

## The many questions of non-retranslation. Swedish non-retranslations from the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Elin Svahn

Stockholm University

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### Abstract

The phenomenon of non-retranslation, here defined as translations that are continuously being republished over an extended period of time *without* being retranslated, has attracted scholarly attention in recent years. Yet, there has been no systematic exploration of the phenomenon to date. This article aims to fill this gap by reporting on a bibliography of Swedish non-retranslations, which has been constructed as an answer to previous calls on macro-studies in retranslation studies. In particular, this article offers a first overview of the bibliography with a point of departure in the five W and one H approach. Hence, this article aims to answer some questions regarding non-retranslation, such as *what* (establishing a definition; categories), *who* (authors; translators), *when* (publication timespan; publication interval), *where* (source languages; publishers; series), *how* (overt and covert revisions), and *why* (hypotheses). Some of the findings, regarding for example publication timespans and publication intervals, counter some of the assumptions often prevailing on retranslations. The article concludes with pointing out new avenues for research, such as exploring the role of publishing houses in relation to non-retranslation and case studies on specific titles. In sum, the article presents a macro-perspective of non-retranslation, with implications for both research on retranslation and non-retranslation.

### Keywords

non-retranslation, retranslation, bibliography, macro-scale study, Swedish

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, “the curious concept of non-retranslation” (Van Poucke & Sanz Gallego, 2019, p. 14), i.e., translations that are continuously being republished over an extended period of time *without* being retranslated, has attracted some scholarly attention (Bollaert, 2019; Koskinen & Paloposki, 2019). This newfound interest appears timely as the phenomenon of non-retranslation has the potential to counter some of the prevailing assumptions about retranslations, such as the assumption that a retranslation is inevitable for canonical works (Koskinen & Paloposki, 2019, p. 31) or that a retranslation is required for each generation (Van Poucke, 2017, p. 93). However, despite the curiousness surrounding non-retranslation, there has been no systematic exploration of the phenomenon to date.

The project “Non-retranslation in 20<sup>th</sup>-century Sweden” aims to explore the phenomenon of non-retranslation broadly through the means of a bibliography collecting non-retranslations into Swedish. The bibliography is further introduced in the *Method and material* section below. As such, the project answers previous calls for macro-level approaches within retranslation studies (Berk Albachten & Tahir Gürçağlar, 2018; Koskinen & Paloposki, 2019) and offers a novel perspective on retranslation research.

This article presents the first overview of the bibliography in its current state, with 200 titles and 1002 editions. In particular, this article seeks to answer some of the many questions of non-retranslations by applying the five W and one H approach: *what* (establishing a definition; categories), *who* (authors; translators), *where* (source languages; publishers; series), *when* (publication timespan; publication interval), and *how* (overt and covert revisions). In the *why* section, I propose a hypothesis for why non-retranslated texts have not been retranslated. First, however, I discuss some key concepts for retranslation research and how they relate to non-retranslation, after which I then introduce the bibliography and selection criteria.

## 2. Non-retranslation as opposed to retranslation

Retranslation has often been discussed in terms of when a new translation is required. For example, Koskinen and Paloposki (2019, p. 31) conclude:

Among our most solid findings is the observation that getting retranslated is actually the normal case for any title with some lasting value in the literary system, and not the special event it has been portrayed to be.

Similarly, Berk Albachten and Tahir Gürçağlar (2018, p. 219) state that they found that “works that have attained the status of classics [are] retranslated more frequently than others”. These findings from the Finnish and Turkish context, respectively, are intriguing concerning non-retranslations as a phenomenon. As will be shown in this article, some of the titles found in this bibliography can be considered to have “some lasting value in the literary system” and “attained the status of classics”, and yet have not been retranslated.

Bollaert (2019) discusses the critical question of reprinting in relation to (non-)retranslation. Building on the work of Gómez Castro (2008), Pokorn (2012), and Suleymanova (2016), Bollaert concentrates on translation within totalitarian regimes, with the result that manipulated (non-) retranslations still circulate after the fall of the regimes. The present article differs in scope from Bollaert’s since the investigated time frame and place – 20<sup>th</sup>-century Sweden – does not have a totalitarian past. Hence, the main focus is not ideologically manipulated translations but the phenomenon of non-retranslations more broadly. However, Bollaert’s (2019, p. 45) claim that reprinting can be seen as “an instance of non-retranslation” is highly relevant for this article. Bollaert (2019, p. 60) concludes:

Indeed, reprinting, as retranslating, presupposes an active choice. It means a work is kept in motion and available for readers. Although both reprinting and retranslating cause a similar movement, they are different in the message they convey. Retranslating is bringing something new, reprinting is keeping something old.

Although I have chosen to discuss non-retranslations in terms of republishing and editions instead of reprinting and reprints, which I elaborate on in the *Method and material* section below, the implications are the same as Bollaert's contention: that republishing an old translation means that an old, in a certain sense "frozen", representation of a target work is represented to readers. For example, when readers in Sweden 2022 wish to buy John Steinbeck's *Vredens druvor* [Grapes of Wrath] in a bookshop, they effectively buy Nils Holmberg's unrevised translation from 1949. Obviously, this is an instance of "keeping something old", and it brings several important questions to the fore. The most overarching question is, of course, why this work has not been retranslated, although the number of editions – 17 between 1949 and 2019 – would suggest a steady interest in the title over 70 years. Since both Steinbeck's status as an author and the status of *Vredens druvor* as a 20<sup>th</sup>-century classic have changed since 1949, it is probable that a potential retranslator would approach the novel in a more faithful manner than when the first translation was carried out in the 1940s. This evokes Koskinen and Paloposki's (2015, p. 27) reasoning on the first translation being "faulty" in some sense:

The process [of retranslation] is initiated because there is an understanding that the existing translation is somehow faulty: too old, too outdated, too free, too domesticated or too foreignized, and so on.

Regarding the temporal aspect, both translation norms and the Swedish language have developed since the 1950s. For instance, Larsson (2007) has explored how the Swedish language has become "shorter, more informal and more intimate, more visual, more international and more oral" (2007, p. 55, my translation) since 1945. He compared how these changes were manifested in the retranslation of Jaroslav Hašek's *Soldaten Svejk* [Dobrý voják Švejk] from 1994 compared to the first Swedish translation from 1930. He found that the retranslation was slightly more colloquial and more idiomatic than the first translation, but that the most significant change concerned a more source-oriented approach; Larsson concludes that the retranslation is "considerably more international, more Czech" than the first translation (Larsson, 2007, p. 71, my translation).

On a more general level, Steinbeck's *Vredens druvor* represents a kind of longseller, which has been active in Sweden for a long time. Vanderschelden (2000, p. 11) discusses translations that "have acquired a long-standing status in the target language" with reference to Berman's (1990) notion of 'great translation'. Similarly, Van Poucke refers to 'great translations' as translations that "resist time" (2017, p. 96). I have discussed the relationship between non-retranslations and 'great translations' elsewhere (Svahn, 2023), but suffice to say here that Berman's writing does not rule out the fact that first translations, and hence non-retranslations, may be seen as a sort of 'great translation', although this is not how the concept has generally been understood. By the definition of non-retranslation proposed in this article, non-retranslations are the only translations of a source text. As such, they can be said to have acquired some sort of status in the target culture and, thus, resisted time. As we will see, however, not all non-retranslations can be considered classics in the same way as Steinbeck's *Vredens druvor*.

