

Translation Visibility and Translation Criticism in the Swedish Reception of Post-Soviet Russian Literature

Literary Reviews as Epitexts

Abstract

Translation criticism—or rather the poor state of translation criticism—has been a reoccurring topic in the Swedish cultural debate since the 1980s. In this chapter, reviews of post-Soviet Russian novels published in Swedish translation has served as a case for analyzing translation visibility and translation criticism. This is an example of an inquiry related to the *metadiscursive* function of the paratext, which means that the reviews have not been analyzed as commentaries on specific texts, but rather as a body of epitexts containing general information related to translation as a phenomenon. The corpus consists of 430 reviews of 82 post-Soviet novels published in Swedish translation between 1994 and 2020. The analysis indicates that the literary translation criticism available today in Swedish general media is not random. Firstly, works pertaining to highbrow literature and authors who write such literature not only receive more attention in Swedish media, but they also receive more reviews containing translation criticism. Secondly, positive translation criticism clusters around stylistically and linguistically challenging source texts pertaining to highbrow literature, and the translators responsible for translating such texts. Thus, demanding texts with elaborate stylistic and linguistic features seem to trigger the critic to address the translated nature of a novel in a review.

1 Introduction

In today's globalized world we are constantly surrounded by translations. We watch dubbed or subtitled series on streaming platforms, we live in multicultural societies where public service announcements reach us in multiple languages, and we use machine translation to access webpages originally written in languages we do not understand. We tend to react when a movie character says something different than indicated in the subtitles, and the internet is overflowing with webpages devoted to comical mistranslations of signs. However, the above situations involve simultaneous access to the source and target text. We react because we notice a discrepancy between, for example, what we hear and what we read. Literary translation, however, is a different matter. Reading translated literature for leisure does not usually include parallel reading of the source and target texts.

In his essay "How to Read a Translation," Lawrence Venuti strives to make readers of translations aware of the possible gain and stylistic beauty of a translated text. He does this against the backdrop of an assumed neglect of translations in the United States, and claims that readers have been trained by publishers and critics to value only fluent translations that "appear untranslated" (110). Consequently, he reasons that in order to truly appreciate a translation people need to gain a better understanding of what a translator does. He clarifies: "The loss in translation remains invisible to any reader who doesn't undertake a careful comparison to the foreign text—i.e., most of us. The gain is everywhere apparent, although only if the reader looks" (110).

In Sweden, literary translators and critics have during the last decade engaged in a revived cultural debate about a topic related to Venuti's apprehensions, namely translation criticism in literary reviews, or rather the poor state of Swedish translation criticism (see section 2.1). I will therefore turn to a type of paratext—the literary review—in order to further investigate this matter. Aiming to shed light on the mechanisms behind translation criticism, I will use post-Soviet Russian literature published in Swedish translation as a case for analyzing translation visibility and translation criticism. By focusing on translations from Russian—a language with relatively few speakers in Swe-

den¹—the question of translation criticism in literary reviews will be pushed to its limits.

The analysis covers two topics: firstly, translation visibility, or specifically *whether* and *how* the review signals that the reviewed novel is a translation; and secondly, translation criticism, or specifically any value judgements made by the critic in relation to the translation. The analysis will be governed by the following research questions: 1) Is the novel identified as a translation in the review? 2) Is the translator mentioned in the review, and in that case how? 3) Does the review contain any translation criticism (positive or negative)? 4) If so, in what way does the critic comment on the quality of the translation? 5) Is translation criticism more common in reviews of novels a) written by certain authors; b) translated by certain translators; c) pertaining to certain genres (highbrow or popular genres); or d) written by certain critics?

The material for this analysis comprises reviews of post-Soviet Russian fiction (novels) published in Russia from 1992 onwards, and thereafter published in Swedish translation. 82 novels published in Swedish between 1994 and 2020 meet these criteria. Two Swedish media databases, *Svenska Dagstidningar* and *Mediearkivet*, have been used to search for reviews of the novels in question. The reviews were published in non-scholarly and non-specialized media (henceforth *general media*). Many of the downloaded reviews were incomplete and had to be cross-checked with microfilm editions.

This investigation focuses on how *the critic* discusses a translation, and therefore only independent reviews (not combinations of a review and an author interview) have been of interest. Furthermore, only one review per critic and novel has been included in the corpus. In cases when a critic has sent versions of the same review to different newspapers, publication date (earliest) and in some cases review availability (in full-text database) has determined which review was included. Finally, a few very short reviews without reflections were excluded. In total 669 reviews were identified, of which 430 were included in

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- 1 In 2012/2013, Russian ended up in 18th place (29,000 speakers) on a list of foreign and minority languages in Sweden based on the number of native speakers (Parkvall 28). Additionally, Russian is not taught as a foreign language in Swedish elementary schools (grades 0–9). However, it may be selected as a L3 or L4 at some upper secondary schools, or studied at university level.

the corpus. The reviews were gathered from 69 different general media sources of different kinds (newspapers, magazines, webpages, and journals).

After file preparation (e.g., OCR-scanning, transcription, formatting), the reviews were imported to NVivo—a computer software for qualitative and mixed-methods data analysis. A classification sheet containing factual information related to the reviews (such as novel title, author of reviewed novel, translator of reviewed novel, critic, newspaper) was uploaded to NVivo in order to simplify the initial coding process. Finally, the reviews were read and assigned thematic codes pertaining to the research questions in NVivo. The dataset “Swedish reviews of post-Soviet Russian novels published in Swedish translation 1992–2020,” containing complete information about the novels, reviews, classifications, and results, may be accessed via the Swedish National Data Service (Podlevskikh Carlström).

2 Theoretical Perspectives

2.1 The Literary Review as Epitext

The material for this investigation consists of literary reviews, and, as indicated by the title of the chapter, I perceive of the literary review as an *epitext*. However, according to the framework of paratexts developed by Gérard Genette, reviews written by critics are not generally included in the category of paratext. Genette defines an *epitext* as a type of paratext that stands in relation to and may influence the reception of a text, but is placed outside of the actual volume (5). However, Genette’s *epitext* is restricted by *authorial intention*, meaning that the author or an authorized party must be responsible for the publication (345). Genette’s framework has been of paramount significance in many disciplines but has drawbacks when applied to translations, which has led to TS scholars often adapting it to suit their own aims or research designs (Batchelor 28). Consequently, Kathryn Batchelor has developed the theory of paratextuality to benefit the study of paratexts in translation-related contexts. Importantly, in her framework, authorial intention is not required for the inclusion of a text in the category of paratexts. Instead, she defines the paratext as “a consciously

crafted threshold for a text which has the potential to influence the ways in which the text is received” (141–142). Literary reviews are written in order to make the public aware of newly published literature, and may be compared to service announcements (Kobbersmed, “Et bud på nogle kriterier”; Maier 205). Thus, reviews have the potential to influence the way in which a text is received, and most certainly “fit within the domain of the paratext” (Batchelor 149).

However, apart from their paratextual function, as thresholds to specific texts, reviews may also be metatextual and comment on a text (Batchelor 151). In my analysis, I go even further and analyze how *translation as a phenomenon* is commented upon in a body of epitexts pertaining to a particular literary system—an inquiry related to the *metadiscursive* function of paratexts, or, that is, as a commentary not on a specific text, but rather on translation as a phenomenon (Batchelor 151).²

2.2 Translation Criticism and Translation Visibility

The general state of Swedish translation criticism³ has been a reoccurring topic in the Swedish cultural debate since the 1980s (Gullin 171), and, as indicated above, the topic has recently enjoyed a revival. In April 2021, literary scholar and translator Lars Kleberg called for university courses in translation criticism in a debate article in Swedish newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* (“Starta en kurs i översättningskritik”); in a recently published book about literary translations, Nils Håkanson concludes that Sweden lacks a translation criticism worthy of the name (*Dolda gudar* 304). Furthermore, translation criticism is a recurring theme at Swedish book fairs and the climate between translators and critics has become tense throughout the years (Eriksson; Munkhammar, “Snyggare språkdräkt”, “Varför känner sig översättarna hotade”; Steinick, “Skjut inte på kritikern”).

