

An abstract painting featuring a vertical rainbow spectrum of colors (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple) on the left side. The rest of the background is a textured, multi-colored wash of these hues. At the bottom, a row of stylized, white, human-like figures is depicted, some holding hands or standing in pairs. A small signature 'KLINT' is visible in the bottom right corner of the painting.

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Beyond Essentialisms – Translating Sex and Gender

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FROM THE EDITOR

FRÅN REDAKTÖREN

The object of this TfL special issue is to explore the figuration of sex and gender in translated and internationally circulated literature. To this end, we first ask how matters of sex and gender affect literary translation – considering, for instance, how gendered and sexualized terms are translated from one language to another, and how gender hierarchies in society impact the consecration of translated fiction. But importantly, recognizing that literature plays vital roles in the “writing of culture” and that “there is no gender from the start,” we also ask how the translation of literary texts takes part in the construction and dissemination of social, political and sexual categories.¹ And as the following pages testify, the connections between these two concerns are equally relevant when studying the cross-cultural migration of ancient texts as the finer workings of the contemporary book market.

In the field of translation studies, questions of sex and gender have played important roles for decades, particularly in connection to feminist theory.² A famed example has to do with the translations of Simone de Beauvoir’s *Le deuxième sexe*, published in French in 1949 and exceptionally important for second wave feminism. Beginning in the 1980’s, critical examinations have shown that the bowdlerized English version from 1953 significantly misrepresented Beauvoir’s thinking – particularly on matters of sex.³ Another example is Mona Baker’s reminder in 1992 that the Arabic didn’t have a neutral word for “homosexuality,” and that (homo)sexuality therefore should be considered an important problematic for

Syftet med detta temanummer av Tfl är att utforska figurationer av sex och genus i översatt och internationellt cirkulerad litteratur. För det första frågar vi hur sex och genus påverkar litterär översättning – exempelvis genom hur könade och sexualiserade termer översätts från ett språk till ett annat, eller genom den inverkan samhällsliga könhierarkier har på konsekrationen av översatt litteratur. Men via erkännandet av att litteratur spelar viktiga roller i ”[the] writing of culture” och att ”there is no gender from the start” frågar vi också hur översättning av litterära texter bidrar till konstruktionen och spridningen av sociala, politiska och sexuella kategorier.¹ Och som de följande sidorna vittnar om är kopplingen mellan dessa två övergripande spörsmål lika relevant i studier av antika texters rörelser mellan kulturer, som i granskningar av detaljmekanismer på den samtida bokmarknaden.

Inom fältet översättningsstudier har frågor om sex och genus varit viktiga i flera decennier, särskilt i relation till feministisk teori.² Ett välkänt exempel rör översättningar av Simone de Beauvoirs *Le deuxième sexe*, som gavs ut på franska 1949 och fick ett exceptionellt inflytande på andravgångsfeminismen. Med start under 1980-talet har kritiska granskningar visat att den förkortade och ”rensade” engelska versionen från 1953 gav en märkbart felaktig bild av Beauvoirs tänkande – särskilt i frågor om sex.³ Ett annat exempel än Mona Bakers erinran 1992 om att arabiskan inte hade något neutralt ord för ”homosexualitet”, och att (homo)sexualitet därför borde förstås som ett viktigt problem för översättningsstudier.⁴ Mer

translation studies.⁴ More recently, connections between translation and sex have led to an increased awareness of previously neglected materials, as well as to reconsiderations of established translations. In a 2014 special issue of *Comparative Literature Studies*, for instance, scholars raised questions of how to appropriately translate supposedly gender-neutral terms in older texts (e.g. the French “homme” in 17th century treatises), and how literary translation ties in with the construction of sexual identities – historically and in the present.⁵ Similarly, studies on the translation of erotic literature (by José Santaemilia, for example) have stressed both the stylistic nuances *within* texts that inevitably arise when translating sexually explicit materials, and how such texts have effects *outside* themselves, particularly as they shape perceptions of sexuality.⁶

Important advancements have also been made in connections between translation studies and queer theory. On the one hand, scholars like Marc Démont have (re)examined translations of queer texts, mapping both strategies for translating queerness and the effects resulting from homogenizing and “straight” translation.⁷ On the other, notions of queerness have led to reconsiderations of the pre-given categories and concepts of translation studies, not least by problematizing binary pairs like *source* and *target culture*, or *original* and *translation*. In *Queer Theory and Translation Studies* (2021), Brian James Baer argues that this is particularly important as translation studies have tended to define “the other” in cultural and linguistic terms – not sexual or social. Considering translation in tandem with queer experiences and epistemologies, he contends, is therefore key in any attempt at a “counterhegemonic rethinking” of how language and the cross-cultural migration of texts affect gendered and sexual identities.⁸

Somewhat surprisingly, questions of how gender and sex affect translation (and vice versa) have figured far less prominently in research on World Literature – despite its

nyligen har kopplingar mellan översättning och sex lett till ett ökat intresse för tidigare förbisedda material, liksom till nygranskningar av väletablerade översättningar. I en special issue av *Comparative Literature Studies* från 2014, till exempel, lyfte forskare frågor om rimliga sätt att översätta förmodat könsneutrala termer i äldre texter (såsom franskans ”homme” i traktat från 1600-talet) och hur litterär översättning hänger samman med konstruktionen av sexuella identiteter – både historiskt och i samtiden.⁵ På snarlikt manér har studier av översättning av erotisk litteratur (av bl.a. José Santaemilia) betonat både stilistiska variationer *inom* texter som oundvikligen uppstår vid översättning av sexuellt explicit material, och hur sådan texter har effekter *utanför* sig själva, speciellt genom hur de formar uppfattningar av sexualiteter.⁶

Viktiga framsteg har också gjorts via kopplingar mellan översättningsstudier och queerteori. Å ena sida har forskare som Marc Démont (ny)granskat översättningar av queera texter, och både kartlagt strategier för att översätta queerhet och effekter som stammar ur homogeniserande eller rak (“straight”) översättning.⁷ Å den andra har föreställningar om queerhet också lett till omprövningar av översättningsforskningens förgivettagna kategorier och koncept, inte minst via problematiseringar av binära begreppspår som *käll-* och *målkultur* respektive *original* och *översättning*. I *Queer Theory and Translation Studies* (2021) menar Brian James Baer att dessa omprövningar varit särskilt viktiga eftersom översättningsstudier tenderat definiera ”den andre” i kulturella och språkliga termer – inte sexuella eller sociala. Att tänka översättning i relation till queera erfarenheter och epistemologier, menar han, är därför centralt för varje ansats till ”counterhegemonic rethinking” av hur språk och texters kulturella migration påverkar genusmässiga och sexuella identiteter.⁸

Något förvånande har frågor om hur genus och sex påverkar översättning (och vice versa) förekommit i långt mindre grad

dramatic surge since the turn of the millennium.⁹ Part of the explanation has to do with the systemic and structural approaches by scholars like Casanova, Heilbron, Moretti and Sapiro, where the formative relations between the center and peripheries of the world literary sphere have taken precedence. But one should also recognize that efforts to move beyond the center/periphery-divide have tended to highlight geography, culture and language rather than gender or sex – not unlike the linguistically marked “other” of translation studies. This is not to say that recent scholarship on World Literature (and the world’s literatures) is flawed or misconstrued. Quite the contrary: much has been gained by increased awareness on the dynamic between vernacular and cosmopolitan literature, for example, or how literary migration ties in with cultural mobility and conceptions of nationhood. And yet the general silence on matters of gender and sex is easily perceived. In a sense it echoes what Derrida once called Heidegger’s “stubborn mutism” on the same issue.¹⁰

By connecting the exploration of sex and gender in translated literature to translation studies, queer theory and scholarship on world literature, we hope to highlight and establish new lines of inquiry and interdisciplinary collaboration. Remo Verdickt’s opening essay about James Baldwin’s *Giovanni’s Room* is exemplary in this regard: it tracks the novel’s transformation across a range of European languages to understand the strategies different translators have employed to handle Baldwin’s sexually explicit prose, how those strategies reflect historically situated notions of (homo)sexuality, and what the host of both older and recent editions of *Giovanni’s Room* imply regarding Baldwin’s stature as a world literary figure in the 21st century. Similarly, in the second essay of the issue Milan Vukašinović and Lilli Hölzlhammer explore the long translation history of the Old Indian fable collection *Panchatantra*, detailing its “prismatic translation.” Drawing on theories of untranslatability, they parti-

inom forskning om världslitteratur – trots områdets dramatiska expansion sedan millennieskiftet.⁹ En del av förklaringen handlar om de systemiska och strukturella angreppssätt forskare som Casanova, Heilbron, Moretti och Sapiro nyttjat, där formativa relationer mellan världslitteraturens centrum och periferier satts i första rummet. Men det bör också påpekas att ansatser att röra sig bortom center/periferuppställningen tenderat betona geografi, kultur och språk snarare än genus och sex – inte olikt översättningsforskningens språkligt präglade ”andra”. Därmed inte sagt att forskningen om världslitteratur (och världens litteraturer) är bristfällig. Tvärtom: mycket har vunnits genom det ökade intresset för dynamiken mellan vernakulär och kosmopolitisk litteratur, liksom genom granskningar av hur litterär migration hänger samman med kulturell mobilitet och föreställningar om nationalstaten. Men ändå är den generella tystnaden kring frågor om sex och genus lätt att lägga märke till. På sätt och vis ekar det av vad Derrida kallade Heideggers ”envisa stumhet” om samma ämne.¹⁰

Genom att koppla utforskandet av sex och genus i översatt litteratur till översättningsstudier, queerteori och världslitteraturforskning hoppas vi kunna belysa och etablera nya forskningsvägar och interdisciplinära samarbeten. Remo Verdickts essä om James Baldwins *Giovanni’s Room* är exemplarisk i den bemärkelsen: den spårar romanens transformationer genom ett antal europeiska språk, både för att förstå de strategier olika översättare använt för att hantera Baldwins sexuellt explicita prosa, hur de strategierna speglar historiskt situerade föreställningar om (homo)sexualitet, och vad uppsjön av både äldre och nyare utgåvor av *Giovanni’s Room* säger om Baldwins ställning som världslitterär författare under 2000-talet. På ett snarlikt sätt utforskar Milan Vukašinović och Lilli Hölzlhammer den indiska fabelsamlingen *Panchatantra*s långa översättningshistoria, genom en kartläggning av dess ”prismatiska översättningar”. Med stöd i teorier om oöversättbarhet betonar Vukašinović

cularly emphasize how notions of gender have been shaped by the text's transpositions from Sanskrit to Middle Persian, Arabic, Byzantine Greek, Old Slavonic, Serbian and English – owning both to strictures of grammar and the idiosyncrasies of individual translators.

Turning from details in individual translated texts (albeit with far-reaching implications for the politics of gender and sex), Marcus Axelsson's contribution examines gender hierarchies in the paratexts of translated fiction on the Scandinavian book market. With a corpus of more than 300 titles, he shows how review excerpts on book covers are configured through an interplay between genre, target and source culture relations, and the gender of both reviewers and prospective readers, thus stressing the importance of sex and gender as analytical categories for the sociology of translation. Keeping the focus on reviews and paratexts, in the issue's fourth essay Berit Grønn and Britt W. Svenhard analyze the Norwegian reception of Disney's *Encanto*. They show that the film's close connections to Gabriel García Márquez *Cien años de soledad* and Colombian notions of matriarchy was downplayed in Norway, with reviewers instead stressing its portrayal of a modern (potentially feminist) Disney-princess. While clarifying *Encanto*'s reception in Norway, Grønn and Svenhard also outline more generalized patterns of how notions of gender and genre are transmitted across languages, culture and media – thereby laying the grounds for further research. In a sense turning back towards textual minutiae, Oscar Jansson's essay then analyses the implications of untranslated terms of endearment in Violine Huisman's *The Book of Mother* and Sang Young Park's *Love in the Big City*, arguing that the aesthetics of translation ties in with an ethics of reading translated literature.

Following these five essays, the issue turns to a close with Anna Hultman's conference report from the 2022 Komplitt symposium "Translation/Transmission/Transgression," held at Lund University, where several contributors to

och Hölzlhammer särskilt att föreställningar om genus formats av textens rörelser från sanskrit till mellanpersiska, arabiska, bysantisk grekiska, fornslaviska, serbiska och engelska – på grund av såväl grammatiska regelverk som enskilda översättares idiosynkrasier.

I en vändning från detaljer i enskilda översatta texter (om än med omfattande implikationer för genus och sex i politisk mening) granskar Marcus Axelssons bidrag istället könshierarkier i paratexter till översatt litteratur på den skandinaviska bokmarknaden. Utifrån en korpus av över 300 titlar visar han att recensensutdrag på bokomslag konfigureras genom ett samspel mellan genre, förhållandet mellan käll- och målkultur och såväl recensentens som den förmodade läsarens kön – och betonar därigenom betydelsen av sex och genus som analytiska kategorier inom översättnings-sociologin. Med likartat fokus på recensioner och paratexter analyserar Berit Grønn och Britt W. Svenhard därefter det norska mottagandet av Disneys *Encanto*. De visar att filmens nära band till Gabriel García Márquez *Cien años de soledad* och colombianska föreställningar om matriarkat och femininitet tonades ner i Norge, då recensenter istället underströk dess gestaltning av en modern (och potentiellt feministisk) Disneyprinsessa. Medan detta klagör *Encantos* mottagande i Norge skisserar Grønn och Svenhard också mer generella mönster för hur förståelser av genre och genus sprids mellan språk, kulturer och medier – och lägger därigenom grund för fortsatt forskning. I en sorts vändning tillbaka till detaljer i enskilda texter granskar Oscar Janssons essä därefter implikationerna av oöversatta ömhetsbetygelser i Violande Huismans *The Book of Mother* och Sang Young Parks *Love in the Big City*, och hur frågor om översättningens estetik hänger samman med etiska aspekter av att läsa i översättning.

Efter dessa fem essäer avslutas numret av Anna Hultmans konferensrapport från Komplittsymposiet "Translation/Transmission/Transgression", som hölls vid Lunds universitet 2022 och där flera av temanumrets

the special issue presented papers. Hultman's report is key in the sense that it clarifies some of the backgrounds for the special issue's rationale – and parts of the institutional collaborations between Lund, Leuven, Østfold and other universities that have given the issue momentum. And importantly, Hultman's report also exemplifies how the questions raised at both the symposium and in this special issue might be explored in the future, in continued and renewed collaborations and projects.

skribenter presenterade papers. Hultmans rapport är viktigt i bemärkelsen att den klargör några av temanumrets bakgrunder och impulser – och likaså några av de samarbeten mellan Lund, Leuven, Østfold och andra lärosäten som gett numret kraft och framåtrörelse. Vidare exemplifierar Hultmans rapport hur frågor som lyftes på symposiet och i detta temanummer kan utforskas vidare i framtiden, genom fortsatta och förnyade samarbeten och projekt.

Oscar Jansson
Lund, 2023

Notes

- 1 Gabriele Schwab, *Imaginary Ethnographies: Literature, Culture, and Subjectivity* (Columbia University Press: New York 2012; Judith Butler, "Blogpost: Judith Butler Talks Gender," (2017), relativesociology.blogspot.com
- 2 For a general overview on translation, gender and sexuality, see Brian James Baer's chapter in Kirsten Malmkjær (ed), *The Cambridge Handbook of Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2022).
- 3 Anna Bogic, "Why Philosophy Went Missing. Understanding the English Version of Simone de Beauvoir's *Le deuxième sexe*," in *Translating Women*, ed. Luise von Flotow (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press 2011), 151–166.
- 4 Mona Baker, *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation*. 1st Edition (London: Routledge 1992), 24.
- 5 Pierre Zoberman, "Homme" peut-il vouloir dire "Femme"?: Gender and Translation in Seventeenth-Century French Moral Literature", *Comparative Literature Studies*, 51:2 (2014), 231–252; Sergey Tyulenev, "Strategies of translating sexualities as part of the secularization of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Russia," *Comparative Literature Studies*, 51:2 (2014), 253–276; Serena Bassi, "Tick as Appropriate: (A) Gay, (B) Queer, or (C) None of the Above: Translation and Sexual Politics in Lawrence Venuti's *A Hundred Strokes of the Brush Before Bed*," *Comparative Literature Studies*, 51:2 (2014), 298–320.
- 6 See José Santaemilia, "Sex and translation: On women, men and identities," *Women's Studies International Forum*, 42 (2014), 104–110; José Santaemilia, *Gender, Sex and Translation: The Manipulation of Identities* (New York: Routledge 2005); Johannes D. Kaminski (ed.), *Erotic Literature in Adaptation and Translation* (MHRA/Legenda: Oxford 2018).
- 7 Marc Démont, "On Three Modes of Translating Queer Literary Texts" in *Queering Translation, Translating the Queer: Theory, Practice, Activism*, eds. Brian James Baer and Klaus Kaindl (eds.), (Routledge: New York 2018), 157.
- 8 Brian James Baer, *Queer Theory and Translation Studies: Language, Politics, Desire* (New York: Routledge 2021), 2f.
- 9 Consider, for instance, that the lack of gendered and feminist perspectives in studies on World Literature is a main impetus for *Feminism as World Literature* (Bloomsbury 2022), edited by Robin Truth Goodman.
- 10 Jacques Derrida, "Geschlecht I: Sexual Difference, Ontological Difference," *Research in Phenomenology*, vol 13. (1983), 65–83.

REMO VERDICKT

“THE WORD *HOMOSEXUAL* IS NOT A NOUN”

Transfiguring James Baldwin’s Queerness through Translations
of *Giovanni’s Room*

Introduction: Nouns of a Native Son

For decades, James Baldwin’s sophomore novel *Giovanni’s Room* (1956) has been considered a landmark of American queer fiction. In 1973, three members of Gay Activist Alliance took inspiration from its title when they founded Giovanni’s Room Bookstore, presently the oldest gay bookstore in the United States. Apart from that, the novel has been routinely featured at the top of classic queer fiction lists, most notably when The Publishing Triangle compiled its list of the hundred best gay and lesbian novels in 1999.¹

In 2019, *Giovanni’s Room* featured on the BBC’s list of the hundred most inspiring English language novels in the category “Love, Sex, and Romance.”² The BBC’s disclaimer that these novels “shaped our world” offers a normative reading of the influence literature exerts on modern society, but surely *Giovanni’s Room* has helped to shape our contemporary understanding of Baldwin as a writer, especially in non-anglophone Europe. Not only is it Baldwin’s most celebrated novel – together, arguably, with his debut *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953), which appears on Modern Library’s 1998 list of the hundred best English language novels of the twentieth century – but since the turn of the century it has also been his most widely circulated novel through translation in continental Europe.³ Moreover, Baldwin’s novels enjoy far greater circulation-through-translation in Europe than his non-fiction, of which at present only the collections *Notes of a Native Son* (1955) and *The Fire Next Time* (1963) are circulating beyond the French and Italian markets – a marked contrast with the essays’ omnipresence in the anglophone world. Crucially, despite the importance of Baldwin’s essayist output for his revival in popular culture, his queer identity, which is decidedly absent in these texts, remains closely intertwined with his popular reception.

Since the turn of the century, Baldwin’s work has enjoyed an international critical and popular renaissance, which has been further amplified by the release of Raoul Peck’s documentary *I Am Not your Negro* (2016), Barry Jenkins’ film adaptation of

Baldwin's penultimate novel *If Beale Street Could Talk* (2018), and by Baldwin's ongoing mobilization by the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and his circulation on social media. Intriguingly, these adaptations of Baldwin's life and work – or *translations* if you will, into new media – are primarily informed either by Baldwin's non-fiction writings, or, in the case of Jenkins' film, by the one novel which is least concerned with notions of queerness. Peck's screenplay constructs a voice-over monologue based on Baldwin's unfinished memoir *Remember This House* and a variety of other essays while the overwhelming majority of quotes and videos that circulate on social media are derived from Baldwin's essays, speeches and interviews.⁴

Queerness is routinely if only superficially invoked in these various mobilizations, as well as in their reception. Although *I Am Not Your Negro* contains only one brief allusion to Baldwin's sexuality – a move that has led some to criticize Peck for “erasing” Baldwin's queerness⁵ – reviews and promotional material consistently pointed out Baldwin's difficulties as both a Black *and* gay man. In 2021, Wes Anderson's fiction film *The French Dispatch* featured a character that was loosely based on Baldwin: Roebuck Wright (Jeffrey Wright), an expatriate queer African American author residing in France. The flimsy biographical resemblance to Baldwin was enough for the connection to be routinely mentioned in the film's press talks – further aided by the fact that actor Jeffrey Wright himself had been a student of Baldwin's at UMass Amherst.⁶ Relatedly, the queer romcom *Bros* (2022), features a hologram of Kenan Thomson ventriloquizing Baldwin in the fictitious National LGBTQ+ History Museum. Earlier in that same film, protagonist Bobby (Billy Eichner) is exchanging flirtatious, slightly scabrous texts with his soon-to-be-lover Aaron: “You had a gender-reveal-orgy? James Baldwin would be so proud!” Baldwin's queerness has thus become a vital part of his posthumous public image, to the extent that fictional gay characters self-mockingly measure their love life to his standards.

One of the few non-fiction pieces where Baldwin *does* address the issue of queerness is a short paragraph in his idiosyncratic volume of film criticism *The Devil Finds Work*.⁷ Here he expresses doubt that “Americans will ever be able to face the fact that the word, homosexual, is not a noun.”⁸ Considering Baldwin's present world literary status – and the significance of his queer writing for his circulation in Europe – Baldwin's complex views on the linguistic representation of queerness warrants a closer examination of the strategies that his European translators have wielded to render the notions – and *nouns* – that denote queerness in Baldwin's oeuvre into their respective languages. As Stefan Helgesson argues, “[w]orld literature has a necessary connection to translation”; a connection that David Damrosch defines as a transcultural process which includes multiple refractions, as they negotiate between ‘source’ and ‘target’ cultures and thus bear evidence for shifting literary values.⁹ These shifting literary values are evident when considering the taboo queer subject of *Giovanni's Room* and the varying sociopolitical realities and ideological inflections of its target cultures upon original publication – a notion which has been at the heart of recent interventions in the convergent fields of translation and queer studies.¹⁰

This essay engages in what Helgesson identifies as “text-based approaches to literary translation that deal with textual transformation and recontextualization.”¹¹ Given *Giovanni's Room's* central position in Baldwin's European *canonization-through-translation*, the translations of the novel's frank discussions of same-sex intimacy are vital to

European audiences' understanding of Baldwin as a queer author. By comparing the Danish, Dutch, French, and German translations of *Giovanni's Room*, this essay argues that a plurality of strategies have been employed to transmit notions of queerness in Baldwin's novel – informed both by socio-political and ideological discrepancies between the various receiving cultures, and linguistic tendencies specific to the respective languages.¹² The comparisons show that over the years, shifts in the reception of queer literature and that of *Giovanni's Room* specifically have led to revised strategies and paratextual elements that offer a much more varied perspective than that on display on the popular slotting of Baldwin as a gay icon. However, this broadened understanding of 'the queer imagination' is itself – due to dominant modes of thinking – constantly under threat, as essentialization diminishes its disruptive potential. Ultimately, the plurality of translation strategies exemplifies *Giovanni's Room's* inherent destabilizing queer qualities as these diverging translations, too, invoke the tensions and contradictions which are intimately bound up with the inevitable multifariousness of queer reading practices.¹³

Habeas Corpus: Criminalization and Corporality in the Translations of *Giovanni's Room*

Giovanni's Room tells the story of David, a WASP expatriate idly spending his days in Paris. While his fiancée Hella is away, David meets the young Italian Giovanni. The pair strike up a brief romance that is doomed from the onset because of David's internalized guilt and self-hate – a similar trajectory to a brief fling he had with another same-sex lover in his youth in New York. As Hella returns from Spain, David breaks off the affair and Giovanni falls into despair and destitution, ultimately murdering the gay bartender Guillaume. Hella discovers David's bisexuality and leaves for the US. On the morning of Giovanni's scheduled execution, a solitary David imagines both Giovanni's physical and his own spiritual demise.

Crime is a central element to the novel's plot, as is homosexual desire. The supposed connection between these elements ties in with Didier Eribon's argument that since the mid-nineteenth century, the proximity of homosexuality to crime "becomes one of the central themes not only of police literature and medical and psychological literature, but of literature itself."¹⁴ Of special interest here is how this outdated notion has informed translation strategies in the past. In *Proust, China and Intertextual Engagement: Translation and Intercultural Dialogue* (2017), Shuangyi Li traces the influence of the dominant Chinese scholarly view on homosexuality – which one sexologist called "an abnormal behaviour that should be penalized" – on the first Chinese translators of *A la recherche du temps perdu* (1913–1927), as they chose to "explicitly pathologize Proust's description of homosexual characters."¹⁵ As we shall see, at least one of *Giovanni's Room's* early European translations employ a similar pathologizing praxis. Before detailing specific translation strategies, however, I will briefly outline the novel's European publishing trajectories and circulation.

Giovanni's Room was quickly translated into Danish (1957, translated by Michael Tejn as *Giovannis Værelse*) and French (1958, translated by Claude Messanges as *Giovanni, Mon Ami*), followed by a West German edition in 1963 (*Giovannis Zimmer*, translated by Axel Kamm and Hans-Heinrich Wellman) and a Dutch translation in 1965 (*Giovanni's Kamer*, by G. A. Prinsen). The three most recent translations of this essay's

corpus are the new French (1996, translated by Élisabeth Guinsbourg as *La Chambre de Giovanni*), Danish (2019, translated by Pjal Juul and also titled *Giovannis Værelse*), and German (2021, translated by Miriam Mandelkow and also titled *Giovannis Zimmer*) translations.¹⁶ In her comprehensive study of Baldwin's American reception, Conseula Francis notes how American academic critics would not pay attention to the book's homosexual themes until the advent of queer theory, whereas its initial (non-academic) reviewers and readers much more openly discussed the queer elements.¹⁷ In France, however, academic critics immediately *did* address these elements, some even making comparisons to established queer French authors André Gide and Jean Genet.¹⁸

Intriguingly, in the German Democratic Republic, a reprint of Axel Kamm's and Hans-Heinrich Wellman's West German translation was not published until 1981, in a large edition that quickly sold out.¹⁹ A similar trajectory befell the Hungarian translation, which was not published until 1980. Zsófia Gombár calls this the "delaying" technique of the Socialist publishing industry, where "questionable works" were put aside for a few years, as their authors accrued more critical standing and publishers could "bide their time and wait for a politically more favorable atmosphere when the book could be published."²⁰ Hajek notes of the book's success in the GDR that

[o]ne of the reasons for this strong reader-response may well be Baldwin's very sensitive yet reckless daring to explore the most intimate and most vulnerable and most tabuized regions of human relations, including his fictional treatment of sexuality, and specifically homosexuality, as a possible manifestation of true human love.²¹

Aside from a few French comparisons to Jean Genet's work, the book's initial reception in these receiving cultures has thus little to say on any supposed proximity between homosexuality and criminality, although the communist authorities in Hungary and the GDR considerably delayed its publication. However, a comparative analysis of the Danish, Dutch, French, and German translations lays bare the respective ideological tensions and shifts, as translations address the novel's criminal elements through diverging lexica and paratexts.

Nigel Hatton situates the first Danish translation, *Giovannis Værelse* (1957) within its national political and cultural context. As Hatton quotes from Bonnie Zimmerman's *Encyclopedia of Lesbian and Gay Histories and Cultures* (2000), the 1950s in Denmark were marked by "harassment by the police, legal discrimination, and societal oppression of homosexuals."²² Baldwin's novel was published two years after a national scandal, as Axel Lundahl-Madsen and his partner Eigil Eskilden were convicted in 1955 on pornography charges and sentenced to short prison terms for running a gay modeling agency that sold photographs of male nudity. Reportedly, over seventy Danes committed suicide in the aftermath of the scandal, as they were fearful of being outed by the authorities.²³

When *Giovannis Værelse* was first released, its afterword was written not by a literary critic but by the Copenhagen police commissioner Aage Maurizio Lotinga. Lotinga himself had authored in 1948 a book called *The Sexual Deviant and Society*, and he had advocated before that homosexuality should not be publicly condemned on moral grounds, but best be understood "as a matter of concomitant crime, like the theft and public indecency associated with male prostitution."²⁴ Hatton carefully analyzes how Lotinga's afterword simultaneously paints the novel as illustrative of his own theories

on homosexuality *and* as a stylistic feat that succeeds in generating the reader's sympathy for its criminal queer characters. On the surface, Lotinga sees his understanding of homosexuality as inherently intertwined with crimes such as theft and violence, confirmed by the novel's plot, as the titular Italian character becomes destitute and retreats to murder once his American lover David, the book's protagonist, leaves him. At the same time, Lotinga recognizes the book's humane dimension and its "delicate, yes almost tender understanding."²⁵

Hatton also sees Lotinga's criminalization of homosexuality mirrored in the book's translation, and one passage in particular stands out. The narrator David recounts the aftermath of a sexual encounter with a previous male lover: "I was ashamed. The very bed, in its sweet disorder, testified to vileness." In the 1957 Danish translation, 'vileness' is rendered as "lastefuldhed". According to Hatton,

Lastefuld, a form of carelessness, echoes the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, and links "vileness" to criminality. Lotinga, after all, urged the public to remove the issue from any discussion of morality.²⁶

Hatton further remarks how Pia Juul's recent Danish translation (2019) does away with *lastefuld*, instead opting for *unmoralsk*, meaning "immoral", thus "eschew[ing] criminality in favor of Baldwin's moral difficulty."²⁷ None of the other editions of this essay's corpus opt for criminalizing translations of 'vileness.' The Dutch translation speaks of "laagheid", Messanges's of "abjection", and Kamm's and Wellman's of "Verderbtheid," which are all terms that roughly translate to "lowness" or "abjection" in English. The more recent French and German translation use the terms "souillure" and "Schändlichkeit," which suggest a sense of guilt and are in keeping with the development of the critical discourse on *Giovanni's Room*, in which the focus has shifted since the 1990s on David's interiorized shame and subjective guilt.²⁸

Although Lotinga's afterword makes the original Danish translation stand out, G. A. Prinsen's translation at times also retorts to legal and implicitly judgmental jargon, occasionally invoking religious imagery when Baldwin refrains from doing so. Thus at one point Prinsen translates "cavern" as "kerker," which is the Dutch word for 'dungeon.'²⁹ A remarkable shift, as the original sentence reads "[t]hat body suddenly seemed the black opening of a cavern."³⁰ Elsewhere, he translates "healing" – "his eyes... were like the eyes of a dying man who looks everywhere for healing" – with "redding", which can both mean 'rescue' and 'salvation', while "I was Jacques' protection" becomes "beschermengel" ('guardian angel') in Dutch.³¹ Strikingly, Prinsen interjects "als een aureool" ("like a halo") to Baldwin's less overtly religious "all of the light of that gloomy tunnel trapped around his head."³² Prinsen also adopts judicial jargon to render "you have finally... corrupted this great American football player" with "omgekocht," which means 'bribed', while David's famous aside that "perhaps home is not a place but an irrevocable condition" becomes "een onherroepelijke voorwaarde," which is a judicial formulation.³³

None of the other translations I analyzed deviate from Baldwin's original prose with jargon as markedly legal and/or biblical. One point of comparison can be found in Kamm's and Wellman's translation, when they too translate "healing" as "Hilfe," which has no salvational connotations. Miriam Mandelkow's recent German transla-

tion sticks closer to the English original and opts for “Heilung.” None of the corpus’s translations contain paratextual elements in the vein of Lotinga’s afterword. The only versions that feature an afterword are the East German 1981 reprint of Kamm’s and Wellman’s translation and Miriam Mandelkow’s more recent counterpart. Both posit the opposite of Lotinga’s plea for criminalization. The first was written by GDR literary critic Bernhard Scheller and stresses Baldwin’s vision on homosexuality as a manifestation of universal love, thus, according to Friederike Hajek, “eventually [doing] justice to this formerly much criticized aspect of Baldwin’s work.”³⁴ In the second, playwright and essayist Sasha Marianna Salzmann claims that for many contemporary readers the book is both “a literary example and an antidote against one’s own shame.”³⁵

This “shame” is often articulated in the book through bodily functions and physical discomfort and Matt Brim identifies “a fundamental corporeal questioning” at the heart of the novel.³⁶ Prinsen, Mandelkow, and both French translators closely follow Baldwin’s explicit depictions of sex and of nausea and other forms of physical discomfort and corporality. However, the original German translation advocates a certain prudishness, as it tones down some of Baldwin’s graphic language. Thus, “this was Giovanni’s *regurgitated* life” becomes “es war der *Auswurf* von Giovanni’s Leben,” that is, “the *ejection* of Giovanni’s life” – a much less graphic image. Elsewhere, “[I] had trouble not to vomit” is translated as “ich ekelte mich vor ihm,” (“I was disgusted by him”) leaving out the actual physical discomfort altogether. On a similar note, when David recounts his distress after first having slept with Joey, he fails to understand “how this have happened to me, how this could have happened *in* me.”³⁷ Kamm and Wellman translate this as “weil ich nicht begriff, wie so etwas passieren konnte, *mir* passieren konnte” – by leaving out “in”, they neutralize the strong implication of anal sex. These observations are in line with Peter Freese’s analysis on the early translations of Baldwin in West Germany, specifically the general tendency that “Baldwin’s ubiquitous and often brutally outspoken sexual references [were] frequently tuned down and ‘purified.’”³⁸ Miriam Mandelkow’s recent translations do away with this strategy, and her *Giovanni’s Zimmer* in particular stays close to Baldwin’s original direct and graphic prose.

Although the first Danish translation offers the most overt judicial condemnation of homosexuality, the threat of legal prosecution of homosexual acts was far from a uniquely Danish phenomenon in the 1950s and 1960s. Same-sex activity was not decriminalized in West Germany until 1969. Meanwhile, despite the fact that the GDR decriminalized same-sex activity in 1968, it did not publish Kamm’s and Wellman’s translation until 1981.³⁹ While the act was not criminalized in France and the Netherlands, here too legal and public discrimination of sorts abided at the time.⁴⁰ Although Lotinga’s proactive afterword exemplifies the judicial climate in Denmark in the 1950s, the points of comparison discussed below paint a more complicated picture of the discrepancies between the various translations – one in which homophobia, stereotypes, and prudishness manifest through a variety of translation strategies. All of these translations intersect with the cultural history of homosexuality and are, in part, shaped by their context.⁴¹

Baldwin’s original text is no exception to that rule. *Giovanni’s Room* was published four years after homosexuality was included on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), and Cynthia Barounis argues that the book “is crucially engaged with this queer moment in the history of medicine.”⁴² Barounis reads the

novel “as an exploration of how these diagnostic criteria might function, for some gay subjects, as a counterintuitive site of racial and class privilege – one which cleansed same-sex desire of many of its previous associations with effeminacy, poverty, interracial intimacy, and prostitution.”⁴³ These ‘cleansing’ dynamics that Barounis identifies in the original text, are transfigured and complicated through the strategies that its translators adopt – be it through omission, distortion or interjection.

“Strutting like a Cock before Them”: Book Covers, Posturing, and Erotic Desire

Aside from afterwords, another paratextual element of comparison are each translation’s book cover(s). The first edition of Tejn’s Danish translation uses a plain dark grey cover, which Hatton sees as “representative of its taboo subject matter and the need to be hidden in the 1950s.”⁴⁴ Messanges’ translation has an equally sober artwork, with its title imprinted on a deep red cover. Later editions and translations in the 1960s and 1970s all opt for covers that suggest a detached domesticity. Thus, when Hasselbach reissued Tejn’s translation in 1966, the new cover shows an impressionistic sketch of a window, presumably Giovanni’s. The first editions of Prinsen’s translation, all issued by Bruna, show blocked sketches of a lamp, window, and the top of a chair against a dark green backdrop. The first West German edition of Kamm’s and Wellman’s translation shows simple sketches of a chair and a bed, against a dark blue backdrop, ornamented by Mondriaanesque black and orange squares. Soberness and domesticity are essential to all these covers, as each gives little indication of the book’s taboo content.⁴⁵

Neither Tejn’s nor Messanges’s translations remain in print after 1966. Later West German editions continue to use the dark blue cover, although in the 1980s an alternative cover is sometimes employed, showing a dark shadow against an impressionistic cityscape. When the translation is printed in the GDR, the cover has a sober lay-out, in keeping with Reclams Universal-Bibliothek’s uniform style. After the unification of Germany, further editions only used the dark shadow artwork, until Eder und Bach GmbH reissued the book with a sober red cover in 2015. The German tendency to downplay the novel’s erotic undertones is thus mirrored in its artwork well into the twenty-first century. The Dutch translation received new artwork when it was republished by De Bezige Bij in the 1980s and 1990s. The first editions use a comic book-style image of a wine glass that breaks as it hits a wall. Domesticity and melodrama are again key here, although the shattered glass also suggests a more sinister conflict. The translation’s last edition from 1996 is much more explicit, as it shows two naked men lying in the dark. The publisher’s decision to explicitly show same-sex intimacy responds here to the popularization of LGBTQ literature and theory. In the same year, the new French translation by Guinsbourg is first published, although Payot & Rivages’s artwork is far less erotic. Two covers are used, being another domestic image of a lamp and bedside, and a picture of a man resting on a couch. The most recent Danish and German translations follow the example of the last Dutch cover: Hatton sees in the multi-color cover of Pia Juul’s translation “a medley of sculptures that depend on one another to reveal the presence of a human profile,” as it shows two human – male? – figures embracing one another.⁴⁶ Mandelkow’s cover features an attractive young Giovanni in tank top, suggesting eroticism.⁴⁷

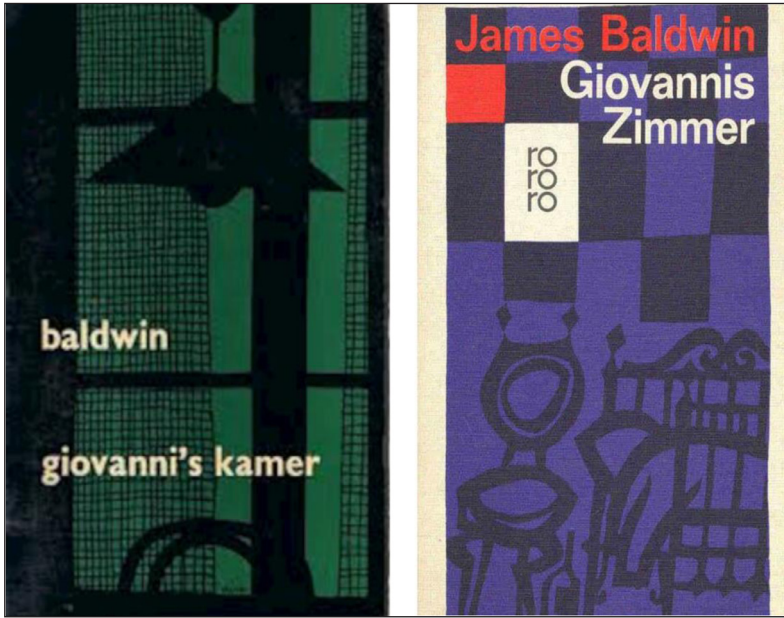


Figure 1. The original Dutch cover as it was first published by Bruna in 1965 (left), The original cover of Kamm's and Wellman's translation as published by Rowohlt in 1963 (right).

