Ecce homo reactualized

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Introduction

When Laura Ruohonen's *Olga* was staged at the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh in 2001, some of its success was ascribed to the thematic resonance it was able to find in its new environment, Scotland. Many of its themes were, indeed, important in both Finland and Scotland: the relations between the young and the old, the treatment of the old, the hopelessness of the unemployed young, the state of the environment, and even the similar geopolitical location united the two small countries. There were also differences which had been visible in the language: unlike Fins, Scots did not have "death nests", they would not talk so much about the war veterans, and they would laugh at different things (cf. Mendelsohn 2002.) The translation had, however, played down the importance of these differences and reactualized the play for its Scottish audiences. Thematic reactualization did not succeed with *An Island far from Here*, another play by Ruohonen, when it was produced in England:

> Although it was performed with considerable pluck by the New Peckham Varieties [theatre group], this gloomy tale of angst, parenting and love proved only that some plays don't travel, and that it is a long way from rural Finland to urban Peckham. (*apud* Hackston 2004)

The criticism, which appeared in a broadsheet newspaper, prompted an angry reply from the translator, David Hackston, who saw that the comment:

> ... in many ways sadly sums up the pervading attitude to foreign – and in particular Scandinavian – drama in the UK. Firstly, there is the false assumption that Finland (read: Scandinavia) is entirely rural. Far more damaging, however, is the assumption that a group of teenagers from (arguably urban) Peckham cannot possibly be expected to understand something as exotic as a play set in (slightly less urban) Helsinki. (*Ibidem*)

Globalization and the unification of Europe have increased opportunities for translated drama to cross borders. International and national projects, theatre festivals and the availability of texts in electronic form provide opportunities to see and read foreign drama:

> Now more playwrights are working on getting basic translations of their work done, and are able to email their texts round the world, all of which allows theatres abroad to access the work much quicker and decide if they want to take it further. (Mendelsohn 2002)

Despite the increased opportunity, some plays travel better than others, and the success of some, or failure of others, to cross borders depends on a number of factors of which thematic resonance is only one. The image of the source culture (as a source of cultural capital), which depends on its perceived status in the hierarchy of cultures, affects the reception of both theatre practitioners and audiences. In commercial theatre, plays from marginal cultures are not a good selling line and the more marginal or exotic the image, the higher the threshold for acceptance for other reasons than as a cultural curiosity. The more marginal the source culture the more important it is also to explain or emphasize their relevance in the new environment. After the selection for production, translation is one of

the sites where the relevance for the new audience can be suggested. Other sites for this are the interviews, previews, and reviews, as well as the theatre programmes. Theatre translation always involves some reactualization. Only texts deemed to be relevant in some respect get chosen and these are then, in translation, described in domestic terms. The process of reactualization can, however, be further enhanced both in translation and performance by the use of elements which improve the integration into the time and space occupied by the audience.

Actualization or reactualization on the linguistic level can work through a variety of indicators. Explicit references to the setting or the point in time in/of the play, discursive markers, and the use of the *remainder*[1], regional or group or social varieties, idioms and sayings, clichés and slogans, stylistic innovations, archaisms, and neologisms guide the audience to derive a play's relevance. Source texts contain their own actualizers which in translation become the sites of indeterminacy as they can be manipulated to suggest a play's relevance as either an overlap or an analogue. In the theatre, the success of a play, in particular from a marginal country, is partly bound to its potential of reactualization for its new audiences. »

In my study I will investigate how some contemporary Finnish theatre texts have been reactualized or made relevant for the English speaking stage. I use the term *reactualization*[2] to refer to the choices made at the sites of indeterminacy to suggest familiarity or distance and, through these, relevance. I am interested in what indeterminacies the parties, translators and a director, involved in the translation process have identified and what strategies the translators have employed in reactualizing the plays. I will approach the texts from two different points of view. I will first look at the translation processes and the indeterminacies identified there by the translators and a director. Then I will look at completed translations to identify the sites which have been used to suggest familiarity with or distance from the audience realities.

As my material I will use three plays, *Olga, Queen C* and *The Island far from Here*, by a contemporary Finnish playwright, Laura Ruohonen, and their various translations, gloss-, introductory - and stage translations, into English. I have also made use of a translator's notes, intended for the discussion with the playwright, and the exchange of letters between a translator and a director. Of *Olga*, I have used the first Finnish version from 1995 (which has been revised later), the English introductory translation by Anselm Hollo, commissioned by the Finnish Theatre Information Centre,

the gloss-translation by Angela Landon, commissioned by the Traverse Theatre of Edinburgh and, finally, the stage translation by Linda McLean of the Traverse. Of *Queen C*, I have the Finnish version from 2002, the introductory English translation by David Hackston, commissioned for the European Platform project also from 2002, as well as its revised stage version from 2003, prepared for the production at the Gate Theatre in London. Additionally I have used the correspondence between the translator David Hackston and the director Svetlana Dimcovic at the Gate concerning the translation of the play. Of *The Island far from Here*, I have the first Finnish version with the translator David Hackston's commentary, its revised Finnish version from 2003, and the translation of that into English by David Hackston.

My research falls within cultural studies as it considers texts in their cultural environment and is interested in the way in which culture impacts and constrains translation. In this I follow the views of Lawrence Venuti and Annie Brisset of translation as domestic inscription which has ideological implications. The concrete research method into the translations follows Gideon Toury's suggestion of mapping the translations onto their source texts and establishing pairs of solution and problem as units of immediate comparison (1995: 38). My theoretical framework is inter-disciplinary in that I am interested in the construction of meaning, which places my research in

theatre semiotics, but, also, as theatre texts are only words before they are read (in the widest sense of the word), it is also linked with reception studies.