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- 2 Texts that provide general statements on translation and other sociocultural phenomena are seen by Tahir-Gürçağlar as belonging to the category of *extratext* (“What Texts Don’t Tell” 58).
- 3 As suggested by Outi Paloposki (with reference to James S. Holmes’s applied translation studies), I include the journalistic activity of evaluating literature within the term *translation criticism* (184). Consequently, a *critic* is responsible for providing journalistic translation criticism.

On the one hand, Swedish critics seem to consider translators as being easily offended and unwilling to defend their choices. Munkhammar, for example, explains: “They [the translators] have presented their solution to the problem of the text: A translation, and it should not be understood as a draft for discussion” (Munkhammar).⁴ Moreover, the viewpoint that critics only should review translations from languages that they are familiar with is described as a utopia (Munkhammar “Snyggare språkdräkt”; Steinick, “Skjut inte på kritikern”). Munkhammar formulates her view on the task of the critic in *Dagens Nyheter*:

The old—unspoken—demand on the critic’s knowledge of the source text is today highly unrealistic. ... You can at the most note expressions that seem strange in a Swedish context, for example unjustified anachronisms that make the reader stop in amazement. (Munkhammar, “Snyggare språkdräkt”, my translation)

On the other hand, Swedish translators and scholars would like translation criticism to be based on a comparison between the source and target texts, and particularly dislike one-word assessments that do not include a reason for what the critic found to be particularly positive or negative (Lindqvist “Att göra den osynliga”; Gullin 170–172; Gustafsson 5). Nevertheless, as Katharina Reiss explains, this type of translation criticism is very common:

... reviews of translations do usually not judge them as translations at all. And when they do, it is usually only in passing and with such trite phrases as ‘translated fluently’, ‘reads as the original’, ‘excellent translation’ or ‘sensitively translated’—judgements that are almost always vague and unsupported. (*Translation Criticism 2*)

Similarly, Raymond van den Broeck notes that the foreign nature of translations is often ignored in reviews: “In many cases reviewers treat the translated work as if they were dealing with an original written in their mother tongue, without betraying even by a single remark that it is in fact a translation” (Van den Broeck 55).

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4 In this chapter, all quotes from Swedish sources are rendered in the author’s English translation.

Carol Maier provides two reasons as to why there is a lack of translation criticism in literary reviews: firstly, literary translation is perceived as a creative activity and is therefore difficult to assess; and secondly—and probably more importantly—the status of translation in the West is low (205). The question of translator status in relation to translation criticism in newspaper reviews was discussed in 2019 by Lars Kleberg in another article in *Dagens Nyheter*. Kleberg notes that we speak more about translations today than ever before, and that new prices have recently been established for distinguished translators. Nonetheless, continues Kleberg, critics still use the same platitudes to describe translations as in the 1940s and 1950s (“Tiden har stått stilla”).

Miriam Vestergard Kobbersmed has investigated Danish newspaper translation criticism and describes a situation similar to the Swedish one, where translation assessment most often consists of unsubstantiated one-word clichés (“Et bud på nogle kriterier”). Kobbersmed describes the literary review as a service announcement, and insists that translation criticism therefore does belong in newspaper reviews. She finds that an assessment of the translation based on the applied translation strategy and the translator’s priorities is just as relevant as an evaluation of the novel’s plot or as aesthetic and linguistic features. Additionally, Kobbersmed explains that a reasoned assessment of the translation in newspaper reviews will highlight the fact that a translation is a special form of literature that has been read and interpreted by someone else, which in turn will counteract the tendency to read a translation as an original work (“Et bud på nogle kriterier”).

Kobbersmed is one of many scholars who have proposed models for translation criticism in order to improve the practice of reviewing literary translations⁵ (Kobbersmed, *Mod en litterær oversættelseskritik*). What all models have in common is that they build on a comparison between the source and target texts, which makes it possible to explain the reasons for the assessment.⁶ Notably, no such comparison is evident in the 430 reviews included in the

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5 See for example van den Broeck “Second Thoughts on Translation Criticism”; Chesterman “Kriitikko ja käännoefektit”; Reiss *Translation Criticism*; Rodríguez Rodríguez *Literary Translation Quality Assessment*; Hewson *An Approach to Translation Criticism*.

6 In Chesterman’s model this depends on the critic’s view of translation.

analysis performed in this article. A few critics who apparently know Russian express familiarity with the source text author and discuss questions such as the transfer of “the author’s voice” to Swedish in general terms, but never with tangible examples from the source text.

As illustrated above, translation criticism in literary reviews is a topic under debate, and neither translators nor translation studies scholars are satisfied with the current state of translation criticism. Nonetheless, general statements on translations are a relevant area of inquiry within translation studies. Literary reviews are written by critics—figures of authority—and may thus provide valuable information on how translations are represented to the public (Paloposki 185). As a figure of authority in the literary system, the critic functions as a gatekeeper, whose service announcements—reviews—may encourage or discourage readers to read a novel. As gatekeepers, critics may also have an impact on the reputation of individual translators, and the general understanding of translation as a phenomenon in the literary system.

2.3 Analyzing and Categorizing Literary Reviews

Many studies that investigate translation criticism in reviews do this against the backdrop of Venuti’s seminal *The Translators Invisibility* from 1995.⁷ One example with relevance for the current analysis is Peter Fawcett’s analysis of translation criticism in reviews published in British review journals and non-tabloid publications, in which he aims to find out “how translation is perceived as a general phenomenon by this kind of press” (295). The investigation was qualitative and only included reviews “that wrote explicitly about translation” (295). Despite the rather small corpus of eleven reviews, Fawcett’s results are interesting and include a preference for transparent translation, negativity towards source-oriented translation strategies, a lack of evidence to back up criticism, and a high degree of “frankness in negative criticism” (296). In his conclusion,

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7 One of Venuti’s key points was that the low Anglo-American translation ration has led to the development of “aggressively monolingual cultures,” in which readers have a low tolerance for the foreign and prefer to read fluent translations. In such cultures, the literary translator becomes invisible and often neglected in literary reviews (*The Translator’s Invisibility* 15, 8).

he expresses a dislike for this harsh and theoretically ungrounded criticism and refers to it as “an exercise in institutionalized irresponsibility” (305).

Isabelle Vanderschelden’s analysis of the French literary system has a broader approach and also includes comments about translation in forewords and interviews. Vanderschelden aims to survey how the translator is represented in a literary system with a higher translated ratio than Venuti’s previously discussed Anglo-American (272, 291). Her results show that the invisibility of both the translator and the translation in general is to some extent also a feature of the French literary system (290). She concludes that “translators are often ignored, taken for granted or criticized rather flippantly, and the evaluation of translation, when it actually takes place, is far from reliable” (290).