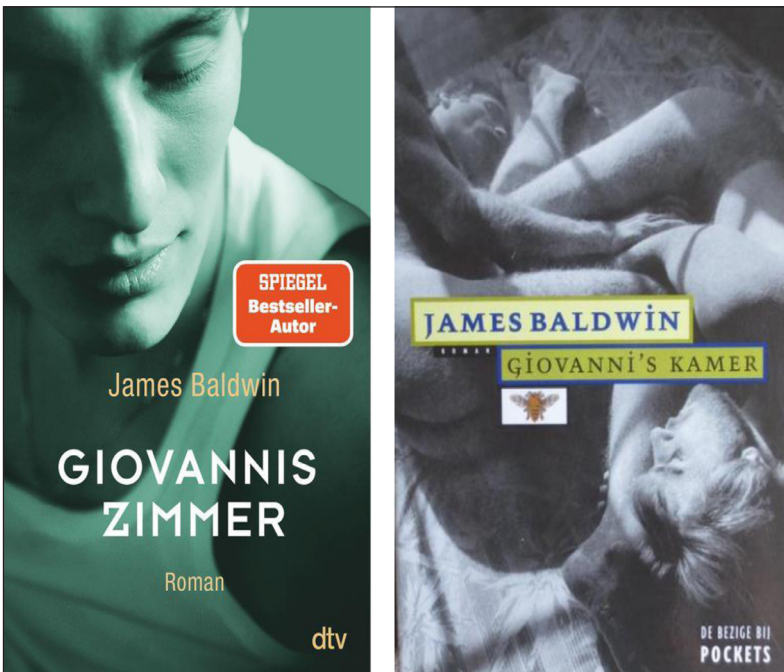


Figure 2. The cover of Miriam Mandelkow's recent translation for dtv Verlag (left). The cover of of De Bezige Bij's 1996 edition (right).

Giovanni's Room's eroticism has thus only reached the translations' covers – or literal surface, if you will – since the mid-nineties, and even then French and German publishers have remained hesitant to accentuate it. It is easy to see why most publishers preferred to forward elements of sexless domesticity instead. Not only do these tie in with the book's title – apart from Messanges's translation – but they also feature heavily in David's description of his life together with Giovanni. David is obsessed with gender roles and 'proper' masculine behavior. Both German translations leave out some of the nuances in this regard, while the Dutch translation at times goes even further than the original text to accentuate the matter. Thus both German versions translate "when I had become a man" and "he wanted me to look on him as a man like myself" with "erwachsen" ("grown-up") and "als meinesgleichen" ("as my equal"), leaving out the notion of masculinity altogether. The French and Dutch translations do pick up on the ambiguity, and elsewhere Prinsen accentuates the masculinity even more. Thus "Giovanni liked to believe that he was hard-headed and that I was not" becomes "dat hij een nuchtere vent was en ik niet" ("that he was a level-headed *guy*" – 'vent' carries a connotation of toughness in Dutch) and "with my manhood unquestioned" is rendered as "gewoon man zijn" (which can both mean "to be just a man" or "to be a normal man").

Performative femininity is equally important to Baldwin's novel, as exemplified through David's and Giovanni's usage of the terms 'coquette' and 'coquettishly.' Although 'coquette' denotes a flirtatious woman, the term is exclusively used for male characters in the book. Thus, upon first meeting Giovanni, David finds that "there was something in him of the coquette," while Giovanni later describes the predatory bar owner Guillaume as acting like "some fabulous coquette – and he is ugly, ugly, he has a body just like sour milk!" When David spots the cross-dressing 'mummy' (see below), he also notices how the character's shirt is "open coquettishly to the navel." Earlier in the novel, David describes his widowed father's bachelor behavior toward women as "no, not flirting with them, strutting like a cock before them." All translations render Baldwin's usage of the term 'coquette' relatively faithfully. Likewise, the French and German translations opt for the usage of 'coq' and 'Hahn' to describe the behavior of David's father. However, Prinsen writes "of nee, hij flirtte niet met ze, hij koketteerde," which constitutes the same verb that he later chooses to describe Giovanni's and the mummy's behavior. By conflating the vocabulary used for 'masculine' and 'effeminate' behavior, Prinsen undercuts the considerable efforts he takes elsewhere to stress David's preoccupation with masculinity. Brim sees David as being trapped in the delusion that he has to choose between hetero- and homosexuality. The fact that this choice constitutes a trap of itself, "is important for queer theoretical readings of the novel: neither straight identity nor gay identity can do justice to the complex realities of erotic life."⁴⁸ Prinsen's conflated translation strategy inadvertently suggests a similar conclusion.

Although the German and French translations stay clear from the criminalizing and legal jargon of their Danish and Dutch counterparts, a conflicted relationship with queer intimacy can be discerned beyond the initial book covers and the prudishness of Kamm's and Wellman's translation. When David describes his first night with Joey, he says that "out of this astounding, intolerable pain came joy; we gave each other joy that night." Both the Dutch and initial German translation translate 'joy' with terms

that rather denote 'pleasure' ("genot" and "Entzücken", respectively), thus substituting a carnal satisfaction for Baldwin's state of happiness. Elsewhere in the same paragraph, the German translation further emphasizes this notion, as it translates "tenderness" into "Verlangen" ("desire"). Both French translations stick closer to the original "joy" with "joie", while Mandelkow does the same with "Freude." However, nearly all translations equate David's moral dilemma with a fear of *becoming* corrupted – i.e. queer – instead of one of already *being* in this state. When Giovanni analyzes his lover's state of mind, he confronts him with his homophobic desire: "You want to be *clean*."⁴⁹ The Dutch, French and first German translation all render 'be' here with transversal verbs that are equal to the English verb 'remain' ("blijven", "demeurer", "bleiben"), as if David has not already been 'tainted' by his queer sexuality. Only Mandelkow's most recent translation uses the direct German equivalent of 'to be'; "Du willst *sauber* sein." All the other translations ignore – or willingly erase – Baldwin's more subtle indications of David's moral and sexual posturing.

Nomen est "No Men"? Translating *Giovanni's Room's* Derogatory and Pejorative Terms

To Matt Brim, David "represents so dramatic an example of the *inability* to think queerly," while Baldwin leaves it up to the readers what he "through David, does not and cannot do for them: ever unseat themselves."⁵⁰ As both readers and transmitters of the novel, the European translators are given the dual task of at once rendering David's "inability to think queerly" while also "unseating" themselves in the process. The tensions between the two is laid bare when they engage with pejorative lexica – be they Baldwin's invention or their own.

The Dutch translation not only accentuates David's obsession with masculinity, it also adds a pejorative, or at least more colorful, connotation when Baldwin opts for the neutral nouns 'boys' and 'friends' to denote queer male characters. Prinsen consequently uses the diminutive forms 'vriendje' ('little friend') and 'jongetje' ('little boy') when referring to these characters. Although 'vriendje' is a common Dutch term to denote one's lover (comparable to the French 'petit-ami'), the term never refers to David's actual lover, but to Jacques ("As long as I was there the world could see and he could believe that he was out with me, his friend...") and Giovanni's friends ("But his friends tell him how rich Guillaume is..."). Prinsen also doesn't limit his use of the diminutive to David's point of view, as he also employs it when Hella asks David "Do you want to have a drink upstairs before you go back to join your friends?" Even more striking is Prinsen's use of the diminutive to translate 'boys', when David wonders: "And would I then, like all the others, find myself turning and following all kinds of boys down God knows what dark avenues, into what dark places?" Prinsen's translation strategy thus adds a potentially deprecating connotation to male bondship in the novel, as David's would-be fantasy about "all kinds of boys" becomes conflated with suggestions of pedophilia. While it is true that in general Dutch makes extensive use of diminutive forms, it is striking how Prinsen exclusively applies the form to queer characters – with negative implications. When David recounts "I invented in myself a kind of pleasure in playing the housewife after Giovanni had gone to work,"

Prinsen again translates ‘housewife’ in the diminutive. Notions of domesticity, which are so abundantly promoted through all of the initial book covers, are thus not only feminized – as they are in Baldwin’s original text – but also literally belittled.

Neither Claude Messanges’ original nor Élisabeth Guinsbourg’s presently circulating French translation adopt strategies as marked as the Dutch one’s pederast undertones or the original German one’s caution in matters of physicality. In fact, the French translations fairly often retort to the same relatively faithful lexicon – their main differences consist of stylistic choices in terms of syntax. Yet, in one passage these French translations depart significantly from the original text and its Dutch and German translations: the infamous “mummy” scene.

In this particular scene David has only just encountered his soon to be lover Giovanni for the first time. The pair find themselves in a Parisian gay bar, but David is careful to differentiate himself from “les folles” (a derogatory feminized term for overtly queer men), as he is still firmly pretending to be heterosexual. Right after making Giovanni’s acquaintance, David makes the following observation:

Now someone whom I had never seen before came out of the shadows toward me. It looked like a mummy or a zombie – this was the first, overwhelming impression – of something walking after it had been put to death. And it walked, really, like someone who might be sleepwalking or like those figures in slow motion one sometimes sees on the screen. It carried a glass, it walked on its toes, the at hips moved with a dead, horrifying lasciviousness. It seemed to make no sound; this was due to the roar of the bar, which was like the roaring of the sea, heard at night, from far away. It glittered in the dim light; the thin, black hair was violent with oil, combed forward, hanging in bangs; the eyelids gleamed with mascara, the mouth raged with lipstick.⁵¹

David’s description of this cross-dressing or perhaps transgender character reads extremely cruel, as he routinely reduces the person to a ‘thing’, identified through pejorative adjectives and imbued with monster-like qualities. The passage shocks the modern reader, and in recent years critics have addressed its troubling content.⁵²

The Dutch and both German translations stick close to the description of the English original. However, since French doesn’t have a neutral personal pronoun, the original French translation relies on the masculine pronoun ‘il’ (referring back to “un être”), which achieves a significantly less blunt atmosphere of objectivation – even if terms like “une momie” and, intriguingly, “apparition” instead of “zombie”, remain intact. Guinsbourg’s more recent translation, on the other hand, wants to stay closer to Baldwin’s original paragraph, and instead opts for the demonstrative pronoun “cela.”

Messanges’s translation

Et voici que, sortant de l’ombre, s’avança vers moi quelqu’un que je n’avais jamais vu auparavant. On aurait dit une momie ou l’apparition... d’un être qui aurait continué à marcher après avoir été mis à mort. Il marchait vraiment... Tenant un verre, il avançait... Il empesait la poudre et le parfum genre gardenia. (59–60)

Guinsbourg’s translation

Et là, quelqu’un que je n’avais jamais vu emergea... on aurait dit une momie ou un zombie... une creature errante après son trépas. Cela marchait... Cela tenait un verre à la main, cela marchait... La creature luisait dans la semi-obscrité... (59–60)

Although this is the only instance where both translations significantly differ in matters of lexicon from the original text, the anecdote illustrates how even the absence of a certain pronoun can destabilize and transfigure the book's approach to gay life in its various manifestations. As Brim notes, "David's problems do seem to be category problems."⁵³ The bigendered structure of the French language poses here some category problems of its own – problems that translators have to strategize.

"Category problems" also apply to the linguistic *categorization* of homosexuals. Baldwin's belief that this term "is not a noun" seems to have informed the writing of *Giovanni's Room* – not once does the word appear in the text.⁵⁴ Instead, Baldwin's narrator and characters exclusively use pejorative terms: four times the word 'fairy' is uttered, while the French terms 'une tapette' and 'une folle' (which translates literally as 'a crazy woman') are both used twice, and "silly old queen" – English counterpart to "une folle" – makes one appearance. All five translations leave the French terms untranslated, except for the first German translation that translates 'tapette' once with the word that Baldwin so dreaded; 'Homosexuellen.'

Original text	Dutch translation	First French translation	Second French translation	First German translation	Second German translation
"fairy" (used four times)	"mietje" (once), "flikker" (three times)	"tapette"	"tapette" (twice), "tante" (twice)	"Schwule" (twice), "folle", "Homo"	"Tunte"
"une folle", "une tapette"	untranslated	/	/	"folle", "Homosexuellen"	untranslated
"silly old queen"	"onnozel oud wijf"	"vieille folle"	"vieille folle"	"Alten Homo"	"Alte Tucke"

This is in keeping with the original German translation's tendency to soften much of Baldwin's tone, as it also translates "fairy" and "tapette" with the less pejorative "Homo(sexuellen)." As to the term "fairy," the majority of these translations exhibit the opposite trajectory of the one Li observed in the Chinese translations of Proust, where "translators have struggled to find terminological variants in modern vernacular Chinese to accommodate Proust's wide range of vocabulary regarding 'homosexual(ity)'."⁵⁵ In these European translations of *Giovanni's Room*, several translators use a wider range of pejorative terms than Baldwin's original terminology, with only the first French translation and Miriam Mandelkow's recent German one opting for a consistent uniform usage throughout the text ("tapette" and "Tunte", respectively).

Despite the first German translation's softening of David's pejorative lexicon, it employs a register of objectification when talking of homosexuals as a group. Thus, when David says of 'les folles' that "a man who wanted a man would certainly not want one of *them*,"⁵⁶ "one of them" is translated as "mit dieser Sorte" ("with this type/variety", no emphasis in the text).⁵⁷ Once Giovanni has murdered Guillaume, the police start arresting men on suspicion of having "les goûts particuliers," which David himself translates in the next sentence as "these 'tastes'." In the German translation, this becomes "Neigungen" ("inclination"), which adds a pathological connotation. Elsewhere, David tells Hella, referring to Giovanni, that "these people have another

style from us.” Kamm and Wellman render ‘style’ here as “Lebensstil,” turning the comment in a reference to Giovanni’s way of living enhances the implication of sexual preferences.⁵⁸ While the translators are reluctant to render Baldwin’s graphic depictions and pejorative terms in full, they thus accentuate a detached pathologized view of “les folles.”

Conclusion: “Thinking Queerly” and the Confinements of Circularity

In *The Devil Finds Work*, Baldwin continued his argument that “the word, *homosexual*, is not a noun” by claiming that “[t]he root of this word, as Americans use it – or, as this word uses Americans – simply involves a terror of any human touch, since any human touch can change you.”⁵⁹ *Giovanni’s Room* and its protagonist are preoccupied with this “terror of any human touch.” To Brim, the novel “offers a particularly productive text for cultivating the queer imagination, not because it repays close readings by individual queers of different stripes, but because it so urgently compels the individual reader to engage incompatible or incommensurable LGBT reading practices.”⁶⁰ The book’s Danish, Dutch, French, and German translators have each engaged in reading and translating practices that are inevitably – whether or not knowingly – intertwined with LGBTQ discourse and “the queer imagination.” This correlation not only pertains to what the novel represents, but also to the textual elements of which the translations are a part.

Marc Démont identifies three modes of translating queer literary texts: the misrecognizing translation, the minoritizing translation, and the queering translation.⁶¹ Of these, misrecognizing is the most *straightforward*, as it “simply ignores queerness” and “aims to suppress the text’s disruptive force.”⁶² None of this essay’s case studies wholly engage in this mode, but the toned-down graphicness of the first German translation and the original, chaste book covers contain hints of it. Démont’s second mode, the minoritizing translation, is much more present throughout the corpus. Minoritizing translations, according to Démont, “often serve the goal of an identity politics at the expense of queerness,” that seeks to assimilate the text’s disruptive force “into a fixed explicit form.”⁶³ At its most explicit, in the original Danish case, this implies a reconfiguration of ‘the queer as criminal,’ while in Prinsen’s translation it entails an accentuation of the masculinity-femininity binary. In sharp contrast with the Danish translation, the original German translation counters the stigmatization of queer people – as same-sex activity was still criminalized in West-Germany – through its prudishness and reluctance to render pejorative terms. Without directly erasing the novel’s queer elements, the characters are presented here in ‘sanitized’ form, ready to be assimilated into the heteronormative mold.

As Brim notices, Baldwin’s original text is itself heavily invested in the dynamics of the queer imagination. Margaret Sönsler Breen sees *Giovanni’s Room* as “informed both by American politics and by the sexual and racial politics of mid-century France;” since David’s sexual panic and guilt also reflect “his resistance to being shaped by France’s long-standing tradition of homosexual tolerance,” his internalized homophobia is itself “a refusal of cultural translation.”⁶⁴ Precisely because both French translations of this story of “translation failure” stay markedly close to Baldwin’s original prose, their strategies still correspond to Démont’s understanding of minoritizing translations,

which “congea[l] queerness’s drifting nature by flattening its connotative power to a unidimensional and superficial game of denotative equivalences.”⁶⁵ The same critique may apply to Pia Juul’s and Miriam Mandelkow’s translations, as they, too, substitute “denotative equivalences” for Baldwin’s queer prose.

Démont posits a third mode of translation, the queering translation, which “focuses on acknowledging the disruptive force and recreating it in the target language” by simultaneously exposing “the source text’s specific manifestations of queerness” – often through critiquing the minoritizing mode of previous translations – and developing techniques that recreate the queerness of the text in the target language.⁶⁶ Drawing on Kwame Anthony Appiah’s understanding of “thick translation,” Démont argues for a mode of translation that “preserves the web of virtual connotative associations and, therefore, the text’s ambiguities and potentially disruptive content.”⁶⁷ He concludes that the queering translation can succeed in this

by voluntarily refusing to offer an ‘ultimate’ translation, by resisting the temptation to close the translation on itself, and by offering commentary that preserves its fundamental ambiguities and highlights its potential interpretative *lignes de fuite*.⁶⁸

One such instance can be found in the cover of Pia Juul’s recent translation. Hatton compares the cover of the recent German translation unfavorably to the Danish one, as dtv Verlag “opted to set aside the potentialities of allegorical hybridity and transcendence,” instead representing Giovanni in ways that are “reminiscent of earlier representations of the novel and claims about Baldwin that scholars have carefully problematized.”⁶⁹ The bright-colored, equivocal human figure on Gyldendal’s cover stands in sharp contrast to this singular narrative.

Démont’s queering mode offers useful tools for approaching the inherent tensions of translatability vis-à-vis the dynamics of the queer imagination, and it resonates with William Spurlin’s understanding of the “disruptive, subversive space of indeterminacy between source and target languages” as “a queer space, one that challenges any normative idea of straightforward, untroubled translatability.”⁷⁰ In a similar vein, Aarón Lacayo has drawn from Luce Irigaray’s theory of sexual difference to identify the act of translation as “a queer encounter between a bodily text and an infinite number of unknown, possible others,” as these constitute “a body that is yet to come into existence, a body created – and that only exists – in the act of translation.”⁷¹

Démont’s and Lacayo’s theorizations offer insights in the pluralities of strategies – a finite number of “possible others”, if you will – that the European translations of *Giovanni’s Room* have adopted. Rather than exhibiting conclusive and consistent supranational (or cross-generational) patterns, they are primarily characterized by a multifariousness that is only at times convergent. Although historical developments such as anti-discriminatory legislation and the popularization of queer studies have informed epistemic shifts in the way queer literature is being read and translated, the trajectory of *Giovanni’s Room’s* translations cannot merely be attributed to these developments. The same applies to the original text’s impact on Baldwin’s reception in the anglophone world: as the novel helped cement Baldwin’s reputation as a major queer author, its ambiguous representation of various aspects of queerness continues to destabilize reductionist and essentialist understandings of its author and of queerness.

David's "inability to think queerly" and the readers' task of "ever unseat[ing] themselves," are mirrored in the way these translations transform Baldwin's already unstable original text.⁷² Loting's afterword, Prinsen's curious insertion of diminutives and Kamm's and Wellman's aversion to corporality and explicit intimacy each display a certain inability to "think queerly" – a marked contrast to Baldwin's pop culture afterlife, where "thinking queerly" has become an obvious, if at times superficial, prerequisite.

This prerequisite contains tensions of its own. As shown in the essay's introduction, Baldwin's popular afterlife is primarily informed by anglophone cultural discourses and artifacts. Although Baldwin's European circulation focuses more on his output as a queer novelist, here, too, the question arises to what extent these new translations are not themselves primarily informed by what Baer identifies as "the monopolization of sexual discourse by the anglophone West."⁷³ In like manner, Epstein and Gillet are wary of "the American notion of queer as a global phenomenon," and see (the resistance to) the appropriation of the American concept as exemplary of transcultural translation practices in the twenty-first century.⁷⁴ While the recent French, Danish, and German translations of *Giovanni's Room* may appear to stay closer to Baldwin's original text than their predecessors, a parallel argument could be made: perhaps they simply deviate less from the now increasingly dominant anglophone notion of what queerness precisely entails. By primarily adhering to an American understanding of 'the' queer, they are less informed by the *actual* source text than by the normative discourse that shapes the popular – and as of yet still decidedly anglophone, as the examples in the introduction attest – reception of Baldwin. Thus, these recent translations simultaneously epitomize the circularity of Baldwin's text and the corresponding circular movements of queer translation practices over time. Much like David and Giovanni struggle to leave the titular room behind, translators must navigate the confinement of dominant, normative modes of thinking as they encounter the novel's inherent destabilizing queer qualities.

Notes

- 1 Victoria A. Brownworth, "Road to Stonewall: Giovanni's Room," *Philadelphia Gay News*, 20 June 2019; "Best Lesbian and Gay Novels," *The Publishing Triangle*, <https://publishingtriangle.org/best-lesbian-gay-novels/>. In a delightful coincidence, the first review of *Giovanni's Room* in *The New Yorker* was titled "Tormented Triangle" (Hicks, Granville, "Tormented Triangle", *New York Times*, 14 October 1956, <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/98/03/29/specials/baldwin-giovanni.html>; accessed 26 November 2022). Meanwhile, one of Baldwin biographer James Campbell's main regrets is that he didn't manage to show Baldwin a local restaurant called Giovanni's Room, while they were together in Bloomsbury in 1985 (Douglas Field and Justin A. Joyce. "How Long Blues: An Interview with James Campbell," *James Baldwin Review* 7 (2021), 166–183; 179).
- 2 Jake Kerridge, "The BBC's 100 Novels that Shaped Our World is a Short-sighted List that will please Nobody," *The Telegraph*, 9 November 2019.
- 3 Remo Verdickt, "The Evidence of Things Translated: Circulating Baldwin in Contemporary Europe," *James Baldwin Review* 8 (2022), 199–203; 211. It is of note that at present, due

- to the recent release of Barry Jenkins's eponymous film adaptation (2019), there are more translations of *Beale Street* in print. However, since *Giovanni's Room* has been enjoying a re-circulation that considerably predates that of *Beale Street*, including several reprints and concurrent editions in key markets Germany and France, I argue that the *cumulative* twenty-first century European circulation of *Giovanni* exceeds that of *Beale Street*.
- 4 Melanie Walsh, "The Mythology of James Baldwin on Twitter," November 13, 2016, <https://melaniewalsh.org/the-mythology-of-james-baldwin-on-twitter>.
 - 5 Max Gordon, "Faggot as Footnote: On James Baldwin, *I Am Not Your Negro*, *Can I Get a Witness?* and *Moonlight*," *The New Civil Rights Movement*, 25 February 2017; Magdalena J. Zaborowska, Nicholas F. Radel, Nigel Hatton and Ernest L. Gibson III, "Rebranding James Baldwin and his Queer Others: A Session at the 2019 American Studies Association Conference," *James Baldwin Review* 6 (2020), 200.
 - 6 The Roebuck character is in fact an amalgam of Baldwin and *New Yorker* food critic A.J. Liebling. Both authors are honored in the film's end credits. See: Eric Kohn, "The French Dispatch: How Jeffrey Wright Landed his Best Performance in Wes Anderson's Literary Tribute," *Indiewire*, 26 October 2021.
 - 7 The other three are the short essays "Preservation of Innocence" (1949), "The Male Prison" (1954), and "Here Be Dragons" (1985). Notably, "Here Be Dragons" is the only piece of non-fiction in which Baldwin addresses *his own* queerness. Likewise, Baldwin "discussed his sexuality during a handful of interviews from the mid-sixties" (Douglas Field, *James Baldwin*, Tavistock: Northcote House 2011, 46), but his "most candid discussion of homosexuality" was delivered at the end of his life, in an interview with Richard Goldstein in 1985 (Douglas Field, *All Those Strangers: The Art and Lives of James Baldwin*, New York: Oxford University Press 2015, 65).
 - 8 James Baldwin, *The Devil Finds Work* (1976), in *Collected Essays*, ed. Toni Morrison (New York: Library of America 1998), 529. Baldwin argues that Americans simply use the term to evade the complexity of same-sex bonds and that it is instrumental in bringing "the American legend of masculinity [...] to its highest pressure."
 - 9 Stefan Helgesson, "Translation: Duration and Cosmopolitan Reading," in *Literature and the World*, eds. Stefan Helgesson and Mads Rosendahl Thomsen (Abingdon: Routledge 2020), 134; David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2003), 24, 167.
 - 10 William J. Spurlin, "Introduction: The Gender and Queer Politics of Translation: New Approaches," *Comparative Literature Studies* Vol. 51 (2014:2), 204–205; B. J. Epstein, and Robert Gillett, "Introduction," in *Queer in Translation*, eds. B. J. Epstein and Robert Gillett (Abingdon: Routledge 2017), 1–2; William J. Spurlin, "Queering Translation: Rethinking Gender and Sexual Politics in the Space between Languages and Cultures," in *Queer in Translation*, eds. B. J. Epstein and Robert Gillett (Abingdon: Routledge 2017), 173; Brian James Baer, and Klaus Kaindl, "Introduction: Queer(ing) Translation," in *Queering Translation, Translating the Queer: Theory, Practice, Activism*, eds. Brian James Baer and Klaus Kaindl (New York: Routledge 2018), 3–4.
 - 11 Helgesson 135.
 - 12 As I am not familiar with Danish myself, I draw on Nigel Hatton's case study on the two Danish translations for the section on translation and criminalization. I briefly look at the books' paratextual elements (i.e. their covers) but leave them out from the more detailed linguistic comparisons.
 - 13 Matt Brim, *James Baldwin and the Queer Imagination* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 2014), 56; Marc Démont, "On Three Modes of Translating Queer Literary Texts," in *Queering Translation, Translating the Queer: Theory, Practice, Activism*, eds. Brian James Baer and Klaus Kaindl (New York: Routledge 2018), 167–168.

- 14 Didier Eribon, *Insult and the Making of the Gay Self*, transl. Michael Lucey, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 210–211.
- 15 Shuangyi Li, *Proust, China and Intertextual Engagement: Translation and Intercultural Dialogue* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan 2017), 59.
- 16 Miriam Mandelkow has been working exclusively with dtv Verlag in the past few years to translate several of Baldwin's works. So far, the pairing has led to brand new translations of four novels and two collections of essays, making Mandelkow the most prolific and experienced contemporary European translator of Baldwin's work. Mandelkow has also spoken at length and publicly about some of her translation strategies, and the issues she has had with some of the translations of her German predecessors (Elizabeth Grenier, "N-word and Gender Politics: How German Translators Deal with Them," DW, September 30, 2019, www.dw.com/en/n-word-and-gender-politics-how-german-translators-deal-with-them/a-50636705, accessed November 15, 2022; Miriam Mandelkow and Gesa Ufer. "Romane im Rhythmus des Blues," Deutschlandfunk Kultur, May 7, 2020, <https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/baldwin-uebersetzerin-miriam-mandelkow-romane-im-rhythmus-100.html>, accessed November 15, 2022).
- 17 Conseula Francis, *The Critical Reception of James Baldwin: 1963–2010* (London: Camden House 2016), 105. It is important to note that, initially, Baldwin himself faced several hardships in getting the book published: Knopf, which had published his debut *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, was frightened by the new book's queer content, and it took considerable effort and concessions on Baldwin part to finally publish the book with Dial Press in the US and with Michael Joseph in the UK (Fern Marja Eckman, *The Furious Passage of James Baldwin*, New York: M. Evans 1966, 137–138; David Leeming, *James Baldwin: A Biography*, New York: Arcade Publishing 2015, 113, 116; Field *All Those Strangers*, 41).
- 18 Rosa Bobia, *The Critical Reception of James Baldwin in France* (Lausanne: Peter Lang 1998), 22. Interestingly, in "The Male Prison," Baldwin overtly criticizes André Gide for too openly discussing his own homosexuality.
- 19 Friederike Hajek, "Historical Aspects of the Reception of James Baldwin in the German Democratic Republic," in *James Baldwin: His Place in American Literary History and His Reception in Europe*, ed. Jakob Köllhofer (Hamburg: Peter Lang 1991), 40.
- 20 Zsófia Gombár, "Literary Censorship and Homosexuality in Kádár-Regime Hungary and *Estado Novo* Portugal," in *Queering Translation, Translating the Queer: Theory, Practice, Activism*, eds. Brian James Baer and Klaus Kaindl (New York: Routledge 2018), 151.
- 21 Hajek, "Historical Aspects..." 40.
- 22 Nigel Hatton, "Sculpting a Human Being: James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, and the Police in Denmark," in "Rebranding James Baldwin and his Queer Others: A Session at the 2019 American Studies Association Conference" (M. Zaborowska, N. Radel, N. Hatton & E. Gibson III), *James Baldwin Review* 6 (2020), 219. Original quote from Bonnie Zimmerman, *Encyclopedia of Lesbian and Gay Histories and Cultures* (New York: Garland 2000), 394.
- 23 Hatton, "Sculpting..." 219.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid. Original quote from James Baldwin, *Giovannis værelse* (Copenhagen: Hasselbalchs Forlag 1957).
- 26 Hatton, "Sculpting..." 220. One Scandinavian reviewer of this essay noted how "lastefulhed" can also literally mean "full of vice." This brings to mind Li's work on the developments in Chinese translations of Proust: "The word 'vice' is most frequently associated with homosexual acts in *La Recherche*. In both early translations and Xu's Translation, 'vice' is consistently translated as *exi* (evil habit) or *chou'e* (ugly evil) (*FT I*, 121; *FT II*, 1720; *ES*, 80; *XT IV*, 17), which clearly expresses a firm moral condemnation.

- Notwithstanding this perception of homosexuality as something inherently evil, as earlier translations imply, Zhou consistently changes all the ‘vices’ of homosexuality into *pi-xi*. *Pi*, as explained earlier, means ‘proclivity’ and *xi* ‘habit’. In many ways, this is not necessarily a deliberate softening of tone purely based on Zhou’s ‘learned sympathy’ towards homosexuality (i.e. the cultural change brought about by, for instance, Li’s works). Proust’s narrator himself states on several occasions that the word ‘vice’ is only used for the sake of convenience: ‘le vice (on parle ainsi pour la commodité du langage)’, and he questions the validity of this conventional designation of homosexual acts: ‘leur vice, ou ce que l’on nomme improprement ainsi’ (*RTP III*, 15, 19; *PT IV*, 17, 21).” (Li, *Proust, China and Intertextual Engagement*, 65)
- 27 Hatton, “Sculpting...” 220.
- 28 Guinsbourg, *La Chambre de Giovanni*, 19; Mandelkow, *Giovannis Zimmer*, 15; Francis, *The Critical Reception...* 62–64; Sharon Patricia Holland, “(Pro)Creating Imaginative Spaces and Other Queer Acts: Randall Kenan’s *A Visitation of Spirits* and Its Revival of James Baldwin’s Absent Black Gay Man in *Giovanni’s Room*,” in *James Baldwin Now*, ed. Dwight A. McBride (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 265–288; Kathleen N. Drowne, “An Irrevocable Condition”: Constructions of Home and the Writing of Place in *Giovanni’s Room*,” in *Re-viewing James Baldwin: Things Not Seen*, ed. D. Quentin Miller (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), 72–87; Brim, *James Baldwin and the Queer Imagination*, 57–68; Monica B. Pearl, “*Chagrin d’amour*: Intimacy, Shame, and the Closet in James Baldwin’s *Giovanni’s Room*,” *James Baldwin Review*, 6 (2020), 64–84.
- 29 Prinsen, *Giovanni’s Kamer*, 16.
- 30 Baldwin, *Giovanni’s Room*, (1956), in *Early Novels and Stories*, ed. Toni Morrison (New York: Library of America 1998), 226.
- 31 Baldwin, *Giovanni’s Room*, 238, 242; Prinsen *Giovanni’s Kamer*, 33, 38.
- 32 Baldwin, *Giovanni’s Room*, 255; Prinsen *Giovanni’s Kamer*, 56.
- 33 Baldwin, *Giovanni’s Room*, 244–45, 294; Prinsen *Giovanni’s Kamer*, 42, 113.
- 34 Hajek, “Historical Aspects...” 40.
- 35 Mandelkow, *Giovannis Zimmer*, 203, my translation.
- 36 Brim, *James Baldwin and the Queer Imagination*, 76.
- 37 Baldwin, *Giovanni’s Room*, 226, Baldwin’s emphasis.
- 38 Peter Freese, “Some Remarks on the Reception of James Baldwin’s Work in the Federal Republic of Germany,” in *James Baldwin: His Place in American Literary History and His Reception in Europe* ed. Jakob Köllhofer (Hamburg: Peter Lang 1991), 19.
- 39 George De Stefano, “State of (Gay) Liberation in East Germany and West Germany,” *Pop-Matters*, 11 July 2022, <https://www.popmatters.com/states-gay-liberation-clowes-huneke>.
- 40 In the novel, David also notes how “these ‘tastes,’ which do not constitute a crime in France, are nevertheless regarded with extreme disapprobation by the bulk of the populace, which also looks on its rulers and ‘betters’ with a stony lack of affection” (343).
- 41 Already in 1998, Keith Harvey noticed how translators of ‘camp talk’ produced texts “that harmoniz[e] with the prevailing view of human subjectivity that obtains in [their]—the target—culture.” See Keith Harvey, “Translating Camp Talk: Gay Identities and Cultural Transfer”, *The Translator* Vol. 4 (1998:2), 310.
- 42 Cynthia Barounis, “‘Not the Usual Pattern’: James Baldwin, Homosexuality, and the DSM,” *Criticism: A Quarterly for Literature and the Arts* Vol. 59 (2017:3), 395.
- 43 Barounis, “‘Not the Usual Pattern’”, 396.
- 44 Hatton, “Sculpting...” 221.
- 45 It is of note that the American and English editions of the novel follow a similar trajectory – sober book covers and imagery of domestic life have only in recent years received more explicit erotic counterparts.

- 46 Hatton, "Sculpting..." 221.
- 47 Hatton is less impressed with this cover: "... [P]ublisher Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag opted to set aside the potentialities of allegorical hybridity and transcendence for the cover of its 2020 German translation. The cover art represents Giovanni as a chiseled and handsome European man in a provocative white tank top, reminiscent of earlier representations of the novel and claims about Baldwin that scholars have carefully problematized. The publisher presents a singular narrative in opposition to Baldwin's multiple worlds, a stark contrast to the colorful, ambiguous yet recognizable human on the Danish *Giovanni's Room*." (221)
- 48 Brim, *James Baldwin and the Queer Imagination*, 61.
- 49 Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 336, Baldwin's emphasis.
- 50 Brim, *James Baldwin and the Queer Imagination*, 56.
- 51 Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 251.
- 52 Brim, *James Baldwin and the Queer Imagination*, 64–68.
- 53 Brim, *James Baldwin and the Queer Imagination*, 61.
- 54 Baldwin's refusal of the term is reminiscent of Proust's, as the French novelist wrote in his notebook that he considered the term 'homosexual' "too German and pedantic" and he instead favored the term "inverti" (Li, *Proust, China and Intertextual Engagement*, 51).
- 55 Li, *Proust, China and Intertextual Engagement*, 52.
- 56 Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 241, Baldwin's emphasis.
- 57 All the other translations stick much closer to the original with "un de ceux-là", "niet zo een," "aucun d'eux," and "einen von denen."
- 58 Intriguingly, Messanges interprets the comment in an entirely different light, as he translates "these people" with "les Italiens" (191–192).
- 59 Baldwin, *The Devil Finds Work* 526.
- 60 Brim, *James Baldwin and the Queer Imagination*, 56.
- 61 Marc Démont, "On Three Modes of Translating Queer Literary Texts," in *Queering Translation, Translating the Queer: Theory, Practice, Activism*, eds. Brian James Baer and Klaus Kaindl (New York: Routledge 2018), 157.
- 62 Démont, "On Three Modes..." 157, 163.
- 63 Démont, "On Three Modes..." 163.
- 64 Margaret Sönsner Breen, "Translation Failure in James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*," in *Queer in Translation*, eds. B. J. Epstein and Robert Gillet (Abingdon: Routledge 2017), 65.
- 65 Démont, "On Three Modes..." 157.
- 66 Démont, "On Three Modes..." 163.
- 67 Démont, "On Three Modes..." 168.
- 68 Ibid.
- 69 Hatton, "Sculpting..." 221.
- 70 William J. Spurlin, "Introduction: The Gender and Queer Politics of Translation: New Approaches," *Comparative Literature Studies* Vol. 51 (2014:2), 207.
- 71 Aarón Lacayo, "A Queer and Embodied Translation: Ethics of Difference and Erotics of Distance," *Comparative Literature Studies* Vol. 51 (2014:2), 215, 220.
- 72 Brim, *James Baldwin and the Queer Imagination*, 56.
- 73 Brian James Baer, "Beyond Either/Or: Confronting the Fact of Translation in Global Sexuality Studies" in *Queering Translation, Translating the Queer: Theory, Practice, Activism*, eds. Brian James Baer and Klaus Kaindl (New York: Routledge 2018), 53.
- 74 B. J. Epstein, and Robert Gillett, "Introduction" in *Queer in Translation*, eds. B. J. Epstein and Robert Gillet (Abingdon: Routledge 2017), 5.

LILLI HÖLZLHAMMER & MILAN VUKAŠINOVIĆ*

WHO'S AFRAID OF GENDERFLUID TURTLES?

Gender Trouble with Translating Medieval Animal Stories

In the Old Indian fable collection *Panchatantra* (Eng. *The Five Treaties*), composed by an unknown person at least 2000 years ago, a philosopher promises to answer a series of questions on ethics and governance that were besetting the mind of a king. His answers took the shape of entertaining stories whose main protagonists were animals, although humans appeared occasionally as well. Since those answers were of interest not only to kings and people understanding Sanskrit, the *Panchatantra* soon spread across the globe. As a text, it has been developing, adjusting, and expanding on its journey through different cultures and languages.

The process of translation literally led to a multiplication of the text of *Panchatantra*, thus exemplifying what Matthew Reynolds designates as prismatic translation. For Reynolds, accepting the fact that “translation breeds translation” would mean changing the field’s dominant metaphor:

[Translation] would no longer be a ‘channel’ between one language and another, but rather a ‘prism.’ It would be seen as opening up the plural signifying potential of the source text and spreading it into multiple versions, each continuous with the source though different from it, and related to other versions though different from them too.¹

Tracing back the *Panchatantra*’s circulation in an ever-expanding web of translations has already been attempted by Franklin Edgerton, showing that the reconstruction of an ‘Ur-Text’ is entirely impossible.² From the perspective of translation studies, a more insightful approach than an ‘Ur-Text’ reconstruction could be an observation of how a single aspect is translated in a single branch of the text. Our aim in this article, therefore, is to look at the various strategies used to tackle the challenge of translating gender as a grammatical and social phenomenon in translations of the still actively translated Byzantine Greek *Panchatantra* branch, spanning the eleventh to the twenty-first century.

