Blunder

Even when a translator intends to give a faithful and equivalent rendering of an author's text in its entirety (if that were possible),¹ his/her understanding of it may turn out to be insufficient. This is where the difference between translators become acutely clear. Of our seven translators, three have done a very competent job. The percentage is not encouraging: less than a fifty-fifty chance of getting a competent translation seems not very reassuring, and it might be a token of Jane Austen's fairly modest status in Norway in the twentieth century.

For it is the nineteenth- and the twenty-first century Norwegian translators that have the best mastery of English. The anonymous 1871 translator tops the list, with a very impressive grasp of the meaning of Austen's text, even in its more complicated aspects, and a rendering well-phrased and readable down to the minutest details. Only when looking very carefully do we find a couple of very minor mistakes, such as rendering Mrs Croft's fifteen years of marriage as fifteen years of travelling, which is almost true any way.² The next translator, Alf Harbitz in 1930, is also very competent, and demonstrates an excellent understanding of Austen's novel. The most recent, Merete Alfsen, has a very good grasp of both her target and her source language, and delivers many outstanding renderings. At the other end of the scale, the translators of 1947 and 1972 struggle with Austen's language, while that of 1974 seems to have an adequate understanding, but a reductive strategy.

This does not mean that translation was an undeveloped skill in mid-twentieth century Norway, but there are perhaps two other reasons. One is that there seems to have been a vogue for abridged versions of famous novels, which made it acceptable and even common practice to treat them with disturbingly great freedom.³ A case in point is the paradoxically titled

1 As is commonly observed in translation theories, there is no complete correspondence between languages, and instead scholars will often describe various forms of equivalence between target and source language (see *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, 77). David Bellos also reminds us that all texts or even utterances of more than minimum length will have any number of potential translations in any target language (David Bellos, *Is That a Fish in Your Ear? Translation and the Meaning of Everything*, London: Penguin Books, 2011, 5).

2 Austen, *Familien Elliot*, 29 December 1871.

3 This was hardly a new phenomenon in literary translation, as such practices were so common in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that they have even given name to a period

“Store Klassikere” (“great classics”) series of the 1960s and 70s that included for instance an amputated version of George Eliot’s *Adam Bede* (first published in 1954). Only around 200 pages remain of the *circa* 600 page novel, and ten of its chapters are gone.⁴ Jane Austen has never been treated quite as roughly as this, at least not between book-covers in Norway.

The other reason is that the best available translators did not necessarily translate Jane Austen. Her mid-century translators were instead known for their familiarity with entertainment fiction.⁵ Their mistakes are so many that merely listing them fills twenty-five pages. This is therefore not a complete inventory, but rather a selection to illustrate some common weaknesses. They may exceed Frank Churchill’s “blunder” alluded to while playing scrabble with Jane Fairfax (in *Emma*, 111, 5).

Some translators make very banal mistakes, like turning morning into evening, evening into afternoon, or luncheon into breakfast.⁶ Tuesday becomes Thursday, one week becomes several, and “the day after the next” is instead “the next day”.⁷ Spanish chestnuts are transformed into walnut trees,⁸ and partridges into pâtés.⁹

The banal mistakes may disturb the grammar, when the genitive *s* is mistaken for plural, so that “lady’s” becomes “ladies”, or when Wickham inexplicably speaks with a royal “we” rather than “I”.¹⁰ In other cases, “she” becomes “he” or *vice versa*. Even banal mistakes can sometimes imply serious loss of meaning,

or tendency of translation, *les belles infidèles* (see for instance Emily O. Wittman, “Literary narrative prose and translation studies”, *The Routledge Handbook of Translation Studies*, London and New York: Routledge, 2013, 439). In spite of their elegant unfaithfulness, French translations played a central role as intermediaries between original works and retranslations into other languages (see Johan Heilbron, “Towards a Sociology of Translation: Book Translations as a Cultural World System”, *Critical Readings in Translation Studies*, London and New York: Routledge, 2010, 311).