### 3. Method and material

Recently, several retranslation scholars have called for macro-investigations of retranslations (Berk Albachten & Tahir Gürçağlar, 2018; Koskinen & Paloposki, 2019). Concerning non-

retranslations, Koskinen and Paloposki (2019, p. 31) have suggested that “[a] corpus of these special cases of “non-aging” translations [i.e., non-retranslations] might allow us to advance our understanding of the processes of aging”. As an answer to these calls, I have constructed a bibliography of Swedish non-retranslations, with the aim that it can be developed into an open-access database in the future. Currently, the bibliography consists of 200 titles and 1002 editions. Because of the difficulties associated with locating non-retranslations, the bibliography does not aim to be representative of all Swedish non-retranslations. Still, the material is large enough to point towards important patterns regarding non-retranslation as a phenomenon in the Swedish target culture.

The titles and editions have been located using the Swedish National Catalogue *Libris*. In the bibliography, a post includes author, title, original title, translator, year of the first edition in source culture, year of the first edition in the target culture, number of editions, year of each Swedish edition, the publishing house of each Swedish edition, additional notes (e.g., foreword). To be included in the bibliography, each title must have been published at least three times in the same translation, and the first edition must have been published in Sweden between 1900 and 1990. This criterion is appropriate since it would theoretically be possible for a title to be published in three editions between 1990 and 2022 when this article was written. Furthermore, the bibliography only includes novels and short story collections. In practical terms, locating non-retranslations means manually looking through authors’, translators’, and publishers’ posts searching for titles that matched the criteria. This process, which has been both cumbersome and tedious, evokes Paloposki’s (2018, p. 18) sentiment that “[t]ranslations need to be teased out of general bibliographies”.

It should be noted that *Libris* has some shortcomings, not least in relation to what kind of information is available. The bibliography’s material spans over 120 years (1900–2022), and it comes as no surprise that cataloging practices have shifted over this period. This is particularly evident in the early 1900s. Another great shift can be seen in 1970, when ISBN numbers were introduced. In only some cases is the cover included in the post. Further, some posts include the print run of the title, in thousands, but also this is an inconsistent practice. Another important distinction is the inconsistent use of the terms *utgåva* (edition) and *upplaga* (reprint). Like Rüegg (2021, p. 30), in her work on Nobel laureates in Swedish translation, I define an edition as “a new version of a work” (my translation). In the context of non-retranslations, the new version naturally does not refer to the translation, but to, e.g., the publisher, the format, page number, or cover. Also, an edition can be printed in several reprints (*upplaga*). In *Libris*, however, the terms edition and reprint are sometimes used interchangeably, which in practice means that although several aspects point to a new edition of a title – signaled by, e.g., a new publishing house and a new page number – it can still be labeled as a reprint. Conversely, a post can be labeled a reprint although, e.g., a new publishing house would suggest that it is, in fact, a new edition. Yet another problematic circumstance is that some posts of an edition contain a ‘Detail’ folder, which in some cases includes a “Note” of reprints that are not visible in *Libris*. These reprints seem to adhere to what is usually considered a reprint, i.e., a new print of an existing edition, but since the only information given is the year of publication, it is hard to be certain that this is the case.

My pragmatic approach to these dilemmas has been to include the original posts in *Libris* and, for ease of expression, refer to these as *editions*, regardless of some of them being labeled as *reprints* in *Libris*. Further, I have chosen not to include the reprints in the ‘Detail’ folder, partly because it would require a great deal of effort to manually check all the posts for the 1002 editions. Also important for this decision is the lack of information concerning these reprints, such as publishing house, ISBN number, etc. My terminology thus differs from Bollaert’s, who

largely discusses non-retranslation using the term reprinting. Following the outline above, I'm using the term 'republished' instead of 'reprinting' to signal that the majority of the titles in the bibliography are not simply "reprinted", in the sense that they are reprinted in the same format, with the same word font, with the same cover, and by the same publisher, but that they have also been "repackaged" in some sense.

In the following, I will present the analysis of the non-retranslations in the bibliography with a point of departure in the questions What, Who, When, Where, How, and Why?

## 4. Analysis

### 4.1. The What of non-retranslation

The first important question to investigate is the 'What?' question. Although non-retranslations have slowly begun to attract scholarly interest in recent years, there is no established definition of what non-retranslation is. The few scholars who have explicitly mentioned non-retranslation as a phenomenon have had different approaches to non-retranslation and have not elaborated on the definition. For example, Bollaert (2019, p. 48) discusses Russian translations of Sartre's work "through the lens of non-retranslation", but she does not define what she means by non-retranslation. In general, she discusses non-retranslation in terms of reprinting, which she defines as "first translations and retranslations that are published anew" (2019, p. 54). Koskinen and Paloposki (2019, pp. 31–32), in turn, refer to non-retranslations as "works that remain relevant and read but do not get retranslated or revised", which excludes revised translations from the description. Revisions commonly refer to "making changes to an existing TT while retaining the major part, including the overall structure and tone of the former version" (Vanderschelden, 2000, p. 1). In a previous study (Svahn, 2023), I investigated the titles in the bibliography that had been published in most editions, including a small-scale textual investigation to detect covert revisions. Out of the fourteen titles, one (*Spionen som kom in från kylan* [The Spy Who Came in From the Cold] by John le Carré) was acknowledged as being a revision in the colophon but not in the post in *Libris*.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the textual investigation showed that another six titles had been subject to covert revision, mainly on a grammatical level and mainly conducted in the 1950–1960s, although the majority of the titles were last published in the 2000s.

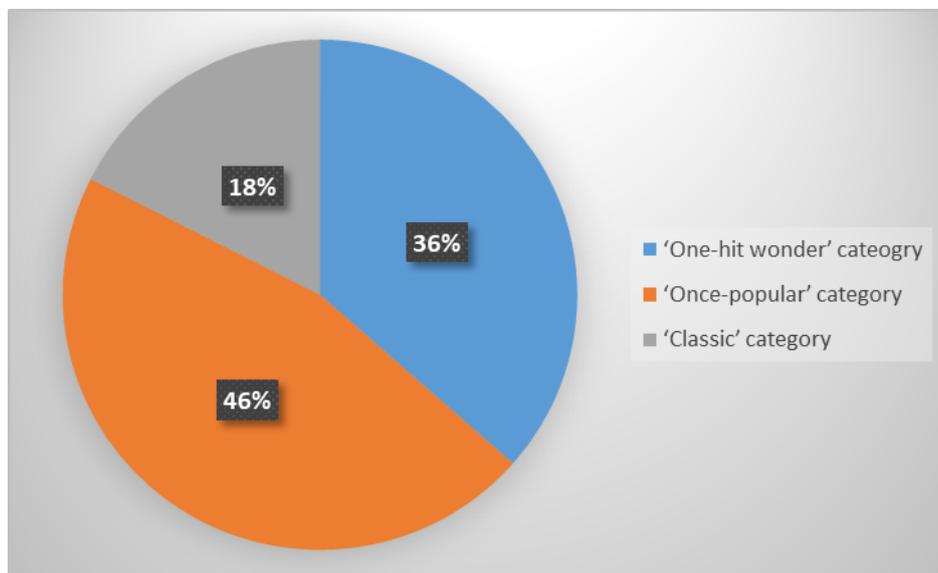
With these considerations in mind, I propose the following definition: non-retranslations are translations that are continuously being republished over an extended period of time *without* being retranslated. This definition includes revisions, which means that it is possible to work with non-retranslation in large-scale studies such as the present one without manually checking whether each edition of each title has been subject to revision. Further, what "an extended period of time" means is, of course, open to interpretation. In this bibliography, I have chosen the minimum limit of three editions without any restrictions regarding the time between the first and latest editions. However, as we shall see below, some of these have been published over a rather short period of time.

