

Milo Watering Love

The Retranslation of Dorain Gray

Investigating the retranslation hypothesis in Norwegian translations of Oscar Wilde.

Bachelor's project in Language Studies with Teacher Education
Supervisor: Annjo Klungervik Greenall

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Department of Language and Literature



1. Introduction

Within translation studies, there is a notion that first translations of influential literature are incorporated into the target culture by means of domesticating the language, while later retranslations are more likely to be foreignized. This is called the retranslation hypothesis (RH). In this paper I will be using Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (abbr. to PDG) to further investigate this claim. The novel, Wilde's first and only, was published in 1891. For RH to be tested, a first translation, as well as later retranslations, is needed. In this case, the first translation into Norwegian (bokmål) was done by Martin Gran in 1932. In addition to his version, I will be looking at two more, one by Ragnar Kvam (1959) and the other by Carl Henrik Grøndahl (1970). These dates are not reflected in the publication dates, as I have been unable to find versions published according to the translation dates listed above. Retranslation with Norwegian as the target language seems unexplored, making this an exciting facet to investigate. Additionally, Oscar Wilde's writing, known for being aesthetic and metaphorical, presents an interesting backdrop for testing RH.

This paper will begin by presenting the theoretic framework in which the analysis is situated. This involves further elaboration on RH, which in turn necessitates a look into Venuti's terms *foreignizing* and *domesticating*. For the analysis, I will use Toury's three-phase methodology from the descriptive branch of translation studies. To utilize this method, lexical shifts occurring in the translations must be identified. In this endeavour I will draw on the procedures deposited by Vinay and Darbelnet. This section will also include a brief introduction to similar studies done in this field, as these will be relevant for the later discussion. Following the theoretical background, I will present the data my analysis is based on. Finally, I will discuss the findings revealed by the analysis, and how this implicates RH in this instance. Currently, the question remains: has the retranslation hypothesis been demonstrated through translations of Oscar Wilde's famous phrases in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*?

2. Theoretical background

2.1 The retranslation hypothesis, and Venuti

The natural starting point for the theoretical section is within the question itself. The retranslation hypothesis (RH) has a twofold claim. The first claim from this approach is that first translations tend to domesticate. “They are “introductions”, seeking to integrate one culture into another, to ensure positive reception of the work in the target culture” (Paloposki & Koskinen, 2004, p. 27). In turn, the second claim says literature that enjoys the benefit of already being integrated into the target culture, will tend to be foreignized in later retranslations of the source text. Essentially, this is the effect this paper wishes to shed light on through analysing excerpts from PDG. As Paloposki and Koskinen point out, there is an underabundance of empirical data on this theory, suggesting that further investigation is needed to shed light on its accuracy (2004, p. 27). The binary nature of RH has in recent years been called into question (Massardier-Kenney, 2015, p.76). This re-evaluation is tied to the notion that early translations are inadequate if tendencies to domesticate are evident (Massardier-Kenney, 2015, p. 72). For this paper, however, I will adhere to the original claim. To better grasp the claims made by this hypothesis, we must turn to Venuti. He introduced the terms domesticating and foreignizing, though they have now lost some of their preliminary intent. Initially, they were used in the domain of ethics, assessing the emerging trends in translation as ethnocentric. Domesticating as the most prevalent translation strategy, was deemed to be evidence that the target culture sought to make the “unintelligible other” comprehensible, pointing to lingering imperialism (Paloposki, 2011, p. 40). This debate is outside the scope of this paper and will remain unexplored. On the other hand, foreignizing for Venuti was the counterweight for domesticating, and its purpose is to preserve the essence of the ST by staying closer to the original. The discrepancy between the two strategies is articulated by Schleiermacher thusly “[E]ither the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him, or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him” (Paloposki, 2011, p. 40). Regarding RH, Paloposki remarks that the claim is rather vague, pointing to unclear conclusions in previous RH studies as evidence. I have in turn been aware of this tendency when considering my own analysis. The problem of categorizing shifts as domesticating or foreignizing was further complicated by imposing these concepts on Vinay and Darbelnet’s procedures.