4 Sverre Brændeland, *Adam Bede*, Oslo: Ansgar, 1954/De Unges Forlag, 1972.

5 As also observed by Emily O. Wittman: “Since the nineteenth century, there has been a strong distinction between high and low culture, with the former receiving much more careful translation” (“Literary narrative prose and translation studies”, 441).

6 Austen, *Elizabeth og hennes søstre*, 1930, 205. Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, 1947, 293. Austen, *Stolthet og fordom* c.1972, 180.

7 Austen, *Elizabeth og hennes søstre*, 1930, 219. Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, 1947, 302. Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, c.1972, 152.

8 Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, c.1972, 210.

9 “posteier” (Austen, *Omvei til lykken*, 1974, Part 13, 72).

10 Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, 1947, 294. Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, c.1972, 76.

for instance when Knutsen mixes up Jane's and Elizabeth's reactions by using an indiscriminate "she" throughout a passage (335).¹¹

Mistaking Characters

A quite common type of mistake is the confusing of characters. Bingley takes Darcy's place, Elizabeth replaces Mary at the piano, and Mrs Bennet rather than her daughter complains "But papa is so disagreeable!" (229). Mrs Hurst rather than Miss Bingley admires Darcy's library, losing the flirtatious implications.¹² Instead of Mr Collins' "scruples of leaving Mr and Mrs Bennet" being "most steadily resisted" by them (75), he just overcomes them himself. Rather than Mr Wickham being attentive to the ladies at supper, they are attentive to him.¹³ Rather than Lady Catherine speaking exclusively to her nephews, she is annoyed that her nephews speak only to the other guests. She even mistakes her daughter Anne for her own sister when describing her proficiency at the piano.¹⁴

Lalli Knutsen often misinterprets who is doing or saying what, creating new versions that make less sense than the original sentences. When Colonel Fitzwilliam explains that he believes it was Bingley that Darcy rescued from an imprudent match, "from knowing them to have been together the whole of last summer" (185), Knutsen has "because I knew he had spent a lot of time with a young lady all of last summer".¹⁵ In the same way (and in the same chapter), she does not understand that Elizabeth is thinking of Darcy when she comes to the conclusion that "If his own vanity, however, did not mislead him, *he* was the cause, his pride and caprice were the cause of all that Jane had suffered" (186). Knutsen, rather pointlessly, allocates the vanity to Bingley.¹⁶

Giving lines to the wrong character may have greater implications than is immediately apparent. When the Hauges transfer Mr Bennet's sarcastic remark (330) about his departing son-in-law, Wickham, to Mrs Bennet, it is turned into a serious evaluation: "What a fine man!" said Mrs Bennet once they

11 Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, 1947, 288. Knutsen also deletes two lines here.

12 *Ibid.*, 301, 27. Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, c.1972, 185, 37.

13 "Mr Collins hadde overvunnet alle sine skrupler"; "Da viet de andre damene deres oppmerksomhet til Mr. Wickham" (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, c.1972, 66, 74.

14 Austen, *Omvei til lykken*, 1974, Part 7.

15 "fordi jeg visste at han har vært svært mye sammen med en ung dame hele siste sommer" (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, 1947, 163).

16 "Men hvis ikke Bingleys egen forfengelighet hadde villedet ham, var det altså Darcys stolthet og herskelyst som var årsaken til alt Jane hadde lidd" (*ibid.*, 164).

were out of the house".¹⁷ The 1974 translator does exactly the same when the husband's ironic approval of all three sons-in-law becomes the wife's genuine praise: "Oh, I admire all my sons-in-law so much! Perhaps I love Wickham best, but I will become as fond of your husband as of Jane's!"¹⁸ It is equally strange to see Mr Bennet's mockery of Mr Collins transformed to admiration in the mouth of Mrs Bennet: "How very happy for you that you have the gift to flatter in a fine way".¹⁹ In all three cases, the words more or less correspond to Austen's words, but the attitude is the opposite of hers. We will see more examples of such loss of irony in a later chapter.

