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On Translating Style, Finnish into English

For a literary translator, translating style is at once fun and nerve-wracking: fun because style unleashes the translator's greatest creativity, and nerve-wracking, because the aesthetic and political consequences of our choices are so complex, and it's so easy to get it wrong. As Adnan K. Abdulla warns, "the author's particular mode of vision is severely compromised when translated into a different culture and the translated version becomes a text with a different effect, a different meaning" (1993, 77). On a more positive note, Susan Bassnett points out that translations can also "regenerate literature by introducing new forms, new styles of writing, new ways of seeing" (2004, 10), as in the case of Ezra Pound's translations of Chinese poetry into English. Translators must make often very difficult choices when deciding upon what effects and meanings are possible in the target language, choices that become all the more difficult in the translation of literature, where style and meaning are inseparable. These choices take place along a long continuum, beginning with large pragmatic decisions like whether to domesticate or localize, moving down to how to treat dialect/dialogue, how to translate figurative language and idioms, how to manage rhythms and even individual sounds, how to translate the "mind style" of the original author. Choices at one level affect choices at other levels, and indeed are so closely intertwined that separating them out like this feels entirely artificial.

The present essay will discuss stylistic issues in translation from the perspective of a practicing translator, selecting material from three plays I've translated from Finnish into English: Anna Krogerus's *Rakkaudesta minuun* (2006; trans. *For Sheer Love of Me*, 2007), Juha Lehtola's *Othellohyrrä* (2003; trans. *Spinning Othello*, 2005), and Laura Ruohonen's *Olga* (2002; trans. 2007), plus two short examples from a work in progress.¹ I shall not attempt to identify my own personal translation style,² but rather to show through a kind of retrospective think-aloud protocol how I have approached stylistic issues in the past, and how I might approach such issues differently in the future.

Becoming a Translator

A few background words are perhaps in order. Some of my most strongly held feelings about translation are rooted in my childhood experiences, and concern issues connected to what I can best describe as the materiality of language. Although one of my parents is Finnish, I grew up speaking English and only learned Finnish as an adult. From the

point of view of translation, this has meant that I had a long association with Finnish without understanding more than a word or two, and hence was able to spend many years listening to the exquisite music of the language without being bothered about the meaning (something, alas, I can no longer do). As a child, I noticed that Finnish plosives were more voiced than in English (the Finnish *p* sounds like *b* in my ears), that saying *hyvää yötä* reduced my sister and me to fits of laughter as we struggled to curve our lips around those vowels and diphthongs, and that the women in our extended family had an attractive habit of inhaling when they said *joo...*, a mannerism I imitated for awhile in English until I noticed that people reacted quite negatively to it.

These kinds of observations have for better or worse shaped the kind of translator I have become. The fact that there are subtle differences between English and Finnish even at the level of phoneme and morpheme affects the most basic things, like what is going on in the lips, tongue, teeth and breath of a Finnish-speaking or English-speaking actor. I thus pay very close attention to the poetical qualities of language, to sounds and rhythms, to theatrical “beats.” The fact that my sister and I tended to laugh at the strangeness of the sounds we were trying to produce has also made me perhaps excessively wary of creating unintentional or inappropriate comedy through the sounds I decide to include in a translation, whether in the form of character names, place names, or the odd foreign phrase. These sounds extend beyond mere words or phrases, to the whole system of filler sounds, backchat noises and the rest. The fact that Americans started laughing at me when I inhaled rather than exhaled on my filler “yeah” shows how conservative language can be in some areas, even as it is changing quite quickly in others.

So for me, at the very basic level translating style means wrestling with the physical qualities of language, of turning one verbal music into another, a theme which runs through all of the examples below. As Kate Cameron argues, verbal music is especially important in theatrical translation:

Particularly pertinent to translators of theatre, the ear rather than the eye will be chiefly attentive to the musicality of language, to the oral and the aural. The translator must attune ears and mouths to the qualities and differences in the original language and their own tongue. (2000, 109.)

Writing about translating the Spanish playwright Valle-Inclán, David Johnston similarly focuses on the musicality of language, saying he needs to find ways to preserve the “tones, counterpoints and dissonances of Valle’s carefully orchestrated verbal music” (2000, 87).

So what are the qualities of Finnish verbal music? One of my favorite descriptions of the differences between the sounds and structures of English and Finnish comes from a review of Cajander’s *Hamlet*, published in 1880 by B.F. Godenhjelm. Speaking of the

difficulties of translating from English into Finnish, he writes that the English language is “*kuin myrskyisen meren kuohuvat aallot, jotka raubattomina särkyvät rantaa vastaan, suomen kieli on virta, joka tasaisesti vie merta kohde*” (qtd in Aaltonen and Jänis, 2007, 269).³ I must confess that while I like his image of the stream, I’ve always thought that Finnish, especially when spoken quickly, sounds more like a submachine gun: steady (no rising or falling intonation like English), punctuated only by double-consonants. It’s not a language that washes over you, but rather one that pushes you over, yet one which is capable of the most exquisite lyricism, as in the works of Eino Leino.

