

Translations *not* in the making? Rejections, disruptions and impasses in translator–publisher correspondence

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Résumé de l'article

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Translations *not* in the making? Rejections, disruptions and impasses in translator–publisher correspondence

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RÉSUMÉ

L'étude se penche sur un phénomène fréquent mais rarement analysé: celui des traductions proposées, rejetées ou mises à mal, dans le travail des traducteurs. Le corpus inclut la correspondance de 64 traducteurs trouvée dans les archives de la maison d'édition finlandaise Werner Söderström (WSOY) et portant sur les années 1880-1940. On traite environ 180 suggestions de traducteurs et d'un nombre presque égal de rejets, découverts dans cette correspondance entre traducteur et éditeur. La recherche s'appuie sur la théorie de l'acteur-réseau; elle se concentre sur les processus émergents et les controverses, explorant tensions et décisions au fur et à mesure qu'elles apparaissent dans l'interaction archivée entre les traducteurs et les éditeurs. Sont ainsi mis en relief le grand nombre de rejets, les divers types de remises en cause dans la réalisation des traductions et la contingence de la traduction comme évènement. L'étude des manières dont les traductions voient le jour – ou pas, comme c'est souvent le cas – déplace l'attention des traductions en tant que produits vers les traductions comme processus: tensions, conflits et impasses, ainsi qu'on va le montrer, constituent une part significative du travail des traducteurs et des éditeurs et sont essentiels pour comprendre le processus de traduction.

ABSTRACT

This is a study of a frequently occurring but seldom studied phenomenon: that of proposed translations, rejections and disruptions in translators' work. The study is based on the correspondence of 64 translators in the archive of the Werner Söderström (WSOY) publishing house in Finland between the 1880s and the 1940s. It deals with around 180 translator suggestions and an almost equal number of rejections discovered in translator–publisher correspondence. The research draws on actor-network theory and its focus is on emergent processes and controversies, exploring the events and decisions as they unfold in the archived interaction between translators and publishers. The large number of rejections, the various kinds of disrupted processes in the making of translations and the contingency of the translation event are set in high relief. Studying the way translations come into being – or do not come into being, as is often the case – shifts the focus from translations as products to the translation event: disruptions and impasses, it will be shown, constitute a significant share of translators' and editors' work and are crucial in understanding the translation process.

RESUMEN

Este estudio aborda un fenómeno frecuente pero muy poco estudiado: aquel de las traducciones propuestas, rechazadas o manipuladas. El corpus incluye la correspondencia de 64 traductores con sus editores, que se encuentra en los archivos de la editorial finlandesa Werner Söderström (WSOY) y se refiere a los años 1880-1940. Con este corpus se procesan alrededor de 180 sugerencias de traductores y un número casi igual de rechazos. La investigación descansa en la teoría de actor-red (ANT); se concentra en los

procesos emergentes y las controversias, indagando en las tensiones y decisiones a medida que aparecen en la interacción archivada entre traductores y editores. De esta manera se ponen de relieve el gran número de rechazos, los distintos tipos de cuestionamiento en la realización de las traducciones, así como la contingencia de la traducción como acontecimiento. Estudiar las maneras en que se publican –o no, como es frecuentemente el caso– las traducciones traslada el centro de atención de las traducciones como productos hacia las traducciones como procesos: tensiones, conflictos e impases, como se mostrará, constituyen una parte significativa del trabajo de los traductores y de los editores, y resultan esenciales para entender el proceso de traducción.

MOTS-CLÉS/KEYWORDS/PALABRAS CLAVE

archives, maison d'édition, suggestions, rejet, ANT

archives, publishing, suggestions, rejection, ANT

archivos, editoriales, sugerencias, rechazos, ANT

1. Introduction

The archives of publishing houses provide the possibility of examining translation not from the point of view of the finished product but from the point of view of the process, of translation being negotiated and texts coming into being (the “translation event,” Toury 1995: 249). The event-oriented view allows to study how translations gradually evolve and how translators then negotiate with other actors. It also sets in high relief the disruptions and impasses that are part of all social action. These impasses are the topic of this article: rejections, delays, unfinished and unpublished translations. If translations form a shadow culture in literary histories (Frank 1998), then unfinished and unpublished translations form the shadow of the shadow. They are worth our attention because they make up a significant share of the work of translators and editors alike; they may reflect an understanding of the different actors with respect to (un)desired works, practices and strategies in translation, but they also highlight the unexpected and the arbitrary, making visible the contingent nature of all action.

This was not, however, the initial aim of this article. Perhaps rather fittingly, the research process itself underwent a similar roundabout way that translators' paths often do, through disruptions and dead ends. Initially, the aim was to shed light on a neglected group: the translators of popular literature. The material chosen for the study, the letters written by translators of popular literature found in the archives of the Werner Söderström publishing house (WSOY) in Finland, proved problematic. Material was scant and difficult to find, and what little there was seemed to speak against the presupposed category of popular literature translators – the very category that was supposed to be the topic of the research. Most translators were not confined to only one genre but regularly dealt with a variety of genres, from detective stories to modern classics and non-fiction, and the treatment of popular literature in the correspondence did not differ from the treatment of other texts. What the material did show, though, was the contingency of translation work, opening up an opportunity for a change of focus.

The nature of the data during the material collection phase thus turned the study into a quest for “translations in the making” (Buzelin 2007), especially of the many unfinished projects that could be detected only in the archive. Sixty-four translators

are studied in this article. This new focus did not actually take anything away from my earlier interest in the issue of neglect as the translators in this study have been a very little studied group. Furthermore, it became possible to study the disruptions and controversies to which the letters attest. Finally, the article continues my earlier line of research into translator archives in Finland (Paloposki 2017), now moving on in time from the 19th to the 20th century. The material proved to be so rich that it became necessary to choose which facet of the translations-in-the-making to focus on. In this article, suggestions, interruptions and delays in translation will be dealt with in detail, while other potential topics will be studied in forthcoming research.

