

FROM MAJOR TO MINOR: SWEDISH WORKING-CLASS FICTION IN THE UK AND THE US

Paul Tenngart

Lund University

- 54 I noticed the stain of black ink directly when I collected *Cape Farewell* from the loan counter at the New York Public Library. Where it should have said “Harry Martinson” on the spine of the American edition of the author’s *Kap Farväll*!, it actually read “Harry Martins•on.” But was it a stain? No; at a closer look, it turned out to be more of a neatly added dot concealing an erroneous second “s” in the Swedish author’s name. When I opened the book, I saw that the same correction had been made on the title page. Sometime between when the American edition had been published in 1936 and my visit to the library in 2014, a librarian had noticed the publisher’s mistake and corrected the name twice. Perhaps the misspelling was discovered when Martinson received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1974 and his name came up in newspapers and journals all over the world; perhaps the library staff had seen the error directly when the book was purchased in the 1930s.

Whenever it was detected, the librarian was unable to completely erase the publisher’s altered spelling. All she or he could do was to correct the alteration with a second one, leaving a double modification at the back and in the beginning of the book, thereby highlighting the difference from the original book, written in Swedish in 1933 by the author Harry Martinson. In fact, the book in New York is not even identical to the British version published in London in 1935 with the exact same translation and title. Indeed, the British edition of Naomi Walford’s translation includes eight illustrations by the English artist John Farleigh. The American edition of 1936, by contrast, like the Swedish original, is not illustrated. The two *Cape Farewells* are thus very different versions of Harry Martinson’s *Kap Farväll*!. The name “Harry Martins•on” is indeed quite an adequate construction to signal the ambiguous creative origin and transformation of this American edition of a British translation of a Swedish narrative.

The American spine is a tangible example of David Damrosch's observation that every circulated text "manifests differently abroad than it does at home" (6). A migrated text meets a new frame of understanding and a new set of knowledge in the receiving culture, and this new intellectual context reshapes the literary work into new forms and formats. Isabel Hofmeyr notes that when literary works cross cultural, linguistic, and political borders, they get "excised, summarized, abridged, and bowdlerized by the new intellectual formations into which they migrate" (2-3). How this transformation plays out has very much to do with the position that the work occupies in the complex and multifaceted target culture. As Itamar Even-Zohar has shown, the translated text is given a specific meaning in the target culture's literary "polysystem," and this position is often very different from the position the literary work has in the source culture (42).

Not all texts cross borders under the same conditions. The ways in which the translated work is transformed and recontextualized depend heavily on the source culture and language it comes from and the language and culture to which it is introduced. More specifically, the fate of the migrated work depends on the relation between the particular source and target languages and cultures involved. From a world-systems approach to translation, literary languages have been divided into four categories of centrality and dominance: hyper-central, central, semi-peripheral, and peripheral languages. As Johan Heilbron and many others have shown, English is a hyper-central language when it comes to international literary distribution, with a very high literary export and a very low import. French, German, and Russian enjoy a central position, and several other European languages (including Swedish) occupy semi-peripheral positions, whereas almost all languages originating in Africa and Asia are very peripheral; they simply remain inaccessible for most readers of the world (see Brems et al.; Edfeldt et al.; Heilbron; Lindqvist; Maia et al.; Schwartz). This article explores the effects of one specific relation within this hierarchical system of literary translations: a semi-peripheral source language, Swedish, and a hyper-central target language, English. My main argument is that this particular movement often results in minorization. Central literary texts in semi-peripheral source cultures tend to become peripheral texts in hyper-central target cultures, and these effects are caused by a range of different dislocations, strategies, and adjustments. This article discusses three kinds of minorization—distributional, thematic, and peritextual—and their effects, especially with regard to political issues. However, my case in point—Swedish working-class literature in English translation—does not always confirm this general minorization tendency, but also brings significant exceptions to light in which the dislocations lead to a majorization effect.

SWEDISH WORKING-CLASS FICTION IN SWEDEN

Harry Martinson's *Kap Farväll!* is a central title in a very specific literary current. In

Swedish literary history, the boom of autobiographical novels published in the 1930s by a range of self-educated authors is called the “golden generation” of working-class literature. The history of Swedish proletarian fiction goes much further back than the 1930s, but something radical happened in this decade. Like never before, true-to-life novels of parish children, orphans, and the sons and daughters of farmworkers and factory workers were reviewed by the mainstream press and discussed by leading critics. Some were dubious about the style, morals, and ideology in this seemingly new literary current, but many saw something new, fresh, and vibrant in the novels of Eyvind Johnson, Harry Martinson, Ivar Lo-Johansson, Moa Martinson, Vilhelm Moberg, and Jan Fridegård.