Translating for the Theater: Faithful Rendering versus Adaptation

But language is more than verbal music, and translators must combine sound and sense; we must *tell the story* in a language the audience can understand. But how does one tell the story? The demands of live performance are different from the demands of printed texts, where translators have recourse to long introductions and explanatory footnotes. Therefore, as Terry Hale and Carole-Anne Upton explain, theatrical translators must be particularly sensitive to the needs of the audience, which to their mind “demands careful mediation of the source text” (2000, 2). Furthermore, translators must write with an awareness of the *mise en scène*, and must function as cultural bridges, while at the same time producing a performable text. The first and third points have been contentious, especially regarding what this “careful mediation” can include, to what extent translators can deviate from source texts in order to produce “speakable” or “playable” translations. Similar issues had been earlier raised by David Johnston, who noted that there is “some considerable divergence among practitioners not only on the principal issues of the scope for personal creativity, or voice, in translation, whether translators should play feudal servant to their master, or if they are a second author in their own right [--] but also on the question of the translator’s linguistic competence in the target language” (1996, 7).⁴ Theatrical translations, therefore, can range anywhere from faithful, academic renderings, to domesticated texts with the foreignness smoothed out, to adaptations sharing hardly more than a title with the original.

As Sirkku Aaltonen points out, there are important cultural considerations at work when deciding what type of translation is appropriate in any given context. My own naive goal has been to translate worthy texts from a small language into one of the world’s leading *lingua francas* in an effort to create demand for these works, to encourage an interest in the foreign.⁵ Aaltonen, by contrast, suggests that this is not how theater works:

In well established and fully developed theatrical systems (in particular their mainstream stages) an interest in the Foreign is rarely, if ever, decisive in the adoption of a foreign text for a production. It is more likely to be the situation within one’s own culture, one’s own society and one’s own theater which di-

rects the choice of texts to other cultures. When the Foreign is not of primary interest in the selection, constraints concerning “fidelity” to the source text and the invisibility of the translator are not the most important criteria in translation either. (2000, 75-76.)

In her terms, my translations are “reverent,” where the Foreign “is held in esteem and respected” (2000, 64).⁶

At the same time, however, I want to provide my imagined English-speaking audience with an aesthetic experience which is as similar as possible to how I experience the work in Finnish.⁷ So my first question is whether to transfer that world into a world more familiar to the target audience (e.g., Janne Reinikainen’s recent decision at the Finnish National Theater to set Gogol’s *Reviisori* [The Inspector General] in Finland rather than Russia) and attempt to induce a similar *effect* on the audience as the original audiences might have experienced or whether to preserve the foreign setting with its inevitable distancing.

For most of my own drama translations, preserving the foreign setting is the most obvious choice. Indeed, I got into drama translation when I decided to try my hand at translating Juha Lehtola’s *Othellohyrrä*, a rewriting of Shakespeare’s *Othello* set in Helsinki, because I thought this specifically Finnish rewrite deserves a wider audience. The Finnish setting is an equally integral part of most of the other works I’ve translated. Of the plays under discussion here, *Olga* is most like *Othellohyrrä* in this respect, especially in the title character, who like others of her generation, is very tied to the land.⁸

But there was one time when I questioned whether keeping the Finnish setting best served the play I was translating. Perhaps not uncoincidentally, this was a translation I was doing for a specific performance, *Rakkaudesta minuun* for a festival of Finnish plays done by the Lit Moon theater company (Santa Barbara, California) in the summer of 2007. *Rakkaudesta minuun* tells the story of a young girl, Sylvia, and her parents, her father a busy television psychologist and her mother, an unfulfilled interior decorator. The plot revolves around the exploits of the parents (both have affairs), and the child’s efforts to get attention from the adults in her life. My first instinct when I read the play was that for the translation to work it had to be set in Santa Barbara,⁹ otherwise it would be too easy for the audience to simply dismiss these selfish parents as “Finnish,” in other words, “not us,” and the whole point of the play would be lost. American parents of the same class have the reputation of smothering their children with activities while emotionally ignoring them like Krogerus’s parents, and I wanted the translation to be as immediate and real to the target audience as it had been to the original. The American festival organizer, along with the Finnish director, did not agree, and we ended up keeping the Finnish setting.¹⁰