Another way to approach the "What?" question is by exploring what kind of literature is included in the bibliography. To gain an overview, the material has been divided into three categories:

1. The 'one-hit wonder' category (3 editions, i.e., the minimum to enter the bibliography);
2. the 'once-popular' category (4 editions or more);
3. the 'classic' category (a minimum of 5 editions the latest of which came out in the 2010s).

<sup>1</sup> The novel was subsequently retranslated in 2021 and has therefore been excluded from the bibliography.

The choice to construct this categorization based on the number of editions, instead of e.g. the status of the title in Sweden, derives from its advantages when it comes to detecting different sorts of non-retranslations within the material. For example, when discussing non-retranslation as a phenomenon, it is easy to focus on classic and long-sellers since these are extraordinary cases. However, this categorization reveals that such titles only account for 18% of the material as a whole (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Categories of non-retranslations based on titles

The three categories also represent different processes of non-retranslation. The 'one-hit wonder' category gathers titles with only three editions. This category includes 73 titles and 219 editions, which represents 36% of all titles, written by a total of 46 authors. Here we can see how a sort of consecration process has started but then quickly ended. There are, however, exceptions to this tendency: the Norwegian Nobel laureate Sigrid Undset appears the most with seven titles, e.g., *Katarina av Siena* [Catarina av Siena], *Fru Marta Oulie* [Fru Marta Oulie], and *Den lyckliga åldern* [Den lykkelige alder].

The second category – the 'once-popular' category – shows a consecration process that for some reason has either halted or ended completely. It includes 92 titles and 500 editions and is the largest category with 46% of the titles. The category's name comes from the assumption that these titles were once popular to the extent that they have been published in at least four editions. The author with most titles in this category is the nowadays mostly forgotten Scottish author Archibald Joseph Cronin with 16 titles. He is a good example of an author who was once indeed popular; his novel *Hattmakarens borg* [The Hatter's Castle] was published in 11 editions between 1935 and 1985, but none of his titles have been published since then.

The third category includes the remaining 35 titles (18%) and 283 editions. As opposed to the two previous categories, the 'classic' category includes both a numerical and temporal aspect: it requires at least five editions, of which the latest has been published in the 2010s. The temporal aspect is included in order to ensure that there is still an editorial interest in the titles and echoes a certain temporalism often included in retranslation research. Here we find many familiar names such as Virginia Woolf's *Vågorna* [The Waves], Elsa Morante's *Historien* [La storia], and Gabriel García Márquez' *Kärlek i kolerans tid* [El amor en los tiempos del cólera]. These are titles that could be described as "having a long-standing status" in Sweden, and thus this category has some affinities with the concept of 'great translations'.

Naturally, this categorization means that some authors appear in several categories. This is, for example, the case of John Steinbeck, whose well-known novels *Öster om Eden* [East of Eden] and *Vredens druvor* are found in the 'classic' category, whereas for example *Missnöjets vinter* [The Winter of Discontent] is in the 'once-popular' category, and *Loggbok från Cortez hav* [The Log from the Sea of Cortez] is found in the 'one-hit wonder' category. Conversely, the majority of Vicki Baum's titles are found in the 'one-hit wonder' category, while *Den huvudlösa ängeln* [Headless Angel] is in the 'once-popular' category.

#### 4.2. The Who of non-retranslation

The two most prominent agents of non-retranslation are, of course, the authors and the translators, and this section presents an overview of the persons involved in the titles in the bibliography.

Out of the 83 authors in the bibliography, 34% are women and 66% are men. 33 (40%) of the authors are represented with two titles or more, while more than half (50 authors; 60%) are only represented with one title each. Of course, the high number of authors with only one title might be a reflection that they have few translations into Swedish generally, that their other titles have been retranslated, or that the titles fail to meet the selection criteria. An overview of these is found in Table 1.

Author	Number of titles
Archibald Joseph Cronin	16
John Steinbeck	11
Daphne du Maurier; Sigrid Undset	9
Pearl Buck; Vicki Baum	8
Dorothy L. Sayers; Marguerite Duras	7
Doris Lessing; Desmond Bagley; John Irving	5
André Gide; Alberto Moravia; Italo Calvino; Knut Hamsun; Mary Stewart; P.G. Wodehouse	4
Anatole France; Herman Hesse; Jean-Paul Sartre; Joseph Conrad; Ray Bradbury; Sinclair Lewis; Trygve Gullbrandsen; Virginia Woolf	3
Agatha Christie; Albert Camus; André Malraux; Erich Maria Remarque; Günter Grass; Hammond Innes; Nathalie Sarraute; William Golding	2
Aksel Sandemose; Aleksander Solzenicyn; Anne Tyler, Bernaud Malamud; Boris Pasternak; Colette; Cornelius Ryan; Dashiell Hammett; Edison Marshall; Elsa Morante; Evgenij Zamjatin; François Mauriac; Françoise Sagan; Frans Eemil Sillanpää; Frederick Marryat; Gabriel García Marquez; Georges Bernanos; Graham Greene; Grazia Deledda; Heinrich Böll; Herman Melville; Italo Svevo; James M. Cain; Jane Austen; Anne Telscome; Jean Stubbs; John Carter Dickson; John Le Carré; Joseph Heller; Karen Blixen; Kenzaburo Oe; Kobo Abé; M. Agejev; Margaret Drabble; Marguerite Steen; Mazo de la Roche; Miguel Angel Asturias; P.D. James; Phyllis Eleonor Bentley; Richard Adams; Samuel Shellabarger; Saul Bellow; Sigrid Boo; Simone de Beauvoir; Sofie Lazarsfeld; Somerset Maugham; Svetlana Aleksijetvitj; Sylvia Plath; Vasilij Grossman; Claudio Magris	1

Table 1. Authors and number of titles

As Table 2 demonstrates, the names vary from very well-established authors to authors that may not be well-known for a contemporary reader. It should be noted that Bollaert (2019, p. 48) mentions authors like Steinbeck and Sinclair as examples of authors with Russian non-retranslations; her third author, Hemingway, has been retranslated in Sweden fairly recently. Whereas there is an imbalance when it comes to the authors' gender, an overview of the translators displays a fairly equal share: out of the 85 translators in the bibliography 45 (52%) are women and 41 (48%) are men.

