Translation between Cultures: Domestication and Censorship as Guiding Forces in Strindberg’s *Giftas* into English

**Introduction**

This study will focus on Ellie Schleussner’s translation – *Married* (1913) – of August Strindberg’s collection of short stories, *Giftas I, II* (1884, 1886). It will demonstrate that the original has undergone many changes – some because of the fact that Schleussner’s translation has in turn been based on another translation – Emil Schering’s *Heiraten* (1910) – rather than on the Swedish original, and some because Schleussner’s translation has been subjected to severe censorship (by whom remains to be seen, to date), which thoroughly undermines Strindberg’s argumentative force. For instance, this force, or power of persuasion, can be seen in the way Strindberg deals with a core concept in *Giftas*: his naturalist notions that man is an animal (Lagercrantz p. 147). He supports these both by directly stating this very fact in *Giftas*, but also by using quite explicit sexual descriptions as examples of man being steered by sexual desires, in this way proving his naturalist claims. When these parts are omitted or rewritten, the arguments that Strindberg puts forward to prove his thesis are removed or weakened.

The study will also discuss the reasons for the book’s being censored, show how this censorship has been carried out and demonstrate how the German translation has influenced Schleussner’s translation. It will finally argue that although a translation showing the Swedish original much more fidelity was published in 1973 (Mary Sandbach: *Getting Married*), Schleussner’s translation is still given a platform from which it can exercise an influence on the way Strindberg’s authorship is regarded in the English-speaking world today. In order to achieve the above, this study will be based on a combination of both reception theory and translation studies, but, depending on future findings, most likely with a major focus on the latter.

**Domestication and Censorship**

Most scholars today would probably agree that literary translation requires more than just the direct transferring of a stream of words from a source language (SL) into the target language (TL) while only focussing on maintaining good grammar and semantic fidelity. Many translators, especially at the time of Schleussner’s translation, claim that in order for the translation to work, translators also have to take into consideration the various cultural differences between the source text (ST) and target text (TT) that come into play during such a transaction (see for instance Bassnett pp. 2-10, 38-41, Munday pp. 11, 13). In order to ensure that the reader of the target text is given the same chance to interpret and understand the TT as is the reader of the ST, the translator can make use of “naturalisation” (e.g. Steiner p. 195) or “domestication” (e.g. Lewis p. 162). This means that in order to translate certain terms from the source
culture (SC) into the target culture (TC), the translator often feels compelled to add explanations, or, if there is no real equivalent of the source term in the TL, replace it with another term that has the same or a similar function, or connotation, as the term to be translated (Bassnett pp. 37-41).

However, domestication may sometimes have slightly different goals than those above. On occasion, as is the case in this study, a ST may bring up words or actions that are not culturally or socially acceptable in the TT culture. The translator is then faced with a professional dilemma: should fidelity to the ST be the guiding line in his/her work, or, for instance, should he listen to his editor’s demands to translate within the framework of what is considered acceptable by the TC (Munday p. 137)? In one way, the latter practice could also be regarded as an act of domestication. However, one should here distinguish between the different driving forces behind a translation. For instance, a professional translator would normally apply domestication when he considers it to be the best way to stay true to the original text (i.e. his goal is to make the TT reader see what the author meant the ST reader to see). Nevertheless, there may be other driving forces behind a translation: exterior powers – in the forms of powerful authorities laying down prohibiting rules and regulations, causing editors to try to follow these in the supervision of their translators – force another goal upon the translator – one that has got nothing to do with fidelity to the ST, but only has the TC (target culture) in mind. This type of domestication has had to give way to pure “censorship”. Celia Marshik quotes Sturge (2004) when providing a definition of “censorship”:

Censorship is a form of manipulative rewriting of discourses by one agent or structure over another agent or structure, aiming at filtering the stream of information from one source to another. Because translation often, though not always, makes the source culture visible within, and accessible to, the target culture, translated texts tend to attract censorial intervention; they voice the presence of the Other from within. (Marshik p. 3).

The fact that external forces often play an important part in the way the final translation turns out is stressed by Gideon Toury: ”Even in the case of the most prestigious translators, whose translational products may well have been tampered with least of all, one can never be sure just how many hands were actually involved in the establishment of the translation as we have it […]” (p. 183). Naturally, also the translator himself may decide to alter the TT for personal ideological reasons.