Translating Individual Styles: Dialect, Age, Gender and Class

Once the largest pragmatic issues are solved, the next step is considering how best to convey the author's particular style. Since in the theater the author's style is so intimately connected to the rendering of speech, in practice what I do next is determine how best to capture the idiolects of the characters. I take note of the character's age, gender, social background, education, what other characters say about this character, and how this compares with what the character says about him- or herself, and any obvious mannerisms included in the Finnish.¹¹ On the whole, I think that capturing a character's distinctive speaking style is a bit harder in English, since in Finnish so much can be done with the contrast between book language and spoken language, as well as with polite forms. In addition, the flexible syntax of Finnish compared with English makes it easier for writers to use word order for emphasis, to highlight key moments or to enhance sound devices. The risk of doing the same in English is that the text begins to sound too "poetic." I find word formation to be a bit freer in Finnish, or perhaps it's only the authors I've worked with have enjoyed inventing new words or word combinations. On the other hand, English has a large vocabulary, which compensates somewhat. The rhythmic structures of the two languages (trochaic versus iambic) couldn't be more different on the surface, but in my experience rhythm only becomes problematic in translating certain kinds of poetry.¹²

One of the most vexing problems in any literary translation is what to do with regional dialects. Some translators, in an effort to reproduce something of the local color, employ a "comparable" dialect in the target language.¹³ Others elect to use standard language, partially to avoid having "Finnish" characters speak a recognizable English variation. What best serves a particular text and audience will always be a matter of interpretation. For example, Leppihalme (2000) raises the important point that sometimes a stylistically flatter translation might in fact work better for the target audience. In her study, American readers liked a standardized English translation of Kalle Päätalo's *Koillismaa* (*Our Daily Bread*), even though Leppihalme, who admired Päätalo's distinctive regional dialects in the original, found the translation rather flat.

To give the reader some sense of the choices involved, let me include a short example here of a work in progress, a translation of Leea Klemola and Klaus Klemola's *Kohti kylmempää* (2008), which is written in a strong Ostrobothnian dialect. In an early scene in the play, the main character, 65-year-old Marja-Terttu, is driving her dog team home towards Qaanaaq, Greenland. The stage is dark, we hear the dogs howling, and see the tip of a burning cigarette at the back of the stage. These are her first words:

Kotia. (tauko) Kotia. Kotiappäin. (tauko) Hyvin menee jos tämä nyt sitte on kotiappäin. (21)

The dialect features here are not particularly strong, *kotia* for *kotiin*, and the dropped *n* in *sitten*. A fairly literal translation into standard English might look something like this:

Home. (pause) Home. Homeward bound. (pause). This is going pretty well if we're heading towards home.

But a translation like this doesn't even come close to capturing Marja-Terttu's rugged independence. I want some sort of dialect features, but not ones which are too closely identified with any one American region:

Home. (pause) Home. Let's git on home. (pause) This'z goin purty well if we'z headin towards home.

The English word *home* is soft, completely different in feel from *kotiappäin*. Therefore, in this version I changed the structure, giving myself the hard *t* and *g* sounds in *let's git on home*.¹⁴ If I wanted to make Marja-Terttu a bit coarser, I might turn the final sentence into a negative:

This ain't goin so bad if this'z the way home.

or,

This ain't goin so bad if we're goin in the right direction.

A choice like *right direction* eliminates the repetition on *kotiappäin* in the Finnish, but the alliterative *r* and the dental sounds, both voiced and unvoiced (*d* and *t*), sound give the actor a lot to work with. I suspect the latter line is also more likely to get a laugh.¹⁵

Several or even all the characters in a play might speak the same dialect, but they are likely to be different in respect to age, gender and class. In the theater, these attributes are primarily indicated through visual means, through casting and costumes. But playwrights have their own means of indicating such characteristics in the text. From the point of view of translating from Finnish into English, the biggest challenge comes in dealing with effects which can be made rather easily in Finnish through politeness forms and the distinctions between more formal book language and informal spoken dialects. Adding colloquial or dialectal elements quickly lowers class in English in a way it doesn't necessarily do in Finnish. The following example is taken from the beginning of *Olga*, where Rundis, a young cleaner/thief, is first visiting Olga's home. Olga has already been introduced to us as a tough old cookie, sharp and sarcastic, but in this social situation she uses formal language, including the polite forms of the command:

OLGA: Menkää kotiinne vaan. Menkää menkää! Minun tyttäreni teidät kutsui. Ei hän olisi muuten uskaltanut, mutta hän asuu Espanjassa. Menkää menkää.

RUNDIS: Hyvä kämppä. Oottekste kauan tässä ollu? (HARJAA JA TUTKII OLGAN ASUNTOA EDELLEEN) (14)

OLGA: Go on home. Go on, go go! It was my daughter who called you. She wouldn't have had the courage otherwise, but now she lives in Spain. Go on, get out of here!