A Swedish study from 2002 analyzed general statements about translations in reviews of English literature in Swedish translation in 1980–1985, aiming to clarify how translators’ achievements are being noticed by critics (Gullin 175, 172). Gullin separates “assessment of the translation consisting of broad-brush formulations without motivation” from “assessment of the translation with motivation.” The second category also includes statements in which the critic expresses a reservation regarding the assessment, such as “the translation *seems to be brilliant*” (174). The results show that, through the whole period, it is most common to only mention the translator’s name together with other required information about the publication—a practice that increased in frequency between 1980 and 1985. Of 101 reviews that do not mention the translator’s name, as many as 84 were published during the first year of the investigation, 1980. When it comes to translation criticism, Gullin identified 358 broad-brush formulations and 139 assessments with motivation. Interestingly, she notices a decrease in broad-brush formulations during the 1990s, which she relates to the ongoing cultural debate about translation criticism in reviews (176).

My classification of reviews and translation criticism draws on the previously mentioned studies, with one additional category: literary segment (highbrow and popular culture). As previously explained, my material consists of reviews of 82 post-Soviet novels originally written in Russian and thereafter translated into Swedish. However, they belong to different literary segments and have been written by authors of various reputations. According to Even-Zohar’s *polysystem theory*, such novels are still united by the fact that they have been

selected for translation by target culture institutions, and translated according to target culture norms (46). Thus, in line with Toury, the translations may be seen as “target culture facts” (23). The target culture’s operational and preliminary norms will determine whether the translation is performed according to the principle of acceptability (in relation to the target culture and language) or the principle of adequacy (in relation to the source text) (Toury 69–70). In Sweden, Lindqvist, for example, has concluded that for translators of highbrow literature, adequacy becomes the guiding principle, while translators of popular works instead adhere to the principle of acceptability (*Översättning som social praktik* 218, 222). As we will see, the difference between highbrow and popular literature is also clearly visible when it comes to the reception of translated literature and how a literary review is formulated. When classifying works as belonging to either highbrow or popular literature, I have applied a genre-based definition of popular literature that differentiates between categorized genre-fiction (literature marketed as pertaining to a specific genre) and non-categorized genre fiction (literature that may share certain traits with a genre, but which is not marketed as belonging to that genre) (Määttä 46).

To summarize, the initial classification of reviews and translation criticism will be based on three different categories: firstly, the reviews will be categorized as belonging to either the highbrow or popular literary segment. Secondly, reviews will be classified based on translation visibility, determining whether, how, and at what point in the review the translator and/or translation is mentioned. Thirdly, reviews that contain translation criticism (positive and/or negative *critical statements*) will be coded as containing either *stereotyped statements* (one-word criticisms, clichés) or *explanatory statements* (containing either a reason and/or a reservation).

3 Visibility and Media Attention

3.1 Media Attention

One way of measuring the visibility of translators and translation in Swedish newspaper reviews is to analyze whether published translations receive media

attention or not. On average, the 82 post-Soviet novels that met the initial criteria each has 5.2 reviews included in the corpus. However, for 16 novels no reviews were identified. A common trait among these novels is that they all belong to the popular literary segment: 11 fantasy novels (nine novels by Nick Perumov and two by Max Frei⁸); three dystopias (two novels by Andrei Diakov and one by Dmitry Glukhovskiy), one thriller (by Chingiz Abdullayev), and one chick lit/thriller (by Oksana Robski). In contrast, 13 novels resulted in ten or more reviews. Of these, only one—*Leviathan (Murder on the Leviathan)*⁹ by Boris Akunin—belongs to the popular segment, while the rest have been classified as belonging to highbrow literature. Two novels by Vladimir Sorokin score the highest number of reviews included in the corpus: *I det heliga Rysslands tjänst (Day of the Oprichnik)* (22 reviews) and *Snöstormen (The Blizzard)* (21 reviews). Thereafter we find Svetlana Alexievich's *Tiden second hand: Slutet för den röda människan (Secondhand Time: The Last of the Soviets)*, together with another novel by Sorokin, *Tellurien (Telluria)*, that each received 17 reviews. To conclude, translated works that belong to highbrow literature evidently receive more media attention and are consequently more visible in the literary system.

It is also clear that the source text author's reputation is of importance. In an analysis of the Swedish reception of Russian literature 1797–2010, Nils Håkanson concluded that the Swedish selection of Russian literature for publication is politicized and that since the late 19th century there has been a clear bias towards Russian writers who are in conflict with state authorities (*Fönstret mot öster* 148). The same tendency seems to affect the review policies of Swedish newspapers: Vladimir Sorokin—who has not only been accused of the dissemination of pornography, but also had his books burnt by Putin's youth organization "Nashi"—always receives large numbers of reviews in the Swedish press. Another author who receives considerable media attention is Svetlana Alexievich, who has also been straightforward in her criticism of the political developments in Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union. In 2013, another

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8 Pen name for Svetlana Martynchik and Igor Steopin.

9 This is an example of a Russian novel that has been published in English translation. English titles of Russian novels that *are not* available in English translation have been translated literally and are indicated with quotation marks.

writer, Mikhail Shishkin, refused to represent Russia’s “criminal regime” at the US Book Expo—a decision that was noted in the Swedish media. Naturally, subsequent reviews label the author as being “Putin’s enemy.”

3.2 Translation Visibility

Another way of approaching translation visibility is to study whether—and how—the reviewed novels were identified as translations. The results of this research question are illustrated in Figure 1.

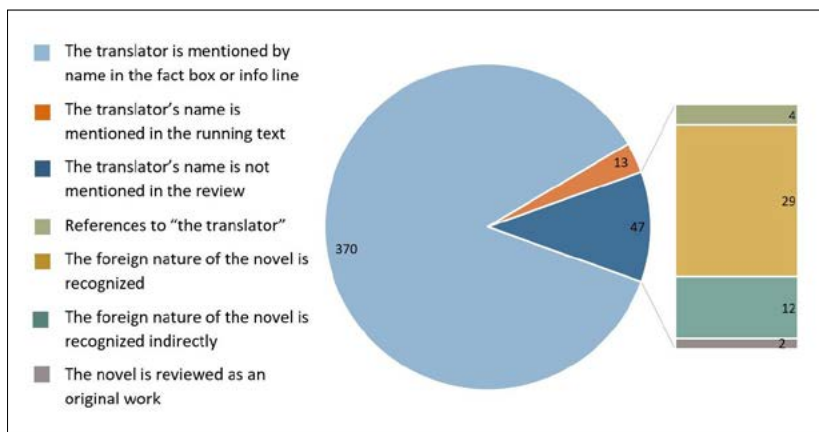


Figure 1. Translation visibility

As illustrated in Figure 1, 370 of the 430 reviews include the name of the translator either in a fact box or an info line.¹⁰ An additional 13 reviews instead mention the translator’s name in the running text. Thus, in total 383 (89%) of the analyzed reviews indicate the name of the translator.

In 47 (11%) of the reviews the translator’s name is not mentioned. In four of these, the critic engages in translation criticism and discusses an unidentified translator. In 29 reviews, the critic recognizes the foreign nature of the novel,

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 10 The fact box or info line contains factual information (e.g. author, title, publishing house, price, and translator) related to the reviewed novel.

for example by describing the author as being Russian, Ukrainian, or Georgian, or by discussing the author's previous translations and success in their home country. 12 reviews only recognize the foreign nature of the novel in an indirect way, for example by mentioning that the action takes place in Russia or that the author "traces the memory of her Russian family." Naturally, it is possible that literature originally written in Swedish takes place in other countries, and Swedish authors may also have Russian ancestry. Finally, in two reviews there is no indication of the novel's foreign nature; the book is essentially reviewed as if it was an original work.

4 Translation Criticism in Swedish Literary Reviews of Post-Soviet Novels

This section focuses on the way in which the critic assesses the translation, and how common the various types of translation criticism are in my corpus. The analysis reveals that 112 (26%) of the 430 reviews analyzed did contain some form of translation criticism. The critical statements are further explored in Figure 2.