2. Theoretical background, methodological considerations and previous studies

Hélène Buzelin (2005; 2007) introduced Bruno Latour's actor-network theory into translation studies, applying it to an examination of 'translations in the making.' The framework is well suited for the study of publishing house interactions, which Buzelin (2007) sets out to show through ethnographic methods and a focus on everyday negotiations. She stresses the importance of understanding how translated texts come into being and the role the actors play in the negotiations. In historical studies, it is the archived documents that allow us to explore translators' negotiations and add to the knowledge of the emergent practice of translating and its historical roots. This approach also connects translators' work with that of other actors; it "is part of a wider labour conducted by groups of people who must enrol other participants and negotiate their own position in the production of the finished work," writes Tom Boll (2016: 33) in connection with his study on the founding of the Spanish and Latin American Penguin Poetry subseries.

Thus, the focus of this archival work, like that of ethnographic studies, is not on the finished product, and not even only on those processes that are completed, but simply on the work as it unfolds (see also Marin-Lacarta 2019: 29, 33-34). Historical documents also reveal processes that are delayed or aborted. Rejected offers, abrupt endings, and impasses form part of a translator's dealings with the publisher. These ruptures, significant for the understanding of the contingent nature of the processes, can hardly ever be identified through bibliographies and are therefore not immediately available to the researcher: they need to be studied by other means and with other material which, in the case of a historical study, is the archive.

Latour's (2005: 61-62) approach to studying action as it unfolds and Buzelin's and Boll's respective studies are in line with many arguments of Finnish historians on political and scientific debates in 19th century Finland: what needs to be studied is not only the winning arguments or linear developments and advances but also the ruptures, conflicts and contrasts (Huomo 2004: 228; following the history of science paradigm as in Collins and Pinch 2002; Shapin and Schaffer 1985). If the past is seen only as an antecedent of the present, and past events as seamlessly leading to the present moment, we have no framework for understanding chaos, conflicts and impasses (Huomo 2004). Or, in Latour's words, "controversies are not simply a nuisance to be kept at bay, but what allows the social to be established" (Latour 2005: 25).

Jeremy Munday (2014: 77) expresses worry over the "chance survival" of translators' papers, reflecting the generally agreed view on the fragmentary nature of archi-

val documents in addition to their subjectivity and the selectivity with which documents are preserved. Translators' documents are considered harder to locate than authors' documents (or they may even be non-existent). Here, the Finnish data have an obvious advantage. For a small country, Finland has an extensive archival system and sophisticated archival legislation. Finnish translation culture being small and rather young, it is possible to form a fairly comprehensive picture of the history of translation practices, cross-referencing the material in various archives. The publishers' archives house exactly the kinds of papers that were coveted by Munday: documents and letters from "ordinary" translators can be found alongside those from better-known translators, or translators of famous authors. The archives of general publishers also provide clues to a wide range of genres, including non-fiction translation. Translation archives, not surprisingly then, are a growing research area in Finland, and the results have largely been reported in Finnish (and not just by translation studies scholars).

The late 19th to early 20th century was a formative period in which linguistic and literary development was discussed. Taru Nordlund (2018) focuses on language ideologies in the correspondence between three WSOY translators and the publisher. Kaarina Pitkänen-Heikkilä (2018) discusses editorial processes in connection with the creation of scientific terminology in non-fiction translating. Kukku Melkas (2010) studies the prolific author-translator Maila Talvio and the negotiation of fees with her publisher, WSOY. Maarit Leskelä-Kärki (2006) explores the life and work of the three Krohn sisters, who were translators and authors. The archives of twentieth century translators have equally attracted attention: Anu Koivunen (2018) presents a case study of Väinö Jaakkola, a long-standing translator for WSOY. Laura Ivaska (2020) studies the archives of the translator Kyllikki Villa in tracing processes of compilation and/or indirect translation and Hanna Karhu (2010) examines translators' drafts in order to establish translation genealogies. Nestori Siponkoski (2014) explores the correspondence and drafts of a major WSOY translation programme at the beginning of the new millennium: that of retranslating all of Shakespeare's dramas into Finnish, with a view to establishing the negotiations between the different actors concerning the actual translating. Finally, one of my own studies focuses on two different archives: the archive of a major 19th century Finnish publisher and that of a prolific 19th century translator. The materials in these two archives allowed for the study of the negotiations between publishers and translators during the latter half of the 19th century (Paloposki 2017).

3. The WSOY publishing house and the material of the study

The WSOY publishing house, named after its founder Werner Söderström, is generally considered to have begun its activities in 1878, when the then 18-year-old Söderström published the company's first book (which happened to be a translation). WSOY is a household name in Finland: it has been the country's largest publishing house for most of its history,¹ and a general publisher from the start. It publishes a wide range of books covering diverse topics and genres, from school books, manuals and non-fiction to classics, modern and popular literature, both originals and translations (Häggman 2001; 2003). The annual production of new titles rose from one in 1878 to 78 in 1899 (the total for the 19th century was 856 new titles) and then steadily

throughout the 20th century.² Finland is a small market compared to larger European countries and language areas: in 1936, the French publishing house Gallimard published 2200 volumes (Sapiro 2015: 148), while WSOY produced 234 new titles and 156 reprints.³ Yet, for a population barely exceeding three million people,⁴ and in comparison with other Finnish publishing houses, WSOY can be considered a large-scale publisher (Bourdieu 2008).

The WSOY archive, housed in the National Archives of Finland since 2012, amounts to 12.8 shelf metres of material related to the company.⁵ Correspondence between authors and the publishing house (1878 to 2012), so-called “author correspondence,” is contained in 130 boxes, which in turn contain files in alphabetical order of the recipients/writers of the letters. Author correspondence is searchable by author surname through an electronic search facility (there is no separate index or catalogue of letter writers in the database). The results of the search give the start and end years for the correspondence of the particular person, not the number of individual letters or any other metadata. When requesting material, the client gets the box containing this specific author’s correspondence. In my material, the letters to/from a single person never fill the whole box so the reader gets – in the same box – material from other authors as well, those whose names are alphabetically close to the requested author’s surname. This is a feature of the archive that was to prove crucial for the new research design in the present study. A box typically contains correspondence from 15 to 25 people, many of whom are translators, enlarging substantially the scope of the study.

The letter writers and recipients (“authors”) range from aspiring to established Finnish authors, translators and other actors. The latter group includes experts in different fields who were consulted on potential translatable material (content) or on finished translations (language or terminology and strategies). For the early years there are no copies of WSOY’s letters in my material: only received letters dated before 1907 have been archived.