RUNDIS: Nice place. You been living here long? (GOES ON BRUSHING THE SOFA AND EXAMINING OLGA'S APARTMENT)

The phrase *go on home* is something an older person would say, and the repeated *go* in the second sentence, with its hard *g* and long, assonating *o*, creates a sharp rhythm which helps to maintain a little formality. But clearly the phrase is not nearly as formal as the Finnish command, so I tried to inject more formality into the next sentence with the phrase *it was* in front of *my daughter*, which also preserves the emphasis on daughter made possible by the Finnish syntax. The added phrase also gives the actress an extra hard *t* sound, which was no doubt in my mind from the Finnish alliteration, which was itself accentuated by the shift in word order (*tyttäreni teidät kutsui* as opposed to *tyttäreni kutsui teidät*). The flavor of Rundis' question is difficult to achieve in English, as he uses the polite *te* form of the verb, though most of the syllables drop out in spoken speech. Trying to achieve a similar effect, I left out the auxiliary verb in English (*have you been living here long?*).

By the end of the play, Olga and Rundis have fallen in love, a change Ruohonen can indicate through Olga's shift from the formal *te* to the informal *sinä*, a change which is reinforced by a cascading alliteration on the *s* starting with *Sinun antamasi suklaalaatikko* and continuing to the very end, with *sinun suusi*:

Täällä on rauhallista ja hämärää ja minä ajattelen kaikkia niitä asioita, joista eniten pidin. Sinun antamasi suklaalaatikko minulla on vieressäni. Siinä on yksi kirsikkasydän.

Viimeiseksi maailmassa minä syön sen ja ajattelen, että se on yhtä punainen ja ihana kuin sinun suusi. (82-83)

It's peaceful and dark here, and I'm thinking about all the things I used to like best. The box of chocolate-covered cherries you gave me is here next to me. There's one left.

The very last thing I'll do in this world is eat it and think it's as red and beautiful as your mouth.

In an important sense, Olga's language becomes ageless here, so the trick is to try to preserve the sense of calm, Olga's bliss at the thought of Rundis's warm, red mouth, lips she will never kiss. I've made a number of changes, mainly in order to deal with the consequences of English syntax being so much stricter. In the second sentence, Finnish premodification and flexible syntax allows the weight to be on the fact that Rundis has given the box, but I lose that when the subject becomes *the box of chocolate-covered*

cherries, with *you gave me* reduced to a post-position modifying clause, although it does get a little bit of extra weight due to the repeated *me* at the end of the sentence. Some readers may object to the loss of *cherry heart*, but Americans eat *chocolate-covered cherries*, which as a phrase has wonderful alliteration and weight. In addition this change allowed me to simplify the last sentence in the first paragraph, creating a big change in rhythm from the rolling sounds of the previous sentence to three long, ponderous syllables (*There's one left*) framed by a hard *th* and *t*, with *th* picked up at the beginning of the last sentence. The addition of *very* probably comes from the sounds of Finnish *viimeiseksi*, but was also added to enhance the sense of finality, that this old woman is about to die.¹⁶ Otherwise I've translated the sentence fairly literally (often a good choice!), except I've rendered *ihana* as *beautiful* rather than the more traditional *wonderful*, again because of the sounds: the latter felt too watery (too many *r* sounds, which are pronounced in American English); plus I liked the distant alliteration of *b* with *box*.

As we saw with Olga and Rundis, Finnish playwrights can employ the contrast between book and spoken language to differentiate characters. When it comes to differentiating children from adults, however, the tools are more subtle and difficult to manage. When attempting to capture the style of children's speech, it's important to get the rhythm right: lots of starts and stops, short syllables, bursts of energy resulting in longish paratactic sentences. The following exchange between Sylvia, the 10-year-old daughter in *Rakkaudesta minuun*, and their neighbor Saana Mikkonen, a 25-year-old student, seems on the surface to be fairly straightforward, but in fact it was extremely difficult to catch the tone and rhythm, and I am not entirely satisfied with the result:

SYLVIA: . . . Onks sulla muuten paljo kavereita?

SAANA: Ihan sopivasti. Onks sulla?

SYLVIA: No – välillä ei. Kato ku mä en jaksa välkällä vaan seistä niissä ringeissä ja puhua ja puhua, ku mä haluisin leikkii sellasta missä *ollaan* joku. Mut ei sellaisia leiki enää ku jotkut toka- tai kolmosluokkalaiset enintään. Mä meen aina välkällä yhteen aidan nurkkaan seisomaan, ja leikin mun pään sisällä. Kato ku leikkiminen ei oo muotia. (32-33)

SYLVIA: . . . Do you have a lot of friends?

SAANA: Enough. Do you?

SYLVIA: Well – not always. At recess I hate it when all the girls want to just stand around and talk, 'cos I want to play a game where you *are* somebody. But nobody plays pretend anymore except for maybe third or fourth graders.¹⁷ At recess I always go stand in a corner by the fence, and play inside my head. 'Cos you see, playing isn't cool.

