this besides links to e.g. ice-cream and ice companies. Both translators use the neologism → non-neologism strategy as they translate it into the more idiomatic word 'isbjerge' [ice mountains]. This gives the impression of tallness, which may not have been Melville's intention.

2.

ST	'Five great motions are peculiar to it [...] Fourth, in <b>lob tailing</b> ' (Melville 2001: 411)
TT MB	'Fem store bevægelser er karakteristiske for <b>halen</b> [...] for det fjerde til at <b>slå fladt på bølgerne med</b> ' (Melville 2008: 383)
TT FCN	'Fem former for bevægelse er karakteristiske [...] for det fjerde til <b>haldedask</b> ' (Melville 2011: 359)

This compound noun refers to whales lifting their flukes (tail fins) to beat the surface of the water with a big splash. TT MB has used a neologism → non-neologism strategy as he explicates what is meant by it 'halen [...] slå fladt på bølgerne med' [the tail...to beat the waves flatly with]. TT FCN, on the other hand, turns the source neologism into a Danish neologism in choosing 'haldedask' [tail slap].

3.

ST	‘Well, <b>manmaker!</b> ’ (Melville 2001: 512)
TT MB	‘Nå, <b>menneskemager!</b> ’ (Melville 2008: 469)
TT FCN	‘Nå, <b>menneskemager!</b> ’ (Melville 2011: 437)

‘Manmaker’ is an epithet used for the carpenter in this chapter of the novel. Both translators manage to translate it directly into a Danish neologism ‘menneskemager’ [man/human maker] while retaining the alliteration of repeating an ‘m’. The English word has apparently not caught on when speaking of carpenters, but is now used to denote a certain technique within the exercise form of crossfit according to Google.

4.

ST	‘canoes of dark wood, like the rich <b>war-wood</b> of his native isle’ (Melville 2001: 521)
TT MB	‘kanoer af mørkt træ, der lignede <b>våbentræet</b> på hans fødeø’ (Melville 2008: 477)
TT FCN	‘kanoer af mørkt træ, der mindede om hans hjemlands store <b>træskjolde</b> ’ (Melville 2011: 444)

Here we learn about a type of wood in Polynesia. According to wiktory.org it denotes wood similar to black walnut (*Juglens Nigra*). It may also refer to wood used for military materiel in historical warfare. Thus TT MB translates the neologism into the equivalent neologism ‘våbentræet’ [weapon wood], whereas TT FCN turns it into a non-neologism by rendering it as ‘træskjolde’ [wooden shields]. In this way the word loses its ambiguity.

Semantic change:

1.

ST	'this " <b>holding on</b> " as it is called; this hooking up by the sharp barbs of his live flesh from the back' (Melville 2001: 389)
TT MB	'denne " <b>fastholden</b> ", som det hedder, hvorunder de skarpe modhager trækker hårdt i hvalens ryg' (Melville 2008: 363)
TT FCN	'denne " <b>holden ved</b> ," som det hedder, med de hvæssede pigges pinefulde kroge hægtet ind i ryggen' (Melville 2011: 343)

This is obviously a gerund phrase related to whaling, and both translators manage to translate it into an equivalent neologism in Danish. However, Boisen's translation is a compound word, whereas Nielsen's is also a gerund phrase.

2.

ST	'Rig it, dig it, <b>stig</b> it' (Melville 2001: 189)
TT MB	'Ring den, kling den, <b>sving</b> den' (Melville 2008: 178)
TT FCN	'Klar med den, dik den, <b>vrik</b> den' (Melville 2011: 191)

According to the online annotations to *Moby Dick* (<http://www.powermobydick.com/>) the word 'stig' means to brand or mark with a hot iron. It is part of a series of alliterations which take an extra toll on the translator. None of the translations are neologisms, though. TT MB translates it into 'sving' [swing], and TT FCN decides on 'vrik' meaning 'wiggle' or 'scull'. But the alliterations have been maintained.

Affixation:

1.

