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Lost in Translation? – A Comparative Study of Three Swedish Translations of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*

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Abstract

The practice of translation has many different approaches. By comparing and discussing three different Swedish translations of *The Hobbit*, this text discusses what factors affect literary translation and how these influences have changed over time. In this essay, I investigate how the translations *Hompen, eller En resa dit och tillbaks igen* (1947), *Bilbo: En hobbits äventyr* (1962) and *Hobbiten eller Bort och hem igen* (2007) differ from each other and discuss this with special attention to the influence of social and cultural norms, but also how translators position themselves according to the source text author's wishes and the opinions of readers. I will argue that these factors impose demands on translations and that these demands change over time, which consequently affects the production of a translated literary text.

Keywords: translation, J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, Tore Zetterholm, Britt G. Hallqvist, Erik Andersson, cultural adaptation, domestication, foreignization, target audience

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Introduction

In his article on using translation as literary criticism, Allan Turner claims that a translated work ultimately becomes a different version than the original text, much due to language being naturally ambiguous. Additionally, a translator often has to choose between different readings of the text (169) and he claims that "the work of a translator may be compared to that of the musical arranger who rewrites a piece for a different instrument or group of instruments" (168) meaning that a translation ultimately becomes an interpretation, which is adapted for its target audience.

The works of J.R.R. Tolkien have been translated into many languages and re-translated more than once in some languages. The first Swedish translation of the children's book *The Hobbit or There and Back Again* (1937), which was published in 1947, was the very first translation of this novel into any language (Sundmark 4). It was rather controversial as translator Tore Zetterholm made alterations that deviated from the original in certain aspects, such as changing the name of the protagonist from 'Bilbo' to 'Bimbo', and altering and removing some passages of the plot. In a letter to the British publisher Allen & Ulwin regarding the planned Dutch translation of *Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien himself stated that he disapproved of Zetterholm's work:

> I wish to avoid a repetition of my experience with the Swedish translation of *The Hobbit*. I discovered that this had taken unwarranted liberties with the text and other details, without consultation or approval; it was also unfavourably criticized in general by a Swedish expert, familiar with the original, to whom I submitted it. (Carpenter 249)

Since this first translation, titled *Hompen, eller En resa dit och tillbaks igen*, there have been two other official Swedish translations of *The Hobbit*, the first of which was titled *Bilbo: En hobbits äventyr* and was published in 1962 with Britt G. Hallqvist as translator. In 2007, Erik Andersson translated the novel once more and gave it the title *Hobbiten eller Bort och hem igen*. This time, however, there were two translators of the novel as Andersson translated the prose and John Swedenmark translated the verse in the novel. By comparing and discussing the three different Swedish translations of *The Hobbit*, this text discusses what factors affect literary translation and how these influences have changed over time. On account of the difference

between the two translation practices of prose and verse, I have decided not to compare any of the verses in the translations and this essay will therefore only study the prose.

Due to the fact that there are three Swedish translations of this novel, the main question this essay will focus on is why there is a need for more than one translation of a literary work. Some scholars within the field of translation studies have claimed that "any retranslation implicitly criticizes earlier translations in that it deliberately differs from them" (Kraszewski, qtd in Turner 169). I will therefore compare the three translations mentioned above and anchor them to the original text. By comparing and contrasting instances where the translations deviate from the original and from each other, the implied critique will be illustrated.

First, I will first investigate what factors need to be taken into consideration when translating literature, with special attention to cultural adaptation in the target language. There are different approaches to how so-called culture-specific elements should be translated and this essay will compare the Swedish translations, discussing why there are differences and how they might affect the perception of the text. Thereafter, I will examine what happens to the implied author in a text when it is translated and discuss how translators bring their own voice into their work. Furthermore, as Tolkien wrote *The Hobbit* as a story for his children ("J.R.R. Tolkien"), it falls into the category of children's literature in which there is a concern regarding what is appropriate for children to read. This will be discussed with focus on translation of children's literature and how this concern has changed over time. I will also investigate what the driving forces behind producing new translations might be and how this could affect the production.

All this affects the translated work itself and so, by mapping out the sociocultural demands on literary translations and seeing how they are manifested in the three Swedish translations of *The Hobbit*, this essay will argue that translators are influenced by the cultural norms in the society they live in. This, in combination with influences from the literary market and an established fan base, ultimately colours the translations.

Domesticating and Foreignizing Translation

When comparing and discussing translations, one has to take the issue of culture into consideration and reflect on how culture-specific elements in a foreign text have been approached. This issue has been much discussed by translation theorists, one of whom is Lawrence Venuti who brought forth his concepts of 'domesticating' and 'foreignizing' translation. These terms signify "two extremes of how a translator positions a translated text in

the target language and in the textual environment of the target culture" (Myskja 3), essentially meaning: to what extent should cultural adaptation be practiced in translation?