The translation here flattens the style somewhat, choosing standardized forms like *do you* rather than the more colloquial *d'ya*. But I wanted to preserve the way Saana echoes Sylvia's question, and I needed the standardized form for the rhythm (a long stressed

syllable on *you*). *Kato ku...* was also difficult, as the Finnish has a nice sense of sarcasm emphasized by the short syllables and all the alliteration on *k* plus the very evocative *muotia*, with the assonating *o*. I tried keeping some of the same basic sounds in English, but the result doesn't quite catch the lovely combination of child and teenager talk in Finnish.

Common Pitfalls of Translation

In this excerpt, I also commit the cardinal translator sin of disambiguating ambiguity (*sellaisia leiki* becomes *play pretend*), a point I would like to examine in more detail given how much translation theorists have pointed to the issue.¹⁸ At best, literary language is open, able to be interpreted in a variety of ways, with nuances pointing in several different directions at once. Due to the inherent differences in languages, however, translators often find themselves having to choose between meanings, a habit which closes off texts, rendering them flat and uninteresting. In this example, I decided to spell out what Sylvia wanted to play because I thought adding the alliterative *p* in *play pretend* would make her seem more childlike (plus I was always *playing pretend* as a child, and I still love the phrase). The more sophisticated *cool* came in opposition to *pretend*, since ten is an age where children can be babies one minute playing pretend and teenagers the next, worrying about what's cool, and at least at the time I thought that *cool* as a word would give an actress more room to play than a word like *style* or *fashion*.

Allowing a literary text to retain its ambiguity is especially hard for a translator like myself who has spent years doing non-literary texts, where the whole point is to explain things as clearly as possible. A related problem is allowing translated texts to contain unusual expressions put there by the author. In the *Othellohyrrä* translation, I found myself hesitating over the following lines:

OTHELLO: En pidä sopimuksista. . . ihmissuhteisissa.

MONA: Minä en pidä ihmissuhteista.

OTHELLO: Vaan?

MONA: Mä pidän rakkaussuhteista. (108)

OTHELLO: I don't like agreements . . . in human relationships.

MONA: I don't like human relationships.

OTHELLO: What do you like?

MONA: I like love relationships.

While I liked the parallel structures, I felt that *love relationships* wasn't very idiomatic, and I tried for a long time to get the author Juha Lehtola to agree to something like *being in love* for Mona's last line. This would have been much more evocative and romantic due to the long vowels, and the actress could have lingered nicely on the final *love*. The final version is much more business like, requiring a quicker pace. In the same

vein, translating *Vaan?* with the longer question is not as effective if Lehtola is wishing for speed, but I found myself deliberately wanting to slow down that moment, to draw out the contrast between *human* and *love*. Since pacing is such an important part of dramatic style, we would do well to pay attention to how we achieve pacing at the micro-level, and whether translators feel that different target audiences expect or need different sorts of pacing than the original.

Another way that authors work to create a character's specific style is to give them made-up or distinctive words. Mostly these are fun to translate. One of my most memorable was a line from Hugo about Othello: *Othello, sehän tais olla mokkamuna* (25). We settled on the fairly direct *Mocha-prick*, though we also played around with variations suggested by Shakespeare's original, like *black ram* or *ebony eel*. But looking back over my own translations, I found several examples where I went for less evocative, safer translations of made-up words, ones which fail to convey the style of the original. The following example comes from *Rakkaudesta minuun*. Towards the end of the play, Sylvia is arguing with her mother about why the mother is always thinking about death, and why she named Sylvia after a poet who committed suicide:

SYLVIA: Tappaa ja tappaa ja tappaa ja tappaa. Mä inhoon noita sun kuolemajuttujas! Miks mulle on annettu nimi tollasen kuolemapaskarunoilijan mukaan? Mä haluan jonkun tavallisen nimen. (107)

SYLVIA: Kill kill kill kill. I hate your stupid stories about death. How come you had to name me after a stupid poet obsessed with death? I want an ordinary name.

Although the sounds and rhythm of *stupid poet obsessed with death* work, it's much more sophisticated than the original *kuolemapaskarunoilijan*, which is devastatingly compact and childlike in its fury. I consciously chose to give the adult actress playing the role some nice hard syllables to spit out, but might now choose to experiment more with something closer to the original made up word, like *bullshitdeathpoet*.