56 This new recognition was partly because these novels were published and distributed by main publishers in the bourgeois majority culture, not by the labour movement’s own channels. Unlike earlier generations of Swedish proletarian fiction—and unlike the majority of British and US working-class literature in the 1930s—Swedish 1930s working-class fiction was not particularly directed to a working-class audience, but to a wide, undefined readership, including the middle classes as well as the economically and socially underprivileged (Nilsson 66). This change in address and position affects the question of how to define the phenomenon of working-class literature. While the pre-1930s kind of Swedish proletarian literature fulfills all three classic criteria of being written by, about, and for working-class people, the 1930s novels suggest a wider, more inclusive definition of working-class literature that does not require that all these criteria must be met (cf. Coles and Lauter; Furuland and Svedjedal; Nilsson). In relation to the novels in question, these three criteria appear all too narrow, not only as a package but also one by one. Even though none of these authors came from a privileged home, their backgrounds and levels of schooling varied, and so did, consequently, the settings of their autobiographical novels. Moreover, none of their breakthrough novels were exclusively addressed to a specific social stratum. Instead of the traditional definition of working-class literature, based on the triangular argument of author, subject matter, and address, I would suggest a receptional definition. These novels from the 1930s are working-class literature because they were received as contributions to a distinct literary current that depicted manual labour from a genuinely experienced position.

At the end of World War II, the generation of self-educated novelists from the 1930s had entered the absolute centre of Swedish culture. Vilhelm Moberg had earned enormous respect for explicitly standing up against Nazi Germany in the darkest hours of the war. His 1941 allegorical novel *Rid i natt!* (*Ride This Night*, 1943) was famously burnt on Adolf Hitler’s book bonfires. Ivar Lo-Johansson’s novels and short stories were recognized as significant forces behind the abandonment of the “statarsystem,” an old rural economic system that radically restricted farm workers’ resources and agency. In 1949, Harry Martinson was elected into the Swedish Academy, and eight years later, Eyvind Johnson also became a member. In the 1950s, these authors’ breakthrough novels of the 1930s were reissued as inexpensive editions

which greatly expanded their outreach and strengthened their positions as household names. And in 1974, Martinson and Johnson jointly received the Nobel Prize for literature.

This domestically canonized working-class literature strongly contributed to the national narrative of twentieth-century Sweden. During the construction of the Swedish welfare state and beyond, the continuous tradition of working-class literature has successively rejected the notion of Sweden as a more or less classless society, even though deep into the latter half of the twentieth century the dominant national narrative of equality was still supported by the cultural centrality of the self-educated writers of the 1930s generation. The contrast between the autobiographical stories of childhood poverty and their authors' rise to fame and influence in postwar Sweden managed to distribute a broad rags-to-riches story that mirrored both the marvelous careers of several Social-Democratic political leaders and, more symbolically, the nation's quite dramatic rise—over a period of only one or two generations—from poverty to wealth and from deep social inequality to a functioning welfare system. Autobiographical working-class novels of the 1930s thus provided a literary legitimacy to what historian Martin Wiklund has called the core narrative of the Social-Democratic welfare state (118), and twentieth-century Swedish working-class fiction has been seen as a unique contribution to world literature (Wright 334). This observation is not only based on thematic and formal aspects of the novels, short stories, and travel writings themselves, but also—and more adequately so—on the huge impact that a single generation of self-educated authors had on literary, cultural, and political national history. When it comes to domestic centrality and national importance, the collective literary works of the self-educated authors Martinson, Johnson, Martinson, Moberg, Lo-Johansson, and Fridegård seems globally unparalleled.

57

DISTRIBUTIONAL MINORIZATION

These Swedish authors have been quite extensively translated. Apart from translations into neighboring languages such as Danish and Norwegian, many German and French versions have been published from the 1930s onwards. In the latter part of the 1970s, there was also a distinct Nobel Prize effect, resulting in translations into, for example, semi-peripheral languages such as Polish and Czech, and peripheral languages such as Hungarian, Croatian, Bulgarian, Turkish, Japanese, Hebrew, and Korean. This seems to suggest that the effect of the Nobel on translation is more distinct in relation to minor literary languages. But it also demonstrates that Swedish and Scandinavian Nobel prizes tend to have a less significant distributional effect than other laureate selections made by the Swedish Academy (see Tenngart, *The Nobel Prize*).

English translations have been less frequent than those into German and French, but by no means rare. Two of Harry Martinson's books were translated by Naomi

Walford in the 1930s, and since the 1950s every decade has seen new English translations of Martinson's novels, poetry, and essays, most notably several editions of the long epic poem *Aniara* from 1956. Vilhelm Moberg's work was also translated early on, with his breakthrough novel *Sänkt sedebetyg* appearing in the US both independently (*Memory of Youth*, 1937) and as the first part of a one-volume trilogy (*The Earth Is Ours*, 1940) in Edwin Björkman's translations. Moberg's domestically most successful novels—the tetralogy *Utvandrarna* (1949), *Invandrarna* (1952), *Nybyggarna* (1956), and *Sista brevet till Sverige* (1959)—have also been his most translated works in English. Gustaf Lannestock's translations of these four novels have appeared in several American editions since the 1950s.