1. *Ecce Homo* revisited

The foundation of all drama makes intercultural theatre possible irrespective of the time and place of its creation: drama is essentially of human beings, *ecce homo*, and it will call upon some aspects of human life: "A play is an image of human life created in the minds of an audience by the enactment of a pattern of events" (Clay / Krempel 1967: 26). How much or how little the audiences are assumed to find to be true to their lives determines partly the potential of foreign texts for international circulation. The choice of a foreign theatre text for production relies on some relevance that it can be assumed to have in the new environment. If the play is deemed thematically relevant and accepted for production, the translation can further suggest ways this relevance could be viewed. »

The choice of a text for translation already assumes its relevance for an individual or society. Theatre translation, like all translation, is always egotistically motivated. According to Perteghella, theatre translation can fulfil four social functions in the receiving society (2004: 7, 19-20). Texts may be used for dissemination of scholarly/pedagogical study and education, for propaganda or protest purposes, for the introduction of new dramaturgy or new theatrical practices. Depending on the function assigned to the foreign text, linguistic or performance level practices will generate rewriting strategies within the text itself or on stage.

The way the foreign text is reactualized and integrated into domestic repertoires constitutes a social discourse of alterity of which Annie Brisset has distinguished three forms in her study of Quebec in the period of nationalist struggle between 1968-

1988 (1996: 60, 110, 166). In iconoclastic translation, the source text was seen as an incarnation of the dependence of Quebec and translation as a source of dispossession. In perlocutionary translation, reactualization through some markers led the audience to project the content of a play onto Quebec. In the third type, in identity-forming translation, the goal of translation was not so much to provide an introduction to the other or to mediate the foreign work, but the foreign play was given a mission to speak for the language of translation, Quebecois, and through that recognition and independence. In new emerging cultures, foreign texts can also be made to speak for the inclusion in a desired cultural community and to display a nation's cultural competence for it. Reverence and alignment can be demonstrated through a high regard for the original both in the linguistic and performance level practices (Aaltonen 2000: 65).

For an individual, the thematic resonance can cover a variety of issues from emotions to conflicts with society. As human beings are not good at hearing new stories (Tymoczko 1999: 48), intercultural theatre can also be seen as a search for new ways of telling the old stories. Every translation, like every writing or theatre production, is, thus, a retelling of an old story whose relevance can be underlined in the translation, production on stage and the publicity in the media and elsewhere. According to Brisset (1996: 112), two semantic avenues open up for the audience of translated drama. One is towards the time-space conjunction (the chronotope) of the source text and the other towards that of the translation. In the translation, like in the source text, there are various guiding indicators, in particular space and time actualizers, which actualize the text for its audience. Some of these lend themselves better than others to the superimposing of new chronotopes which disconnect the translation from original work.

In what follows, my aim is to investigate this process when contemporary Finnish drama has been translated and performed for new audiences in Britain.

The choice of three contemporary Finnish plays and their translations into English sets limits to the possibilities of generalization of my claims. Finland represents text-centred Western theatre, and although living in one of the Nordic countries, Finns speak their own Finno-Ugrian language which belongs to a different family of languages from those of their neighbors. Finnish culture is marginal in the Western cultural hierarchy, and the Finnish language usually impenetrable without the mediation of an intermediary language or intermediary translation. When Finnish drama is marketed to English (or any other foreign) theatres, three types of translations may be needed in the process. The first, an introductory English translation is commissioned in Finland and intended to convince foreign practitioners of the potential of the play. Once accepted for production, theatres may commission a gloss-translation which constitutes a metatextual commentary on how the source text is constructed. Finally, a stage version may be created for a specific production, using either the introductory, the gloss translation, or both. The stage version reactualizes the play to its new audience, while the other two translations are targeted at theatre practitioners. The three types of translations, the introductory, gloss and stage translations, are thus motivated by different aims. The introductory translation, prepared in the source culture, is aimed at selling the text's way of retelling a story with a particular dramaturgy to theatre practitioners in a variety of language-cultures, while the gloss translation prepares a new source text. The stage version is aimed at selling the text to specific theatre audiences in a particular segment of a larger spatio-temporal environment (for the three types, see Aaltonen forthcoming).[3] All types may involve collaboration between the playwright and the translator, the playwright, the translator and the director, or the translator and the director.

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2. Vanishing dreams or musical scores: Text in the theatre

The claims I shall make of contemporary Finnish drama in translation are, even at their best, restricted to the text-based Western theatre. They are further limited to only a small part of the Western theatre praxis, as the use of the written text there is not homogeneous. There are directors who regard the text as an important, maybe even central, element in the production, but also those who feel that the written text has gained too much
72>73 prominence in the theatre. The view of the (un)touchability of the written text as an element in the production may also be affected by the perception of the director of a particular text in a particular production, which may, in turn, be connected to the view of the function the foreign text is made to serve. It may echo the director's perception of the prestige of the source culture, the playwright and the play and even of translation. Finally the use of the text in a production may be affected by the copyright or constraints of the mode of production.

According to Richard Hornby (1995: 92-103) the views of the relationship between the text and the performance fall into three categories. According to the more conservative view, the *symphony model*, the stage director is like a conductor of an orchestra. The performance is seen as a straightforward inter-semiotic translation of the theatre text where a set of verbal signs in the text is replaced with a combination of verbal and partially non-verbal signs on stage. The stage director is only an interpreter, not a creator, and variations that occur are of minor significance. Everything one needs is in the text, and the director and actors are neutral and interchangeable. The other extreme, the *cinema model*, typically the view of film directors, sees the performance as an independent art form. The play text is just one variable among many in the theatre (others are the performers, stage designer, etc.), and the director is the creator. In Hornby's view, both the symphony and cinema model

have problems when applied to the theatre: the symphony model does not have enough variables, the stage is not neutral and the audience is important. Still, the script is important in providing the element of control in the production; it has parameters and tolerances, and the decision has to be taken at some point on what must or must not occur in performance. From the point of view of theatre translation, in particular when a text is translated from a marginal source culture for the stage of a dominant culture, the most frequently used model is likely to be the *sculptor model*, which sees the translator as the sculptor, who has an idea and material to create a statue. The text provides the idea, and the translator uses the source text to create a new text. The translator is reactive with respect to the text, and the work involves both interpretation and creation. »

3. Finnish drama abroad

Finnish theatre has throughout its history relied heavily on the imports of foreign drama. The repertory consists annually of more than 700 plays, of which up to and over 50% have been foreign imports, mostly from the English-speaking world.[4] Such high share of foreign drama could be expected to have had an influence on Finnish drama and made it less exotic or unique, which then, in turn would have made Finnish plays a saleable option also outside the Finnish borders. This has, however, not been the case. Finnish plays have not interested foreign theatre practitioners.