In domesticating translation, the translator adapts the foreign source text according to the cultural and literary standards of the target language so that the text can be read fluently, as though it had been written in the target language (Venuti 17). Domesticating a text can be done by removing or replacing elements that are tied to the specific culture of the source text, such as for instance food items, and occasionally even by moving the setting to a domestic one (Wright 43). In foreignizing translation, the foreign cultural traits are retained in translated text and joined with the target language (Venuti 15). Nida and de Waard argue that one reason for practising domesticating translation is that "the translator must be a person who can draw aside the curtains of linguistic and cultural differences so that people may see clearly the relevance of the original message" (qtd in Venuti 16). How domestication can be carried out in practice can for example be seen in the Swedish translations of place names and different types of food in *The Hobbit*. For instance, in the original text, the home of the elves is called "Rivendell" (*The Hobbit* 44) which according to Tolkien literally means "cloven-dell" (*Guide to Names in The Lord of the Rings* 18). In *Hompen*, Zetterholm has translated "Rivendell" as "Älvdalen" (50) [lit. Elf-valley], which clarifies that it is the home of the elves, but does not convey the original message as intended by Tolkien. Additionally, "Älvdalen" is the name of a place in Northern Sweden, as would probably be recognised by many Swedish readers, thus making it slightly more difficult to apply this name to a fictional place. The second translator, Hallqvist decided to keep the original English name in *Bilbo: En hobbits äventyr* (50). The reason for her keeping the English name in this translation is probably that she did not believe that a domesticating approach should be practiced in translation of children's literature (*Min text och den andres* 11).

In the third translation *Hobbiten eller Bort och hem igen*, it has been translated as "Riftedal" [lit. Rift-valley]. Thus, the third translation of the place name appears to be the result of a domesticating approach. However, it seems as though this was not a choice made by translator Erik Andersson alone, but a choice also partly based on him being influenced and pressured by others. In his published diary *Översättarens anmärkningar*, Andersson states that he had just decided not to translate any names of places or people in *The Lord of the Rings*, which he also translated, when he was sent Tolkien's guide on how to translate names in his works. This manual, titled *Guide to Names in The Lord of the Rings*, was written by Tolkien

himself as a guideline for future translators of the *Lord of the Rings*[1], as he was displeased with the first translations of the trilogy into Dutch and Swedish (*Översättarens anmärkningar* 13). In the manual, Tolkien writes that "Rivendell" should either be kept in its original form or be translated so that the name in the target language conveys the sense of the original one (*Guide to Names in The Lord of the Rings* 18). It should therefore be clear to the reader that the name denotes a 'cloven valley'. Furthermore, Tolkien also writes in the introduction to the manual that "it is desirable to translate such names [as "Rivendell"], since to leave them unchanged would disturb the carefully devised scheme of nomenclature and introduce an unexplained element without a place in the feigned linguistic history of the period" (1), which suggests that even though Tolkien wrote that translators could choose to retain the original name, he preferred it if they did not. On account of this, Andersson chose to assume a domesticating approach (*Översättarens anmärkningar* 14). Additionally, Andersson discovered that there had been a vote on an online Tolkien-forum on what new Swedish name should be used for "Rivendell" and the winning suggestion was in fact "Riftedal" (*Översättarens anmärkningar* 44). Ultimately, this also had an influence on his choice of discarding the initial foreignizing approach to place names.

The three translations of *The Hobbit* have evidently not been treated consistently with regard to cultural adaptation and whether or not one should practice cultural adaptation in children's literature is in fact a topic without consensus (Lathey 38). However, if we assume a domesticating approach to the translation of children's literature, a translator must function as a mediator between the source and target texts and adapt the latter so that it becomes culturally understandable for the target audience. This is an especially delicate topic when translating texts that are aimed for children, since foreign culture-specific elements may be completely unfamiliar to a child and therefore difficult to understand. Children might not be aware that they are reading a translated text in the same way an adult might be, and are consequently not as tolerant when faced with phrases or passages unfamiliar to them (Davies 66). Thus, domesticating the Swedish translations of *The Hobbit* essentially means removing elements that are distinctly "British" in the original version and replacing them with something more neutral and less bound to British culture, and therefore more acceptable to a young Swedish reader. For instance, this kind of approach can be found in a passage where the main character Bilbo's

[1] This manual was written for translations of the *Lord of the Rings*-trilogy. However, since the *Lord of the Rings* was initially written as a sequel to *The Hobbit* and it contains some place names that are the same in both works, I have decided to base this discussion on the manual.

home is invaded by a party of dwarves who all demand to be served different types of food (*The Hobbit* 12). The following passages are extracts from the source text and the three translations:

(1) "'And **mince-pies** and cheese', said Bofur.
'And **pork-pie** and salad', said Bombur" (Tolkien 12).