The westward journey of the *Panchatantra* has been a long one (fig.1).³ Originally, it consisted of five animal stories that were trying to answer questions about true friendship (lion and bull, the ringdove), vanquishing a superior foe (the war of owls and crows), collaborating with an enemy (mouse and cat), and the price of hastiness (the ascetic and his weasel). Translated around the year 570 CE into Middle Persian by Burzoe, who also added further stories from different Indian sources like the Sanskrit epic *Mahābhārata*, it gained popularity. It was rendered into Arabic before 756/759 CE by the Persian Ibn al-Muqaffa⁶ who named it *Kalila and Dimna* (*KwD*), after the main characters.⁴ In the eleventh century, Symeon Seth from Antioch translated it into Greek, translating the protagonists' names and the title as *Stephanites and Ichnelates* (*SkI*). Symeon Seth, however, translated only a part: 8 out of 15 books.⁵ On Mount Athos, *SkI* was translated, with minor additions, into Old Slavonic as *Stefanid and Ihnilat* in the 13th century. Tomislav Jovanović translated that version in 1999 into Serbian as *Stefanit and Ihnilat*. Around the time of the Old Slavonic translation, a Sicilian scholar, Eugenius of Palermo, decided to add the missing seven books to Symeon Seth's text from the Arabic sources.⁶ This extended Greek version was then translated into English by Alison Noble in 2022 as *Animal Fables of the Courtyl Mediterranean*. We chose to examine this branch because it demonstrates well the complexity of the text's translation history, and showcases different strategies of translating gender in a time span of 900 years within the 'same' material.

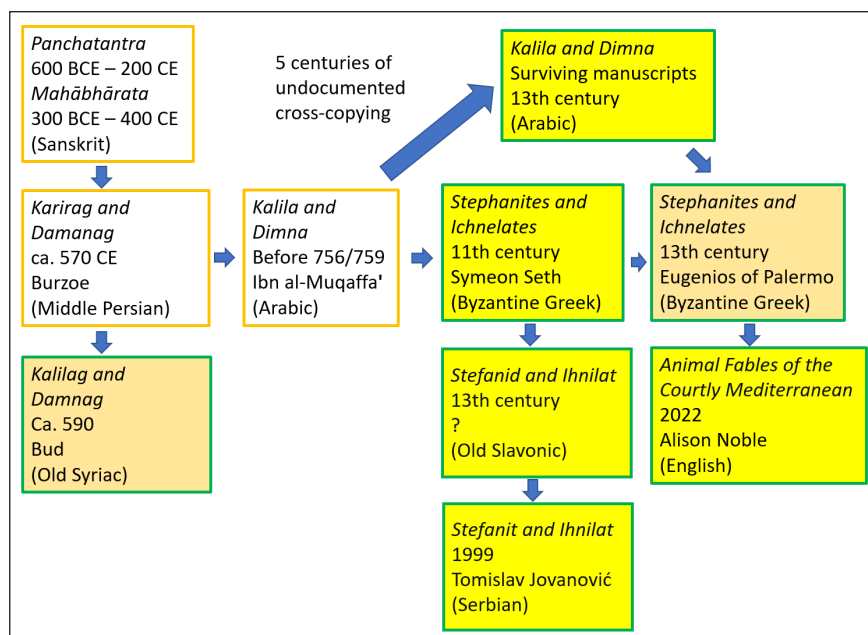


Figure 1. The Westward Journey of Panchatantra, 600 BCE – 2022 CE

As medieval texts vary from one manuscript to another even inside a single linguistic community, it is impossible to know if the exact manuscript that the first Greek translator had an insight into survives. The closest we can get is conjecturing the proximity of the Greek text with the surviving Arabic manuscripts. Similarly, there is not one 'Greek' version of the text, but at least two recensions, made centuries apart. And we have no way of knowing how close the Slavonic version available to us is to the first Slavonic translation from the Greek. Despite having more information on some translators or manuscripts, any analysis on contextual grounds would therefore be if not entirely conjectural, then at least heavily unequal. Which historical reality would we turn to for causes of alterations in a new linguistic version: the one of the scribe of the lost source-language manuscript, the one of the author of the oldest conjectured target language manuscript, or all the ones of all the scribes between those version and the ones we have?

In an attempt to circumvent the contextual complexities and lacunae of *Panchatantra's* long history, grasping for notions such as 'Arabic medieval mentalities' or 'the Middle Byzantine court culture' are too generalized to be useful. Furthermore, none of these scribes and translators believably aspired to write a representation of theirs or anyone else's reality. While some 'domestication' of the meaning of the text might have taken place, *Panchatantra* remained a didactic and imaginative composition containing narratives on distant lands, strange characters and unbelievable events.⁷ The only context that it would partially make sense to conjure for interpretation, is that of what it meant to translate in a given period.

Rather than hypothesizing about the contexts the different translations of *Panchatantra* sprang from or represented, we prefer focusing on texts themselves and the worlds that the translations created. More pointedly, we are interested in the strategies employed by the text's translators for navigating the untranslatability of characters' gender, on the intersection of grammatical, social, political and 'natural' categories. The authors and translators of the *Dictionary of Untranslatables*, above all Barbara Cassin and Emily Apter, define the untranslatable as "not that which we do not translate but that which we do not cease – not – translating."⁸ They argue that the transposition of concepts that cannot be unproblematically rendered in another language does not preclude the transfer of meaning, but keeps creating new meanings over and over again. The generative locus of new meanings is the Derridian deconstructive aporia, the "quilting point" or the "nub of conceptual opacity."⁹ In our particular case, the aporia is located in specific historical moments when past translators of *Panchatantra* found themselves lacking in target language the networks of signification between the grammatical, social and political aspects of gender that would be deemed identical to the ones of the source language. In those moments they became interpreters in the double sense of the word. In this article, we focus on the choices of resignification the translators made, as well as the consequences of those choices for the narratives they produced and their potential performative imprint onto the world they lived in.

Grammatical gender is a notoriously complex category. While its (non)existence and variability across languages is readily acknowledged, questions of its arbitrariness or semantic rootedness, spatiotemporal contingency or naturalness are often either disputed or avoided. Generally speaking, the grammatical gender of inanimate objects poses no particular problem, and the human grammatical gender ends up being too

easily aligned with the socially-shaped category of biological sex – or else consciously deconstructed.¹⁰ But animals present us with a controversial middle ground. In order to capture the elusive grammatical gender of animals, linguists speak of epicenes (words of any grammatical gender, which dictate the gender of the surrounding words and allegedly do not imply the gender of their referent) and common-gendered words (whose grammatical gender can be modified by the surrounding words to fit the gender of the referent). These categories could be helpful but they imply the existence, the precedence and the verifiability of the gender of the referent, often referred to as ‘sex’. An excellent example of this are the diligent studies of Cristiana Franco, who examines anthropological aspects of the animal gender in ancient Greek literature, with focus on Artemidorus’ *Interpretation of dreams*. While her surveys are valuable, parts of Franco’s interpretation are undermined by a lack of engagement with gender theory and the uncritical adoption and projection of binary human ‘sex’ and monogamous, reproductive, heterosexual relationality onto animals. This leads to a neglect of the effect that diverse (non-heterosexual, perverse) sexual practices and anxieties of cross-racial miscegenation and hybridization have on the production of human gender.¹¹ Conversely, we see human gender not as inherent and essential but as performative – that is, as being permanently produced through normative, citational practices and societal interactions that are tightly intertwined with human sexuality and relationality – and the grammatical gender of narrated animals as indelibly linked to the construction of gender as a social categorization of humans.¹²

The animal heroes in the stories analyzed below, being mirrors of human behavior without ever fully becoming human, present us with examples of how human gender constructs are materialized in animal characters and narrated in diversely gendered languages. By comparing five linguistic versions of three stories from the *Panchatantra*, we offer case studies of the historical shifts in conceptions of gender and animality as grammatical, social and political categories, focusing in particular on the translators’ strategies for dealing with the untranslatability of gender and the aporia it creates. While avoiding the pitfalls of either severing the linguistic gender from the human or animal sexuality or stitching them together by threads of ‘nature’, we choose to query the tension in the intersection of gender, sexuality, animality and sociality. And importantly, we argue that the continued (mis)translation of those untranslatable gender tensions gives the narratives we read both normative and worldbuilding power. That is why we choose to mobilize philology, narratology, translation studies and gender theory in order to analyze the multilayered animal genders in these narratives – not as words reflecting or representing genders that simply ‘are’, but as stories that continuously shaped gender across languages and cultures.¹³

Querying the linguistic differences of gender, we compare stories of selected characters from three different fables in Greek (G), English (E), Old Slavonic (O), and Serbian (S) versions, while also looking at the Arabic source text *Kalila and Dimnah*.¹⁴ Although the question of Symeon Seth’s Arabic source text of *KwD* still needs more detailed research, it appears that it belonged to the so-called London continuum.¹⁵ Each section will start with an account of the manuscript London Or. 4044 (L4044) to provide an impression of what a ‘source text’ for the Greek translation might have looked like. Symeon Seth follows the structure of the manuscript but cuts varying amounts of text, streamlining it into a quicker read.

The three chosen stories each show very different situations in which translating gender creates new meanings. First, the story of the lion king's mother fighting an evil conspirator presents shifting meanings of an individual's gender in a political court setting; second, the story of the war between owls and crows contrasts the gender of groups and individuals in and out of court settings; and third, the story of the monkey and the turtles offers a view of the gender shifts of individuals engaged in cohabitation and intimate friendship. In each of these cases, gender aporia is resolved in a different way, pertaining to how political aspects overshadow those of animality, how collectivity is conceptualized, and how gender fluidity springs out of concerns of intersecting species and gender difference. Arguably the way these scenarios are handled by different translators in various cultures in a time span of 900 years establish the *Panchatantra* as a perfect test case for the performativity of *both* gender *and* translation. Accordingly, our main focus will be on the historical shifts of gender as grammatical, social and political categories, through an inductive analysis of the four selected translations and the way the translators managed the aporetic situations of the dissonance between different aspects of the grammatical gender, animal sociality and human institutions.

The Lion's Mother

Our first example is the story about the lion king's mother, from the second book written by Ibn al-Muqaffa'. In the events of the first book, the evil jackal – called Dimnah in Arabic, Ichneletes in Greek – managed to sow distrust between the lion king and his closest friend and advisor, the bull. In the *Panchatantra*, their story ends with the lion killing the bull and honoring the treacherous Dimnah for his loyalty. Apparently, this ending inspired Ibn al-Muqaffa' to avenge the murdered bull in his continuation of the story by taking Dimnah to court and sentencing him to death at the end of the second book. In the attempt to bring the villain of the first book to justice, the lion is encouraged by his mother to put Dimnah/Ichneletes on trial and convict him for plotting the bull's murder. Significantly, translations avoid using a word for 'female lion' when designating the king's mother, thus emphasizing her role as queen-dowager and mother at the cost of her animality.

In the case of the lion king's mother, the first passage quoted below is translated nearly word for word from the probable Arabic source text. In both linguistic versions, the character is referred to as 'the lion's mother' whenever she speaks, avoiding the word for 'lioness', admittedly rare in Greek.¹⁶ Compared to *KwD*, Symeon Seth alters the second part of the story significantly. In L4044, Dimnah/Ichneletes is convicted due to the testimony of two independent witnesses who overheard his confession of plotting the bull's death. In *KwD*, justice and law prevail against an evil scheme, with the lion's mother and her son as the main forces in their enactment.

In *SkI*, Ichneletes is more careful with his confessions, so the court cannot prove his guilt. To reestablish justice, the lion king orders an extrajudicial killing of Ichneletes in prison. Accordingly, the story turns into an example of what to do when law and justice fail to convict evil. In her short and decisive speech, the lion's mother warns her son that Ichneletes will turn into a bad example for others to attempt the same, jeopardizing the state. From an intercessor between the leopard and the king, she turns

into an active, protective force of the state, instigating the ruler to use his royal power to eliminate the threat. In this regard, she is more than just the lion's mother; she is the mother and protectress of the kingdom itself. Nevertheless, both stories result in Ichneutes' death, with the lion's mother as the driving force behind his trial and punishment. Her function as a character remains stable despite the significant changes in the Greek translation.

(G1) καὶ ἀκούσας τούτων εἰσῆλθε πρὸς τὴν μητέρα τοῦ λέοντος καὶ ἀνήγγειλεν αὐτῇ, ὅσα ἀκήκοεν. (191)

And after hearing these things, he [the leopard] went to the lion's mother and told her what he had heard.

(G2) ἡ δὲ τοῦ λέοντος μήτηρ ἔφη (191)

The mother of the lion said:

(G3) μετὰ δὲ τὸ φρουρηθῆναι τοῦτον καθωμολόγησε τῷ λέοντι ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ τὸν εἰπόντα καὶ ὡς λεοντόπαρδος ἦν. (195)

After he [Ichneutes] was detained, the lion was confessed to by his mother what had been said and that it was the leopard.

(G4) ἰδὼν οὖν ὁ λέων τὴν ἑνστασιν τῆς ἰδίας μητρὸς προσέταξε τὸν Ἰχνηλάτην ἀναιρεθῆναι. (200)

Seeing the resolution of his own mother, the lion ordered Ichneutes to be killed.

The examples quoted above consistently name the character as 'the lion's mother' (G1, G2). Only when the focalization shifts to the lion, is she called 'his own mother' (G3, G4). Nevertheless, why would *SkI* keep this complicated character naming found in *KwD*? Possibly since it emphasizes the character's function as a king's mother, linking her to the ruler's power and influence. As such, it is a good example of the consequences of the deconstructive *aporia* for translation. The mother of the lion is the only character legible as 'female' in the story. Still, the supposed referent of her grammatical gender, that is, her animal sex(uality), is suppressed in favor of the familial and political. Through translation and narrative strategies, the tension between the 'natural' and socio-political aspects of gender leaves its trace on the lexical choices: there is no place for a 'lioness' at the court or in this story, and accordingly both her sexuality, and her animality had to give way to her political role. And even though the trace of 'sexual difference' between her and her son is thus erased, she still does not become a universally masculine 'lion counselor.' Although 'mother' could imply her past status as a female and potentially sexual character, her function as caretaker and protectress of the state becomes crucial when the first two episodes describe her acting in an official setting on her political power (G1, G2).

A near contemporary translated text could serve as a useful comparison here. The *Martyrdom of Saint Michael* was translated from Georgian into Greek and incorporated into the extensive *Life of Saint Theodore of Edessa*, in the eleventh century on Mount Athos. In a scene set in Jerusalem, a young and handsome monk is preyed upon by the lustful wife of a sultan. The Georgian text has the wolf enter the heart of the woman at the sight of the innocent lamb, spurring her to corrupt him. The Greek text transforms the woman into a “a bitter lioness.”¹⁷ There seems to be a definite conflation of sexuality and animality associated with the term ‘lioness’ in the court setting, both of which are suppressed by the circumlocution “the lion’s mother.”

Symeon Seth’s translation also introduces a slight change of perspective compared to *KwD*. The king’s mother’s character is designated as “his mother” (G3), stressing the scene’s intimacy, when the other characters are gone. While remaining king and queen mother, their interaction evokes a familial secret-sharing setting. This is especially important since the lion’s mother promised not to reveal the identity of the leopard. While she asks for the leopard’s consent first in *KwD*, the family bonds in *SkI* outweigh the promise to a non-relative.¹⁸ The same function is repeated in the final passage (G4), where her display of resolution convinces the lion. Although she speaks in court (SkI II, 200), the effect she has on the lion is largely due to her being “his own mother.” Ichneletes is sentenced to death because her political and familial influence, united, convince the king.

Accordingly, the focus on mother’s status as *mother* overtakes her classification as an animal. The text never refers to her as a lioness and assuming she would be one just because her son is a lion would already be unfounded in this narrative setting. Her gender is not determined by her animal nature or species. The story neglects her animal-ness, letting her position within family and politics define her gender. In other words, although “the lion king’s mother” opens up for a plurality of implications like “female”, “mother”, “romantic/sexual relationship with the former king”, “lioness”, “queen dowager” and more, the story reduces its ambiguity by only narrating her familial and political characteristics.¹⁹ Therefore, the narration’s focus and the selection of words signifying a character become tools to shape a character’s gender.

(E1) When the leopard heard this, he went to the lion’s mother and told her what he had heard. (171)

(E2) The lion’s mother said (173, 183) His mother said (173)

(E3) And after Ichneletes had been bound and imprisoned, the lion’s mother confessed to him that it was the leopard who had spoken to her. (183)

(E4) When the lion understood his mother’s position, he gave orders to one of his officers for Ichneletes to be killed. (195)

As can be seen by comparing Noble’s English translation to our translation of Symeon Seth’s Greek text above, the quoted examples are very close. Symeon Seth’s abridged version of *KwD* was copied and filled in with additional material from Arabic sources to create the thirteenth-century Eugenic version, and there is an almost complete overlap

between the versions of this story. Therefore, the mother's position as the protectress of the lion king and the state and her role in Ichnelates' death remain the same.

The Eugenician *SkI* also adds no material containing the lion's mother asking the leopard for consent to reveal his identity, showing that the later extension of Symeon Seth's version continues to put family bonds before promises to unrelated characters. Similarly, the lion's mother's courtly female-ness and position as queen mother still take precedent over her animality.

(O1) Сїа же {слышавъ} лешндопардѡсь и ѡуразѡуме вса по дробнѡу, и въшьдѣ къ матери львоѡе сказа ен вса елика слыша (283)

(S1) Кад ово чу, леопард схвати све подробно, и ушавши ка матери лавовој, исприча јој све што чу. (176)

When the leopard heard this, he understood it all thoroughly. Entering to the lion's mother, he told her everything he heard.

(O2) Львоѡа же мати рече: (283)

(S2) А лавова мати рече: (176)

And the lion's mother said:

(O3) И по шковани его исповѣда львоу мати его: ѡко лѣшндопардѡсь сказа ми ѡже о Ихнилате. (285)

(S3) И по окиѡанѡу његоѡу, рече лаву мати његоѡа: 'Леопард ми исприча о Ихнилату.' (178)

After he was chained, the lion's mother told the lion: 'The leopard told me about Ichnilates.'

(O4) Видѣвъ ѡубо львъ насилїе матере свое, повѣле ѡко да ѡубїють и погубеть Ихнилата. (288)

(S4) Видевши лав наѡаљивање своје мајке, заповеди да убију и погубе Ихнилата.

Seeing his mother's violence [S: insistence],²⁰ he ordered for Ichnilates to be killed and executed.

The Old Slavonic text follows Symeon Seth's *SkI* closely for the most part. The character in question is consistently referred to as the "lion's mother." Equally, the modern Serbian translation is close to the Old Slavonic one, signaling the text's antiquity to modern readers with archaizations. Still, a certain ambiguity of the lion's mother's character is stronger in the Old Slavonic. During Ichnilates's trial, most of the judges

succumb to his convincing rhetoric and mesmerizing narratives, leaving them unable to convict him. At one instance, Ichnilates's gendered and sexist rhetoric directly target the lion's mother, advocating for steadfast gender roles and inducing a brief self-doubt in her. But when all the existing male verbal instruments fail to convict Ichnelates, she still insists on his execution. While the other versions speak of her resolution, position or insistence, in Slavonic, the lion sees her "violence." The Serbian translator seems to go back to the Greek, rather than his source text. This underlines the ambiguity of her position: even though her belief does not seem to ensue from discursive rationality, it turns out to be both in accordance with the reality available to the reader, and salvific for the son she protects.

The comparison of these five languages shows how even slight changes, resulting from the tension emerging in attempts to translate gender, alter the lion's mother's character. While her lexical designations remain translatable across languages, her narrative positions change. In *KwD*, she is an ally of institutional justice, inspiring the lion king to punish Ichnelates and keeping her promises to her subjects like the leopard. This delicate position of an intercessor changes starting from *SkI*, where her familial bonds outweigh other commitments and she is more active. She becomes a motherly, extralegal, protective force for the state and the king against the disruptive potential of Ichnelates. Neither text questions her position in the court; in *KwD*, the king is even absent from the trial and informed about it by his mother in a way that incites his emotional reaction. Although, from *SkI* onwards, the lion king presides over the trial, both texts agree that his mother's insistence and resolution get Ichnelates executed.

In the Old Slavonic, the mother's readiness to kill Ichnelates is named "violence." This violence is a necessary evil to protect the state, being directed against the disruptive force but also against the law that would exonerate Ichnelates. Although the Serbian translation softens the tone, her transformation from a caring court intercessor into a resolute decision-maker is completed, while her gender's irrationality and violence are narratively transformed into truth and justice, refuting her opponent's views on gender roles. She turns from an important supporting character to a protagonist. Finally, all the texts continue to refer to the character as the lion's mother. Her species remains an assumption, with the emphasis on her familial and political practices, making clear her gender does not originate in nature but springs from those practices.

The Owls and the Crows

In book number four of *Panchatantra*, a longstanding war between the owls and the crows is resolved through the feats of a crow spy. The events of the story tell that a crow once insulted an owl in public and thus prevented the owl from becoming king of all birds. After this, owls and crows have been caught in an ongoing strife. In the present time of the story, the crows are on the verge of losing after a night raid from the owls. Following the advice of his clever minister, the crow king sends said minister as a spy. The owl king falls for the spy's deception because he ignores the warnings of his minister. When the crow spy returns with his intel on the enemy, the crow king successfully annihilates all the owls. Interestingly, the story of the owls introduces different grammatical genders for the birds outside of the court, while the individual owl ministers and their king have to be male in the court setting.

Since Symeon Seth keeps the same structure for the owl-crow chapter, *KwD* is easily comparable to *SkI*. Although the two benevolent owl ministers are fused into one in *SkI*, the remaining characters provide enough comparison material. The main differences between *KwD* and *SkI* stem from *SkI* removing nearly every embedded story except one, leading to a more straightforward narration.

Overall, the Arabic in L4044 pursues a similar strategy for the owls as it did for the lion's mother. Since the Arabic word for owl, *buma* (بومة), is feminine, their male king is continuously called "the owls' king." This wording avoids mistaking him for a queen or the king of crows. The owls themselves remain feminine whilst in a group or during simple tasks like carrying messages. When the owl ministers are mentioned, the word owl is left out altogether, emphasizing the male-ness of the owl courtiers.²¹ Much like "the lion's mother," the way that the story is told creates the court as an all-male social and political setting, where the grammatically feminine 'owls' become an inadmissible species designation. The Arabic text translates its own grammatically female characters into a culturally acceptable male equivalent by using strategies of either avoidance or specification of the term 'owl'.

(G5) νυκτὸς δὲ αἱ γλαῦκες ἐπὶ τὸ δένδρον παραγενόμεναι οὐκ εἶδόν τινα ἐν αὐτῷ εἰ μὴ τὸν τυφθέντα κόρακα κείμενον, καὶ ἀνήγγειλαν τοῦτο τῷ οἰκείῳ αὐτῶν βασιλεῖ. (221)

At night, as the owls came to the tree and they saw no one but the wounded crow lying there, and they reported this to their own king.

(G6) ταῦτα ἀκούσας ὁ βασιλεὺς εἶπε πρὸς τινα τῶν πρωτοσυμβούλων αὐτοῦ. (222)

Hearing this, the king said to some of his councilors:

(G7) ἕτερος δὲ τις τῶν τοῦ βασιλέως συμβούλων ὑπολαβὼν εἶπεν (222–223)

But another one of the king's counselors said

(G8) ὁ δὲ τὴν ἀναίρεσιν τούτου συναινέσας ἔφη (223)

He who advised the destruction [of the crow] said

(G9) ἤρξατο οὖν ὁ κόραξ ταῖς γλαυξὶ προσομιλεῖν καταμόνας καὶ οἰκειοῦσθαι ταύταις καὶ φιλιοῦσθαι. (223)

The crow began to converse alone with the owls and live with them and befriend them.

(G10) μοχθηρὰν καὶ πονηρὰν καὶ ἀνώμαλον καὶ ἄτακτον καὶ τοὺς ὑπ' αὐτὸν ὁμοίους αὐτῷ ἐκτὸς μόνου τοῦ τὴν ἀναίρεσίν μου συμβουλευσάντος, οὗτος γὰρ πάντων συνετώτερος ὤφθη. (227)

[The owl king's way of life] was wretched, wicked, unruly and undisciplined and his subjects were the same as him, except only the one advising my destruction. He of all can be considered clever.

Like in Arabic, 'owl' is grammatically feminine in Greek. Probably for that reason, *SkI* adopts the same strategies when referring to the owls as a group or in court. In court, the owl king is only called "the king" (G5, G6, G7), whereas his councilors remain gender neutral since the Greek genitive allows it (G6). Only when the councilors present their individual opinions are they revealed as male, while their animal species is no longer mentioned (G7, G8, G10).

However, appearing as a group, the owls revert into feminine owls that attack the grammatically male crows and are later on tricked by the male spy crow (G5, G9). It becomes apparent that, like for the lion's mother, gender is essential in a court setting and can become a challenge for the translator when a tension appears between the grammatical gender and the projected social and political categories. A host of female owls attacking the crows and a group of female owls conversing with a crow remain female. In contrast, a court setting requires creative solutions for gendering the characters. Again, like the lion's mother's female gender is more important than what animal she is, the owl-ness of the owl characters seems to diminish in the face of a political setting. The crows, on the contrary, appear as an all-male society, both in individual and in collective emanations.

(E5) That night, when the owls arrived at the tree, they saw no one in it, only the crow which had been beaten and was lying there, and they reported this to their own king. (251)

(E6) Hearing this, the king of the owls said to one of his chief counselors (253)

(E7) Another of the owl king's chief counselors said (255)

(E8) But the one who favored killing him said (263)

(E9) the crow began talking to the owls individually, making them his friends and endearing himself to them. (263)

(E10) Wretched, wicked, disorderly, and undisciplined, and his subordinates were like him, with the sole exception of the one who advised that I should be killed. Rather, he seemed to me more intelligent than all the others. [slight differences in the Greek] (273)

While the later Greek and its modern English translation still follow Symeon Seth's version closely, the lack of gendered nouns in English comes into play. The difference between the female owl collective and male political positions at the owl court is thus not reflected in English. Accordingly, the male gender of individual owl characters spills over to the collective and neutral "they" in English, implying either an all-male society, or a one where female owls are invisible. As a result, the tension between the group's female gender and the single owl's male gender disappears by default.

(O5) Ноштїю же виплеви кь дрѣвѹ прїдоше, и не обрѣтоше никогоже, тьчїю бїенаго гаврана лежешта. И сказахѹ виплеви своему царѹ (296)

(S5) Ноћу дођоше сове до дрвета и нађоше никога осим претученога гаврана како лежи. И испричаху сове свом цару. (186)

In the night the owls came to the tree and found no one except for the beaten raven lying on the ground. They told it to their emperor.

(O6) Сїа слышавъ царъ рече къ некоему шть пръвосвѣтникъ своихъ (297)

(S6) Чувши ово, цар рече некоме од првосаветника своих: (187)

Hearing this, the emperor said to one of first councilors:

(O7) Други же нетко шть свѣтникъ царевехъ рече: (297)

(S7) Неки други советник рече: (187)

Some other councilor said:

(O8) пръвосвѣтникъ же онъ иже о ѹбїени его свѣтовавїи (297)

(S8) А првосаветник онај, који саветоваше да се убије, рече: (187)

And that first councilor who advised for him to be killed:

(O9) И начеть ѹбо гавранъ съ виплеви бѣседовати не едниє и любити се с ними. (297)

(S9) И поче, дакле, гавран разговарати са совама не једанпут и зближавати се са њима.

So, the raven started conversing with owls not once and they started loving each other [S: getting close to them].

(O10) Скотъско јестъ и лукаво и негладько и безчиньно. и иже подь нымъ подобнїи суть емѹ тчью единого на ѹбїенїе мое свѣтовави; ть ѹбо шть всьсехъ ѹви ми се мѹдрѣнши (298)

(S10) ‘Скотски, и лукаво, и неудобно и неуредно. И они који су му потчињени слични су му, осим једног који саветоваше да ме убију. Он ми се од свих учини мудрији.’ (188)

Cattle-like and cunning and uncomfortable and without rank. And his subordinates are like him, except for the one who advised my killing. He appeared wiser than all to me.

The Old Slavonic uses a seemingly rare, masculine word for owls. The ornithological vocabulary is uncertain, but the Greek seems to use the same word for crows and ravens, and the Slavonic translator chooses the latter ones as heroes. In any case, the Slavonic text makes both bird species and all individuals masculine, avoiding the Greek gender-bending. In modern Serbian, however, crows and owls are feminine, while

ravens are masculine. This is particularly interesting, since not only do we know the names of modern translators, but we can also presume their approach to translation of medieval texts as being a diligent scholarly endeavor that makes materials from the past accessible to experts and laypeople of the present. Being given multiple possible combinations, Tomislav Jovanović pits the feminine owls against the masculine ravens. Thus, he circumvents the gender scenario of the Slavonic text and re-establishes the hierarchy of *SkI*, where all crows/ravens are masculine, while owls are feminine as a collective but masculine in their individual roles as a king and advisers. This solution produces renditions that although grammatically incongruous, apparently are tolerable for the translator, such as: “Of all the owls (f), I have not seen a single (f) rational (f) one (f), except the one (m) who advised them to kill me.”²² Furthermore, the Serbian translation replaces “love” between the masculine owls and the masculine raven spy from the Slavonic version with a less affective “closeness.” It also paradoxically establishes female as the norm in the owl society. Regardless of individuals of power or intellect performing masculinity, when the owl army attacks the ravens, they are gendered female in their collectivity.

As comparing various languages shows, in three out of five languages the owls face similar but inversed gender troubles as in the example of the lion’s mother. Greek and Arabic use the same strategy to work their way around the grammatically female owls by focusing on the owls’ offices, or by calling them “subjects” of the owl king (ΓΙΟ) to avoid the female gender. The Serbian translation exhibits similar difficulties but overrides its source, being less reluctant to have collective female and individual male characters. The owls remain a feminine group whereas the only clever owl is singled out as masculine. This rendition does not only reverse the usual ‘generic masculine’ when referring to a group of a single masculine and even countless feminine nouns, but creates a productive tension in translation. Thus, while the gender tension in the story of the lion’s mother came from the interaction between two individual characters, here it originates from the gender difference between the individual and the collective. In the case of Old Slavonic, the whole situation is solved by choosing a masculine word for owl and avoiding any gender confusion. The king is furthermore referred to without stating his species, which leads to his owl-ness becoming a marginal fact. English avoids the issue by the grace of not being gendered beyond pronouns. The pronouns tacitly follow *SkI* when they appear. But in consequence, these two versions produce an all-male warrior society.

The point of tension in translating the story of the owls and the crows lies in the clash between the social or communal aspects of gender on the one hand, and the idea that the grammatical gender of a textual animal can be verified against a real or an ideal referent on the other. It thereby connects to wider issues of the representations of animals in late-capitalist Western popular culture, which have been criticized for their bourgeois, Christian undertones and the imposition of notions of monogamous, heterosexual, reproduction-oriented animality; an imposition that ultimately provides basis for a stable gender binary and obscures diversity of animal communality and cooperation.²³ The translators of the story of owls and crows had to retell a tale of grammatically gendered characters who were organized in radically non-reproductive and collaborative social structures. The owls and the crows fight for survival in the present through communal care and cooperation and with a complete disregard of

reproductive futurity. As such, they open a space for deconstructive aporia that all four translators bring to diverse closures. Their translation strategies result in the multiplication of ways gender relates to their sociality: either one or both flocks being universally male, reversed gender relations between the source and the target texts, the suppression of ‘love’ as a part of communal care between the owls and the undercover crow from the Slavonic version in its Serbian translation.

The Turtles and the Monkey

In the book number five, an exiled monkey king uses figs to build a close relationship with a turtle who promptly stays with the monkey and forgets about the companion at home. Out of grief, the turtle’s companion feigns illness curable only by eating a monkey’s heart. The monkey’s friend tries to lure the monkey into a trap by inviting him for a visit on the turtles’ island. Since the monkey cannot swim, the turtle intends to drown him in the lake, but a moment of moral hesitation on the turtles’ side and the monkey’s wisdom let the monkey escape into the safety of the trees.

The main points and the ending of the turtles-monkey story overlap in *KwD* and *SkI*, but Symeon Seth introduces significant changes. Whereas *SkI* only has the bare minimum of characters – the monkey and the two turtles – L4044 has an additional female friend of the abandoned turtle and mentions the turtle’s and the monkey’s families and children.

KwD is very clear in the distribution of gender roles. The male turtle interacts with the male monkey, whereas the turtle’s wife is grieving at home, supported by her female friend of an unknown species. Interestingly, L4044 chooses the Arabic term for a female turtle (سُلْحُفَاة - *sulhufa*) for the husband, despite an existing word for male turtle. Yet, the grammatical female gender of *sulhufa* is suppressed in the case of the male turtle character by masculine verb conjugation, pronouns, and adjectives, and by him being called “husband.”²⁴ In this way, the turtle’s male gender can be identified without additional explanation, turning the *sulhufa* more into a sort of a character’s name rather than a common noun. The turtle’s wife, however, is referred to as female, in agreement with the grammatical gender. The tension between the social (that is, marital) and grammatical gender leads to grammatically unusual sentences requiring attentive reading.

Furthermore, the way that the friendship between the monkey and the turtle is told implies a potential erotic or romantic relationship that transcends species differences and endangers the heterosexual relationship with the turtle-wife. Both the monkey and the male turtle long for each other and profess their love on multiple occasions. Additional misogynistic remarks stage the turtle-wife and her female friend as disruptive factors harming the preferable bond between the male characters.²⁵ From a different perspective, however, the story could prove the superiority of female friendship based on true concern for each other, which easily manages to destroy the superficial bond between the two male characters who depend solely on each other for the satisfaction of needs and desires.

(G1) μιᾶ δὲ τῶν ἡμερῶν ἐσθίοντι πέπτωκε τῆς χειρὸς αὐτοῦ μία συκῆ, ἣν ἄρασα ἡ χελώνη ἔφαγεν, ἐρ’ ὧ ὁ πῖθηξ γελάσας οὐ διέλιπε τὴν χελώνην

σुकίζων. ἡ δὲ ἡδυτάτην εὐροῦσα τροφήν τῆς οἰκίας ἐπελάθετο· καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἡ σύζυγος αὐτῆς ἀθυμοῦσα ἦν τὰ μέγιστα καὶ πόρον ἐζήτει, δὲ οὗ τὸν πίθηκα ἀπολέσει καὶ τὸν σύζυγον ἀπολήψεται. (228)

One day while eating, one of the figs fell out of the [monkey's] hand. Picking it up, a turtle ate it, which made the monkey laugh and he did not cease [to give] figs to the turtle. Having found very sweet fruit she forgot about home and because of this her wife became disheartened greatly and searched for a path through which the monkey might be destroyed and she would receive back the husband.

(G12) μιᾷ δὲ τῶν ἡμερῶν ἡ χελώνη οἴκαδε ἀπιούσα καὶ περίλυπον τὸν σύζυγον ἰδοῦσα εἶπε πρὸς αὐτόν· τί ὅτι σκυθρωπὸν ὄρω σε καὶ νοσερόν; ἡ δὲ εἶπε· νόσω δεινῇ περιέπεσον καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἴασιν εὐρεῖν, εἰ μὴ γε καρδίᾳ πίθηκος χρήσομαι. ὁ δὲ ἀπορήσας καθ' ἑαυτὸν διελογίζετο τὴν τοῦ ζητουμένου δυσχέρειαν καὶ ὡς οὐχ ἑτέραν καρδίαν εὐρήσει εἰ μὴ γε τὴν τοῦ ἐταίρου αὐτῆς. (228–229)

One day, the turtle went home and seeing the husband very sad she said to him: “Why do I see you so gloomy and sick?” She said: “I have become terribly sick and there is no other cure but a monkey’s heart.” Confused, he reasoned with himself about the difficulty he found himself in and how there was no other heart to be found but her companion’s.

The most striking aspect of the quoted passages is how both turtles switch their gender even within the same sentence, making it hard to follow the story if one relies on their gender to distinguish between the characters. The fig turtle starts as a female and has a wife at home. The Greek uses a term that is gender neutral, like ‘partner’, but becomes gendered through the use of masculine or feminine articles. However, this article changes mid-sentence for the fig turtle, turning “her” into a “husband” (G11). In the continuation, the fig turtle reverts to being female, asking the now male home turtle about his wellbeing. The home turtle turns female again, when she replies (G12). After the dialogue, the fig turtle has become male yet again, but switches to female by the end of the sentence (G12).

SkI varies significantly from the distinctive gender roles taken on in *KwD*. Despite this, technically speaking *KwD* is probably the source of *SkI*'s genderfluidity. Although L4044 is only a variant of the manuscript used for Symeon Seth's translation, it can be assumed that the source text must have used a similar strategy in depicting the male turtle. It combined the grammatically female noun with incongruent masculine pronouns and verbs in Arabic. With *SkI*'s translational cuts and edits, it was probably even harder to trace the gender of each turtle. *SkI* also lacks misogynist remarks and the home turtle's female-friend character, providing the chance for even more ambiguity since no turtle is distinctively female. Additionally, Greek manuscript variations of *SkI* offer different gender discrepancies but in an equally genderfluid manner, implying that this could not have been a mistake of a single manuscript or a branch of them.²⁶

These observations agree with the impression from the other two cases we've examined, where the gender attribution was generated by the political setting or a type

of sociality. In the story that lacks apparent political structures or a wider community, the grammatical gender seems to be randomized. This could have been the product of a tension between the social gender in a common household and implications of inter-species intimacies. Remarkably, the apparent turtles' gender fluidity did not irritate most Byzantine readers and copyists. The gender fluidity might also stem from the use of animal protagonists. As the previous story exemplified, and as the below linguistic versions will show, the medieval narrative engagement with the animal world seemed to be going well beyond the modern heteronormative imagination.

(E11) One day, as he was eating, a fig fell from his hand, which a male turtle took and ate. The ape laughed happily at this and carried on fattening the turtle with figs. As the turtle found the food very sweet, he forgot about his own home and, because of this, his wife became very depressed and sought a means by which she could get rid of the ape and get her husband back. (277-279)

(E12) One day, when the turtle returned home, he found his wife looking very sad, and he said to her, "Why do I see you looking miserable and sick?" And his wife said to him, "Poor me, I've caught a terrible sickness, and there's no cure to be found for me, unless I eat an ape's heart, just as the physicians told me." Her husband was quite at a loss, for he was pondering the difficulty of getting what was being sought, as he would not find any heart other than that of his companion.

The genderfluidity of the turtles is reduced in some of the manuscripts that Noble uses for her edition of the Eugenic *SkI* and completely erased in her English translation, through curious translational practices. In the "Note on the text," Noble explains her intention to establish the twelfth-century Eugenic recension of *SkI* on the basis of much later manuscripts. She specifies that when different readings appear, she gives a preferential treatment to the manuscript P, since it is more complete and higher in style than the other three manuscripts (BLO). Still, against this principle, in the first sentence of E11, she adopts the phrasing "male turtle" (*arrenikè*) from BLO, instead of "wild turtle" (*agriá*) from P, thus setting the precedent for the gender of the fig turtle.²⁷

Noble's choice allows her to consistently gender the fig turtle as male even though her Greek text mentions "her wife" (E11). Since the manuscript reading of "male" was chosen as better from the first appearance of the character, it was easier to treat any subsequent ambiguity as a mistake. The gender 'correction' is passed in silence, creating a tension between the Greek and the English texts printed on opposite pages. If Noble consulted an Arabic version of the text in an attempt to amend gender ambiguity through a recourse to the 'original', she does not mention it in the book. Prioritizing gender conformability, she establishes clear gender roles of a hurt, clever female at home and an adulterous or neglectful male, who needs to be tricked into fulfilling his marital duties.