Translator	Number of titles
Sonja Bergvall	22
Nils Holmberg	17
Lisbeth Renner	16
Torsten Blomqvist	14
Louis Renner	8
Karin Alin	6
Elsa Thulin; Eva Alexanderson; Teresia Eurén	5
Hans Björkegren; Birgitta Hammar; Karin De Laval; Torsten Jonsson	4
Harry Blomberg; Rose-Marie Nielsen	3
Alvar Zacke; Axel Claëson; Gunnar Ekelöf; Gösta Olzon; Harald Heyman; Hugo Hultenberg; Ingmar Forsström; Lorenz von Numers; Nils Jacobsson; Per E. Rundquist; Sven Stolpe; Sven Wallmark; Lily Vallquist; Vanja Lantz	2
Aida Törnell; Anna Beijer; Anne Marie Hansen; Ingalisa Munck; Britt Arenander; Britt G. Hallqvist; Britt-Marie Bergström; Sven Bergström; Christina Liljencrantz; Cilla Johnson; Glaes Gripenberg; Einar Thermae; Else Lundgren; Estrid Tenngren; Eva Marstrander; Eyvind Johnson; Gabriel Hedengren; Gallie Åkerhielm; Gerg Lilliehöök; Gunnar Barklund; Gunnar Brandell; Bengt John; Hadar Högberg; Hagar Olsson; Håkan Norlén; Inge Barhnson-Rosenborg; Irmelin Fritzell; Keiko Kockum; Jane Lundblad; Johan W Walldén; Josef Almqvist; Karin Hirn; Karin Jensen; Karin Lindgren; Karin Stolpe; Katarina Frostenson; Madeleine Gustafsson; Margareta Ekström; Margareta Nylander; Margareta Ångström; Marianne Lindström; Marie Werup; Märta Lindquist; Olov Jonason; Pelle Fritz-Cronne; Peter Landelius; Ragnar Ågren; Reidar Ekner; Signe Bodorff; Signhild Borgström; Sigrid Elmblad; Sten Söderberg; Suzanne Palme; Sven Barthel; Vera von Kraemer; Thomas Warburton; Barbro Andersson	1

**Table 2.** Translators and number of titles

Several of these translators are known as some of the most noteworthy from the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For example, several of them were interviewed in *12 + 1*, an interview series published in the evening paper *Aftonbladet* in 1955 (Liffner, 2013). In 1953, some answered a questionnaire aimed for literary translators in *Bonniers litterära magasin* (BLM 1953). Two translators – Madeleine Gustafsson and Katarina Frostenson – are still active today.

Several of the translators translated in pairs, either occasionally or regularly. The couple Louis and Lisbeth Renner are, for example, known to have translated together (Liffner 2013), whereas in other cases, the collaboration might have been in the form of a division of parts or short stories. This is, for instance, the case with Eva Alexanderson and Eyvind Johansson's translation of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Le mur*, where Johansson translated the title short story and Alexanderson translated the rest. In the bibliography, the following translators occur in the same post in *Libris*: Anne Marie Hansen and Ingalisa Munck (*Historien* by Elsa Morante); Louis and Lisbeth Renner (e.g., *Hotell Shanghai* [Hotel Shanghai] by Vicki Baum), Aslög Davidson and

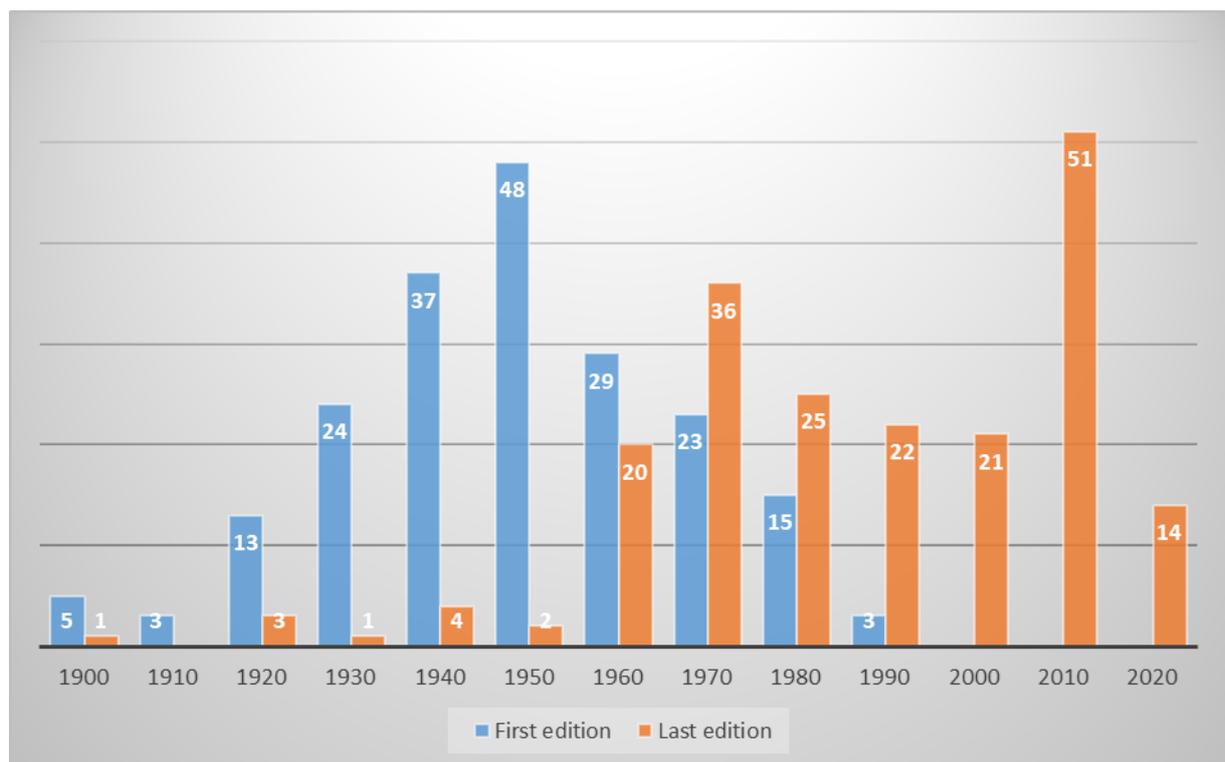
Elsa Thulin (*Det blåser över Dödingfjäll* [Det blåser frau Dauingfjell] by Trygve Gullbranssen), Eva Alexandersson and Eyvind Johnson (*Muren* [Le mur] by Jean-Paul Sartre), Birgitta Hammar and Vanja Lantz (*Pion* [Peony] by Pearl Buck), Britt-Marie Bergström and Sven Bergström (*Ett mord annonseras* [A Murder is Announced] by Agatha Christie), Gunnar Brandell and Bengt John (*Myten av Sisyfos* [Le myth de Sisyphé] by Albert Camus); Hadar Högberg and Alvar Zacke (*Det var en gång ett krig* [Once There Was a War] by John Steinbeck), Irmelin Frizell and Keiko Kockum (*Kvinnan i sanden* [Suna no onna] by Kobo Abé); and Karin Lindgren and Elsa Thulin (*Värdshuset Jamaica* [Jamaica Inn] by Daphne du Maurier).