My initial aim had been to study translators of popular literature during an era when light fiction became increasingly popular: 1936 to 1955, from WSOY’s first Agatha Christie translation to the founding of the Finnish Association of Translators and Interpreters (this latter date as a potential indication of the professionalisation of translators).⁶ Out of the 17 translators identified and whose correspondence was archived, only Aune Suomalainen discussed popular literature in any depth in her letters. In many cases, no translation-related issues at all were dealt with in the correspondence. This dead-end necessitated a reformulation of the research questions and research design, and it was the organisation of the archive, which provided me with an alternative focus. The 16 boxes (out of the total of 130 boxes of WSOY correspondence) to which I had been given access contained material on many more translators than the seventeen I had initially identified for the study. I located the correspondence of 64 translators, most of whom have never been studied. Some of them translated anonymously, which hides them from any bibliographic search. Additionally, there were 15 people involved in editorial work, advising or selecting books for translation, or language checking.

Starting with the intention to study specific people, I ended up researching anyone who happened to be *alphabetically* near the originally identified 17 translators. The 16 boxes represent about 12% of all the archived correspondence and present a

cross-section of the archive. In the present article I will focus only on translators, not the 15 other actors involved in some other phases in the production of translations.

Since the letters were organised alphabetically, not chronologically, the original start year of 1936 was abandoned. The first letters in my material now date from 1884. The cut-off year of 1955 was kept, but since there was no relevant material for the last ten years, the last letters in the material are from 1944. The start dates of the correspondence by the 64 translators fall into the following decades (not necessarily coinciding with the first translations made by the person for the company, as not all translations were discussed in the letters):

1880-1889: 4
 1890-1899: 9
 1900-1909: 9
 1910-1919: 13
 1920-1929: 15
 1930-1939: 8
 1940-1944: 6

The correspondence is fairly evenly distributed across the different decades, aside from a slight ‘bulging’ in the 1910s and 1920s. It is to this correspondence that I will now turn, a sample of the correspondence represented by 16 boxes, containing 64 translators’ files at the WSOY publishing company, from 1884-1944.

4. Findings

4.1. *General remarks*

Here, I call translators both those people who offered to translate – whether they ended up translating for WSOY or not – and those who actually translated. The term ‘translator,’ even for those aspiring to be one, must be distinguished from the other actors in the translation process within publishing houses: language checkers, revisers, terminologists, title hunters, readers who recommended (or rejected) books for translation. Further, extending the scope of the term, even to aspiring translators, shows the considerable amount of work – both for translators and for the publishing house – that is part of the publishing business, but mostly conducted behind the scenes.

Indeed, perhaps one of the most striking observations in the material is the many letters from aspiring translators who never ended up translating for WSOY and whose contact with the company may have consisted of a single letter (perhaps not even with a reply from the publisher). Slightly more than half of the studied translators conducted a more prolonged correspondence with the publisher and dealt, in their letters, with more than just one translation, while the rest were ‘one-offs’: translators whose (archived) letters referred to one translation project only, and even this one project may have been rejected. Given the number of one-offs and truncated projects, the material gives a totally different picture of initiating, negotiating and publishing translations than that offered by bibliographies and publishing house histories only. The significance of these aborted processes does not reside in the (non-)impact they had on the company’s output and its potential successes – no translations were produced, no money changed hands, no profit for the company was forthcoming and

no cultural capital either – but in what they reveal about the contingent nature of translating and the irregular fates that translators faced when offering to translate. This uncertainty sets the background for the translators' work and lives (although it must be remarked that it was by no means only translators who led precarious lives – translation could actually provide much-needed income in times of hardship).

The material in this study pertains to 64 people, but the number of actual translations by these people is manifold, as many translators worked regularly and intensively for the company over a number of years. For example, by 1955 Väinö Jaakkola alone had translated 25 books and Laila Järvinen 33. Then again, the number of letters by an individual is not automatically an indication of whether a translator or translation was important for the company. Some aspiring translators wrote numerous letters and a few established translators only a handful. In many cases, only some of the translations are discussed or even mentioned in the existing correspondence. Järvinen's letters, for example, are all from the early years; there is nothing from the period when she translated Tove Jansson's *Moomin* books into Finnish.

Another general observation from the material is the great variety of different works that were suggested and/or translated by individual WSOY translators. Further, regarding their backgrounds, the people who translated for WSOY were a truly varied group. Many aspiring or active translators were teachers or journalists while others were self-taught or came from fairly poor backgrounds. Five translators ended up as university professors. Perhaps rather surprisingly, out of these five, two were later nominated directors of the Finnish National Gallery (both had translated popular literature). At least three more translators held doctorates, and there was also one Doctor Honoris Causa. One translator worked for the diplomatic corps and there were several authors, including three poets, among the translators. Most started their correspondence with WSOY when there were no indications yet of their future careers.

I will now turn to the unfolding of translation processes and focus first on the beginnings (which often were endings, too): how translations were offered and suggested. We could call these, adapting Toury's terminology (1995: 58), the preliminary stages of the translation event. Section 4.2, suggestions, will be followed by rejections (Section 4.3). Other delays and aborted processes are treated in Section 4.4. Acceptances and rejections of individual books, when they are not documented in the publisher's replies, have been corroborated through the national bibliography⁷ and the WSOY catalogue of publications 1878–1954 (Ellilä, Karro, *et al.*, 1953).

4.2. Translators' suggestions

In 19th-century Finland it was customary for translators to suggest works to publishers, who did not always possess the necessary knowledge to judge the supply or the need for specific works (Hellemann 2007: 336). There is evidence of this dynamic between specific translators and publishing houses, such as in Samuli Suomalainen's correspondence with Otava Press (Paloposki 2017: 38). In the WSOY material, the translators' initiative is visible throughout the 60-year period covered by this study: correspondence very often starts with an offer to translate a specific book, and if the correspondence does not end as a one-off offer, such suggestions recur throughout the translator's dealings with the publisher. Out of the 64 translators, 39 offered to

translate a specific book or books, and ten had already translated (wholly or in part) the book/books that they were offering for publication. In the material at hand, most of the suggestions made by translators did not lead to a publishing deal, which is rather surprising considering the major role translators played in the 19th century in choosing books for translation.