A similar example is allocating Mrs Bennet's serious praise of Lady Catherine as "a very agreeable woman" to Mr Bennet (66–67), as both Alfsen and Knutsen do.²⁰ Less clear-cut is the place where Austen has left no tag to mark Mr and Mrs Bennet's speeches. The newest translator has chosen to give him her lines, in spite of four indications to the contrary (63). First, these lines are separated from Mr Bennet's previous speech with new italics and new paragraph. Secondly, they form Mrs Bennet's only response to Mr Collins' letter, which her husband has just read aloud, and are followed by the responses of the others. Thirdly, they demonstrate her (not his) concern for the girls' future. And fourthly, they are serious rather than ironical. When read as Mrs Bennet's response, they show the contrasting attitudes of the spouses: he makes fun of Mr Collins; she sees that he may become useful.

The Hauges have chosen to add "said his wife" to clarify the point, and the 1974 translator agrees: "said the mother".²¹ The other translators have kept Austen's separation but no tag. Only Alfsen has interpreted it as Mr Bennet's speech.²² She also attributes to Elizabeth what is clearly a description of Darcy's attempts to make her and Georgiana talk to each other (269).²³

17 "For en fin mann!" sa Mrs. Bennet straks de var ut av huset" (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, c.1972, 260).

18 "Å, jeg beundrer alle mine svigersønner sånn! Kanskje er jeg aller gladest i Wickham, men jeg skal bli like glad i din mann som i Jane's!" This is added to her effusions about Elizabeth's future wealth and importance (Austen, *Omvei til lykken*, 1974, "Siste avsnitt" [last part]).

19 "det er en stor lykke for Dem at De har evnen til å smigre på en fin måte", sa fru Bennet" (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, 1947, 67).

20 Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, 2003, 68; Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, 1947, 66.

21 "sa hans kone" (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom* c.1972, 59; Austen, *Omvei til lykken*, 1974, Part 3).

22 Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, 2003, 64.

23 The original sentence is: "Elizabeth saw that he was anxious for his sister and herself to get acquainted, and forwarded, as much as possible, every attempt at conversation on either side" (269). This is translated as if *she* forwarded the attempts: "Elizabeth forstod

“There you missed your shot, my dear!”²⁴

Austen's English vocabulary seems at times too rich for Norwegian translators, and even the plain meaning of words may be mistaken. Lalli Knutsen, for instance, has problems with quite ordinary words and phrases. She translates “ill usage” (78) as “strong enmity” and the “influence of the Pemberley House” (81-82) has become its income.²⁵ The 1974 translator does the same in Mr Collins' case, where his “influence” becomes his “affluence”. She also transforms Darcy's “haughty composure” (195) to “exquisite politeness” (which, unfortunately, was not how Elizabeth perceived him at this stage).²⁶

Georgiana's “post” (duties as hostess) has become an attitude: “to remind her of her post” (268), is in Knutsen inexplicably given as “had reminded Miss Darcy of her condescension”. “Poor Kitty has anger” (being the object of her father's anger) is translated as “poor Kitty is desperate”, and “to try to discover her” is oddly translated “try to take care of her” (275).²⁷

Admittedly, Austen employs intricate words that can pose quite a challenge, like “querulous serenity”. That “Mrs Bennet was restored to her usual querulous serenity” (238) is one of Austen's ironic collocations, a paradoxical composition of opposites that is in danger of being lost in translation. Knutsen's choice, “Mrs Bennet had regained her usual tearful calmness” is perhaps an attempt at the same effect, but makes less sense, since the point is that the women stop crying (over departed officers), and she takes up her nagging and quarrelling again.²⁸

The Hauges translate the phrase as “complaining peevishness”, which is just a doubling of her querulousness, and has lost all sense of the paradox. “Peevishness” is certainly no equivalent for “serenity”. Harbitz loses the phrase when cutting the first half of the chapter. Alfsen has the best choice with her “whining equanimity”.²⁹

at han gjerne ville at søsteren og hun skulle bli kjent med hverandre, og gjorde hva hun kunne for å støtte ethvert forsøk på samtale” (*ibid.*, 249).