**Point of Departure**

This study will take as its point of departure a comparison between August Strindberg’s two-volume work *Giftas I, II* (1884, 1886), and Ellie Schleussner’s English translation of the same work: *Married* (1913). Comparisons will be made with the 1973 translation of *Giftas – Getting Married* – by Mary Sandbach, and they will show that this translation has restored whatever was censored out in Schleussner’s translation. Moreover, as it turns out that *Married*

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1 For simplicity, the translator and the reader will hereafter be referred to as he.
was not translated from a Swedish original, but from a German translation by Emil Schering – *Heiraten* (1910), this translation will also be part of the comparison. Whereas *Heiraten* only covers 20 of the altogether 30 short-stories in *Giftas* – having omitted to author’s foreword as well – *Married* only covers 19 of the 20 short-stories in *Heiraten*, with an addition of the one-act play *Creditors* (*Fordringsägare*). To date, I have found two translations of *Fordringsägare* into German before Schleussner’s translation in 1913: the first one by Erich Holm, (*Gläubiger*, 1893), and the second one by the same name, translated by Emil Schering (1902). However, it has yet been impossible to determine whether either of these is the original used by Schleussner, as both are very true to the original text, and the very many deviations in Schleussner’s translation cannot be traced back to either of the two. To date, it seems just as likely that Schleussner has been using the Swedish original for these.

The reasons for this choice of work are manifold: not only was the topic of *Giftas* – the so-called “woman question” – a hot topic even at the time of publication, which meant that Strindberg was heavily debated as well in Europe as in the USA (Anon. “A Literary Woman Hater” (1899), Mauritzson (1912-13)), but books and articles are still being published on the topic (Compare for instance Gordon (1998), Cavallin & Westerståhl Stenport (2006), Fahlgren (2009) and Schideler (2009)).

Moreover, as Schleussner – the translator of *Married* – has had to deal with the problems of translating not from the original but from a German translation of the original, it is possible to expect there being some added difficulties in her tasks as a translator. Therefore, an inventory of what these problems constitute and how they have affected the English translation is logically called for.

Furthermore, as Schleussner has had to translate a text that was not only charged with heresy, but that would also be considered shocking to the readers of post-Victorian England – due to Strindberg’s explicit ways of proving his naturalist ideas through intimate descriptions of sexual acts and the female body – investigating the problems faced by the translator, making an inventory of how these translational problems have been technically dealt with by Schleussner, and discussing the effect of the above on the English translation might be expected to contribute to the scholarly field known as translation studies.

**General Outline**

Hence, this study will first describe the background to Strindberg’s authorship and the place of *Married* in the debate surrounding “the woman question”. It will also provide a background for the social and cultural norms prevalent in Sweden and the Post-Victorian society of 1913, and define the relevant terminology of translation and censorship. It will then be divided into four main parts.

Through examples, *part one* will argue that the 1913 translation has been influenced by the German translation from 1910, demonstrate how the German translation has affected the English one and show how many translations would not have occurred if Schleussner had had access to the Swedish original instead. The reasons for Schleussner’s choice of using a German original will be investigated. Moreover, partly based on correspondence between Strindberg and
Schering [if I can find any], there will also be a discussion on why certain short-stories were selected for translation and others were not, and based on correspondence between Schleussner and her editor [if I can find any], this study will also find out what forces were behind the final, censored, version of *Married*.

In *part two*, there will be focus on the main aim of this study: to provide an analysis of the various linguistic methods used by the translator in order to avoid rendering the taboo words and sentences that describe actions and phenomena not allowed to appear in print when *Married* was published in post-Victorian England.

*Part three* will present an overview of the views on morality and the Church in England in the post-Victorian era. Through comparing what is known about British censorship at the time of publication with those concrete formulations that have been censored and those that have been allowed to remain, part three will also provide an understanding of the rules and regulations – both written and unwritten – which dominated post-Victorian England as regards censorship. Furthermore, this part will demonstrate how Schleussner’s translation alters Strindberg’s text, undermining his argumentative force. Comparisons will be made with the 1973 translation by Sandbach, whose translation will often be used to show how the translation could have looked had it not been censored.