The total number of book suggestions in the material is around 180, by 39 different translators (out of the total of 64 translators under study). That means that almost two thirds of the translators at one point or another suggested a book or several books to the publisher. As one translator, Aune Suomalainen, alone was responsible for proposing more than 80 titles, she will be treated separately, with the remaining 96 suggestions discussed first. The numbers, however, need to be treated with caution. First, we know for sure that several letters with suggestions went missing (such suggestions were mentioned in the subsequent correspondence from Joutsen, Järvinen, Saarikivi and Suomalainen, without necessarily repeating the suggested titles). Second, from reading the correspondence it is evident that many more letters have not been archived. Third, suggestions were also offered on the telephone or face-to-face. The total number of suggestions by the translators in the material can thus be expected to be even higher.

Some of the translators' suggestions simply consisted of lists of titles (sometimes nearly a dozen books in one list), while others were accompanied by evaluative assessments and justifications for the translation and publication of this particular book. The recommendations were based on popularity and print runs of specific books in their source cultures, on literary reviews in foreign or domestic newspapers (accompanied by newspaper cuttings or quotations), on the translator's own reading experience and evaluation of the work's literary qualities, or on a presumed demand.

The 96 suggestions are spread out over the period of study with the most suggestions (27) in the 1910s and the least – only one – in the 1880s. There were 11 in the 1890s, 20 in the 1900s, 12 in the 1920s, 21 in the 1930s and five in the 1940s. The rejection rate remained very high throughout the period: out of the 96 suggestions, 80 were rejected. This does not mean that these translators would have been overlooked as WSOY often proposed other titles for them to translate.

An illustration of this complex relationship between the company and its translators is provided by the careers of the couple Werner Andelin (later Anttila) and his (future) wife Selma (née Helander). Andelin was the first person in my material to make an offer for a book to be published. At the age of 17 he wrote to his not-much-older namesake, Werner Söderström, on November 18, 1884: "I have just finished translating the comedy *"Den politiske kocken"* [The Political Cook] by the Swedish author, Aug. Blanche [...]. I translated the book since there are too few comedies and I considered this one worthy of translating."⁸ The book was not published and the same fate befell Selma's first offer:

It is my first try and it is not a model translation. I cannot vouch for perfection and success, but [...] my future husband, who is an established linguist and a man of letters, has promised to help me. My vocation as a librarian has made me aware of the scarcity and poverty of Finnish children's literature. This literature should be enriched. [...] My only wish is to provide proper reading matter for Finnish children⁹. (9.4.1893)

The suggestion reflects the uncertainty with which a newcomer in the field approached the publisher and is also indicative of altruistic reasons for translating.

With no archived replies prior to 1907, the fate of the specific book was checked in the national bibliography, which reveals that her translation was published, not by WSOY, but by Hagberg (1893). These first proposals illustrate the eagerness of many young writers to try their hand at translating, even before securing a contract, and the rather compact rhetoric used to try to persuade the publisher.

Werner and Selma Andelin later established an on-off business relationship with WSOY. Werner translated several works for WSOY on the publisher's request; Selma offered to translate 11 more books by ten different writers, only getting one of her offers accepted (Carlyle's *Past and Present*, which she translated together with Werner). Despite rejecting Selma's suggestions, WSOY offered her other works to translate. The couple worked for other publishers too, which was (and is) typical in the profession.

In her subsequent letters, Selma Andelin presented various other criteria to support her choice of books. She assessed the impact of *Psychke* by Norwegian author Helene Dickmar (she reckoned it would develop readers' literary tastes in a more sober direction and away from sugary love stories; 18.1.1907); she described Waldemar Bonsels' creativity and language (*Eros*, 28.6.1921), and she resorted to authorities (literary critics) on D. H. Lawrence's *England, My England* (1934, undated).

Similar arguments were used by other translators, too. Language, style and the authorial voice were mentioned by Lauri Pohjanpää, a young Finnish student in Paris, who suggested Georges Rodenbach's *Bruges-la-monte* (23.11.1912). Rodenbach's poetry was "strong" and "independent," and he believed it would attract Finnish readers. An author's style could also be described as "splendid" and "lively" (Kaarle Jaakkola about Karl May, 7.5.1900). The fame of the author or of the book was also an incentive. Vilho Annala, who wanted to translate the Swede Gustav Hellström's book *Kulturfaktorn* (a very timely book on the French wartime perspective), praised the writer as a very distinguished author with the capacity to vividly describe the events on the French front and in French homes and hospitals (15.11.1916). Praise for the work in its source culture, or even more widely, constituted a rationale for translating, as in the case of Romain Rolland's book on Mahatma Gandhi (Aarne Anttila to WSOY 12.5.1924). It was not uncommon to append newspaper and journal cuttings that praised the work in question: Onni Arima sent a newspaper cutting from the *St. Petersburg Herold* to support his suggestion to translate Paul Lindenberg's *Aus dem dunklen Paris* (7.8.1897); Pontus Artti a cutting from *Göteborg's Handelstidning* [Gothenburg Financial Times] as proof of publishability of Johannes V. Jensen's *Braaen* (3.3.1910), and another cutting from the Norwegian *TidensTegn* [The Sign of the Times] to convince the publisher of Harald Hjärne's *Revolutionen och Napoleon* (3.9.1912). None of these cuttings had the desired effect.

Source culture popularity was another reason to have a book translated, as it still is today (cf. Bourdieu 2008: 149). Laila Järvinen vouched for *Mit Ilsebill freiwillig nach Sibirien*, the German journalist Artur V. Just's account of his journey to Siberia in 1931, which was very popular in Germany (10.3.1932). Further, she suggested that the contemporaneous situation in Siberia would be of interest to Finns (an audience-oriented comment), and the light style of the book combined with matter-of-factness would guarantee it a market in Finland. Her suggestion was accepted and she was later asked to do title-hunting for books on modern Germany (undated letter referring to oral agreement, 1933). These proposals – Hans Hinkel and Wulf Bley's

Kabinett Hitler and Wolfgang Uwe's *Die soziale Diktatur* – were not garnished with any reasons for translating. Whatever Järvinen's brief, they were never published in Finnish. Neither was André Maurois' *Le peseur d'âmes*, which had been Järvinen's own suggestion – she simply found it “rather interesting” (1.12.1932).