24 “Der bommer du, vennen min” (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, 1947, 7). This is a colloquial idiom replacing Mr Bennet's “You mistake me, my dear” (Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 1983, 5).

25 “sterkt uvennskap fra hans side”; “inntekten av Pemberley House” (*ibid.*, 75, 79).

26 “utsøkt høflighet” (Austen, *Omvei til lykken*, 1974, parts 3 and 8, 25).

27 “hadde mint frøken Darcy om hennes nedlatenhet”; “stakkars Kitty er fortvilt”; “for å forsøke å ta vare på Lydia” (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, 1947, 230, 236).

28 “Fru Bennet hadde gjenvunnet sin vanlige tårefulle ro” (*ibid.*, 207).

29 “klagende grettenhet” (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, c.1972, 192); “sin sedvanlige sytende sinnssro” (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, 2003, 225).

“Mortify” is evidently another difficult word, as Knutsen has Jane say, very uncharacteristically, to Elizabeth: “You make me angry”. What she really says is “It mortifies me” (343), which is quite a different thing.³⁰ “Moralize” should not be difficult, but when Mary “could still moralize” over morning visits (386), Knutsen thinks she “felt herself to be unfairly treated ... or so she claimed”.³¹ It is perhaps an interpretation, but appears to be a mere mistake.

“Saucy” may be an unfamiliar word for Knutsen, since “saucy speech” (327) becomes “bitter utterance”, a not-at-all fitting description of Elizabeth’s early dealings with Darcy. In the same place, Wickham being exposed as not having “turned out well” is translated “had not taken care of himself”, which is rather less of a condemnation.³² Jane’s refusal to pry into Lydia’s secret, “You may depend upon me seeking no further” (319), that is asking more questions, is not understood but instead rendered “you can trust me not to say anything about it”.³³

The Hauges’ translation demonstrates an even more uncertain understanding of some common English words, for instance not distinguishing between “while” and “when” (101).³⁴ They often have an approximate translation, as if they are guessing where they do not know. In this way, “ridicule and censure” becomes “smile at”, “insincere” becomes “not serious”, “archly” becomes “a little supercilious”.³⁵ Sometimes, the difficult word is just replaced by a more common one, as when “the hermitage” (in the Longbourn garden) is simply rendered as “the property” (352).³⁶ In other places they deal with difficulties by evading them, hence just deleting the archaic “se’nnight” in “yesterday se’nnight” and very illogically translating it “the day before yesterday” (97).³⁷

One of the places where Elisabeth and Eivind Hauge have thoroughly misunderstood Austen’s sentence is in II, 9, in the description of Mr Darcy’s awkwardness when visiting the Hunsford Parsonage. “Colonel Fitzwilliam’s occasionally laughing at his stupidity, proved that he was generally different”

30 “Du gjør meg sint” (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, 1947, 295).

31 “hun var fortsatt forurettet over hver eneste formiddagsvisitt hun ble tvunget til. Dette påsto hun i hvert fall” [the last sentence is an addition] (*ibid.*, 333).

32 “bitter ytring”; “ikke hadde tatt var på deg selv” (*ibid.*, 281–82).

33 “du kan stole på at ikke jeg skal si noe om det” (*ibid.*, 274).

34 The implication of translating “while” as “when” here is that Mr Bennet now is amused by his wife’s speech, rather than by Mr Collins’: “da han hørte sin kone” (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, c.1972, 87).