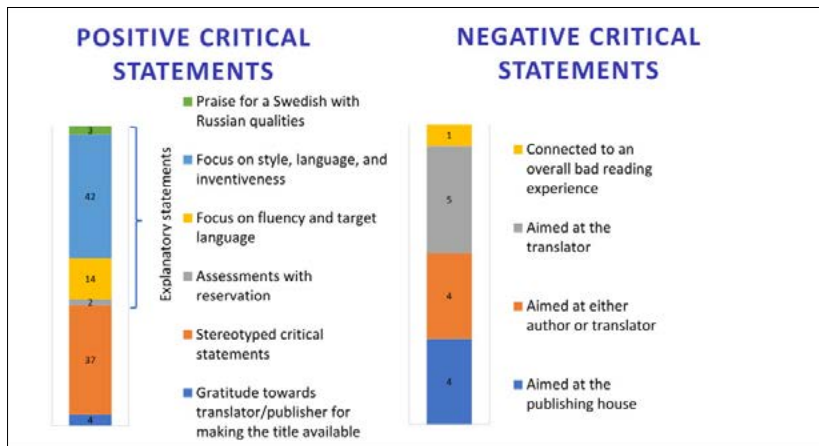


Figure 2. Translation criticism

The 112 reviews coded as containing translation criticism resulted in 116 critical statements, which means that four reviews contained both positive and negative criticism. It is far more common in the Swedish corpus to find positive critical statements (102 reviews) than negative critical statements (14 reviews). Furthermore, the results indicate that works belonging to highbrow genres receive more translation criticism than novels pertaining to the popular segment. 29% of the reviews of highbrow novels contained translation criticism, compared to 17% of the popular novels. The difference becomes greater if we only look at positive criticism: 27% of the reviews of highbrow novels, and 13% of the reviews of popular novels contained positive translation criticism.

4.1 Negative Translation Criticism: Explanatory Statements

The amount of negative criticism in the corpus might seem very small. Only 14 (3.3%) out of 430 reviews were coded as containing negative translation criticism, and all of these statements contained a reason for their assessment. That is, there were no stereotyped negative critical statements in my corpus. I referred earlier to Fawcett's analysis of translation criticism in British press, in which he reacted to the striking frankness in negative criticism. Such a tendency is not confirmed by my Swedish corpus of literary reviews. In fact, the Swedish critics generally seem unwilling to point their fingers at the translators when they come across grammatical errors or other perceived flaws. It is more common for the critic to seem hesitant regarding who is to blame for certain negative aspects of the text—the author or the translator? This is the case in four of the 12 negative critical statements. For example, in his review of Andrei Konstantinov's *Baronens hemlighet* ("The Baron's Secret"¹¹), Karl Steinick wonders whether Konstantinov or his translator is to blame for the "lack of creative ability".¹² Similarly, Pia Ingström is not fond of the "total lack of irony and flatness of style" in the Swedish translation of Aleksandra Marin-

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11 This Swedish title is not transparent. The Russian title of the novel is *Zhurnalist 2*.

12 All reviews discussed in section 4 may be found in "Primary Material – Reviews" in the reference list. For space reasons, only the name of the critic and the title of the reviewed work are provided when citing these reviews in the running text.

ina's *Mördare mot sin vilja* ("The Reluctant Murderer") but concludes that it is impossible to know whether the translator or author is to blame for this. Finally, the translation of Sorokin's *Snöstormen* (*The Blizzard*) irritates the critic Lina Arvidsson with multiple repetitions of the same word, and she therefore wonders whether the translation is limping or "if it just is a 'Russian thing' to write badly at times." In four reviews, the criticism is presumably aimed at the publishing house, and concerns matters such as proofreading, the translation of the title, and elisions. Only five reviews (by four critics) contained negative translation criticism specifically aimed at the translator. These critical statements involve aspects such as grammar, transcription, lack of word knowledge skills, and finally, an inability to transfer the style of the original to Swedish. Importantly, even if the critical statements are sometimes straightforward, the critic tends to balance them by also mentioning positive aspects. To exemplify, in his review of Boris Akunin's *Särskilda uppdrag* (*Special Assignments*), Sture Nilsson explains that "he would not even at gunpoint accept certain grammatical backflips in the *otherwise fine translation*" (my italics). He thereafter continues, rather harshly, to explain that "not knowing the difference between pronoun and definite article is caveman-level Swedish." Similarly, in a review of Akunin's *Akilles död* (*The Death of Achilles*), the same critic, Sture Nilsson, describes Kristina Rotkirch's translation as having "flow and rhythm although at times it illustrates a surprising lack of word knowledge skills." Another type of criticism is expressed by Inga-Lina Lindqvist—who has obviously read the Russian source text—in a review of Ludmila Ulitskaya's *En munter begravning* (*The Funeral Party*): "Unfortunately, Ulitskaya's multifaceted tone does not come through in the precise but at times slightly muted translation." Finally, critic Stefan Ingvarsson concludes that the translators responsible for translating Olga Slavnikova's novel *2017* (*2017*) must have had a lot of trouble "with the entangled and strongly figurative sentences." He explains that he "far too often had to read a page over again" and therefore wishes that the translators had taken greater liberties.

One negative critical statement is difficult to classify and expresses a strong general dislike for the novel in question. In his review, Mikael Nydahl describes Sorokin's *I det heliga Rysslands tjänst* (*Day of the Oprichnik*) "as a torment to read," and concludes that the novel is an embarrassment "for everybody in-

volved, starting with the author, to the translator, to the publishing house and finally to the reader of it all.”

4.2 Positive Translation Criticism

Positive translation criticism may be divided into different types of critical statements. Four critics express either a gratitude towards the publishing house and translator for making the author in question available in Swedish translation, or a hope for more translations by the same publisher and/or translator. Such gratitude is connected to a positive reading experience and has therefore been coded as belonging to positive translation criticism. The other 98 positive critical statements have been categorized as either *stereotyped* or *explanatory* statements. Furthermore, the explanatory statements have been thematically coded based on the different aspects of the translation mentioned in the review.

4.2.1 Stereotyped Statements

Bland statements such as “in excellent translation by” or “translated by the brilliant translator” turned out to be rather frequent: 37 (36%) of the 102 positive critical statements were classified as stereotyped. These statements are further explored in Table 1.

Table 1. Stereotyped statements used to describe translations and translators

Excerpt from the review	English translation of the excerpt	Instances
(alldes) utmärkt översättning, i utmärkt översättning	a (really) excellent translation, in excellent translation	3
(alldes) utmärkt översatt	(really) excellently translated	4
[Översättaren] har gjort ett utmärkt arbete	the translator did an excellent job	1
av den utmärkta översättaren	the excellent translator	1
brilliant översatt	brilliantly translated	1
vackert översatt, i vacker översättning	beautifully translated, in beautiful translation	2

Excerpt from the review	English translation of the excerpt	Instances
fint översatt, fint fångad, ett fint jobb	nicely translated, nicely captured, a nice job	3
i fin och följsam översättning	in a nice and flexible translation	1
den skickliga översättaren	the skillful translator	1
lysande översättning	brilliant translation	1
mästerligt översatt	masterly translated	2
suverän svensk översättning	supreme Swedish translation	1
följsamt översatt av	flexibly translated by	1
i njutbar översättning	in enjoyable translation	2
imponerande översättning	impressive translation	1
formidabelt överförd till svenska	formidably translated	1
förtjänstfullt översatt	translated with great merit	1
i [översättarens] pregnanta översättning	in [the translator's] pregnant translation	1
kongenial översättning	congenial (in the spirit of the original) translation	1
ett oklanderligt jobb	an impeccable job	1
uppfinningsrikt översatt	ingeniously translated	1
har översatt med den äran	has translated with the honor	1
har översatt med lätt hand och vinnande rörelser	has translated with a light hand and winning movements	1
smidig översättning	smooth translation	1
i tonsäker översättning	in a translation with a great sense of pitch	1
översättningen har flyt och rytm	the translation has fluency and rhythm	1
den i övrigt fina översättningen	the otherwise fine translation	1
	In total:	37

One might argue that some of the words in the above list are more meaningful or descriptive than others. While “brilliant” can only be interpreted as meaning that the critic for some reason found the translation to be of good quality,

words such as “congenial” (*kongenial*) and “smooth” (*smidig*) could possibly be interpreted as providing some information about the aspect of the translation that appealed to the critic. The Swedish word *kongenial* may be used to refer to a translation done in the true spirit of the original, which might lead to the assumption that the critic is familiar with the source text. However, both “congenial” and “smooth” are typical examples of one-word clichés frequently used in reviews and therefore do belong in this category.