(2) "'Och **pastej** och ost', sade Bofur.
'Och **fläskpannkaka** och sallad', sade Bombur" (Zetterholm 16).
[lit. "'And **pie** and cheese', said Bofur.
'And **pork-pancake** and salad', said Bombur"]

(3) "'Och **köttpastej** och ost', sade Bofur.
'Och **fläskpannkaka** och sallad', sade Bombur" (Hallqvist 16).
[lit. "'And **meat-pie** and cheese', said Bofur.
'And **pork-pancake** and salad', said Bombur"]

(4) "'Och **fruktpastejer** och ost', sade Bofur.
'Och **fläskpaj** och sallad', sade Bombur (Andersson 17).
[lit. "'And **fruit-pies** and cheese', said Bofur.
'And **pork-pie** and salad', said Bombur"]

One of the difficulties that arise here is that since both "mince-pie" and "pork-pie" are British traditional dishes, there are no Swedish equivalents. A mince-pie is a traditional sweet mincemeat pie, eaten during the Christmas holidays in most of the United Kingdom (Hirst). In example (2), Zetterholm has domesticated the translation of "mince-pie" by giving it the name "pastej", which is defined as "a pastry with filling, e.g. mincemeat" ("Pastej"). That is to say, it does not refer to a specific Swedish dish, but rather a type of food – much similar to that of mince-pie, but without the fruit-base. On the other hand, "pastej" has now more commonly come to denote a type of paté in Sweden, as many households eat "leverpastej" [lit. liver-paté] as a sandwich spread. It is therefore not very likely that a Swedish reader would identify pastej as a type of pie. In a similar fashion, Hallqvist has translated "mince-pie" as "köttpastej" [lit. meat-pie] in example (3). With the previously mentioned definition of "pastej" in mind, the translation of "mince-pie" in example (4) – "fruktpastejer" – is more closely related to the definition of the British dish. In examples (2) and (3), a domesticating approach has been

assumed as “pork-pie” has been translated as “fläskpannkaka” [lit. pork-pancake], which is a large oven-baked pancake that has pork added to the batter, and is a rather common dish in Sweden. In example (4), which is from the most recent translation, “pork-pie” has been translated literally to “fläskpaj”, even though this dish is foreign to Swedish readers. This choice of translation could be explained by a shift in attitude among readers today, who would see distinctive foreign traits in a text as “an exotic enrichment” instead of regarding it as culturally unacceptable as has been the prevailing attitude earlier (Wright 45). It could therefore be argued that foreignization is a more accepted practice today, and perhaps even preferable given that the translator of the most recently commissioned translation of *The Hobbit* appears to adopt more of a foreignizing strategy than the two earlier translations.

The Voice of the Translator

In narratology, the concept of the implied author is widely spread amongst literary theorists. It refers to the author that is projected by a text through its “stylistic, ideological and aesthetic properties”, which are thence construed by the reader (Schmid 161). As the implied author is created by the individual reader, there is no general implied author of a written work, but instead it depends on personal interpretations of the text.

Of relevance for the present discussion, it can be argued that if there is the concept of an implied author in a written work, there also ought to be an implied translator in a translated work. For instance, Giuliana Schiavi argues that “[t]he text is itself the implied author, and the implied author in turn … instructs the reader on how to read the text and how to account for the selection and ordering of the textual components” (10). This entails that although the writer of a text has a large power over it, through the process of translation, the translator gets the opportunity to give his or her interpretation of the original text, which then becomes the text read by the target reader. Thus, the translator ultimately becomes a part of the implied author, and partially an implied author in his or her own right (Schiavi 3). Therefore, when different passages in the translations are discussed in this essay, I will refer to the translator as the author of that text. Moreover, Schiavi suggests that when a text is translated, the translator brings in new entities to a text that may or may not replace already existing entities, but still affects the structure of the text, and she argues that it is therefore misleading to compare the translated text with the original as though they were synonymous (2). She further explains this concept of translation as being an interpretation of a text as a result of the translator creating a new relationship between what she calls the “translated text” and a wider range of implied readers

through interpreting the original text according to certain norms and strategies within translation (7). To illustrate how the different translations can be seen as interpretations of the source text, I have chosen a passage where I have detected a difference in the Swedish translations of *The Hobbit* that affects the perception of what is depicted in that particular section. The following extracts are from Chapter One, where we are introduced to the main character and what type of creatures the so-called 'hobbits' are:

(5) "They are inclined to be fat in the stomach" (Tolkien 4).

(6) "De har ofta tjocka magar" (Zetterholm 6).
[lit. They often have fat stomachs]

(7) "De har anlag för kalaskula" (Hallqvist 8).
[lit. They are predisposed for gaining a pot belly]

(8) "Ofta är de tjocka om magen" (Andersson 10)
[lit. They are often fat around the stomach]

Although these descriptions essentially have the same meaning, the second translation by Hallqvist could be perceived as slightly more comical than the others. This could mainly be due to the fact that "kalaskula" indicates that the overweight around the stomach comes from eating a lot of good food in good company, as "kalas" means "party". The image conveyed in this translation could therefore be seen as more amusing and provides additional information about how hobbits tend to lead their lives. Another instance where a slight alteration in the choice of words affects the perception of the text can be found in Chapter Three where one of the dwarves, Thorin, explains to Bilbo who Durin was:

(9) "'He was the father of fathers of the eldest race of Dwarves, the Longbeards, and my first ancestor: I am his heir'" (Tolkien 50).

