

# Self-translating: Linking Languages, Literary Traditions and Cultural Spheres

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*Self-translation, which is when an author translates his or her own texts and the outcome is two (or more) distinct works speaking to two (or more) different audiences, provides a useful insight into transnationalism and border-crossings, which are phenomena that operate outside the national, monolingual paradigm. Self-translation is regarded as a kind of border-zone activity that reorganises the relationships between languages and literary traditions, challenging the monolingual assumptions of the literary institution and literary history writing, which have been important in the construction of the modern nation-state. This is also the case in Finland where the literary institution and traditions have been defined by language despite the fact that Finland has two official languages, Finnish and Swedish.*

*By looking more closely at the self-translations of two Finnish authors, Kersti Bergroth (1886–1975) and Henrik Tikkanen (1924–1984), and the strategies that are used in their texts in order to engage simultaneously in two languages, cultural spheres, and literary traditions, I discuss self-translation as an interpretive task that attempts to negotiate complex cultural equations that are subject to the changing fortunes of time and place. The analysis focuses on texts by Bergroth and Tikkanen that depict war, on their intersections and overlaps, showing that self-translations link Finnish and Swedish-speaking language groups and literary traditions.*

The following reflections and thoughts by Henrik Tikkanen (1924–1984), a prolific Finnish author and illustrator, who wrote and published both in Swedish and Finnish, provide valuable information about the individual motifs, choices, and practices of linguistic border crossings from the author's point of view.

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. . . tekstin sävy on ruotsiksi erilainen kuin suomeksi. Se ei johdu yksinomaan teknisistä seikoista vaan siitä, että kirjoittaessani suomeksi kirjoitan suomalaisille ja kirjoittaessani ruotsiksi kirjoitan ruotsinkielisille. . . Sillä samat asiat on sanottava eri tavalla suomenkielisille ja ruotsinkielisille, jotta sanoma olisi sama, toisin sanoen jotta sanoilla olisi sama vaikutus molempiin ryhmiin. Kirjoittaessani esimerkiksi Helsinki-kirjaani tuli suomenkielisestä laitoksesta nelisenkymmentä sivua laajempi kuin ruotsinkielisestä. (Tikkanen 1978, 76.)

. . . the tone of the text is different in Swedish than in Finnish. This does not only stem from technicalities, but also from the fact that when I write in Finnish, I write for Finnish-speaking people and when I write in Swedish I write for Swedish-speaking people . . . as the same things must be expressed differently to Finnish-speaking people, compared to Swedish-speaking people in order for the message to be the same; in other words, in order for the words to have the same effect on both groups. For example, when I wrote my Helsinki book, the Finnish version became 40 pages longer than the Swedish one.<sup>1</sup>

At the end of the quotation, Tikkanen refers to his work *Mitt Helsingfors/Minun Helsingini* (1972), in which he, in a combination of drawings and texts, captures views of a past, and partly already lost, Helsinki in his original style. He offers his Swedish- and Finnish-language audiences different texts on the same topic. This kind of information, which reveals personal views of writing, translation and, in particular, self-translation, is interesting: how do author-translators, who often live and work in two (or more) languages and cultures, or who do not necessarily sharply distinguish between the languages and cultures, or give priority to one over the other, cope with writing in their different languages? However, instead of only emphasising the creative role of the author, it is also important to pay attention to the collective aspects of the phenomenon, not least to its effects for the conceptualisation of literature, literary history and nationality.

Self-translation has been addressed to some extent in research dealing with migrant and diasporic writing (e.g. Seyhan 2001) as well as minority studies (e.g. Hirvonen 2011), although, in general, the subject has received far more attention within translation

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1 Unless otherwise indicated, the translations are my own.

studies than literary studies.<sup>2</sup> In the following, my aim is to bring the discussion about self-translation more closely into the field of literary studies. The focus here is on the cultural and historical perspectives of the phenomenon in Finnish literature and especially on the strategies that are used in the “twin-texts” of self-translators in order to engage simultaneously in two languages, cultural spheres, literatures and literary traditions. Self-translation is regarded as a kind of border-zone activity that reorganises relationships between languages and literary traditions and challenges monolingual assumptions of the literary institution and literary history writing.<sup>3</sup>

### **Self-translation: Amidst overlaps and intersections**

In recent years, ideas of fixed entities such as nation-states as well as homogeneous national histories and national cultures have been widely challenged in various disciplines across the humanities and social sciences. Instead of viewing nations as territorially or ethnically bounded, scholars have focused on different kinds of cross-border relations between nations, their histories, languages and traditions (see e.g. Amelina *et al.* 2012, 2–19). “Transnational studies” or “cross-border studies” are terms that have been widely used to deal with the interwoven relationships between nations and cultures. Yet, the focus on transnational dimensions should not lead to a disregard of the internal and local hierarchies of power. On the contrary, one of the methodological challenges of transnational and cross-border studies is to seek to explore the relationship between global and local cultural dynamics (see Amelina *et al.* 2012, 6). Self-translation, in which an author translates his or her own texts and the outcome is two (or more) distinct versions with overlapping content, speaking to two (or more) different audiences (e.g. Kellman 2000, 32–33; Hokenson & Munson 2007, 12–14; Zanotti 2011, 84), provides a useful insight into these phenomena, which operate outside traditional modes of conceptualisation of nations, literature and national literary canons. It is an activity that draws attention to cross-language constellations that take place within national borders

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2 Translation studies have examined, for example, the connections between language, translation and authorship (Fitch 1988; Boyden 2013; Buffagni *et al.* 2011), as well as the history of self-translation (Hokenson & Munson 2007).