2.2 Vinay and Darbelnet’s procedures

The procedures I have identified in the excerpt data are only a portion taken from a more extensive list. For this paper’s purpose, I will only elaborate on those that proved relevant, and

were identified. Before doing so, I will address the problem hinted to above. To successfully determine whether the strategy is domesticating or foreignizing, I have had to place Vinay and Darbelnet's procedures within this framework. In a previous study closely related to this topic, there was an assumed relationship between direct translation and foreignization, and between oblique translations and domestication (Obeidat and Abu-Melhim, 2017, p. 55-63). However, this article does not directly tie all Vinay and Darbelnet's terms to these strategies, yet for this paper's purpose I have assumed this relationship to be valid in most cases. There will be some breaks from this pattern, specifically related to 'obligatory' or 'optional' shifts. In some instances, procedures often associated with domesticating derive from obligatory shifts. In cases where a literal translation is only impeded by morpho-syntactic constraints between the languages, I have chosen to view them as foreignizing. Vinay and Darbelnet's procedures are divided into two main approaches, one labelled direct and the other oblique (1995, p. 31). In the direct procedures, the only one evidenced in the data is literal translation. Literal translation is word-for-word transference of ST to TT, producing grammatical and semantically coherent TT renditions (1995, p. 34). Intact grammar may necessitate transposition, a procedure associated with oblique translation. Transposition involves changing a word class for another and is in some cases obligatory (1995, p. 36). If this is the case, I have viewed them as foreignizing rather than domesticating. The remaining procedures taken from Vinay and Darbelnet's term bank are generalization, when a more general word is used in the TT, economy, where the TT include fewer words than the ST, amplification, where more words are included in the TT, and finally omission, where words from the ST are left out of the TT. These relate to the oblique, often domesticating, category.

2.3 Toury's three-phase methodology, and previous studies

The strategies (domesticating and foreignizing) and procedures listed above are needed to perform Toury's three-phase methodology for systematic DTS. Since this paper only draws on Toury's model to test RH, I will give a shortened rendition only highlighting the aspects most important to utilize this method. The first phase is to consider the text within the target culture system (Toury, 2012, p. 31). This serves as a background for the following steps and reveal insight by considering the affect and acceptability the TT has had in the target culture. The second phase consists of identifying 'coupled pairs', or rather units of parallel text where shifts have occurred (2012, p. 32). These units are analysed as corresponding segments of the texts in question, and after these pairs are distinguished, they are studied and identified. When

the data has been handled, stage three can commence. In this final phase, the overall *norm* or strategy deployed should be made clear by stage two (2012, p. 32-33). Drawing on these finding, generalizations are made, for this paper, pertaining to whether the strategy is domesticating or foreignizing. I have borrowed insight from two related studies to reinforce my conclusion. In the first, RH is tested in audio-visual translations of subtitles from German (audio) to English (visual) (Bywood, 2019). In the second, foreignizing and domesticating elements of three Croatian translations of PDG are explored, seeking to show which strategy is most evident (Schmidt, 2013).

3. Data

	ST (Wilde)	TT1 (Gran-1932)	TT2 (Kvam-1959)	TT3 (Grøndahl-1970)
Excerpt 1	“It is silly of you , for there is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about , and that is not being talked about ” (p.6)	“Det er dumt av deg , for det er bare en ting i verden som er verre enn å bli snakket om , og det er – <i>ikke</i> å bli snakket om ” (s10)	“Det er idiotisk av deg , for det er bare en ting i verden som er verre enn å bli snakket om , og det er å ikke bli snakket om ” (p. 8)	"Det er dumt av dere , for det finnes bare en ting (ø) som er verre enn å bli omtalt . Og det er å ikke bli omtalt " (p. 10-11)
	silly	dumt (procedure: literal translation; foreignizing)	idiotisk (procedure: generalization; (domesticating)	dumt (procedure: literal translation; foreignizing)
	you	deg (procedure: literal translation; foreignizing)	deg (procedure: literal translation; foreignizing)	dere (procedure: generalization; domesticating)
	in the world	i verden (procedure: literal translation, economy (obligatory); foreignizing)	i verden (procedure: literal translation economy (obligatory); foreignizing)	(ø) (procedure: omission; domesticating)
	talked about			omtalt (procedure: economy,