35 “ville ha smilt av”; “ikke ... alvorlig”; “litt overlegent” (*ibid.*, 210, 79).

36 The 1974 translator does the same when replacing the specific word “venison” with the general word “dinner” (Austen, *Omvei til lykken*, Part 13, 72).

37 “eiendommen”; “i forgårs” (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, c.1972, 279, 84).

we are told (180). The Hauge's version is "The Colonel often laughed at the clergyman's stupidities, so he was very different".³⁸ Here it is the clergyman who is stupid, and the Colonel who is different, and Darcy has disappeared from the sentence.

They may use words that seemingly correspond to those of Austen, but with a twisted meaning. Darcy's assurance to Elizabeth that he does not want to dwell "on wishes, which, for the happiness of both, cannot be too soon forgotten" (196) is changed to "dwell on wishes for a mutual happiness for both of us" (complete with pleonasm).³⁹ The happiness of the first lies in forgetting each other, of the second in being united.

Also the latest translator, who is generally much more reliable, occasionally loses her footing. When we read that Mr Wickham says he grew up with the same "privileges" as Mr Darcy, this seems odd, and the original is "amusements" (81), which is quite a different thing.⁴⁰ Elizabeth's plain "masters" must have been teachers, but Alfsen translates twice as "the great masters", which is not entirely comprehensible, and perhaps refers to books.⁴¹ Also, when Elizabeth realizes that vanity has been her "folly" (208), the translation "infamy/ignominy" seems not to fit the bill.⁴²

When Darcy's housekeeper appears to be "much less fine and more civil" than expected, Alfsen translates "fine" as "sharp" (246). Why, however, would Elizabeth expect the housekeeper to be sharp? "Fine" must here mean that she expects her to be proud of her position in such a grand house. "Fine" (*fin*) is also a Norwegian word, with the same meaning, and could have been used here. Austen uses "fine" a second time a few lines further down about the furniture, which was not "uselessly fine", and here Alfsen has chosen the Norwegian equivalent.⁴³

The same happens with "elegant", which is the same in both languages. When Elizabeth is bothered by Mrs Phillips' lack of elegance, and looks forward to "the comfort and elegance" of her own future home at Pemberley (384), the use of the same Norwegian word would have been better than the chosen solution, which means "high-born/distinguished/of quality".⁴⁴ The choice

38 "Obersten lo ofte av prestens dumheter, så han var helt anderledes" (*ibid.*, 146).

39 "dvele ved ønsker om en felles lykke for oss begge" (*ibid.*, 158).

40 "privilegier" (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, 81).

41 "de store mestere" (*ibid.*, 158). The Hagues also think that "masters" refer to books, while Knutsen and Harbitz both translate it as "teachers".

42 "skjensel" (*ibid.*, 198).

43 "spiss" (the choice is perhaps inspired by Knutsen's "skarp", which has the same meaning); "eller meningsløst fine" (*ibid.*, 229).

44 "fornem", "fornemmere" (*ibid.*, 354).

makes Elizabeth a snob, disappointed that Mrs Phillips is not a woman “of quality”, while in reality she is only reacting to the vulgarity of her relatives’ flattery of Darcy.

Most translators mistake the literal meaning of “ramble”. Alfsen renders “your solitary ramble” (327) as “your solitary meditations”. The translation stems from Harbitz, and Knutsen has the variation “very deep meditations”. The Hauges avoid the word by rendering it “in your loneliness”⁴⁵ and the 1974 translator deletes the relevant episode. The choice of a metaphorical rather than a literal translation is perhaps understandable, as Wickham here interrupts Elizabeth’s thinking, but she has started walking again when he sees her, and rambling around the country is, indeed, a favourite activity of hers.

Close Enough?