A marginal language-culture has to be active in promoting its drama, starting from the preparation of an introductory translation which can be used to sell it to foreign theatre practitioners. Most of the Finnish plays have been translated by the Finnish Theatre Information Centre in cooperation with the Finnish Literature Information Centre. It is also responsible for making the translations available to foreign theatre

practitioners and audiences. Very few have found commercial publishers. The Finnish Theatre Information Centre keeps a small library of the plays (the list of these is available on the net), and some are available from the Finnish Dramatists' Union. Some plays have been published in international theatre periodicals, such as *Modern International Drama*, some by Finnish theatre periodicals such as *Finnish Theatre*. At present, the trend seems to be towards digital copies, which can be e-mailed round the world.

According to the Finnish Theatre Information Centre, some 270 Finnish plays are available in translation into 34 languages. The total of 229 are available in English translation, and if we exclude monologues, puppet plays, children and youth drama, plays with music and radio plays, the number of straight plays is 102. The same number, 229 plays, is available in German as well (of these 63 are of straight plays), 159 are available in Swedish (109 straight), 77 in French (23 straight) and 16 in Spanish (15 straight). The more exotic languages have a handful of translations: four have been translated into Chinese, 3 into Esperanto, 1 into Afrikaans and 1 in Ndongan (spoken in North Namibia and Angola). The languages of translation include the Finno-Ugric Udmurt, Moksha and Mari, although only a handful of plays have been translated into them.[5]

English is obviously an important intermediary language as the number of plays performed in the English speaking countries is small. Since 1990, the total number of 65 Finnish plays by 33 playwrights have been performed in 25 countries outside Finland. In the English-speaking world, the U.S. has admitted 11 plays, Canada 2, England 4, Ireland 1 and Scotland 4 plays. Many of these productions have been performances on off-mainstream stages, public readings of the plays, workshop performances, festival productions and productions in drama schools. The highest number of productions has been of Laura Ruohonen's four plays, which have been produced over 21 times followed by the Finnish-Swedish Bengt Ahlfors, with 15 productions of 6 plays.[6]

The most popular plays to have gained access to foreign stages have been Laura Ruohonen's *An Island Far from Here*, which was produced by 17 youth groups in England in 2003 Shell Connections, followed by *Olga* with 7 performances, mostly in the English-speaking theatres, and *Queen C* with six both on German and English-speaking stages. Bengt Ahlfors's *Are there Tigers in Kongo*, comes next with 5 productions in five countries.[7]

Laura Ruohonen' plays have been produced mostly in the English-speaking world, Tove Jansson's *Mumin* plays in the Nordic countries, Aki Kaurismäki's plays in Germany. There are also those whose plays have been performed over a large geographical area. Plays by Bengt Ahlfors have been produced in the U.S.A. and over Europe in 12 countries, Inkeri Kilpinen's in Petroskoi, the Republic of Carelia in Russia, Bangok, Canada, China, the U.S.A., the Udmurt Republic of Russian Federation and Mordovian or Mordva Republic.[8]

It is obvious that small and marginal language-cultures have to work hard and also have a great deal of luck in gaining acceptance for production abroad. To be included in international projects, such as the Platform project, or foreign national projects, like the Shell Connections at the Royal National Theatre, which aim at promoting contemporary drama, have helped playwrights like Laura Ruohonen to gain foothold in the otherwise impenetrable foreign markets. Public readings and theatre festivals have also been important. Still, lucky coincidences may be the most significant. For example, a Scottish play, commissioned and staged by the Traverse Theatre, had been put on stage at the Finnish National Theatre in 1999, and the artistic and literary directors of the Traverse came to see the performance. On this trip they were told about *Olga*, became interested and took the text home to the International Literary Associate at Traverse, who commissioned a translation of it. To follow, *Olga* was premiered at the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh in December

2001. Similarly, Ruohonen's *An Island Far from Here* found its way to the Shell Connections through the production in Traverse. The producer at the Royal National Theatre read the Traverse translation of *Olga*, became interested and decided to include Ruohonen in the 2003 Shell Connections.[9]

Small stages and international projects can be more tolerant of alterity, and for example, Ruohonen's plays have been marketed in reviews as representatives of contemporary Finnish drama. Still, more justification of a play's relevance is needed to attract audiences to see plays from marginal than

from dominant cultures. Thematic resonance needs to be commented on in the previews, as was the case with *Olga*, and the resonance further supported by reactualization which guides the audience to see the reality of the play as relevant to that of their own. On the performance level, familiar actors and language heard on stage work to the same end.

How are plays reactualized in different translation processes? What sites of indeterminacy do translators identify in their work? In what follows, I will first explore the indeterminacies that have been identified in translation of the plays by Laura Ruohonen to see if the readings of practitioners differ as to what they feel needs attention in the translation. Then I will move to analyse the reactualization of her plays for different uses in the international theatre.

4. Sites of indeterminacy identified

All practitioners involved in the production of meaning in the theatre are interested in locating the textual elements which may be potentially significant for guiding the readings of the theatre practitioners and audiences. What translators identify as sites of indeterminacy may vary according to their role in the process and also depending on who they are collaborating with. In what follows, I will compare the sites of indeterminacy identified:

1) by a theatre translator in a gloss translation (*Olga*);

2) when a translator and playwright were preparing an introductory translation (*An Island Far from Here*); and, finally, when

3) a translator and director were preparing a stage version (*Queen C*).

I am interested in comparing the readings of the various theatre practitioners of what needs to be commented on or requires a commentary and relating these sites to the ways the texts have been reactualized for the audiences.

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4.1. Translator preparing a gloss translation: The case of *Olga*[10]

A gloss translation is incomplete as it only identifies the sites of indeterminacy where the two languages differ in their constructions of reality but avoids making choices. Gloss translations are commonly used, for example, in Great Britain, while they are practically unknown in Finland. Over the years, the praxis has been a target of severe criticism as it has been seen as an excuse for justifying an ethnocentric translation strategy and enabling "writers to rewrite plays by foreign dramatists as they think fit, whilst still claiming that they are producing something called a translation" (Bassnett 2001: 62). It has also been seen to have led to a situation of "asking playwrights with no knowledge of a foreign language to 'adapt' plays for the British stage, in an attempt to draw in larger audiences; the logic being that the theatre-going public may not be prepared to go and watch a play by a writer whose name they can barely pronounce, but if So-And-So 'translated' it, then it must be okay" (Hackston 2004).