3 Terms such as ‘contact-zone’ or ‘border-zone’ were developed and applied within post-colonial studies, border studies, and studies making use of the term transnationalism (see e.g. Simon 1998; Seyhan 2001; Jay 2010) have often been applied in discussions of spaces where languages and cultural categories overlap and intertwine with each other.

at the same time as it encompasses aspects of transcending the limits of nation-centred thinking. It can be seen as an effort to overcome the idea of linguistic purity, which has been and still is important – if not fundamental – to modern nation-states, cultures, disciplines, institutions and individuals, albeit that not all nation-states possess only a single language.

As language has been such an important element of nation-building, self-translation – or other phenomena of multilingualism that challenge the idea of linguistic purity – has not been in favour or given priority within national history and its monolingual framework (also Hokenson & Munson 2007, 8). The assumption of an individual possessing one language, a “mother tongue”, through which he or she is organically linked to a particular ethnicity, culture and nation, has been and still is deeply rooted in the idea of the modern nation. As the word “mother” in “mother tongue” has strong associations with a maternal origin, an affective and corporeal intimacy, and natural kinship, the whole constellation of a “mother language” is highly emotionally charged (Yildiz 2012, 10–14). Yet, as Yasemin Yildiz (Ibid.) expresses it, monolingualism is not only a quantitative term designating the presence of just one language: it constitutes an important structuring principle, a monolingual paradigm, which organises individuals and social life. This is also the case in Finland, where, in spite of the fact that Finland is a bilingual country with Finnish and Swedish as the official languages, the division of the literary and cultural field into separate literary institutions and traditions defined by language has been taking place since the end of the 19th century, when Finnish also became a language of administration and education along with Swedish.<sup>4</sup>

Even today, when looking at Finnish literary histories, it is difficult to find even brief references to self-translation or other phenomena related to multilingualism. In the case of Henrik Tikkanen, it is not easy to decide which of his novels, children’s books or travel books were rewritten or translated into another language by Tikkanen himself. He wrote and published most of his works in Swedish. For example, the Swedish-language literary history *Finlands svenska litteraturhistoria* (2000), in which Tikkanen’s authorship is thoroughly discussed, highlights this very aspect of his career, whereas his moves between the Finnish and Swedish language literary fields do not get any attention at all. In the most recent Finnish language literary history *Suomen kirjallisuushistoria* (1999), he is introduced in two contexts: in war literature and confessional literature. In contrast to Swedish-language literary history, the language question is dealt with at length, as it is mentioned that due to his provocative style and public TV debates in the 1970s, he also became known among the Finnish-speaking population. Thus, he

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4 For a brief overview of Finland’s past and present linguistic situation, see Salo (2012, 26–28).

cannot be regarded only as a part of Finland-Swedish literature. What is not mentioned, however, is that Tikkanen wrote his best-known war novel *Unohdettu sotilas* (1974) not only in Finnish but also, later on, in Swedish.<sup>5</sup>

Although Finnish literary histories seem to experience difficulties in dealing with phenomena in which languages and cultural categories intertwine with and overlap each other, there are a few scholars who have considered Tikkanen's bilingualism and works in the Finnish language to be important (Schoolfield 1987; Alhoniemi 1987 and 1995). George C. Schoolfield (1987, 136) even positions Tikkanen's drawings in the context of language issues, when he writes, appositely, that they "cut straight across language boundaries."<sup>6</sup> In the most recent work on Henrik Tikkanen's authorship, the biography or essayistic biography *Tikkanens blick* (2012; Tikkanen's gaze) by Johan Wrede, one important thread running through the whole work is Tikkanen's bilingualism and his ability to reach a broad audience outside the Finland-Swedish literary sphere, where he has usually been placed. His works found a wide readership not only in Finland, but also in Sweden. By calling attention to Henrik Tikkanen's self-translations and the phenomenon of self-translating, the linguistic and cultural diversity of Finland can be grasped in even greater detail.

In this article, I will deal with two Finnish writers: the above-mentioned Henrik Tikkanen, as well as Kersti Bergroth (1886–1975), who was, like Tikkanen, enormously productive as a writer. She published, among other things, more than 70 volumes of novels, poems, plays, memoirs and essays in Swedish, Finnish and German. In contrast to Tikkanen, for whom switching between Finnish and Swedish or working with them in parallel was already characteristic at an early stage of his career, Bergroth began her career as a Swedish-language author in the early 20th century. At the beginning of the 1920s, however, she changed the language of her writing to Finnish. Nevertheless, her

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5 Another illustrative example is Hella Wuolijoki (1884–1954), a well-known and respected playwright who is best-known for her Niskavuori plays, which she began to write in the 1930s in Finnish. Although it is widely known that Wuolijoki was Estonian-born, *Suomen kirjallisuushistoria* (1999) does not say a word about the works she wrote in Estonian or in both Estonian and Finnish, as if these were insignificant to her authorship and would reduce her importance as a Finnish writer.