ST	‘strike the bell eight, thou Pip! thou <b>blackling!</b> ’ (Melville 2001: 188)
TT MB	‘slå otte glas, du Pip! <b>Sorte knægt!</b> ’ (Melville 2008: 188)
TT FCN	‘slå otte glas, Pip! du <b>lille sorte djævel!</b> ’ (Melville 2011: 189)

The word ‘blackling’ is a diminutive epithet applied to a black boy. Again, none of the translations are neologisms as Boisen translates it into ‘sorte knægt’ [black boy/black rascal], and Nielsen translates it into ‘lille sorte djævel’ [little black devil].

2.

ST	‘and swimming on, in one solid, but still <b>creseentric</b> centre’ (Melville 2001: 418)
TT MB	‘og de svømmede videre i en fast, men endnu <b>halvmåneformet</b> formation’ (Melville 2008: 389)
TT FCN	‘og svømmede videre i en solid kreds, der stadig havde <b>måneseglens form</b> ’ (Melville 2011: 364)

When searching for ‘creseentric’ in Google, I only came upon it as a medical term. I could not find it in any dictionary. In *Moby Dick* it denotes a crescent-shaped formation based on *cre-* and the suffix *-centric*. None of the translations manage to find an equivalently fanciful term. TT MB renders it as ‘halvmåneformet’ [crescent-shaped] and TT FCN selects ‘måneseglens form’ [the shape of the crescent].

3.

ST	'this <b>omnitooled</b> , open-and-shut carpenter, was, after all, no mere machine' (Melville 2001: 510)
TT MB	'denne tømmermand <b>med de mange færdigheder</b> , der kunne bruges fuldstændig efter behov og lukkes op og i, dog ikke nogen blot automat' (Melville 2008: 468)
TT FCN	'denne <b>tusindkunstner</b> af en luk-op-og-luk-i-tømmermand dog ikke en ren og skær automat' (Melville 2011: 435)

This affixation refers to the carpenter possessing all types of tools. Boisen has not grasped this as he translates it into 'med de mange færdigheder' [with the many skills], and Nielsen turns it into the commonly known Danish word 'tusindkunstner' [handyman/Jack of all trades]. They are both close to the ST meaning, but lack the novelty of Melville's neologism.

4.

ST	'The old man well knew that to steer by <b>transpointed</b> needles [...] was not a thing to be passed over' (Melville 2001: 563)
TT MB	'Desuden vidste den gamle skipper meget vel, at dette at styre efter <b>stærkt misvisende</b> kompasnåle nok er muligt med besvær' (Melville 2008: 209)
TT FCN	'Desuden var den gamle mand udmærket klar over, at nok kunne der med stort besvær styres efter kompasnåle <b>med fejlvisning</b> ' (Melville 2011: 475)

Here the word 'transpointed' is a combination of 'pointed' and the prefix 'trans-' meaning pointed in a contrary direction. Both translations use a neologism → non-neologism strategy as they explicate the underlying meaning. The first one 'stærkt misvisende' can be back-translated into 'strongly misleading', and the second one 'med fejlvisning' means 'with an erroneous indication'.

## Borrowings:

1.

ST	<p>‘I well know that these <b>Crappoes</b> of Frenchmen are but poor devils in the fishery’ (Melville 2001: 441).</p> <p>‘but look ye, here’s a <b>Crappo</b> that is content with our leavings’ (Melville 2001: 441).</p>
TT MB	<p>‘Jeg ved nok, at de franske <b>frølår</b> kun er nogle elendige karle til hvalfangst’ (Melville 2008: 408)</p> <p>‘Men ser I, her er et <b>frølår</b>, der nøjes med vores affald’ (Melville 2008: 408)</p>
TT FCN	<p>‘De <b>Crappoer</b> til franskmænd er nogen arme djævle til fangere’ (Melville 2011: 382)</p> <p>‘men den <b>Crappo</b> her er tilfreds med vores levninger’ (Melville 2011: 382)</p>

According to Babcock, this word is used contemptuously about seamen of the French whaling float. It denotes a toad (*crapaud*), and is typically used about Frenchmen in general (Babcock, 1952, 98). Boisen chooses a neologism → non-neologism strategy as he translates it into ‘frølår’ [frog’s thigh], whereas Nielsen chooses a neologism ST = neologism TT strategy by maintaining the original word.

2.