Eyvind Johnson had to wait until 1952 before his first English translation was published, but by then his 1946 novel *Strändernas svall* appeared in both the UK and the US as *Return to Ithaca*, translated by M.A. Michael. Since then, three texts have been translated into English: the autobiographical *Nu var det 1914* of 1934 (*1914*, translated 58 by Mary Sandbach in 1970), and the historical novels *Hans nådes tid* (*The Days of His Grace*, translated by Elsbeth Harley Schubert in 1968) and *Drömmar om rosor och eld* (*Dreams of Roses and Fire*, translated by Erik J. Friis in 1984).

Ivar Lo-Johansson, Jan Fridegård, and Moa Martinson were all discovered later by Anglophone publishers and translators. Ivar Lo-Johansson's work first appeared in English in 1971, when his erotic novel *Lyckan* was translated by Allan Tapsell and published in the US, UK, and Canada as *Bodies of Love*. In the early 1990s, two of his novels from the 1930s, *Godnatt, jord* and *Bara en mor*, were published in the US as *Breaking Free* (translated by Rochelle Wright, 1990) and *Only a Mother* (translated by Robert E. Bjork, 1991). Fridegård's autobiographical trilogy of the 1930s, *Jag Lars Hård*, *Tack för himlastegen*, and *Barmhärtighet*, were translated by Robert E. Bjork in 1983 and 1985 and published in two volumes, *I, Lars Hård* and *Jacob's Ladder & Mercy*. A couple of years later, Bjork also translated a trilogy by Fridegård set in the Viking age: *Land of Wooden Goods* (1989), *People of the Dawn* (1990), and *Sacrificial Smoke* (1990). Moa Martinson's breakthrough novel *Kvinnor och äppelträd* (1933) and her first autobiographical novel *Mor gifter sig* (1936) were finally translated in 1985 and 1988, respectively, by Margaret S. Lacy and published in the US as *Women and Appletrees* and *My Mother Gets Married*. The former was also published in the UK as *Women and Apple Trees* (1987).

A deciding factor for the position of working-class fiction in Swedish literary and political history is its publication and distribution conditions. Lo-Johansson, Johnson, Moberg, Harry Martinson, and Moa Martinson were all published by the largest publisher in Sweden, the Stockholm-based Albert Bonniers förlag, and Fridegård was published by the Helsinki-based Schildt, which was smaller than Bonniers but dominant in Swedish-speaking Finland. The most tangible minorization effect in the English translations of these works is their production by less central publishers in the UK and the US.

The early UK translations of Harry Martinson were published by the London-

based Cresset Press, a small publisher with a narrow profile. In the 1930s, Cresset Press published a large number of British classics, such as John Milton, Edmund Spenser, and John Bunyan, but also some contemporary renowned authors, such as the poet Ruth Pitter. Naomi Walford's two Martinson translations are parts of a third category of the publisher's specialties: translated highbrow literature. *Cape Farewell* and *Flowering Nettle* stand side by side with Homer, Nikolai Gogol, and Heinrich Heine as the two only Scandinavian works published by Cresset in the 1930s. When Martinson's narratives are moved from Bonniers to Cresset Press, their distributional contexts change from a wide interest in contemporary domestic culture to a particular curiosity for old and foreign literature.

This change is even more significant in the case of Mary Sandbach's translation of Eyvind Johnson's breakthrough novel, *Nu var det 1914*. Since its first publication in 1934, Johnson's autobiographical novel had become a standard modern classic in recent Swedish literary history, frequently used as mandatory reading in schools, not only to provide knowledge of twentieth-century literature, but also to teach domestic history and politics. Furthermore, when Adam Books published Sandbach's translation *1914* in 1970, Johnson had become a member of the Swedish Academy and had published several novels in a grand, learned format, to great domestic acclaim. Two of these, *Strändernas svall* (*Return to Ithaca*, 1952) and *Hans nådes tid* (*The Days of His Grace*, 1968) had also been translated into English. Adam Books, however, was a very small publisher, specializing in original and translated poetry as well as translated non-fiction on art and literature. Just a couple of years after publishing *1914*, the company shut down, probably vanquished by bigger companies in the hardening publishing climate in the 1970s UK.

When the works of Ivar Lo-Johansson, Jan Fridegård, and Moa Martinson were translated into English in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, their distributional patterns were just as minorized as Eyvind Johnson's *Nu var det 1914* and *1914*, but in somewhat different ways. When Lo-Johansson's *Lyckan* was published as *Bodies of Love* by the London publisher Souvenir Press in 1971, it moved from the mainstream press Bonniers to a vanguard and radical publishing context. To this day, Souvenir Press presents itself as a "fiercely independent" publisher providing "an eclectic mixture of titles that aim to challenge received wisdom" ("Souvenir Press"; "About Souvenir Press"). The independent and eclectic nature of the publisher was confirmed when I ordered *Bodies of Love* in the British Library in 2013. To collect this erotic book, I had to leave the "Humanities 1 Reading Room," where I had received and read all the other translations, and go to the room for "Rare Books & Music." In this smaller reading room, I had to stay at a very special desk while reading Lo-Johansson's *Bodies of Love*, permanently monitored by the librarian. Apparently, I had ordered a book of highly dubious pornography, and I was not trusted to be alone with it.