Despite the criticism, gloss translations are likely to remain in use at least of plays from marginal languages. This was also the case with *Olga*. When the introductory translation of the play had attracted the interest of the Traverse Theatre, the bilingual Scottish-Finnish translator Angela Landon was

commissioned to write a gloss translation of it which would then be used by Linda McLean to prepare a stage version. In the theatre programme, the different versions of the play were distinguished by a hierarchical listing: as the programme at the Traverse clarified, the play on stage was "*Olga* by Laura Ruohonen in a version by Linda McLean; literal translation by Angela Landon".

In her gloss translation Landon identified indeterminacy in some 120 segments in the source text where, in the final stage version, at least in theory, a choice could be made between "of here" and "not of here". The majority of Landon's remarks, ninety in all, concerned the linguistic form of the Finnish expression, that is, sites where only the expressions of the languages differ. Topical cultural markers, expressive of different social realities, were commented on in some 12 cases. A few remarks concerned stylistic options, linguistic alternatives and metaphoric code-switching.

The Finnish expressions that prompted commentary were chosen on the basis of a variety of criteria. Some represented figurative language: "And you are of course very sweet on her", which in Finnish was expressed with "And you are of course very much in resin"[11] (Ruohonen / Landon 1995: 29). Others were regarded as important because of their etymology: [the postman] squeezing in "some piece of paper", explained that the expression in the source text, "Pumaskaa – comes from the Russian word a small piece of paper" (*Ibidem*: 8). In some cases the indeterminacy concerned the author's idiosyncratic expression, such as "We'll put banana trees and glutomonseras [*hyötsynäggeröitä* is the author's invented plant name] to grow " (*Ibidem*: 64). Occasionally the translator made herself visible in the commentaries when she included her own hesitation about the English expression and suggested an alternative: "Hunky-dory [*Primus Ulaga*, an expression invented by the author, which to a Finn sounds like fantastically great]. Another word I thought of might be *poptastic*" (*Ibidem*: 66).

Commentaries on topical cultural markers varied between explanations and approximate cultural counterparts. Olga's line "My carpet was stolen off the carpet-rack this morning" was explained to refer to "communal racks for beating carpets, common in Finland" (*Ibidem*: 12), while a counterpart was suggested for "Have you been in the army? (Have you done your National Service)" (*Ibidem*: 25). Occasionally it was difficult to see the motivation for the commentary, such as Rundis's dream of having "a nice cup of tea" when old, instead of the Finnish "little cup of coffee" (*Ibidem*: 37).

Throughout, there was variation in the choice of elements for commentary. Some differences were seen to require a remark, while others, which were similar, went unidentified. A significant grammatical difference between Finnish and English in the use of personal pronouns was identified in the case of the third person singular pronoun but not in the polite/informal second person plural. The fact that Finnish does not distinguish feminine and masculine gender was pointed out with "from the Finnish you can't tell whether it is a she or a he" (*Ibidem*: 6), which justified the non-committed "Tell him/her it is not my problem" (*Ibidem*: 4). The fact that Finnish tends to use "it" for both was explained but not its stylistic implication of colloquial speech. The translator did not comment on the Finnish use of the second person plural pronoun for polite address at all although it may, and does in Olga, have dramaturgical implications. When *Olga* and Rundis first meet, they address each other with the polite form (Ruohonen 1995: 6), whereas after Rundis has later broken into Olga's flat in Scene 6, they start using the familiar form to each other (*Ibidem*: 16-22).

Implications for the situational style are also important in the choice of swearwords, but this was not commented on in the gloss translation of *Olga*. Still, Olga's exceptionality gets emphasised in English as the translator suggests that she use "fuck" (Ruohonen / Landon 1995: 8), while in Finnish her

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"hell" is far less vulgar (Ruohonen 1995: 7). The style is important also in the choice of Olga's derogatory, but a fairly good-hearted, Finnish epithet *owl*, "fool", to describe herself (Ruohonen / Landon 1995: 5). A difference between Finnish and Scottish usage was suggested but not explained when the translation suggested that the antiques dealer refer to his mother as "mum" with the source text equivalent "mother" in brackets (*Ibidem*: 5) and, the opposite, his response to Olga's remark "Yes, yes", like in the source text, but with a possible alternative "Yeah, yeah?" in brackets (*Ibidem*: 6).

80>81 Inconsistency was also typical of the comments on place names. The function was considered important when "Rantalahti" was explained to be the "name of her [Olga's] childhood home" (*Ibidem*: 33), whereas when the daughter wanted to place Olga in an old people's home "Iltala", the denotation of the name, "*ilta* is evening in Finnish, but *Iltala* is just a name" (*Ibidem*: 59), was considered more significant. For some reason, a literal translation was given of recognizable, non-fictional place names such as "*Vanhankaupunginlahti* (Lit Old-town-bay)" (*Ibidem*: 19). Topical cultural markers were commented on only superficially. This was the case, for example, in the stage direction "Pretends to be a young Finn", which was explained with "Young Finns were political reformers" (*Ibidem*: 50). The implications for Rundis's manner of speaking may be rather difficult to infer from this.

The sites of indeterminacy in the gloss translation consisted of expressions where the two languages differ in the way they construct the reality. The majority of the remarks concerned the form of the expressions and small segments, usually individual words or phrases, of language. Some remarks concerned topical cultural markers, while situational stylistic differences were usually not commented on. For reactualization, the gloss translations gave little support as it was content with pointing at signs but not understanding the signifieds.

4.2. Translator and playwright preparing the introductory translation: The case of *An Island Far from Here*

When Laura Ruohonen was invited to write a play for the 2003 Shell Connections project at the Royal National Theatre in England, she decided to rewrite her text *Kellarimummo*, "cellar granny" for it.[12] The play was renamed and the new title, *An Island Far from Here*, shifted the focus from an old lady to an escapist utopia of the two young protagonists. The play has a small cast and is only about an hour long. The translator of the play into English, David Hackston, started his work already on the earlier Finnish version.