#### 4.3. The When of non-retranslation

The “when?” question of non-retranslation is dealt with by exploring certain aspects of the publication time span and publication interval.

The time span, i.e., the time between the first and last edition, ranges from 1 year to 104 years, with the mean time span for all 200 titles being 38.7 years. For the ‘one-hit wonder’ category, this number is 33.2 years, which reflects the fact that only titles with three editions are included in that category. For the ‘once-popular’ category, the number is 36.2 years between the first and last edition. Finally, for the ‘classic’ category, the mean timespan is 58.5 years, which stems from the higher number of editions required to be included in this category.

Figure 2 presents an overview of when the first and last editions of all titles were published; the figure shows when the first and last editions were published by decade, but not the relationship between the first and last edition.

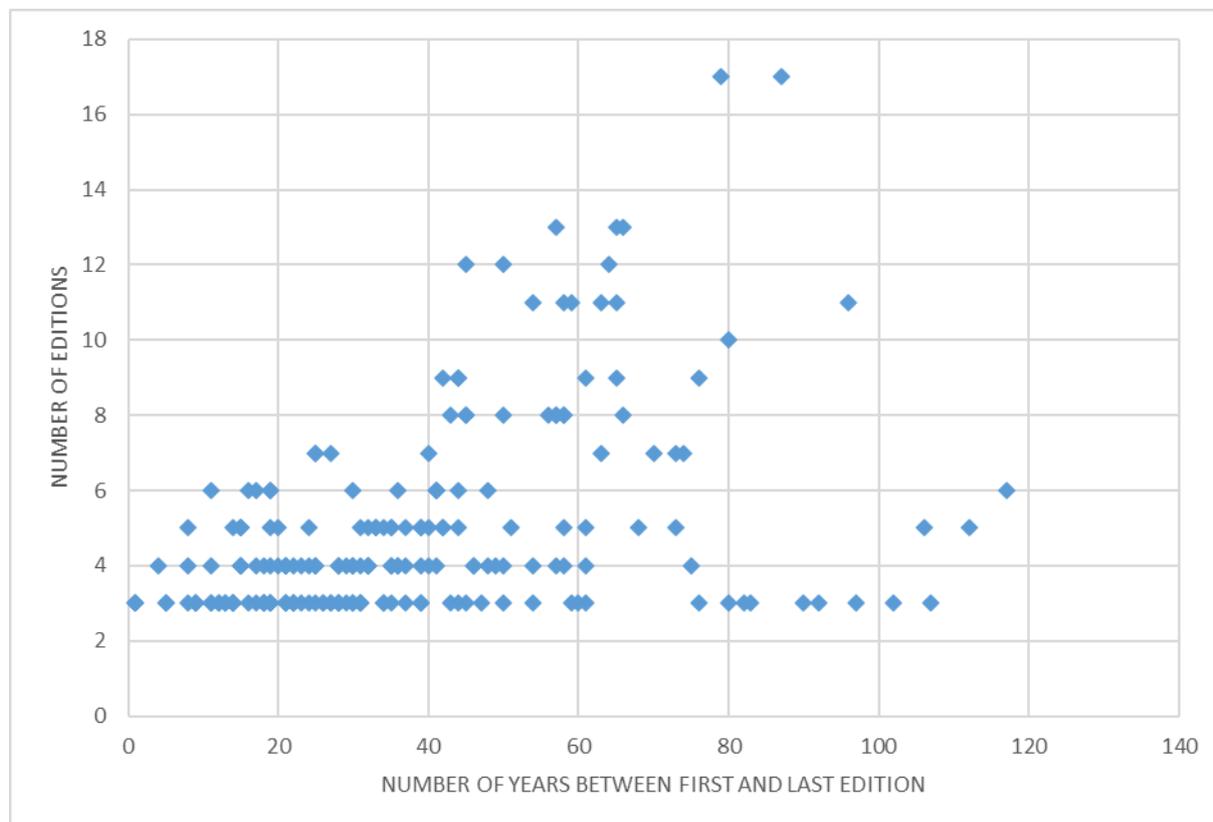


**Figure 2.** Overview over first and latest edition according to decade

From Figure 2, it is clear that most titles were first published in 1940s–1960s: 48 titles (24%) in the 1950s, followed by the 1940s (18.5%), and the 1960s (14.5%). The latest editions were predominantly published from the 1960s and onwards, with a peak in the 2010s, when 51 of the titles (25.5%) were published in their latest editions. It is striking that 14 titles (7%) were published in the 2020s, which in practice means 2020–2021. In total, 65 of the titles

(32.5%) were last published in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which clearly shows that non-retranslations are not only a practice of the past. Among the most striking examples is the Norwegian Nobel laureate Sigrid Undset, whose novels *Den lyckliga åldern*, *Skärvan av trollspegeln* [Splinten av trolldspeilet], and *På livets skuggsida* [Fattige skjæbner] were published in the 1920s, and thereafter in 2020 – a time span of roughly a hundred years.

Yet another interesting aspect of the “When?” question is the relationship between the number of editions and the number of years between the first and last editions, presented in Figure 3.



**Figure 3.** Overview number of editions and number of active years

Figure 3 reveals a number of interesting findings. Firstly, it is clear that the titles published only in three editions can still be published over a long period of time, the most extreme example being the three novels by Sigrid Undset mentioned above. Secondly, two titles have been published in 17 editions – *Vredens druvor* by John Steinbeck and *Stäppvargen* [Der Steppenwolf] by Hermann Hesse – and they have been published over 79 and 87 years respectively. Thirdly, it is possible to distinguish a cluster of titles with 3–6 editions that were published during sixty years. When examining this cluster in more detail, we can note that up to six editions were published in the first twenty years. Fourthly, another, looser, cluster can be distinguished with 8–13 editions and 40–80 years. In addition, there are a number of outliers that are not as easily categorized. This is the case for the two titles being published in five editions over 106 years (*En fredlös på öarna* [An outcast of the islands] by Joseph Conrad) and 112 years (*Ametistringen* [L’anneau d’améthyste] by Anatole France). The same goes for Knut Hamsun’s *Svärmare* [Sværmere], which was published in 6 editions over 117 years, and Pearl Buck’s *Den goda jorden* [The Good Earth], in 11 editions over 96 years.