Later Lo-Johansson translations have undergone a different kind of minorization. When *Godnatt, jord* and *Bara en mor*—both modern classics in Swedish literary history—became *Breaking Free* and *Only a Mother* in 1990 and 1991, they were pub-

lished and distributed to the US public by the University of Nebraska Press. From the commercial, mainstream Bonniers, the novels had moved to “a nonprofit scholarly and general interest press” (“University of Nebraska Press”), to quote the publisher’s homepage. The publisher “extends the University’s mission of teaching, research, and service” (“University of Nebraska Press”) by marketing, distributing, and using literature that exists side by side with the profit-driven system of commercial publishing houses. This change from a major commercial agent to a non-profit and partly state-funded organization aiming for specific readerships in an educational ambition also informs Robert E. Bjork’s translations of Jan Fridegård’s 1930s trilogy on Lars Hård at the University of Nebraska Press in the 1980s and Margaret S. Lacy’s translations of Moa Martinson’s novels at the Feminist Press, an imprint of the City University of New York, several years later.

A less radical but still significant minorization effect occurred when Naomi Walford’s translation of *Kap Farvål!* was published in the US by G.P. Putnam’s Sons. 60 Putnam’s is a larger publisher than Cresset Press, but its position on the American book market in the 1930s cannot be compared with Bonniers’s centrality in Sweden. At that time, Putnam must be categorized as a medium-sized publishing house, having enjoyed quite a success in 1927 with Charles Lindbergh’s autobiographical *We*.

A few of the Anglophone publishers in this material are closer to Bonniers’ Swedish position. In 1955, Jonathan Cape published Maurice Michael’s translation of Harry Martinson’s 1948 novel *Vägen till Klockrike* (*The Road*), and the first English renditions of Vilhelm Moberg’s work—Edwin Björkman’s translations *Memory of Youth* and *The Earth Is Ours*—were published in 1937 and 1940 by Simon & Schuster, which also published Moberg’s tetralogy on Swedish emigrants a decade later. Neither Jonathan Cape nor Simon & Schuster were absolutely dominant publishers in their respective book markets in the 1950s, but both of them were definitely major players. When it comes to the centrality of their publishers, these translations are exceptions, but, as single titles, *The Road*, *Memory of Youth*, *The Earth Is Ours*, and Gustaf Lannestock’s translations *The Emigrants*, *Unto a Good Land*, *The Settlers*, and *The Last Letter Home* never became as widely distributed, discussed, or read as their source texts; far from it. Vilhelm Moberg was very optimistic when Lannestock’s four translations were about to be launched, but he was disappointed when he saw the humble sales and experienced the novels’ limited recognition in the USA (Liljestrand 192-193).

The Emigrants, *Unto a Good Land*, *The Settlers*, and *The Last Letter Home* have been reissued several times in the USA since the 1950s, but from the 1990s onwards it is no longer Simon & Schuster but the Minnesota Historical Society Press that publishes and distributes Lannestock’s translations. In this case, the novels have undergone quite a radical minorization too. Unlike the nationally central Bonniers and Simon & Schuster, the Minnesota Historical Society Press has a regional scope and aim. In their publications, Swedish working-class fiction is distributed as a part

of a regional interest, particularly in connection with the history of Scandinavian immigration to Minnesota. The earliest proletarian fiction's address to a particular reader has returned, even if this later particular reader belongs to another kind of minority.

The restricted reach of Cresset Press, Putnam's, Adam Books, the University of Nebraska Press, and the Minnesota Historical Society Press means these English translations are distributed as special interest books. To be reached and attracted by these books, target readers need to be acquainted with specific minor circles and have a strong interest in the topics of the novels. Apart from a few exceptions, these Swedish working-class novels are simply not detectable in the dominant literary culture. This stands in contrast with the more recent translation flow from Swedish to English since the 2000s, in which Nordic noir thrillers have become part of mainstream literary culture (Edfeldt et al. 2017).

THEMATIC MINORIZATION

The recontextualization of these novels from dominant Swedish positions to minor positions in the British and American literary cultures has thematic consequences. This is not to say that anything is altered *per se* in the texts themselves, but that they are read differently, and that different readings identify different themes. Thematic minorization is thus a kind of receptive minorization. In their new contexts, these narratives are understood from new perspectives, a process that often involves minorization because it reduces the regional diversity present in the source culture and homogenizes it in a way that renders it more easily digestible for foreign readers. By obfuscating this diversity, minorization reinforces the crude opposition between the source and target cultures that structures traditional discourses on translation and common perceptions of intercultural differences, making the two poles seem further away than they really are.