	talked about	snakket om (procedure: literal translation; foreignizing)	snakket om (procedure: literal translation; foreignizing)	modulation); domesticating)
		snakket om (procedure: literal translation; foreignizing)	snakket om (procedure: literal translation; foreignizing)	omtalt (procedure: economy, modulation); domesticating)
Excerpt 2	“The only way to get rid of temptation is to yield to it” (p. 16)	“Den eneste måte å bli kvitt en fristelse på, er å gi etter for den” (s29)	Den eneste måten å bli kvitt en fristelse på er å gi etter for den” (p. 24)	“Den eneste måten å tilintetgjøre en fristelse på, er å gi etter for den” (p.30)
	get rid of	bli kvitt (procedure: literal translation economy (obligatory); foreignizing)	bli kvitt (procedure: literal translation economy (obligatory); foreignizing)	tilintetgjøre (procedure: economy (optional), transposition (optional); domesticating)
Excerpt 3	“Nowadays people know the price of everything, and the value of nothing” (p. 35)	“Nå for tiden vet folk prisen på alt mulig, men ikke hva noe er verdt” (s67)	“Nå til dags vet folk prisen på alt, men ikke hva noe er verdt” (p.53)	“Nå til dags kjenner folk prisen på alt og verdien av ingenting” (p. 65)
	Nowadays	Nå for tiden (procedure: amplification (obligatory), generalization; domesticating)	Nå til dags (procedure: amplification (obligatory), transposition (obligatory); foreignizing)	Nå til dags (procedure: amplification (obligatory), transposition (obligatory); foreignizing)
	people know	vet folk (procedure: literal translation modulation (obligatory); foreignizing)	vet folk (procedure: literal translation modulation (obligatory); foreignizing)	kjenner folk (procedure: transposition (obligatory), generalization; domesticating)
	the value of nothing	ikke hva noe er verdt (procedure: modulation,	ikke hva noe er verdt (procedure: modulation,	verdien av ingenting (procedure: literal

		transposition; domesticating)	transposition; domesticating)	translation; foreignizing)
Excerpt 4	"I represent to you all the sins you have never had the courage to commit" (p. 57)	"Jeg representerer for deg alle de syndene du aldri har hatt mot til å begå" (s111)	"Jeg representerer for deg alle de syndene du aldri har hatt råd til å begå" (p. 87)	"Jeg utgjør alle de syndene du ikke har hatt mot til å begå" (p. 108)
	represent to you courage	representerer for deg (procedure: literal translation; foreignizing) mot (procedure: literal translation; foreignizing)	representerer for deg (procedure: literal translation; foreignizing) råd (procedure: generalization; domesticating)	utgjør (procedure: economy, transposition; domesticating) mot (procedure: literal translation; foreignizing)
Excerpt 5	"I don't want to be at the mercy of my emotions. I want to use them, to enjoy them, and to dominate them" (p. 77)	"Jeg vil ikke være en slave av mine sinnsbevegelser. Jeg vil bruke dem, nyte dem og herske over dem" (s149)	"Jeg vil ikke være prisgitt mine følelser. Jeg vil bruke dem, nyte dem og beherske dem" (p.118)	"Jeg vil ikke bli dominert av mine følelser. Jeg vil bruke dem, nyte dem og dominere dem" (p.145)
	be at the mercy emotions dominate	være en slave (procedure: transposition; domesticating) sinnsbevegelser (procedure: generalization; domesticating) herske over (procedure: amplification, transposition; domesticating)	være prisgitt (procedure: transposition; domesticating) følelser (procedure: literal translation; foreignizing) beherske (procedure: generalization; domesticating)	bli dominert (procedure: transposition; domesticating) følelser (procedure: literal translation; foreignizing) dominere (procedure: literal translation; foreignizing)
Excerpt 6	"Humanity takes itself too seriously. It is the world's original sin. If the caveman had known how to laugh, History would have been different" (p. 31)	"Menneskeheten tar seg selv altfor alvorlig. Det er verdens arvesynd. Dersom huleboeren hadde kunnet le, ville historien vært en annen" (s263)	"Menneskeheten tar seg selv altfor høytidelig. Det er verdens opprinnelige synd. Hvis hulemennesket hadde visst hvordan det skulle le, ville historien vært annerledes" (s. 47)	"Menneskeheten tar seg selv for alvorlig. Det er den opprinnelige synd. Hvis hulemannen hadde kunnet le, ville historien vært en annen" (p. 58)