4.2.2 Explanatory Statements

61 (60%) of the 102 positive critical statements were classified as being explanatory, which means that they either contained an explanation as to what the critic found to be positive in the reviewed translation, or a reservation regarding the assessment of the translation. Apart from reservations, the criticisms in this category have been thematically coded and divided into two major groups based on the features of the translation valued by the critic.

4.2.2.1 Reservations

Two reviews of Vladimir Sorokin’s *I det heliga Rysslands tjänst* (*The Day of the Oprichnik*) only differ from the stereotyped statements in that they contain a reservation. For example, in his review of the novel, Per Svensson writes that the translation “*as far as I understand* is rather masterly translated” (emphasis added).

4.2.2.2 Focus on Fluency and Target Language

This category contains 14 critical statements that specifically praise the translator’s achievement of a well-functioning target text (9 statements), as well as statements that praise a fluent, flexible, or smooth translation (5 statements). A few examples from the review corpus are provided below. Table 2 specifies the translations that received critical statements classified as belonging to this category.

Table 2. Novels that received critical statements focusing on fluency and target language

Title	English title	Author	Translator	Reviews
<i>Bön för Tjernobyl</i>	<i>Voices from Chernobyl</i>	S. Alexievich	H. Björkegren	1
<i>Sonetjka</i>	<i>Sonechka</i>	L. Ulitskaya	K. Rotkirch	1
<i>Vinterdrottningen</i>	<i>The Winter Queen</i>	B. Akunin	K. Rotkirch	1
<i>En munter begravning</i>	<i>The Funeral Party</i>	L. Ulitskaya	K. Rotkirch	1
<i>Presidentens sista kärlek</i>	<i>The President's Last Love</i>	A. Kurkov	Y. Mörk	1
<i>Tiden second hand</i>	<i>Second Hand Time</i>	S. Alexievich	K. Öberg Lindsten	1
<i>Moskva, jag älskar dig inte</i>	“Moscow, I Don't Love you”	S. Minaev	J. Lindblad	2
<i>Ön</i>	<i>To the Lake</i>	J. Vagner	K. Lidén	2
<i>Tellurien</i>	<i>Telluria</i>	V. Sorokin	B. Hellman	1
<i>Jakobs stege</i>	<i>Jacob's Ladder</i>	L. Ulitskaja	H. Björkegren	1
<i>Minnen av minnet</i>	<i>In Memory of Memory</i>	M. Stepanova	N. Håkanson	2
			In total:	14

Jan Arnald praises the Swedish language in both Minaev's *Moskva, jag älskar dig inte* (“Moscow, I Don't Love You”) and Akunin's *Vinterdrottningen* (*The Winter Queen*) by using the Swedish word *språkdiräkt*, a word that in literal translation to English means “language costume.” Magnus Östnäs uses the same word when assessing the translation of Sorokin's *Tellurien* (*Telluria*). Stefan Hagberg particularly appreciates the Swedish language in a translation by Maria Stepanova:

The recently established publishing house Nirstedt/litteratur has in exquisite Swedish and exceptional translation by Nils Håkanson (who, for example, uses delightful words such as brick crumbs [*tegelsmul*]) published her *Minnen av minnet* (*In Memory of Memory*). (Hagberg, my translation)

Stig Hansén applies a musical metaphor when he concludes that Karin Lidén achieved “a Swedish with an infallible sense of pitch” in her translation of Jana Vagner’s *Ön* (*To the Lake*). A similar musical metaphor is also used in a review of Alexievich’s *Tiden second hand* (*Second Hand Time*): “The translator Kajsa Öberg Lindsten has completed a marvelous work with a linguistic sense of pitch that never fails” (Bergdahl).

The following critical statements are similar in their target-oriented approach and specifically praise a translation they found to be fluent, flexible, or smooth. For example, Örjan Abrahamsson admits that he does not know a word of Russian, but explains that he still dares to say that Johanna Lindblad’s “Swedish interpretation” of Sergei Minaev’s *Moskva jag älskar dig inte* (“Moscow, I Don’t Love You”) is “good, sensitive, and smooth.” In a review of Alexievich’s *Bön för Tjernobył* (*Voices from Chernobyl*), Mikael Löfgren argues that the monologues in the novel find their own tone thanks to “the literary sensitivity of the author and the independent flexibility of the translator.” Finally, Karin Lundqvist concludes that Karin Lidén’s translation of Vagner’s *Ön* (*To the Lake*) has an “excellent flow.”

4.2.2.3 Focus on Style, Language and Inventiveness

The 42 reviews that have been coded as belonging to this category all praise stylistic or linguistic aspects of the translated text. Some critics express a general appreciation for a successful translation of a text they found to be stylistically demanding. For example, they mention features such as pastiche, a mixture of styles and language varieties, poetry, imagery, a vital and exact language, historical and political allusions, intertextuality, and narrative skills. I will provide a few examples of critical statements classified according to this category below.

Table 3. Reviews that praise aspects such as style, language and inventiveness

Title	English title	Author	Translator	Instances
<i>Omon Ra</i>	<i>Omon Ra</i>	V. Pelevin	B. Hellman	1
<i>Tiden är natt</i>	<i>The Time: Night</i>	L. Petrushevskaya	B. Lönnqvist	2
<i>Insekternas liv</i>	<i>Life of Insects</i>	V. Pelevin	S. Skott	1
<i>Blått fett</i>	“Blue Lard”	V. Sorokin	B. Hellman	1
<i>Lustgården</i>	“The Garden”	N. Sadur	J. Orlov	1
<i>Vinterdrottningen</i>	<i>The Winter Queen</i>	B. Akunin	K. Rotkirch	1
<i>Därv</i>	<i>The Slynx</i>	T. Tolstaya	S. Skott, M. Nikolajeva	11
<i>Leviathan</i>	<i>Murder on the Leviathan</i>	B. Akunin	K. Rotkirch	1
<i>Is</i>	<i>Ice</i>	V. Sorokin	B. Hellman	1
<i>Fältstudier i ukrainskt sex</i>	<i>Fieldwork in Ukrainian Sex</i>	O. Zabuzhko	I. Voltjanskaja	1
<i>Krigets färger: Ett vittnesmål</i>	“The Colors of War”	A. Babchenko	O. Wallin	1
<i>I det heliga Rysslands tjänst</i>	<i>The Day of the Oprichnik</i>	V. Sorokin	B. Hellman	3
<i>Den ryska frågan</i>	“The Russian Question”	A. Krym	N. Håkanson	1
<i>Brevboken</i>	<i>The Light and the Dark</i>	M. Shishkin	E. Parkman	2
<i>Venushår</i>	<i>Maidenhair</i>	M. Shishkin	E. Parkman	2
<i>Det gröna tältet</i>	<i>The Big Green Tent</i>	L. Ulitskaya	H. Björkgren	1
<i>Familjen Joltysjev</i>	<i>The Yeltyshevs</i>	R. Senchin	N. Håkanson	1
<i>Laurus</i>	<i>Laurus</i>	E. Vodolazkin	K. Linden	2
<i>Tellurien</i>	<i>Telluria</i>	V. Sorokin	B. Hellman	2
<i>Vid glömskans rand</i>	<i>Oblivion</i>	S. Lebedev	N. Håkanson	1