Sakari Saarikivi had translated a detective story by William Crofts and was keen to get something better: “perhaps – despite all – Huxley. “Brave New World,” a satire of the world where technology has been developed to its utmost, might not be too pessimistic for our time” (21.8.1943).¹⁰ Literary qualities were extolled by Kaarle Jaakkola, who regarded Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *The Last Days of Pompeii* a classic (18.7.1916), describing it as fluent reading. Anna-Maija Saaristo, for her part, vouched for the humour in P. G. Wodehouse's *Sam the Sudden* (30.3.1931). There are also some idiosyncratic suggestions, such as that of Vihtori Peltonen: “Tolstoy's Kreuzer Sonata is excellent. It is only about 100 pages long. The sentences are wonderfully short and clear; it could very well be translated from Swedish” (5.8.1892).¹¹ The longest and most detailed description was by Hannes Anttila, who sent WSOY three short stories by Theodore Storm that he had translated from German, together with a literary analysis of Storm's oeuvre (13.2.1939). Anttila contrasted modern “psychoanalytic” and realist literature with romanticism, but considered the work of Storm a combination of romantic and realist. He discussed at length Storm's style; his suggestion that Storm incorporates the feeling of ‘Heimat’ might have resonated in the Finnish cultural atmosphere of the 1930s that sought to bond with German culture, as his suggestion was accepted.

The largest number of books, by far, was suggested to WSOY by Aune Suomalainen in her correspondence with the company. In her 114 letters, written between 1927 and 1944, she proposed more than 80 books for translation, mostly from English, but also quite a few from Swedish and Norwegian. She suggested authors such as Sinclair Lewis and William Thackeray. For the latter she considered herself particularly suitable as she had written a university thesis on the style of *Vanity Fair* (7.11.1932). She also recommended *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in a two-page letter, quoting at length the Finnish author Kersti Bergroth, and without realising that there already existed a translation of *Alice* from 1906 (3.1.1929). In most of her early proposals she described the book in question with a few lines in order to justify her suggestion. Marketability was one of the arguments: “a thrilling adventure story which would certainly attract readers” (*The Purple Land* by U. Hudson, 23.11.1927)¹² and “Montgomery's works are the schoolgirls' utmost favourites” (*The Golden Road*, 24.3.1932).¹³ She also drew on literary authority, quoting newspapers and journals that, for example, praised modern American fiction and the work of Sinclair Lewis (16.4.1928) or Franz Werfel's *Die Geschwister von Neapel* (7.11.1932). At other times, Suomalainen merely produced lists of authors and works to be translated, turning more towards lighter fiction as the years went by. Her first translation commission was in 1933 (WS to Suomalainen, 2.6.1933). It was not one of her own suggestions but *The Bridge of Kisses*, by an extremely popular romantic author, Berta Ruck, whose works had been translated into Finnish since the 1920s, though not yet by WSOY.¹⁴

Translators presented arguments not just in favour of books but also to offer their services in general. Juho Jäykkä (12.10.1894) included a letter of recommendation from the editor of a newspaper he had been working for, in addition to listing his languages: Russian and German into Finnish and Swedish; he got no work. Werner Anttila

(2.3.1897) stated that he translated from various languages; in addition he said he would do the work cheaply – he did get work, but only after several years. O. A. Joutsen (12.2.1910) worked from all Scandinavian languages, German, French and English; he also pointed out his previous work experience for WSOY, but he had to wait 5 years before his next commission. Vihtori Peltonen (6.8.1891) was afraid that a poor review of an earlier translation of his would affect the publisher's decision, but clearly it did not as he was given translation work, and later became a trusted colleague and friend of Söderström (Häggman 2001). Juho Saarinen (12.11.1892), for his part, referred to a favourable review in a Finnish literary journal. Aune Lindström (29.8.1923) listed her languages (Scandinavian languages, German and English) and added that she was "fast." She really was – she translated over 20 books in the 1920s, but none of these were commissioned by WSOY.¹⁵ Frithiof Pennanen had a recommendation from the bishop in 1935 (no date specified in the letter) to translate a religious book, which WSOY rejected (but they gave him Graves' *I, Claudius* instead). Anna Talaskivi humbly said that her only recommendation was that since her school days she had had a special affinity for languages, and that she had studied languages at university and abroad (7.10.1913).

4.3. Rejections

Bourdieu (2008: 123) talks about "the sorting and selecting of manuscripts" to distinguish "the publishable" from the "unpublishable": the daily work of the publishing house. The publisher's person is often considered to be important in this sorting, either criticised (as in Venuti 2013: 163) or understood and sympathised with (as in McCleery 2002). Personal experiences of being rejected have been collected in, for example, Le Comte (1988), and publishers' blunders are brought to ridicule: David Oshinsky (2007) lists famous failures such as Knopf's rejection of *Anne Frank's Diary*, and Umberto Eco (1963) satirises publishers' letters from readers in his essay 'Dolenti declinare.' There are certain standard responses that publishers tend to use (Oshinsky 2007; Payne and Erdim Payne 2007), such as "not right for our list" or "extremely crowded list." Some of the expressions are euphemistic (one editor, when challenged, admitted that "we don't think your book can be successfully published"; Le Comte 1988: 442). Rachel Toor (herself an editor) admits to using euphemisms, but with the large numbers of submissions, "writing rejection letters is a mainstay of an editor's job" (Toor 2007). She concedes that editors, too, make mistakes.

Even if translators might have the advantage of proposing a work that has already been accepted once (published in the original language), they still face the same problems of over-supply and competition, and publishers tend to use similar phrases in rejecting translations that do not appeal to them, as shown by Venuti (2016: 12–13). The real reasons for rejecting a manuscript may not be given. Larry Walker (2015: 78) reports that editor Harold Strauss, who was responsible for the Alfred J. Knopf series of Japanese novels, wrote to the translator Oscar Meredith Weatherby in 1955 and diplomatically disentangled himself from committing to publishing a novel by Mishima Yukio. The following year Strauss was discussing the matter with a colleague and disclosed that he was not ready to publish Mishima's homosexual novel as yet.