In the first Finnish version, the translator identified some 85 Finnish expressions which he either had found unclear or wanted to discuss with the playwright.[13] The majority were linguistic queries concerning Finnish idioms where the meaning was not derivable from the parts. They also involved the use of the remainder of colloquial language, such as "*menikö kaaliin*" (Ruohonen / Hackston 2002a: 34), "did it go into cabbage", meaning "did you get it". Similarly problematic were some less familiar epithets like "*jäppinen*" (*Ibidem*: 20), "boy and young man" and "*jästipää*", "stupid young man or boy" (*Ibidem*: 29). The sense was also difficult with some onomatopoetic verbs (*Ibidem*: 20).

In some cases, Hackston queried the significance of an otherwise simple Finnish expression. What did the old lady mean when she was comparing her son in a monologue to a stone (*Ibidem*: 11), or what was the significance of an entire exchange of remarks which did not seem to fit in the dialogue (*Ibidem*: 21)? What was the logic in some stage directions: why was one of the characters getting drunk so late (*Ibidem*: 30) and what was the noise when there was no indication in the context of what had caused it (*Ibidem*: 35)? On one occasion, he suggested the leaving out of the stage direction concerning an unspecified gesture, a "liar sign" which one of the girls makes at her sister (*Ibidem*: 43). One of the queries concerns the sig-

nificance of a historical reference: was the point of time, 18th century chosen randomly by one of the characters in a trivial remark about the Norwegians (*Ibidem*: 29).

Some eight inquiries concerned the significance of what could have been a feature of Ruohonen's style: the fragmented layout of the lines (*Ibidem*: 9) and tautology (*Ibidem*: 11). Occasionally the translator took the role of an editor and suggested that there might be too many adjectives in the description of a landscape (*Ibidem*: 20) and the opposite, that the English could be made more descriptive in another place (*Ibidem*: 29).

The majority of the translator's queries in preparing an introductory translation focused on expression, but he was clearly interested in signification. He showed awareness of the text as a narrative and queried about the logic of the lines. Unlike the gloss translator, he was interested in the signifieds. He was also reacting to what might have been features of the author's style and, as such, more important for drama as literature. As his linguistic queries concerned the use of the Finnish remainder, onomatopoetic expressions, figurative language, colloquial epithets and idioms, this could lead to the use of the remainder in the translation. Indeed, Hackston suggested the use of an English idiom in some cases at this early stage (*Ibidem*: 8, 27).

4.3. Translator and director preparing the stage version: The case of *Queen C*

Theatre translation is similar to mapmaking in that in it, a translator draws a map of the play which the stage director will use for finding a path (with the actors) through the play and for directing the actors along this path. In this map, some elements are more significant than others, and through the significance given to the elements, the play is made to mean. This process is visible in the collaboration of the translator David Hackston and the stage director Svetlana Dimcovic for the production of Laura Ruohonen's *Queen C* at the Gate Theatre London.

After reading the English version of *Queen C*, which was produced for the European Platform project, the stage director discussed it with the translator. After the discussion she wrote a letter to the translator, asking for clarification or explanation to what she called "pivotal points in the text" (Dimcovic n.d.). In her letter she identified a number of sites of indeterminacy which needed to be settled before the rehearsals with the actors could begin. She pointed out that clarification would be important as she was responsible for the idea that her actors would work on.

The structure, story and theme make *Queen C* a play which would not necessarily attract large audiences. It is only loosely based on the life of Queen Christina, who ruled Sweden for some twenty years in the 17th century. It has a loosely woven plot and combines episodes with Queen Christina and other characters who communicate largely through monologues and do not speak to each other but rather past each other. In addition to the exceptional formal structure of the play – episodes rather than a continuous plot, monologues rather than dialogue in scenes – also the choice of topic, a Nordic Queen from the 17th century makes it a demanding text. Thematically it is timely, though, and takes part in the discussion of gender and choice. >>

The director found the language of the translation problematic on many accounts. It was opaque as if the characters were speaking and acting through a sheet of matte glass; it was non-specific and the sentence structures, words and images caused problems of logic and motive. The characters were not talking to each other but past each other (*Ibidem*). A typical unfocused remark is the following speech of the Queen Mother in the presence of Christina:

> The sorrow and suffering of one person, when you wholly and fully embrace them, can be greater and more horrific than the sum total suffering of entire nations and wars. And these are not my own findings, not at all, but the opinion of the greatest minds of our time. (Ruohonen / Hackston 2002b: 10)

In the scene, Christina and the Queen mother speak past each other but do not communicate with each other. All characters use a similar style.

A more problematic indeterminacy concerned the interplay between a very elevated language and dialect or slightly more vulgar terms. For example, the Queen mother uses standard and colloquial language to the philosopher Descartes and almost slangy language or dialect to Christina (Ruohonen 2002b: 13, 14, 21). In places, she uses standard language in her monologues in the presence of Christina (*Ibidem*: 3). The
84>85 director was puzzled. Should such strong and different characters all speak the same vernacular and rhythmically very similar English, as this suggested that the characters had no unique self? According to the director, the English actors would wonder, for example, if the Queen Mother should sound a little dated and Christina laddish and tougher in her lack of femininity (Dimcovic n.d.).

A single reoccurring detail, an image referred to in the stage directions was also unclear, and the director wondered how she should deal with it on stage: In the first Scene, "The Queen Mother hobbles on stage, carrying a small glass box containing the King's dried up heart" (Ruohonen / Hackston 2002b: 12), which is not referred to at all in the dialogue. Should this be done naturalistically or in a stylized way, as her lines did not explicitly suggest a reading: "I'm so sore – my hands are sore and my eyes are so terribly sore and you, you don't know how sore really sore is . . ." (*Ibidem*).