Part three will also compare the exercised censorship in *Married* and censorship in other translations of Strindberg’s works into English at the time of Strindberg’s death, as well as compare with how other naturalist authors, or authors whose explicit sexual descriptions might be considered shocking by the post-Victorian readership/audience, have been translated into English. Provided that the material studied provides a solid foundation for it, there will also be an attempt to assess how the censorship prevalent in Schleussner’s translation may have influenced the way in which Strindberg’s *Married* was perceived in the English-speaking world. A study will be conducted of reviews, literary histories and so on, especially from the time of publication. Furthermore, by comparing *Married* and the translations of *Giftas* into German (*Heiraten* (1910)) and French (*Les Mariés* (1885)), taking into account the relative success Strindberg met with in France, and, especially, in Germany, this study will argue that it may not be Strindberg’s shocking ways of expressing his ideas that paved the way for his lesser success in the English-speaking world, but possibly the opposite: it may be the lack of these in the English translation from 1913 (and, possibly, other contemporary English translations) that has thoroughly weakened Strindberg’s argumentative force, thus undermining his genius, and that it is not until the more modern and accurate translations appeared from 1949 and onwards that the view of Strindberg in the English-speaking world has had a chance to be vindicated (compare France p. 581). If only little ground for this argument is found, this section will be included in part three – otherwise, it may come to form a part of its own.

Moreover, this part will argue that since few contemporary readers share the moral norms of 1913, or even know of them or the fact that they led to censorship (Marshik 203), reading *Married* will not give them a better understanding of what was so shocking that Strindberg was even prosecuted for heresy – especially not since the particular paragraph in question also happens to be fundamentally censored.
Finally, despite Sandbach’s translation from 1973 showing much more fidelity to the original, part four will argue that because of the plethora of current publications of Schleussner’s old translation (found at Amazon, at Project Gutenberg and many other places on the Internet), where nothing is mentioned about the original being a German translation, nor about Married only covering a selection of 19 of the original 30 short-stories (the 20th being a translation of Schering’s German translation of Strindberg’s one-act play “Fordringsägare”) or the fact that this book has been heavily censored, this ensures that the Schleussner translation from 1913 continues to convey a false image of Strindberg’s authorship and ideas long after Sandbach’s translation was first published. There will also be an analysis of what forces make it possible to continue selling the old translation alongside the new and better one.

An overview of my thesis paper looks as follows:

**Introduction** *(statement of thesis and method, etc.)*

Translation theory – definition of terms *(domestication, censorship* etc.)*

Background to Strindberg in Sweden and the rest of Europe – The Modern Breakthrough. What Strindberg wrote and how he was received

1. **Translating a Translation: Desired and Undesired Effects**

   Examples of the German translation having had effects on the English one

   Discussion on what this does to the final translation *(pros?)* and cons

2. **The Application of Translation Methods in Cultural Censorship: An Inventory**

   Survey of related research

   Circumlocution – examples and discussion *(avoiding taboo words by rephrasing the sentence)*

   Replacement – examples and discussion *(one taboo word replaced by a milder such or by one that completely changes the entire meaning of the sentence.)*

   Omission – examples and discussion *(omitting single words, entire clauses, sentences or even paragraphs)*
3. Cultural Context and Censorship

Background to views on morality and the Church in Great Britain, esp. in the post-Victorian era

Background to censorship in G.B. in post-Victorian times

Strindberg’s views on the Church – examples of censorship and its effect upon the message

Strindberg’s naturalist views – examples of censorship and its effect upon the message

The image of Strindberg’s *Married* in post-Victorian England – comparisons with France and Germany – possible reasons for different reception (a short overview of reception theory will precede)

A comparison with other works (by Strindberg and his contemporary naturalist colleagues) translated at the same time as *Married* – both in English and in French and German – to try to find out how wide-spread this censorship was.

4. The Afterlife of Bad Translations
   – How Bad Translations Are Circulated

Schleussner’s censored translation from 1913 being given the chance of continuing to spread misconceptions of Strindberg’s authorship via uncritical copies being promoted by publishers to this very date, and possible effects enabled by this very fact. Comments also on the lack of knowledge among readers as regards the censorship in the post-Victorian era and the effects of this, giving examples from Amazon and other book sellers, where nothing is stated about censorship etc., and comments on Project Gutenberg making the same copy of *Married* available without commenting on the above-mentioned problems

*Married* as an example of a general trend as concerns the above? –

Conclusions?

**Bibliography** – works used and referred to in my writing so far.


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