(10) "'Han var stamfader för ett av de båda dvärgfolken, långskäggen, och min farfars farfar'" (Zetterholm[2] 59).
[lit. He was the primogenitor of one of the two races of dwarves, the longbeards, and my grandfather's grandfather]

(11) "'Han var fader till en av de två dvärgstammarnas förfader, Långskäggen, och min farfars förfader'" (Hallqvist 61).
[lit. He was the father of one of the two dwarf-tribes' forefather, the Longbeards, and my grandfather's forefather]

(12) "'Han var fädernas fader i dvärgarnas äldsta ätt, långskäggen, och min första anfader: jag är hans arvinge'" (Andersson 58).
[lit. He was the father of fathers of the eldest dynasty of dwarves, the longbeards, and my first ancestor: I am his heir]

The extract from the original text tells the story of a person who was the source of all dwarves, and then connects Thorin to him by stating that Thorin is his heir. The latter is relevant for the plot of the novel as Thorin, Bilbo and the rest of the dwarves are on a quest to reclaim Thorin's kingdom from the dragon Smaug. The translation by Zetterholm also connects Thorin to Durin as his relative, but limits their relationship in time by saying that Durin is Thorin's grandfather's grandfather. Hence, the origin of one of the dwarf-tribes becomes defined as starting four generations back. Additionally, this passage has limited the number of dwarf-races to two – something that is not specified in the source text. This specification of the number of dwarves can also be found in the passage from Hallqvist's translation. However, she extends the origin of dwarves in comparison to Zetterholm's version as she does not specify which generation Durin belongs to, and therefore this translation is more similar to the source text. The passage also connects Thorin as a relative of Durin, but much like the translation by Zetterholm, Thorin is not specified as the heir. Durin is said to be the ancestor of Thorin's grandfather, yet that does not say that Thorin has a greater claim to the kingdom than the other dwarves. The most recent

[2] This essay argues that a translation is an interpretation of a source text and thus becomes a text in its own right. Therefore, I have chosen to refer to the translators as the writers when discussing extracts from the translations.

translation implies the same thing as the original text as it has connected Thorin as Durin's heir, and it has not specified the number of dwarf-tribes like the two previous translations.

The examples discussed above show that translators ultimately write their own interpretation of a novel. However, when reviewing foreign and thus translated works in newspapers and periodicals, it is often the case that little, or no focus is given to the translator. This is could be explained by the view of how translations should be executed, as stated by Norman Shapiro:

> I see translation as the attempt to produce a text so transparent that it does not seem to be translated. A good translation is like a pane of glass. You only notice that it's there when there are little imperfections - scratches, bubbles. Ideally, there shouldn't be any. It should never call attention to itself. (qtd in Venuti 1)

Translators should not be visible in a text, according to Shapiro. If this is successfully executed, it could explain why translators are rarely acknowledged. This lack of recognition of translators is questioned by Venuti, as he believes that the little attention given by the reviewers often disregards crucial factors that can affect translations, such as English literary trends, the economic value of the translation on the literary market and even how accurate the translation is (Venuti 2)[3]. Instead, focus is given to the style of the translation and its fluency, which is what makes a translation acceptable to most reviewers and publishers. Venuti further explains that this fluency is what creates an illusion of transparency; the translator is invisible and the translated text that is read is in fact the original and not a translation (Venuti 1). From various reviews of literary translations, Venuti identifies a set of "discursive features" which help create said fluency. The primary focus of these elements is what type of language is used and most important is that it has a current and updated and modern style with little or no "jargonisation". The usage of idiomatic expressions is also to be avoided (Venuti 4). In addition to said features, Venuti argues that the syntactic structure of a translation is also crucial, but as this issue is outside the scope of this essay, I have decided not to review this aspect further.

What is determined by the features of "fluency" mentioned above is that a good translation is a fluent translation, and the main criterion for fluency is the use of an updated language. However, this criterion becomes problematic as it implies some sort of time frame in

[3] For more examples of such reviews see page 2-3 in Venuti

which the style of language used is actually modern and updated. Furthermore, Alan Turner states that Tolkien intentionally uses archaic language in his works, so that the style of language harmonises with the remote past, in which they are set (4). This usage of language appears to only have been adopted by the most recent Swedish translator, Erik Andersson. For instance, he uses the word "ty" [lit. for] on several occasions throughout the translation – a word which is rarely used in everyday speech in Sweden, and when Gandalf criticises Bilbo for getting up late in the morning he uses the expression "arla morgonstunden" |lit. early morning], which also is an outdated expression that is rarely used today. The usage of these old-fashioned words give the impression a formal implied translator, and the characters who use this expression are perceived as rather proper. Neither Zetterholm, nor Hallqvist have adopted the usage of archaic language in their translations as they, for instance, have not used "ty" like Andersson has and instead of saying "arla morgonstunden", both translators have used the word "tidigt" [early] (Zetterholm 34; Hallqvist 35), which is common in everyday Swedish speech. Modern readers would probably react to the archaization employed by Andersson, but not to the language used by Hallqvist or Zetterholm, which shows that using outdated language is a successful way of setting the story in a remote past. However, the avoidance of archaic language appears to be a conscious choice on Hallqvist's part as she writes in her book *Min text och den andres*:

> "själv tycker jag att man bör akta sig för arkaisering. … Ett tidlöst språk är ett ouppnåeligt, för att inte säga orimligt ideal, eftersom ett levande språk ständigt förändras". (24-25) [I believe that one should avoid archaization. … A timeless language is an unobtainable, not to say unreasonable ideal, since a living language is constantly changing].

Hallqvist's view is that language eventually becomes outdated and there appears to be little that can be done to prevent this from happening. The fact that Andersson appears to have adopted a style of language more close to the style used by the source text author could be the result of influences from Tolkien's devoted Swedish fan base, as some were part of ensuring that Andersson's translation stayed true to the original. *The Lord of the Rings*-trilogy was first written as a sequel to *The Hobbit*, as it is based on the same fictional world and contain many of the same characters. It was a huge success (Stenström 629) and in the time following its publication in English between the years 1954 and 1955 ("J.R.R. Tolkien"), a large fan base developed and many formed a special interest in Tolkien's works. Some of these were later involved when Andersson translated *The Lord of the Rings* as three people were employed for

factual checking. An additional twelve people, constituting a reference group, made sure that the translation would become a satisfactory interpretation of the source text. This makes it evident that there were many opinions and much outside pressure during the translation process that also had to be taken into consideration ("En vanlig enkel översättare"). In an interview, Andersson states that the reviewing work eventually became as big as the translation itself ("En vanlig enkel översättare"). When he translated *The Hobbit* a few years later, the reviewing work was instead only carried out by two people and it is reasonable to assume that the number was kept down because the reviewing work of *The Lord of the Rings* eventually became unmanageable, as Andersson himself states in the interview. Nevertheless, this outer influence from Tolkien's Swedish fan base is likely to have restricted Andersson in his work and he could therefore take less liberties than the two previous translators.

Culture and Translation

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a so called "Cultural Turn" developed in the field of translation studies. Translation theorists had earlier acknowledged the effect cultural identity has on translation, but this shift contributed to an increased focus on culture studies and translation came to be seen as a "more complex negotiation between two cultures" (Munday, qtd in Myskja 2). Instead of seeing translation as the purely linguistic process of transferring a text to another language, Schiavi claims that a translation carries a set of cultural values and norms as "language [is used] as a repository of cultural values" (14), meaning that our culture can be illustrated in what type of language we use. Consequently, a translator has to take into consideration what type of cultural connotation he or she wishes the translation to carry, by considering what style of language is used. The theory that some instances in a particular language can carry additional cultural meaning poses a problem in translation, as the connotation portrayed through a given word choice might contradict what is being said in the source text.

An example of such an instance can be found in *Hompen*, where the chosen word already has a strong conceptual meaning in Swedish that is not compatible with the image portrayed in the original. The people known in Tolkien's novel as "elves" (232) are, in Zetterholm's version, translated as "älvor" (58); a word which carries the meaning of the English words "fairies" or "sprites". According to Bradford Lee Eden, the elves in Tolkien's novels are "powerful, strange and as tall as humans" (150), and Tolkien himself describes them as "[m]en with greatly enhanced aesthetic and creative faculties" (qtd in Dickerson 153), which

shows their closeness to humans. In addition to "älvor" having a different meaning in Sweden than the word "elves" has in the world invented by Tolkien, it becomes problematic when trying to keep the two apart as both "fairies" and "elves" are mentioned in *The Hobbit*. Yet, they are both translated as "älvor" and consequently become indistinguishable for a Swedish reader. As late as up until the early 20th century, people in parts of Sweden still believed that "älvor" produced and spread diseases that were only curable by making sacrifices to them ("Älvor"), which illustrates that there has been a deep-rooted picture of "älvor" in Sweden for a long time. The Swedish word "alver", which is the name that is used in the two later versions, also denotes supernatural beings but are creatures that have a strong physical resemblance to man, meaning that they are more closely related to the depicted elves in Tolkien's novel. According to *Nationalencyklopedin*, the word "alv" is linguistically related to "älva", though not conceptually ("Alv"), perhaps as the denoted creatures do not share the same physical features. As opposed to bearing a physical resemblance to man like "alver" do, "älvor" are traditionally thought of as small winged and magical females in Norse mythology (Egerkrans 22). However, Egerkrans claims that the word "alv" is simply the masculine form of the feminine "älva", but that this is not particularly well-known. Thus, he contradicts the claim that they are separate classes of creatures, and he further adds the issue of gender. As there appears to be two different ideas of what these creatures are, it becomes difficult to determine whether one term is better suited for this context than the other. Nevertheless, Egerkrans states that the claim that "alv" is a masculine form of "älva" is not well-known, and it could therefore be argued that "alv" is a more appropriate use for this particular purpose.