(O11) Въ едний же шть дньи ѿдоуштоу паде из роуки его едина смоква, юже дѣвіа жельва пріемъши издеде. О нѣмже питикъ посмѣавъ се, и не прѣстае жельвою питае смоквами, она же сладькою обрѣтъши пиштоу и своего дома забы. Того ради подругъ его малодушествоваше, и вельми

искаше како би питика погоубилъ причтею и подроуга своего възметь.
(188–189)

(S11) И док јеђаше, једног дана паде му из руке једна смоква, коју дивља корњача узе и поједе. Томе се мајмун насмеја и не престаде хранити корњачу. А она, нашавши слатку храну, заборави на свој дом. Због тога супруг њен беше очајан и много помишљаше како да погуби мајмуна и да узме своју супругу. (188–189)

While he was eating, one day out of his hand a fig dropped, which a wild turtle (f) found and ate. The monkey laughed at that and did not stop feeding the turtle. She, finding the sweet food, forgot about her (n) home. Because of that his companion [S: her husband] despaired, and thinking, sought a lot how he (n) could execute the monkey and take their companion (m) [S: his wife].

(O12) И единою оубо шьдыши желва въ дмь свои, и скръбьна своего друга обрѣтъшии, рече къ нѣмоу: по что дрѣхла виждуоу те и больна? Она же рече: въ болѣзнь лютоую въпадх, и нѣст ми исцѣленіа обрѣсти, аште не полоучоу срьдце пивѣиково. Она же недооумевъши се о сѣмь помышляше въ себѣ: яко ино срьдце не имамъ обрѣсти тьчю госта своего.

(S12) И једанпут, кад корњача оде у дом свој, затече жалосног свог супруга и рече му:

„Зашто те видим смрченог и болесног?“

А он рече:

„У болест љуту падох и нећу наћи исцељење ако не добијем мајмунско срце.“

Она, пак, не досећајући се шта је, помишљаше у себи:

„Друго срце нећу наћи осим пријатеља мог.“ (189)

And once, when the turtle went to her home, she (n) found her (n) grieving companion [S: husband], she (n) told him (m): ‘Why do I see you gloomy and sick?’ And she [S: he] said: I fell into a grave disease and I will not find healing unless I receive a monkey’s heart.’ She (f), however, not seeing through it, thought to herself (n): I can find no other heart, save the one of my host [S: friend].

The earliest ever Greek-Slavonic book translator was aware and commented on gender incompatibilities between the two languages, giving precedence to the ‘meaning’ of the text.²⁸ With diverse word categories or grammatical forms being gendered or not in the two languages, the ‘gender reveal’ can come sooner or later in the text, while

gendering can seem more pronounced in one of the texts. In the story of the turtles, the Slavonic translator follows the seemingly incongruous gendering of *SkI*. There are alterations, but no normative or corrective ones. ‘Turtle’ is a female epicene in Greek, Slavonic and Serbian. When O11 is compared to its presumed source text G11, it shows that the Greek female present participle *heurousa* becomes a gender neutral *obrēt’ ši* in Slavonic. Similarly, the indirect speech phrase “no other than the heart of her friend” at the end of G12, becomes a direct speech phrase in O12, which changes the subject and removes the gender marking of the possessive pronoun to “no other heart, save the one of my (own) host.”

Apart from that, the Slavonic text maintains the gender ambiguity of *SkI*, occasionally pushing it even further. In O11, the fig turtle starts out as a *she*, but *his male companion*, the home turtle plots to get *his male companion*, the fig turtle, away from the monkey. In O12, the fig turtle, *female* again, asks her *male companion* about *his* illness, and the home turtle replies that *she* needs a monkey’s heart. The Slavonic text also translates the Greek *helho syzygos* (= pair, spouse; noun with a ‘male ending’ that can be gendered female through the use of the article) into a consistently male ‘(*po*) *drug*’, whose dominant meaning is ‘comrade’ or ‘companion’. The translator does not use the neuter noun ‘*podroužiiie*’ or any other words meaning ‘wife’ or ‘female partner’ for any of the turtles. In the Slavonic version of the text, two genderfluid turtles cohabit in a partnership that shows no clear sign of a marital bond.

Like the modern English translation of the Eugenic *SkI*, the modern Serbian translation of the Slavonic one suppresses all the ambiguity related to gender and sexuality. The fig turtle is consistently female and a wife, while the home turtle is consistently male and a husband. Interestingly, this reverses the initial Arabic gender division and the latest English translation of the Greek version.

The fact that both modern translations of this text ‘correct’ their source texts against their editorial and interpretative principles reveals unstated norms they choose to favor. Under the presumed effort of removing inconsistencies on textual and narrative levels, the conventional fidelity to the source text is sacrificed to the idea of a heterosexual, monogamous norm originating in nature. But why was the ambiguity introduced and preserved in medieval translations, and why was it erased in the modern ones? In the versions dependent on Symeon Seth’s Greek translation, this is one of the rare stories about a couple of same-species animals sharing a household. Diverse animals share their dwellings with the multitude of their species, with members of other species, or with humans. Yet only humans are almost exclusively narrated as forming heterosexual marital unions, whether monogamous or polygynous.

While *SkI* transmits the story about ‘love’ and cohabitation between two ducks and a turtle, the later Eugenic *SkI* also includes the kingfisher’s story from *KwD*. In both stories, the same-species monogamous union is threatened by a member of another species interfering in the reproduction process, or by the potential disclosure of inter-species non-monogamy, respectively. The desire of the male kingfisher to stay inside the sea nymph’s reach against his wife’s advice endangers his progeny’s survival, until king Phoenix’s patriarchal authority reintroduces the order. The trilateral cohabitation between two ducks and a turtle can persist as long as it is kept secret from the world. The order is violently re-established by patriarchal intervention and death, respectively.²⁹ What these stories share with the turtles-monkey story is the apparent

third-party threat to the patriarchal, heterosexual, endogamous marital order. The tension between grammar and the possibilities and anxieties regarding gender, sexual and trans-species relations contributed to our characters' genders becoming ambiguous.

Judith Butler offers a critique of certain psychoanalytic engagements with Lévi-Strauss's stance on incest taboo and kinship as negotiating a patrilineal line through marriage ties. Butler examines how the opponents to both non-heterosexual kinship and immigration in Europe strived to find intellectual grounding for their stances in ethnology and psychoanalysis. Without claiming that such patriarchal anxieties are ahistorical, they can be detected in the way both medieval and modern translations of our text suspend aporia and re-signify gender. The way our stories were written and translated reflects a patriarchal anxiety over the preservation of both the heterosexual marital unit and the racial or ethnic 'purity'.³⁰

The non-human animals often constitute a battleground claiming 'naturalness' of specific visions of gender and sexual practices. These claims can be heard from both the heteronormative side and their opponents, since animals doing something makes it natural and justified for humans to do the same. Inversely, as J. Halberstam notes, "[m]ost often we project human worlds onto the supposedly blank slate of animality, and then we create the animals we need in order to locate our own human behaviors in 'nature' or 'the wild' or 'civilization.'"³¹ Simultaneously, serious debates and reassessments are taking place among biologists on the question of sexual selection and using the term gender when referring to non-human animals.³²

However, as being primarily discursive or narrative creatures, our characters' gender precedes their sex. No real-life turtle with a real-life sex was 'described' by the authors – and even less so by the translators. Furthermore, their gender is performative and temporally bound to the narrative time. They can exist genderless until the first word that genders or un-genders or re-genders them in a given language appears in the text, either in the order of grammar or syntax (noun, pronoun, participle), or in the order of vocabulary and semantics ('husband', 'wife'). The trouble comes when the continuity of a character's gender is interrupted in a temporal sequence of the text. Even though the modern editors and translators act as if there is an ontological rupture when a diverse gender marker appears, there did not seem to be one for some of the medieval Greek and Old Slavonic translators and scribes. Based on the surviving evidence, we have to suppose that they perceived neither a logical contradiction in the existing sequences, nor an impediment in understanding and transmitting the story. Neither was the gender of the turtles crucial for them to distinguish between the two characters of the same species, nor were the sexuality and marital status of the turtles essential for the narrative action and the relations in the storyworld. Their actions, experiences and emotions – grief, love, care, fear – were generated by their communal cohabitation, but not necessarily by their gender difference or sexual practices.

Final thoughts

We have analyzed the translational life of three animal stories in specific points in time from the eleventh until the twenty-first century, with the specific focus on how the tension between diverse significations of grammatical, social and political aspects of gender was resolved by different translators. All of our examples have shown both the

creative, worldbuilding power of the translated texts, and the normative capacity of translation itself. Gender seems to be an ‘untranslatable,’ not solely as a philosophical term, but also as a grammatical and potentially social category. As such, with every attempt of translation, the aporia that the untranslatable creates has generated new meanings. In the story of the lion’s mother, her familial and political position imposes or removes gendered elements of her character depending on the linguistic version. Subtle alterations from Arabic, to Greek, to Slavonic take her character from a helpful mediator to a violent protagonist. The interplay and tension between the collective and the individual genders of owls and crows (or ravens) opens up spaces of diverse societal imagination, supplanting the monogamous reproductive futurities, with cooperative and collective survival presents. This story shares concerns of gendered cohabitation and partnership with the story about the turtles and the monkey, highlighting both the social anxieties the translators might have registered and the ways they tried to relieve them through their translational worldbuilding.

The first medieval Greek and the Old Slavonic translations of the turtles’ story created a storyworld in which genderfluid characters could exist and act, even though the term we now use to designate their specific gendered existence would not become common for about a millennium. At the same time, already in a string of medieval manuscripts, some scribes found it more coherent that a turtle should be ‘male’ rather than ‘wild’. Modern translators dealt with the same untranslatable aspects by generating a normative behavior for animals, based on the certain human models. Their decisions could not have been based on faithfulness to an original text, linguistic limitations of the target language, or biological facts. It is true that turtles are not know to change sex, like, for example, clown fish. But turtles are famously polygamous and uninterested in either coupling or child care. We decided not to verify whether they are keen on figs.

As stated, our inquiry has been less interested in the contextual elements that predated and surrounded these translations, than in the traces of prismatic proliferation of both texts and meanings that they left in the world. The historicity of such an approach is based in the snapshot insights it yields of the conceptualization of gender, but also in the permanent mark on those conceptualizations left by the very act of translation. We see these prismatic texts as generating gender possibilities, not as a historical justification of today’s gender modalities (since none of them needs to justify their existence), but as both autonomous historical alterities and the translational challenges that can generate a diverse present.

Notes

- * This article has been written within the frame of the research programme Retracing Connections (<https://retracingconnections.org>), financed by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond (M19-0430:1).
- 1 Matthew Reynolds, “Introduction,” in *Prismatic Translation*, ed. Matthew Reynolds (Oxford, 2019), 1–3. Idem, “Prismatic Agon, Prismatic Harmony. Translation, Literature, Language,” in *Prismatic Translation*, ed. Matthew Reynolds (Oxford, 2019), 35–42.
- 2 Franklin Edgerton, *Panchatantra Reconstructed* vol. 2 (1924), 3–270.

- 3 Johannes Hertel, "Was bedeuten die Titel Tantrākhyāyika und Pañcatantra?" *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* vol. 20 (1906), 81.
- 4 Friedrich Max Müller, "On the Migration of Fables," *The Contemporary Review* vol. 14 (1870), 573; Frithiof Rundgren, "From Pañcatantra to Stephanites and Ichneulates. Some Notes on the Old Syriac Translation of Kalila wa-Dimnah," in *Λεμῶν*, ed. Jan Olof Rosenqvist (Uppsala, 1996), 173.
- 5 On erased stories in Symeon Seth, see Lilli Hölzlhammer, "Altindische Weisheit in Byzanz. Zu den didaktischen Erzählstrategien in Symeon Seths Stephanites und Ichneulates und seinen arabischen Vorgängern," *Fabula* vol. 63 (2022:1–2), 99–103, <https://doi.org/10.1515/fabula-2022-0004>; The translation history of the text: Johannes Niehoff-Panagiotidis, *Übersetzung und Rezeption. Die byzantinisch-neugriechischen und spanischen Adaptionen von Kalila wa-Dimna*, Wiesbaden (2003), 10–60. Heinz Grotzfeld, Sophia Grotzfeld, Ulrich Marzolph, "Kalila und Dimna," in *Enzyklopädie des Märchens Online* 7, ed. Rolf Wilhelm Brednich et. al. (Berlin/New York, 2016), 888–892. The number of books varies greatly, even in the surviving Arabic manuscripts: Beatrice Gruendler, Jan J. Ginkel, Rima van Redwan, et. al., "An Interim Report on the Editorial and Analytical Work of the AnonymClassic Project," *Medieval Worlds* vol. 11 (2020), 241–279, <http://dx.doi.org/10.17169/refubium-32988>.
- 6 The correct chronology of the Greek translations is established by Lars-Olof Sjöberg, *Stephanites und Ichneulates. Überlieferungsgeschichte und Text*, (Uppsala, 1962), 55–70.
- 7 Jennifer London, "How to do Things with Fables: Ibn Al-Muqaffa's Frank Speech in Stories from Kalila Wa Dimna," *History of Political Thought* vol. 29/2 (2008), 189–212.
- 8 Barbara Cassin, *Éloge de la traduction. Compliquer l'universel*, (Paris, 2016), 24. Our translation.
- 9 Emily Apter, "Afterword: Trans-Ontology and the *Geschlecht* Complex," in *The Geschlecht Complex. Addressing Untranslatable Aspects of Gender, Genre, and Ontology*, eds. Oscar Jansson & David LaRocca (Bloomsbury: New York 2022), 293; François Raffoul, "Deconstruction as Aporetic Thinking," *Oxford Literary Review* vol. 36 (2014:2), 286–88, <https://doi.org/10.3366/olr.2014.0135>.
- 10 Regarding questions of grammatical sex in connection to social and political issues, it should be noted that linguistics and philology as academic disciplines are not immune to societal biases, such as patriarchy and sexism, and still have a long way to go before catching up with decades of feminist and queer critique, as well as transformative societal changes. See Emily Apter, "Lexilalia: On Translating a Dictionary of Untranslatable Philosophical Terms," *Paragraph* vol. 48 (2015:5), 168–171, DOI:10.3366/para.2015.0155; Greville G. Corbett, *Gender*, (Cambridge, 1991); Françoise Balibar, "Masculine, feminine, neuter," in *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*, eds. Barbara Cassin, Emily Apter, et. al. (Princeton, 2014), 970–971.
- 11 Cristiana Franco, "Gendering animals. Feminine and masculine species in Artemidorus' Interpretation of dreams. Part One," *I Quaderni del Ramo d'Oro* vol. 12 (2020), 73–103; "Gendering animals. Feminine and masculine species in Artemidorus' Interpretation of dreams. Part Two," *I Quaderni del Ramo d'Oro* vol. 13 (2021), 41–76.
- 12 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (New York, 1990), 175–193. Judith Butler, "Gender and gender trouble," in *Dictionary of Untranslatables*, 377–379.
- 13 Cf. Michela Baldo, "Queer Translation as Performative and Affective Un-doing. Translating Butler's Undoing Gender into Italian," in *Queering Translation, Translating the Queer Theory, Practice, Activism*, eds. Brian James Baer & Klaus Kaindl (New York, 2017), 188–205.

- 14 The page numbers of our excerpts are quoted in brackets from the following editions: Arabic = *Kalilah and Dimnah. Fables of Virtue and Vice. Ibn al-Muqaffa'*, ed. Michael Fishbein (New York, 2021); **G** = Sjöberg, *Stephanites und Ichneletes*; **E** = *Animal Fables of the Courty Mediterranean. The Eugenic Recension of Stephanites and Ichneletes*; ed. & transl. Alison Noble with Alexander Alexakis & Richard P. H. Greenfield, (Cambridge, MA/London, 2022); **O** = Đuro Daničić, "Indijske priče prozvana Stefanit i Ihnilat," *Starine* vol. 2 (1870), 261–310; **S** = Tomislav Jovanović, 'Стефанит и Ихнилат, са српскословенског превео и уводну белешку саставио Томислав Јовановић', *Источник. Часопис за веру и културу* vol. 29/30 (1999), 158–197.
- 15 Gruendler et. al., "An Interim Report," 259.
- 16 *Kalilah and Dimnah*, ed. Fishbein, 148; Franco, "Gendering animals, Part One," 91–98.
- 17 Monica Blanchard, "The Georgian Version of the Martyrdom of Saint Michael, Monk of Mar Sabas Monastery," *Aram* vol. 6 (1994), 151; Ivan Pomjalovskij, *Житие иже во святых отца нашего Феодора архиепископа Едесского*, (Saint Petersburg, 1892), 18.
- 18 The Ancient Greek stories of coupling between lionesses and leopards and on the violent relationships between lionesses and their cubs could have made an interesting backdrop to this story, if known in Byzantium. Franco, "Gendering animals, Part One," 93–94.
- 19 This reduction of meaning is comparable to the phenomenon described by: Marc Crépon, "Geschlecht," in *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*, eds. Barbara Cassin, Emily Apter, et. al. (Princeton, 2014) 394–396 and further developed in Oscar Jansson & David LaRocca, "Contending with Untranslatable Categories; or, Inducing the Nervous Condition of the *Geschlecht* Complex," in *The Geschlecht Complex. Addressing Untranslatable Aspects of Gender, Genre, and Ontology*, Idem, eds. (New York, NY, 2022), 1–34.
- 20 When significant, we mark the (gender) of a word and [differences between O and S] in our English translation.
- 21 *Kalilah and Dimnah*, ed. Fishbein, 230–232.
- 22 'He видех ни једну од сова разумну осим једног који рече савет да ме убију.' (188)
- 23 Brett Mills, "The animals went in two by two: Heteronormativity in television wildlife documentaries," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* vol 16, (2012:1), 100–114, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549412457477>.
- 24 *Kalilah and Dimnah*, Fishbein, ed., 256–258. In an Arabic manuscript closely related to Symeon Seth's translation, MS Or. 8751, the Arabic word for turtle is "male turtle". This shows that gender variations can be found even within the same manuscript continuum.
- 25 *Kalilah and Dimnah*, Fishbein, red., 263.
- 26 Sjöberg, *Stephanites und Ichneletes*, 228.
- 27 *Animal Fables*, ed. & transl Alison Noble, 393–396, 444.
- 28 André Vaillant, "La préface de l'Évangélaire vieux-slave," *Revue des études slaves* vol. 24 (1948), 5–20.
- 29 The kingfisher and the ducks and the turtle: *Kalilah and Dimnah*, ed. Fishbein, xxx; **E**:150–155; The ducks and the turtle: **G**: 184; **O**: 279–280; **S**: 173. The story of the couple of doves living together and dying due to a misunderstanding, without interacting with other species is preserved in Seth's version as well: **G**: 241–241; **O**: 304; **S**: 192–193.
- 30 J. Butler, "Is Kinship Always Already Heterosexual?," in *Undoing Gender* (New York, 2004), 122–124.
- 31 J. Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*, 32–33.
- 32 See Joan Roughgarden, *Evolution's Rainbow: Diversity, Gender, and Sexuality in Nature and People*, (Berkeley, 2004), and one of the reviews Ellen D. Ketterson, "Do Animals Have Gender?," *BioScience* Vol.55 (2005:2), 178–180, [https://doi.org/10.1641/0006-3568\(2005\)055\[0178:DAHG\]2.0.CO;2](https://doi.org/10.1641/0006-3568(2005)055[0178:DAHG]2.0.CO;2). We are grateful to Dr. Vladimir Jovanović (FU Berlin) for his guidance and recommendations of biological references.

MARCUS AXELSSON

TRANSLATION, GENDER, AND LEGITIMACY

A Study of Review Excerpts

Introduction

A number of scholarly works have been published on the topic of gender and translation. For example, Luise von Flotow has published and edited several books on women and translation, including *Translating Women* and *The Routledge Handbook of Translation, Feminism and Gender*, co-edited with Hala Kamal.¹ In the latter volume, scholars such as Sanaa Benmessaoud and Elizabeth Gibbels analyze the translation of women's writing, while Rajkumar Eligedi and Garima Sharma focus on the translation of feminist writings.²

In the present article, I take a different approach to gender and translation by directing the interest toward gender in the sociology of translation – arguably an under-developed topic. I focus on paratexts, which are an interesting unit of analysis for those interested in questions related to the discipline of sociology of translation or, more specifically, its sub-branch; the sociology of translations.³ Since paratexts give signals on how a work of fiction is packaged to fit a specific audience,⁴ and function as a threshold to the story,⁵ they are likely to provide valuable insights into what publishers deem as important to convey to readers, and give hints on what readers are most likely to be attracted to when browsing the shelves of a bookstore. Some studies touching on paratexts, translation, and gender have been carried out previously, but few have analyzed how translated novels are paratextually designed for marketing purposes.⁶ Through this article, I contribute to bridging this research gap by drawing attention to an element often foregrounded on book covers to entice readers, namely the review excerpt.

Before specifying the aim of this article, I will briefly highlight two concepts central to this study: review excerpts and legitimacy. The first is the main unit of analysis in this study, and the second is an important theoretical concept for a closer analysis of the review excerpts. A review excerpt is a short text that publishers place on the covers of novels, most often paperback novels. They contain praise for a book and are regu-

larly quotes from longer reviews.⁷ Genette makes the distinction between peritexts and epitexts, where peritexts are paratexts that are published in the same physical volume as the main narrative, whereas epitexts are published in texts surrounding the volume in one way or another.⁸ Review excerpts are hence epitexts – reviews published in for example newspapers and magazines – turned peritexts once quoted and published on the book cover.⁹ In addition, the review excerpt is a special kind of paratext since it straddles both the review and the advertising genre. However, its function on a book cover is primarily as a marketing device.¹⁰ It is what Batchelor, inspired by Annika Rockenberger, defines as a “commercial paratext.”¹¹ Its function is to advertise, praise, and sell.¹²

Inspired by Bourdieu’s *The Field of Cultural Production* from 1993, Gino Cattani and colleagues make the distinction between three kinds of legitimacy that a cultural product can be granted: bourgeois, popular, and specific legitimacy.¹³ Bourgeois legitimacy is recognition from critics, popular legitimacy is recognition from the public, and specific legitimacy is recognition from peers – in this case, recognition from other authors.¹⁴ In the present study, I will use these nominations to categorize the different kinds of review excerpts that appear on book covers.

The aim of this study is to investigate the review excerpts that are used on book covers when translated literature is marketed to Swedish buyers and how variables associated with gender affect excerpts. The aim can be divided into two research questions:

RQ1 Does gender affect whether source culture or target culture review excerpts are foregrounded?

RQ2 Does gender affect what kind of legitimacy is foregrounded on book covers?

Review excerpts are the main unit of analysis and the dependent variable. An author’s gender, on the other hand, is the key independent variable. In addition to the research questions above, it is expected that the study also will yield secondary results of relevance for anyone interested in questions regarding for example the intended reader’s gender, the critic’s gender, as well as other questions regarding for example social class and different genres and literary segments – questions that are not necessarily related to gender, but to other groups and strata in the society, and that are relevant for the theme for the TfL special issue in which the article appears.

Theory and Previous Research: Reviews and Review Excerpts

Although this article focuses on gender and translation, the section on theory and previous research is devoted to works focusing on reviews and review excerpts. For an overview of studies dealing with gender and translation, the reader is advised to look at the introduction to this special issue (as well as other articles within it) and the books and volumes mentioned in the introduction to this article.

Johan Svedjedal mentions that one of the functions of literary criticism, apart from being evaluative, is to assist industrial initiatives in selling goods on a market. This means that positive as well as negative reviews can help sell a book, since they both contribute to giving it publicity.¹⁵ Karl Berglund also notes the commercial advantages

of book reviews, mentioning that they are useful for publishers since they can indicate the quality of a novel and categorize it within a genre. The greatest advantage of a review excerpt, according to Berglund, is that a book can appear as authorized by critics and not only by its publisher.¹⁶

Both Svedjedal and Berglund acknowledge that not all media and critics have the same consecrational power. Regarding print media, national morning newspapers, the largest evening papers, and literary journals have the most power. Reviews published by the Swedish Bibliotekstjänst (The Library Service) lay the ground for what local libraries buy and are the most important instances of literary criticism, according to Svedjedal.¹⁷ In his study of review excerpts on the covers of Swedish detective novels, Berglund notes that neither TV, radio, nor the internet have managed to challenge critics from the daily newspapers in review excerpts. In his corpus, consisting of 568 reviews from 153 detective novels,¹⁸ Berglund observes that publishers resort to media of high prestige when possible, but they sometimes also need to turn to less powerful consecrational institutions, such as weekly magazines and book tip websites, to make it look as if a book has received critical acclaim.¹⁹

Moving on to critics, Svedjedal points out that Horace Engdahl is (or, when adjusting Svedjedal's reasoning after the crises in the Swedish Academy, rather "was") an especially important critic in Sweden, because of his important roles in the literary system – not just as a critic.²⁰ However, while one should thus recognize the potential impact of individual critics, Berglund's study shows that the mention of a reviewer's name in excerpts seems to be less important than indicating where the review was published. In other words, it is more important to sign the review "*Svenska Dagbladet*" than "Magnus Persson" or "*Dagens Nyheter*" than "Lotta Olsson."²¹

The main unit of analysis in this study is the review excerpt. It is necessary to point out that I also include so-called *blurbs* in the study and often refer to them by the term "review excerpt." According to Berglund – and Rye Andersen – who has devoted empirical attention to dust jackets, blurbs are not the same as review excerpts. Blurbs are instances where a publisher has asked another author to read a book manuscript and give a (positive) value judgment that can be printed on the cover.²² Hence, blurbs, to a large extent, correspond to specific legitimacy. Rye Andersen argues that review excerpts are more authentic than blurbs, since they are not ordered by a publisher. But Rye Andersen also questions the value of a review excerpt, since it is the result of a "copy and paste" activity: it is possible that the original review is more negative than it appears in the excerpt.²³ Berglund mentions that review excerpts end up as "expected superlatives," which lose their power,²⁴ and Rye Andersen describes blurbs as "worthless value judgments."²⁵ What we can gain from Berglund's and Rye Andersen's reasonings is that both blurbs and review excerpts risk becoming so general that they may be placed on the cover of any novel, but review excerpts may be seen as somewhat more reliable.

Rye Andersen asks whether blurbs are sometimes more valuable for an author than for a reader. An author "blurb" by another author with a high amount of cultural capital will result in the bestowal of cultural capital on the former. It is also less common for an author "below" another in terms of cultural capital to "blurb" the author of higher status than it is for the opposite to occur. The absence of blurbs may signal that no author surpasses the author in question in terms of cultural capital and that

the author's name speaks for itself.²⁶ We can interpret Rye Andersen's reasoning to raise the hypothesis that well-known and/or consecrated writers do not need review excerpts and blurbs to the same extent as lesser-known authors.

Because the present study borders the field of sociology of literature, it is appropriate briefly to review literature that reports on the reading habits of the Swedish population in relation to the variables of social class and gender. Svedjedal refers to numbers from Nordicom (the Nordic Information Centre for Media and Communication Research at the University of Gothenburg) and notes that the reading of books has increased and become more democratic than it was in the past. Reading has increased among people with low education, and publishers now focus less on the cultural elite than they did previously.²⁷ Numbers that measure media habits in the Swedish population in 2021, from Nordicom's *Mediebarometern 2021* (the Media Barometer), show that there are more women than men who read books daily. According to these statistics, 54% of Swedish women read books daily, while only 37% of men do.²⁸ Of these, 40% of the women read works of fiction on a daily basis, whereas the number was 25% for men.²⁹ *Svenska förläggareföreningen* (the Swedish Publishers' Association) and *Svenska bokhandlareföreningen* (the Swedish Book Sellers' Association) do not take gender into account in their statistics, but their report for 2021 contains a section called "Voices from the profession" in which a bookstore owner states that her main buyers are middle-aged women who prefer reading physical books, like to discuss books with shop attendants and fellow readers, and like to blog about them.³⁰

Assessing numbers from Nordicom and *Mediebarometern* over the years makes it clear that the internet has changed the Swedish population's reading habits.³¹ The advent of the internet has also changed literary criticism.³² Many amateurs have now entered the field of literary criticism, using platforms such as Amazon and private social media accounts to publish comments and critique.³³ Ann Steiner observes that there is an idealistic view on the internet when it comes to reading and sharing reading experiences; it is democratic and inclusive, and everybody has the opportunity to both write and read reviews. At the same time, critics argue that there is a risk that this is not the case, and Anglo-American cultural dominance on the internet will push smaller cultures to the periphery.³⁴

Steiner notes that there are differences and similarities in how professional critics and amateurs write reviews. These differences depend on genre. Amateurs review all genres, whereas critics mainly focus on novels of high prestige. For the latter, critics and amateurs write reviews that are similar in content and style, with amateurs imitating professional critics. For popular literature, there is a difference between the two.³⁵ This type of literature is less reviewed by critics. For amateur critics, it is often important to distance themselves from professional critics and defend the genre. Steiner mentions that a drive behind readers of popular literature is to be part of a reading community and share personal reading experiences, just like the women described in *Svenska förläggareföreningens* statistics.³⁶

Materials and Methods

This study is based on a corpus consisting of photographs of covers of paperback novels translated into Swedish. To create the corpus, which I refer to as "the bookstore

corpus,” I visited a bookstore in a mall in the outskirts of a medium-sized (80,000 inhabitants) Swedish city. The bookstore belonged to a well-known bookstore chain, with roots from the 1800’s. I asked for permission to take photographs of all the fiction paperback books. I photographed front and back covers but left out the inside of the covers, as including these would result in the handling of too many variables. Furthermore, front and back covers are the most important elements in the so-called reading order.³⁷ Since I was only interested in translated literature, I left out all novels originally written in Swedish. Books marketed as “classics” and “crime fiction” had their own shelves, and were not included. I noted that some books may have been misplaced, but I kept them in the corpus, since it was impossible to verify the genre of every book in the corpus.

After having photographed the covers, I created a spreadsheet with an overview of the different books in the corpus, noting their title, author, author’s gender, publisher, source language, and type of legitimacy. For the latter, I counted and categorized the excerpts according to their type of legitimacy and noted whether they came from the source culture (SC), the target culture (TC), or (an)other culture(s) (OC). The results from the corpus are analyzed using descriptive statistics.

The reason for choosing paperback novels is that they are most often not first editions.³⁸ Second and subsequent editions are often published in paperback, and here publishers have more data to access regarding a novel’s reception in a literary system. There will simply be more TC reviews to choose from than for first editions, where publishers will most likely need to resort to SC reviews. Since this article partly investigates what reviews (TC or SC) are most used on the book covers, it is paramount that the material not consist of first editions, but of second or subsequent editions.

In Sweden, the paperback novel has always belonged to the segment of so-called *billighetsböcker* – that is, ‘cheap books’.³⁹ The Swedish paperback novel had its first commercial upswing in the 1960’s, when it was common that first editions were published in the format. In the government white paper *Läsandets kultur* (“The culture of reading”) from 2012, it is stated that the paperback novel had a new boom in the last 15 years, but that the format is now used for reprints. Especially fiction is a common genre to publish in paperback, and the variation within this genre is wide, since both popular literature, literature of high prestige and classics are published in paperback. It is clear, though, that the paperback format is mostly devoted to titles that are published in large volumes, as well as bestsellers.⁴⁰ It is therefore expected that the corpus used in this article has a similar composition.

Results

The results section consists of two parts. The first focuses on the quantitative results from the bookstore corpus. I divide the population into groups according to gender and compare them. In the second part, I return to some observations from the quantitative analysis, highlight a few observations from the corpus, and discuss both in light of theory and previous research. To a large extent, in this part, I also devote attention to other observations that may be relevant for the theme of the special issue where this article is published.

The Bookstore Corpus: Quantitative Results

The investigated bookstore had a total of 660 books retailed in paperback as “Fiction.” Out of these 333 – or slightly more than 50% – were translations and hence included in the corpus. Books translated from English ($n = 234$) make up 70% of the corpus. Among the 333 books in the corpus, women authors dominate with 262 titles, and 69 are written by men. The distribution of female–male authors is 79% to 21%. There are two novels that I have not categorized as having either a female or male author. The Dutch author Marieke Lucas Rijneveld, who is represented in the corpus with *Obehaget om kvällen* (*The Discomfort of Evening*; Dutch original *De avond is ongemak*), identifies as partially non-binary, and Ambrose Parry (*Där inget vissnar mera*; English title *The Way of all Flesh*) is a pseudonym for Chris Brookmyre (a man) and Marisa Haetzman (a woman).⁴¹ Counting unique author names instead of titles and leaving out Rijneveld and Parry leads to 218 unique author names, distributed between 169 women and 49 men. This yields almost the same distribution (78%–22%) between female and male authors.

Together, the 333 books have 829 review excerpts on their covers distributed between the groups “women authors,” “men authors,” “non-binary” (Rijneveld), and “co-ed co-authors” (Parry). When categorizing the excerpts into the three kinds of legitimacy of Cattani and colleagues for the four groups of authors, as well as into their culture of origin, the bookstore corpus yields the numbers presented in Table 1.

Type of Legitimacy	Bourgeois				Popular				Specific				Total
Origin of excerpt	SC	TC	OC	Total	SC	TC	OC	Total	SC	TC	OC	Total	
Women authors (n = 262)	62	410	4	476	8	93	1	102	42	20	3	65	643
Men authors (n = 69)	22	136	4	162	0	6	0	6	8	2	4	14	182
Non-binary (n = 1)	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
Co-ed co-authors (n = 1)	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total	84	549	8	641	8	99	1	108	50	22	8	80	829

Table 1. Number of review excerpts in the corpus filtered by gender, origin of excerpt, and type of legitimacy.

In total, there are 643 review excerpts on female authors’ book covers and 182 for male authors. I will return to these numbers later on, where I will use them as points of departure for studying the distribution between the three kinds of legitimacy for these two groups.

Rijneveld and Parry only have two review excerpts each. In Table 2, I have excluded them to compare the two largest groups: women and men. Table 2 provides the means (M), standard deviations (SD), and minimum and maximum numbers of review excerpts for the two groups.

Gender	Number of review excerpts	M	SD	Min	Max
Women authors (n = 262)	643	2.45	1.34	0	6
Men authors (n = 69)	182	2.64	1.60	0	7
Total population (n = 331)	825	2.49	1.40	0	7

Table 2. Means, standard deviations, and minimum and maximum numbers of review excerpts filtered by gender.

On average, there are 2.45 review excerpts on female authors' covers and 2.64 excerpts on those of male authors. The number of review excerpts for male authors in the sample is slightly higher than for female authors, but this number is not statistically significant ($p = .33$),⁴² and there is no external validity. There is also more dispersion among the men ($SD = 1.60$) than among the women ($SD = 1.34$) for the number of review excerpts per cover. There are 17 books with no excerpts on their covers. Proportionally, these are fairly evenly distributed between men (4) and women (13). Two novels in the corpus have 7 review excerpts each.

Returning to Table 1, there is a clear preference from publishers to front review excerpts from the TC for all groups of authors. Table 3 is filtered by the variable "origin of excerpt" and provides the number (N) of review excerpts per culture of origin, together with their means.

Origin of excerpt	SC		TC		OC	
	N	M	N	M	N	M
Women (n = 262)	112	0.427	523	1.996	8	0.031
Men (n = 69)	30	0.435	144	2.087	8	0.116
Both groups (n = 331)	142	0.429	667	2.015	17	0.048

Table 3. Number of review excerpts filtered by gender and origin of excerpt.

Table 3 provides an answer to RQ1 and shows that there is almost no difference between the two groups concerning SC reviews ($M = .43$ for women and $.44$ for men) or TC reviews ($M = 2.0$ for the female authors and 2.1 for the male). Although the number of OC reviews is low, we note that OC review excerpts are used more on the covers of books by male authors ($M = .116$) than by female ones ($M = .031$).

Returning to Table 1, it provides the answer to RQ2. It shows that of the 829 review excerpts in the corpus, 641 (77%) originate from sources that can be categorized as granting bourgeois legitimacy. We can thus conclude that this type of legitimacy is most frequent in the corpus. There is a small difference between men and women regarding occurrences of bourgeois legitimacy. Using the numbers from Table 1, 643 for women and 162 for men, we note that excerpts signaling bourgeois legitimacy appear on the covers of books written by men in 90% of cases and in 74% of cases for women. On average, there are 2.35 review excerpts per cover categorized as granting bourgeois legitimacy for male authors and 1.82 for women. Of the 641 bourgeois legitimacy excerpts, there is a clear dominance of TC reviews for all groups. For women, the numbers are 13% SC, 86% TC, and 1% OC. For male authors, they are 14% SC, 84% TC, and 2% OC.

Of the 829 review excerpts, 108 cases (13% of the total) are categorized as providing popular legitimacy. For the total sample, popular legitimacy is the second most preferred type of legitimacy when Swedish publishers choose review excerpts for translated literature. One of the most evident results in the bookstore corpus is that an author's gender greatly influences a publisher's tendency to foreground excerpts categorized as popular legitimacy. For female authors' reviews, 16% are categorized as popular legitimacy, with only 3% for male authors. Another notable number in Table 1 is the preference for TC excerpts. Of the 108 cases of popular legitimacy, 91% are TC excerpts. The distribution between the three types of culture of origin for the reviews categorized as granting popular legitimacy is different for women and men. For women, the numbers are 8% SC, 91% TC, and 1% OC. For men, they are 0% SC, 100% TC, and 0% OC.

There are only 80 cases (10%) of reviews categorized as establishing specific legitimacy in the corpus. This shows that specific legitimacy is the least preferred type of legitimacy when Swedish publishers choose review excerpts for covers of translated paperback novels. There is a small difference between the two groups: 14% of male authors' reviews are categorized as providing specific legitimacy and 10% of female authors. There is an overweight of SC review excerpts, but the distribution – 63% SC versus 27% TC – is more even for specific legitimacy than for the other two types. In addition, the percentage of OC excerpts (10) is higher than for the other types of legitimacy. The distribution between the three types of culture of origin for the reviews categorized as signaling specific legitimacy is different for women and men. For female authors, the numbers are 65% SC, 31% TC, and 5% OC. For male authors, they are 57% SC, 14% TC, and 29% OC. It should be pointed out that the total number of excerpts categorized as providing specific legitimacy for male authors is low, and it is wise to not devote too much attention to the percentages.

The Bookstore Corpus: Qualitative Results and Discussion

Already in the descriptive presentation of the corpus, it was possible to conclude that there is a large dominance of female authors. Unfortunately, I do not have any bases of comparison to shed light on this observation, such as statistics showing the distribution between male and female authors in translation on other bookstore shelves in Sweden. However, the earlier numbers from *Mediebarometern 2021* showed that women are more avid readers than men. In the corpus, there are many books targeting women that are written by women. These numbers may partially explain female dominance in the corpus. *Svenska förläggareföreningen's* statistics for the most sold authors in 2021 show that two female authors from the Anglo-American literary field topped sales lists for the fiction genre: Delia Owens, with *Där kräftorna sjunger* (*Where the Crawdads Sing*), and Lucinda Riley, with *Den saknade systern* (*The Missing Sister*).⁴³ Both of these books appear in the bookstore corpus together with a large amount of romance and feel-good novels. Women are most often credited as authors in these genres, which partly explains the uneven gender balance in the corpus.

As noted in Table 2, the average number of review excerpts per book cover is 2.49. According to Rye Andersen, covers of paperbacks are normally richer in blurbs than first editions.⁴⁴ This is natural, as the reception of a novel is unknown in first editions.