A particular danger is mistaking similar words, for instance similar-sounding Norwegian ones. Such deceptively similar words with different meaning are also known as “false friends”.⁴⁶ Knutsen translates “remarkable” places (240) as *merkelig*, but this means “strange/odd”, and since Oxford is first in the list of examples of such odd places, it is, indeed, a remarkable translation.⁴⁷ Likewise, when the housekeeper is described as “respectable-looking” (246), she is here said to be awe-inspiring, or commanding respect.⁴⁸

When Elizabeth is walking “two or three times” along the lane, the 1974 translator renders “times” as *timer*, although this means “hours”. Similarly, “this formidable introduction” has become “this formal introduction”.⁴⁹

In some cases they mistake words for similar-sounding English ones. Knutsen mistakes “confirmed” as completed, so that instead of “my opinion of all parties was confirmed” (198), Darcy rather pointlessly writes that his opinion was completed.⁵⁰ The Hauges use “confuse” as translation of both “profuse” and “diffuse”, the two latter obviously unfamiliar to them. When Mrs Bennet

45 “dine ensomme funderinger” (*ibid.*, 300; Austen, *Elizabeth og hennes søstre* 211); “meget dype funderinger” (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, 1947, 281); “I Deres ensomhet” (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, c.1972, 258).

46 See for instance Bassnett, *Reflections on Translation*, 68.

47 “merkelige steder” (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, 1947, 208).

48 “respektinngytende utseende” (*ibid.*, 210).

49 “timer”; “den formelle presentasjonen” (Austen, *Omvei til lykken*, Part 8, 25 and Part 10, 28).

50 “min bedømmelse av samtlige innblandede personer var ferdig” (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, 1947, 173).

was “profuse in her acknowledgements” of Bingley’s hospitality (42), instead she now “sounded completely confused”. The “diffuseness and warmth” of Bingley’s greeting of Jane (54), is translated “the warmest and most confused reception”, which sounds a little odd, even if it may happen to be quite close to the truth about this young admirer.⁵¹ It is less to the point when “nonsensical” (99) is translated as if it meant “insensitive”.⁵² The expression “in want of” is translated as “wanted”, so that young ladies “in want of a partner” (175) rather more shamelessly “sat longing for a partner”.⁵³

Translators may also mistake words with similar connotations, for instance: “looks”, “looking”, “appearances”, “regard”. When Elizabeth thinks of Darcy’s “regard”, in other words his esteem for her, the author has allowed herself a pun on “to regard” as “to see”. Elizabeth is actually looking at his portrait, fixing “his eyes upon herself” (251). When, however, “his regard” is merely translated “this glance”, they lose the primary meaning of the word in this context.⁵⁴

A deceptively simple word like “look” may sometimes be difficult to interpret. When Wickham is exposed by Elizabeth, he “hardly knew how to look” (329), probably meaning both how to meet her gaze, and how to appear. This, unfortunately, becomes “did not really know how the matter stood with her”, a rendering which is introduced by Knutsen and repeated by Alfsen.⁵⁵ Furthermore, looks and appearances may deceive. When “the appearance of goodness” (225) is translated “good looks” something is turned on its head, and it happens in two of the translations.⁵⁶

Another case of connotations gone astray is the translation of “charity”. Although “charity” etymologically means love, and in its purest and most disinterested sense, it is still not correct to translate “The adieu is charity itself” (368) as “the farewell words are really a declaration of love”, or “are really loving”, as two translators do. This is Elizabeth’s description of Darcy’s letter, and the actual words of charity are “God bless you” at the end of it.

51 “lød helt forvirret”; “den hjerteligste og mest forvirrede mottagelse” (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, c. 1972, 41, 51).

52 “følelsesløs” (*ibid.*, 86).

53 “satt bare og lengtet etter en kavalier” (*ibid.*, 142).

54 “dette blikket” (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, 1947, 215).

55 “slett ikke riktig visste hvor han hadde henne” (*ibid.*, 283; Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, 2003, 302).