The English stage director was puzzled by the significance given to an almost agent-like element, a large eel, living in the well in the palace garden. Its significance is made clear both at the beginning and at the end of the play. The eel, unlike Christina, had a choice: it could change from male to female. In English the eel was a slimy fish and could thus connote a "slimy" person. It used to be working class food, but more recently it had become an expensive delicacy. So what was its

common, everyday significance (animal, shape, creature, biological case of gender, food) in Finland? And what was its mythical, historical, socio-historical, sexual, religious, spiritual or folklore/ folktale significance (Dimcovic n.d.)?

Only once, significance was added to a particular linguistic expression. The stage director found the use of the words "femaleness" and "maleness" awkward, as these particular words would not be used in English. She felt, that they would de-sexualize the question of gender. Could these be replaced?

On the basis of the exchange of letters, the stage director was only interested in the signifieds, not in the signs. The most important ambiguities were long and complicated sentences and lines, monologue-like dialogue, the mixing of styles, some details in the setting and a marker of the play's discourse of gender. Their significance needed to be settled for the intersemiotic translation of *Queen C* and in that, characterization and character identification. This suggests that the potential for reactualization for a director was the familiar conventions of the stage and those of a particular type of play. On the level of the story, already the source text has been thematically reactualized as discourse of gender, although the explicit links "maleness" and "femaleness" to academic feminist discourse were removed from the revised translation (Ruohonen / Hackston 2002c: 11). »

5. Reactualization as parallel or overlap in the introductory and stage translations

The choice of a theatre text for translation implies that it has been deemed by somebody potentially relevant for foreign audiences. When the decision to translate is commissioned at source, which is a common praxis in marginal cultures, it is likely to be based primarily on anticipated thematic resonance in a wide range of environments. A choice abroad to take the

text further may then also involve a decision of linguistic and performance level reactualization.

In what follows, I will look at the reactualization of two plays by Laura Ruohonen in different types of contexts. The material consists of: 1) the introductory/stage translation of *An Island Far from Here*; 2) the introductory translation of *Olga*; and 3) the stage translation of *Olga*. In my analysis, I will identify the sites where readings of familiarity or universality, "of Finland" or "not of Finland" have been suggested and, finally, compare these with the ones identified as sites of indeterminacy in the preparation of the translations.

5.1. Introductory translation of *An Island Far from Here*

When Laura Ruohonen's *An Island Far from Here* was translated into English, the play had already been accepted for production, and it was clear that it would be performed by youth theatre groups in England within the Shell Connections project. The playwright herself rewrote the Finnish text to suit the productions, and, in preparation for the translation, the translator identified a number of sites of indeterminacy which he discussed with the playwright. Finally, he wrote his translation, which was used as such in the productions.[14] In what follows, I will look at the reactualization strategies that were employed in the translation of the text.

The names of the characters and places are an obvious site for identifying the foreign origin of a theatre text. These are, however, not reliable indicators of the source, as the play may be set in a foreign location (e.g. many plays by Brecht). The setting may also be only vaguely identifiable in the names of people and places as was the case with the Finnish source text of *An Island Far from Here*.

In *An Island Far from Here*, the few names that appeared in the Finnish source text were retained in their original form. These were of marginal importance to the story and only mentioned in passing, like "Elisa's dog, Mrs Tina Falk" and "Auntie

Elsi" (Ruohonen / Hackston 2002d: 5, 47). The protagonists' names, "Lidia" and "Sofia", did not appear in the lines at all, but in the stage directions, and they had been retained. The descriptive names of the other characters did not appear in the lines either, and, in the stage directions, they were translated with a mixture of British and American English as "Pal, Friend, Ally and Bloke".

A number of linguistic elements were however, used to suggest familiarity in the new environment. The characters used words, such as "three hundred quid", "the mobile", "the zebra crossing", "lorries", "petrol" and "wellies" (Ruohonen / Hackston 2002d: 19, 20, 33, 35). These would set the play in England rather than the U.S.A. The same purpose would be served by English sayings, such as "not for donkey's years" or "having a whale of time" (*Ibidem*: 3, 20). Such (British) English expressions were used by all characters. English informal situational style was also suggested by the choice of swearwords, such as "bloody incredible", "Bloody Hell", or epithets such as "alky", "little rogues", "dickhead" and "morons" (*Ibidem*: 14, 34, 16, 19, 20, 22). The reading of the dialogue as contemporary English colloquial speech was also suggested by a number of informal expressions, such as "flops down", "the bugger's neck" and a "chin-wag" (*Ibidem*: 5, 16, 19). Moreover, topical cultural markers, such as the more timely "mad cow's disease" to replace "scurvy" in the source text (*Ibidem*: 20), were used to enhance the sense of familiarity.

There were, however, a number of cultural markers which indicated a foreign Finnish setting. The spoons used in Heaven for feeding were, according to the girls, "two metres long", and they would need to catch "perch" on their island (*Ibidem*: 22, 2). Such foreign details were few.

In the translation of *An Island Far from Here*, reactualization thus took place on the level of the language but at different sites from those identified as needing discussion in the Finnish source text. The translation was reactualized with

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idiomatic and familiar (British) English. Some foreign Finnish cultural markers were kept in the text to refer to the source culture, and the origin was also brought up in the previews. The comment about the failure of the text to establish relevance to its English audience in some of the newspaper reviews (see above) clearly related to differences in the narrative which the language could not hide.

5.2 Introductory translation: *Olga*

While the introductory translation of *An Island Far from Here* was completed by a British English translator David Hackston, the one of *Olga* was made by an American Finn, Anselm Hollo. While Hackston knew that English theatre practitioners were interested in *An Island Far from Here*, Hollo's translation was more clearly introductory and aimed at a variety of theatre practitioners. His choices in the translation process are, therefore, likely to reflect his background rather than any audience reception.