The picture of malevolent "älvor" is not one that is portrayed in either Tolkien's original text, or in the two later translations of it. Instead, the elves are described at one point in the novel as being "a good and kindly people" (*The Hobbit* 232) and therefore, naming them "älvor" in the Swedish translations is incompatible with this characterisation. Additionally, having a positive depiction of "älvor" creates a sort of cultural contradiction as they already have a mainly negative, deep-rooted image in Sweden as being mythical dancing creatures who spread diseases. Thus, the cultural connotation Swedish readers might apply to creatures known as "älvor" could affect these readers' perception of them.

Dialects and Our Underlying Perception of Them

Another example of how language carries additional cultural meaning can be found in the third Swedish translation from 2007 where the translator has given three characters a distinct western

Swedish accent. In this particular context it proves to be rather problematic, as the cultural value implied by the Swedish dialect used could be perceived as incompatible with the depiction of the characters in question.

In Chapter Two, Bilbo and the dwarves encounter three large creatures and Bilbo can tell that they are trolls by their appearance and language, which is described as not being "drawing-room fashion at all" (*The Hobbit* 33). This is illustrated mainly through their dialogue, but also by their actions and it becomes evident that they are supposed to be creatures with an obvious lack of sophistication. Tolkien achieves this by giving them a Cockney accent – "the speech of the lower-class Londoners" – as stated by John D. Rateliff (120). To illustrate how the Cockney accent might have been perceived to be appropriate for the depicted image of the trolls, the London County Council wrote in 1909 a report for *The Conference on the Teaching of English in London Elementary* School that "… the Cockney mode of speech, with its unpleasant twang, is a modern corruption without legitimate credentials, and is unworthy of being the speech of any person in the capital city of the Empire" (Santipolo 421). In other words, Cockney was officially perceived as a poor way of speaking. Even though this was written almost 30 years before the publication of *The Hobbit*, it is likely that this view still pervaded the British culture at the time Tolkien wrote the book. In fact, Cockney was not spoken on the BBC at the time *The Hobbit* was written, as all newsreaders spoke the so-called "received pronunciation". Dr Catherine Sangster claims that this was due to the limited social group from which broadcasters were recruited, which indicates one social standard for those who spoke received pronunciation and another for those speaking for instance Cockney (Sangster). Additionally, it has been proposed that the Cockney accent with its so-called 'rhyming slang' was first invented by thieves and pickpockets so that the police would not understand them (Santipolo 428). This aspect of the Cockney dialect entails a criminal undertone to the trolls and makes them intimidating. Thus, by having the trolls use colloquial slang such as "blimey" (33), which the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as "a vulgar corruption of the imprecation "blind me!" or "blame me!" ("Blimey"), but also by using the contracted form "yer" instead of "your" or "you", and giving them a Cockney accent, Tolkien illustrates in written text how the trolls' speech matches their supposed low-class behaviour and emphasises that they are dangerous.

The usage of English colloquial language discussed above leads to the question of how to convey foreign vernacular in translations – is it even possible? For instance, Antoine Berman argues that "a vernacular clings tightly to its soil and completely resists any direct translating into another vernacular" (286). In other words, it would not be possible to directly translate

"blimey" into Swedish as there is no proper Swedish equivalent. Instead of direct translation, a cultural adaptation in the target language must then be employed. One such instance is found in the third Swedish version, *Hobbiten*. While assigning a particular accent is a strategy that has not been adopted by the first two translators, Andersson has chosen to give the trolls a distinct western Swedish accent, which most Swedish readers would identify as being spoken in the city of Gothenburg. Hallqvist discusses the issue of dialects in translation, which she encountered when translating from German into Swedish, and she writes that she believes that it is better to avoid trying to mirror an accent in another language and instead try to convey a sort of "universal" accent (*Min text och den andres* 27). Moreover, the Gothenburg-dialect used in Andersson's translation is illustrated by the addition of words like "la" and "ena" in sentences spoken by the trolls (42) – a vernacular phenomenon mainly restricted to the area around Gothenburg. The word "ficka" [pocket] is spelled as "fecka" (42), which further clarifies their pronunciation of the word.