In the corpus, I have no first editions to compare with, but the average number of review excerpts appears quite low. One might have expected that there would have been more excerpts, since paperbacks, according to Rye Andersen, are more commercial in their design than first edition hardback covers.⁴⁵ The average number of review excerpts per cover appears to be especially low in light of Berglund's results. He investigated crime fiction from 1998 to 2011, and noted that the number of excerpts from reviews increased during this period. The books from the latter period tended to have three to four quotes on the cover. In Berglund's corpus of 153 novels in paperback, there was only one book that did not have any review excerpts on its cover.⁴⁶ In the bookstore corpus, there are 17 books without excerpts (5% of the corpus). The difference between Berglund's and my results can be explained by genre. It seems safe to conclude that crime fiction is a more commercial genre than general fiction, and Rye Andersen's theories that the more commercial a product is the more review excerpts it contains may support this hypothesis.

Earlier, we noted that there were slightly more review excerpts on book covers by male authors. Men also have an overweight of reviews categorized as bourgeois and, particularly, specific legitimacy. Although the difference between men and women is not statistically significant, this result is interesting considering previous research. As we remember from Rye Andersen's reasoning, well-known and/or consecrated writers do not need paratextual consecrational markers to the same extent as lesser-known authors. As I created an overview of the authors in the corpus, I noticed that the number of well-known and/or consecrated writers was higher among the men than the women. Even though Rye Andersen's results mostly concern blurbs and are based on a smaller sample, it is possible to raise the hypothesis that the bookstore corpus partly contradicts Rye Andersen's theories. The results imply that publishers consider that translated women authors, although many of them are less well known than their male counterparts, need fewer review excerpts to sell. This line of thought is particularly pertinent given the earlier observations that books targeting women dominate the bookstore corpus and statistics show that women are more frequent readers. These two observations strengthen a hypothesis that could be formulated as such: books written by (and for) women do not need the same number of review excerpts as books written by men, since they are likely to sell anyway.

As pointed out earlier, Svedjedal mentions that one of the most prestigious critics in Sweden is Horace Engdahl. However, his name does not appear in the corpus. This may be partly because there are many literary genres represented in the corpus, including genres that would not be subject to any reviews from critics in the Swedish Academy. One may also hypothesize that Engdahl's name, as hinted earlier, might have a slightly negative ring to it following conflict in the Swedish Academy. A third explanation may simply be that a few years have passed since Svedjedal's article, and a new generation of critics has emerged. If there is a new generation, then Lotta Olsson and Ulrika Milles seem to be two of its most prominent figures. Reviews by the former (who was indirectly mentioned as an important critic by Berglund) are frequent in the corpus and always appear with the newspaper she works for, *Dagens Nyheter*, which is a national newspaper of high prestige. What is especially interesting with Olsson is that her name appears on the covers of translated books categorized as novels of high prestige and on feel-good novels. In this way, she shares characteristics with the ama-

teur critics studied by Steiner, who review all types of fiction. Some studies show that the border between highbrow culture and popular culture is becoming increasingly blurred, and Olsson's name appearing on the covers of all kinds of genres is in line with these theories.⁴⁷ Regarding Olsson, it should be noted that she is categorized as a "critic" by *Dagens Nyheter* – that is, as a person writing book reviews – but at the same time, she appears just as much as a person giving book tips, i.e. more informal recommendations. Every Saturday Olsson has a column in *Dagens Nyheter* where she gives book tips, which often concern genres such as feelgood or crime fiction, and not only novels of high prestige.⁴⁸ An explanation for Olsson's reviewing of all kinds of literature may hence be her status both as a critic and a person giving book tips, which are two different genres within the world of literary criticism.

Above I noted that Olsson's name always appeared with the name of the newspaper that she writes for. As I delved deeper into the cases of bourgeois legitimacy in the raw data – the photographs of the book covers – I noted that most of the review excerpts came from high prestige Swedish newspapers, such as *Dagens Nyheter* and *Svenska Dagbladet*. It is also common to refer to the so-called *BTJ*, which is an abbreviation for Bibliotekstjänst.⁴⁹ This observation is in line with previous research by Svedjedal and Berglund. The fact that the majority of the excerpts used on the covers come from the TC indicates that publishers ascribe them the highest status, or, more likely from a publisher's point of view, the highest commercial potential – even higher than review excerpts from the hypercentral Anglo-American system. It seems as if publishers have confidence that readers trust the Swedish literary system and its consecrators, especially regarding female authors. Interestingly, the same is also true for the reviews categorized as popular legitimacy, where there are few cases of SC reviews. The cases of popular legitimacy are most often excerpts of reviews taken from social media. The risk that Steiner mentions about the internet resulting in the Anglo-American system pushing other cultures to the periphery has not become a reality for review excerpts, where SC excerpts – including Anglo-American ones – are seen as much less important compared to their Swedish counterparts.

The corpus shows some inconclusive patterns in the Swedish literary system's relationship to the Anglo-American system. According to studies by Chatarina Edfeldt and colleagues in 2019, 28% of all books published in Sweden were translations.⁵⁰ The equivalent number in the bookstore of my study is above 50%. Furthermore, of the translations in my corpus 70% are from English. This result is in line with previous research, which shows the dominance of English as a source language.⁵¹ It seems as if results from the bookstore corpus both contradict and verify previous research. There is a large amount of translated literature in the corpus, and there is a large Anglo-American dominance in terms of books retailed in the store, but reviews from the Anglo-American literary system are not used to the same extent as one might expect. Another observation that suggests that the Anglo-American system is less powerful than expected is that a number of the authors in the corpus writing in English have their roots in what could, in Wallersteinian terminology, be referred to as the periphery. Ayobami Adebayo, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and Shubhangi Swarup are a few examples.

In the corpus, there are no numbers signaling the critic's gender, but as I created an overview of the corpus, I noted that for bourgeois legitimacy, there is an equal gender

balance among the critics. For popular legitimacy, there is no such balance. In all cases where the person behind a review can be identified, it is a woman. This observation is in line with *Mediebarometern 2021*'s numbers and with *Svenska förläggareföreningen*'s report, showing that women are the most avid readers and the ones who are most likely to be interested in sharing reading experiences and discussing books. In the corpus, it is possible to see a direct link between popular legitimacy, feel-good literature, and amateur critics. The corpus shows that the instances of popular legitimacy are especially frequent on the covers of feel-good novels. From Steiner's observations that readers of popular literature want to be a part of a reading community, share reading experiences, and defend a genre, one can draw the conclusion that popular legitimacy has just as much worth as bourgeois legitimacy for feel-good novels, not least because these readers are credible; they are part of the same reading community as book buyers. It should be noted that there are also cases of bourgeois legitimacy on the covers of feel-good novels – even from the high prestige newspapers (cf. Lotta Olsson earlier). However, there are no male reviewers for feel-good novels.

As Steiner noted, the number of amateur critics has increased with the advent of the internet, but popular legitimacy is not used nearly as much as bourgeois legitimacy in the corpus. Instead, it seems as if Berglund's observation that other types of media are not used to the same extent as reviews from traditional media is more correct for the sample in question.

In this article, I do not focus on how review excerpts are formulated to any large extent, but for popular legitimacy, it is interesting to point out that "easy read" is sometimes used as a sign of quality. On the cover of Sarah Morgan's *Vinterbröllop (A Wedding in December)*, there are two excerpts from reviews pointing out that the novel is easy to read: "A charming and easy to read mix of love with humor and a whole lot of coziness to enjoy" (Boklysten) and "Well-written, easy to read and a real page-turner" (Emmas bokhylla).⁵² "Well-written" and "easy to read" are two qualities of a book that are not often included in critics' reviews, whereas they can perfectly well be combined when a review is written by a blogger. One may raise the hypothesis of whether the value judgment "easy read" is an example of amateur critics taking on a "bildungsauftrag". Is it a way to encourage more people to discover literature? As signaled earlier, Svedjedal notes that the reading of books has increased and become more democratic. The fact that "easy read" is branded as a quality criterion for a book relates to Svedjedal's reasoning about the democratization of the reading of fiction. It is possible that "easy read" literature is commercial, but the commercialization of reading and literature has also led to it becoming more accessible to all strata of society. This appears to be the case for feel-good literature. All this being said, however, it is important to remember that the review excerpt, as mentioned earlier, straddles the review and the advertising genre: while it to a large extent says something about the status of a book, it is also a commercial paratext that is supposed to entice potential readers to buy the book in question.

In a volume on feel-good literature, Piia Posti and Maria Nilsson mention that feel-good is a genre that is read all over the world; it is transnational and read as often in its original language as in translation. Drawing on ideas from other literary scholars, they note that all genre-literature should be viewed more broadly, namely as different "worlds," where books, agents, and institutions, such as editors, publishers, readers, journals, and even fictional characters, are all important ingredients.⁵³ Bearing

the above in mind, it is interesting to note that the transnational perspective is not reflected in the review excerpts, where TC review excerpts dominate. Instead, one recognizes the pattern of bourgeois legitimacy, where TC reviews are judged as most important. It is also highly probable that it is much easier for publishers to search for reviews “closer to home” than peruse blogs and social media accounts from all over the world to find fitting quotes. This line of reasoning is partly supported by Berglund, who mentions that to easily find reviews to quote, publishers use subscription services to databases containing most national newspapers.⁵⁴

Another observation concerning the review excerpts categorized as granting popular legitimacy is that they could be defined as book tips instead of reviews following specific criteria. As Steiner notes, the most important thing for book bloggers and influencers seems to be to interact with other readers rather than casting value judgments on a book, and it seems to be these aspects that publishers choose to focus on when choosing excerpts for covers.

Earlier, I noted that there is a clear dominance for TC review excerpts in the category bourgeois legitimacy. However, this is not the case for specific legitimacy, where SC reviews dominate, specifically reviews from the Anglo-American literary system. At first glance, it may seem as if the hypercentral Anglo-American literary system has an important consecrational power. At the same time, the dominance of SC excerpts may be explained by the fact that the strategy of using blurbs is not widespread in Scandinavia.⁵⁵ In addition, the fact that blurbs, according to Rye Andersen, seem to be common on the covers of Anglo-American literature but only appear 50 times in the corpus suggests that many SC blurbs have been left out and not judged as important to translate into Swedish.⁵⁶

Among the review excerpts categorized as granting specific legitimacy, there are some cases where cultural agents other than authors have blurbed a novel. These agents are often people with the right kind of capital, for example, politicians or artists. For Colson Whitehead’s *Den underjordiska järnvägen* (*The Underground Railroad*), Barack Obama and Oprah Winfrey – two African-American consecrators with a high amount of cultural capital – are foregrounded. On the back cover of Gregory David Robert’s *Shantaram*, there is a review by Isabella Lövin from *Femina*. Lövin has three important roles as a consecrator: politician, journalist, and author. The fact that a female politician’s review from a magazine targeting women is used raises questions about whether it is an attempt by the publisher to attract readers to a story about a man that is written by a man.

Finally, as noted earlier, Svedjedal points out that both positive and negative reviews may assist sales figures. This is not the case for the books in the corpus, where there are no instances in which excerpts expressing negative criticism are used. It is still possible, though, that Rye Andersen’s “creative copy-paste strategies” have resulted in review excerpts appearing more positive than they were at the beginning.

Implications of the Study and Methods Discussion

Although this study largely consists of quantitative descriptive results mapping the corpus, it has implications beyond the immediate material analyzed. For one, the findings contribute more empirical evidence to the field of translation sociology and

the sociology of literature. This study also contributes results to the book market, mainly publishers and bookstores, by showing what a potential book buyer experiences in a bookstore in a snapshot of time. It also contributes insights on book publishers' strategies when choosing reviews to quote and may lay the ground for changing these practices.

Another possible implication of the study is that it may contribute to theoretical discussions on the power of the paratext. I earlier mentioned that review excerpts are epitexts turned peritexts. In further studies one may ask what happens when uncommercial epitexts in the shape of reviews are quoted, words are taken out of their context, and transformed into commercial peritexts placed on the cover of a novel. How does this strategy affect the critics writing the reviews, and what importance do the readers allot to the review excerpts when choosing a novel?

There are some methodological limitations to this study. Using only one bookstore's assortment of books gives a sample that represents one moment in time in one specific bookstore. I can only draw conclusions about the sample. In the future, it may be possible to extend the corpus with more bookstores or create other corpora that make more comparisons possible, such as a corpus of literature written in Swedish or a corpus of literature in another country. Another methodological choice that may not have affected the results, but still should be problematized, is the choice of bookstore where the material was collected. The bookstore chain in question has had a long tradition of selling course books to university students, and this academic legacy may still influence the genres and literary segments that are retailed in the store. As I assembled the corpus, I noted that many genres and literary segments were represented, but it is possible that another bookstore would have had another composition of genres and literary segments. However, the choice of store will probably not have had any major effect on the variables relating to gender that have been the center of attention in this study.

Since this study is limited, there are variables that I have not been able to investigate further. I have not taken different publishing houses into account in the quantitative analysis, nor have I contacted publishers or consulted previous research on the publishing industry. Instead, I have taken book buyers' perspectives and investigated what they come across when browsing the shelves of a bookstore.

One of the strengths, but also one of the weaknesses, of quantitative studies is the strategy of categorizing and quantifying. A strength of quantitative studies is the possibility of comparing different (gender) groups to reveal differences between them and, as a next step, taking action to change uneven distributions of power and goods. In this study, categorizing and labeling different groups depending on biological gender may be seen as somewhat essentialist, since it contributes to perpetuating categories that are not clear-cut in real-life society. This article may function as a first step to a quantitative mapping of the field, which could, in turn, be followed by qualitative approaches to problematizing the concept of gender and sex to a much larger extent. Another issue regarding categorization relates to the three kinds of legitimacy. As I conducted the study, I ran into cases where the borders between the different kinds of legitimacy were not always clear-cut. This is especially true for specific legitimacy, where, for example, Oprah Winfrey may be categorized both as a critic and another author. However, I argue that the corpus is so large that a few categorization errors have not affected the results.

Another methodological issue in this study is that I used only descriptive statistics. Although there are a few calculations of p-values, it should be possible in the future to apply inferential statistics and draw conclusions about the population at large, and not only about the sample.

Conclusion

In this article, I have investigated two research questions using a corpus of 829 review excerpts from the covers of 333 paperback novels translated into Swedish. In the first research question, I asked whether gender affects whether SC or TC review excerpts are foregrounded. The results show that there is almost no difference between women and men in this regard and that there is a clear preference for TC review excerpts in both groups. It should be noted that the covers of books by male authors tend to include an excerpt from a culture other than the SC or the TC to a slightly greater extent than books written by female authors. In the second question, I investigated the kind of legitimacy (bourgeois, popular, or specific) that was most frequent in the corpus and if there were any differences in their frequency depending on gender. The results show that there is a large overweight of bourgeois legitimacy from the TC for both groups.

At first glance, the answers to both research questions may appear to have yielded a null result. When scrutinizing the numbers further, the results show that there are differences between the groups. There is a large difference between men and women in the use of popular legitimacy – female authors are significantly more represented. Another difference is male authors' preferences for review excerpts categorized as specific legitimacy. In addition to answering the research questions, the study has also yielded other results. The most striking of which is the large number of women authors in the corpus. Another result is that Anglo-American consecrational power seems to be much less used by publishers than expected.

Notes

- 1 Luise von Flotow, *Translating Women* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press 2011); Luise von Flotow and Hala Kamal (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Translation, Feminism and Gender* (Abingdon: Taylor and Francis 2020). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315158938>.
- 2 Garima Sharma, "An Indian woman's room of one's own. A reflection on Hindi Translations of Virginia Wolf's A Room of One's Own," in *The Routledge Handbook of Translation, Feminism and Gender*, eds. Luise von Flotow and Hala Kamal (Abingdon: Taylor and Francis 2020), 184–195; Elizabeth Gibbels, "The Wollestonecraft Meme: Translations, Appropriations, and Receptions of Mary Wollstonecraft's Feminism," in *The Routledge Handbook of Translation, Feminism and Gender*, eds. Luise von Flotow and Hala Kamal (Abingdon: Taylor and Francis 2020), 173–83; Sanaa Benmessaoud, "Maghrebi women's literature in translation," in *The Routledge Handbook of Translation, Feminism and Gender*, eds. Luise von Flotow and Hala Kamal (Abingdon: Taylor and Francis 2020), 64–82; Rajkumar Eligedi, "Volga as an international agent of feminist translation", in *The Routledge Handbook of Translation, Feminism and Gender*, eds. Luise von Flotow and Hala Kamal (Abingdon: Taylor and Francis 2020), 17–31.

- 3 Andrew Chesterman, "The Name and Nature of Translator Studies," *HERMES – Journal of Language and Communication in Business* vol. 22 (2009:42), 6, <https://doi.org/10.7146/hjlc.v22i42.96844>.
- 4 See Jana Rüegg "Marketing Frenchness. The Paratextual Trajectory of Patrick Modiano's Swedish Book Covers," in *Paratexts in Translation. Nordic Perspectives*, eds. Richard Pleijel and Malin Podlevskikh Carlström (Berlin: Frank und Timme Verlag 2022), 168.
- 5 Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997), 1–4.
- 6 See Marcus Axelsson, "Translating Feminism. Paratexts in the Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish Translations of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963)," in *Paratexts in Translation. Nordic Perspectives*, eds. Richard Pleijel and Malin Podlevskikh Carlström (Berlin: Frank und Timme Verlag 2022), 93–121; Valérie Henitiuk, "Translating Woman: Reading the Female through the Male." *Métra* vol. 44 (1999:3), 469–84, doi:10.7202/003045ar.
- 7 Karl Berglund, "Bokanalyser bortom verk och författarauktorisering: Exemplet recensionsutdrag på samtida svenska pocketdeckare," in *Textkritik som analysmetod: Bidrag till en konferens anordnad av Nordiskt Nätverk för Editionsfilologer 2–4 oktober 2015*, eds. Paula Henrikson, Mats Malm & Petra Söderlund (Stockholm: Svenska vitterhetssamfundet 2017), 173.
- 8 Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, 4–5.
- 9 Cf. Berglund, "Bokanalyser bortom verk och författarauktorisering: Exemplet recensionsutdrag på samtida svenska pocketdeckare," 172.
- 10 Maria-Lluïsa Gea-Valor, "Advertising Books: A Linguistic Analysis of Blurbs," *Ibérica* (2005:10), 45, <https://revistaiberica.org/index.php/iberica/article/view/445>.
- 11 See Annika Rockenberger, "Video Game Framings," in *Examining Paratextual Theory and its Application in Digital Culture*, eds. Nadine Desrochers and Daniel Apollon (Hershey, Penn: IGI Global 2014), 252–286.
- 12 Kathryn Batchelor, *Translation and Paratexts* (London and New York: Routledge 2018), 160.
- 13 Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (Cambridge: Polity, 1993).
- 14 Gino Cattani, Simone Ferriani, and Paul D Allison, "Insiders, Outsiders, and the Struggle for Consecration in Cultural Fields: A Core-Periphery Perspective," *American Sociological Review* vol. 79(2014:2), 261, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122414520960>.
- 15 Johan Svedjedal, "Kritiska tankar: Om litteraturkritiken," in *Litteraturens offentlighet*, eds. Anders Olsson and Torbjörn Forslid (Lund: Studentlitteratur 2009), 162.
- 16 Berglund, "Bokanalyser bortom verk och författarauktorisering: Exemplet recensionsutdrag på samtida svenska pocketdeckare," 175.
- 17 Svedjedal, "Kritiska tankar: Om litteraturkritiken," 168–169.
- 18 Berglund, "Bokanalyser bortom verk och författarauktorisering: Exemplet recensionsutdrag på samtida svenska pocketdeckare," 171.
- 19 Berglund, "Bokanalyser bortom verk och författarauktorisering: Exemplet recensionsutdrag på samtida svenska pocketdeckare", 176.
- 20 Svedjedal, "Kritiska tankar: Om litteraturkritiken," 169.
- 21 Berglund, "Bokanalyser bortom verk och författarauktorisering: Exemplet recensionsutdrag på samtida svenska pocketdeckare," 176–177.
- 22 Berglund, "Bokanalyser bortom verk och författarauktorisering: Exemplet recensionsutdrag på samtida svenska pocketdeckare," 173–174; Tomas Rye Andersen, "Omslag," *Passage – Tidsskrift för Litteratur Og Kritik* vol. 22 (2007:57), 76–78, <https://doi.org/10.7146/pas.v22i57.1393>.
- 23 Rye Andersen, "Omslag", 76–78.

- 24 Berglund, "Bokanalyser bortom verk och författarauktorisering: Exemplet recensionsutdrag på samtida svenska pocketdeckare," 173.
- 25 Rye Andersen, "Omslag," 78.
- 26 Rye Andersen, "Omslag," 79–80.
- 27 Svedjedal, "Kritiska tankar: Om litteraturkritiken," 165.
- 28 Nordicom, *Mediebarometern 2021*, (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet 2022), 78. <http://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1659067/FULLTEXT02.pdf>
- 29 Nordicom, *Mediebarometern 2021*, 85.
- 30 Erik Wikberg, *Bokförsäljningsstatistiken helåret 2021*, (Stockholm: Svenska förläggareföreningen & Svenska bokhandlareföreningen 2022), 18–19, <https://forlaggare.se/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/bokforsaljningsstatistiken-2021-helar.pdf>
- 31 See Nordicom's archive: https://www.nordicom.gu.se/sv/publikationer/sok-bocker-och-rapporter?combine=&field_publicerad_r_target_id=All&field_publicerad_lang_1_target_id_2=All&field_kategori_1_target_id=3121
- 32 Ann Steiner, "Digital litteraturkritik," in *Litteraturens nätverk. Berättande på internet*, ed. Christian Lenemark (Lund, Studentlitteratur 2012), 51–52.
- 33 Ann Steiner, "Amatörkritik på internet," in *Litteraturens offentligheter*, eds Anders Olsson, and Torbjörn Forslid (Lund: Studentlitteratur 2009), 178.
- 34 Steiner, "Amatörkritik på internet", 181.
- 35 It is sometimes necessary to make a distinction between literature of high prestige and popular literature, and the fairest way of doing this is to define the former as "books that are reviewed in prestigious contexts, are dealt with in literary history, and receive literary prizes" and the latter as literature that is popular, and, most often, commercial. See Ann Steiner, *Litteraturen i mediasamhället* (Lund: Studentlitteratur 2019), 256–257.
- 36 Steiner, "Amatörkritik på internet," 183–185.
- 37 Karl Berglund, *Mordförpackningar. Omslag, titlar, kringmaterial till svenska pocketdeckare 1998-2011*, (Uppsala: Avdelningen för litteratursociologi vid Uppsala universitet 2016), 14.
- 38 SOU 2012:65. *Läsandets kultur* <https://data.riksdagen.se/fil/F7768127-700F-4FAD-9110-5FoD9025108E> 224.
- 39 Gunnel Furuland, "Billigbokens förändringar 1940-2017. Från folkböcker till pocketserier. Definitioner, förlagskulturer och spridningsvägar," in *Böckernas tid. Svenska Förläggareföreningen och svensk bokmarknad sedan 1943*, ed. Johan Svedjedal (Stockholm: Svenska Förläggareföreningen, 2018), 297–300; see also Berglund, *Mordförpackningar. Omslag, titlar, kringmaterial till svenska pocketdeckare 1998-2011*, 18.
- 40 SOU 2012:65. *Läsandets kultur*, 224–225.
- 41 Canongate. <https://canongate.co.uk/contributors/13184-ambrose-parry/>.
- 42 Calculated using a two-tailed t-test.
- 43 Wikberg, *Bokförsäljningsstatistiken helåret 2021*, 7.
- 44 Rye Andersen, "Omslag," 81.
- 45 Rye Andersen, "Omslag," 76.
- 46 Berglund, "Bokanalyser bortom verk och författarauktorisering: Exemplet recensionsutdrag på samtida svenska pocketdeckare," 171, 175–176.
- 47 Marc Verboord, "Market logic and cultural consecration in French, German and American bestseller lists, 1970–2007," *Poetics* vol. 39 (2011), 290.
- 48 See for example Lotta Olsson, "Lotta Olsson tipsar: Här är 5 nya deckare du bör läsa", *Dagens Nyheter*, 2023-02-18, <https://www.dn.se/kultur/lotta-olsson-tipsar-har-ar-5-nya-deckare-du-bor-lasa-2/>
- 49 One of the most quoted newspapers within the category of SC bourgeois legitimacy is *Kirkus Books*. *Kirkus Books* specializes in writing short reviews for the book industry to

- use. It resembles BTJ, although BTJ targets the public sector, whereas *Kirkus Books* targets an industry with commercial interests.
- 50 Chatarina Edfeldt, Erik Falk, Andreas Hedberg, Yvonne Lindqvist, Cecilia Schwartz, and Paul Tenngart, *Northern Crossings. Translation, Circulation and the Literary Semi-periphery* (New York: Bloombury Academic 2022), 201. <https://library.oapen.org/viewer/web/viewer.html?file=/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/52488/9781501374265.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- 51 Johan Heilbron, "Towards a Sociology of Translation: Book Translations as a Cultural World-System," *European Journal of Social Theory* vol. 2 (1999:4), 434. <https://doi.org/10.1177/136843199002004002>
- 52 Quotes from the cover of Sarah Morgan, *Vinterbröllop* (Stockholm: Harper Collins 2021).
- 53 Piia K. Posti and Maria Nilsson, "Förord" in *Speglingar av feelgood. Genre, etikett eller känsla?*, eds. Piia K. Posti, and Maria Nilsson (Växjö: Linnaeus University Press 2022), 2–3.
- 54 Berglund, "Bokanalyser bortom verk och författarauktorisering: Exemplet recensionsutdrag på samtida svenska pocketdeckare," 176.
- 55 Berglund, "Bokanalyser bortom verk och författarauktorisering: Exemplet recensionsutdrag på samtida svenska pocketdeckare," 173.
- 56 Rye Andersen, "Omslag," 81.

BERIT GRØNN & BRITT W. SVENHARD

MAGIC REALISM AND THE FEMININE IN *ENCANTO*

Genre and Narrative Mode as Paratext

Introduction

The Oscar-winning Disney film *Encanto* (2021) was hailed for its authentic representation of Colombian culture, but it also sparked a discussion on film's ability to capture aspects of a culture – or even change the global image of a country.¹ Many international reviews claim that the film is a tribute to the Colombian concept of family and find a dissemination of matriarchal ideals in *Encanto*'s portrayal of a Colombian household dominated by female characters.² Furthermore, reviews highlight that the animated musical is influenced by the Colombian Gabriel García Márquez's iconic novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (*Cien años de soledad*), particularly through the literary style *magic realism* often associated with García Márquez.³

Encanto is constructed around a family saga of the Madrigal family – 'los Madrigal'. The story takes place in a Colombian setting, in the village Encanto, and in the family's house the Casa Madrigal (mainly referred to as 'Casita'). It is located in a rural area in the mountains, in an atmosphere of magical happenings. We follow the main character Mirabel as she has to figure out her place in her own extraordinary family, being the only child not blessed with a magical gift. Step by step, Mirabel discovers that the magic surrounding her family's house is in danger. The flame of a candle known as the Magic Candle or simply Alma's candle, which contains the miracle that blessed the Madrigal family, is about to be extinguished. In the end, crisis is averted as Mirabel reminds the family matriarch that love, respect and mutual care is the basis of the Madrigal family's many blessings.

Mirabel can be seen as an anti-hero in the sense that she is not the typical princess that appears in traditional Disney films. She does not share the physical traits of Disney female lead characters like Ariel, Cinderella or Belle, but is an ordinary girl, with specs and somewhat heavy physical features. This unconventional beauty is presented as a positive, clearly addressing a more diverse, modern audience able to identify and sympathize with Mirabel. In parallel to the film's general portrayal of the matriarchal

family ideals, the character of Mirabel can thus be seen as raising questions of gender representation. Some reviewers, on the other hand, see the film as a continuation of generic structures of Disney films.⁴

This essay does not attempt to evaluate the merit of *Encanto* as a conveyor of Colombian culture or literary traditions – as argued in a number of reviews – nor to assess the progressive aspects of Mirabel’s character in terms of politics or genre. Instead, we aim to investigate how Norwegian reviewers of *Encanto* have navigated the film’s portrayal of culture and gender, particularly with regard to the relationship between the genre conventions and the presentation of the feminine. While clarifying certain aspects of *Encanto*’s reception in Scandinavia, our investigation also contributes to the understanding of transcultural reception in a more general sense, especially relating to how notions of genre and gender are transmitted across languages and cultures.

Since viewers around the world may have responded differently to *Encanto* according to a number of variables – their cultural background and knowledge of languages, as well as their familiarity with Disney productions, magic realism, and García Márquez’s literary universe – we have limited our study to questions concerning how genre knowledge may influence the different ways the film is reviewed by Norwegian critics.

Theoretically, genre and film reviews can be viewed as paratexts.⁵ We take as our point of departure Gérard Genette’s concept of paratext and paratextuality and his classification of paratextual elements.⁶ However, as Genette was mainly preoccupied with literature we rely on Kathryn Batchelor’s idea that it is possible to adapt Genette’s framework to other kinds of texts, such as films.⁷ The paratextual value can be vested in different types of manifestation, including the genre to which it belongs, and verbal and non-verbal texts.⁸

Since paratexts may influence both the preconception and the reception of *Encanto*, a survey of international reviews – for instance Spanish and English-language (*core*) film reviews – would have been highly relevant with regard to culturally situated understanding of genre and the possibly varying perceptions of the connection between genre and gender. Such a survey, however, lies beyond the scope of this essay. Instead, we have chosen to focus on the (*peripheral*) context of Norway and have selected a set of Norwegian reviews for close scrutiny.⁹ We aim to discover to what extent the element of magic realism and its connection to the feminine in *Encanto* is appreciated by Norwegian critics when they address their Norwegian readers. Considering the core/periphery dynamics between Colombian, Anglophone and Norwegian settings, it is especially important to gauge reviewers’ recognition of the appeal of the female characters (particularly of the main character Mirabel) in relation to some of the feminine aspects being virtually “untranslatable” into a Norwegian peripheral perspective.

One Hundred Years of Solitude, *Encanto* and Magic Realism

García Márquez’s novel is an internationally recognized canonical novel, first published in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1967.¹⁰ It has been translated into more than 35 languages, and is highly researched.¹¹ Several of García Márquez’s other novels have been adapted to the screen, for example *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* [*Crónica de una muerte anunciada*] and *Love in the Time of Cholera* [*El amor en los tiempos del cólera*].¹²

The novel *One Hundred Years* is constructed around a family saga: the multigenerational story of the Buendía family. The story takes place in the fictional town of Macondo, a rural and tropical location thought to be on Colombia's northern Caribbean coast, and it is set during the span of a 100 years against the backdrop of ongoing civil wars. The novel portrays everyday life, state brutality and politics. It deals with folklore and the common people, in an atmosphere of magical happenings, superstition and exaggeration, which are often linked to the everyday and domestic life in a household of women. The novel alternates between the real and the magic, using the same narrative voice, the omniscient narrator.

According to García Márquez, magic realism [*el realismo mágico*] is a narrative style, a stylistic phenomenon, and he has often stated that his magic realism comes from his grandmother's storytelling that included folktales and superstitions from the rural region of Colombia.¹³ Maria-Elena Angulo points out that magic realism is the juxtaposition of natural and supernatural elements without conflict.¹⁴ The fusion of reality, imagination and superstition is perceived as a natural part of normal existence, or being, and supernatural events do not surprise any of the fictional characters. According to Angulo, García Márquez is an expert in using natural and supernatural elements without transition and in this way, the barriers of time and space break down.¹⁵ Thus, the combination of natural and supernatural elements demonstrates the limitations of science and rationality.¹⁶

García Márquez is considered one of the main exponents of magic realism, and the term is often used to characterise the New Novel of Latin American fiction in the 1960s and 1970s. However, it has its origins in Europe and was already present in Latin American fiction in the 1930s. The term appeared for the first time in 1925 in the book *Nach Expressionismus. Magischer Realismus* by the German art critic Franz Roh. Roh used the term as an aesthetic category, a way of representing the mystery inherent in things (a concept created by the artificial modes of the surrealists).¹⁷ The Venezuelan author and essayist Arturo Uslar Pietri (1906–2001) used the term in the 1940s, defining a new prose “[...] where man is a mystery among realistic data.”¹⁸

The Cuban author Alejo Carpentier (1904–1980) was one of the initiators of this mode in the New Latin American novel. His essay-prologue to the novel *El reino de este mundo* [*The Kingdom of this World*] from 1949 can be characterised as a kind of *manifesto* for the New Latin American fiction.¹⁹ In his essay-prologue, Carpentier encourages Latin American writers to look to the American continent as a source of inspiration for how to define themselves, rather than the foreign European cultural models by which Latin American writers had been strongly influenced. From his point of view, *lo real maravilloso* and the “American marvellous” presupposes faith.²⁰

Theorists such as Irlemar Chiami and Graciela N. Ricci have attempted to establish theoretical principles of magic realism as a narrative discourse, emphasising the differences between the marvellous and the fantastic. Chiami points out that the fantastic is based on the “poetics of the uncertain,” with a merging of the natural and the supernatural. In *realismo maravilloso*, on the contrary, the unusual is incorporated into reality, and there is an “effect of enchantment” produced by the nondisjunction of natural/supernatural (semantic aspect) and by the internal causality of the narrative (syntactic aspect).²¹ According to Ricci, marvellous discourse would reproduce the supernatural universe, which is accepted by the reader without question. Fantastic dis-

course departing from a realist discourse would have its “familiar reality” interrupted in the unusual or the unknown reality.²² Thus, marvellous realism does not avoid the “realia” nor eliminate causality, and the reader accepts the coexistence of both worlds. In other words, *magic realism* signifies a new form of representation aiming to draw a multivalent image of reality: “The inclusion of magical realism itself in a text provokes readers to reflect on what they are willing to believe and on their assumptions of the reality.”²³ In this way, magic realistic fiction allows a plurality of readings. Geetha, for instance, suggests that one interpretation of *One Hundred Years* might be that it tells the story of the female life of Úrsula Iguarán, but could also be the story of the literal life of the town Macondo and its inhabitants.²⁴

Encanto was an instant, global, and pop cultural success, in the tradition of so many Disney productions in recent years. Although *Encanto* was not promoted as an adaptation of *One Hundred Years*, the filmmakers claim that the film is inspired by the novel and shares some common features, such as the appearance of yellow butterflies, the family saga, and the imminent destruction of their home and village. In both *One Hundred Years* and in *Encanto* there are characters associated with magical elements. For instance, in the novel the female character Amaranta dies at a very old age, precisely as she had predicted, and the male character Mauricio Babilonia has a “halo of butterflies.”²⁵ In the film, Mirabel wears a costume embroidered with butterflies at the gift ceremony, signifying metamorphosis and renewal.²⁶ In both family sagas, the matriarch plays an important role. Even if the sociocultural background in *One Hundred Years* is patriarchal, the female domain plays a crucial role in the novel. In *Encanto*, the loss of the head of the family, Abuela Alma’s husband, forces Abuela Alma to take responsibility for the family. Both female characters Úrsula, in *One Hundred Years*, and Abuela Alma, in *Encanto*, have complete control of the household.

José Arcadio is a male character in the novel whose virility and strength is supernatural. In *Encanto*, this super-strength is given to Mirabel’s sister, Luisa, who takes care of all her family and the community. In contrast to the novel, where this super-power is sometimes a destructive force, in *Encanto*, Luisa’s powers are solely utilitarian.

In both the novel and in the film, the themes of prophecy and solitude are linked. In the novel, the male character Colonel Aureliano Buendía is clairvoyant, predicting the arrival of Rebeca, his adopted sister, as well as several deaths and catastrophes. Even though he is a revolutionary hero, he is doomed to a cyclical fate, where he is not killed in war but dies in solitude under the same chestnut tree where his father died years before. Similarly, the male character uncle Bruno [tío Bruno] in *Encanto* has the ability to predict the future. Since his visions are of an ominous kind, he would rather leave the Casa Madrigal to avoid destabilizing the family. Mirabel, however, realizes the importance of Bruno’s visions and turns to him for guidance. Thus, *Encanto* tells a story of how the ostracized become the saviors of those who exclude.

Magic in the Disney genre

As mentioned earlier, in García Márquez’s novels magic realism is the juxtaposition of natural and supernatural elements without conflict, with certain characters being endowed with supernatural abilities. In *Encanto*, on the other hand, the lack of a

magical gift makes Mirabel an outsider. Two aspects related to the genre of this Disney production are particularly important to our discussion on core/periphery dynamics in the perception and reception of magic realism and the feminine. Firstly, the storytelling conventions of Disney animation itself.

In *Magic(al) Realism* (2004), Maggie Ann Bowers points out that many global cultural expressions can be associated with magic realism, and that both adult viewers and children are implicitly familiar with and accept film conventions that include elements of magic realism. Much recent children's culture, particularly literature and television, have adopted magic realism. This access prepares children for accepting the structures and effects of the narrative style.²⁷ In these developments, Disney has played a crucial role. Ana Salzberg explains that Walt Disney's appropriation of classic fairy tales and narratives has made Disney Pictures the

collective auteur of the fairy tale genre for generations of children. (...) [T]he lushness of the images conjuring a realm of thrilling, fantastic possibility; the spirited musical numbers punctuating the progression of the narrative; and the 'happy ending' ultimately affirming the supremacy of domestic accord and the triumph over a destabilizing supernatural.²⁸

While recognizing this impact, however, it is important to differentiate between magic realism and the fantastic in Disney. A Disney fantasy film often combines magic and animation to create supernatural events and make-believe creatures. As opposed to the mundanity of magic realism, these events are meant to be seen as extraordinary and often involve the dangerous awakening of magic by the hand of a sorcerer or a witch. Alternatively, the magic exists in the form of an enchantment which aids the hero or heroine in their quest.²⁹

The second aspect of relevance to our discussion is the much debated Disney Princess phenomenon, where critics have challenged the depiction of female characters and demanded a broader notion of gender. Johnson Cheu stresses that as a global media conglomerate, for almost three decades Disney has become increasingly multicultural and inclusive, both in terms of content and image. For instance, non-Caucasian female main characters have been introduced in films such as *Pocahontas* (1995), *Mulan* (1998), and *The Princess and the Frog* (2009).³⁰ Two later films, *Frozen* (2013) and *Moana* (2016), even feature princesses who either take it upon themselves to rule alone or decide to give up the throne to seek spiritual freedom.

Discussing gender issues specifically concerning Disney and Latin America, Karen S. Goldman argues that the stereotypes depicted in Disney films of Latin Americans are those of a "gendered narrative of U.S. masculine-identified hegemony vis á vis a highly feminized representation of Latin America [coding] the nations and people of Latin America as exotic, idealized and sexualized."³¹ From this perspective, it is possible to also see *Encanto* as continuing these stereotypes with its depiction of a matriarchal household. This "invitation to fantasize about the Other," according to Dorfman and Mattelart, also represents a grave threat to the cultural autonomy of Latin American nations, since it "is the manner in which the U.S. dreams and redeems itself, and then imposes that dream upon others for its own salvation, which poses the danger for the

dependent countries [as it] forces us Latin Americans to see ourselves *as they see us*.³² In order to avoid this, the directors of *Encanto* made a trip to Colombia and hired cultural consultants.³³

From a Norwegian peripheral perspective, however, and based in a more gender-equal Scandinavian culture, it might be difficult to discern how this feminized Colombian culture represented by the matriarchal household of the Madrigals combines with Mirabel's role as anti-hero in an American modern narrative of diversity and gender equality. A Norwegian audience will be able to recognise narrative modes such as magic realism, because also Norwegian folklore and fairy tales are characterised by the convergence of the mundane and fantastical.³⁴ However, with the pop cultural domination of the Disney format they are just as likely to recognise these narratives as animation and established Disney conventions, which is evident in the Norwegian reviews of *Encanto* (see *Results and discussion* below). Leaving the question of Colombian authenticity aside, we will discuss these complexities further in our analysis below, including how the depiction of magic realism in *Encanto* as essentially feminine might be similarly lost on a peripheral audience and reviewers accustomed to seeing these fantastical narrative elements first and foremost as inherent in animated Disney films.