6 Tikkanen's witty aphorisms, published in both Swedish- and Finnish-language newspapers, in which he combined a simplified drawing with a short text, were especially popular among Finns, regardless of their native language. Pirkko Alhoniemi (1987, 37–49; 1995, 94–120), who in her analyses of *Unohdettu sotilas* also mentions its Swedish-language version, *30-åriga kriget*, discusses these two novels and their follow-ups, not as two different versions of the same text, but as a sequel. She calls them a long-lasting "Käppärä process" referring to the protagonist Vihtori/Viktor Käppärä, who binds together the works *Unohdettu sotilas* (1974), *30-åriga kriget* (1977), *Efter hjältedöden* (1979) and *Viimeinen sankari* (1979).

language shift was not absolute, as she wrote and published children's literature both in Swedish and Finnish, translating the texts herself.<sup>7</sup>

Kersti Bergroth and Henrik Tikkanen belong to different generations, and they wrote in different genres, but in spite of this there is a common denominator in their self-translations: they both wrote about war. Kersti Bergroth's *Nuoren lotan päiväkirja/ En ung lottas dagbok* (1940; 'The Diary of a Young Lotta'<sup>8</sup>) is a war-novel about the Finnish Winter War (1939–40). It appeared both in Finland and Sweden first in Finnish and then in Swedish only a couple of months after the war had ended. Henrik Tikkanen, for his part, takes issue with the Continuation War (1941–44). In contrast to Bergroth's book, however, his Finnish language novel *Unohdettu sotilas* ('*The Forgotten Soldier*') was written and published in 1974; that is, long after the war had finished. The Swedish version, *30-åriga kriget* (*The 30 Years' War*), was published three years later, in 1977, both in Finland and Sweden.

The fact that both Bergroth and Tikkanen found it important to address both Finnish- and Swedish-speaking readers with their depictions of war serves as an important starting point for my analysis. War seems to be a theme that needs to be discussed in contexts where language borders and strict cultural categories are crossed. Bergroth and Tikkanen are not the only self-translators who have dealt with this theme. For example, Elmer Diktonius, an early modernist, wrote about the Finnish civil war first in Swedish (*Janne Kubik* 1932) and then some time later in Finnish (*Janne Kuutio* 1948).<sup>9</sup> Therefore, in twin-texts, the attention shifts not only to spaces where languages and cultural categories overlap and intertwine with each other, but also to the complex cultural equations and questions of national belonging (also Seyhan 2001, 9–10).

An awareness of the specific cultural and linguistic differences and similarities is, of course, required of all translators. The choices the translator makes have an effect on the

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7 According to Bergroth, she wrote her children's books, the "Mary Marck books", in Swedish and then translated them into Finnish, with one exception. She was not at all satisfied with the language of the Finnish versions, however, as, in her opinion, the idioms were not as "soulful" and "incisive" as their counterparts in the Swedish texts (see Grönstrand 2011a and b). Stylistically, these books bear a great resemblance with, for example, the Katy books by Susan Coolidge. Before publishing her first children's books, Kersti Bergroth translated Coolidge's novel *What Katy Did at School* (1873) from English into Finnish.

8 The term "lotta" in the title refers to Lotta Svärd, the name of the voluntary paramilitary organisation for women, whose members were called "lottas". They worked in different tasks both at the front and at home during the Winter War and the Continuation War.

9 Unlike Diktonius, Bergroth and Tikkanen do not, for example, mix different languages within a single text. Diktonius however uses not only Finnish and Swedish, but also English and Russian in his novels. Julia Tidigs (2008, 685–692) analyses, in detail, the multilingualism of Janne Kubik, but a thorough research where both versions are discussed is still missing.

text and its readers, and there are various translation strategies. Instead of corresponding perfectly with the “original” text, translation establishes a new inscription and, with it, the possibility of a new interpretation (e.g. Bermann 2005, 6). On the one hand, translations bridge languages, cultures and nations, but, on the other hand, they also point to the disparities among states, nations and local traditions, revealing disunity and dissension in the shadow of apparent unity, as Sandra Bermann (2005, 2) puts it. In her reflections on translation, Bermann (2005, 6–7) particularly emphasises the ethical aspects of the task of the translator which involves, among other things, the ability to take into account the context of each language, its intertexts and intrinsic alterity. These kinds of perspectives also open up interesting opportunities for the works by the author-translators, who are responsible for texts which do not necessarily follow the traditional division into an “original” or “source” text, and a “target text” or translation.

The idea of a static “original text” and its translation, which indicates a dichotomy, and often also a hierarchy, between the two texts and between the author/translator, as well, has been criticised for some time within translation studies. The critics emphasise, for example, that the two texts produced possess equal artistic value, and that translation should be understood as a creative rather than a re-creative activity (see e.g. Buffagni 2011, 17; Zanotti 2011, 79). The relationship between the two poles is further complicated when the translator and author are one and the same person (also Zanotti 2011, 84). For example Jan Walsh Hokenson and Marcella Munson (2007, 9) state that the terms ‘equality’, ‘commensurability’ and ‘equivalence’, which are often used in measuring the quality of a translation, are nowhere as problematic as in this kind of case. Sometimes the deviations between the two texts are so great, for instance, that they raise the question of whether the two versions should be considered as totally different works. Yet the similarities might be so prominent that neither can be called autonomous creations. When analysing self-translations, there is a risk that the result is a description of the differences between the two versions. However, instead of looking at the “gaps” between texts, languages and cultures, it is more important to focus on the common core of the two versions of the same text, the intersections and overlaps between them, and how they are engaged in several cultures simultaneously (Ibid. 2007, 4–12).

## Focus on the cornerstone of common Finnish culture

The two versions of Kersti Bergroth's *Nuoren lotan päiväkirja / Ung lottas dagbok* were offered to young Finnish- and Swedish-speaking readers almost simultaneously, during the second half 1940. The Finnish version came out first, but this cannot by any means be regarded as clear evidence that it had been written before the Swedish language text. Similarly to her previous parallel texts, the stories take place in a milieu that is represented in a surprisingly monolingual fashion. The character and place names are Finnish in the Finnish-language version and Swedish in the Swedish-language version. The characters in *Nuoren lotan päiväkirja* have Finnish language names such as Orvokki, Misse Ahola, Eira, Siiri, Reijonen and Hannes Aramo, while in *Ung lottas dagbok* there is a greater variation. Judging by their names, the characters seem to be either Finnish or Swedish speakers. The reader comes across characters with names like Viola, Misse Ahola, Eira, Siri, Reijonen and Hans Arming, names that reflect everyday life at the war hospital where the events are taking place. The wounded soldiers and evacuees from the front, who are being taken care of by the nurses, all come from different parts of Finland. However, despite these kinds of adaptations, similarities between the texts predominate as if there was no need to make a difference between the language groups. The two texts are easily comparable, beginning with the title which is identical.