We turn now to publication interval, i.e., the mean range between the publication of a title’s different editions. The publication interval ranges from 0.2 years (*Ridå. Hercule Poirots sista fall* [Curtain: Poirot’s last case] by Agatha Christie) to 53.5 years (*Den lyckliga åldern* by Sigrid

Undset). The mean publication interval amounts to 11.8 years, revealing that the editions in the bibliography have on average been published with an interval of a little over ten years. The mean publication interval for the different categories ranges from 8.8 to 16.3 years, with the higher number belonging to the ‘one-hit wonder’ category. The ‘once-popular’ category has the lowest mean score, 8.8 years, whereas the titles in the ‘classic’ category on average have been published every 9.8 years. As previously mentioned, some of Sigrid Undset’s novels have time spans bridging roughly a century and they have contributed to raising the mean publication interval in the ‘one-hit wonder’ category. The same tendency can be observed when investigating publication intervals in relation to source languages: Norwegian displays the highest number – on average, a Norwegian title was published every 25.1 years. Interestingly, however, different source languages do display different mean publication intervals, in contrast to the different categories. French and Italian have the second and the third highest mean score with a title translated from French being published every 14.1 years, and a title translated from Italian every 11.8 years. English and German have the lowest mean publication interval with 9.5 (English) and 9.9 (German) years. These numbers suggest that the source language seems to influence the pace of the republishing process, although the low number of titles for some languages makes it hard to draw any far-reaching conclusions.

#### 4.4. The Where of non-retranslations

This section looks into three aspects of the “where?” question: source languages, publishers, and series. There are a total of ten source languages in the bibliography (Figure 4); with the exception of Japanese, the material only includes titles in European languages. There is one example of an indirect translation: Warburton’s translation of *Mardrömmen* [Kojinteka na taiken] by Kenzaburo Oe, which was translated from English.

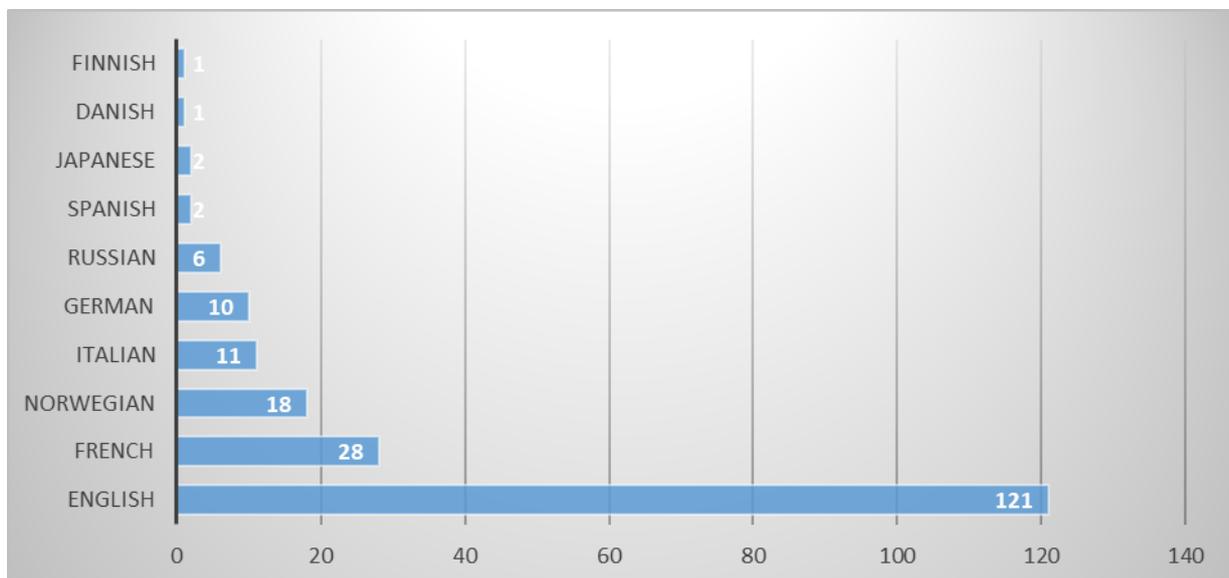


Figure 4. Source languages

English (60.5%) is the most common language, followed by French (14%), Norwegian (9%), Italian (5.5%), German (5%), and Russian (3%). The remaining source languages count 0.5–1% each. The dominance of the English language is in line with Sweden’s general dominance of English in publishing statistics over time (e.g., Lindqvist, 2016). However, the rather low share of German is surprising given its fairly prominent position in publishing statistics (Lindqvist, 2016, p. 181). One possible explanation is that I have not managed to locate titles from more minor source languages.

Table 3 shows the source languages according to the three categories.

	'One-hit wonder' category		'Once-popular' category		'Classic' category		Total
	N	%	n	%	n	%	n
<b>English</b>	42	57	59	65	20	56	121
<b>French</b>	10	13	12	13	6	16	28
<b>Norwegian</b>	8	11	8	9	2	6	18
<b>Italian</b>	5	7	4	4	2	6	11
<b>German</b>	2	3	6	7	2	6	10
<b>Russian</b>	2	3	2	2	2	6	6
<b>Japanese</b>	2	3	0	0	0	0	2
<b>Spanish</b>	1	2	0	0	1	3	2
<b>Danish</b>	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
<b>Finnish</b>	1	2	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	73	100	91	100	36	100	200

**Table 3.** Number of percentages of the three categories according to source languages

Table 3 shows that there are only minor changes across the three categories when adjusted for different source languages: the percentage of English ranges between 56%–65%, with a peak in the 'once-popular' category. French ranges from 13%–16%, while the change is larger regarding Norwegian, where the 'one-hit wonder' category amounts to 11%, followed by 9% in the 'once-popular' category, and 6% in the 'Classic' category. Here, the changing status of Norwegian may be reflected in the uneven percentages in the different categories. Again, many of the Norwegian titles in the 'one-hit wonder' category are those of Sigrid Undset, as discussed earlier. Regarding Italian, the 'one-hit wonder' category amounts to 7%, and the 'classic' category to 8%, while the 'once-popular' category only amounts to 3%. In general, no clear tendency can be found regarding source languages according to the three categories, which suggests that the source language does not seem to be a decisive factor for the practice of non-retranslations.

Regarding the publishing houses, the 1002 editions in the bibliography have been published by 72 publishing houses. The 12 publishing houses with more than ten editions are shown in Figure 5, which clearly demonstrates Albert Bonniers förlag's total dominance in the bibliography, contributing 315 editions (31.5%).