Planning new publications and reading the submitted manuscripts was the task assigned to Assistant Director (later Director) Jalmari Jäntti at WSOY by Werner

Söderström (Taivalkoski-Shilov 2013: 69), a task that included rejecting those manuscripts that were not deemed publishable. At WSOY, rejection was far more common than acceptance, judging from the material of this study. Of the approximately 180 suggestions, fewer than 20 were accepted; that is, 10% of all proposals. Silence from the publisher was the simplest form of rejection (in this study, if there is no more correspondence in the archive concerning a particular proposal, the national bibliography was consulted to check its fate). Anxious translators sometimes wrote and queried after their letters. Written rejections were issued, too, where the simplest form was just a few lines: “We have decided to inform you that we are not willing to publish Hällström’s Kulturfaktorn. We are happy to keep you in mind in case something turns up.” (WSOY to Vilho Annala, 13.12.1916).¹⁶ Or, even more curtly: “Our board has decided that we do not wish to publish the translation.” (WSOY to Aarne Anttila, 17.4.1915).¹⁷ Market concerns show in some rejections: “we are not willing to publish a translation of the book. We are very much in doubt of its potential success” (11.9.1912 to Pontus Artti).¹⁸ Concerns of the moral value of the book were also sometimes in the way. V. Arti received the following reply to his letter suggesting *The Powers that Be* by Alexander Cannon, an occultist and hypnotist: “we cannot undertake the publishing of this kind of a book” (31.1.1936).¹⁹ The personal preferences of the publisher (Venuti 2013: 163) also show: “We are not that enthusiastic about the book” (Webb Miller’s *Journal of a Foreign Correspondent*, suggested by Esko Saarinen; WSOY 9.10.1940).²⁰

All offers from 18 translators were rejected. Most of these were one-offs, but Pontus Artti’s three suggestions were rejected and Kaarle Jaakkola faced four rejections. However, Jaakkola did manage to publish one of the rejected works, Karl May’s *Der Geist des Llano Estakado*, with another publisher in 1912.

One of the rejections is a special case: the reason for rejection was that the title had already been commissioned from another translator, Vihtori Peltonen, but as the work had already been partly translated by the proposer, Artur Sieberg, it was agreed that the published translation would incorporate the first 25 pages by Sieberg. Peltonen acknowledges Sieberg’s part in the translation in his letter to Werner Söderström (date partly unclear, 1893) when talking about his fee: “the first part was translated by a Magister Sieberg, whose share needs to be deducted from my fee.”²¹ In the national bibliography, only Peltonen is mentioned, while Sieberg remains invisible.

A specific category of unsuccessful proposals is constituted by those 12 offers where the suggested book already existed in Finnish translation (as with Suomalainen’s offer to translate *Alice*) or was currently being translated. Kaarle Jaakkola received this reply to his offer on Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton’s famous work: “a pity that you did not offer me *The Last Days of Pompeii* sooner as we commissioned a translation last spring; it is now done” (20.7.1916).²² Updated information on what was published and what was going to appear in print in Finland was not always easy to get, and prior to Finland’s joining the Berne Convention in 1928 it was difficult even for publishers to know if a translation was already underway by some other company.²³ Collisions – as coinciding publications of one and the same book by two different publishers were called – were a frequent phenomenon even after Finland joined the Bern convention in 1928. In the material there is correspondence on a translation process that was duly finished and paid for in 1942, but never printed because the publisher discovered that

a competing publishing house had just come out with the very same book, without copyright. Books were also rejected because there was a related or similar book already being translated: Järvinen's offer to translate Paul Gauguin's biography was turned down as there was a Van Gogh biography coming out, and a medical book was rejected as a Finnish original in the same field was soon to be published. Competition was thus not only from other translations but from Finnish originals as well.

Collisions are a fairly straightforward explanation for rejections, but otherwise it is difficult to see any general policy behind rejections as the suggested books cover such a wide range of genres, topics and styles. One striking observation is the publisher's recurring practice of offering other work to translators whose own suggestions he had not accepted. In the early years, Jäntti had established the practice of following literary developments by reading the catalogues of foreign publishers (Taivalkoski-Shilov 2013: 69): what he needed, then, might not have been recommendations and suggestions but the translators to do the job.

4.4. *Disruptions and delays*

Rejections are not the only kind of impasses and disruptions observable in the material. Books were transferred from one translator to another (or to several other translators) or they never appeared, despite having been commissioned or translated. Delays were common.

Aune Suomalainen started her first translation for WSOY in May 1933 and the process took a little over a year, during which time there were frequent pauses and interruptions in the communication. While the publisher first appeared to understand the delays caused by the translator's recurring illness, they later (in April 1934) asked her to return the original in order to give it to someone else: the cover was ready and the printers were waiting. Suomalainen pleaded for more time and promised to take six times the normal dose of fever medicine to manage; a few more delays later she submitted the manuscript. Four out of the six translations Suomalainen did for the WSOY suffered from considerable delays and misunderstandings. An Agatha Christie translation (*Cards on the Table*) proved problematic because the clue to the mystery in the book, the new game of bridge with its rules, was as yet fairly unfamiliar in Finland. Suomalainen reported to WSOY her efforts to work out the missing terms, which included contacting Finns who had lived in England and asking the British delegation at an international medical conference that happened to take place near her home. Nothing worked. WSOY eventually found a book in Finnish on the rules of bridge and gave it to Suomalainen so she could finish her work.

On one occasion, a translation assignment was cancelled: Otto Joutsen was starting to translate *Quo Vadis* by Henryk Sienkiewicz in 1901, but then the work was given to Maila Talvio, who was obviously considered the better candidate for translating Sienkiewicz as she knew Polish, unlike Joutsen, who would have translated indirectly. Joutsen was compensated for what work he had done and given another translation task, Joseph Victor von Scheffel's *Ekkehard*. Translating *Ekkehard* was not straightforward, either. When returning the last sheets of the manuscript (10.12.1901), Joutsen informed the publisher that two other people, E. Wallin and E. Tamminen, had translated parts of the text, around 150 pages. He had fallen ill, and involving other people in the translation meant not having to give it up altogether

(today, this is sometimes called ‘ghosting’; Solum 2015; it also reveals the often-colaborative nature of translation, see Cordingley and Frigau Manning 2017). Only Joutsen’s name appears in the bibliography –perhaps not his decision, though.

Illnesses caused delays, but death was an even more tragic event. Samuli Suomalainen suggested seven new works in his last letter to WSOY, but he did not have time to start on any of them. Fr. Pennanen’s death interrupted the translation project he was involved in, and I. K. Inha’s work on Knut Hamsun was transferred to Eino Cederberg.