The protagonist and narrator in *Nuoren lotan päiväkirja* and *Ung lottas dagbok* is Telma, a name that can be understood as either Finnish or Swedish, and thus needs no adaptation in order to function in both Finnish- and Swedish-language contexts. Moreover, in both versions, the central figures of mid-19th century Finnish culture and literature – Lönnrot, Topelius and Runeberg – are of importance, as they serve as markers of the kind of Finnish culture that is regarded as common to everyone regardless of language and class: it is evident that Lönnrot, Runeberg and Snellman are called upon in order to emphasise the unity of the Finns and to evoke feelings of patriotism.

In spite of the patriotism that runs through the whole story, however, there is also room for hesitation towards the classic texts and their ability to speak to Telma, who keeps a diary where she records her thoughts, feelings and reflections during the war. In the beginning of the novel, on 5 February 1940, which is the day when the national poet of Finland, J. L. Runeberg, is celebrated, she writes:

Mutta en voi ymmärtää mitään, kun luen Runebergiä. Kaikki ne rakkaat runot näyttävät vaan paperilta. Olenko minä tosiaankin pieni ihminen, kun en voi unohtaa itseäni ja



omaa kohtaloani, niinkuin Vänrikki Stoolin sankarit osasivat ja niinkuin pilven veikon morsian<sup>10</sup> ja torpan tyttö osasivat? Enkö minä ole Lotta Svärd, joka kestää ja kantaa? (Bergroth 1940a, 35.)

Men jag förstår ingenting av Runeberg när jag läser. Alla de kära dikterna ser ut som bara papper. Är jag faktiskt en liten människa då jag inte kan glömma mig själv och mitt eget öde, liksom hjältarna i Fänrik Stål glömde sitt och liksom torpflickan glömde sitt? Är jag inte Lotta Svärd, som kan bära och fördra? (Bergroth 1940b, 43.)

But I do not understand anything when I read Runeberg. All the beloved poems look like paper. Am I really a small-minded human being as I am not able to forget myself and my own destiny as did the heroes of Ensign Stål and the bride of the Cloud's brother and the girl of the cottage? Am I not Lotta Svärd, who endures and bears her cross?

There is no doubt about the fact that Telma is familiar with Runeberg and his works. She makes precise references to particular poems in *Fänriks Ståls sägner* (1848; *The Tales of Ensign Stål*) and the well-known female figures portrayed in them. She brings out her love for them, and she is also well aware that these poems, which deal with the Russian-Swedish War (1808–09), are supposed to function as important role models in times of war. In the 1940s, Runeberg was still very influential both within the Finnish and Swedish cultural circles of Finland. For example, the entire Lotta Svärd organisation, as a voluntary organisation for those women who wanted to work in different tasks at the front and at home during the war, was named after one character of one of Runeberg's poem. But as the poems suddenly seem to have lost their effect, the contradiction between Telma's inner, private feelings and her sense of collective duty is represented in a somewhat dramatic way. However, this kind of self-scrutiny can also be regarded as an integral part of the genre's conventions as *Nuoren lotan päiväkirja/En ung lottas dagbok* is a diary novel. The diary form gives a strong impression of authenticity and immediacy; the entries follow upon each other, frequently documenting not only the intense course of the war's events and the feelings on the home front, but also reflections on the diary keeper's own personality and her personal relationships. Moreover, with its young and colourful narrator-protagonist, *Nuoren lotan päiväkirja/En ung lottas*

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<sup>10</sup> The reference to the poem "Pilven veikon morsian"/"Molnets broder" is missing from the Swedish version.

dagbok may also be regarded as a book for young readers, being specifically addressed to girls.

Kersti Bergroth's earlier twin-texts, which were popular, warm-hearted school stories for girls, became acknowledged for their patriotic spirit, amongst other things, and for being models of an exemplary way of life (Grönstrand 2011a, 86). The same kind of atmosphere can also be found in *Nuoren lotan päiväkirja / En ung lottas dagbok*. Collective experiences gain in importance especially when it becomes obvious that Finland will lose important battles. In her entry of 5 March 1940, Telma writes about the loss of Vyborg, which was the second biggest city of Finland and situated near the Russian (Soviet) border, in the following way:

Viipurista taistellaan. Annetaanko se? . . . Me istuimme kaikki aivan hiljaa radion ympärillä. Me tiesimme, että koko Suomi istui sillä tavalla, tuntien yhteisen suruun ja yhteisen, yhä korkeammalle nousevan rakkauden. (Bergroth 1940a, 107; emphasis HG.)

Nu pågår kampen om Viborg. Måste vi uppge det? . . . Vi satt alla alldeles tysta omkring radion. Vi visste att hela Finland satt på det sättet, att hela Finland kände den gemensamma sorgen och den gemensamma allt större kärleken. (Bergroth 1940b, 125; emphasis HG.)

The battle of Vyborg is being fought. Will we lose it? . . . We were all sitting completely silent at the radio. We knew that all of Finland was sitting like we were, that all of Finland felt the shared sorrow and the shared, ever increasing love. (emphasis HG.)