Film review as epitext

In the introduction to the book *Translation and Paratexts*, Batchelor states that “we form opinions about a text based on surrounding or apparently superficial elements”³⁵ and that Genette labels such elements *paratexts*. According to Genette, paratextuality can be defined as the “relationship that binds the text properly speaking to what can be called its paratext: a title, a subtitle, intertitles; prefaces, postfaces, notices, forewords, etc.; [...] illustrations; blurbs, book covers, dust jackets, and many other kinds of secondary signals, whether allographic [from a third party] or autographic [from the author].”³⁶ Batchelor summarizes the paratextual elements explored by Genette, stressing that any material physically attached to the text conveys a comment on the text, and that the paratextual elements may or may not be manifested materially:

The paratext consists of any element which conveys comment on the text, or presents the text to readers, or influences how the text is received; where they are, that manifestation may be physically attached to the text (peritext) or may be separate from it (epitext). Any material physically attached to the text by definition conveys comment of the text, or presents the text to readers, or influences how a text is received.³⁷

In Batchelor's definition of paratexts, reviews become epitexts. According to Batchelor, interviews, reviews and online commentaries are comparable to the authorial and allographic epitexts discussed by Genette.³⁸ However, Genette's concept of epitext is restricted by *authorial intention*³⁹, and Batchelor has developed Genette's framework.

Genette's definition of paratext depends on its functions, and the “paratextual value [...] may be vested in other types of manifestation”, including the ‘purely factual’, such

as the age or sex of the author, the era in which the text was written, or the genre to which it belongs. Genette explains: “By *factual* I mean the paratext that consists not of an explicit message [...] but of a fact whose existence alone, if known to the public, provides some commentary on the text and influences how the text is received.”⁴⁰ Hence, Bachelor concludes that the definition of paratext depends not on materiality but on function.⁴¹

Writing in 2010, Jonathan Gray called for a relatively new type of media analysis which would focus on the media world’s equivalent of book covers, such as opening credit sequences, trailers, posters and promotional campaigns.⁴² Gray adopts Genette’s terms paratexts and paratextuality to denote such supposedly peripheral elements, arguing like Genette that they play a crucial role in meaning-making for the films and other media products to which they are thresholds.⁴³ Sara Pesce and Paolo Noto note that in today’s society, there is an extraordinary quantity of paratextual materials circulating on- and off-line, among others posters or billboards, and trailers, interviews, websites, merchandise and toys, reviews, and so on.⁴⁴ In addition to these tangible paratexts, intangible aspects such as the genre of a film can also function paratextually, in much the same manner as the factual paratext identified by Genette.

Film Reviews and Methods

We began our investigation by searching for film reviews of *Encanto* in Norwegian digital newspapers. Using two data bases: 1) *Retriever Mediearkivet Atekst*; 2) *PressReader*,⁴⁵ we found reviews in two national newspapers, *VG* and *Klassekampen* (R1 and R2) and in three regional newspapers, *Stavanger Aftenblad*; *Bergens Tidende*; *Fædrelandsvennen* (R3-5).⁴⁶ We also found a review of *Encanto* on the website *Barnevakten* (R6).⁴⁷ Our approach to the analysis of the data’s basic topics were a selection of First Cycle and Second Cycle Coding Methods.

First Cycle Coding Methods

First, we applied *Descriptive Coding* (*Topic Coding*) to identify the topics of the reviews (*what was written about*).⁴⁸ Here, we summarized in a word or short phrase the basic topic of the passages. Second, we combined the *Descriptive Coding* with *In Vivo Coding* and *Versus Coding*. *In Vivo* is a meaning driven method, and as a code, it refers to a word or short phrase found in the qualitative data record. For example, we coded the terms used by the film reviewers themselves. In accordance with Charmaz (2014), we attuned ourselves to words and phrases that seemed to call for bolding and underlining and we tried to grasp what was significant to the reviewers: how they perceived and interpreted the film.⁴⁹ We used *Versus Codes* to identify dichotomous or binary terms with regard to genre characteristics, narrative mode, and gender characteristics.⁵⁰

We carried out First Cycle Coding of the title, the ingress, and the main body of each review, paying close attention to terms the reviewers used to describe the film’s genre and narrative mode (nouns, bolding), especially words denoting positive or negative qualities (underlining).

Review	Title	Coding
R1	«Nye tider, nye helter»	Contextual elements (time) Characters in <i>Encanto</i> vs. traditional Disney characters
R2	«Animerte karakterer som «pustar», syng og svingar seg til salsarytmer» Main title: <u>Blendande bagatell</u>	Characters Art of animation Musical elements Content Light vs. dark
R3	«Disney leverer magi til jul»	Disney Magic Contextual elements (time)
R4	« <i>Encanto</i> er en fengende, musikalsk sukkerbombe»	Film title Music Colourful vs. grey
R5	«Frodig og fargerik Disney-magi»	Visual elements Disney; magic Colourful vs. grey Fertile vs. arid
R6	<i>Encanto</i> . Anmeldelse.	Film title

Table 1. Title. First Cycle Coding.

In addition, we numbered the genre categories given in the fact boxes in the reviews: Animated film (5); Fairy tale (1); Children's film (2); Family film (2); Comedy (1).

Review	Ingress	Coding
R1	Jakten på den <u>tapte magien</u> .	Content, Magic, Loss of magic vs. control of magic
R2	« Roller, musikk og <u>teknisk handverk</u> er på plass, men ei historie mangler »	Characters Music Art of animation Content Music and animation Lack of narrative progression
R3	Musikalnumrene er <u>klare høydepunkt</u> i den nye Disney-filmen	Music, Disney
R4	Disneys nye animasjonsfilm « <i>Encanto</i> » <u>byr på farger</u> , fantasi og magi for store og små	Disney Art of animation Target audience Colourful vs. grey
R5	Å <u>se</u> denne filmen er som å oppholde seg i <u>varmere himmelstrøk</u> et par timer	Art of animation Contextual elements Perceptions from a periphery North vs. south
R6	<i>Encanto</i> er en <u>fargerik</u> og <u>frisk animasjonsfilm</u> med en <u>spennende historie</u> , <u>flotte sanger</u> og et <u>flott budskap</u> om familie og fellesskap.	Art of animation Content Musical elements Community vs. individuality

Table 2. Ingress. First Cycle Coding.

Review	Excerpts from the data illustrating the method	Coding
R2	I Disney-filmar er familien spesiell viktig og dei viktige familiane spesielle. Det er også bodskapen i den colombiansk-inspirerte , magisk realistiske Encanto , utan at denne knappe oppsummeringa yter filmen rettferd som sanseoppleving på kino. Her handlar det det nemlig mest om animasjonskunsten – og ikke minst den animerte musikalen eit steg vidare [...] Abuela Alma velsignet med et mirakel: den hemmelige dalen: han er framstilt som ein tidlaus, folkloristisk eventyrstad der matriarken Alma i spissen for tre generasjonar Madrigal enno held si hand over dei som flykta saman med henne og deira etterkomarar .	Disney Content Contextual elements Narrative mode The art of animation Musical elements Matriarchy vs. patriarchy
R3	Historien sparkes i gang av en introlåt som både er skikkelig catchy , og effektivt introduserer alle medlemmene i familien Madrigal med deres magiske evner . Vi møter blant annet Mirabels mor , som kan kurere sykdom med maten hun lager, den kjempesterke Luisa , den perfekte Isabela [...] og det hvistes om Bruno , som kunne se i fremtiden og så noe så forferdelig at han forlot familien . [...] Det litt spesielle med « Encanto » er at det egentlig ikke finnes en skurk . Det er press og forventninger fra familien Mirabel må kjempe mot.	Content Musical elements Characters Magic Strong vs. weak Perfect vs. imperfect Matriarchy vs. patriarchy Loyal vs. disloyal Outside pressure vs. inside drive Story archetypes Quest
R5	[...] å gi filmen troverdige latinamerikansk koloritt : Både språk, farger og sanger [...] bærer preg av like deler respekt og nitidig research.	Contextual elements Musical elements Art of animation
R6	«De bor i et magisk hus i et område de kaller Encanto – et undrenes sted »	Contextual elements

Table 3. Film review, main body. First Cycle Coding.

When words and concepts in the data appeared to stand out or struck us as important, we highlighted them and listed them on a text-editing page, and then cut and pasted them into outlined clusters that suggested categories of belonging and an order. In our Outlined Clusters, we emphasised the following topics: I) Genre characteristics and narrative mode; II) The feminine.

I. Genre characteristics and narrative mode

- A. Characters: new+heroes, not+villain, etc.
- B. Magic: loss+magic; colourful+Disney-magic; magic realism+Encanto; magical+abilities, etc.
- C. The art of animation: technical craft+demonstrated; colourful+animated film; intro song+catchy ..., etc.
- D. Musical elements: great+songs; sing+dance+salsa rythme; Musical numbers+highlight; Lin-Manuel Miranda+Into the Heights, etc.

II. The feminine

- A. Female characters: Mirabel+loss of magic+ordinary; a rational girl; Mirabel+outcast; Mirabel+independent+young; great+girl power; Mirabel+save the family; Mirabel's mother+healing powers; giant strength+Luisa, perfect+Isabela, etc.

- B. Male characters: **Bruno**+predict the **future**; terrible+**Bruno**+outcast+left the family, etc.
- C. Matriarchy: **Abuela Alma**+miracle; fairy tale setting+matriarch Alma+three generations, etc.

We also paid close attention to words and short phrases which denoted contextual elements (time and space) in *Encanto*.

III. Contextual elements

- A. Continent: salsa rhythm; credible latinamerican depiction; ‘warmer shores’
- B. Country: Colombian inspired [...]; fantasy version+**Colombia**; remote+lush+**Colombia**; **different setting** from the US
- C. Landscape: ‘live in a magical **house** in the **mountains**’; magical house+region+**Encanto** – a marvellous **place**; the secret valley+timeless, folkloristic+fairy tale setting; enchancing+world
- D. Domestic domain: gift+animated house; magical house
- E. Time: ‘new times’; ‘for Christmas’; ‘a couple of hours’; ‘look into the future’⁵¹

Each of them was extracted from the body text and reassembled together in separate files for an organized and categorized description of the topics for further analysis.

Post-coding transitions

To better focus the direction of our data set, we paid more attention to the versus coding, as seen in Table 4 (below). We focused on how the reviewers had appreciated and communicated genre characteristics and the feminine in *Encanto*.

R1	<p>«<u>mangler</u> et par av eventyrets <u>arketypiske</u> ingredienser: Skurken, og den <u>ensomme reisen</u> som helten må foreta, <u>langt hjemmefra</u> (Mirabel <u>forlater aldri familiens skjød</u>) [...]</p> <p>Tiden da prinsesser var ute av stand til å redde seg selv, men måtte vente på en ridder på hvit hest, er over. Tiden da alle prinsesser og helter skulle være <u>ariske</u> og <u>blonde</u> er også forbi</p> <p>Mirabel er en helt <u>vanlig jente</u>, med <u>runde briller</u> og <u>kraftige øyenbryn</u>. Hun tar mangelen med <u>godt mot</u>, men føler seg naturlig nok <u>litt utenfor</u>. Skal hun noen gang få sin dag i solen?</p>	<p>Narrative elements in traditional Disney films vs. narrative elements in <i>Encanto</i></p> <p>Hero vs. villain</p> <p>Journey of discovery vs. stay in home</p> <p>Gender in traditional Disney films vs. gender in <i>Encanto</i></p> <p>Active vs. passive</p> <p>Physical traits in traditional Disney films vs. physical traits in <i>Encanto</i></p> <p>Princess vs. ordinary girl</p> <p>Light vs. dark</p> <p>Inclusion vs. exclusion</p>
R2	<p>Abuela Alma <u>velsignet med et mirakel</u>: den <u>hemmelige dalen</u>: han er framstilt som ein <u>tidlaus</u>, <u>folkloristisk eventyrstad</u> der matriarken Alma i spissen for <u>tre generasjoner</u> Madrigal enno <u>held si hand over</u> dei som <u>flykta</u> saman med henne og deira etterkomarar.</p>	<p>Natural vs. supernatural</p> <p>Matriarchy vs. patriarchy</p> <p>Role of protector vs. vulnerable</p> <p>Timeless vs. time specific</p> <p>Isolation vs. community</p> <p>Fantasy place vs. real place</p>

R3	Det litt spesielle med Encanto er at det egentlig <u>ikke finnes</u> en skurk .	Narrative elements in traditional Disney films vs. narrative elements in <i>Encanto</i> Hero vs. villain
R4	Og for en gangs skyld er <u>ikke</u> moralen denne gongen like <u>glætt, polert og perfekt</u> <u>disneysk</u> , men faktisk med eit <u>lite element</u> av de <u>uperfekte</u> og <u>menneskelige</u>	Overall message in traditional Disney films vs. overall message in <i>Encanto</i> Perfect vs. imperfect
R5	Mirabel «en <u>uvurderlig rolle</u> å spille»	Important vs. unimportant role
R6	Med de <u>fantastiske</u> talentene sine <u>hjelper</u> familien menneskene i samfunnet rundt seg, og familiens overhode Abuela gjør sitt beste for å <u>holde</u> familien <u>sterk</u> Det vil si, ikke alle i familien har en <u>spesiell</u> <u>magiske</u> <u>evne</u> . Den <u>unge</u> jenta Mirabel er en <u>livsglad</u> jente som er veldig <u>glad i</u> familien sin, men hun føler seg litt <u>utenfor</u> siden hun er den eneste <u>uten</u> talent . Men det viser seg snart at det er Mirabel som er den <u>viktigste</u> personen i filmen. En dag oppdager hun nemlig at det er <u>sprekker i</u> idyllen i den <u>tilsynelatende</u> <u>perfekte</u> familien .	Matriarchy vs. patriarchy Strong vs. weak Loss of magic vs. control of magic Inclusion vs. exclusion Anti-hero vs. hero Important vs. unimportant role Perfect vs. imperfect

Table 4. Post-coding transitions.

In order to construct categories from the classification of our codes, we applied *Code Mapping*.⁵² First, we made a simple list of all the versus codes from our first cycle coding (27). Then we reorganised them into six categories. Finally, the *Versus Coding* led to two major moieties:

- **Narrative elements in traditional Disney films vs. *Encanto***
hero vs. villain; journey of discovery vs. to stay in the home;
loss of magic vs. control of magic, etc.
- **Gender description in Disney films vs. gender description in *Encanto***
matriarchy vs. patriarchy; active vs. passive; protective vs. vulnerable;
beautiful vs. ordinary; lightness vs. darkness, hero vs. anti-hero;
exclusion vs. inclusion, etc.

Second Cycle Coding

After having finished the post-coding transition, we reorganized and reanalysed our data coding and searched for the most significant codes to develop the most salient categories.⁵³ To progress towards major themes, we categorized the coded data from our array of first cycle coding, based on thematic or conceptual similarity (*Focus Coding*), and we grouped the passages that seemed to relate to each other (*Axial Coding*).⁵⁴ In this way, we could determine which codes in our research were the dominant ones, and which were less important.

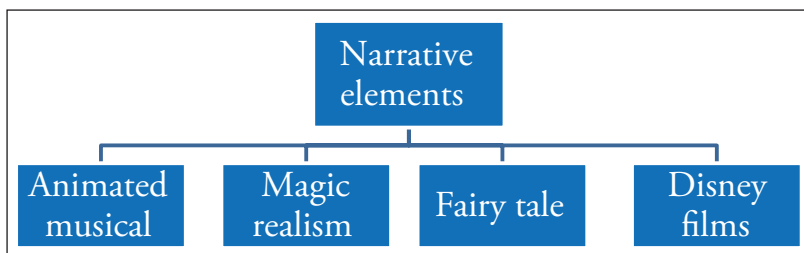


Figure 1. A tree diagram of categories and subcategories – Narrative elements

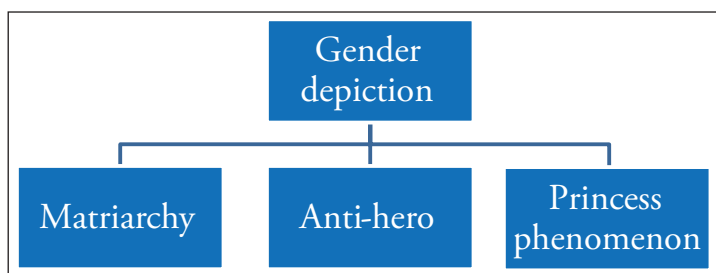


Figure 2. A tree diagram of categories and subcategories – Gender description

Results and discussion

In the reviews, as may be expected with the release of an animated musical film, the main part of the comments concerned the animation and the musical numbers, where both were hailed as state-of-the-art. The comments emphasised the innovative animation techniques and the vibrant and colourful atmosphere. However, despite placing *Encanto* in the magical realistic tradition, none of the reviewers pursued this any further. While emphasising the importance of the song- and playwriter Lin-Manuel Miranda's creativity, making Miranda appear as a cultural reference, none of the reviewers mentioned García Márquez and his work as a source of inspiration for the film.

Our analysis indicates that the reviewers perceived magic elements first and foremost as inherent of classical fairy tales and the Disney genre, and less so as the narrative mode of magic realism. The reviewers also consider animated Disney films to be an independent genre (Disney-magic; Disney fantasy universe) and associate the genre with classic fairy tales. This is in line with Salzberg's claim about Disney's appropriation of classic fairy tales and narratives.⁵⁵ A few of the reviewers note that *Encanto* lacks some archetypal elements of fairy tale, for instance the typical villain and the lonely journey away from home. From the reviewers' perspective, this poses a problem with narrative complexity: they state that although the animation and the musical scenes are outstanding, the plot is both vague and superficial. Here, we ask if this problem could be due to Mirabel's role as a modern anti-hero in a narrative of conformity. She never actively challenges the power structure established by her grandmother Alma and her quest becomes one of keeping both the structure of the house and Alma's authority intact.

In *Encanto*, the usually necessary lonely journey in the form of a quest takes a different turn, quite literally, inside the hidden corridors and walls of the house of the Madrigals, as Mirabel seeks out a possible helper in her uncle Bruno who is hiding in the secret rooms. Although the reviewers do not consider the male character Bruno a villain, they accept that he is not allowed to return on the grounds that he left the family in the first place (the moieties loyal vs. disloyal; inclusion vs. exclusion).

Gender depiction was highlighted by some of the reviewers, but not more thoroughly debated. They stress as positive that Mirabel is not the typical princess that appears in traditional Disney films, and the fact that she does not share the physical traits of a Disney female lead character (the moiety princess vs. ordinary girl). They also point out that it is easy for a Norwegian audience to identify with Mirabel as a female antihero.

In fact, there are significantly more female characters than male characters in *Encanto*, and those male characters that do feature are marginalized. However, none of the reviewers make any remarks concerning this. Interestingly, not many reviewers have cared to comment on the role of Abuela Alma, the grandmother, either, except for a few who label her a matriarch. Alma treasures the ceremony in which the future generations receive a magical gift, and she appreciates strength (the moiety strong vs. weak). The magical power of which she is the guardian, is a guarantee that the stability and harmony of their home, the Casa Madrigal, is not threatened. However, when her love and care become controlling and superficial, the magic starts to fade. One of the reviewers remarks that Alma exudes authority, and when Mirabel does not receive a magical gift, the grandmother turns cold towards her. According to the reviewers, this degree of cynicism is understandable, taking into account Alma's experiences during the armed conflict that left her a widow, and it explains her need to protect both the family and the village.

None of the reviewers touch on possible connections to *One Hundred Years* and the significance of the house as a domestic and feminine domain. The novel depicts the challenging life of a matriarch, Úrsula Iguarán, in a patriarchal society and describes female characters of various social status (wives, daughters, concubines, prostitutes, entrepreneurs, etc.). In this world created by García Márquez, both male and female characters are central to the development of the narrative and the novel tells the story of the family's exodus and foundation of the village Macondo. The antecedent for their fleeing to start a new life is violence, but they are not victims of violence, like Alma. Rather, José Arcadio commits a homicide. Since José Arcadio and Úrsula are cousins, Úrsula is gripped with fear of the possible effect of her incestuous relationship with her husband, and that their children will be born with a pigtail. This curse on the family is present throughout the book and symbolizes the married couple's feelings of loneliness and guilt. One important element which does seem to be a more likely source of inspiration for the Madrigal family is the novel's Buendía family house. It can be regarded as a main character because it communicates the emotions of the characters, and the Norwegian reviewers similarly note that it seems to reflect the family's various emotional states. Yet, they do not discuss the lack in *Encanto* of female participation in society outside of the domestic domain, nor the marginalization of male characters.

As mentioned earlier, the main character Mirabel, the regular girl in the position of the anti-hero, shows courage by undermining her grandmother's rules, and thereby

saves the magic. Traditionally, this can be regarded as a masculine, active and rebellious trait and from the peripheral, Scandinavian perspective of the reviewers, this display of feminine assertiveness, is described as “girl power.”⁵⁶ As the Norwegian reviews indicate, *Encanto* appears to fall neatly into the category of a modern, multicultural, diverse and feminist-oriented Disney production. What they do not discuss, however, are the ramifications of matriarchal structures on female emancipation, as seen in Mirabel’s desperate desire to fit into the existing structure.

We would argue that lacking the magic power renders Mirabel a threat to the stability of the matriarchy. And the fact that the grandmother controls the magic and is in a position to abuse it, makes her, in turn, a potential villain. Naturally, as one of the reviewers herself remarks, this problem is not developed further in the film, as such ambiguity is avoided to secure a happy ending. With Salzberg’s words, such progression of the narrative must be ‘punctuated’ as it has no place in a modern Disney film featuring anti-heroes and diversity.⁵⁷

According to the Spanish speaking film critic Samuel Lagunas, *Encanto* could even be viewed as a confining space for the female characters – “un claustro de princesas” – and that this narrative of conformity is hidden behind multicultural and literary references in a Latin American, and more specifically Colombian, context.⁵⁸ This is in contrast to Latin American female authors, for instance, the Chilean María Luisa Bombal, who in the 1930s, addressed the need for emancipation from patriarchy and traditional family structures.⁵⁹ If one wants to investigate this topic further, it would be interesting to compare how Latin American female writers and film directors treat the emancipation of women, compared to the trends and fads of Hollywood, and how this, in turn, is perceived by readers and viewers in Scandinavia or other (semi) peripheral contexts.

Another interesting topic could be the relationship between English as a kind of hyper-central language, the Spanish language as semi-peripheral, and the role of Norwegian as peripheral. In the words of Heilbron, on the issue of books and the flow of translations between language groups, “English functions as an intermediary or vehicular language – as a means of communication between language groups which are themselves peripheral or semi-peripheral.”⁶⁰ In spite of *Encanto*’s use of Colombian culture consultants, the nods to García Márquez, and the film’s Spanish-speaking co-writer, it is possible to view the film’s Disney format with its genre conventions as a kind of hyper-central narrative mode.

Notes

- 1 Jared Bush, Byron Howard & Charise Castro Smith, *Encanto* (Walt Disney Animation Studios, 2021). Regarding international reviews, see for example Parkin J. Daniels, “Not just cocaine and war: Colombian pride at Oscar-winning *Encanto*’s positive portrayal,” *The Guardian*, 2022-03-29, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/29/colombia-encanto-oscars-animated-film>; Laura Zornosa, “‘*Encanto* May Be Accurate, but Can It Carry a Whole Country?’ The filmmakers behind the Disney hit worked for cultural accuracy. Some Colombians and Colombian Americans are looking for more,” *The New York Times*, 2022-03-11, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/11/movies/encanto->

- colombia.html?smid=em-share; Samuel Lagunas, “Encanto. El triunfo del princesimo,” *Cine Divergente*, 2021-12-09, <https://cinedivergente.com/encanto/>.
- 2 Nicolas Ayala, “Encanto’s Real Life influences: how Accurate Is Its Colombian Story?” *Screenrant*, 2022-05-27, <https://screenrant.com/encanto-movie-real-life-influences-colombia-explained/>; “Colombia and the magical realism of Gabriel García Márquez,” *American Post*, 2021-11-23, <https://www.americanpost.news/colombia-and-the-magical-realism-of-gabriel-garcia-marquez-shine-in-encanto-the-new-disney-animated-film/>.
 - 3 Gabriel García Márquez, *Cien años de soledad* (Barcelona: Grupo Editorial Random House Mondadori [1967] 2003); Gabriel García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, transl. Gregory Rabassa (London: Penguin Group [1967] 1972). Hereafter abbreviated *One Hundred Years*. The first translation into Norwegian appeared in 1970: Gabriel García Márquez, *Hundre års ensomhet*, transl. Kjell Risvik (Oslo: Gyldendal [1967] 2021).
 - 4 See for example Lagunas, “Encanto. El triunfo del princesimo.”
 - 5 Kathryn Batchelor, *Translation and Paratexts* (London and New York: Routledge 2018), 59.
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 - 8 Batchelor, *Translation and Paratexts*, 10; Jonathan Gray, *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers and their Paratexts* (London and New York: New York University Press 2010).
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 - 13 Raymond L. Williams, *Gabriel García Márquez* (Boston: Twayne Publishers 1985), 6; Gabriel García Márquez and Plinio Apuyelo Mendoza, *El olor de la guayaba* (Barcelona: Random House Mondadori 1994), 10–11.
 - 14 Scholars apply different terms when referring to this narrative mode such as *magic realism* (*realismo mágico*), *magical realism*, and *marvellous realism* (*realismo maravilloso*), and we have chosen to use the term magic realism.
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 - 16 See also Gabriel García Márquez, “Fantasía, creación artística en América Latina y el Caribe,” *Texto crítico* 14 (1979): 3–8.
 - 17 Franz Roh cited in Angulo, *Magic Realism: Social Context and Discourse*, 3.

- 18 Arturo Usler Pietri cited in Angulo, *Magic Realism: Social Context and Discourse*, 4.
- 19 Alejo Carpentier, *El reino de este mundo* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial [1949] 2012).
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OSCAR JANSSON

FOREIGN FAMILIARITIES

Untranslated Terms of Endearment in *The Book of Mother and Love in the Big City*

In this essay I want to examine the English translations of two recent and critically acclaimed novels, one French and the other Korean: Violaine Huisman's *The Book of Mother* and Sang Young Park's *Love in the Big City*.¹ More specifically, I want to assess the aesthetic and ethical implications of two gendered and sexualized terms of endearment – “Maman” and “hyung” – that have been left untranslated in the English texts.

It is important to note that my focus lies on how those untranslated words function *within* the translations of Huisman's and Park's works, and the effects they have on making sense of what the novels mean. I will not do double readings to compare the translations with the source texts, nor will I attempt to analyze the strategies behind the stylistic choices of the two translators, Leslie Camhi and Anton Hur. Instead, I will direct my attention to the potential significance “Maman” and “hyung” add to the novels, particularly through the aporias and lacunae their foreignness present to readers of the translations. Conceptually this approach draws on what Reine Meylaerts has called “heterolingualism” and what Luise von Flotow describes as “translation effects” – two terms that despite certain differences both relate to how (non)translation, the mixing of languages and cross-cultural literary circulation can produce unpredictable nuances between different versions of literary works and impact how texts are read.² And crucially, both terms also highlight the complex processes by which social and political meanings are ascribed to translated texts. Considering that “Maman” and “hyung” both pertain to gender norms and conceptions of sex, the latter is undoubtedly important.

Connecting the idea of “translation effects” to the tripart model for analyses of translation and literary circulation presented in *Northern Crossings: Translation, Circulation and the Literary Semi-Periphery* (2022) – distinguishing the micro, meso and macro levels of cross-cultural literary traffic – I will also chart how the significance of “Maman” and “hyung” is reflected in the novels' publishing trajectories and reception.³ Both were longlisted for the International Booker Prize in 2022, for instance,

which explicitly marked (and marketed) them as *literature-in-translation*. Much like the untranslated words within the texts, the novels' circulatory patterns thus emphasize their dependence on contrasts and crossings between linguistic and cultural frames. Both aspects are important to keep in mind when considering what "Maman" and "hyung" mean for Huisman's and Park's novels – and what they imply for reading (non)translations of words and stories enmeshed in matters of sex and gender.

* * *

Sang Young Park's *Love in the Big City* was written as four novellas, but published as a novel of four parts.⁴ Combining a flaneur-type narrative with traits of autofiction, it tells the story of Young: a queer French-major at a Seoul university who parties hard, juggles Tinder dates, reads European novels and cares for his sick mother. Step by step, the story also delves deep into Young's troubled relationship with Gyu-ho – an older man who might be the love of his life – and his reflections on what it means to "have Kylie," as he puts it; a sort of code for being HIV-positive.

As indicated by the novel's title, *Love in the Big City* is also a story about the possibilities of love in modern metropolitan life. More specifically, it details some of the risks and prospects of gay love in the big cities of East Asia. Apart from Seoul, the characters find themselves in Shanghai and Bangkok – each counting 10 to 25 million inhabitants, depending on how one delineates their metropolitan areas – all the while with distinct ideas of how life might be lead in Paris and New York. More than mere settings, the cities are portrayed with regard to how their nightlife, geography and social norms affect what (and who) the characters do. And likewise, the connections between how characters act and where they come from play a crucial role throughout the narrative. In the opening scene, for example, set at a rather conservative wedding, the narrator comments on a person's "thick Gyeongsang Province accent" – signaling that he is not from Seoul and, to the narrator at least, prudishly boring. As a means of comparison, the narrator then recounts late nights drinking soju in the gay bars of Itaewon, eating Kyochon fried chicken, discussing trips to Jeju Island, and hooking up with strangers "in those dark streets of the city."⁵ The names of places, drinks and foods, in other words, localize both characters and scenes on a spectrum of possibilities, especially when it comes to love, pleasure and sex.

As elements of the novel's realist world-making (or its "writing of culture" through "imaginary ethnography," as Gabriele Schwab puts it), it is crucial that Park's references to love and life in different cities are culturally specific – like the Gyeongsang accent and the Itaewon gay bars.⁶ And it is equally important that Anton Hur's English translation retains the Korean names and allusions. For while understanding them is by no means exclusive to Korean readers, the fact that the references are left un-commented produces a foreignizing effect that marks the English translation as just that: a translation of the Korean text. And in doing so, Hur's (non)translation also emphasizes the cultural specificity of the story itself. It quite simply accentuates that the story unfolds in Seoul, Shanghai and Bangkok, and that the love lives it revolves around are tangled up in the social and sexual norms of those particular cities.

Simultaneously, however, *Love in the Big City* is also rife with Western products, trademarks and icons of popular culture that are used to similar world-making effects.

For example, in the first part of the novel it is mentioned repeatedly that one of the principal characters smokes Marlboro Reds, shaves with Gillette razors and reads *Cosmopolitan* magazine – sometimes in tandem and often as precursors for late nights out in Seoul.⁷ Similarly, in the third part Starbucks coffee and Kylie Minogue’s pop song “All the Lovers” are key components of a climactic scene where the narrator has unprotected anal sex, leaving him sore, satisfied and, as it turns out, HIV-positive.⁸ Though perhaps primarily a reflection of the global reach of Western capitalism, these recurring invocations of Western (and more specifically American or Anglophone) culture also lay bare the cosmopolitan aspects of Seoul’s gay scene.

Stressing the cosmopolitanism of the world Park portrays is not to say that the impact of the specifically Korean is reduced or removed, however, but rather that it encompasses both the local and the global. In that sense, the novel’s thematic of gay love, sex and queerness can be framed under the rubric of “the Global Gay” – an intermittently but intensely debated notion in sexology, social science and queer translation studies. In brief outline, the main concern has to do with a clash between essentialist and constructivist perspectives on gay identity formation, and questions on how to gauge the relationship between (homo)sexuality, sexual identity, globalization and language.⁹ On the one hand, scholars like Dennis Altman have argued that capitalist globalization extends Western conceptions of gay life to other cultures, and that one must be attuned to the effects of hegemonic discourses on how people “incorporate [gay identity] into their sense of self.”¹⁰ On the other, Altman has been criticized for downplaying the agency of non-Western individuals and cultures, essentially erasing the possibility of sexual subversiveness on the grounds of the hegemon.¹¹ And those criticisms have in turn been revealed as lacking in their attunement to language – a factor that, as Brian James Baer points out, “must be taken into account in any discussion of the agency of subaltern subjects.”¹²

In political terms, the levelling of references to Korean and Western culture in *Love in the Big City*’s portrayal of gay life thus connects forcefully to complex issues of representational politics and perceptions of subaltern agency. Similarly, from a world literary perspective the same dynamic between cosmopolitanism and cultural specificity highlights questions of exchange and power inequalities in the transcultural literary sphere.¹³ Those exchanges and inequalities are not least apparent in the novel’s publishing trajectory, as its success in Korea in 2019 laid the grounds for Hur’s translation and its simultaneous release in Britain and the US in 2021, by Titled Axis Press and Grove Atlantic. Significantly, in parallel to the novel’s nomination to prestigious translation awards, Grove Atlantic called it Park’s “English language debut,” stressed its mix of Korean and Western influences and connected it to Asian world literary authors like Sayaka Murata, Han Kang and Cho Nam-Joo – thus exemplifying the “localizing practices” in international publishing whereby translated literature is marketed through a dynamic between conceptions of foreign and domestic literary styles, trends and figures.¹⁴ Furthermore, on the textual level of Hur’s translation the interchange between Western trademarks and retained Korean names might be said to echo Venuti’s argument in *The Translator’s Invisibility*, that conceptions of the domestic and the foreign are interdependent (and to a certain extent reversible).¹⁵

It is in the connection of these two perspectives or backgrounds – the politics of the “Global Gay” and the dynamic between cosmopolitanism and cultural specificity

in world literature – that Hur’s retention of the Korean familial endearment “hyung” is particularly interesting. In dictionaries it is often translated as “older brother” and described as used by Korean males to address an older male figure with whom they have a close relationship. Importantly, usage is extended beyond actual brothers and blood-relatives and grounded on a cultural norm of expressing respect for one’s elders (even when those elders are themselves quite young). “Noona” is the equivalent word for males expressing respect and closeness to an older female; “unni” and “oppa” if the speaker is female.¹⁶ All four are retained in *Love in the Big City*, without explanatory notes from the translator or comments on their connection to Korean social norms in the story itself. But arguably, to a certain extent it is possible to deduce their stylistic and societal significance from individual scenes. In the first part of the novel, for instance, Jaehee (the character with a love for Marlboro Reds and Gillette razors) goes to a clinic for a consultation on abortion. When the conservative physician lectures her on safe sex, she loses her temper in a violent outburst directed at both him and others. After that, she addresses a female nurse a “unni” in a faltering attempt at an apology, clearly signaling the word’s respectful and submissive tone. Analogously, Jaehee calls her boyfriend “oppa” when she tries to divert his attention from her excessive drinking or one of her many lies.¹⁷ Both quantitatively and in terms of its centrality for the narrative, however, “hyung” stands out.

The word first appears in the second part of *Love in the Big City* – titled “A Bite of Rockfish, Taste the Universe” – when the narrator receives a letter and a parcel with his old diary from a long-lost lover. “Hello. It’s hyung,” the letter begins, triggering a series of recollections on their fraught relationship, ended five years earlier.¹⁸ Although both sexually and emotionally intimate, throughout these recollections the lover remains anonymous, designated only as “he” or “hyung.” While in part a reflection of the narrator’s attempts to keep his earlier life at a safe distance, naming the lover as “hyung” is also tied to their age difference and how their relationship is entangled with conservative social norms. On the one hand, the latter is signaled by the narrator’s self-conscious insecurities. When they first meet, reading Barthes and Spinoza at a seminar on “the Philosophy of Emotion,” he is hesitant to talk openly about his sexuality, and later wonders if the soon-to-be-lover’s comment on his diction is meant as a cue that he is “faggy” or “sound[s] gay.”¹⁹ The pejorative tone of these reflections is also tied to the narrator’s mother, and her condemnation of his homosexuality. When she first sees him kissing a boy, she tries to have him hospitalized at a psychiatric ward, and upon his release she both invokes religion (citing Leviticus 20:13, arguing that sodomy be met with the death penalty) and blatantly states that it is a “shameful thing.”²⁰ On the other hand, the boyfriend called “hyung” is continually cast as more assured of himself than the narrator – even declaring that he knew from the first moment they met they would end up in bed together. But he is also meticulous with *not* giving any public displays of the sexual nature of their relationship.²¹ As these points align, “hyung” seems the perfect designation of the older lover: intimate and endearing, yet (officially) stripped of any sexualized nuance.

Significantly, the older lover also criticizes the narrator’s political views and perceptions of gay culture. For while the narrator “loves all the divas” – Beyoncé, Britney, Kylie – and argues that “[a]ll gay guys do,” the lover only hears expressions of American imperialism and how the US controls everything, “from the world economy to global

culture.” And while the narrator tries to circumvent their differences, stating that he wants to “fold every inch of [his] body and soul” into his lover’s “heat and heartbeat,” it proves impossible.²² Their differences are too great, the disconnects in how politics, social norms and cultural expression form their identities as gay men and lovers too palpable, and they drift apart.

Of course, the particularities of Seoul’s gay scene are inscribed in Park’s Korean original, including its conflicts with Western conceptions of sexuality and queerness. But they are stressed by Hur’s retention of “hyung,” and exemplify the unpredictable and politically impactful “translation effects” described by von Flotow.²³ For when the word appears in the English translation, Anglophone readers are not only called upon to recognize that the story takes place in Seoul, but also that the novel thematizes the complexities of “the Global Gay” – and that expressions of queer sexuality reads differently in Korean than in English. Even within the cosmopolitan setting of the “Big City” and despite the novel’s profound investments in Western culture, in other words, the untranslated endearment marks the foreignness and particularity of the story. Or to paraphrase José Santaemilla: the retention of “hyung” in *Love in the Big City* is a reminder that translating the language of sex and gender is never neutral, but a political act of both ideological and epistemological consequence.²⁴

* * *

Violaine Huisman’s *The Book of Mother* is an autobiographical account of life with her mother, Catherine. Diagnosed as manic-depressive, she is constantly troubled, often fighting (or having sex) with her ex-husbands, and intermittently putting her children at risk through excessive drinking and bad driving. “Cigarette dangling from her left hand,” Huisman recalls, she’d drive on sidewalks and scream at pedestrians, acting as if “the rules of the road were purely theoretical.” But Catherine is also outspoken and charismatic, sublimely beautiful, and loving with an intensity that at times seems to outweigh the dangers she causes to herself and others. This complexity is reflected in Huisman’s ironic and subtle prose – consider her description of “being used to [Catherine’s] sporty driving habits” – as well as in the sympathy with which she tries to reconstruct “the precise moment of [her mother’s] collapse.”²⁵ When portraying Catherine’s tendency to curse at her daughters, for example, calling them ingrate little shits and screaming for them to fuck off, Huisman does not dwell on the trauma of a violent parent, but on the hilarity of her mother’s diatribes. The sheer excessiveness of Catherine’s outbursts against her and her sister, Huisman writes, was a reminder that they “weren’t responsible for all of her suffering.” And even more to the point, she also describes how becoming a mother in a sense was a trauma for Catherine; that given her illness and her past, when giving birth to her daughters “she could only respond violently, unpredictably, and destructively, but also with all the love that was missing from her own childhood.”²⁶

Huisman’s novel is divided into three parts. The first recounts her childhood memories of her mother, including the episodes outlined above. The second portrays Catherine’s childhood and youth, centering on her desire to break free from the working-class environments of her upbringing and her own suffocating mother. In detail it depicts Catherine’s promising career as a dancer, and most importantly her

seduction by Antoine; a wealthy and worldly member of the Parisian bourgeoisie and later father to Violaine and her sister. The third part, finally, deals with Catherine's old age and death, and how her daughters try to make peace with their memories of her. It turns to a close on a note of sympathy and grief, as the adult Violaine finds a poem she wrote to Catherine as a child, around the time of her forced hospitalization. Its last words are "How deeply I love you!"²⁷

The second part of *The Book of Mother* is narrated in the third person and reads like a short biography, mixing fictionalized accounts of Catherine's inner life with more neutral descriptions of the sort of environments and important events that Virginia Woolf described as the foundational "granite" of classical biographical writing – dates of birth, names of schools, tax records of relatives and addresses of childhood homes.²⁸ While crucial to the characterization of Catherine, however, particularly in light of Huisman's ambition to portray "le personnage de la femme derrière la mère," for my interests in this essay the first and third parts of the novel are more illuminating.²⁹ For it is in those parts that Huisman writes about "Maman" – the gendered term of endearment Leslie Camhi has left untranslated in the English edition published by Virago Press.