56 “et godt utseende” (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, 1947, 196); “Darcy’s utseende” (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, c.1972, 182). Harbitz has deleted these lines. Alfsen has an excellent choice here: “Den ene er god i sinn, mens den andre er det i skinn” (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, 2003, 213). The 1974 translator also shows good understanding: “Den ene har all godheten, den andre all sjarmen” (Austen, *Omvei til lykken*, Part 9, 21).

The expression “charity itself” is (for once) best translated by the Hauges, as “pure goodness”.⁵⁷

“Passion” may, surprisingly, also cause a problem. When Darcy writes of “the utmost force of passion” required to put aside his objections to Elizabeth’s family, he was thinking of the strength of his love for her. One translator evidently associates passion with suffering, probably thinking of the Easter story and Passion music. She has Darcy declare that his objections “had to yield to my endless suffering”, which sounds ridiculously inappropriate.⁵⁸

There is clearly a logic behind translating “acquaintance” as “friends”, and it would have been quite appropriate had it been the plural. However, when Darcy asks Elizabeth’s permission “to introduce my sister to your acquaintance”, he means to her, not “to your friends”.⁵⁹

Even when keeping seemingly very close to the original, translations may risk losing some of its significance through overlooking apparently innocuous words. A word as minor as “of” may carry significant meaning. Hence, “the undeserving of the other sex” (289) leaves a possibility that they are not all undeserving, while the translation “the faithless other sex” leaves us no hope.⁶⁰

The Other Way Round

Sometimes an unfortunate translation turns the original meaning upside down, so that the author says the opposite of what she intended. “She could answer calmly” is the opposite of “she could not answer without confusion” (335).⁶¹ Similarly, “both equally big” is the opposite of “by no means of equal magnitude” (196). Likewise, “a reason ... which asked no extraordinary stretch of belief” (326) is the opposite of “the motive did not appear creditable”.⁶² Furthermore, to let Elizabeth ask Mr Darcy about Colonel Fitzwilliam, rather than the other way round, seems sloppy, when the person addressed is clearly named: “‘Shall we ask your cousin the reason for this?’ Said Elizabeth, still addressing Colonel Fitzwilliam” (175).⁶³

57 “Avskjedsordene er i bunn og grunn en kjærlighetserklæring” (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, 1947, 318); “rent kjærlige” (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, 2003, 339); “godheten selv” (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, c. 1972, 294). Harbitz and the 1974 translator both deleted this phrase.

58 “som måtte vike for min uendelige lidelse” (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, 1947, 173).

59 “til dine venner” (Austen, *Omvei til lykken*, Part 10).

60 “det troløse andre kjønn” (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, c. 1972, 226).

61 “hun kunne svare rolig” (*ibid.*, 265).

62 “to forbrytelser av svært ulik karakter, men begge like store”; “selv om motivet ikke var egnet til noen større tiltro” (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, 1947, 172, 281).

63 “Skal vi spørre oberst Fitzwilliam om årsaken” (*ibid.*, 155).

Where Jane, ill and bedridden at Netherfield, originally “could attempt little beside expressions of gratitude” (33), in the Hauges’ translation she “could not express how grateful she was”. In the same situation, “nor were the other ladies often absent” (from Jane’s room) (33) becomes “the other ladies were in their rooms”.⁶⁴

Mr Collins’ odd apology for his future inheritance of the Longbourn estate is also turned on its head. The Hauges’ version is: “he could easily have changed it, if he had so wished” (that is, he can if he wants to). The original, however, reads: “We cannot suppose he would help it, if he could” (64) (he cannot and he would not).⁶⁵

Mr Darcy’s admission “Perhaps ... I should have judged better” (175) is turned inside out to “I would probably have been judged more favourably”.⁶⁶ The Hauges also have problems with Elizabeth’s laconic comment on Bingley’s motives for renting and leaving Netherfield, and that it would be better for the neighbourhood if he were to leave it: “But perhaps Mr Bingley did not take the house so much for the convenience of the neighbourhood as for his own, and we must expect him to keep or quit it on the same principle” (178). When this is translated “did not think so much of the neighbourhood when he settled there, so *that* would not stop him getting rid of the place”, the last part is illogical, as it is part of Elizabeth’s argument that he must be expected to keep it if it pleases him, while the Hauges have her say the opposite.⁶⁷

