

**Cultural and Textual Properties in the Translation and
Interpretation of Allusions:
an analysis of allusions in Dorothy L. Sayers' detective novels
translated into Finnish in the 1940s and the 1980s**

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ABSTRACT

This study introduces a new method of analysing TT readers' interpretive possibilities when reader-response tests are not possible. Previous studies in translation and literary research (e.g. Leppihalme 1997, Gambier 2001; Pucci 1998, Irwin 2001) have focused on the allusive interpretation proper and on culture bumps; I propose two other possibilities and explore connections between the properties of ST allusions and translation strategies.

The study consists of two parts. In chapters 2 to 5, I develop a method for analysing interpretive possibilities based on the cultural and textual properties: the allusion's cultural familiarity to TT readers, the markedness of style and form, and the coherence of the cotextual meaning that an allusion has in its cotext without the referent. These properties can be determined on the basis of textual and documental evidence, and they create four interpretive possibilities: 1) an allusive interpretation; 2) a pseudo-allusive interpretation where an unfamiliar allusion is stylistically or formally marked but has a coherent cotextual meaning without its referent; 3) a non-allusive interpretation where an unfamiliar allusion has no formal markers and reads coherently; and 4) a culture bump, or an unfamiliar allusion with a puzzling cotextual meaning. Translation strategies are described by means of a revised set of strategies incorporating three previous classifications (Nord 1990, Leppihalme 1997, Gambier 2001).

In Chapters 6 to 7, the proposed method is tested by analysing five detective novels by Dorothy L. Sayers (1893–1957) and their Finnish translations from the 1940s and the 1980s. The target contexts are discussed in terms of the status of detective fiction, TT readers' expectations and translators' working conditions. The analysis of translated allusions shows that unfamiliar ST allusions have often been retained in all the translations as long as their cotextual meaning is at least metaphorically coherent. Pseudo-allusive passages are more frequent in the 1980s' translations, and quite often they suggest functions similar to those of the original allusions. In contrast, the 1940s' translations contain more modifications and omissions, resulting in non-allusive passages that bring the translations closer to a traditional 'whodunit' but also involve greater functional shifts. The results indicate that the coherence of cotextual meaning may affect translators' decisions to a greater extent than previously acknowledged. In addition, pseudo-allusions deserve to be studied further: they may convey similar functions as allusions proper and even save the translator's effort.

KEYWORDS: allusions, detective fiction, genre translation, history of translation in Finland, intertextuality, literary translation, reception, translation strategies.

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