There was also a translator who disappeared. In 1919, a group of translators already at work on the war memoirs of the German General Ludendorff was not making enough progress and a translator named Frans Talaskivi was recruited to help in the work. WSOY wanted the book out quickly, and the printers were already waiting. The newcomer was informed of the stricter than normal timetable, which he accepted “with pleasure” and offered to translate 350 pages (10.7.1919). It was customary for translators to submit manuscripts in batches and for typesetters to work on them as the translation progressed, but when the first instalments came in from Talaskivi – already a bit late – there were omissions and misunderstandings. Then, the translator disappeared. The publisher’s letters grew more and more desperate and asked for the original to be returned so a new translator could be recruited. Finally a telegram was sent, but it came back: the addressee had not been found at the given location. There are no more letters to or from Talaskivi in the archive concerning this translation, but scribbled at the bottom of the returned telegram sheet there are four names, along with numbers that could be page calculations. It seems as if the rest of the translation was again divided up between different translators (supposedly they did get the original back!). In the end, the translation appeared anonymously; none of the translators involved have been credited.

In several instances a translation already commissioned, translated and paid for never came out in print. K. Emil Jaakkola, who was one of the few translators whose suggestions were all accepted, over the years sent the publisher three translations he had produced from Hungarian: the novel *Pogányok* by Ferenc Herczeg (26.6.1913), Viktor Rákosi’s *Téli Rege* (24.10.1914) and Kálmán Mikszáth’s *Kísértet Lublón* (8.5.1923).²⁴ Each time, WSOY agreed to publish, but their interest seemed to diminish with each new book: for the first, by Herczeg, they asked Jaakkola to write a preface on the author. The second (Rákosi) seemed a bit of a gamble (“I have certain doubts about the success of Rákosi’s little book in the Finnish language; however, we agree to publish”; 20.11.1914).²⁵ The third, by Mikszáth, was sent to the publisher in May 1923 but never appeared in print. The contract was sent to Jaakkola on 8.6.1923, the fee was paid on 19.6.1923, and the manuscript was edited by another translator, Jaakkola’s namesake Väinö Jaakkola (10.3.1924). There is nothing in the archive to indicate why this particular book was never printed, but the case is illustrative of changes and disruptions in publishing decisions even after a deal had been struck. Was it decided that it would be too costly to print a book that would not sell? Was the manuscript forgotten or lost? That Jaakkola does not enquire after the published book indicates that the publisher and the translator may have discussed the matter over the telephone or in person.

Three other books were never published despite having been translated. The translation of *Reisen mit Doktor Überall* by Ernst Bulova was edited by Vilho Setälä

in 1944, but was never printed; a Margit Ravn book translated by Aune Suomalainen and duly paid for was subsequently discovered to have been published by another company and thus withdrawn from the WSOY list; and the Finnish manuscript of *Frau Henriette Jacoby* by Georg Hermann was mentioned in a 1922 letter to Ruth Serlachius to be ready and waiting to be printed. It is uncertain whether Serlachius was the translator or whether she had simply been enquiring about the fate of the book. The anonymous translation of Robert Leighton's adventure story *Coo-ee! A Story of Peril and Adventure in the South Seas* was edited in 1922 by Väinö Jaakkola but, again for some unknown reason, the translation did not appear until 1933. Interestingly, a previous version of this same book had been produced by another publisher in 1920, which could explain the delayed publication.

Delays were often explained by illness, but there were other reasons. Ilmari Jäämaa wrote to the publisher on 3.9.1909: "I had a slight accident with the manuscript, so I needed to start again from the beginning and cannot send you more right now."²⁶ Delays were also often due to poor time management and the company's potential neglect in informing translators of the timetable: four translators at different times expressed their surprise at the publisher's queries about the state of a translation for which they thought there was plenty of time left. In the words of Werner Anttila, "there's nothing to it now but we'll just have to get on and start working really hard here; and over there, you just have to wait a little" (30.12.07).²⁷

5. Conclusion

The rationale for this study was to explore work as it unfolds and to pay attention to translations in the making. The publishing house material reveals that a large amount of the work – by translators and by the publishing house WSOY – consists of dealing with delays, impasses and other disruptions in the work, that is, not only translations in the making but also translations that are never finished or published. Thus, the article sets in high relief the contingency of translation work and the invisibility of these contingencies. Translations that never happen cannot be found in bibliographies, so the study also uncovered a hidden microcosm of negotiations, offers, suggestions and rejections – and revealed the translators of some hitherto anonymous translations.

The translation event, a concept that stands at the centre of this article, is here considered to embrace the whole process of translations-in-the-making, from the idea until its realisation in print. The findings of the present study indicate that if we only consider translations to be those texts that are published, entered into bibliographies, sold, borrowed and read, we lose a holistic grasp of the process of translating. The study found that only around 10% of the suggestions for translation made by the 64 translators in this material were accepted. In addition to rejections, there were delayed and interrupted processes and a large number of so-called one-offs, translations done by individuals who only ever suggested or translated one book. Translating involves enormous amounts of work on various dead ends, impasses, interrupted processes and rejected suggestions. These unfinished projects also tell us about the practice of translating, of the history of texts-in-the-making, of the various deliberate or random decisions made by the actors in the process, and of other kinds of constraints: the material world around translating, including such issues as tools,

reference works, literary magazines and postal services, but also illness and poverty.

Archival research complements the bibliographical and book historical perspective on translations. It can describe and partly explain the phenomenon of 'one-offs,' translations done by individuals who only ever translated one book, or, an even more hidden phenomenon, translations that were offered but rejected. One of the findings of this study was the complex function of rejections for the publisher: translators' suggestions were rejected, but this did not prevent the publisher from involving these translators in other projects. This is a facet of the emerging translation culture that has not received attention until now: the suggested or initiated translations that never materialised in print, and the 'translator reserve' that the publisher seems to have been securing while rejecting suggestions.