Since these trolls are described as neither well-mannered nor intelligent, which here is portrayed by the type of language they use, one could argue that it is important that the cultural connotation of the used accent or style in the target language should also match this description of the trolls. Thus, the chosen translated style or accent becomes highly dependent on how Swedes connect different accents to different types of people. That raises the question: do Swedes generally regard people from Gothenburg as being ill-mannered and unintelligent? Much like the social status of speaking with a Cockney accent was frowned upon in Britain and not used in media, broad accents were for a long time rarely used in Swedish media. If they were, they were almost exclusively used in films to illustrate how the character in question is uneducated, ignorant or incompetent ("Vilken bild ger media av dialekter och hur påverkas vi av den?"). The usage of the broad Gothenburg accent in the third translation is therefore in line with the portrayed image of the trolls as being uneducated, and thus lower class in Tolkien's original text. However, due to the sentence intonation used in the Gothenburg-accent being different from other Swedish dialects, the general opinion of these people is that they are relaxed, have a good sense of humour and most of all – they are happy (Lindström 2:52). This description does not fit with the intimidating image of the trolls portrayed in the source text and consequently, the cultural adaptation can have an effect on the way Swedish readers perceive these characters and this passage is an example of how the difference in culture between source and target languages can affect translation.

Censorship in Children's Literature

The production of children's literature has always been a delicate matter as for example publishers, authors and parents all have opinions on what is suitable to include in novels that are meant to be read by children. The fact that children's literature is written, edited and marketed by adults forms an imbalanced power relation according to Angelika Nikolowski-Bogomoloff, who further argues that this imbalance is highlighted in translation as it adds the issue of cultural and social adaptation in the textual environment of the target language (194). An example of such an instance where it appears as though outer influences have affected the translation of *The Hobbit* can be found in Chapter Seven where the character Beorn has killed a goblin and a so-called warg that were hunting the dwarves and Bilbo. Beorn shows the other characters what he has done and the picture presented by Tolkien is that "[a] goblin's head was stuck outside the gate and a warg-skin was nailed to a tree just beyond" (123). This, arguably violent, scene is kept in both the translation from 1962 and in the one from 2007 (Hallqvist 137; Andersson 126). However, in the translation from 1947, Beorn does not show or tell the others what he has done, but simply says that they are no longer alive (Zetterholm 127). By removing this part, Zetterholm alters the perception of Beorn's character. Granted, it is implied that Beorn is the one who has killed the goblin and the warg, but as we are not told how brutally he has killed them, we do not perceive how vicious Beorn can be.

It is evident that what has been omitted from the passage in Zetterholm's translation is the most violent part of this scene. The reason for this could be the fact that a growing concern for how much children should be exposed to issues regarding death, and thus grief, emerged in the 1920s and persisted until the 1970s when it gradually abated. This concern grew from the notion that "children no longer understood death, because they were so unlikely to have direct experience" and consequently, the time following the 1920s saw many large campaigns for the protection of children (Stearns 125). It is therefore possible that this attitude towards children, regarding how exposed they should be to violence and death, was reflected in children's literature, and thus the first translation of *The Hobbit* inflicts a type of censorship by removing passages deemed inappropriate. As mentioned above, this alteration was not kept in the second translation in 1962, which instead followed the original plot. In the production of *Bilbo: En hobbits äventyr*, the renowned children's book author Astrid Lindgren was the primus motor (Sundmark 4) and as such, she most likely had some influence over this translation. Nikolowski-Bogomoloff claims that "Astrid Lindgren's ideology is based on the notion that no aspects of life should be hidden from the child" (194), which could be a reason behind the choice to discard Zetterholm's alteration and to keep the violent passage.

The Driving Forces of Publishing Demands and Target Audience

Gillian Lathey lists some reasons why a publisher might commission new translations of children's literature. Several of these reasons can be applied to the two later Swedish translations of *The Hobbit* and they all illustrate how translations are affected by publishing demands and target audiences. The first reason for such a commission is that there might be a recognised illustrator who has agreed to make new illustrations, and thus fuels the production of a new translation (Lathey 120). This reason might have been a driving factor in the commission of the second Swedish translation by the children's book author Britt G. Hallqvist in 1962, when the first edition also included illustrations made by Tove Jansson.

In 1958, the publisher *Kooperativa Förbundets Bokförlag*, which earlier had published *Hompen* in 1947, merged with their associated company *Rabén & Sjögren* ("KF:s Förlag"). Consequently, *Rabén & Sjögren* held the Swedish copyrights to *The Hobbit* and the manager of the unit for children's literature, Astrid Lindgren, employed Britt G. Hallqvist to translate and Tove Jansson, who was well-known as the creator of the *Moomin*-trolls, to illustrate the new edition (Sundmark 4-5). However, the collaboration with Jansson was not as successful as was anticipated, and the second edition of *Bilbo, en hobbits äventyr* was later re-published without her illustrations. The reason behind this could be that these illustrations were perceived in Sweden as clashing with the world depicted in *The Hobbit*. After studying the reception of this edition in nine selected reviews in the Swedish press in the winter of 1962–1963, Björn Sundmark proposes the hypothesis that, although the illustrations were generally appreciated by the reviewers, the Swedish familiarity with Jansson's *Moomin*-illustrations made them rather incompatible with the world of Tolkien's characters (9). The kind and playful world of *Moomin* does not work in combination with that of *The Hobbit*, where 'evil' is a constant presence (10). This phenomenon, where a type of image or word is strongly rooted in the culture of the target language and therefore is distorted by its connotations, is similar to what was discussed above about "älvor" as a translation of "elves".