Moberg's national emigration narrative, for example, becomes a distinctly more specific immigration story when read from a US perspective. Whereas Moberg's grand story functions as a national Swedish epic on emigration, it contributes to a particular, and minor, aspect of the US immigration narrative: Scandinavian migrants in Minnesota. For a Swedish understanding of the series, the first book is pivotal. Set in the province of Småland in southern Sweden, this first volume depicts mid-nineteenth-century Sweden as a country of poverty and religious oppression. Anchored in this nationally coded historiographic dimension, the whole tetralogy becomes a story of escape. An American reading of the series is probably more focused on where the characters end up after their dramatic Atlantic crossing: Minnesota. Moberg's depiction of the economic, social, and cultural structures that nineteenth-century Minnesota has to offer the Scandinavian newcomers is part of a broader US tradition of immigration stories, including Willa Cather's novels on Scandinavian settlers

in the Midwest, and Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, on Lithuanian immigrants in the Chicago meat industry. The Swedish emigrant story becomes thus an American immigrant story.

Another example of a thematic downsizing is to be found in Eyvind Johnson's 1914 and its protagonist, Olof. Isolated on the autumnal potato fields in northern Sweden, the young farmhand Olof is ignorant of the war going on in central Europe. For a Swedish reader, this ignorance enhances the theme of alienation. Olof is stuck on the desolate, cold field, searching for the last remnants of potatoes long after the harvest people have returned to their homes. He is trapped on the outskirts of the world, too remote from everything and everyone to be able to change his situation. News from the war comes to him through outdated scraps of newspapers blowing in the wind over the fields, and he is not sure of how to interpret these fragments. In the British English translation, by contrast, the novel's title denotes a time in history when millions of young working-class men were forced to cross the English Channel and get
 62 killed en masse at the front. From this perspective, Olof's non-participation in these world events may very well be seen as a lucky stroke of God's grace. He is spared, and when the war ends he will have the opportunity to get on with his life, unlike so many of his fellow British proletarians. For a British reader, then, Olof's remoteness does not seem so miserable after all. The cultural recontextualization of the story diminishes and hence minorizes his problem.

This thematic minorization does not only occur on the levels of characterization and motifs, but also in relation to the cultural and social space in which the novels are set, Sweden. Most of the source texts have very distinct regional settings. Johnson's autobiographical coming-of-age story is set in the northern province of Norrbotten, and Moberg's characters have almost always had roots in the southern province of Småland. Harry Martinson's novels are most often set in Blekinge, Moa Martinson's in Östergötland, Ivar Lo-Johansson's in Södermanland, and Jan Fridegård's in Uppland. These settings are easily identified by Swedish readers, by way of direct geographical references or by the use of dialect. Many Anglophone readers, on the other hand, will have significant problems identifying these regional references. But do they have to? No, not really. International readers will understand the setting differently through a process of zooming-out: what appears as a regional trait from a Swedish perspective, appears as a generally Swedish phenomenon for the reader in translation. The particular regional spaces depicted in the novels are thus replaced by a common, more generalized Swedish space (see Tenngart, "Dislocated Vernacular").

Harry Martinson's novel *Nässlorna blommar* features an abundance of proper names of towns, villages, lakes, forests, and rivers. Most of these names refer to geographical phenomena in the province of Blekinge in southeastern Sweden, but some of them signify places in other Swedish regions, while others refer to specific places in other Scandinavian countries or to places farther away from the protagonist's home. Most Swedish readers know most of the names, and if they are not familiar with a particular reference, they can safely conclude that it refers to a tiny

geographical space in Blekinge. In a British understanding of Naomi Walford's translation *Flowering Nettle*, however, most of these specific geographical references lose their specific meanings. Average British readers are unable to distinguish between local places and other Swedish places—and probably several references to other Scandinavian localities too—turning the richly stratified and nuanced geography of the novel into a flat Swedish landscape. It should be noted that Walford's translation is very loyal to Martinson's geographical accuracy. The translator keeps almost every single national, regional, and local reference. Although *Flowering Nettle* includes the same abundance of geographical proper names as *Nässlorna blomma*, these references have a different effect for an Anglophone reader who is not familiar with Scandinavian, Swedish in general, or southeastern Swedish geographies.

Another example of this zooming-out effect is evident when comparing Eyvind Johnson's *Nu var det 1914* to Mary Sandbach's translation *1914*. The novel is set in the very northern parts of Sweden, and from a central-Swedish perspective Johnson's frequent references to "up here" denote the cold, northern province of Norrland. From a British perspective, however, "up here" tends to mean a much larger geographic space. The domestically Swedish prototypical notions of Norrland are probably quite similar to international perceptions and representation of Sweden. Norrland is for Stockholm what Sweden—or even, perhaps, Scandinavia as a whole—is for London: a wintery landscape. From a British perspective, then, the cold, dark, and remote "up here" refers to Sweden rather than to a particular part of that country.