The archive does not necessarily give answers to predefined questions, but it may guide and steer research in new, unexpected directions. The initial starting point of the present research was to identify and study material on neglected translators in history by way of exploring the archival presence of translators of popular literature – an *a priori* categorisation which needed to be abandoned as there was very little archival presence of the kind I was looking for. Abandoning the search based on bibliographical identification of translators and embarking on a bottom-up approach I was able to unearth people and practices which might not have been evident or available for study through an *a priori* selection procedure. Yet, my bibliographic search did provide me with a preliminary starting point for material collection, permitting a wider reach into translator correspondence and action. The initial material in the archive created new research questions and steered the research in unprecedented ways into the problematic of rejections and disruptions. Furthermore, the material collected for this study yields to a variety of other research questions: constructing translator microhistories, exploring translators' careers longitudinally, studying decisions, strategies and practices of indirect translating and dialect translating. It also allows for the study of translators' tools, their collaboration, and the nascent practice and culture of translating. These will be considered in future research. Further, the different perceptions of 'neglect' deserve to be studied, not just to pinpoint where exactly translators have been neglected but also to describe the ways in which neglect can be observed, operationalising the concept for further research and perhaps linking it to present-day discussions on status. As far as 'neglect' simply means invisibility, archival study can do much to increase general knowledge about publishers, translators and translating.

Finally, studying letters always entails ethical decisions. Letters, even when they are not intimate communications between family and friends, are usually not meant for anyone other than the recipient. Business letters like the ones examined in this paper also contain personal information and are sometimes written in an intimate style. The fragmentary nature of archived letters adds to an ethical dilemma: we do not know all the details and background of any single disrupted project. Therefore, not even archival study can be expected to give a full picture of the contingencies of translation.

NOTES

1. WSOY (2020): Visited on 9 October 9, 2020, <<https://www.wsoy.fi/briefly-in-english>>.
2. Calculation based on statistics in Ellilä, Karro, *et al.* 1953 and Häggman 2001.
3. The year 1936 is given in Sapiro as an example, and as it falls within the period under study, it is used here for the sake of comparison.
4. STAT.FI Statistics Finland: Visited on 13 December 13 2019, <<https://www.stat.fi/org/tilastokeskus/vaestonkehitys.html>>.
5. NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF FINLAND (2020): Visited on 9 October 2020, <<https://www.arkisto.fi/en/frontpage>>.
6. This cut-off date will be tested in forthcoming research on the impact of professionalisation for publisher–translator relations
7. FENNICA The national bibliography of Finland: Visited on October 9 2020, <<https://kansalliskirjasto.finna.fi>>
8. “Olen juuri suomentanut ruotsalaisen kirjailijan Aug. Blanchen kirjoittaman ilveilyksen “Den politiske kocken” [...]. Tämän suomensin sen vuoksi, että nykyään ei ilveilyksiä ole mielestäni tarpeeksi ja koska tämä oli mielestäni suomennoksen arvoinen.”
9. “[...] ei ole mikään mallikelpoinen käännös, se on ensimmäinen omatakeinen koe. Sen nojalla en voisi antaa varmoja takeita työn täydellisestä onnistumisesta, mutta ensi kesäkuussa aion mennä naimisiin, tuleva mieheni on jäykkä suomalainen kielimies ja työskentelee kirjallisuudenkin alalla. Hän on luvannut auttaa minua. Kirjastonhoitajana tiedän, miten vähälukuinen ja puutteellinen suomenkielinen lasten kirjallisuus on, olisi hyvin toivottavaa, että sitä rikastutettaisiin. [...] Minun toivoni on vaan saada suomalaisille lapsille kunnollista lukemista.”
10. “Brave new World,” satiiri teknillisesti huippuunsa kehittyneestä maailmasta, ei varmaankaan ole liian pessimistinen meidän ajallemme.”
11. “Tolstoin mainio ”Kreutzer sonaten.” Se on vaan noin 100 sivua pitkä. Lauseet siinä on niin erinomaisen lyhyitä ja selviä etten luulisi tekevän ollenkaan haittaa jos ruotsistakin kääntäisi.”
12. “[...] olisi jännittävänä seikkailuromaanina kenties suurempi yleisömenestys.”
13. “[...] pitävät koulutytöt niitä mielikirjojensa joukossa ensimmäisinä.”
14. A previous translation in Finland by another company existed, but it seems to have been overlooked not only by the translator but also by WSOY.
15. Later, WSOY bought the stock of Lindström’s previous publisher and republished many of her earlier translations.
16. “Olemme päättäneet ilmoittaa, ettemme ole halukkaita julkaisemaan Gustav Hellströmin “Kulturfaktorn” kirjan suomennosta. Pidämme kernaasti Teidät muistissa siltä varalta, että jotta sopivaa käännöstyötä sattuu.”
17. “Johtokuntamme päätöksen mukaisesti ilmoitan, ettemme halua ottamaan kustannettavaksi [...]”
18. “Emme ole halukkaita kustantamaan [...] suomennosta. Epäilemme suuresti voisiko se saada tarpeellista menekkiä.”
19. “emme voi ottaa kustannettavaksemme tämänlaatuista teosta.”
20. “Emme ole siinä määrin innostuneet, että ottaisimme käännöksen kustannettavaksemme.”
21. “Siitä on kuitenkin laskettava pois ensimmä. kappale, jonka käänsi joku maist. Sieberg.”
22. “Ikävä, ettette aikaisemmin tarjonnut Pompeijin viimeisten päivien suomennosta, sillä viime keväänä tilasimme suomennoksen, joka on jo valmis.”
23. The Berne Convention was the first international copyright pact, signed initially by ten nations in 1886, to protect authors and translators against literary piracy. One of the core concerns of the Convention is translation rights. There are now 179 country signatories to the Convention. WIPO = WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION (2020): Visited on 9 October 2020, <<https://www.wipo.int/treaties/en/ip/berne/>>. See also Nyqvist 2018.
24. Only the Finnish name that was to be given to the book is mentioned in correspondence. I thank Attila Krizsán and Markku Nikulin who have helped me identify this book among Mikszáth’s production.
25. “Epäilen jonkun verran Rákosin pikku romaanin menestystä suomenkielisenä, mutta suostumme kuitenkin kustantamaan sen [...]”
26. “Minulle tapahtui pieni onnettomuus käsikirjoitukseen nähden, joten täytyi alkaa työ alusta enkä siis voi lähettää tällä haavaa enempää.”
27. “ei auta muu kuin käydä täällä ankarasti työhön ja siellä vähän odottaa.”

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