	too seriously	altfor alvorlig (procedure: explicitation; domesticating)	altfor høytidelig (procedure: generalization; domesticating)	for alvorlig (procedure: literal translation; foreignizing)
	world's original sin	verdens arvesynd (procedure: transposition; domesticating)	verdens opprinnelige synd (procedure: literal translation; foreignizing)	den opprinnelige synd (procedure: omission; domesticating)
	the caveman	huleboeren (procedure: economy (obligatory), generalization; domesticating)	hulemennesket (procedure: economy (obligatory), literal translation; foreignizing)	hulemannen (procedure: economy (obligatory), literal translation; foreignizing)
Exce rpt 7	"The books that the world calls immoral are books that show the worlds its own shame" (p. 151)	"De bøkene som folk kaller umoralske, er de som viser verden dens egen skjensel" (s294)	"De bøker som folk kaller umoralske, er bare bøker som viser dem deres egen sletthet" (p. 230)	"De bøker som verden kaller umorlaske, er de bøker som viser verden dens skam" (p. 281)
	the world	folk (procedure: generalization; domesticating)	folk (procedure: generalization; domesticating)	verden (procedure: economy (obligatory), literal translation; foreignizing)
	are books that	er de som (procedure: transposition, omission; domesticating)	er bare bøker som (procedure: amplification; domesticating)	er de bøker som (procedure: amplification (obligatory); foreignizing)
	Shame	skjensel (procedure: generalization; domesticating)	sletthet (procedure: generalization; domesticating)	skam (procedure: literal translation; foreignizing)
Exce rpt 8	"I am afraid I may frighten the company, frighten or enthrall them" (p. 49)	"Jeg er redd for at jeg kan skremme publikum, skremme eller maktstjele dem" (p. 95)	"Jeg er redd for jeg kommer til å skremme ensemblet, skremme dem eller tryllebinde dem" (s. 74)	"Jeg er redd jeg kommer til å skremme hele forsamlingen, skremme dem eller tryllebinde dem" (s. 92)
	I may	for at jeg kan (procedure: amplification,	for jeg kommer til å (procedure: amplification,	jeg kommer til å (procedure: amplification,

		transposition; domesticating)	transposition; domesticating)	transposition; domesticating)
	the company	publikum (procedure: generalization; domesticating)	ensemblen (procedure: generalization; domesticating)	hele forsamlingen (procedure: generalization; domesticating)
	enthrall	Maktstjele (procedure: generalization; domesticating)	Tryllbinde (procedure: literal translation; foreignizing)	Tryllbinde (procedure: literal translation; foreignizing)

4. Analysis

To enter the first phase of Toury's model, the TT's must be examined to contextualize their acceptance in the target culture. The translations into Norwegian have seemingly been well received. There is little specific information regarding any of the translations available, so my assumptions are largely based on the general high standing British authors receive in Norway, and how the books themselves are presented. Both Grøndal and Gran's versions are published in collector's editions, yet do not contain any description of Oscar Wilde or his work. This indicates that Wilde does not need to be justified to the reader, marking his acceptance in the TC. The covers are elegantly decorated yet reflect the typical style associated with 'classics' in literature. The Kvam version I have used in this paper is an illustrated version showcasing some of Håkon Gullvåg's artwork. Gullvåg is a highly acclaimed Norwegian artist, and this is further evidence of the high standing position Wilde's work has received in Norway. Seemingly, as early as Gran, Oscar Wilde was contemporarily well received, and continued to solidify into the Norwegian discourse.

The excerpts taken from the ST are among Wilde's more famed phrases, and this is our point of departure for Toury's second phase. From these excerpts, I extracted coupled pairs marked by colour code in the table of data. Of the 23 coupled pairs, each analysed opposed to the ST, the results were as follows. In Gran (TT1), nine procedures were foreignizing, and 14 were domesticating. In Kvam (TT2), 12 procedures were foreignizing, and 11 were domesticating. In Grørdahl (TT3), 12 procedures were foreignizing, and 11 were domesticating. In sum, TT1 showed more domesticating tendencies, and TT2&3 showed a slight preference for foreignizing strategies.

Based on the summary of strategies, one could argue for a pattern of increased foreignization in TT2&3. Yet, this conclusion is complicated by conflicting patterns. To support the claim that the later retranslations foreignize, a decrease in generalizations is apparent. In TT1 there are six instances, and in TT3 there are only three. Conflicting this, however, is the increased pattern of omission. None were observed in TT2, yet two occur in TT3. This may seem insufficient in drawing a pattern, yet I find it suggestive that two instances of omission were found in only 23 coupled pairs.