A conspicuous indication of the setting of the play and also a potential site of reactualization are, again, the various character and place names. While *An Island Far from Here* was only loosely set in Finland through topical cultural markers, *Olga* abounds in them. There are many character names in the source text, a mixture of Finnish and Swedish names, which appear also in the dialogue. The text has not only the names of the protagonists, "Olga" and "Rundis" (maybe short for "Rundgren" or some other Swedish names), but also Olga's surname "Wikström", the names of her friend "Ida Backman", the antique dealer "Rauno Ervasti" (Ruohonen / Hollo 1995: 3, 4) and the municipality leader "Savolainen" (only the first name "Mikko" appears in the dialogue). In addition, the postman reads out the Finnish names on the letters he is carrying: "Aaltonen, Maalismaa, Laine, Kytömaa, Salminen, Volanen... Wikström!" (*Ibidem*: 79). The antique dealer answers the phone with his nickname "Rauski" (*Ibidem*: 2, 6), which is further

complicated by the fact that Olga keeps on mixing his name "Rauno" with "Raimo" (*Ibidem*: 5, 16). Hollo kept the majority of the names in their original form in his introductory translation. The few exceptions he made were of insignificant details to the narrative, such as the antique dealer looking for "Mrs Park's apartment" (*Ibidem*: 2, 4, 8) or the dealer referring in passing to his acquaintance "Adler" (*Ibidem*: 84). In the Finnish source text these were Finnish names (Ruohonen 1995: 3, 71). A third exception in Hollo's translation were the names of some imaginary ducks, "Billy, Jack" and "Buck" (*Ibidem*: 49), which were Finnish "Teppo, Jere" and "Matti" in the source text (Ruohonen 1995: 44). »

Place names in the dialogue in Hollo's translation were mostly English. Some were established names, such as "Lapland" (Ruohonen / Hollo 1995: 45-49) and "Karelia" (*Ibidem*: 52-61; 50-60), while others had been translated for this occasion, e.g. "Old Town Bay" (*Ibidem*: 23, 50-59). Some names, such as that of Olga's childhood home "Rantalahti" (*Ibidem*: 39-43, 80-68) but also "Helsinki" (*Ibidem*: 18-19) were omitted as unnecessary details, and in one case "Suomi", 'Finland' became neutralized as "north" (*Ibidem*: 28-30).

On the level of linguistic expression, English idioms were used to suggest familiarity and, through that, relevance. The translation used English binomials "aches and pains", figurative speech like "look at this baby", sayings "talk to you later, alligator" or "she's bananas" (*Iibidem*: 2, 9, 82, 16). Only occasionally, however, these replaced a Finnish saying in the source text, whereas when English epithets were used they replaced the Finnish ones in the source texts. These included exclamations such as "you're a scoundrel", "you bum" or "hoodlum" (Ruohonen / Hollo 1995: 39, 86, 44). These suggested familiarity, as did the swearing, such as "godssakes", "goddam", "shit", "oh my" or "Jesus" (*Ibidem*: 6, 2, 12, 50).

Hollo's own American English background directed the choice of expression towards his own variety. He used the

American "stairwell" both in the stage directions and the dialogue, "bill" instead of the British English "banknote","mailman", "mailbox", "garbage", "vacation, movie", "rutabaga casserole" and "cab" (*Ibidem*: 2, 6; 14, 15; 8; 44; 18; 31; 66, 72; 9). In one case he made use of both the American English and British English varieties in a scene where social class was linked with Olga's correction of Rundis's use of the word "cookies" which she suggested should be replaced by "biscuits" (*Ibidem*: 8). In this detail, British English was linked with middle class speech, while American English revealed a lower social class.

Topical cultural markers in the introductory translation were a mixture of familiar and foreign, and some had been neutralized or acculturated. A frosty night became a "starry night", a special Finnish homemade paint just "red" and the representative a Finnish liberal political party, a "young conservative" (*Ibidem*: 42, 61, 68). Some markers kept their Finnish reference, and these ranged from a "milk carton" to "the Czarist rule, in the Grand Dutchy of Finland" (*Ibidem*: 6, 7). The currency was kept in its Finnish form (*Ibidem*: 84, 11, 13, 15). The mixture may be due to the fear of an overload of foreign detail, irrelevant in the narrative and distractive if excessive.

In the introductory translation of *Olga* by Anselm Hollo, idiomatic language signaled familiarity and authenticity and reactualized the play for an unspecified English environment. Topical cultural markers were a mixture of familiar American English and foreign Finnish. The translator's own background directed the language towards the American English variety of language.

5.3. Stage translation: *Olga*

The stage version of *Olga* was based, in the first instance, on the gloss translation, but it was also checked against the introductory translation by Hollo. Moreover, Ruohonen and McLean discussed the translation, which was the object of a public reading and was then rewritten in its final form.

The translator saw Olga as an old Scottish granny, and took the decision to use Scottish English in it.[15] Scottish English became an important element of characterization, visible on all levels of the language. The orthography suggested the accent, and there were elements of both the lexis and grammar which gave the impression of the characters' use of the variety. Most conspicuously Scottish English was used by Rundis, his girlfriend Ella and the Policeman, maybe indicating their social status. Rundis says "Gie us it", "Gie it a bye noo" and "Efter thon light bit" (Ruohonen / McLean 1995: 13, 29, 22) instead of the more standard English lines of the introductory or gloss translation. For Rundis, 'father' is "the Da" and potato is "tatty" (*Ibidem*: 23, 31). The nearest ditch becomes "the nearest burn" and children "weans" (*Ibidem*: 16). Olga's speech is less marked for accent, but she uses Scottish English expressions, such as "haar" for the standard English "mist", "loch" for the "lake" and "midgie bites" for "mosquito bites" (*Ibidem*: 42, 24, 31). »

The American English of the introductory translation changes into Scottish (or British) English in that "sneakers" become "trainers", "stairwell" becomes "stairway" and "closet" becomes a "cupboard" (Ruohonen / Hollo 1995: 2, 2, 6; Ruohonen / McLean 1995: 1, 2, 4). The difference in the introductory translation between "cookies and biscuits" (see above) becomes that between "muffins and scones" (*Ibidem*: 6). "Mailman" (Ruohonen / Hollo 1995: 8, 78) becomes "postman" (Ruohonen / McLean 1995: 6, 57) and "apartment" (Ruohonen / Hollo 1995: 47) a "flat" (Ruohonen / McLean 1995: 35). The lines abound in Scottish English sayings such as that's a "wee stoatir" (*Ibidem*: 7), a "gibberin auld fruitcake"(*Ibidem*:14) and many others. Lexically the play thus suggests relevance through the remainder, which "made English dance the eightsome reel in the play".[16]

The situational style become adjusted to Scottish English as well, and for example Rundis's swearing reflects the new environment. While he uses a range of swearwords in the intro-

ductory translation ("my goodness, Oh shit, Shit, Fuck, Jesus Christ, Jesus"), in Scottish English he uses mostly "fuck". Exclamations changed, and Olga's "Oh my" (Ruohonen / Hollo 1995: 12) became "Holy Shmoly" (Ruohonen / McLean 1995: 9), and Ervasti's "Balderdash" became "Are you mental" (*Ibidem*: 12). "She's bananas" (Ruohonen / Hollo, 1995: 16) was changed into "she's off her trolley" (Ruohonen / McLean 1995: 12).