Instead of reflecting on her own private self, Telma emphasises the people at the hospital that form the entity of the collective “we”. This “we”, in turn, is presented as part of a much larger group, that of “all Finns”, who all identify themselves as one. The references to the canonical texts have the same kind of function: to stress the collectivity and unity of the nation. One night when the nurses and patients gather together to discuss the true meaning of the idea of Finnishness, they characterise it by making references to a song by Topelius, “Kesäpäivä kangasalla”/ “En sommardag i Kangasala” (‘A summer’s day in Kangasala’), a section from the *Kalevala*, and to Runeberg’s most famous epic poem, *Fänriks Ståls sägner* (*The Tales of Ensign Stål*). The fact that the national epic *Kalevala*, compiled by Lönnrot, is based on Finnish-language folklore, whereas *Fänriks Stål’s sägner* and Topelius’s texts were originally written in Swedish, does not disturb their reflections on people, nation and nationhood. The texts that are referred to are

the same both in the Finnish and Swedish versions, in the original language and the translation, suggesting that there is no need to distinguish between the two language groups.

The importance of the canonised 19th-century texts is further reinforced at the end of the novel. It offers a quotation from Topelius's poem "Morgonsång" ("Aamulaulu"/ 'Morning song'), which is the opening poem of one of his most influential works, *Boken om vårt land* (1875; 'A Book about our country'). *Boken om vårt land* was a textbook for schoolchildren which contained illustrated stories of Finland's history and geography as well as stories of the people and their languages, thus highlighting Topelius's central idea of national unity. Topelius found that despite differences with regard to language, geography and culture, there was a fundamental unity among the Finnish people. If clear evidence of the significance of *Boken om vårt land* is required, one only has to look at its popularity: it was translated into Finnish only a year after it had been published, and, in addition, for decades it frequently appeared in new editions. Until the 1950s, it was an essential part of the school curriculum.<sup>11</sup>

Interestingly, the poem quoted at the end of the novel is the same in both versions, yet the stanzas are different. Whereas the Finnish language quotation "Kuin kukkaranta aamusella/Heräjä uuteen aikaan"<sup>12</sup> is taken from the second stanza, the Swedish language quotation "Vak upp kring hundramila stränder/mitt sköna land, mitt fosterland"<sup>13</sup> comprises the first two verses straight from the beginning of "Morgonsång". It is, of course, impossible to know why or how Kersti Bergroth arrived at this particular solution. Did she not remember how Topelius's "Morgonsång" began in Finnish or was she not satisfied with the Finnish translation of those particular lines? There is not even a way of finding out which one of the two versions, the Finnish- or Swedish-language one, Kersti Bergroth had in mind in the first place. However, when taking into account the patriotic theme of the novel and the context in which it had been published, it is obvious that the reference to a well-known patriotic text brimming with optimism and hope is more important than any exact equivalence between the two texts. However, this kind of difference also signals that although the author-translator knows the two languages and cultures well, they do not necessarily overlap each other entirely.

Sometimes the subtexts have different connotations in Finnish and Swedish, which means that they cannot be used in the same way. For example, when the nurses gather

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11 See, for example, Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland (The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland): <<http://www.topelius.fi/index.php?docid=28>> (visited 4 August 2013).

12 "Like a shore in blossom at dawn / Wake up to a new time".

13 "Wake up on the shores of thousands of lakes / my beautiful country, my motherland".

together for the first time to get to know each other, they address the questions of patriotism in singing. Although the sing-along song they choose is the same in both versions, “Suomen salossa”/“I Finlands skog” (‘In the backwoods of Finland’),<sup>14</sup> only *Nuoren lotan päiväkirja* provides an explicit quotation from the song’s text while there is only an implicit reference to it in *En ung lottas dagbok*:

Tuntui hyvältä saada laulaa taas kerran näin lottien kesken.  
”Omanpa henkeni kieltä ne puhuu  
Honkain humina ja luonto muu...”  
Sitä se juuri on. Minä en olisi osannut sanoa sitä, mutta niin se on. (Bergroth 1940a, 27.)

Det gjorde gott att sjunga så här lottor emellan en gång igen.  
När vi sjöng om att furornas sus talar ”vår andes språk” så tänkte jag: ja, så är det.  
(Bergroth 1940b, 33.)

It felt good to have an opportunity to sing once again among nurses. “They speak the language of my heart / Whisper of the pine trees and the rest of nature. . . .” That is just how it is. I would not have known how to say it, but that is how it is. / It felt good to sing like this among the nurses once again. As we sang that whisper of the pine trees speaks “the language of our heart”, I thought: yes, that is just how it is.

Originally “Suomen salossa” is a Finnish folk song to which Yrjö Sakari Yrjö-Koskinen, a central character in the Finnish language nationalist movement, wrote a text in 1856. Although a Swedish version of this song already existed at the end of the 19th century, it is possible that Bergroth herself did not know the song in Swedish or did not rely on her readers knowing it. Perhaps she found it overly “Finnish” to be entirely credible in a Swedish context. The reference in the Swedish language text points more towards the Finnish version than to the Swedish translation of the song in which there is not, for example, an expression such as “furornas sus talar ‘vår andes språk’” (“whisper of the pine trees speaks ‘the language of our heart’”).

A closer look at *Nuoren lotan päiväkirja/En ung lottas dagbok* discloses that nationhood and patriotism cannot, after all, be discussed exactly in the same terms. In addition to the example above, there are other examples too. When one of the nurses

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14 Also known as “Honkain keskellä/ Dold mellan furorna”.

reflects on her patriotism, the Finnish and Swedish language versions differ slightly from each other:

Lönnrotin aika, ja Runebergin ja Snellmanin – se on minusta tavallaan oikein oikea Suomi. . . . Siinä on kaikki koottuna – historia ja runous ja rakkaus tähän kansaan. (Bergroth 1940a, 74.)