Another issue which arose when translating Sylvia's speeches is to what extent the translator can or should include appropriate literary allusions to the target culture in an effort to emphasize stylistic points. Lawrence Venuti writes that all translations include what he calls a "domestic remainder," essentially a layer of the target culture within a foreign text: "The foreign text is rewritten in domestic dialects and discourses, registers and styles, and this results in the production of textual effects that signify only in the history of the receiving language and culture" (2004, 485). Venuti adds that intercultural communication works best when this domestic remainder "includes an inscription of the foreign context in which the text first emerged" (2004, 487). But how does a translator "inscribe the foreign context" within domestic discourses, echoes of

which come to mind, consciously and no doubt unconsciously, during the process of translation? In the above example, when translating *tappaa ja tappaa...*, I was certainly influenced by the line in *King Lear* (4.6.184), where right after the reunion with Gloucester a crazed Lear states his intentions towards his sons-in-law (kill, kill, kill, kill, kill). This repetition of a single one-syllable word does not capture the childlike rhythm and structure of the Finnish, but nevertheless in my ear conveyed the proper sense of childlike fury.

A similar example comes from the same play. Towards the end of *Rakkaudesta minuun*, Sylvia writes a letter to Pentti, Saana's dog, whom she has been walking. The audience will later learn that Pentti was hit by a car and killed when Sylvia took him off the leash, and she has been hiding his body in the attic. The letter reveals just how lonely Sylvia is, and ends with the following lines:

Jos mä vois näyttää miten iso mun rakkaus on, se menis koko maapallon ympäri, ja koko avaruuden ympäri, ja vielä senki ympäri mikä on avaruuden takana, ja mistä ihmiset ei tiedä eikä nää mitään edes satelliitilla. Taivas on niin iso, että sinne mahtuu koko rakkaus. Ihmiseen ei aina. Minä rakastan sinua. Terveisin, Sylvia. (120)

When I read these lines the first time, I immediately thought of the enormously popular children's board book *Guess How Much I Love You*, by Sam McBratney, illustrated by Anita Jeram. In this book, Little Nutbrown Hare and Big Nutbrown Hare "compete" to see which one loves the other one the most, and the last few pages go through a list similar to Sylvia's. The parent ultimately wins by saying he loves Little Nutbrown Hare all the way to the moon "and back" (n. pag.) the last words whispered quietly to himself after the child has fallen asleep. I got stuck on the phrase *miten iso mun rakkaus on*, as I felt that talking about *how big my love is* sounded unidiomatic, and so decided to play around with variations suggested by McBratney's book:

And I could show you how much I love you. I love you to the moon, and to the sun, and to the other end of the universe, and to all the places we don't know about and can't see even with satellites, and back. The sky is so big, it can hold all love. But people can't, always. I love you. Yours truly, Sylvia.¹⁹

Adding this literary allusion sends a good many Americans to the emotional world at the end of *Guess How Much I Love You*, which I felt was perfect in this context, like a child repeating words/phrases which have been read to her in conversations with her pets or dolls.

However natural adding such literary allusions feels to me, I am also aware that not everybody regards them as appropriate. The most extreme example in my oeuvre is from the *Othellohyrrä* translation, where I found myself quite deliberately adding a few direct quotes from Shakespeare's original. I felt that English-speaking audiences

would expect such echoes, and that these would provide the kind of stylistic deviation which works in this kind of rewriting of a classic text. The following is the most jarring example: towards the middle of the play, after having been fired, Kasurinen (the Cassio character) returns to the office, trying to find a way to get himself reinstated. Kasurinen is trying to hide from Othello and talk to Mona, while Mona is trying to find Kasurinen and find out more about what's been happening. In this excerpt, Kasurinen begins by telling Mona to be quiet when Hugo decides to get involved:

KASURINEN: Shhh.
 HUGO: Kuka?
 MONA: Ei mitään.
 HUGO: Minä en pidä tästä.
 OTHELLO: Mitä? Mistä?
 HUGO: Ei mitään. Tai ehkä. En tiedä. (67)

In the parallel moment in Shakespeare's version, Cassio and Desdemona have been speaking, and he exits, prompting the following exchange:

IAGO: Ha! I like not that.
 OTHELLO: What dost thou say?
 IAGO: Nothing, my lord; or if—I know not what. (3.3.35-36)

When I was an undergraduate, a professor of mine once commented that Othello's downfall begins here, and this "Ha!" has always seemed especially significant to me. So when I went to translate Lehtola's sequence, I found myself giving Hugo Shakespeare's words:

KASURINEN: Shhh.
 HUGO: Who?
 MONA: Nothing.
 HUGO: Ha! I like not that.
 OTHELLO: What did you say?
 HUGO: Nothing. Or maybe -- I don't know.

A more faithful translation, such as *I don't like this*, would better preserve the speed of the exchange, and of course wouldn't be jarring. A more serious question is whether this stylistic layer I am adding to the play conflicts with the author's vision. In her analysis of Lehtola's play, for which she only had the translation, the literary critic Linda Richter worries that is impossible to "distinguish between allusions the author made and allusions the translator added" (2008, 136), though she also points out places where I could have included direct quotes and didn't. Incidentally, in the production of *Othello* currently running at the Finnish National Theater (2008-09), Michael Baran translates *I like not that* with *epäilyttävää* – I'll leave the reader to draw conclusions about this choice.