Title	English title	Author	Translator	Instances
<i>Zulejcha öppnar ögonen</i>	<i>Zuleikha</i>	G. Yakhina	M. Nydahl	2
<i>Minnen av minnet</i>	<i>In Memory of Memory</i>	M. Stepanova	N. Håkanson	2
<i>Belägringen av Izmail</i>	“Taking Izmail”	M. Shishkin	M. Nydahl	1
			In total:	42

As illustrated in Table 3, the novel *Därv* (*The Slynx*) by Tatyana Tolstaya received 11 reviews containing this type of positive translation criticism, and there is also repetition for other authors and translators: the 41 reviews refer to 23 novels, 13 authors, and 12 translators. The authors Pelevin, Shishkin, Sorokin, and Akunin are all represented with reviews of two or more novels in this category. Similarly, the translators Hellman, Skott, Rotkirch, Håkanson, Nydahl, and Parkman are represented in this category with reviews of translations of at least two novels. Not surprisingly, 21 of the 23 translations which received this type of translation criticism belong to the highbrow segment. Interestingly, the two translations that belong to the popular segment are historical detective novels by Boris Akunin, written in an elaborate language that imitates an older variety of Russian. They have been classified as belonging to popular literature (see section 2.3), since despite their stylistic features they are marketed as detective fiction.

Among the critics who provided this type of translation criticism, we find Cecilia Nelson, who describes Tolstaya's *Därv* (*The Slynx*) as “an eclectic flow of genres that miraculously feels completely harmonious,” and calls the translation “an elegant and intelligent interpretation.” The elaborate language of a novel is also in focus in a review of Sorokin's *Is* (*Ice*), in which the novel is compared to “an orgy of pastiche.” Still, the critic concludes that the translator has “managed to follow all the drastic turns” (Nykvist). A similar critical statement may be read in a review of Shishkin's *Venushår* (*Maidenhair*): “The translator of this novel, Elin Parkman, seems to follow Mikhail Shishkin's wide turns in an exceptional way” (Löfström).

Åsalill Andersson's review of Sergei Lebedev's *Vid glömskans rand* (*Oblivion*) contains a reason for what she found to be admirable in the translation:

It is clear that Lebedev is a poet; the language makes the reading enjoyable, regardless of the subject. There is almost no dialogue in the novel, and the 345 pages divided into six parts may almost be read as one long poem. It cannot have been easy to translate Lebedev's long, winding sentences full of imagery and shifting atmospheres, but the translator Nils Håkanson has done a praiseworthy job. (Andersson, my translation)

In another review, Jesper Högström expresses appreciation for Shishkin's "poetically precise impressions" in his review of *Brevboken* (*The Light and the Dark*), and finds that they are beautifully communicated in Elin Parkman's "quite physically enjoyable translation." Three critical statements about Ben Hellman's translation of Sorokin's *I det heliga Rysslands tjänst* (*Day of the Oprichnik*) ended up in this category. While one critic concludes that the translator managed to capture the novel's unusual combination of religious rituals and ultramodern information technology (Adolfsson), two other critics seem to agree that Ben Hellman did an exceptional job when translating the novel's poetry (Lindqvist; Sjögren). In his review of another novel by Sorokin, *Tellurien* (*Telluria*), Gregor Flakierski simply concludes that Hellman's translation is "a masterpiece in the higher school of linguistic artistry."

Six reviews particularly praised the translation of intertextual elements in Tatyana Tolstaya's *Därv* (*The Slynx*). When the novel was published in Russia in 2000, it was referred to as being untranslatable by scholars and translators, partly due to its elaborate intertextuality (Podlevskikh Carlström, "The Trials" 1). Skott and Nikolajeva, who translated the novel into Swedish, applied an unusual translation strategy in which a large number of the intertextual references to Russian literature and poetry were recontextualized and replaced by references to Swedish literature (Podlevskikh Carlström, "The Trials" 139). Thus, their strategy clearly deviates from the previously mentioned principle for translations of high prestige literature, which is to say adequacy in relation to the source text. Nonetheless, the use of references to Swedish songs and po-

etry is specifically praised by six critics. For example, Björn Rosdahl praises the translation at length and wonders if the original is as good as the translation:

Staffan Skott and Maria Nikolajeva have achieved a vigorous and stimulating Swedish. Without shame they use Swedish poets instead of Russian and they challenge the Swedish language in order to bring about the slang of the future. It is a sharp text and I—who only know twenty Russian words—wonder if the original is as marvelous. (Rosdahl, my translation)

Sjögren expresses similar feelings in his review of the same novel: “Swedish rhymes and classical verses are stirred into the same pot, and it becomes a playful and sometimes ingenious translation.” Finally, Eva Adolfsson explains that she finds the translators’ decision to use Swedish poetry and lyrics in their translation to be “really successful.”

4.2.2.4 A Swedish with Russian Qualities

The final category is of a more surprising character: three reviews praise the translator for having achieved a Swedish text with Russian qualities. Ingrid Elam describes Hans Björkegren’s translation of Ludmila Ulitskaya’s *Jakobs stege* (*Jacob’s Ladder*) as a great reading experience, something she concludes that the translator is also responsible for. She continues: “He reproduces Ulitskaya’s vivid and captivating style in a way that makes the Swedish seem completely Russian” (Elam). Interestingly, Ulrika Knutsson reviewed the same translation and similarly found that “Hans Björkegren’s rhythmic translation makes the reader think that they have mastered Russian.” The third novel included in this category is Aleksei Kozyrev’s *Minus en* (“A Comma in the Pocket, or Minus One”), a translation that was praised at length:

I have now read a book at a stretch. This does not only depend on the fact that it is a short novel of only about 100 pages and that I have a chicken in the oven and walking clothes in the machine. It is simply a well delivered story and an enjoyable translation. I emphasize the last

bit without having had the possibility of reading the original. There is a Russian flow to Lina Petersson's Swedish text. (Nilsson, my translation)

As indicated by the above citation, Nilsson's critical statement contains both a reservation (he has not read the source text), a positive assessment (an enjoyable translation), and an explanation as to why he found it to be good (it has a Russian flow).

5 Critical patterns

At the beginning of section 4 (above), I concluded that translation criticism is more common in reviews of highbrow literature. Now it is time to return to the other three sub-questions dealing with other types of patterns in the material, namely whether translation criticism turned out to be more common in reviews of particular authors, translators, or critics. However, after noting that no clear patterns could be discerned in relation to the source text author, I instead performed an additional analysis based on individual novels.

5.1 Patterns related to the translators

As indicated in Table 4 below, 16 out of 26 translators received reviews containing positive translation criticism. Moreover, the table reveals that the translators who have the highest number of total reviews also have the highest number of reviews with positive translation criticism. However, there is no clear link between the number of total reviews (which might indicate the reputation or fame of the source text author) and the share of reviews containing positive translation criticism.