Another reason behind the production of a re-translation is that a publisher might regard a re-translation as a way to rekindle the popularity of a novel (Lathey 120). This was probably the major reason behind the commission of *Bilbo: en hobbits äventyr*. Björn Sundmark believes that the people of Sweden were not ready to accept characters such as those depicted in *The Hobbit* when the first translation *Hompen* was published in 1947 (4), which could explain why it did not sell all that well. It is conceivable that one of the main driving forces behind the

commission of the re-translation was a will to make it more popular than it had been the first time around. This is supported by Sundmark as he writes that there was a "Tolkien fever" in Sweden at this time (2) and also by tolkienist[4] Anders Stenström who argues that the success of the first Swedish translation of *The Lord of the Rings*-trilogy, which was translated between the years 1959 and 1961, led to the commission of the new translation of *The Hobbit* in 1962 (629). Additionally, Sundmark claims that this time was a breaking point in the literary genre of fantasy as it earlier had been characterised as surreal and filled with symbols through the works as those of Lewis Carroll and Franz Kafka, but the world brought forth by Tolkien was more realistic in matters such as depiction of characters and surroundings and it was not until the late 1960s that this new direction truly took hold (2-3).

However, the success of *The Lord of the Rings*-trilogy in Sweden might also have been the reason why *The Hobbit* was *not* an immediate success. Sundmark suggests that because this particular translation of *The Hobbit* was published just after *The Lord of the Rings*-trilogy became a popular phenomenon, it was inevitably compared with them. Some recurring elements and themes that could be found in more elaborate shape in *The Lord of the Rings*, were also found in *The Hobbit* and consequently gave the impression of the novel as being slightly underdeveloped with a language more suitable for children. Many of the reviewers thus saw *Bilbo: en hobbits äventyr* primarily as a children's book (Sundmark 20), which could be one of the main reasons for it not being as popular as hoped and perhaps led to a reconsideration of what kind of audience should be targeted.

This issue regarding who the translation should be targeted towards leads to yet another factor behind commissioning a new translation, namely that a publisher might want to reach out to another audience than the previous target audience (Lathey 121). By using archaic language, Andersson arguably moves away from a younger target audience and instead focuses on more mature readers. When *Hobbiten eller Bort och hem igen* was published in 2007, *The Lord of the Rings*-trilogy had been made into an immensely popular film trilogy which was rated PG-13 ("The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring"), meaning that they contain "some material [that] may be inappropriate for pre-teenagers" ("The Film Rating System"). The fact that this age-restriction was kept for all three films indicates that the target audience of Tolkien's works in the film adaptations was an older one. Given the success of *The Lord of the Rings*-enterprise, it is possible that Andersson's re-translation of *The Hobbit* was an attempt to

[4] "Tolkienist" refers to a member of a Tolkien Society and is a term used by the members themselves (Sundmark 15).

appeal to a wider target audience than previous translations, and therefore to tone down the image of the novel as a children's book.

Conclusion

A translation of a literary work is very much influenced by the social environment in which it is written. Since a translation ultimately constitutes a written negotiation between two cultures – the one of the source language speakers and the one of the target language speakers – it is highly dependent on what is culturally acceptable at the time it is published. Moreover, this has shifted over time as readers today appear to be more accepting of foreign culture in translated literature. This can for instance be seen in the translation from 2007 in which foreign culture-specific elements, for instance in food, have been retained. However, cultural adaptation in translation is not only determined by the level of acceptance within the target audience, but is also a conscious choice that is made by the translator, a fact which is evident in the second translation, by Hallqvist, where she has chosen to preserve the original place names, probably due to her own personal preferences. Nevertheless, there are some instances where the translator also has to account for the wishes of the source text author and opinions from fans and target audiences, which have arisen due to critique of previous translations. These voices are raised in order to render the new translation different from its predecessor, as is illustrated through the manual on how to translate place names and proper nouns, which Tolkien wrote as a response to the first translations.

In addition to how cultural adaptation and other social factors affect the translated novel, the translator can also provide a different interpretation of the source text than preceding translators and thus the new translation differs from the previous one; choices in wording and style of language affect how we perceive characters and the time in which the story is set. Furthermore, the perception of both characters and plot can also be changed by censorship, much like the one executed in the first Swedish translation. It is likely that the translator was influenced by social norms of what was appropriate for children to read at the time his work was written, which ultimately affected the translation. As this alteration was likely dependent on the current social norms of the time, it was eventually discarded. Additionally, there is the question of publishing demands. How the book will sell is a major factor in the production of a translation and consequently becomes a driving factor in the changes brought to translations. Because Jansson's illustrations were criticised by the audience, they were removed from *Bilbo: en hobbits äventyr,* and the changes in target audience of Tolkien's world over the last decades

appears to have had an extensive influence on the most recent translation. Over time, demands on translations change, both in terms of what they include and how they should be executed, and this entails a need for new translations.

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