Translators and translation theorists have written a great deal on the problems associated with translating metaphor, but here I would like to raise a slightly different question, namely to what extent translators can *introduce* metaphor into a text. Let me return to *Kobti kylmempää's* Marja-Terttu, her trip over the ice with her dogs, and her rugged and rustic manner of speaking. A few lines below the speech I quoted above, she's been hearing the ice crackle (*jää vähän risahtelee*, in the stage direction), but suddenly there's a loud ice explosion. She responds:

(pimeydestä) Vähän risahtelee mutta vähän pitää risahellakki. Jää elää! Antakaa mennä vain. Kyllä se kestä. Minua ei jäät petä! (21)

The joke of course is the contrast between the loud noise we've heard and her dismissive comment about the sound. A fairly literal translation might be:

(in the dark) Crackling a little but it's supposed to crackle.

But my first instinct is to try something more colorful, to add an image drawn from the Arctic environment:

Squealing like a baby seal but it's 'posed ta squeal.

In truth, I don't even know if baby seals squeal; the seals at Korkeasaari Zoo are pretty quiet. But the line reveals essential information about the ways Marja-Terttu observes and interacts with her environment, it captures the speaking style of a rustic "American/Finn" whose speech is filled with down-home simile and metaphor, and it sounds good. I'm tempted to keep it.

Conclusion

What conclusions can we draw from these examples? Stylistics teaches us that literary texts work through linguistic deviation and foregrounding.²⁰ By deviating from standard language, such as the use of dialects, unusual images, "poetic" syntax and rhythms, writers can produce psychological effects in readers (Short 1996, 11). Research has shown, however, that translators seem to shy away from such deviations, are hesitant to produce such foregrounding effects in translated texts. As Arthur Langeveld humorously explains, when faced with literary language which challenges target language norms, translators tend to standardize it, since "nothing frightens a translator more than to exceed the norms of the target language" (1983, 337). Tim Parks concurs, claiming that "the tendency to sacrifice semantic precision and above all stylistic provocation in translation is almost universal and probably inevitable"²¹ (2007, 237).

The repercussions for readers who have no option but to read or hear texts stripped of their stylistic ingenuity, however, are great. As Parks explains:

To translate a highly individual piece of literature leaving the author's language unruffled and bringing across only the content is to offer the reassurance that experience can be safely housed in standard language (2007, 245).

In effect, foreign cultures are rendered less foreign, or the foreign is absorbed into the Self, made to serve it, as Sirkku Aaltonen argues in *Time-Sharing on Stage* (2000).

To make matters even more complex, translators who do attempt to portray something of the original style inevitably must do so in domestic terms, drawing on the linguistic and literary resources of the target language. Susan Bassnett begins her essay on "Translating style" by describing the experience she had of reading Tolstoy in English translation and finding traces of Jane Austen (2004, 7). What bothered her was that she had no way of knowing whether the Russian contained those stylistic features, or whether they had been put there, consciously or unconsciously, by the translator. This is yet another problem of translating style, since translators are themselves the products of all the reading they have ever done in any language and literature itself works through intertextuality. Any play that I translate is both mine and not mine, just as my translation both is and is not the original author's. In the case of drama, many more artists become involved, as directors, designers and actors all bring their own gifts to the text.

Let me conclude on a hopeful note. I would like to think that dramatic translation can serve two cultures at once, and that it's possible to translate style. With this in mind, I offer the following advice:

1. Make sure you understand the source text and the culture that produced it. If you don't understand the text, your audience won't.
2. Language sings; listen to it. Read your translations aloud, and if you're as lucky in your friends and colleagues as I am, get a mixed group of native speakers of both languages to read aloud the final draft. You'll be amazed how different it sounds in somebody else's mouth.
3. Be fearless in your creativity. Resist the urge to standardize or explain.
4. Have fun. Words have magic, and it is a rare pleasure to take one kind of magic and turn it into another.²²

Notes

¹ In the examples below I include page numbers to the Finnish printed translations (though in fact in all but one case I worked off an electronic version provided by the author or the author's agent). The English translations are not available in print versions at present. Readers who would like to consult the translations may request electronic copies from Nordic Drama Corner (<http://www.dramacorner.fi/>) or the Finnish Theatre Information Centre (<http://www.teatteri.org/>).

² Identifying translator style is an intriguing new development in stylistic research in

translation. See Baker (2000) and especially Pekkanen (2007), who analyzes recurring shifts in the work of four translators translating from English into Finnish.