Despite the familiar remainder, there is also a distance between the world of the audience and that of/in the play, created mainly with Finnish names. The names of characters within the dialogue were all Finnish. The confusion with the first name of the antique dealer was replaced with a wordplay "Rhino and Rauno" (*Ibidem*: 16), and also the ducks were given Scottish English names: "Davey – Wullie – Boaby" (*Ibidem*: 37).

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Place names became Finnish as well. Only the name of the old people's home, where the daughter was planning to send Olga, was given in English, "The Evening Tide Nursing Home" (*Ibidem*: 58) although not in the form suggested by the introductory translation, "The Sandman Nursing Home" (Ruohonen / Hollo 1995: 80) or the Finnish source text. Sums of money were given in Finnish and so were the distances.

Some of the political history was neutralized (Ruohonen / McLean 1995: 5), and some topical cultural markers replaced with English/Scottish ones: a breast button became a "poppy", "Friends of Agriculture" became "members of the Women's Institute", "Town manager" was turned into "the chairman of the town council", and "Brandy" into "whisky" (Ruohonen / Hollo 1995: 28, 55, 64, 72; Ruohonen / McLean 1995: 22, 40, 47, 52).

All in all, the reactualization of *Olga* for the Traverse took place mainly in the change of the idiom and the use of the remainder with its own social and political implications. It differed from both the gloss translation, whose linguistic peculiarities it did not want to use, and from introductory translation, which had used another English variety.

6. Conclusions

Above I have discussed the complex processes of preparing contemporary Finnish texts for production abroad. Very few Finnish plays have gained access to foreign stages, and in particular the English-speaking world has been practically impenetrable. Apart from thematic resonance, reactualization of a foreign play in translation may play a major role in the reception. In my study, I focused on reactualization which I defined as the linguistic strategies which make the play familiar, and through that, relevant for the new audiences. In my study, I was interested in the linguistic reactualization in different types of translations and translation processes. »

Relevance as such can be experienced on a number of levels, starting from the thematic level and extending to the sense of familiarity of the language. Thematic structure is usually a given, but, depending on the views of the director, some themes can be underlined while others can be played down. The language can be reactualized through the names of people and places, but, most importantly, through the use of the remainder.

An introductory translation of Finnish drama, intended for selling the text to a wide range of theatre practitioners, is commissioned at source. It is aimed at those who have the power to decide whether to take the play further, whose acceptance depends largely on the perceived theatrical potential of the play. Once the decision is taken, the play needs to be sold to the new audiences. This is done by showing the relevance of the play in different ways, the pre-publicity, interviews and reviews. Translation can further improve the integration.

In the above study, I examined the sites of indeterminacy that a director and translators identified when preparing the translations. The gloss translation identified differences in linguistic expression and topical cultural markers, while it did not aim at understanding them. At its best, it can be useful

as a close reading of the text, but it remains as a work that a stage translator him/herself should do. Differences pointed out in the gloss translation were not visible in the stage translation. An introductory translation identified instances of the remainder, the author's style, and some inconsistencies in the text, but could only very sparingly take decisions concerning reactualization. The translator could, however, use idiomatic language to increase the sense of familiarity. The stage translator was able to make the final choice with a particular target audience in mind, and reactualize the play through social or
94>95 geographical varieties and selecting suitable topical markers. The stage director was more interested in signification related to the dramatic function than the surface differences between the languages. The play where this was studied was, however, exceptional, in that the source text was already removed in time from its audiences.

The question of reactualization becomes irrelevant when the travel route is reversed from a dominant culture to a marginal one. In both directions, however, the translation provides the site to say "this is where they differ from us, and we accept that". In only one direction, that is usually done. <<

NOTES

[1] The term has been coined by Lawrence Venuti to refer to the elements outside the standard language. These elements exceed communication of a univocal meaning and draw attention to the conditions of the communicative act which are not only linguistic and cultural but also social and political (Venuti 2000: 470-71)

[2] The concept of *reactualization* has been employed by Annie Brisset to refer to manipulation of the space and time actualizer which transposes the space and time of the original play into a reality familiar to the audience (Brisset 1996: 111).

[3] I have used different terminology to describe the retranslations.

[4] http://www.teatteri.org/english/drama/index.html.

[5] http://www/teatteri.org/naytelmat/index.html.

[6] http://www.teatteri.org/naytelmat/ulkomesit.htlm. >>

[7] http://www.teatteri.org/naytelmat/ulkomesit.htlm; Laura Ruohonen, email 10.10.2005.

[8] http://www.teatteri.org/naytelmat/ulkomesit.htlm.

[9] *Helsingin Sanomat* 11.01.2003

[10] For a more detailed discussion of this, see Aaltonen 2004.

[11] The underlining is mine.

[12] *Connections* is a platform for contemporary playwrights to have their texts put on stage in England and have them performed by youth theatre. The total number of new plays written for the Connections programme and performed at the National Theatre in its eleven-year existence is just under 60.
(See http://www.britishtheatreguide.info/news/shellconnections.ht. Cited 8.9.2005)

[13] The exact numerical information in the analysis below is only approximate as the sites can appear under more than one heading (e.g. concern both the denotation and style).

[14] This was confirmed to myself in a message I received from Helen Prosser, dated 2 August 2005.

[15] See http://www.edinburghguide.com/aande/theatre/reviews/o/olga.shtm.

[16] See http://www.edinburghguide.com/aande/theatre/reviews/o/olga.shtm.

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