ST	<p>They were nearly all Islanders in the Pequod, <b>Isolatoos</b> too, I call such, not acknowledging the common continent of men, but each <b>Isolato</b> living on a separate continent of his own. Yet now, federated along one keel, what a set these <b>Isolatoos</b> were! (Melville 2001: 131).</p>
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TT MB	‘Også på Pequod var de næsten alle sammen øboer— <b>Isolatoer</b> kalder jeg dem—der ikke anerkender de store fastlande men <b>hver</b> lever på sit særskilte kontinent. Men nu var de alle forenet over en og samme køl, og hvilken flok <b>isolatoer!</b> (Melville 2008: 140-41)
TT FCN	‘Næsten alle om bord på Pequod var øboere. En <b>Isolato</b> kalder jeg den, der ikke anerkender mennekehedens fælles kontinent, men som <b>Isolato</b> lever på sit eget særlige kontinent. Forsamlet over én køl hvad var <b>Isolato</b> ’erne da ikke for en samling’ (Melville 2011: 147)

This noun is from the Italian *isolato* and refers to a person who is spiritually or physically isolated from others. Both Danish translations render this word unchanged in the Danish context by way of a neologism ST = neologism TT strategy. Only in the second translation the repetition of this word has been exchanged with ‘hver’, which means ‘each one’.

Functional shifts:

1.

ST	‘None exceed that fine manoeuver with the lance called <b>pitchpoling</b> ’ (three passages Melville 2001: 403)
TT MB	‘overgår ingen den smukke manøvre med lansen, som kaldes <b>stangkastet</b> ’ (Melville 2008: 175)
TT FCN	‘overgår intet den elegante manøvre med lansen, der kaldes for <b>stangkastet</b> ’ (Melville 2011: 352)

This nominalisation from the verb ‘to pitch’ and the noun ‘pole’ denotes the action of darting a long lance from a violently rocking boat under extreme headway. The Danish translations into ‘stangkastet’ are equally new words in Danish combining the nouns ‘stang’ (pole) and ‘kastet’ (the throw). Thus there is a functional shift from the order of the original word as Melville’s word has *throw + pole* whereas the Danish one is

formed by *pole* + *throw*, thus making it a more natural combination in Danish.

Blends:

1

ST	‘I’ll try my hand at raising a meaning out of these queer <b>curvicues</b> ’ (Melville 2001, 473)
TT MB	‘vil jeg prøve på at få en mening ud af det sære <b>krimskrams</b> her med Massachusettskalenderen’ (Melville 2008: 435)
TT FCN	‘lad mig prøve, om ikke Massachusettsalmanakken kan fremmane en mening i det uendelige <b>krimskrams</b> ’ (Melville 2011: 408)

Babcock defines this blend as meaning ‘involved figurations’ (Babcock 1952: 98). It is impossible to find it when googling, but it resembles the blend ‘curlicue’ or ‘curlycue’ denoting an ornamental, fancy curl or twist. Here Melville creates the blend ‘curvicues’, which, however, does not find its equal in the Danish translations. Here both translators interestingly land on the same neologism → non-neologism ‘krimskrams’ [scrawl/squiggle/curlicues/doodles].

2.

ST	‘the mincer [...] heavily backs the <b>grandissimus</b> , as the mariners call it, and with bowed shoulders, staggers off with it’ (Melville 2001: 459)
TT MB	‘hakkemanden [...] får denne <b>grandissimus</b> , som søfolkene kalder den, op på ryggen, hvorefter han med bøjede skuldre vakler af med den’ (Melville 2008: 424)
TT FCN	‘hakkemanden [...] får den genstand, som søfolk kalder en <b>grandissimus</b> , slæbt op på ryggen, hvorefter hans bøjede skuldre vakler af sted med den’ (Melville 2011: 396)

Both Babcock (1952, 98) and urbandictionary.com refer to this as the phallus of the whale. Both translators keep this word in the neologism ST = neologism TT strategy, but TT MB has italicised it to make it stand out as a foreign word.

3.

ST	'his heavy grego, or <b>wrapall</b> , or dreadnaught' (Melville 2001: 24).
TT MB	'sin tunge, grove stotrøje eller <b>koft</b> e eller kappe' (Melville 2008: 47)
TT FCN	'hans tykke kappe eller <b>koft</b> e eller stotrøje' (Melville 2011: 65)

A 'wrapall' is a sailor's heavy overcoat. This has been translated into the familiar non-neologism 'koft', which is used about a long cardigan-like piece of clothing made of fabric or leather and typically used by peasants or other poor people back in history.