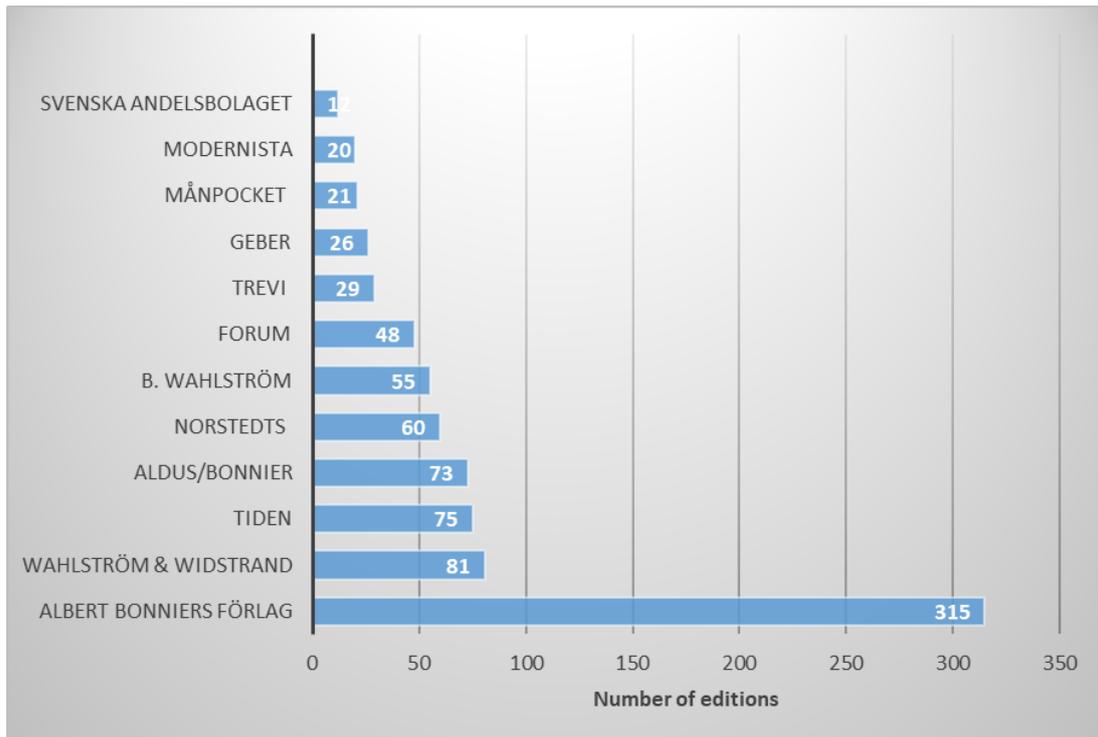


Figure 5. Publishing houses in relation to number of editions

A number of these publishing houses are no longer active, such as Svenska Andelsbolaget, Geber, Trevi, Aldus, and Tiden. It is also worth noting that Månocket is owned by Bonniers and Norstedts together and publishes pocket books. The remaining six publishing houses are still active today. Figure 6 displays these publishing houses' total amount of editions by decade, irrespective of whether these are first or later editions (cf. Figure 2 above).

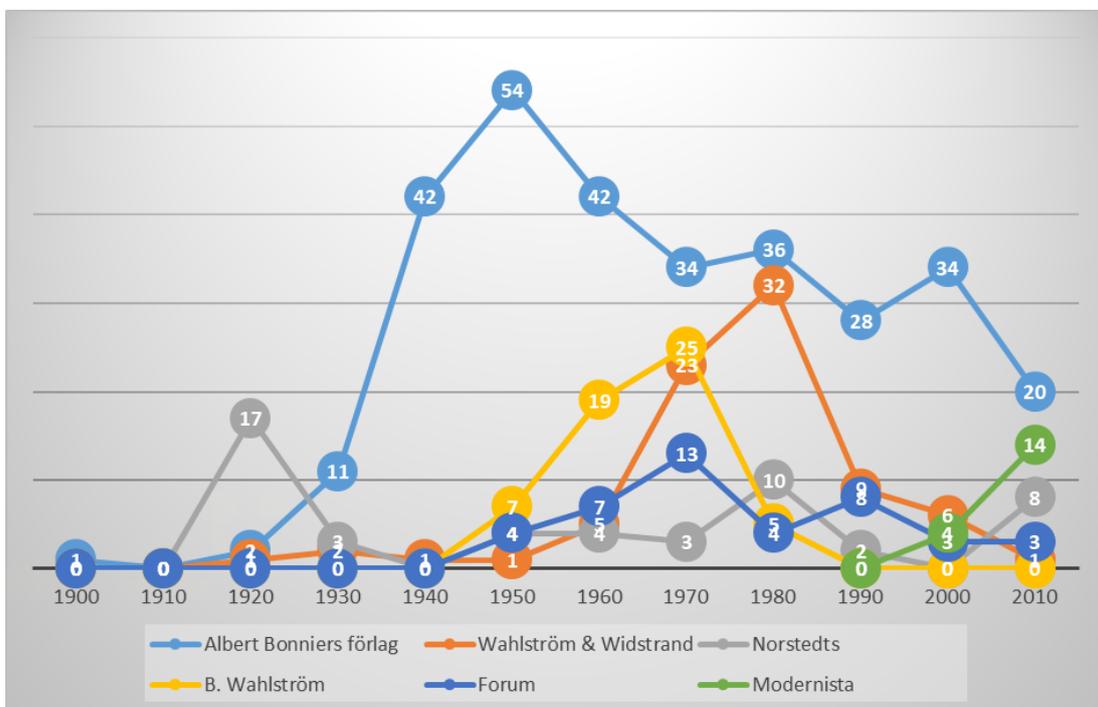


Figure 6. Publishing houses' number of editions per decade

The most noteworthy tendency is, again, Albert Bonniers förlag's dominance. Interestingly, the two largest publishing houses historically in Sweden – Albert Bonniers förlag and Norstedts – seem to have entirely different approaches to non-retranslations: whereas Albert Bonniers förlag have published the highest number of editions during the whole time period, except during the 1920s, Norstedts has a different strategy. In fact, the 17 editions published in 1920 are the highest number of editions registered, followed by ten in the 1980s – a decade when Albert Bonniers förlag published 36 editions. The same tendency can be seen in the 2010s, when Albert Bonniers publishes 20 editions and Norstedts 8 editions.

The other four publishing houses display diverse publication patterns. Wahlström & Widstrand and Forum are both owned by Bonniers. Wahlström & Widstrand has the most widespread practice of publishing non-retranslation, especially in the 1970s and 1980s with 23 and 32 titles. Forum has a much more subtle approach but also has its own highest score in the 1970s with 13 titles. B. Wahlström is generally known for publishing youth and children's literature, but previously also published novels aimed at an adult readership in different series. Perhaps due to this development, they have not published any non-retranslations in the bibliography since the 1980s. Lastly, Modernista was founded in 2002 and is therefore only present in the last two decades. Interestingly, they have quickly established themselves as the publisher who published the second most non-retranslations in the 2010s, with 14 titles compared to Bonnier's 20 titles.

Yet another aspect of the "Where" question concerns series. In a case study on Françoise Sagan's *Bonjour tristesse* [Bonjour tristesse] (Svahn 2022), I noticed that book series, and especially classic series, played a crucial role in both the consecration of specific editions and the overall long-term canonization of *Bonjour tristesse* as a classic in Sweden. In the bibliography, there are 87 different series mentioned. In total, 478 (48%) of all titles are published in a series. Some of these series are clearly aimed toward high prestige literature, such as the Delfin series (117 editions), the Panache series (21 editions), and Bonnier's classic pocket series (18 editions). While these three series have slightly different themes, they are all published by Albert Bonniers förlag, which suggest that their practice of publishing non-retranslations are linked to different sorts of series. Two book club series are especially prominent: Svalans book club (34 editions), also published by Albert Bonniers förlag, and Tidens book club (27 editions), published by Tiden förlag. Some series are more general without any particular theme, such as Forumbiblioteket (15 editions) by Forum förlag and W&W pocket (4 editions) by Wahlström & Widstrand. Yet others have more specific focus; such as Nobel classics (5), Moderna unga människor [Modern young people] (2 editions) and Böcker som förnyat människans tänkande [Books that have renewed the thinking of man] (1 edition). Considering the high number of editions being published in series, continuing to explore book series as a site of non-retranslations seems to be a fruitful avenue for future research.