This "Swedification" (Tengart, "Dislocated Vernacular" 8) of the novels' setting also occurs in the details of the translated texts. The Swedish authors' frequent use of dialect is generally adjusted by the English translators into a geoculturally neutral sociolect. Regional colloquialisms thus become a nationally Swedish idiom that is more or less similar across the different books. One example is Moa Martinson's heavy use of colloquial language in *Kvinnor och äppelträd*, which Margaret S. Lacy refuses to flatten in her English translation. Therefore, Lacy keeps Martinson's frequent use of the colloquial Swedish filler "ja" throughout her text, in the dialogue as well as in the anonymous, third-person narrator's voice. By putting the short Swedish word in italics, Lacy highlights her own "foreignizing" translation strategy (Venuti 20) and continuously reminds the readers that the novel takes place somewhere else. But "ja" is a common colloquial filler all over Sweden, and is not connected to any region and dialect. Whereas the little word functions as a generally Swedish colloquial element among Martinson's strong use of Östergötland dialect, it is a regionally neutral colloquial element in Lacy's *Women and Appletrees*. This way, the setting of the narrative is displaced and zoomed out from Martinson's Östergötland to Lacy's Sweden.

Source text stories about regions thus become target text stories about a whole country. When the narratives are set in a country rather than in a particular part of that country, the culturally specific phenomena depicted represent a larger cultural unit. This larger cultural space is then minorized by way of generalization in the

translation. Sweden comes forth as more streamlined, less nuanced, and less complex than in the original source texts.

PERITEXTUAL MINORIZATION

These general ideas of Sweden are often confirmed and enhanced by the peritexts (Genette). On the sleeve of Mary Sandbach's translation *1914*, for example, Eyvind Johnson's novel is presented as follows: "Finally, the novel describes the way of life of a whole remote country, with its merciless winters and its eerie light summer nights, with its spiritual and material poverty softened and ennobled by a basic human decency" (Johnson). In one sentence, the publisher manages to include a whole range of very distinct ideas of what Sweden as a whole is supposed to be. From their central position in London, Adam Books offers insights into this remote country, its weather, 64 light conditions, economy, spiritual well-being, and human qualities, and in a way that is not just specific to the time in which the events of the novel take place, but transcends temporal boundaries.

This notion of the cultural centre as having complete knowledge of the qualities of the periphery is most distinctly manifested in the many footnotes of Rochelle Wright's and Robert E. Bjork's translations of Ivar Lo-Johansson's novels. In *Only a Mother*, Bjork adds thirty-two footnotes that confirm the academic and educational ambitions of the publisher, the University of Nebraska Press. Through these notes, Bjork guides his readers through the Swedish cultural landscape, explaining seasonal feasts and traditions, everyday behaviour, words and idioms, and references in the novel to Swedish food and drink. In her translation *Breaking Free*, Rochelle Wright adds even more footnotes. In her fifty-four commentaries at the end of the book, Wright enlightens the American reader about all kinds of Swedish phenomena. Every single cultural or societal tradition hinted at by Lo-Johansson becomes explainable and translatable, so that Sweden can be summarized and understood. In a note to Ivar Lo-Johansson's *Only a Mother*, for instance, translator Robert E. Bjork explains:

Lutfisk: A traditional Swedish Christmas dish made of salted and dried stockfish soaked in a solution of lime, soda, and water for several days. On Christmas Eve, it is boiled and served with a white sauce. (Lo-Johansson 487)

In this detailed explanation of a quite insignificant reference in the novel, Bjork adopts the role of a cultural cicerone, guiding the reader through the cultural landscape of Sweden. An important detail is the present tense. The novel is set in the first decade of the twentieth century, but it seems, in the endnote, as if the exact custom of preparing and eating lutfisk has prevailed ever since, untouched by time.

Another special kind of minorization is to depict the specific, remote place with a map. When urban and rural landscapes are conventionalized through cartographic signs, the foreign piece of land is made lucid, possible to overview, and manageable.

Such a map is included in Robert E. Bjork's translation of Jan Fridegård's trilogy on Lars Hård. Right in the middle of *Jacob's Ladder & Mercy*, Fridegård's fiction is interrupted by a rudimentary map of central Stockholm, with seven numbered dots indicating important buildings and addresses. The Swedish capital is reduced to its most central parts, a few written street names, and seven urban spots highlighted as especially interesting in the context of Fridegård's story.