Table 4. Number of reviews and share of positive reviews per translator

Translator	Translated works*	Authors translated*	Total reviews	Reviews with positive TC	Share of reviews containing positive TC
Ben Hellman	7	2	96	16	17%
Kristina Rotkirch	7	4	47	14	30%
Staffan Skott ¹³	2	2	21	13	62%
Nils Håkanson	6	6	36	13	36%
Hans Björkegren	3	2	21	6	29%
Kajsa Öberg Lindsten	1	1	17	6	35%
Ola Wallin	6	3	32	6	19%
Johanna Lindblad	2	2	18	6	33%
Mikael Nydahl	3	3	12	5	42%
Karin Lidén	2	2	11	4	36%
Elin Parkman	3	2	18	5	28%
Ylva Mörk	3	1	15	3	20%
Lina Peterson	1	1	3	2	67%
Barbara Lönnqvist	1	1	6	2	33%
Janina Orlov	1	1	7	2	29%
Irina Voltjanskaja	1	1	14	1	7%

All 99 instances of positive translation criticism have been included in this table. The abbreviation TC refers to translation criticism. * Refers to authors and translators in this corpus.

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13 *Därv (The Slynx)* by Tatiana Tolstaya was translated together with Maria Nikolajeva.

For example, the three novels translated by Mikael Nydahl received 12 reviews altogether. Two of Nydahl's titles—*Den levande* (*The Living*) by Anna Starobinets and *Zulejcha öppnar ögonen* (*Zuleikha*) by Guzel Yakhina—were written by previously untranslated authors. Nydahl's third title, *Erövringen av Izmail* ("Taking Izmail") by Mikhail Shishkin, was the author's third novel published in Swedish translation, but still—possibly due to the demanding nature of the text—it only has five reviews in the corpus. Despite a low number of reviews, Nydahl's share of positive reviews equals 42%. Similarly, Nils Håkanson is responsible for translating novels by Andrey Volos, Anatoly Krym, Roman Senchin, Sergei Lebedev, Maria Stepanova, and Olga Lavrentieva—authors represented with one translation each on the Swedish book market. Nonetheless, Håkanson's share of reviews containing positive translation criticism is 36%. These numbers may be compared with Ben Hellman's, who is responsible for all Swedish translations of Vladimir Sorokin's novels as well as one novel by Viktor Pelevin. As previously mentioned, Sorokin's politically charged novels, in combination with his reputation as the bad boy of Russian literature, constantly grants him a high number of reviews in the Swedish press. Hellman's translations have a total of 96 reviews included in the corpus, but still, the amount of positive translation criticism is only 17%. Yet one translator stands out in the above table, namely Staffan Skott, whose share of positive reviews is as high as 62%. The reason for his high share will be further explored in Table 5.

5.2 Patterns Related to Individual Novels

After clarifying that no patterns could be discerned when it comes to source text author, an additional analysis based on individual novels was performed. Table 5 illustrates the share of reviews containing positive translation criticism per novel, and includes all novels with ten or more reviews in the corpus, as well as all novels with a share of positive translation criticism above 40%. As shown in Table 5, there is no relationship between the total number of reviews in the corpus, and a high percentage of positive translation criticism. Furthermore, all novels in Table 5 belong to high prestige literature. That is, appraisal for certain novels does not seem to be random.

Table 5. Share of reviews containing positive translation criticism per novel

Title	Author	Translator	Reviews in corpus	Number and percent of reviews containing positive TC
<i>I det heliga Rysslands tjänst (The Day of the Oprichnik)</i>	V. Sorokin	B. Hellman	22	5 (23%)
<i>Snöstormen (The Blizzard)</i>	V. Sorokin	B. Hellman	21	1 (5%)
<i>Tiden second hand (Second Hand Time)</i>	S. Alexievich	K. Öberg Lindsten	17	6 (35%)
<i>Tellurien (Telluria)</i>	V. Sorokin	B. Hellman	16	3 (19%)
<i>Fältstudier i ukrainskt sex (Fieldwork in Ukrainian Sex)</i>	O. Zabuzhko	I. Voltjanskaja	14	1 (7%)
<i>Därv (The Slynx)</i>	T. Tolstaya	S. Skott, M. Nikolajeva	13	11 (85%)
<i>Is (Ice)</i>	V. Sorokin	B. Hellman	12	2 (17%)
<i>2017 (2017)</i>	O. Slavnikova	M. Grigoriev, M. Nydahl	11	0 (0%)
<i>Blått fett (Blue Lard)</i>	V. Sorokin	B. Hellman	10	2 (20%)
<i>Leviathan (Murder on the Leviathan)</i>	B. Akunin	K. Rotkirch	10	2 (20%)
<i>Dagar i Alchanjurt (One Soldiers War)</i>	A. Babchenko	O. Wallin	10	2 (20%)
<i>Manaraga: Mästerkockens dagbok ("Manaraga")</i>	V. Sorokin	B. Hellman	10	1 (10%)

Title	Author	Translator	Reviews in corpus	Number and percent of reviews containing positive TC
<i>Minnen av minnet (In Memory of Memory)</i>	M. Stepanova	N. Håkanson	10	5 (20%)
<i>Sonetjka (Sonechka)</i>	L. Ulitskaya	K. Rotkirch	9	5 (56%)
<i>Moskva, jag älskar dig inte</i> (“Moscow, I Don’t Love You”)	S. Minaev	J. Lindblad	9	4 (45%)
<i>En munter begravning (The Funeral Party)</i>	L. Ulitskaya	K. Rotkirch	8	4 (50%)
<i>Jakobs steg (Jacob’s Ladder)</i>	L. Ulitskaya	H. Björkegren	8	4 (50%)
<i>Laurus (Laurus)</i>	E. Vodolazkin	K. Lidén	5	2 (40%)
<i>Erövringen av Izmail</i> (“Taking Izmail”)	M. Shishkin	M. Nydahl	5	2 (40%)
<i>Minus en</i> (“A Comma in the Pocket, or Minus One”)	A. Kozyrev	L. Petersson	3	2 (67%)
<i>Zulejcha öppnar ögonen (Zuleikha)</i>	G. Yakhina	M. Nydahl	3	2 (67%)

Därv (The Slynx) by Tatyana Tolstaya—for which Skott and Nikolajeva received a share of positive reviews of 85%—stands out. Clearly, an inventive language in combination with an unusual translation strategy for high prestige literature—the recontextualization of intertextual references—has triggered the critics to react to the translation.

5.3 Patterns Related to the Critics

244 critics have together written the 430 reviews included in the corpus. This means that each critic on average contributed 1.8 reviews. 162 critics only have one review included in the corpus, while 15 critics are responsible for five or more reviews. The critic responsible for the most reviews is Fabian Kastner (9 reviews), followed by Jonas Thente (8) and Eva Adolfsson (8).

The 112 reviews containing critical statements are divided between 80 critics, and only 15 critics have more than one review containing translation criticism included in the corpus. These 15 critics are further explored in Table 6.