Lönnrots tid, och Runebergs och Snellmans – det tycker jag på ett vis är det riktiga Finland. . . . Där har vi allt liksom förenat – historien och det poetiska och kärleken till det här landet. (Bergroth 1940b, 85.)

The period of Lönnrot, and Runeberg and Snellman – that is in my view somehow the real Finland. . . . Everything is combined – the history, poetry, and love for these people/ this nation.

Although the first sentence is the same, there is an interesting difference at the end of the quotation. In the Finnish version, the nurse explains that the period of Lönnrot, Runeberg and Snellman echoes love for the Finnish people ('kansa'), whereas the Swedish version emphasises the love for the nation or the country ('landet') instead of the people ('folk'). This preference for nation/country acknowledges that the idea of "one people, one nation" that had already been around for decades by the 1940s – not least as an issue in a large number of language conflicts in which the power relations of languages and language groups were contested – was not an undisputed one. From the point of view of the Swedish-speaking language group, which possessed a strong minority identity based on language, it does not question the idea of one nation, but implies a critical attitude towards an idea of a nation consisting of only "one people". The language conflicts between the Finnish and Swedish language groups were not, in the first place, issues of ethnicity, but rather posed ideological and philosophical questions as to what language policy would best serve Finland as a nation (see e.g. Salo 2012, 27–28). Yet, among both language groups there were strong tendencies to strengthen their status and unity. The most radical Finnish language nationalists in the 1920s and 1930s, for example, stated that the development of the whole nation was being threatened by bilingualism (see e.g. Grönstrand 2009, 24).

At the same time, even though Kersti Bergroth's twin-texts show that in times of crisis there is a literary tradition that the Finnish- and Swedish-speaking language groups have in common and which is worth turning to, this tradition cannot be applied

straightforwardly. There is accuracy with regard to the implicit or explicit culturally specific meanings of known songs and single concept. The practices of adaptation are needed every now and then in order to produce culturally convincing texts with the right connotations. On the one hand, the differences are relatively few, encompassing adjustments in character and place, names and references to a few texts that might work in a similar way both in Finnish and Swedish. On the other hand, the differences reveal a discerning eye for questions of language policies and minority/majority positions.

### **Different texts – same tradition**

While Kersti Bergroth provides texts for her Finnish- and Swedish-speaking readers that can be placed, if necessary, on a continuum of “originals” and translations, Henrik Tikkanen’s strategy is totally different. Tikkanen wrote and published his novels *Unohdettu sotilas/30-åriga kriget* long after the war had finished, namely, in the 1970s, which was a period known for its radicalism, revolt against authorities and institutions, and preference for highly personal accounts and confessions in literature. In his twin-texts, Tikkanen follows the tradition of the novel in which the critical attitude towards the Continuation War and war heroism had been established through a scarce style of expression, comical events, ironic attitude and absurd – even grotesque – details (Alhoniemi 1987; Riikonen 2012, 464–466). Tikkanen is considered to have been a satirist (Ibid.), and he has also been given the honour of being the first author of a postmodern Finnish war novel, a genre characterised by a fragmentary structure and a highly controversial view of heroism (Niemi 1999, 121). An important part of his unique style is playing with well-known depictions of the war; not only with those found in J. L. Runeberg’s *Fänriks Ståls sägner* but also with those in Väinö Linnas’s Finnish-language novel *Tuntematon sotilas* (1954; *The Unknown Soldier*), a novel which radically changed the tradition of depicting war events and soon became a classic. As a consequence of its realist style, *Tuntematon sotilas* does not provide a heroic view of the war’s events, which was the case in J. L. Runeberg’s epic poem. This poem, in its turn, is again one of the prominent subtexts of *Tuntematon sotilas*.

In contrast to Kersti Bergroth’s *Nuoren lotan päiväkirja/En ung lottas dagbok* in which the collective “we” is at the centre, the focus in Tikkanen’s *Unohdettu sotilas/30-åriga kriget* is on the individual. The experiences of the lonely soldier Käppärä, whose war lasts for 30 years as he is left alone at the front during the Continuation War, and who stays at his post in obedience to the order that he has been given, are at the

heart of the story. However, whereas dialogue dominates the narrative in the Finnish-language version, it has almost disappeared in the Swedish one. Instead there is an omniscient narrator telling Käppärä's story. Interestingly, the explicit subtexts in use are also different in the two versions. Whereas Linna's *Tuntematon sotilas* is an important subtext in the Finnish-language version, Runeberg's *Fänriks Ståls sägner* is dealt with in the Swedish-language version. However, in practice, the division is not that categorical. The protagonist Käppärä, for example, whose first name Vihtori/Viktor means victory, is depicted in both versions as a modern Sven Dufva. In Runeberg's portrayal of Sven Dufva he was a dutiful soldier who died at his post (see Niemi 1988, 171). Moreover, in spite of the differences regarding the use of subtexts, the effect is the same: both *Unohdettu sotilas* and *30-åriga kriget* make parody of the nationalist discourse in which war heroism is admired.

In *Unohdettu sotilas*, a close connection with Väinö Linnas's *Tuntematon sotilas* is already established in the title. The title is almost the same, as the meanings of the words "unohdettu sotilas" ("forgotten soldier") and "tuntematon sotilas" ("unknown soldier") are close to each other. This kind of allusion is missing from *30-åriga kriget*, in which the title points to a factual historical event, the Thirty Years' War that took place in Europe between 1618 and 1648, and of course to Käppärä's own long war in Karelia. Another strong marker of the relationship between Tikkanen's and Linna's texts is the language of the soldiers, the use of dialect or several Finnish dialects, which was unique in Linnas's work and an important part of his character description, and which Tikkanen follows. At the beginning of the novel, the protagonist, soldier Vihtori Käppärä, and staff sergeant Hurmalainen are talking to each other at their post in the Karelian woods in the following way:

"Ei hyö täst tuu läpi", sanoi ylikersantti.