Nonce words:

1.

ST	' <b>Crish, crash!</b> There goes the jib stay! <b>Blang-whang!</b> God!' (Melville 2001: 193)
TT MB	' <b>Ritsch, ratsch,</b> dér går klyverfaldet! <b>Bingg-dingg!</b> Gud i himlen! (Melville 2008: 192)
TT FCN	' <b>Ritsj, ratsj!</b> Der ryger fokkestaget! <b>Bim-bam!</b> Gud!' (Melville 2011: 196)

These nonce words are onomatopoeia. They both give out the sounds of something being torn and something which tumbles down. The Danish translations follow suit with equivalent sound words. However, three of them are common sound words in Danish. 'Ritsch, ratsch' and 'ritsj, ratsj' are common to denote the sound of tearing something and can be detected back in the writings of Hans Christian Andersen in 1919 according to the *Ordbog over det danske sprog* [Dictionary of the Danish Language] ([http://ordnet.dk/ods/ordbog?entry\\_id=529617&query=ritsch%20ratsch&hi=ritsch,ratsch,Ritsch](http://ordnet.dk/ods/ordbog?entry_id=529617&query=ritsch%20ratsch&hi=ritsch,ratsch,Ritsch)). The last one, 'bim-bam' is often used in Danish to illustrate the sound of bells, such as church bells, and

can be detected back to a children's song in 1912 (<http://ordnet.dk/ods/ordbog?query=bim>). So here we have in total one neologism → neologism strategy and three neologism → non-neologism solutions.

2.

ST	'he have one, two, tree—oh! good many iron in him hide [...] all <b>twiske-tee be-twisk</b> ' (Melville 2001: 176)
TT MB	'Og har han ikke også en, to, tre—oh! mange jern i hans skind [...] og dem alle sammen <b>være så snoet rundt som ham</b> ' (Melville 2008: 179)
TT FCN	'Og han har én, to, tre—oh! mange spyd i ham også [...] alle sammen <b>bedrej-vredet</b> ' (Melville 2011: 181)

Babcock says this expression refers to a reduplicate formation (1952, 98). Even though it looks like a nonce word, some familiar words can be recognised. The word 'betwixt' hides in 'be-twisk' meaning 'between'. And 'twiske-tee' may be a variant of 'twixt', which is a short form of 'betwixt' and/or a version of 'twisty' meaning something being twisted. The first Danish translation abandons the possibility of designing an equally fanciful expression by explicating the situation as 'være så snoet rundt om ham' [be so twisted around him]. The retranslation, on the other hand, creates an equally fresh neologism in 'bedrej-vredet', which combines 'vredet' [twisted] with 'bedrej'. This is certainly no Danish word, but an affixation consisting of the prefix 'be-', which has no particular meaning, and the imperative 'drej' [twist/turn].

### *Results*

When adding up the number of translation strategies in total we see that retorting to a non-neologism is the most frequent technique as it has 24 occurrences. Then follow translations into equivalent neologisms and direct transfers, which both have nine occurrences. None of the remaining strategies are used in the selected passages:

Strategy	Occurrences
Neologism → neologism	9
Neologism → non-neologism	24
Neologism → related rhetorical device	0
Neologism → zero	0
Neologism ST = neologism TT	9
Non-neologism → neologism	0
Zero → neologism	0
Editorial technique	0

### Conclusion

It appears that when applying the analytical method of categorising the translation of puns to the translation of neologisms, the most often used strategy in this case turns out to be the translation of a neologism into a non-neologism. After that neologisms translated into either Danish neologisms or maintained in their original form follow suit. None of the other strategies have been used in this small qualitative corpus. In this way it becomes evident that both translators depart from Melville's stylistic vision of sailing between comprehensible forms in the waters of new words. The creation of flexible Melvillims is Melville's attempt to express the idiosyncratic strangeness of the meeting of the old, familiar world and the new, unfamiliar world on the other side of the horizon. Melville's coinages have found their way into our dictionaries and must be revered accordingly in foreign language translations, I suggest, but that is not the case in the Danish translations.

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