Table 6. Critics who write more than one review containing translation criticism

Critic	Reviews in corpus	Reviews with CS No. (%)	Positive (+) (stereotyped/explanatory)	Negative (-)	+/-	Authors/translators reviewed
Eva Adolfsson	8	8 (100%)	8 (5/3)			8/6
Inga-Lina Lindqvist	6	5 (83%)	3 (0/3)	2		4/5
Gabriella Håkansson	6	4 (67%)	4 (1/3)			4/4
Erik Bergqvist	3	3 (100%)	3 (2/1)			1/1
Ingrid Elam	4	3 (75%)	3 (0/3)			3/3
Aris Fioretos	3	3 (100%)	3 (3/0)			3/3
Sture Nilsson	3	3 (100%)	1 (0/1)		2	2/3
Kaj Schueler	3	3 (100%)	2 (1/1)		1	3/3

Critic	Reviews in corpus	Reviews with CS No. (%)	Positive (+) (stereotyped/explanatory)	Negative (-)	+/-	Authors/translators reviewed
Örjan Abrahams-son Åsalill Andersson	4	2 (50%)	2 (0/2)			2/2
David Isaksson	7	2 (29%)	2 (1/1)			2/2
Björn Löfström	6	2 (33%)	1 (0/1)	1		2/2
Kristina Lundblad	3	2 (66%)	2 (1/1)			2/2
Karin Lundqvist	2	2 (100%)	2 (0/2)			2/1
Magnus Östnäs	3	2 (66%)	2 (1/1)			2/2
Dan Sjögren	7	2 (29%)	2 (0/2)			2/2

Table 6 contains both positive (+) and negative (-) critical statements (CS).

The table above reveals that a few critics are more inclined to include translation criticism in their reviews than others. The most striking example is Eva Adolfsson, who has eight reviews in the corpus, all of which contain translation criticism. However, as illustrated in Table 6, Adolfsson's reviews contain both stereotyped (5) and explanatory (3) statements, and her reviews provide positive translation criticism for eight different authors and six different translators. That is, even though Adolfsson notices and mentions the translation to a higher degree, the praise does not seem to be standardized. Likewise, a high percentage of Inga-Lina Lindqvist's and Gabriella Håkansson's reviews contain translation criticism, but in these cases too, the critical statements belong to different categories and acclaim different authors and translators. One critic

that does stand out in the above illustration is Erik Bergqvist, whose three reviews in the corpus all contain critical statements aimed at the same author and translator.

When it comes to specific types of critical statements, Sture Nilsson is interesting. He is responsible for two of the four reviews in the corpus that contain both positive and negative statements. In both these reviews he makes remarks regarding word knowledge skills or grammatical errors, but concludes that the translation is otherwise “fine.”

One might argue that the critics’ professional background is an important aspect to consider in relation to translation criticism, especially since the four critics with the highest numbers of reviews in Table 6 are authors themselves. However, the corpus also includes several critics who are authors and/or translators and who did not provide translation criticism in their reviews. One example is Fabian Kastner, responsible for nine reviews in the corpus, of which none contained translation criticism.

In the next section, the results presented in this section will be related to the results of sections 3 (Visibility and Media Attention) and 4 (Translation Criticism) in order to draw general conclusions regarding the mechanisms behind translation criticism in Sweden.

6 Conclusions

Against the backdrop of an ongoing cultural debate related to the poor state of Swedish translation criticism (see section 2.1), I have analyzed translation visibility and translation criticism based on a corpus of reviews of post-Soviet novels published in Swedish translation. The investigation has revealed certain patterns in relation to translation visibility and translation criticism.

To begin with, novels pertaining to highbrow literature and authors who write such literature are more visible in the Swedish literary system. Highbrow novels not only receive more attention in Swedish media, they also receive more reviews containing translation criticism. Furthermore, the Swedish media particularly favors oppositional authors who either satirize or openly criticize the current Russian political system. As noted by Håkanson (*Fönstret mot öster*

148), the Swedish selection of Russian literature for translation has been politicized since the late 19th century, and I find the same tendency to be valid also in relation to translation visibility.

Another aspect related to translation visibility is the mentioning of the translator's name in the review. In fact, stating the name of the author or copyright holder of a work when reviewing it for the public is obligatory according to the Swedish Act of Copyright in Literary and Artistic Works, (URL 1960:729, § 3). The same act also states that "a person who has translated or adapted a work, or converted it into another literary or artistic form, shall hold copyright of the work in the new form" (§ 4), which means that the name of the translator has to be included in reviews of translations. However, 11% of the reviews in my corpus failed to do this, which is far more than Gullin found for the two latest years (1989 and 1995) of her previously discussed investigation (175). This difference may be explained by the fact that Gullin's analysis only included the four major newspapers *Arbetet*, *Dagens Nyheter*, *Sydsvenska Dagbladet*, and *Svenska Dagbladet*, while my investigation has a more holistic approach and also includes minor newspapers and other general media sources. An analysis of the same four newspapers based on my corpus resulted in only one review that does not indicate the name of the translator, namely a review in *Dagens Nyheter* of Nik Perumov's *Nekromantikerns födelse (Birth of the Mage)* (Geijerstam), a fantasy novel belonging to the popular literary segment.

Another way in which critics may promote the visibility of translation in the literary system is by discussing and assessing the translation in the review. However, only 115 (26%) of the 430 reviews in my corpus contain translation criticism. A few results related to translation criticism are especially interesting. Firstly, the amount of negative criticism turned out to be very small in my corpus of reviews of post-Soviet literature. In total, 14 negative critical statements were identified and of these only five were aimed at the translator. While three of these focus on Swedish grammar, two focus on the transfer from source to target text, and on particular words that the critic finds to be translated in the wrong way. The previously discussed British and French investigations of translation criticism in reviews reported a high degree of frankness in negative criticism. My corpus rather indicates the opposite: critics seem to be reluctant to point their fingers at the translator, and prefer to express uncertainty regard-

ing who is to blame for flaws in the text, or to balance negative criticism with positive statements. It is possible that the small amount of negative criticism is a result of the focus on reviews of translations from Russian, a language with few speakers in Sweden. Naturally, it is easier to identify supposed errors in a translation if the source text is written in a language one can understand.

The results of the thematic analysis of critical statements, as well as the analysis of patterns related to individual novels, critics, and translators, suggest that the literary translation criticism available today in Swedish general media is not random. Positive translation criticism clusters around stylistically and linguistically challenging source texts pertaining to highbrow literature, and the translators responsible for translating such texts. This means that demanding texts with elaborate stylistic and linguistic features seem to trigger the critic to mention the translation in a review. Interestingly, Gullin's investigation from 2002 resulted in far more stereotyped than explanatory statements, while my investigation instead identified 61 positive explanatory statements, compared to 37 positive stereotypical statements. Gullin noted that the amount of stereotyped statements seemed to decrease over time, something she related to the already ongoing debate of translation criticism in reviews. Thus, my investigation confirms Gullin's findings and suggests that the use of stereotyped critical statements in literary reviews is slowly declining.

Still, it is necessary to point out that none of the reviews included in my corpus would pass the test if compared to the suggested models for literary translation criticism. Even the statements that I have categorized as explanatory lack the type of reasoning and comparison between source and target texts that translators and TS scholars would like literary reviews to contain. The question is, therefore, whether it is at all realistic to expect this type of translation criticism in literary reviews published in general media sources.

In relation to the above, it is relevant to consider the fact that the critic is a figure of authority who functions as a gatekeeper in the literary system. As concluded in section 3.2., most reviews do signal that the reviewed work is a translation, which indicates a high degree of translation visibility. However, I would argue that this is rather a *pseudo-visibility*, since the mere mentioning of a translator's name (as required by law) does not give any insights into what a translator does or what the process of translation entails. Additionally, if the

critic does mention the translation, they generally express more or less reasoned speculations about the relationship between the source and target texts. Consequently, contemporary translation criticism in literary reviews published in general media sources reproduce and confirm the low status of translation and translators in the Swedish literary system.

Finally, in relation to the ongoing Swedish debate between critics and translators (section 2.1), it seems as if the two groups have different understandings of what literary translation criticism is and should be. Translators and scholars seem to want translation criticism to be dynamic and pay attention to the creative effort and the transfer from source to target text. However, what the critics in most cases provide is a static assessment of the translation as a target culture fact, that is to say as a product on the Swedish book market.

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