"Ei tule, herra ylikersantti.

"Eikä mistään", sanoi ylikersantti.

"Eivätkä mistään, niin", sanoi Vihtori.

"Ratekiaa tää vaa, sanoi Hurmalainen. "Vetäyvytää jos hyö tulee peräs, ja taas vetäyvytää ja hyö tulee taas peräs. Ja eivät huomaakaa ja niin myö ollaaki Suomes ja tääl mejän kans ei oo leikkimist. Tääl Suomen leijona purroo ja raapii. Vanja kuoloo ja katuu lähteneesä mejän perrää...

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“Mitäs lähtivät väärälle asialle, sanoi Vihtori vähän innostuen. ”En mä pahalla, mutta ku lähtivät väärälle asialle niin saavat syyttää itseään jos me tapetaan heijät. (Tikkanen 1974, 6.)

”They won’t come through here, said staff sergeant.

“No they won’t, Sir.”

“And not anywhere”, said staff sergeant.”

“Yeah, right. And not anywhere,” said Vihtori.

“This is just a strategy, said Hurmalainen. “We’ll retreat if they follow us, and then we’ll retreat again if they follow us. And they won’t realise until we’re in Finland and here you can’t play tricks with us. Here the lion of Finland bites and scratches. Ruski dies and regrets that he started to follow us...

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“Why did they run a false errand?”, said Vihtori a bit enthusiastically. “No offence meant, but as they run false errands they can blame themselves if we kill them.”

This dialogue between Käppärä and Hurmalainen is highly colloquial. While Käppärä speaks in a form of slang typically found amongst people from the cities of Southern Finland, Hurmalainen speaks in a particular dialect. Moreover, as Hurmalainen’s dialect is from the South-Eastern part of Finland, he reminds the reader of the best-known character of *Tuntematon sotilas*, Antero Rokka, who was from the Karelian Isthmus (also Niemi 1988, 171).

While dialect is essential to the narrative in *Unohdettu sotilas*, it has almost disappeared in the Swedish version. According to Johan Wrede (2012, 125–127), Tikkanen was not able to catch the nuances of the soldiers’ speech convincingly enough, as he himself had experienced the Continuation War in a Finnish-language unit and, thus, did not know how the soldiers spoke in Finland-Swedish detachments. This explanation draws on questions of biography and realism, pointing to the idea that literature reflects the human language facility and its use. These are by all means important dimensions of multilingualism in literature (also Laakso 2011, 33–34) and self-translation. However, the decision to abandon the use of dialect may also be dealt with by taking into consideration the previous tradition of Finnish war literature and the models of depiction it offered. A new leaf was turned when Linna’s *Tuntematon sotilas* appeared. As the language of the soldiers was considered to be not only original and creative, but also an elementary part of the aesthetics, the effect would not have been the same if Tikkanen had tried to use the Finland-Swedish dialects with their totally different



connotations – compared to the Finnish ones – in his Swedish-language version. For example, the South-Eastern dialect that the famous character of Rokka speaks, has strong connotations of Karelia and also to humour, and these dimensions cannot be easily caught in any Swedish dialect.<sup>15</sup> When Tikkanen in his Swedish-language version puts aside the dialect as well as the dialogue, the connection to Linna's classical war text, as well as an influential model of Finnish language war depiction, also changes, although it does not disappear altogether. Like Bergroth, Tikkanen also seems to be well-aware that not even the best-known texts, which were familiar to both the Finnish- and the Swedish-speaking populations, may be applied in the same way. However, in contrast to Bergroth, Tikkanen has a larger repertoire of means for doing this, which is something that gives rise to innovative forms of expression.

As mentioned earlier, an important subtext in Linna's *Tuntematon sotilas* is Runeberg's *Fänriks Ståls sägner*, and this also applies to Tikkanen's *30-åriga kriget*. In Linna's text, the references are varied: the soldiers quote Runeberg, often inappropriately; the role models Runeberg's epic poem first offers to the soldiers turn out to be fallacious in Linna's work, etc. (e.g. Nummi 1993, 100–120). In Tikkanen's novel, the narrator refers to Runeberg, sometimes explicitly, sometimes implicitly. In the following extract from the beginning of the story, Runeberg and the heroism of his influential epic *Fänriks Ståls sägner* is called into question in different ways:

I det krig Runeberg skildrade bjöds de ryska officerarna på bal efter det de intagit en stad. Kulnev brukade dricka champagne ur damers skor. Men det var innan krigen politiserats, det var under krigens l'art pour l'artperiod. Det var krig med nästan bara trevliga sidor, det allra trevligaste var när en ung hjälte fick en kula genom bröstet och blev blek och dog. Det var inte bara trevligt, det var vackert.

När kriget sedan politiserades, fick en mening, som man påstod, var det slut på det roliga, allt förvandlades till en tung plikt, att döda och dödas. Men äran kvarstod från tider som flytt och hindrade soldaterna från att själva fly. (Tikkanen 1977, 6–8.)

In the war that Runeberg described, Russian officers were invited to balls after they'd taken a town; Kulnev would drink champagne from ladies' slippers. But this was before war became politicized; it was during its l'art pour l'art period. War was almost nothing but attractive sides to it, the most attractive one being when a young hero took a bullet

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15 In the Swedish translation of *Tuntematon sotilas*, the dialect that is used (östnyländska) is spoken in a relatively small area in Southern Finland.

in his chest, grew pale, and died: that wasn't just attractive; it was beautiful! Later, when war became politicized, acquiring, so to speak, a purpose, all the fun went out of it. It became a tedious duty – kill and be killed – except for the sense of honor which lingered on from bygone days, and which kept soldiers from taking to their heels (1987, 4; Trans. G. Blecher and L. Thygesen Blecher. *The Thirty Years' War*).