The tendency to reduce the source culture into a manageable stereotypical or prototypical unit is also evident in introductions and afterwords, often written by the translators themselves. In presenting the novels and the novelists, translators tend to link them to source-culture phenomena that British and American readers already know. This sometimes unavoidable pedagogic strategy often leads to a very general notion of Swedish culture, society, and history. Moa Martinson's *Kvinnor och äppelträd*, for example, is presented by Margaret S. Lacy in her afterword as being "as arresting as Ingmar Bergman's *Dance of Death* in *The Seventh Seal*" (M. Martinson 207). Most Swedish readers would have difficulties understanding this comparison, given the distance between the objects compared. The self-taught writer of realist novels on the everyday struggle of working-class women has little in common with a middle-class director of avant-garde auteur films. The comparison fusions very disparate source-culture phenomena into a unified cultural space, evening out the source-culture periphery in a way that reinforces the hierarchical cultural relation between the USA and Sweden.

DEPOLITICIZATION AND REPOLITICIZATION

According to Itamar Even-Zohar, every national literary market consists of many different systems with often quite different logics and functions working side by side (42-44). The translated text occupies a new position in a complex and multilayered polysystem, filling a gap in the overall market, contributing with something that did not exist there before. This means that a migrated literary text often has a completely different function in the target culture than it has in its source culture (Even-Zohar 51). English translations of Swedish working-class fiction illustrate this mechanism of literary exchange very well.

Two narratives by Harry Martinson and a trilogy by Vilhelm Moberg had been translated into English up until 1940, resulting in two British and three American editions, respectively. It would not be unreasonable to assume that these books became part of the strongly politicized contexts that characterized the UK and the US literary markets at the time. The economic depression had resulted in a distinct boost for Socialist literature, published by or in close contact with labour unions and Marxist political parties. Perhaps surprisingly, however, Martinson's *Flowering Nettle* and *Cape Farewell* and Moberg's *Memory of Youth* and *The Earth Is Ours* were not published and distributed in these contexts. Martinson's UK publisher, Cresset

Press, had issued some radical books, but was not particularly active in the powerful wave of British 1930s proletarian fiction. Instead, it focused on small-scale quality texts from foreign cultural traditions. Along the same lines, neither of the two American publishers of Moberg's work, G.P. Putnam's Sons and Simon & Schuster, had a political profile, even though the 1930s were known in the US as the "Red decade" due to the range of influential proletarian novels by authors such as Agnes Smedley, Michael Gold, Jack Conroy, and Tom Kromer (Balthaser 31).

The 1930s translations of Swedish working-class fiction, thus, do not enter the target cultures' equivalents of the Swedish working-class literary system. They are not marketed as working-class literature with a general significance for a "universal" readership, but as literature from another place with a more limited meaning. This change in distribution has thematic consequences. The class components present in the Swedish literary context become cultural elements in the target cultures. Swedish working-class literature thus becomes a specific kind of "world literature": not in the sense that it thematizes general human conditions of social struggle, but in the sense that it enables readers to go beyond their own cultural horizons. Following Gisèle Sapiro's argument in her article "Les collections de littérature étrangère," these translations result in a depoliticized particularism and not a politicized universalism (204-209).

A similar depoliticization occurs in the translations issued by the University of Nebraska Press in the 1980s and 1990s, albeit in a context that is historically more distant to the class struggles at the beginning of the twentieth century. Jan Fridegård's trilogy about the young farmhand who ends up in jail and Ivar Lo-Johansson's novels about the economic, social, and cultural conditions of rural workers undergo what can be called a process of anthropologization in providing insights into a very particular kind of injustice rather than an example of a general class struggle. In her first endnote to Ivar Lo-Johansson's *Breaking Free*, for example, translator Rochelle Wright explains the "statare" system, in which farmhands were only paid in lodgings and food, not money. This was a particularly Swedish system until it was abandoned in the 1940s, but it is also a poignant example of the worldwide oppression of underprivileged classes, which is not discussed in the long and detailed note (Lo-Johansson 453).

In all these examples, narratives that are particularly political in Swedish contexts are particularly depoliticized, rather than politicized for a broader, universal audience, in the Anglophone translations. This depoliticization is an important aspect of the general minorization process that this kind of literature as a whole goes through. Read from UK and US positions as cultural rather than social narratives, the novels' significance shifts from contributing to a central political discourse to giving thematically restricted anthropological insights into a distant cultural periphery.

In spite of this general depoliticization, some translations are, rather, repoliticized: they are charged with a different political significance in the Anglophone target culture. When Moa Martinson is introduced to American and British readers in the

1980s with Margaret S. Lacy's translations *Women and Appletrees* and *My Mother Gets Married*, the Swedish writer is not positioned as a working-class novelist. In her afterword, Lacy mentions Martinson's working-class colleagues Harry Martinson, Ivar Lo-Johansson, and Jan Fridegård, who are presented as male hurdles for her literary ambitions rather than fellow radicals with a common political goal. For Lacy, Moa Martinson is first and foremost a feminist writer, who also happens to be Swedish and proletarian. This confirms a pattern identified by John Lennon and Magnus Nilsson in their comparative analysis of *My Mother Gets Married* and the novel *Daughter of Earth* by the American writer Agnes Smedley: "the (limited) attention Martinson receives outside of Sweden seems to emphasize her gender politics over class" (20).