5. Discussion

Taken at face value, the retranslation hypothesis could appear proven in Norwegian translations of PDG. Based on a limited set of coupled pairs, there emerged a pattern of more foreignizing procedures in later translations. However, I believe the evidence does not indicate a clear tendency preference for the authors to successively be deemed foreignizing in their renditions. A premise of RH is that over time, foreignizing will gradually be made possible by the increasing acceptability and incorporation of the previous translated text. The premise itself is rather vague, for would one not assume increasing foreignization from TT2 to TT3 if this were the case? Here, the number of strategies was uniform across the two translations. This breaks with the notion the foreignization happens gradually, as the main discrepancy is between TT1 and TT2. RH implies that the most recent translation should reflect the highest degree of foreignization, and in this case it does not. TT2 and TT3 also exemplify the increase in omission, a tendency associated with domesticating. Grøndahl (TT3) has made a conscious effort to omit certain phrases in his translation, bringing the author closer to the reader, as it were. A possible objection to this conclusion resides in the context of each translation. Little is accessible regarding the background for each translation, demonstrating the anonymity of the translator. To my knowledge, there was a nynorsk version of the novel published some time before Gran's bokmål version. I do not know to what degree this version influenced Gran, or for that matter what strategy was deployed in the nynorsk version. On a related note, the influence Gran's translation had on Kvam and Grøndahl is ambiguous. One could assume each subsequent translator had a relationship with a previous version, yet there is no way to know for sure. Another question that could help better understand the results of the analysis, is why these later versions were written. This also has

no clear answer. For the sake of this paper, I will assume each has had access to, and utilized the previous translations, in their own renditions. I have also assumed that each retranslation is based off the same ST, and not a previous Norwegian translation or altered versions of the ST. Nevertheless, these information deficits can arguably cloud my conclusion.

Translation studies are complicated by the mere magnitude of languages available to analyse, and the differing results analysing a certain language pair can deliver. This is also reflected in the procedures deposited by Vinay and Darbelnet. These procedures were primarily motivated by English - French coupled pairs and seeing as only three of the main seven procedures were identified in the pairs relevant for this paper, I believe some obscurity is inherent. Subtleties are easily lost, as the strategy scale tips only in one of two directions. What I mean is that the procedures used to identify the shifts constrained the depth at which foreignization and domestication took place. This is partly because the procedures were never directly tied to these strategies, as is evidenced in the obligatory/optional dichotomy. How can you foreignize, if morpho-syntactic constraints hinder you from rendering coherent language in the TT if followed word-for-word? As mentioned, I have understood obligatory shifts in transposition as evidence of trying to adhere closely to the ST, a marker of foreignization. This is also true of obligatory shifts in economy and amplification. Assessing these shifts as foreignizing has only taken place when exclusive obligatory shifts were noted in a specific coupled pair. This too could be an objection to my findings, as taking these liberties has ultimately changed the outcome in the summary of strategies. On a related note, if quality could be called into question, so could quantity. Admittedly, the sample size of coupled pairs this paper presents is relatively small.

In a similar study, foreignizing and domesticating tendencies were investigated in Croatian translations of PDG (Schmidt, 2013). Although not directly utilizing Vinay and Darbelnet, the paper sheds light on how Venuti's dichotomy had been shown within a separate target language. Having analysed the relevant corpus, Schmidt found the opposite of RH, where foreignizing tendencies declined and domesticating rose (2013, p. 544). Indeed, the amount of foreignizing elements heavily outweighed the domesticating procedures. Nevertheless, this study used Croatian as the TL, and Schmidt was most concerned with culture-specific items, e.g., street names, historical figures, and local institutions (2013, p. 542). For my own excerpt selection, there are no culture-specific items, which may explain why little was found within the direct translation procedures. Relating back to RH, the next related study was chosen as it explored this idea directly. Bywood put RH to the test using data from audio-visual subtitling

into English from German (2019). Here, culture-specific items were also taken into consideration. Strikingly, the evidence discussed in the paper pointed to translations moving closer to the target culture, the exact opposite of the claim in RH (Bywood, 2019, p. 827-829). The data in my paper is not equally skewed, however it reveals potential deficits in the theoretical claims surrounding RH.

6. Conclusion

This paper has sought to test the theoretical claim inherent in the retranslation hypothesis. The claim, that first translations will domesticate while later retranslations tend to foreignize, has been explored through excerpts from Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, utilizing three Norwegian translations spanning from 1932-1970. The findings from this paper can at best draw a tentative conclusion. Although a higher propensity of foreignizing elements was found in later translations, the data did not give sufficient evidence to prove the hypothesis. Based solely on the evidence presented in this paper, I believe RH has been disproven. However, the scope of this paper is limited, and without a parallel study of a separate excerpts from the novel, I am hesitant in categorizing RH as entirely disproven in Norwegian translations of PDG. What becomes evident, is that the vagueness of the premise lends itself to being continually reevaluated. If other excerpts were analysed, the result could contradict the evidence presented here. Objections and limitations aside, there are discernible patterns of shift choice evidenced here, and in sum, these are insufficient in proving RH. In turn, this has led me to tentatively conclude that RH has, for the time being, been disproven in this instance.

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7.1 Source and target texts

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