In the beginning of the quote, Tikkanen is referring directly to Runeberg's poem "Kulneff", the character of which is a Russian field commander. The expression "a young hero took a bullet in his chest, and died", in turn, calls up Runeberg's widely known poem "Soldatgossen" ("The Soldier boy"), in which the death of a young boy at the front for the sake of "honour, country, and king" is described in positive terms; as something worthy of admiration. This short excerpt illustrates Tikkanen's economic and laconic style, which creates the parodic tone through which he is able to grasp a number of widely known features of Runeberg's classical text and use them to criticise excessive patriotism and heroism. He makes use of a well-known subtext, as he did in the case of the Finnish-language novel *Unohdettu sotilas*, and thus follows the tradition that Väinö Linna initiated through his *Tuntematon sotilas*.

To be accurate, *Tuntematon sotilas* is not entirely absent from *30-åriga kriget*, either. Linna's novel is being referred to, for example, when the narrator explains that the letters Kämpärä is writing to his mother during his stay in the wilderness reveal that he is tired and, many times, willing to leave his post:

Sådana reflexioner återkommer ofta i breven och psykiatern betecknade dem som helt normala och betingade av sysslolösheten som betraktas som soldatens kanske farligaste fiende. Desto hedersammare var segern över defaitismen, Kämpärä hölls trots sina tvivel kvar på sin post. (Här hänvisade biograferna till Väinö Linnas hjälteepos *Okänd soldat* där det klart framgår att ett betecknande drag för den finska ödemarkssoldaten är hans knorrande, som dock inte har nån negativ verkan på hans stridsinsats, snarare tvärtom. (Tikkanen 1977, 46–47.)

Such thoughts recur often in the letters. The psychiatrists considered them perfectly normal; they were the result of idleness, perhaps the soldier's greatest enemy, and they made Viktor's decision to stay at his post doubly admirable. (In this regard the biographers cite Väinö Linna's heroic epic, *The Unknown Soldier*, in which it's evident that the Finnish fighting man's affinity for complaining has no negative influence on his performance in

battle; quite the contrary.) (1987, 36–37; Trans. G. Blecher and L. Thygesen Blecher. The Thirty Years' War.)

Here the ordinariness and humanity of Linna's soldiers, their habit of complaining, is once again referred to and shown as a positive feature. Although the voice of the narrator is highly ironical, it shows that *Tuntematon sotilas* radically changed the way of looking at the heroism of war, and that Tikkanen's *30-åriga kriget* is part of the same tradition. All in all, even though the subtexts used in Tikkanen's two novels are different, the effect is the same. The rich tradition of war depictions and especially the classical texts give him plenty of material to work with, and he can thus provide his Finnish- and Swedish-speaking readers works in which the cultural and literary connotations are – given their enthusiastic reception – convincing, interesting and inspiring. *Unohdettu sotilas* was a breakthrough for Tikkanen, marking him out as a Finnish-language author. The work became a success in Finnish, but later on also in Swedish (Wrede 2012, 126–136).

### **Self-translation as a border-zone activity**

In their twin texts, both Bergroth and Tikkanen show that the borders and barriers between the Finnish- and Swedish-language groups, cultural spheres and literary institutions are not as sharp as they are often presented in Finland. Instead there are texts and traditions that are common to both language groups that can be used when there is a need to reach out to a larger audience. As war seems to be a topic that has given reason for broadening the amount of potential readers and for discussing it as widely as possible, self-translation can be regarded as an important strategy for dealing with culturally traumatic experiences which are not only personal but also deeply collective.

The analysis of Bergroth's and Tikkanen's texts has shown that self-translation links the Finnish- and Swedish-speaking language groups and literary traditions. By crossing the monolingual paradigm(s), so essential to the modern nation-state, self-translation turns out to be an activity that cuts straight to the core of nationhood, showing that it is possible to engage in two languages, cultures and literary traditions at the same time. By marking how the categories of language, culture and literature – which are so important for modern nation- states, whether they are monolingual or bilingual – overlap each other, and by pointing towards spaces common to both cultures, self-translations disclose the mechanisms of monolingual practices and provide new interpretations of questions about national belonging. There are aspects of incorporation and inclusion,

efforts to discuss important, even traumatic, collective conflicts and crises that cross linguistic and cultural borders and categories by turning to texts that convey the same kinds of connotations and meanings in both language groups.

However, despite the similarities, the two cultural spheres never overlap each other completely, and different kinds of strategies are needed to deal with this. While Kersti Bergroth uses relatively conventional modes of adaptation, such as changing the characters' names and rather discreet revision of subtexts and single words and expressions, Tikkanen constructs both of his texts differently. His decision to construct the stories by changing subtexts and narrative gives rise to two works that are anything but symmetrical and identical, and the strategies in use are close to improvisation. Many researchers dealing with border-cultures and border-zones emphasize and regard such improvisation as important in re-organising and inventing new kinds of subjectivities and cultures (see e.g. Jay 2010, 76–79). As a border-zone activity, self-translation moves the attention not only to the overlaps of languages, literatures and cultures, but also to the fact that cross-cultural activity involves asymmetrical and arbitrary forms of experiences, expression and practices, thus paving the way for reformulations of literary history and theory, which do not stem from monolingual assumptions about literature and culture.

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