Lacy's view of Moa Martinson is strongly supported by the publishing context. Issued by the American Feminist Press and the British Women's Press, these translations are distributed from and within a cosmopolitan feminist network. Her novels take part in the publishers' general project to "eliminate sexual stereotypes," contributing to "the rediscovery of the history of women and the emergence of a more humane society" (M. Martinson, *My Mother* 289). Through the translation processes, Martinson's novels are lifted up from their firm position in Swedish literary history as proletarian narratives to a cosmopolitan context of women writers from different parts of the world. Her narratives contribute, with a Swedish and a working-class perspective, to a vastly significant global issue. The paintings used on the book covers underline this cosmopolitan ambition: *Women and Appletrees* is illustrated with "Baby Reaching for an Apple" by the American artist Mary Cassatt, while *My Mother Gets Married* contains an image of "Mädchenbildnis" by the German artist Paula Modersohn-Becker.

This repoliticization leads to a majorization rather than a minorization of the novels. Although the move from the nationally central publisher Bonniers to the small US and UK feminist publishers goes hand in hand with a minorization effect in terms of distribution and national position, when it comes to political significance and scope the change from Swedish proletarianism to international feminism can be viewed as an enlargement. Martinson's novels add both a female perspective to Swedish working-class conditions as well as a Swedish outlook to global gender issues.

Similarly, Vilhelm Moberg's four novels about Swedish immigrants in Minnesota have quite a complex political significance in the Swedish 1950s. On the one hand, they confirm the hegemonic rags-to-riches story of post-WWII Sweden, but on the other they include a harsh critique of collectivism and a tendency to fear authorities that clearly speaks to Moberg's contemporary Sweden. Moberg was a liberal individualist and a republican, and his four novels are to no small extent a celebration of the USA. This way, Moberg's tetralogy gains new political connotations when read from the perspective of the American target culture. In Gustaf Lannestock's US translations, Moberg's critique of his homeland is overshadowed by his celebration of American individualist freedom, a change tangibly manifested in the English title of

the second volume, where Moberg's original *Invandrarna* (literally *The Immigrants*) has become *Unto a Good Land*.

The repoliticization of Moberg's novels does not lead to any significant change in scope and position in itself. Moberg's four-volume story situates the Swedish national narrative in the context of the wider world, while in the English translation the Swedish experience becomes embedded in a national frame, losing its broader significance. In Sweden, his protagonists represent the migration of many Swedes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, who left their impoverished homeland in search of a better life on the other side of the Atlantic. When it was published in Sweden between 1949 and 1959, Moberg's tetralogy immediately became the story about the vast Swedish emigration to the US. The American translations, in contrast, offer a culturally as well as historically specific minor perspective on the major historical narrative of immigration into North America from the *Mayflower* onwards. Unlike Moa Martinson's two novels, the repoliticization of Moberg's story takes

68 place within the larger frame of translational minorization.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study of British and American translations of Swedish proletarian novels produces several observations that are applicable to other literatures with a similar status. Venkat B. Mani defines "bibliomigrancy" as the "physical and virtual migration of literature as books from one part of the world to another," highlighting how, in this process, readers of texts in translation are not just passive recipients, but actively "shape and inform bibliomigrancy," along with translators (10). The status of the cultures involved in this process of "bibliomigrancy" and its effects on the new identities of literary works is one that deserves more attention. When literary works migrate from semi-central to central or hyper-central literary cultures, they tend to undergo a process of minorization. The translations are issued and distributed by smaller and less central publishers in the target cultures, and their themes tend to be more particular and restricted. Another minorization effect affects the geo-cultural space depicted in the narratives. By zooming out and enlarging the scope of the source culture setting, translations tend to shrink the complexity of a whole national culture into a limited set of prototypical ideas. Several of these effects result in a reduction of the literary works' political charge. Most of the novels studied here have gone through a process of depoliticization when translated from Swedish to English. In some cases, however, these translations include distinct exceptions to this minorization tendency and tend to repoliticize the original texts, a new meaning that may or may not lead to a majorization of the translated work's thematic content and significance. As often the case, translational effects prove somewhat ambiguous, but not without distinct patterns.

Do the English transformations of Swedish working-class fiction, then, exemplify

a general principle instructing the logic of intercultural communication? To be sure, they confirm Johan Heilbron's observation that the literary import to hyper-central and central languages from semi-peripheral and peripheral literary languages is not only small in numbers but also narrow in kind (438). The very restricted literary influences from the peripheral to central literary spaces are thus not only quantitative but also qualitative: the periphery is seen as much less nuanced and complex from the point of view of the centre than the centre is seen from the periphery, a pattern of distinct imbalance that tends to reinforce a hierarchical distribution of stereotypes.

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70

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