#### 4.5. The How of non-retranslation

As previously discussed, my definition of non-retranslations includes both overt and covert revisions. The bibliography reveals a very low number of overt revisions: out of 1002 editions, only 15 explicitly state being revised in *Libris*. These are:

- the 1962 edition of *Ametistringen* by Anatole France.<sup>2</sup>
- the 2017 and 2018 editions of *Sånt händer inte här* [It Can't Happen Here] by Sinclair Lewis.
- the 1994 edition of *Doktor Zivago* [Doktor Živago] by Boris Pasternak.

<sup>2</sup> The latest edition from 2018 does not mention a revision.

- the 2012 and 2014 editions of *De gyllene frukterna* [Les fruits d'or] by Nathalie Sarraute.
- the 2011 edition of *Lord Peters smekmånad: en kärlekshistoria med detektiva avbrott* [Busman's Honeymoon] by Dorothy L. Sayer.
- The 2017 edition of *Smileys sixties*, a collection including several novels, by John Le Carré.
- The 1987, 2004, and 2005 editions of *Muren* by Jean-Paul Sartre.
- The 1999 and 2000 editions of *Blecktrumman* [Die Blechtrommel] by Günter Grass.
- The 1969 edition of *Människans lott* [La condition humaine] by André Malraux.
- The 1983 edition of *Mysterier* [Mysterier] by Knut Hamsun.

Apart from the novel by Anatole France, the editions where the revisions took place are the latest ones being published. Based on the information in *Libris*, it would seem like only a small number of non-retranslations have been overtly revised. However, a previous study (Svahn, 2003) focusing on the titles in the bibliography with most editions showed that 7 out of 14 titles had been covertly revised, although mainly at a fairly low, linguistic level (e.g., punctuation). Based on this case study, a number of editions in the bibliography are likely to have been revised. The extent and nature of these revisions need to be explored in case studies in the future.

#### 4.6. The Why of non-retranslation

Finally, it is of course hard, not to say impossible, to draw a definitive conclusion of why certain titles are not retranslated, despite the fact that they appear to qualify for being retranslated.

One possibility, put forward by Bollaert (2019, p. 65; see also Paloposki & Koskinen, 2004), is that non-retranslations are more inclined to be published by large publishers, who are more marked by economic capital (see Sapiro, 2008). Smaller publishers, on the other hand, are more directed towards cultural capital and literary value and are thus more inclined toward retranslating. The high number of large publishers in this material would, at first sight, speak in favor of this explanation. The *raison d'être* for non-retranslations could then be interpreted as an above all economic question: it is less expensive to republish old translations and gives them a new look by a new setting, cover, and peritexts. Also, large publishers are generally considered to play a more "traditional" or "conserving" role (Sapiro, 2008; Schwartz, 2021). This may be a part of the explanation, and future studies should more closely investigate the publishers' role in publishing non-retranslations, either in a historical setting through archival work or in a contemporary setting through interviews.

Yet, my work with this material has also led me to consider non-retranslations in terms of value making and to see non-retranslations as bearers of a specific form of cultural capital. Bollaert (2019, p. 63) states that:

The position of a particular translation is reinforced by conferring its legitimacy, even canonicity, through the repeated act of reprinting. [...] The difference [compared to retranslation], however, is that reprints, although technically also keeping the memory of the source text alive, rather reinforce a very specific interpretation of it.

One common perception of retranslation is that the first translation is inevitably flawed in some sense and can be summarized in Koskinen and Paloposki's (2015, p. 27) words: "too old, too outdated, too free, too domesticated or too foreign, and so on". The material here, and especially the non-retranslations found in the 'classics' and 'once-popular' categories, rather point towards the opposite: that the translations – marked by older translations norms as they may be – have become one with the titles they represent in the target culture. As such, they are an asset in the title's canonicity in the target culture. Thus, contrarily to previous theories

on retranslations, outdated language is not necessarily a drawback but may in certain cases speak in favour of a title not being retranslated. The titles in the ‘classic’ category can serve as an example of this. It is reasonable to think that these titles, which can be described as a sort of modern 20<sup>th</sup>-century classic, benefit from some kind of linguistic patina; they are still easily understood by contemporary readers while at the same time their old-fashioned language signals their status as classics. This hypothesis could perhaps be called the non-retranslation hypothesis and deserves further exploration in the future.

## 5. Discussion – so what?

After having explored a number of questions related to non-retranslation, one remains: So what? What is the point of exploring non-retranslations and in what ways do non-retranslations relate to retranslations? In this final section, I will discuss some theoretical and methodological implications for (non-)retranslation research as well as some tendencies concerning non-retranslations in Sweden.

From a theoretical viewpoint, as this article has hopefully shown, non-retranslations can call into question some assumptions of retranslations. These assumptions include the notion that outdated language is always a drawback for a translated title as well as the temporal aspects of when a retranslation is “required”. The article has also presented a way to explore non-retranslations in a large scale study by focusing on trends and tendencies.

When it comes to the bibliography, the findings presented here are naturally limited by the present scope of the material and are likely to change as more titles are added to the bibliography. Yet, some conclusions can still be made. For example, the categorization of titles has shown that, perhaps counterintuitively, a large share of the titles cannot be described as classics, but rather as titles where some sort of canonization process started but never took off. This sort of halted canonization deserves further attention. In a longer perspective, I wish that the bibliography give rise to case studies and thus, just as Berk Albachten’s and Tahir Gürçağlar’s write about their bibliography of retranslations, “creat[e] intersections between macro- and micro-level analyses” (2018, p. 221).

In terms of the findings regarding the situation for non-retranslations in Sweden, a prominent finding is the total dominance of Albert Bonniers förlag, which is especially intriguing since the second major publishing house, Norstedts, seems to have a completely different publication strategy for non-retranslations. This article is not comparative, but it would be interesting to investigate whether Norstedts’ lack of non-retranslations parallels a comparable practice of retranslation. Similarly, it would be interesting to explore minor publishing houses’ strategies for non-retranslation and retranslation. In particular, further attention should be devoted to how innovation and conservation, as well as cultural and economic capital, are associated with the two practices. To conclude, this article has answered some questions on the curious concept of non-retranslation, but many questions and answers still remain.

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 Elin Svahn

Stockholm University  
Institute for Interpreting and Translation Studies  
Department of Swedish Language and Multilingualism  
106 91 Stockholm  
Sweden

[elin.svahn@su.se](mailto:elin.svahn@su.se)

**Biography:** Elin Svahn holds a PhD in Translation Studies from Stockholm University. She defended her PhD dissertation *The dynamics of extratextual translatorship in contemporary Sweden. A mixed methods approach* in 2020. Her research interests include (non-)retranslation, translation history, and translation sociology. She has co-edited two publications (2018, 2020) and her articles have appeared in journals such *Meta*, *Perspectives*, and *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer*.



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