It should be noted, first of all, that "Maman" functions as a proper name in Huisman's narrative, substituting "Catherine" whenever Violaine and her sister talk about their mother. By the same token they say "Papa" rather than "Antoine." In the novel's first part the words often occur in pair, particularly in the sections that recount Huisman's memories of her parents' tumultuous relationship after their divorce. For example, regarding the ritualized forms of her father's visits – involving his praising their beauty and intelligence, telling and retelling stories of his life, and failing to understand his ex-wife's feelings – she declares that her "desires and needs were of no concern to Maman and Papa." They argued a lot and the visits, although ostensibly motivated by Antoine and Catherine's shared custody of their daughters, was really about their conflicted love for each other. "I often had the impression," Huisman writes, "that the main reason Papa came by was to get Maman all wound up, like a clock. He slammed the door as he left, triggering, like a spring, the cuckoo. Cuckoo!" She then goes on to declare that "Maman never fainted during Papa's visits; she always waited until he had left to collapse in our arms."³⁰

Of course, Huisman's use of "Maman" and "Papa" as proper names for her parents is commonplace: it is a mode of expression employed by most children and emulated by a host of writers. But while this might pass without notice in the source text, in the English translation "Maman" and "Papa" stand out – not least as reminders that Huisman's story takes place in France, among the Parisian bourgeoisie bohème. They thereby transcend the function of proper names and also become signifiers of a particular place and culture. Or more pointedly: the untranslated familial names become signposts to Huisman's vernacular in the sense of *domestic language* or *mother tongue*, and thus frame the portrait of Catherine in a setting with distinct ideologies and dominant modes of expression.³¹

An effect, in other words, of Leslie Camhi's choice *not* to translate "Maman" is an emphasis on Catherine as a specifically French mother, rather than an English-speaking "Mom." It keeps her connected to the world of precise properties and proportions that Huisman draws out of her childhood memories, with the dilapidated house in Corrèze

and the “fine apartment in the 7th arrondissement,” as well as French parental norms and Parisian ideas of how a woman of the upper classes should behave.³² However, stressing the distinction between “Maman” and “Mom” is not to say that Catherine is an archetype or representative of French motherhood. Any such claim inevitably falls short, as most mothers in France are not manic-depressive alcoholics and few share Catherine’s “sporty driving habits.” And, one might add, the novel is not called “The Book of *Maman*.” The point is rather that in *The Book of Mother*, the dual function of “Maman” as proper name and cultural signifier marks Catherine as particular, foreign or different – even as the meaning of the word itself is a near universal as one is likely to come. While mothers are everywhere, the novel seems to claim, “Maman” is exclusive to France and the environments of Huisman’s childhood.

One could interject, of course, that other writers, artists and translators have employed similar schemes and marked “Maman” with distinct meanings, particularly in situations where the foreignness of the word is somehow familiar and easily understood. In Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina*, for instance, where both Dolly and Anna are repeatedly called “Maman” by their children, the word parallels with imported names of drinks and foods as a shorthand for the Frenchification of upper-class culture – crucial for Tolstoy’s orchestration of the ideological clashes between Zápdaniks and the Slavophiles in 19th century Russia. Similarly, in the subtitles to the third season of Netflix’ *Emily in Paris*, the word is retained in several dialogues between the PR-matriarch Sylvie Grateau (played by Philippine Leroy-Beaulieu) and her son. And perhaps most importantly in relation to *The Book of Mother*, *Maman* is also the name of Louise Bourgeois’ colossal steel spider-sculpture, created in 1999 and first presented at the Tate Modern in 2000, then at the Guggenheim and other institutions. Bourgeois dedicated it to her own mother – who like the spider was a weaver – and argued that it was a sympathetic rendition of a kind creature.³³ In connection to Catherine and her fraught relationship with Antoine, one might also recall that arachnid females are famed for devouring their mates as a means of nourishing their young.

Beyond such circumstantial evidence of intertexts, however, exploring any empirical grounds for the particularities of French motherhood is perhaps best left to sociologists or ethnographers. But judging by the novel itself, the distinguishing traits of “Maman” – that is, of both Catherine’s idiosyncrasies and the specifics of Huisman’s childhood – has to do with a psychoanalytically inflected conception of sex and the female body that foregrounds trauma as an integral part of maternity. For one, such a conception is crucial to Huisman’s biographical project as a whole, since it shapes the outline and causality of her narrative. For instance, Catherine’s depressions and violent outbursts are explained as results of the emotional “tragedy” she suffered as a child. Huisman states that Catherine’s own mother “of course” was the cause of it: “She had opened a hole in her daughter’s heart by giving birth to her, and had left it gaping.”³⁴ The ironic clarity of that *of course* is important, at once mocking and taking for granted the faux-Freudian idea of mothers as the root of all evil, endlessly popularized in books, films and TV-shows.

Coupled with sex and bodiliness, the complex of trauma and maternity is also key to Huisman’s descriptions of Catherine’s bond to her own daughters, and her conflicted relationships to men. The former is exemplified by the following passage from the first part of the novel, well worth quoting at length:

We would have like nothing better than to be kept apart from her life as a woman, for there to be boundaries discretely maintained. But she couldn't help making a display of her life as a woman, the same way she was always going around naked at home and pissing with the bathroom door wide open. The shape of her vulva intrigued me from an early age, and years later I learned that my sister had also wondered if it were normal for a woman's genitals to stick out like that, or if that was something peculiar to Maman, who was so hairless that she barely had any bush and so it was possible to see, very clearly, her clitoris coming up out of her vulva. It looked like an upside-down cock's comb.³⁵

The idea of a lack of "boundaries discretely maintained" is particularly important. On the one hand for the relationship between mother and daughters; echoing, as it does, the hole in Catherine's heart, left there by her own mother's shortcomings in regards to maternal comfort and care. But on the other, the lack of boundaries also ties in with a complex contrast between sex, maternity and female corporeality. For while the detailed depiction of Catherine's hairlessness and protruding genitals is essential for the "display of her life as a woman," it also foregrounds Huisman's ambition to portray "la femme derrière la mère" – and its attendant distinction between "woman" and "mother." In that sense, the question of what is "peculiar to Maman" is not just an issue of distinguishing Catherine from other women, but of keeping "Catherine," "woman" and "Maman" from bleeding into each other. And perhaps even of trying to make sense of how maternity and female sexuality can be kept apart.

The complexity of the issue (for it is, indeed, complex) is highlighted towards the end of the novel's third part, where the adult Violaine tries to come to terms with her mother's suicide. Pondering the note she has left behind – tucked between Stefan Zweig's *Burning Secret* and the child-rearing manual *How to Parent* – Huisman realizes that ever since giving birth, Catherine had been torn between the "two impossible poles" of mother and whore. She goes on to quote a passage from Catherine's autobiographical long-poem *Saxifrage* (published IRL by Éditions Séguier in 1993), where she cries out "My ass, my ass, it's not for sale anymore."³⁶ But even as her mother wrote those lines and told the men who had abused her "to go fuck themselves," Huisman writes, "she couldn't stop performing for men, responding to the relentlessness of their gaze." She couldn't stop taking pride in how "they stared at her ass, her beautiful ass."³⁷

The novel's final analysis of Catherine's tragedy and life as both woman and mother, then, hinges on the Madonna/Whore-complex, again stressing the psychoanalytical inflection of what is "peculiar to Maman." But significantly, where Freud first discussed the complex in relation to sexual neurosis in male patients (naming it "psychic impotence"), for Catherine it's the basis for her whole sense of self.³⁸ Exemplifying what in psychiatric parlance is called "self-objectivation," it is as if the foreign yet all-too-familiar male gaze on her body is internalized and manifested as the grounds for her identity.

From a feminist perspective, the Madonna/Whore-complex can be understood a means of policing women, based on a representational nexus of sexuality, sin and maternity in Juedo-Christian theology. According to Clarice Feinman, what the com-

plex is meant to describe has less to do with neurosis and trauma than the conception of women as owning both the ability to “produce children,” and to “inflare men’s passions.”³⁹ Furthermore, recent studies have shown that self-objectivation is connected to “female endorsement” of the Madonna/Whore-complex, and that it is more common in societies shaped by patriarchal ideologies.⁴⁰ One could argue, then, that the psychoanalytical inflection of Huisman’s portrait of her mother has everything to do with ideology; that the Freudian causality of the narrative not only ties trauma to tragedy and neurosis, but to feminism and an unmasking of the patriarchy. In that sense the aesthetics of Huisman’s novel is inseparable from its ethics. By extension, one could argue that the question of what is “peculiar to Maman” is not solely directed at Catherine or the Parisian particularities of Huisman’s childhood, but at ideologies of motherhood in a more general sense. For Catherine’s fraught dependence on “mother” and “whore” as “inextricable and reversible terms” is not just her own, but tied to paradoxical and neurotic notions of maternity in Judeo-Christian tradition. In that regard Huisman’s ambition of portraying “la femme derrière la mère” does not just pertain to understanding Catherine, but to distinguishing “woman” from “mother” and “whore” – and of extricating a sense of self beyond the pressures of maternity and sex.⁴¹

And though it might be pushing things too far, one could also claim that the connections between motherhood, ideology and the individual self all depend on the word “Maman” – that at least when left as-is in an English text and marked as untranslatable, it stops being a child’s proper name for her parent and becomes something much more meaningful and complex.

* * *

With the tripart model for analysis of translation and literary cross-cultural circulation presented in *Northern Crossings*, both “Maman” and “hyung” are at the micro level of individual works, exemplifying source language retention in the translated texts.⁴² And as previously mentioned, both words illustrate what Reine Meylaerts calls “heterolingualism,” which describes “the use of foreign languages ... in literary texts,” as well as the sort of “translation effects” Luise von Flotow has described in reference to the ideologically impactful nuances that translations can produce.⁴³ Regardless of the preferred typology, however, it is important to stress that neither “Maman” nor “hyung” are foreign in the original. Rather, it is when left untranslated – and perhaps recognized as *untranslatable*, defined by Barbara Cassin as semantic “symptoms of the differences of languages” – that their entrenchment in specific linguistic and cultural norms is laid bare.⁴⁴

Interestingly, with both *The Book of Mother* and *Love in the Big City* something similar happens on what the writers of *Northern Crossings* call the meso level of literary circulation; describing the actions of translators, publishers and other cultural mediators of the international book market.⁴⁵ First of all, both Violaine Huisman and Sang Young Park are themselves such cultural mediators, working in distinctly cosmopolitan literary spheres. Huisman has lived in New York for two decades, organizing multidisciplinary arts festivals at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, though returning at

times to the Paris of her youth. And Park, living in Seoul, has worked as a journalist and contributed to world literary magazines like *Words Without Borders*. Given the autobiographical impulses in both of their novels, these cosmopolitan accents are worth noting.

Secondly, the publishing trajectories of *Love in the Big City* and *The Book of Mother* run along similarly cosmopolitan lines. Both novels were produced by publishing houses of international acclaim – Huisman’s by Gallimard, founded in 1911; Park’s by Changbi, a publishing house and literary periodical founded in the 1960’s that since the turn of the millennium has had considerable international success with writers like Han Kang – and both were met with critical praise and awards in their respective home countries. Park’s novel became a bestseller, adding to his fame as recipient of the Munhakdongne New Writers Award. And notably, *Fugitive parce que reine* (as Huisman’s novel is called in French) won both the Prix Françoise Sagan and the Prix Marie Claire. The English translations were published under similarly favorable conditions. For one, they were launched simultaneously in Britain and the US – *Love in the Big City* by Grove Atlantic and Titled Axis; *The Book of Mother* by Scribner and Virago Press – and both were nominated for prestigious awards.

The context in which Park’s and Huisman’s novels were written, published and translated, in other words, exemplifies patterns of world literary consecration recognizable from the work of Pascale Casanova, Gisèle Sapiro and others, and hinges on acts of translation and cultural exchange at the institutional level of publishers, criticism and literary awards.⁴⁶ And as mentioned, in this regard it is crucial that both translations were longlisted for the International Booker Prize. Originally founded in 2005 as a biennial award for the entirety of an author’s work, it was restructured in 2015 through a merger with the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize. Since then it is given annually to single literary work written in any language that has been translated to English and published in Britain. And according to Jonathan Taylor, chair of the Booker Foundation, the rationale behind the award is geared towards having an impact on patterns of cultural exchange on the meso-level of the British book market. In 2015, he even stated his hope that the International Booker Prize would lead to “greater interest and investment in translation” and highlight the importance of “small publishers concentrating on translated fiction.”⁴⁷

As only works issued in Britain are eligible for the International Booker Prize it can be seen as typical for the increasingly Anglocentric hierarchies of the international book market (apart from English being the only “hypercentral language” of our times, consider, again, the designation of *Love in the Big City* as Park’s “English Language Debut”).⁴⁸ But at the same time, the award’s stress on *translated literature* also highlights to Anglophone readers that the works in question originate from somewhere else – in the present case, that Park and Huisman write about Korea and France, not Britain (or the US). In that sense, being nominated or awarded the International Booker Prize produce effects similar to the retention of individual foreign words in a translated text. Or to paraphrase Meylaerts, a nomination to an award for translation carves out a heterolingual space *surrounding* the literary text.⁴⁹ It follows that awards like the International Booker Prize also have an effect on the macro-level of the international book market as a “system of interconnected literatures,” since it marks and makes visible the

exchanges, interactions and inequalities the system relies on and perpetuates.⁵⁰ Or to put it differently: a nomination-sticker on the cover of a translated book might be a micro-level trace of mechanisms at the meso-level, but from the point of view of the reader the effect also has to do with emphasizing how that particular book is connected to a different culture in another part of the world. Much like writing “Maman” or “hyung” in an English text.

* * *

In the article “Translingual Events: World Literature and the Making of Language,” Stefan Helgesson and Christina Kullberg discuss what they call a “theory of world literary reading” that focus on the manifestation of “linguistic tension.” Against a backdrop of on the one hand the dialect continuum as “fluid zones of variable speech,” and “languages as bounded entities” defined by the nation state on the other, they stress the dynamism of translingual writing, arguing that both texts and readers are moving and unfixed in relation to cosmopolitan and vernacular groundings. “When a translingual event is produced by and in the encounter with a literary text,” they write, “it is not immediately apparent what should count as foreign or familiar – this polarity may shift or even become irrelevant as one engages with the textual material.” Furthermore, Helgesson and Kullberg highlight that “cultivating an attentiveness to translingualism can become both an aesthetic resource and a reading strategy.”⁵¹

To a certain extent, the functions of the untranslated endearments in *The Book of Mother* and *Love in the Big City* can be aligned with Helgesson’s and Kullberg’s theory. Most importantly, the cultural particularities of both novels, signaled in part by the heterolingual foregrounding of “Maman” and “hyung,” are fused with cosmopolitan impulses – evident in the publishing trajectories of both novels, their internationally recognizable genre patterns, and the transnational aura that surrounds both Park and Huisman – in a way that highlight modes of exchange and interaction between the foreign and the familiar. As such, at both the micro and meso levels of description *The Book of Mother* and *Love in the Big City* fit well with the idea of translingualism “as a primary condition” for world literature that individual texts and reading practices can “either work with or disavow.”⁵² Both novels are, quite simply, *world literary*, and ask to be read as such.

Helgesson and Kullberg emphasize the consequence of *translingualism*, and direct their argument to questions of how world literature connects to language politics and standardization, particularly through what Casanova calls the “Herder effect” (concerning the interchange between promoting vernacular literatures and the emergence of standardized languages).⁵³ Regarding the idea of “cultivating attentiveness” and that translingualism is both an “aesthetic resource” and a “reading strategy,” however, one might also stress the importance of *the event*. At least in connection to *The Book of Mother* and *Love in the Big City*, this is more than a Derridean quip. Rather, it is a recognition that it is the retention of source language words that mark the texts as translingual, and elicit the reading practices where the interchange between the foreign and the familiar take center stage. And whether those interchanges make visible the patriarchal ideologies of motherhood and psychoanalysis (as in Huisman) or the

complexities of how “the Global Gay” connects to Korean queerness (as in Park), one could even argue that the translators’ holding on to “Maman” and “hyung” is what makes it happen; that the non-translation of individual words is as once aesthetically and ethically *eventful*.

Notes

- 1 Violaine Huisman, *The Book of Mother* (2018), trans. Leslie Camhi (London: Virago Press 2021); Sang Young Park, *Love in the Big City* (2019), trans. Anton Hur (New York: Grove Atlantic 2021).
- 2 Reine Meylaerts, “Heterolingualism in/and Translation: How Legitimate are the Other and His/Her Language? An Introduction,” *Target* 18:1 (2006), 1–15; Luise von Flotow, “Translation Effects: How Beauvoir Talks Sex in English,” in *Contingent Love: Simone de Beauvoir and Sexuality*, ed. Melanie Hawthorne (Richmond: University of Virginia 2000), 13–33.
- 3 Catharina Edfeldt, Erik Falk, Andreas Hedberg, Yvonne Lindquist, Cecilia Schwartz & Paul Tenngart, *Northern Crossings: Translation, Circulation and the Literary Semi-Periphery*, (New York: Bloomsbury 2022), 19f.
- 4 See the Korea Society’s “Author Talk: Sang Young Park,” (November 16th, 2021) available on Youtube.com: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zvogDMKYVo4>
- 5 Park, *Love in the Big City*, 2f, 5, 15, 31, 42.
- 6 Gabriele Schwab, *Imaginary Ethnographies: Literature, Culture, and Subjectivity* (New York: Columbia University Press 2012).
- 7 Park, *Love in the Big City*, 3, 7, 27.
- 8 Park, *Love in the Big City*, 141f.
- 9 Tyler H. Sutton, “The Emergence of a Male Global Gay Identity: A Contentious and Contemporary Movement,” *Totem: The University of Western Ontario Journal of Anthropology*, 15:1 (2017), 51–58. See also Frédéric Martel, *Global Gay: How Gay Culture is Changing the World* (2012), trans. Patsy Baudoin (Cambridge: MIT Press 2019).
- 10 Dennis Altman, *Global Sex* (Chicago & London: Chicago University Press 2001), 86.
- 11 Jon Binnie, *The Globalization of Sex* (London: Sage Publications 2004), 68ff. See also Arnaldo Cruz-Malavé & Martin F. Manalansan eds., *Queer Globalizations: Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism* (New York: New York University Press 2002).
- 12 Brian James Baer, “Beyond Either/Or: Confronting the Fact of Translation in Global Sexuality Studies,” in *Queering Translation, Translating the Queer: Theory, Practice, Activism*, eds. Brian James Baer & Klaus Kaindl (New York: Routledge 2018), 38.
- 13 Beyond the world system theory approaches by scholars like Franco Moretti, Pascale Casanova and Johan Heilbron, consider Christina Kullberg’s and David Watson’s theorization of the vernacular as “a protean category” necessary to balance the tendency to “equate world literature with cosmopolitanism,” as well as the “Series introduction” to Bloomsbury’s *Cosmopolitan-Vernacular Dynamics in World Literatures*. Christina Kullberg & David Watson, “Introduction: Theorizing the Vernacular,” in *Vernaculars in an Age of World Literatures*, eds. Christina Kullberg & David Watson (New York: Bloomsbury 2022), 2; and Stefan Helgesson, Christina Kullberg, Paul Tenngart & Helena Wulff, “Series introduction. The Cosmopolitan-Vernacular Dynamic: Conjunctions of World Literature” in (among others), *Vernaculars in an Age of World Literature* (2022).

- 14 Cecilia Schwarz, "Profiles of Italy: Localising Practices of Swedish Publishing Houses," in *World Literatures: Exploring the Cosmopolitan–Vernacular Exchange*, eds. Stefan Helgesson, Annika Mörte Alling, Yvonne Lindquist & Helena Wullf (Stockholm: Stockholm University Press 2018), 310–323. See also "Book: Love in the Big City" at the Grove Atlantic webpage, <https://groveatlantic.com/book/love-in-the-big-city/>; and the equivalent site at Tilted Axis, <https://www.tiltedaxispress.com/love-in-the-big-city>
- 15 Regarding this "echo," consider Venuti's reading of the English *Standard Edition* of Freud, and the idea of uncovering "the domesticating movement involved in any foreignizing translation by showing where its constructions of the foreign depends on domestic cultural materials." Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (New York & London: Routledge 1995), 29.
- 16 See "hyung," "noona," "unni," and "oppa" in *Urban Dictionary*, available online: <https://www.urbandictionary.com>
- 17 Park, *Love in the Big City*, 25f. 34f.
- 18 Park, *Love in the Big City*, 50.
- 19 Park, *Love in the Big City*, 57, 60.
- 20 Park, *Love in the Big City*, 69ff.
- 21 Park, *Love in the Big City*, 82, 94.
- 22 Park, *Love in the Big City*, 89ff.
- 23 von Flotow, "Translation Effects: How Beauvoir Talks Sex in English" (2000).
- 24 José Santaemilia, "Sexuality and Translation as Intimate Partners? Toward a *Queer Turn* in Rewriting Identities and Desires," in *Queering Translation, Translating the Queer: Theory, Practice, Activism*, eds. Brian James Baer & Klaus Kaindl (New York & London: Routledge 2018), 12.
- 25 Huisman, *The Book of Mother*, pp. 2–3. Parenthetically it could be noted that the sympathy with which Huisman depicts her at times rather unsympathetic mother was stressed in the French reception of the book, particularly in connection to Huisman's associative writing style. See Raphaëlle Leyris, "Violaine Huisman rend son humanité à sa mère," *Le Monde* (25th January, 2018). Available online: https://www.lemonde.fr/livres/article/2018/01/25/violaine-huisman-rend-son-humanite-a-sa-mere_5246733_3260.html
- 26 Huisman, *The Book of Mother*, 4–5.
- 27 Huisman, *The Book of Mother*, 211.
- 28 Virginia Woolf, "The New Biography" (1927), in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf. Volume IV: 1925–1928*, ed. Andrew McNeillie (London: The Hogarth Press 1994), 473f.
- 29 Quoted from an interview with Huisman in the TV-show *La Grande Librairie* (France Télévision), broadcasted on May 18th 2018. Available on YouTube: "Fugitive pace que reine: Violaine Huisman, pour l'amour d'une mère," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G5UVGJk1BJI>
- 30 Huisman, *The Book of Mother*, 19.
- 31 Cf. Kullberg & Watson, "Introduction: Theorizing the Vernacular," 5.
- 32 Huisman, *The Book of Mother*, 11, 21.
- 33 See "Collection Online: Maman," <https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/10856>
- 34 Huisman, *The Book of Mother*, 37.
- 35 Huisman, *The Book of Mother*, 27.
- 36 Catherine Cremnitz, *Saxifrage* (Paris: Éditions Séguier 1993).
- 37 Huisman, *The Book of Mother*, 190.
- 38 Sigmund Freud, "Über die allgemeinste Erniedrigung des Liebeslebens" (1912), available online via Project Gutenberg: <https://www.projekt-gutenberg.org/freud/klein1/Kapitel19.html>

- 39 Clarice Feinman, *Women in the Criminal Justice System*. 3rd Edition (Westport & London: Praeger Publishers 1994), 3f.
- 40 Rotem Kahalon et al. "The Madonna-Whore Dichotomy is Associated with Patriarchy Endorsement: Evidence from Israel, the United States, and Germany," *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, vol. 43:3 (2019), 348–67.
- 41 Huisman, *The Book of Mother*, 190.
- 42 Edfeldt et al., *Northern Crossings* (2022), 19f, 124.
- 43 Meylaerts, "Heterolingualism in/and Translation: How Legitimate are the Other and His/Her Language? An Introduction," (2006); von Flotow, "Translation Effects: How Beauvoir Talks Sex in English" (2000).
- 44 Barbara Cassin, "Philosophising in Languages," *Nottingham French Studies*, vol.49:2 (Summer 2010), 18.
- 45 Edfeldt et al., *Northern Crossings* (2022), 22f.
- 46 See Pascale Casanova, "Literature as a World," in ed. Theo D'haen, *World Literature: a Reader* (Routledge: London & New York 2012), 275–288; Gisèle Sapiro, "The Transnational Literary Field between (Inter-)nationalism and Cosmopolitanism," *Journal of World Literature*, 5 (2020), 481–504.
- 47 Sarah Shaffi, "'Reconfiguration' of Man Booker International Prize," *The Bookseller*, 7/7 2015, <https://www.thebookseller.com/news/man-booker-306625>
- 48 See Johan Heilbron, "Towards a Sociology of Translation: Book Translations as a Cultural World-System," *European Journal of Social Theory*, 2 (1999), 429–44; "Book: Love in the Big City" at the Grove Atlantic webpage, <https://groveatlantic.com/book/love-in-the-big-city/>; and the equivalent site at Tilted Axis, <https://www.tiltedaxispress.com/love-in-the-big-city>
- 49 Meylaerts, "Heterolingualism in/and Translation: How Legitimate are the Other and His/Her Language? An Introduction," (2006), 4.
- 50 Edfeldt et al., *Northern Crossings* (2022), 12.
- 51 Stefan Helgesson & Christina Kullberg, "Translingual Events: World Literature and the Making of Language," *Journal of World Literature*, 3 (2018), 137f.
- 52 Helgesson & Kullberg, "Translingual Events: World Literature and the Making of Language," 137.
- 53 Helgesson & Kullberg, "Translingual Events: World Literature and the Making of Language," 140, 137.

ANNA HULTMAN

**CONFERENCE
REPORT:
TRANSLATION/
TRANSMISSION/
TRANSGRESSION**

(Komplitt, Lund
22–23 September 2022)

**KONFERENS-
RAPPORT:
TRANSLATION/
TRANSMISSION/
TRANSGRESSION**

(Komplitt, Lund
22–23 september 2022)

The fire alarm went off during Oscar Jansson's opening address for the Komplitt symposium TRANSLATION/TRANSMISSION/TRANSGRESSION, so all participants had to leave the auditorium and make their way out into the sunny September morning. Those gathered for the symposium crowded with lundensean students at the designated assembly spot, drank coffee and waited. Once the fire-drill was finished the participants moved as one, delayed but in good spirits, and returned to the symposium's schedule and opening address. Logistically the fire-drill occurred at a poorly chosen moment, but in the capacity of it being a break, infringement, unexpected movement or reversal it nevertheless fit well into the symposium's theme.

The prefix *trans*, meaning different types of movement across boundaries, featured at the symposium in several respects. In terms of content it delineates the papers presented, but in a wider sense it also captures the symposium's cross- and interdisciplinary character. On the 22–23 September 2022 researchers from a number of disciplines and areas of study

Brandlarmet ljöd mitt under Oscar Janssons öppningsanförande till Komplitts symposium TRANSLATION/TRANSGRESSION/TRANSMISSION, varpå de medverkande tvingades lämna konferenslokalen och söka sig ut i den soliga septemberförmiddagen. Symposiets deltagare trängdes med lundensiska studenter vid den utsedda återsamlingsplatsen, drack kaffe och väntade. När brandövningen var avslutad kunde deltagarna i samlad tropp, försenade men vid gott mod, återgå till schemat och öppningsanförandet. Logistiskt sett inföll brandövningen vid ett illa valt tillfälle, men i egenskap av brott, överträdelse, oväntad rörelse och omkastning följde den i någon mening symposiets tema.

Prefixet *trans*, i betydelsen olika slags rörelser över gränser, präglade symposiet i flera avseenden. Innehållsligt ringar det in de bidrag som presenterades, men i en bredare mening fångar det också symposiets tvära och interdisciplinära karaktär. Den 22–23 september 2022 möttes forskare från en rad olika discipliner och studiefält: översättningsstudier,

convened: translation studies, comparative literature, as well as Chinese, English, French, German, Spanish and Scandinavian literature. The contributions presented ranged across a similarly wide scope of subjects and theoretical fields. World literary and postcolonial perspectives met translation theories and queer methodologies, depictions of the bodies and sexualities of plants, animals and humans were juxtaposed, and presentations moved between sociological and formalist modes of analysis; between considerations of the theoretical, the textual, and the materialities of archives.

Using the movability of the prefix *trans* to connect different subjects and fields of study was also an explicit ambition of the symposium. To shed light on and discuss the “trans-functions” of the world’s literatures invited the types of questions traditionally addressed in research on translation and World Literature – e.g. concerning languages and circulation – but also to concerns of race, gender and sexuality, that has often been overlooked within those fields. In that regard the symposium was a continuation and extension, as well as a widening and a development of the research and collaborations previously initiated and lead by the Komplitt group in Lund.

The three keynote lectures pertinently capture the width that characterized the two days of the symposium. Under the rubric “Translation, Sexuality and the World Literary System,” Paul Tenngart of Lund University used three examples to discuss what happens with sexually explicit prose and poetry when it is translated and moves from one national context to another. The dissimilar examples – Charles Baudelaire, Ivar Lo-Johansson and Yasunari Kawabata – showed how a range of factors affect translations and transpositions of sexual depictions. Genre, questions of censorship, national stereotypes, whether a work migrates from (hyper)central positions to the (semi)periphery or the other way around, and whether the author is niched or canonized; all was presented as important in the complex processes at hand.

komparativ litteraturvetenskap och kinesisk, engelsk, fransk, tysk, spansk och skandinavisk litteraturvetenskap. Bidragen som presenterades vid symposiet rörde sig likaledes över en stor bredd av ämnesområden och teoretiska fält. Världslitterära, översättningsteoretiska och postkoloniala perspektiv mötte queera angreppssätt, gestaltningar av växt-, djur- och människokroppar och deras sexualitet ställdes bredvid varandra, och presentationerna rörde sig mellan litteratursociologiska och formalistiska ingångar, mellan det teoretiska, det textnära och arkivens materialitet.

Att använda rörligheten i prefixet *trans* för att koppla ihop olika ämnen och fält var också en uttalad ambition för symposiet. Att belysa och diskutera världslitteraturens ”trans-funktioner” inbjöd både till den sorts frågor som mer traditionellt brukar beröras inom forskning om översättning och världslitteratur – t.ex. rörande språk och cirkulation – men även till att öppna upp för frågor om ras, kön och sexualitet, som ofta förbisets inom dessa fält. Symposiet utgjorde i så måtto såväl en kontinuitet och förlängning, som en utveckling och förgrening av den forskning och de samarbeten som initierats och drivits i Komplittmiljön i Lund.

De tre keynote-anförandena fångar väl den bredd som präglade symposiets två dagar. Under rubriken “Translation, Sexuality and the World Literary System” diskuterade Paul Tenngart, Lunds universitet, utifrån tre exempel vad som händer med sexuellt explicit prosa och poesi när de översätts och rör sig från en nationell kontext till en annan. De olikartade exemplen – Charles Baudelaire, Ivar Lo-Johansson och Yasunari Kawabata – visade hur en rad olika faktorer spelar in i hur sexuella gestaltningar översätts och transponeras. Både genretillhörighet, censurfrågor, nationella stereotyper, huruvida ett verk rör sig från (hyper)centrum till (semi)periferi eller omvänt, och huruvida ett författarskap är mer nischat eller kanoniserat, framhölls som betydelsefullt för de komplexa processerna.

The first day of the symposium turned to a close with Kanika Batra, who joined via link from Texas Tech University and spoke on “Trans Worldlings and Postcolonial Sexual Activism.” Batra primarily focused on archives – more specifically the theoretical and methodological opportunities and challenges actualized in any attempt to trace postcolonial, feminist and queer histories in fragmented and dispersed materials, or in activist and oral literature. With reference to activist publications from Jamaica, South Africa and India, Batra underscored the significance of seeking interactions in the Global South, of directing attention to the specific vocabularies of activism, and of finding connections between knowledge production and activism. She also discussed the tension in how new materials afford opportunities of hearing new voices, while intersections between different activist settings continue to leave certain voices unheard: the risk that the queer is subsumed in the postcolonial, or that lesbian, bisexual or trans experiences are displaced in favor of male homosexuality.

In the final keynote of the symposium Emily Apter, New York University, talked on the theme “No Good Paradigms. Untranslatability as Critical Method.” The presentation started out on the allure and risks of paradigms, with particular focus on the role of translation in comparative literature and studies on World Literature. The connection between language and power was a guiding principle throughout the talk. The pragmatic need of translation was pitted against how translations always bring forth a power imbalance: a potential for linguistic, structural violence through which the “source” or “originary” language is simplified and subordinated – and where the idea of *source* and *origin* is made into an object, fetishized as virginial and untouched. As an antidote Apter called for an affirmation of untranslatabilities, not as a paradigm but as a critical method or practice. During the talk she returned to the metaphor of *getting lost on purpose* as a means of moving forward; of sometimes choosing

Symposiets första dag avslutades med att Kanika Batra, med på länk från Texas Tech University, talade under rubriken ”Trans Worldlings and Postcolonial Sexual Activism”. Batra fokuserade i hög grad på arkiv – närmare bestämt på de teoretiska och metodologiska möjligheter och utmaningar som aktualiseras i försök att spåra postkoloniala, feministiska och queera historier i fragmenterade och spridda material, liksom i aktivistisk och muntlig litteratur. Med utgångspunkt i aktivistiska publikationer från Jamaica, Sydafrika och Indien underströk Batra betydelsen av att söka interaktioner i den globala södern, att rikta uppmärksamhet mot aktivismens specifika vokabulär och söka kopplingar mellan kunskapsproduktion och aktivism. Hon diskuterade också spänningen i hur nya material ger möjlighet att höra nya röster, samtidigt som intersektionerna mellan olika aktivistiska sammanhang fortsätter lämna vissa röster ohörda: risken att det queera underordnas det postkoloniala, eller att lesbiska, bisexuella eller transerfarenheter förfördelas till förmån för manlig homosexualitet.

I symposiets sista keynote-anförande talade Emily Apter, New York University, på temat ”No Good Paradigms. Untranslatability as Critical Method”. Föredraget tog sin utgångspunkt i paradigms lockelser och risker, med särskilt fokus på översättningens roll i relation till komparativ litteraturvetenskap och världslitteraturstudier. Kopplingen mellan språk och makt löpte som en röd tråd genom föredraget. Det pragmatiska behovet av översättningar ställdes mot hur översättningen alltid bär med sig en maktobalans: en potential till språkligt, strukturellt våld genom vilket ”ursprungsspråket” förenklas och underordnas – och genom själva prefixet *ursprung* görs till ett slags objekt, fetischiseras som jungfruligt och orört. Som ett motgift uppmanade Apter till bejakandet av oöversättbarheter, inte som ett paradigm men som en kritisk metod eller praktik. Under föredragets gång återvände hon till metaforen *att gå vilse med flit* som en väg framåt; att ibland hellre välja oförståelsen

to *not* understand rather than to simplify, of preferring silence to forced dialogue.

The tension between ideals and pragmatism was one of the points repeatedly brought up during the symposium, not least in the panel "Teaching with/in/on translation," where Shuangyi Li, Alexander Bareis and Oscar Jansson discussed the possibilities of accommodating theoretical ideals with the concrete needs and demands of teaching. Another red thread through the symposium as a whole was the need of continued and comprehensive efforts to bridge the gaps between postcolonial perspectives, research on World Literature and translation studies. Politics was a recurring term in papers and discussions, both in relation to World Literature as a (possibly) apolitical framework, and in arguments on the connections between literature, translation and activism. A third point that recurred in presentations and dialogues, as in the structure of the symposium as a whole, was the need for scholars to move between the systemic and the specific. An observation, however, is that the questions on sex and sexuality tended to end up on the sidelines, and that *transgression* to a certain extent appeared as an addendum to the more intertwined *translation* and *transmission*. But this observation must be weighed against the novel ambition of the symposium to more clearly integrate these questions in studies on World Literature and translation. Seen as a pioneering effort in that direction the symposium was an excellent start, that hopefully will be continued by further dialogues, meetings and collaborations.

Translation by Oscar Jansson

än förenklingen, tystanden framför den forcerade dialogen.

Spänningen mellan ideal och pragmatik var en av de punkter som vid flera tillfällen aktualiserades under symposiet, inte minst i paneldiskussionen "Teaching with/in/on translation" där Shuangyi Li, Alexander Bareis och Oscar Jansson resonerade kring möjligheterna att jämka teoretiska ideal med undervisningens konkreta krav och behov. Ytterligare en röd tråd genom symposiet som helhet var behovet att, även fortsättningsvis och mer genomgripande, överbygga klyftorna mellan postkoloniala perspektiv, det världslitterära fältet och översättningsstudier. Politik var ett begrepp som återkom i föredragen och diskussionerna, både i relation till världslitteratur som ett (möjligen) apolitiskt ramverk, och i resonemang kring sammankopplingarna mellan litteratur, översättning och aktivism. En tredje poäng som återkom under föredrag och samtal, och även i symposiets sammansättning som helhet, var behovet att som forskare kunna röra sig mellan det systematiska och det specifika. En iakttagelse är dock att frågorna om kön och sexualitet tenderade att hamna lite vid sidan av, och att *transgression* i någon mån framstod som ett slags tillägg till de mer sammanflätade *translation* och *transmission*. Men denna iakttagelse måste vägas mot det nyskapande i symposiets ambition att tydligare integrera dessa frågor i världslitteratur- och översättningsforskning. Sett som en pionjärsats i denna riktning var symposiet en mycket god början, som förhoppningsvis kommer följas av fler samtal, möten och samarbeten.

Lisa Grahn

Jernbanans mödrar. Moderskap och berättande i Sara Lidmans Jernbaneepos

Uppsala: ACTA, 2022, 218 s. (diss. Uppsala)

Lisa Grahns avhandling *Jernbanans mödrar* analyserar mödrar och modrande i de sju romaner som utgör Sara Lidmans Jernbaneepos (1977–1999). Grahn har alltså inkluderat även de två senare delarna, *Lifsens rot* (1996) och *Oskuldens minut* (1999), vilket den tidigare forskningen i till exempel *Nordisk kvinnolitteraturhistoria* (1997) eller Birgitta Holms stora biografi (1998) inte haft möjlighet att göra. Men inte nog med det – både forskning och reception har tidigare tenderat att fokusera på framställningen av männen. Hög tid för kvinnorna alltså, här i form av Lidmans komplicerade modersgestalter.