³ "like the foamy waves of a stormy sea breaking restlessly against the shore, while the Finnish language is like a stream rolling steadily out to sea." (Trans. NK)

⁴ In the British context, it is typical to hire somebody who knows the foreign language to produce a "literal" translation, which is then reworked by a well-known playwright into an actable text. The name of the well-known playwright is then used in publicity.

⁵ English translations of Finnish plays are also read by those working in non-English-speaking theaters who are trying to decide whether to have a play translated into their own language. I imagine that in some cases the translation is made from English (or French or German) if a competent translator from Finnish is not available.

⁶ Aaltonen, however, says that reverent translations are most common in newly-established theatrical systems which translate foreign classics in an effort to prove that their language/culture/theater are up to the task (2000, 73). In the Finnish context, translations of Shakespeare into Finnish in the late 19th century are a good example of this.

⁷ This may also be a rather naive view. Boase-Beier argues that in literary translation "there is no need to focus on trying to replicate the effects the original text might have had on its original readers... because recreating something of the cognitive state will enable some of its effects to be relived by the reader" (2006, 113).

⁸ *Olga* had previously been translated very successfully into Scots English by the playwright Linda McClean, a solution which worked beautifully when the play was performed in Scotland, but which elicited comment when it was later performed in Ireland.

⁹ It could have been any other American city, but since I've lived in California and have a good friend in Santa Barbara, I thought that localizing it for the actual audience was the way to go.

¹⁰ Perhaps because in my heart of hearts I would have preferred to localize the play, I agonized over the names. The electronic version currently available from Finnish Theatre Information Centre (<http://www.teatteri.org/>) has all the Finnish names except one minor character who never appears on stage: Ilari Riippa became Ilari Burden, so I could maintain a pun on his being a "burden" to his girlfriend. In the performance, the names of the two main characters were changed from Lauri and Tea Jalovaara to Timo and Tina Jalovaara, which were felt to be more accessible to the American audience. I had been especially worried about the name "Lauri," as the nearest English equivalent "Laurie" hasn't been a male name for several generations, and I felt the connotations were all wrong. We also changed the name of a key "character" who never appears: a dog named after Pentti Saarikoski in the original became "Jack" (after Jack Kerouac); reviewers thought this name worked well.

¹¹ My ways of thinking about character have been heavily influenced by conversations over the years with Royal Shakespeare Company actors whom I have met in connection with bringing university students to Stratford-upon-Avon, England on courses arranged by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.

¹² Finnish translators of Shakespeare, for example, have developed any number of ways of handling Shakespeare's iambic pentameter.

¹³ My unscientific impression is that Brits tend to use Scots or northern varieties, while Americans tend to prefer Southern ones.

¹⁴ I also want to avoid the more obvious *homeward bound*, a phrase I cannot even think without breaking into the song of the same name by Simon and Garfunkel. Interestingly, I

discussed this passage with an American translator about ten years younger than myself, and the phrase didn't bother him at all.

¹⁵ At the time of this writing, I don't know if I will eventually settle on one of these possibilities, or come up with something entirely different.

¹⁶ But see also Andrew Chesterman (2007), who suggests that English has a lower "salience threshold" than Finnish, which in practice means that English texts are more likely to use superlatives, adjectives, intensifiers, transitive rather than intransitive verbs, emotive features, figurative rather than literal expressions, and so forth, and hence I instinctively added "very" to increase salience. Thanks to the search function in this word-processing program, I've just counted that this article uses "very" nine times as an intensifier, so it's also possible that "excessive" use of this word is part of my idiolect.

¹⁷ American school children start school one year earlier, so I changed the grades to make things simpler.

¹⁸ Sharp readers will have noticed that this is in fact the second example of my explaining something which wasn't explained in the original, the previous being my translating *harjaa* as *brushing the sofa* in a stage direction in Olga and Rundi's first encounter. Such "explicitation" has been proposed as a translation universal. See Birgitta Englund Dimitrova (2005) and Jean Boase-Beier (2006).

¹⁹ The version I've reproduced here is slightly different from my original.

²⁰ Short (1996) identifies the following linguistic levels where deviation can take place: phonetic, graphological, metrical, morphological, syntactic, lexical, discursal, semantic, pragmatic and other (34).

²¹ Antoine Berman (2004/1985, 280) identifies the following "deforming tendencies" of translators: rationalization, clarification, expansion, ennoblement and popularization, qualitative impoverishment, quantitative impoverishment, the destruction of rhythms, the destruction of underlying networks of signification, the destruction of linguistic patternings, the destruction of vernacular networks of their exoticization, the destruction of expressions and idioms, and the effacement of the superimposition of languages.

²² The author would like to thank Ritva Leppihalme and the two anonymous reviewers for *Avain* for their incisive criticism on earlier drafts of this essay. Thanks also to the issue editors for their careful reading of the text, and for allowing this essay to appear in English.

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