

Min flod flyter mot dig: Sextio dikter av Emily Dickinson. Translated by Ann-Marie Vinde. Bokverket Lyrik, 2010. 174 pp. ISBN 9789186413026.

The impossibility of translating poetry is a well-known dilemma and one that Ann-Marie Vinde readily acknowledges. Her new selection of Emily Dickinson's poetry in Swedish translation in no way pretends to do the impossible. Indeed, her appendix to this collection of poems makes clear that she has not written Swedish interpretations of Dickinson's often enigmatic verses, only translations. Where or how one can possibly make a distinction between the two is of course open to debate, but it is clear from reading this book that Ann-Marie Vinde has made every attempt to provide historically and culturally accurate translations of the poems she has chosen without nudging us into any particular reading of them. Yet, when interpretation and translation have proven indistinguishable, I noted that some of her translations made sense of lines that I may very well have previously misinterpreted when reading the originals.

There are several reasons why this book succeeds in its aim mainly to translate words and leave interpretation up to the reader. The most obvious cause for praise is Vinde's meticulous historical and etymological research. In footnotes to the poems, we are treated to a number of lesser known details pertaining to Dickinson's life and the history of her poetry's publication, which open up the texts to new meanings. I for one was grateful that no attempt had been made to translate specifically nineteenth-century, American elements into something similar in Swedish culture. Instead, we have footnotes providing an explanation of the English word and the closest Swedish translation for it.

What has been sacrificed in this effort is rhyme and rhythm. The translated poems are in no way as lyrical as Dickinson's own, but then again, that is not Vinde's intent. These are translations for readers who want to read the original verses and only need the Swedish translation to check their understanding.

Indeed, the uncrowded, double-page layout offers the opportunity to glance back and forth between the English text and Vinde's translation of it. The numerous notes she provides are placed at the bottom of the page and separated by plenty of space, allowing us to appreciate the poems without the interruption of myriad superscripted numerals in the main text. Having said that, the marginal numbering of lines would have made it easier to find the word or words that each note refers to.

After initial disappointment, I understood Vinde's decision not to reproduce Dickinson's idiosyncratic use of capital letters, one trademark of her poetry. More importantly, she has been faithful to the poet's habit of placing dashes within and at the end of lines, even adding her own when she felt they had been lost in transcriptions.

The sixty poems that Vinde has selected from the almost 1,800 that Dickinson produced in her lifetime, range from some of the most familiar, like "I'm Nobody! Who are You?" to much more obscure poems, many of which appear here in

Swedish translation for the first time. Vinde's targeted audience is clearly composed of English teachers and other English-speaking Swedes of a literary bent, but almost any Swede with an interest in Emily Dickinson should find this book surprisingly accessible due to its many helpful notes and the informative appendix.

In that final section of the book, Vinde provides an interesting and detailed biographical background as well as a thorough explication of the grammatical, syntactical, and lexical anomalies she has had to grapple with. Through this forthright description of the translator's many challenges – such as the near impossibility of finding Swedish language equivalents to Dickinson's almost exclusively iambic meter – even the uninitiated Swedish reader will be able to appreciate Emily Dickinson's timeless and highly inspirational poetry.

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