Inte för intet har romansviten döpts efter järnvägens tillkomst och den förändring av samhället som bygget innebar. Under ett halvt sekel mellan 1870 och 1920 följer böckerna samma familj och by i norra Västerbottens inland. De första fem delarna tecknar Didriks uppgång och fall, dels i relation till familjen han skapar med Anna-Stava och dels i hur han kämpar för att dra bygden in i framtiden med järnvägsbygget. De två sista delarna, som publiceras ett decennium senare, beskriver Didriks och Anna-Stavas son och hans äktenskap med Rönnog som blir den mest framträdande gestalten. Men de patriarkala strukturerna dominerar Jernbanesvitens berättelser och bestämmer kvinnornas handlingsutrymme.

Romansvitens mångfald av olika slags mödrar ger en både splittrad och motsägelsefull bild, och det är inte tal om endast *en* typ av modersgestalt. Grahn väljer därför att i avhandlingens olika analyskapitel skissera fyra olika aspekter av moderskap, nämligen faderns roll, mödrarnas kroppslighet, det normöverskridande icke-biologiska modrandet, samt det metafysiska moderskap som kliver bortom realismens rāmärken i form av spöken och ofödda barn. Det handlar alltså både om en individuell nivå i form av kroppsliga erfarenheter, och om den strukturella nivån av makt över text och kontext, vilket synes rimligt eftersom avhandlingen vill skriva in sig i forskningsfältet ”moderskapsstudier” där just särskiljandet mellan individuell praktik och strukturell institution är etablerad. Grahn tar även avstamp i den fenomenologiska traditionens syn på kroppen som situation, vilket kan sägas utgöra ett kompletterande perspektiv där moderskapsforskningens skarpa uppdelning mellan individ och struktur mildras och istället visar att det handlar om samverkan och process.

I det första analyskapitlet analyseras konstruktionen av moderskapet som strukturellt patriarkal institution. Genom att lyfta fram tre hegemoniska manstyper, Olföraren (”ordföranden”, bygdens starke man), Storsonen (faderns arvtagare) och Den underbare mannen (kolonisatören som homosocial förälskelse). Dessa epitet kan i förstone uppfattas som fasta identitetskategorier men är snarare stadda i ständig förändring i relation till varandra då de tillsammans konstruerar ett lokalt patriarkalt system som mödrarna måste förhålla sig till. Att föda en Storson tillhör mödrarnas

viktigaste uppgift, till exempel, men det är fadern som bestämmer vilken av sönerna som ska utses till att överta ansvaret för ägorna efter honom.

Det finns dock fler berättelser i Jernbanesviten. Efter kapitlet om de patriarkala strukturerna och moderskapet som institution följer sedan tre analyskapitel om mödrar på individuell nivå. Det första fokuserar Anna-Stava och hennes svärdotter Rönnog och deras kroppsliga erfarenheter av sexualitet, graviditet och amning. I analysen lyfter Grahn fram att skildringarnas tidslinjer blir både diakrona och synkrona genom å ena sidan generationskronologin och å andra sidan den upprepning och cirkularitet som moderskapet innebär. Nästa kapitel tar upp begreppet *annan-mamma* och hur gestalter som den sexualiserade Hagar står utanför det normativa och biologiska moderskapet genom att först föda oäkta barn och sedan fungera som amma till andras barn. I det sista analyskapitlet studeras modersgestaltens närmast övernaturliga gåvor i relation till sina ofödda eller döda barn. Genom defokalisering söker romanerna här teckna det osägbara, och spöken och syner blir magiska inslag som bidrar till att lösa upp gränsen mellan dröm och verklighet, liv och död. Även i detta kapitel blir det tydligt att den diakrona tidslinjen korsas och bryts med den synkrona när nutid och dåtid flyter ihop i minnen och drömmar.

Som Grahn påpekar så korsas den patriarkalt linjära tiden, präglad av progression och modernitet, av en feminint definierad cirkulär temporalitet, vilket inte bara möjliggör det uppbrutna berättande som karakteriserar Lidmans skrivande utan även skapar utrymme för modrandets mothistorier. Grahn väljer att kalla brytpunkten för *matrilinjaritet*, och den utgör analysernas huvudsakliga raster. Detta raster är inspirerat av Tess Cossletts begrepp ”matrilinjära narrativ”, där berättelsen följer en linje på mödernet. En sådan läsning, menar Grahn, får konsekvenser inte bara för tolkningen av de individuella modersgestalterna utan för uppfattningen av Jernbanesviten i stort. I förlängningen innebär det matrilinjära narrativets sätt att förhålla sig till historieskrivning och berättande att Jernbanesviten i övergripande mening kan betraktas som en dekoloniserande mot-historia. Grahn tar avstamp i Linda Hutcheons begrepp ”historiografisk metaroman” och menar att Jernbanesviten fungerar som en potentiellt subversiv historieskrivning som inte nödvändigtvis bekräftar den maskulint konnoterade modernitetens linjära progressivitetstanke. Den här slutsatsen är mycket intressant, och jag skulle därför gärna ha sett ett tydligare fokus och utveckling av den. Det bränner till i analyserna som berör Jernbanesvitens historiserande aspekter, och jag tror att kommande Lidmanforskning har mycket att tillägga med ett temporalitetsperspektiv på Jernbanesviten. Svitens problematisering av den maskulint konnoterade moderniteten och kolonialismen har visserligen studerats tidigare, men jag tänker att den uppbrutna och fragmenterade berättelsen går bortom avhandlingens referenser till postmodernism och matrilinjaritet. Vad betyder det att till exempel studera hur historien queeras genom romanernas udda gestalter och polyfona röster? Och hur skulle en alternativ tidslinje beskrivas bortom ”manlig” progressivitet och ”kvinnlig” cirkularitet?

Däremot ser jag inte forskningsfältet kring moderskapsstudier som i sig särskilt fruktbart, det tycks mig som att det sluter sig snarare än öppnar nya infallsvinklar. Den andra vågens feministiska forskning kring moderskap och modrande har förstås med rätta kritiserats för att vara normativt vit med en heteronormativ och borgerlig kärnfamilj i fokus. Till exempel visar Grahn hur Adrienne Rich på 1970-talet jämförde

moderskapet med slaveri och menade obetänksamt att det förstnämnda är ”värre” eftersom banden till barnen gör moderskapet mer sårbart. Uppenbarligen kunde inte den amerikanska Rich se att hennes lands kvinnor bara ett drygt sekel tidigare varit *både* slavar och mödrar, en blindhet som missar att moderskap ibland rentav varit ett *resultat* av slaveriet. Ett mer intersektionellt perspektiv har därför tillkommit i senare moderskapsstudier, liksom i Grahn's avhandling där klass, sexualitet och kolonialism blivit viktiga beståndsdelar.

Grahn lyfter fram olika aspekter av modrande som i förlängningen visar på vikten av alternativa värden, men min kritik av det övergripande forskningsfält hon förhåller sig till, moderskapsstudier, handlar snarare om frågan ifall det valda perspektivet är det mest fruktbara. Avhandlingens analytiska snitt läggs i berättelsen om mödrarna, men jag undrar om det inte hade varit intressantare att lägga det analytiska snittet i berättelsen om *döttrarna*. Visserligen är moderskap något kvinnor måste förhålla sig till, som Grahn mycket riktigt konstaterar, och utgör en ständig referensram för kvinnlig agens. Men det är problematiskt att som inom forskningsfältet moderskapsstudier betrakta moderskap i termer av universell kvinnlig erfarenhet. Dotterskap kan snarare sägas vara en sådan ontologisk kategori, ifall det är det som är poängen. Som feminint konnoterade varelser är vi alla någons dotter, medan långt ifrån alla är mödrar. Förhoppningsvis kan dock *alla* människor praktisera modrande på ett eller annat sätt, medan moderskap endast relaterar till några av oss.

Men det finns naturligtvis aspekter av moderskapsstudier som är högst relevanta, och Lisa Grahn inleder sin avhandling med tidigare nämnda Adrienne Richs uppmaning om att berättelser om döttrar och mödrar utgör ”the great untold story”. Här löper en tråd till dagens feministiska forskning, och den röda tråden går även genom Sara Lidmans författarskap:

If we continue to treat pregnancy and babyhood as a short and sticky and negligible period in mankind's life - it will lead us all to disaster.

Så talade Lidman i ett föredrag på 1990-talet, och så borde vi tala idag. Ett samhälle som prioriterar den autonoma, funktionsnormativa och produktiva individen snarare än värden som omhändertagande och gemenskap är ett samhälle som befinner sig i fritt fall. Moder Jord kan ju inte längre rädda oss.

Kristina Fjelkestam

Martin Hellström

Mariagripelikt. Maria Gripes barnböcker och tidiga ungdomsromaner tolkade genom barns litteratursamtal

Göteborg och Stockholm: Makadam förlag, 2022, 168 s.

Allt sedan jag första gången hörde talas om Martin Hellströms forskningsprojekt om att läsa Maria Gripes böcker med barn för flera år sedan har jag nyfiket väntat på att få höra mer. På något vis slog projektet direkt an i mig. Dels beror det på min förkärlek till Gripes författarskap, dels för att metoden att läsa hennes böcker tillsammans barn över lång tid var något nytt och spännande. Efter en artikel om projektet som har publicerats på vägen i *Tidskrift för litteraturvetenskap* (2016:3–4), där Hellström tillsammans med Hedda Aldén Björäng, Tekla Hagberg, Albert Hellström, Hjalmar Hellström, Ellen Linde, Felix Noske och Carl Wistedt bröt ny mark genom att barnen var medförfattare, har nu Hellströms *Mariagripelikt. Maria Gripes barnböcker och tidiga ungdomsromaner tolkade genom barns litteratursamtal* äntligen utkommit, samma år som Gripe fyller 100 år, på Makadam förlag. Jag kan säga direkt att det här är en storslagen studie. Den är innovativ, idérik och mycket inspirerande. Dessutom är boken skriven med värme och djup respekt för de medforskande barnen som varit med hela vägen från projektets start 2015, då de sju barnen var mellan 9–11 år till 2020 då de äldsta skulle börja på gymnasiet. Också Hellström skriver att han blivit äldre: från 36 år till över 40. Det är sympatiskt. Hellström är en i gänget; en kompis men också en vuxen litteraturforskare som roddar med projektets alla träffar på fredagarna efter skolan och med de gemensamma lägren på somrarna där han läser högt under stjärnhimlen eller när de alla ligger i sina sovsäckar. Martin Hellström styr och ställer med att spela in samtalen mellan lek och mackor. Han arrangerar utflykter till bland annat Nyköping, där Gripe bodde från 1950-talet fram till de sista åren av sitt liv och han hanterar situationer när barnen hellre vill leka än lyssna på Gripes böcker. På omslagsfliken ligger han dock helt avslappnat i gräset med ett barn klättrandets på ryggen.

Hellström är alltså genuint intresserad av barns perspektiv på Gripes författarskap och syftet är att barn samtalar och tolkar hennes verk tillsammans med forskaren. På så vis är studien litteraturvetenskaplig, men istället för en forskares läsning och tolkning av böckerna är fokus på barnens kollektiva samtal och tolkningar, där deras frågor står i centrum. I projektet är barnen därför medforskare och inte studiens empiri. En viktig utgångspunkt för projektet är Mary Kelleys två artiklar ”Empowering children and young people as researchers. Overcoming barriers and building capacity” (2011) och ”Just teach us the skills please, we’ll do the rest’. Empowering ten-year-olds as active researchers” (2004) och Sandra Hilléns etnologiska avhandling *Barn som medforskare. En metod med potential för delaktighet* (2013), där poängen är att barn och forskare tillsammans arbetar för att finna svar på gemensamma frågor och där den vuxna inte ställer frågorna, har svaren, lösningen eller tolkningsföreträdet.

Inalles har forskargruppen läst 26 av 36 böcker från Maria Gripes debut med *I vår lilla stad* (1954) till *Agnes Cecilia – en sällsam historia* (1981). De senare ungdomsböckerna med Skuggserien är alltså inte med då projektet avslutades när barnen blev ungdomar. Varför de inte fortsatte ytterligare några år förklaras inte, men det är gott så. Någon gång måste ett projekt avslutas och fem år är en mycket lång tid och därefter har boken skrivits. Barnen har också sett på filmatiseringar, lyssnat på radioinspelningar och gjort utflykter till platser med relevans för böckerna. Hur dessa utflykter, läger och fikor bekostats framkommer inte, och jag skulle gärna ha haft lite mer information om de materiella förutsättningarna och kanske också något ytterligare om de medforskande barnen. I artikeln (nämnd ovan men som inte är med i boken) förstår man att barnen finns i en gemensam teatergrupp som Hellström känner till väl. Av diskussionerna och kapitlen om böckerna framgår det att barnen visserligen har mycket olika uppfattningar om Gripes böcker, från att tycka att de är tråkiga till att Maria Gripe är cool, och barnen delger många referenser till andra barnlitterära verk, filmer och teater. Barnen, eller åtminstone några av dem, är läsare själva och intresserade av kultur, vilket möjligen skulle kunna ha diskuterats mer i studien, samtidigt är det en balansgång hur mycket information som behöver delges om barnen då studien inte primärt studerar dem per se utan deras tolkningar av Gripes barnböcker och tidiga ungdomsböcker. Barnens roll är att vara medforskare. Klart är dock att gruppen med flickor och pojkar förefaller vara homogen, vit och medelklass (?) och att gemenskapen bygger på vänskap, men också stark tillit till forskaren och kompiserna.

I det medforskande litteratursamtalet, som metoden kallas, har Gripes böcker höglästs av Hellström med några kapitel i taget på olika platser och efter läsningen har samtal förts – ibland kaotiska, ibland mer strukturerade – som spelats in. Som bakgrund finns Aidan Chambers boksamtalsmodell som flitigt används i skolan, men istället för att följa denna mall har samtalen varit betydligt friare och inte heller följt något frågeschema efter någon analysmodell. Samtalen har slingrat sig fram och så småningom har de lett till gemensamma tolkningar som forskaren redogör för i de olika kapitlen. Själva analys- och skrivarbetet har gjorts av Hellström som konstaterar att det som presenteras kan betraktas som antingen ”medforskarnas tolkning av Maria Gripes verk, eller forskarens tolkning av medforskarnas tolkning av Maria Gripes verk.” (s. 22) Jag lutar åt att det kanske är hela forskargruppens tolkning som slutligen beskrivs, men där barnens tolkningar får störst utrymme, men också forskarens röst är närvarande och ibland också styrande, vilket diskuteras i boken. Hellström väjer inte för att ta tag i de svåra problemen som tillfället då det blev kris i projektet då barnen bara ville leka och var helt ointresserade av Gripes tråkiga bok. Hellström reflekterar fint över situationen i avsnittet ”Inpass: Metodkritik 1”, där han beskriver hur han var tvungen att förklara för barnen att hans jobb inte bara var att leka och vara på läger, utan också att läsa Gripes böcker tillsammans med dem. Han föreslog att de kunde byta författarskap, men det visade sig inte vara någon utväg, för vad skulle de då läsa? De var inte överens och starka känslor uppkom. Att det händer oförutsägbara saker och uppstår kriser i en forskningsprocess är inget ovanligt, men det fina hos Hellström är att han blottlägger svårigheterna på ett nyanserat och insiktsfullt vis. Vid alla empiriska studier har deltagarna rätt att avbryta sin medverkan, men vad hade hänt med projektet om alla barnen stack? Hellström lyckades vända skutan och reflekterar över situationen genom att konstatera att det var bra att kritiska röster höjdes liksom att situationen löstes: ”Att ha sju stycken medforskare som alla upplevde Maria Gripes verk

som det bästa de läst, och där det tävlades om att komma med mest berömande analyser, hade inte givit så mycket. Det är olikheterna som ger olika infallsvinklar och som gör samtalet dynamiskt. Därför behövs också något annat som förenar än just uppgiften vi arbetar med.” (s. 75) I projektet är det tydligt att lekens betydelse är ovärderlig. Barnen leker Maria Gripes böcker. De befinner sig på olika platser och är olika karaktärer som bidrar till tolkningen. Om lekens betydelse skulle Hellström kunnat skriva mer, men det kanske kommer då ytterligare en bok om projektet är under utgivning.

I de åtta analyskapitlen ”I småbarnens värld”, ”Gästspel i tonårsrummet”, ”Gripe hittar hem”, ”Vem är det som berättar?”, ”In i sagans värld”, ”Förtroliga samtal”, ”Äventyr för radio och tv” och ”Tillbaka till tonårstiden” placeras Gripes böcker, filmer och radio- och tv-inspelningar in. Genrefrågan är central från de allra första småbarnsböckerna på 1950-talet och barnen hittar raskt på begreppet ”blandad genre”, som innebär att olika stilelement smälter samman. Barnen lyfter fram *Pappa Pellerins dotter* (1963) som första exempel på detta, och det också en bok som de ofta återkommer till. Barnen talar om en ”Mariagripestil”. Där tidigare forskare sett ett frö av den magiska realismen i *Agnes Cecilia* (1981) som utvecklas i Skuggserien, ser barnen frön betydligt tidigare redan i boken om *Nattpappan* (1968) med blomman och ugglan som skapar en känsla av mystik. Det Mariagripenaturliga blir också tydligt i radioföljetongen *Tordyveln flyger i skymningen* (1976), *Agnes Cecilia*, men finns också redan i *Glastunneln* (1969). Barnen samtalar sig till en tolkning av böckerna i relation till varandra efterhand och de blir experter på författarskapet. De jämför ofta karaktärerna, men också genren och stilen. Frågor ställs om kärlek (är barnen Hugo och Josefin exempelvis kära i varandra?), om skräck (som i *Glasblåsarens barn*, där barnen i boken inte förefaller vara skräckslagna, men som läsare blir man det), varför flera böcker är så filosofiska (som *Julia och nattpappan*) och varför det finns så lite av humor i författarskapet. Vi får inblickar om berättarperspektiv, handlingen och stildrag och barnen går emot tidigare tolkningar (som de inte känner till men som Hellström förstås gör) och de fördjupar, nyanserar och ställer frågor. De hittar på nya begrepp som exempelvis mys-mystik, deckar-mystik och mystik-magisk och de använder vedertagna som fantasy och realism. Att böckerna är filosofiska återkommer de ofta till och det är slående hur kreativa barnen är i sina tolkningar och att de är tålmodiga. De diskuterar böcker och filmer de inte är så förtjusta i, ”som suger fett” (s. 26) och när de summerar sina upplevelser i slutet av projektet är det tydligt att idén att låta barnen själva få ställa frågorna till litteraturen öppnar upp för nya tolkningar och för engagemang. Barnen har ju inte valt böckerna själva och skulle inte ha läst alla dessa böcker om de inte var med i projektet. De kommenterar efter fem år att läsning utan mål, utan facit och utan skolans ”läxboksfrågor” (s. 152) blivit något helt annat än skolans och det har inte varit tråkigt. Som ett barn konstaterar: ”Jag anser att skolan kan ta efter detta arbete” (s. 152). I projektet har de svårforcerade texterna lästs på olika platser och sätt och de olika tolkningarna har fått bråka med varandra. Så har litteraturen genomlevts som livets självt och Maria Gripes författarskap har givit mening för barnen – men också för forskaren. Som Hellström så klokt konstaterar: ”Att barnlitteraturvetenskapen har intresse av läsande barn är en självklarhet. Men det är inte lika självklart att barn har ett intresse av barnlitteraturvetenskapen.” (s. 149)

Anna Nordenstam

Anna Bohlin, Elin Stengrundet (red.)

Nation som kvalitet. Smak, offentligheter och folk i 1800-talets Norden

Bergen: Alvheim & Eide, 2021, 360 s.

Skapandet och vidmakthållandet av en känsla av nationell samhörighet är som bekant inte bara en fråga om politiska strukturer utan kräver en mängd av små, nästan osynliga, vardagliga eller oreflekterade inslag. Som en aspekt av denna levda nationalism kan man utan tvekan betrakta *smaken*, den intersubjektiva känsla som förenar producenter och konsumenterna av kultur i en offentlighet. Under 1800-talets nationsbyggande fas hade denna knappast hunnit banaliseras; snarare var såväl smaken som nationen (och deras ömsesidiga förmåga att inrätta varandra) något som synliggjordes genom nyskapande aktörer på kulturens område. Denna koppling mellan smak, nation och offentlighet utgör den spännande utgångspunkten för denna volym, som samlar bidrag från ett symposium hållet vid Universitetet i Bergen 2019. De enskilda bidragen täcker de norska, danska och svenska språkområdena, och innehåller därtill en text om isländska förhållanden (på isländska, men till skillnad från övriga bidrag även i en översatt version, vilket recensenten tackar för). Som de flesta antologier av detta slag spretar den en del med avseende på de enskilda bidragens relation till det övergripande temat, men också (vilket inte heller är ovanligt) vad gäller deras grad av generalitet: en del utgörs av tämligen specifika fallstudier medan andra siktar in sig på någon allmän aspekt av fenomenet och snarare ger översikt än kommer med en helt ny vinkel. De femton bidragen har grupperats i fyra delar: "Moraliska folk", "Materialitet", "Kvalitetsmarkör" och "Offentlighet".

Den första sektionen, "Moraliska folk", behandlar den moraliska laddningen i nationalismen: hur skapades föreställning om en moralisk gemenskap (nationen som moraliskt/politiskt subjekt) och hur skapades föreställningen om moraliska egenskaper hos specifika folkslag? Processen beskrivs ur ett mer realhistoriskt perspektiv i Frode Ulvunds bidrag, vilket undersöker den moraliska underbyggnaden för det norska medborgarskapets juridiska kriterier, och vilka kategorier som därmed uteslöts. Anna Bohlin diskuterar C. J. L. Almqvists föreställning om "fattigdom" som den särskilt utmärkande svenska kvaliteten, jämte liknande teman i Fredrika Bremers roman *Syskonlif* (1848). Susanne Skåre behandlar kopplingen mellan nationalism och kvinnans roll i Camilla Colletts *Amtmandens Dötre* (1854–55).

En innovativ sektion tar upp frågan om nationalism och materialitet genom att behandla klädesplagg och -material som tecken för nationell identitet. Tine Damsholts inträngande analys av Christian Molbechs etnografiska skisser och den betydelse som nationell symbol som där ges den gamla själländska klädedräkten, är stimulerande. Här berörs också den *pars pro toto*-struktur som ofta gör sig påmind i 1800-talets nationalism, och som innebär att specifika regioner tillåts representera vad som logiskt sett borde utgöra summan av delarna (nationen som helhet). Elin Stengrundet skriver likaledes intressant om hur vadmal framstod som nationsmarkör, genom en analys

av hur detta allmogetyg lyftes upp av Henrik Wergeland och övergick från att vara nationalekonomiskt motiverat till att bli den yttre persedel som speglade nationella moraliska egenskaper. Tonje Haugland Sorensen ger en konsthistorisk studie över ett nationalistiskt motiv, den så kallade Slindebjörken, som förekommer i flera kända målningar och dikter.

Vi befinner oss på för litteraturvetenskapen mer bekant territorium i nästa del, ”Kvalitetsmarkör”, som behandlar de olika sätt på vilka det nationella kunnat användas som kriterium i litteraturkritik och kamp på det litterära fältet. Här ger Frode Helmich Pedersen en värdefull överblick över de olika sätt på vilka det nationella fungerat som värdeord i bedömningen av 1800-talets litteratur – och varför det (kanske) inte gör det längre. Frågan om nationens försvagade ställning som ingång till litteraturen behandlas även av Marie Magnor utifrån ett specifikt fall, Bjørnsons pjäs *Paul Lange og Tora Parsberg* (1898), vars receptionshistoria följs till nutiden. Till detta block hör också Guðmundur Hálfdanarsons text om hur den folkliga traditionen av *rímur*-diktning i isländsk litteratur blev ett offer för försöken att höja Island till kulturnation. Christine Hamm observerar smakomdömenas funktion i fiktionen genom en analys av deras koppling till etiska omdömen i vad som mycket väl kan vara världens första kriminalhistoria, Maurits Hansens *Mordet paa Maskinbygger Roolfsen* (1839).

Den sista delen samlar bidrag som berör problem kring offentligheten. Eirik Vassenden analyserar Arne Garborgs bidrag till den nynorska språkstriden och dess bakomliggande syn på språklig frihet och nationalitet. Pia Forssell ger en överblick över Zacharias Topelius verksamhet som tidningsman och författare av följetonger, hans relation till censuren och hans sätt att inrätta medelklassen som sin målpublik. Ytterligare ett bidrag behandlar Bjørnson: Anders M. Gullestads initierade läsning av dennes ”Fadern” (1859, 1868) som en form av ekonomiskt lärostycke. Slutligen skildrar Ruth Hemstad försöken att skapa en särskild form av offentlighet: 1840-talets utgivningsprojekt, föreningar och liknande som ville stärka gemenskapen mellan de skandinaviska länderna och bidra till den ömsesidiga förståelsen, både på ett pedagogiskt och ett ideologiskt plan. Som en kommentar i marginalen till antologin som helhet kommer Pål Bjørbys bidrag, som problematiserar historieskrivningen kring nationalismens 1800-tal och dess arv inom de enskilda ämnena, genom att peka på hur nationalismen hängt samman med ett sätt att reglera såväl sexualitet som könsroller.

Som den föregående uppräknningen ger vid handen är det många olika slags ämnen och infallsvinklar som beretts plats, och här finns mycket att hämta såväl för den allmänintresserade som för specialisten. Samtidigt kan man hävda att vissa teman som dyker upp längs vägen inte riktigt görs rättvisa genom antologin som helhet. En underliggande premiss hos vissa av bidragen, men som med undantag för Ruth Hemstads artikel inte är central i någon enskild av dem, är hur skandinavismen och nationalismen gick hand i hand. Nog ter det sig ändå som ett underutnyttjande av resurser att inte fler bidrag arbetar transnationellt, snarare än att erbjuda en pusselbit inifrån ett specifikt nationellt område. I det skandinavistiska har man ju också tillgång till ett regionalt särdrag, vilket skiljer Norden från de större nationer som ofta legat till grund för nationalismforskningens standardmodeller. Den roll som spelades av försöket att grunda den gemensamma identiteten på en gemensam icke-klassisk forntidskultur belyses också ytterst sparsamt.

I anslutning till detta bör nämnas språkfrågan som nog hade kunnat ges en mer utförlig belysning; Eirik Vassendens text om Garborg har ett lite för snävt fokus. Språkfrågan har trots allt ett mycket nära samband med inrättandet av ett nationellt litterärt system i vilket kopplingen mellan folk, modersmål och kulturyttring blir närmast absolut. Här vore det möjligen intressant att undersöka hur författarskap värderats utifrån en uppfattning om nationalspråk i förhållande till minoritetsspråk, vilka dialekter som får förkroppsliga det verkligt nationella (i enlighet med den *pars pro toto*-struktur som ovan nämnts), och hur den kosmopolitiska dimensionen av litteraturen (till exempel i form av översättningar) bedömts i förhållande till den nationella språksynen. Här finns givande perspektiv inom världslitteraturforskningen som hade kunnat komma till användning.

En mer generell fråga som väcks gäller den tidliga avgränsningen av de fenomen som studeras: huruvida de är fast rotade i 1800-talet eller om de fortsätter att spela en roll. Frode Helmich Pedersens bidrag ställer frågan huruvida kopplingen mellan nation och litteratur i dag helt dött ut (som påstås i Jon Haarbergs melankoliska *Nei, vi elsker ikke lenger* från 2017). Befinner vi oss i så fall i en position *efter* nationalismen, där vi kan titta tillbaka på 1800-talet med etnografens häpna blick för de märkliga påhitten hos denna främmande kultur? Vissa äldre nationsföreställningar kan trots allt dyka upp i senare, kanske mer indirekta eller banala sammanhang, vilket några av bokens bidrag också berör. Anna Bohlin beskriver exempelvis hur föreställningar associerade med den svenska fattigdomen fortlever och fortfarande spelar en roll i marknadsföring. Ikea, och skandinavisk design generellt, marknadsförs inte bara som produkter vilka som helst utan bär också på idéer om specifikt nationella värden, om än i utspädd form. På samma sätt visar Elin Stengrundets bidrag hur rester av en ”vadmalsideologi” kunnat göra sig gällande under OS i Lillehammer 1994. Detta väcker dels frågan om hur det nationalistiska 1800-talet ska avgränsas, och hur relationen ser ut mellan ”stark”, programmatisk nationalism, och dess mer oreflekterade eller levda former i senare tid. Eftersom nationalismen i dag är en tämligen omstridd företeelse torde denna metarefleksion över dess olika typer och deras avgränsning i tiden vara än mer behövlig. Detta slags perspektiv tas i viss mån upp av Pål Bjørby i hans avslutande kommentar, men då mest som en indirekt effekt av hans resonemang om nationalismens marginaliserande inverkan på kvinnor och sexuella minoriteter.

Om detta är funderingar som väcks under läsningen är det å andra sidan en effekt av antologins rikedom på ämnen och infallsvinklar. Det allmänna intrycket är att det centrala problemet kring smak, nationsbildning och offentlighet visat sig produktivt och borde kunna inspirera till vidare studier. I ett bredare perspektiv utgör antologin ett viktigt bidrag till nationalismforskningen i Norden. Genom sin disciplinära bredd har den mycket att erbjuda forskare som intresserar sig för de estetiska såväl som de allmänkulturella aspekterna av problemet. Då nationalismen i dag diskuteras i den allmänna debatten med en häftighet som ofta är direkt proportionerlig till bristen på exakta begrepp och historiska perspektiv, kan antologin ses som ett viktigt bidrag till den samhälleliga självförståelsen i de berörda länderna.

Alfred Sjödin

Maria Ulfgard

Nils Holgersson tur & retur. Barnens brev till Selma Lagerlöf

Göteborg och Stockholm: Makadam förlag, 2022, 215 s.

Barns läsupplevelser har sällan uppmärksammats i litteraturhistorien. I den mån de har skrivits ner har de långt ifrån alltid ansetts värda att bevara för eftervärlden. För Selma Lagerlöf hade emellertid de många brev som barn sände till henne ett stort värde. Hon förvarade dem i en särskild låda vid sitt arbetsbord på Mårbacka och kallade dem ”dyrgripar”. Under den femtioåriga författarbanan anlände hälsningar, teckningar och gåvor från barn i många olika länder till Lagerlöf och samlingen på Kungliga biblioteket har uppskattats innehålla mellan 3 000 och 4 000 brev. De flesta skickades från Norden och Tyskland, men några kom ända från Nord- och Sydamerika. I breven berättar barnen om sin vardag, framför önskemål och tackar för den läsning hon givit dem.

Den bok som oftast omnämns i barnens brev är *Nils Holgerssons underbara resa genom Sverige* (1906–07) som beskrivs som rolig, spännande och lärorik. Den världsberömda läseboken står också i centrum när Maria Ulfgard ger sig i kast med den stora samlingen barnbrev i *Nils Holgersson tur & retur. Barnens brev till Selma Lagerlöf*. Syftet med undersökningen är att ”visa på barns tolkningar av Selma Lagerlöfs verk och på hennes engagemang och interaktion med sina unga läsare” (s. 11). Därutöver ska lärares litteraturundervisning och Sveriges allmänna folkskollärareförening uppmärksammas. I sju analyskapitel beskriver Ulfgard läsebokens väg, från att Lagerlöf ges uppdraget och den skickas ut i världen, till de reaktioner som återvänder till Mårbacka i form av recensioner och brev. Utöver brevsamlingen har framför allt Svensk läraretidning använts som källa för information om lanseringen och mottagandet av boken inom folkskollärarkåren i Sverige. Dessa källor kontextualiseras genom en generös återgivning av tidigare forskning om *Nils Holgerssons* tillkomst, genre och mottagande i olika delar av världen. Här ges en god introduktion till forskningen om läseboken, men det innebär också att de delar som tydligare bidrar med ny kunskap inte riktigt får det utrymme de kunde ha förtjänat.

Undertiteln till trots står brevsamlingen i centrum i knappt hälften av *Nils Holgersson tur & retur* och Ulfgards bok kan snarare beskrivas som en receptionsstudie i bredare bemärkelse. De första tre kapitlen utgör ett slags bakgrund och redogör för brevsamlingens innehåll på ett övergripande plan, Lagerlöfs uppdrag och inspirationskällor, samt samtida kritikers och senare forskares syn på bokens genre. Till skillnad från den äldre *Läsebok för folkskolan* (1868) tillkom *Nils Holgersson* utan statligt stöd. Det ekonomiska ansvaret axlades i stället av förlaget medan initiativet till boken kom från folkskollärarkåren. Bland lärarna fanns ett missnöje med den statliga läsebokens konservativa moral och bristande förmåga att engagera de unga läsarna. När de vände sig till Lagerlöf med förfrågan om en ny bok var förhoppningen att den skulle förmedla lärdom på ett mer intresseväckande sätt och vara bättre anpassad efter en modern pedagogik. *Nils Holgerssons* kombination av fakta och fantasieggande berättelser blev ett

framgångskoncept, men medförde också enligt Ulfgard att boken har tillskrivits skilda genretillhörigheter. Beroende på om den betraktats som i första hand en lärobok, ett skönlitterärt verk eller både och har den givits olika bemötanden av kritiken.

Sveriges allmänna folkskolläraeförenings engagemang i den nya läsebokens tillkomst och lansering utvecklas i det fjärde kapitlet av *Nils Holgersson tur & retur*. Bokens väg ut till skolorna följs utifrån medlemsorganet Svensk läraretidnings rapportering om uppläsningar, recensioner och skolors inköp. Ulfgard visar övertygande hur medvetet *Nils Holgersson* marknadsfördes mot lärarkåren och hur stort och snabbt gensvaret var. En parallell inblick i etableringsprocessen ges genom barnbrev som börjar anlända redan några veckor efter utgivningen. De skrevs både som skoluppgifter och i det privata, men budskapet är i huvudsak detsamma: Lagerlöfs bok välkomnades varmt och skänkte många lustfyllda läsoplevelser. Alla barn var dock inte enbart positiva till *Nils Holgersson*. Ulfgard lyfter bland annat fram tre systrar som alla skrev var sitt brev till Lagerlöf, där de uttryckte missnöje över lille Mats död.

Det var inte ovanligt att hälsningar anlände från en hel klass, gärna med ett följebrev från läraren. I synnerhet skolbrev synliggör flera metodologiska problem och Ulfgard för intressanta resonemang runt i vilken mån dessa texter ger uttryck för barnens egna tankar och upplevelser. En del brev är likalydande avskrifter av en förlaga medan andra tycks följa en modelltext, dock med visst utrymme för barnens personliga uttryck. Det förekommer också att stavfel och meningsbyggnad har korrigerats, vilket synliggör en vuxen övervakande instans. I andra fall verkar breven mer entydigt ha tillkommit på barnens eget initiativ och speglar deras språk, med misstag och allt. Med utgångspunkt i skolbrev diskuteras även lärarnas pedagogiska insatser. Dessa delar är mer problematiska och tenderar att bli väl spekulativa. Då breven innehåller sparsamt med information om undervisningen och lärarna, resonerar Ulfgard i stället om vad lärarna kan ha tyckt eller gjort. En lärarinna *kan* ha varit på en sommarkurs i Lund och en annan *kan* ha tagit del av rapporter i en tidskrift, trots att det inte finns någon information som egentligen tyder på detta. I ett annat fall läxas en lärare upp för att han beskriver elevernas hälsningar som ”några barnligt uttryckta rader” (s. 154). Denna konventionella blygsamhetsfras läses som ett nedlåtande och osympatiskt förhållningssätt till eleverna, vilket framstår som en övertolkning. Även om Ulfgard är tydlig med vad som baseras på information i breven och inte, tillför dessa hypotetiska resonemang inte mycket till diskussionen. Det skulle ha varit intressantare med mer fördjupade analyser av det som faktiskt står i breven än spekulationer om sådant som de svårligen kan belägga.

De tre sista kapitlen är de som tydligast utgår från barnbrev och de utgör också den största behållningen i *Nils Holgersson tur & retur*. De femte och sjätte kapitlen analyserar brevens utformning och innehåll, samt hur dessa kan relateras till olika aspekter av Lagerlöfs verksamhet som författare och offentlig person. Ulfgard redogör för de varierande sätt som barnen kan ha kommit i kontakt med författarskapet genom till exempel tidningsartiklar, radio och film, men även sällskapspel och reklam. I den offentliga bilden av Lagerlöf spelade Mårbacka en viktig roll och gården omnämns ofta i breven, vilket samtidigt synliggör den turistverksamhet som växte fram runt författarhemmet under 1900-talets första hälft. Barnen berättar om en längtan efter att få se Värmland, men också om bra och dåliga minnen i samband med semesterresor till Mårbacka. Andra tillfällen då de fattade pennan var vid kyrkliga högtider, jämna

födelsedagar och offentliga firanden, som när Lagerlöf får Nobelpriset i litteratur. Det var händelser som gav upphov till stora brevsördar fyllda med lyckönskningar.

Stilnivån i barnens brev varierade, från högtidligt och formellt till varma förtroenden. I det sjunde kapitlet berörs barnens läsoplevelser och böner om olika former av gåvor. Många barn uttrycker tacksamhet för att Lagerlöf skrivit *Nils Holgersson* och det kapitel som oftast nämns är ”Den stora trandansen på Kullabergr”, som tycks ha gjort stort intryck på framför allt svenska och danska barn. Flera barn berättar om sin hembygd, ibland med konstateranden att omgivningarna förändrats sedan läseboken skrevs. Andra önskar att Lagerlöf ska skriva en berättelse speciellt för dem. En annan typ av förtroenden handlar om fattigdom, sjukdom och svåra förhållanden. Från utlandet kom önskemål om autografer och porträtt, men från Sverige anlände också vädjanden om bidrag till exempelvis kläder. Författaren svarade på ett antal av breven själv och gav i andra fall instruktioner om hur de skulle besvaras. På många brev står noteringar om hur de har besvarats och vilken liten gåva som bifogats, såsom autograf, minneskort eller ”goda ord”. Utifrån dessa noteringar och bevarade tackbrev konstaterar Ulfgard att Lagerlöf tycks ha varit snar att hjälpa när hon kunnat, men att berättelser om alltför osannolika olyckor lämnats utan svar. I barnens brev speglas även det förändrade världsläget under 1900-talet. Under världskriget ankom bland annat hälsningar från barn på flykt som berättade både om krigets umbäranden och förhoppningar om fred.

Nils Holgersson tur & retur är en välskriven, vackert utformad och rikt illustrerad bok. Här finns bilder av ting som barnen skickat till Lagerlöf, fotografier av författaren och kuriosa kopplat till *Nils Holgersson*, som kylarmärket av Nils och Märten går från Lagerlöfs bilar. Barnens teckningar och brev är återgivna i färgtryck, men i så litet format att breven emellanåt blir svåra att läsa, vilket är synd. Det är en på många sätt gedigen undersökning som ger en god bild av läsebokens tillblivelse och reception, men den ger samtidigt ett splittrat intryck. Det är i flera kapitel oklart om det är *Nils Holgersson*, Lagerlöf som författare eller barnbrevet som utgör huvudfokus i *Nils Holgersson tur & retur*. Med tanke på att barnbrevet och de specifika perspektiv på författarskapet som de erbjuder i liten utsträckning har uppmärksammats i tidigare forskning, kunde de gärna ha fått spela en mer framträdande roll.

Maria Andersson