Even the account of Darcy’s many accidental meetings with Elizabeth in Rosings park suffers from such blunders of reading, “for on these occasions it was not merely a few formal enquiries and an awkward pause and then away, but he actually thought it necessary to turn back and walk with her” (182). In Knutsen’s version, Darcy does not at all turn around and join her, and so the translator changes their love story considerably: “On one of these occasions it was also merely a few forced questions and an embarrassed silence and then goodbye, without turning around and walking with her”.⁶⁸

Elizabeth’s loss of interest in Mr Wickham half way through the novel is evident: “Elizabeth listened as little as she could, but there was no escaping

64 “kunne derfor ikke fortelle hvor taknemlig hun var”; “De andre damene var på deres værelser” (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, c. 1972, 33, 34).

65 “når han lett kunne endre på det, hvis han måtte ønske det” (*ibid.*, 60).

66 “jeg ville nok bli bedømt langt mer fordelaktig” (*ibid.*, 142).

67 “tenkte vel ikke så meget på naboskapet da han slo seg ned der, så *det* ville jo ikke hindre ham i å kvitte seg med stedet” (*ibid.*, 144).

68 “Ved en av disse anledninger ble det da også bare til noen tvungne spørsmål og en forlegen taushet og så farvel, uten at han snudde og gikk sammen med henne” (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, 1947, 160).

the frequent mention of Wickham's name" (222). In Knutsen, however, she still seems interested: "Elizabeth listened as little as possible to them, but she could not avoid paying attention when Wickham's name was occasionally mentioned". There are two mistakes here: that Elizabeth was interested in hearing about Wickham, and that his name was mentioned only now and then, while in reality Lydia and the other girls were chatting about him and the other officers during a whole journey.⁶⁹

Towards the end of the novel, Elizabeth wants to throw a spanner in the works of her mother's embarrassing matchmaking plots. She thinks, however, she is not needed when they all sit down to cards. She could safely go into another room, since "she could not be wanted to counteract her mother's schemes" (346). Knutsen does not understand, and claims that she does not want to disturb her mother's intrigues: "since they were all going to sit down at the card tables, she did not want to ruin her mother's plans".⁷⁰ Since Knutsen does not comprehend Elizabeth's thinking, she has probably had trouble with the opening of the next paragraph, that "her mother had been too ingenious for her", which is simply cut. Even the 1871 translator of *Persuasion* happens to turn the tables when instead of the hosts (the Harvilles) hospitably receiving the friends of their friend (Captain Wentworth), it is the guests who show the same sentiment.⁷¹

Where Does It Come From?

Some alterations found in translations are inexplicable. Why change "uncommonly pretty" (11) to "dances very well", or "walking towards the little copse" (301) to "outside before the house"?⁷² For some unfathomable reason Austen's conclusion about Mrs Bennet is twisted. "With what delighted pride she afterwards visited Mrs Bingley and talked of Mrs Darcy may be guessed" (385) becomes "One can imagine with what delight and pride she later visited Mrs Bingley to talk of Mrs Darcy and Mrs Darcy to talk of Mrs Bingley".⁷³ This

69 "Elizabeth hørte så lite som mulig på dem, men hun kunne ikke la være å lytte når Wickhams navn av og til ble nevnt" (*ibid.*, 193).

70 "siden alle de andre skulle sette seg til spillebordene, ville hun ikke ødelegge morens planer" (*ibid.*, 297).

71 Austen, *Familien Elliot*, 1 January 1872.

72 "danser ... svært godt"; "ute foran huset" (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, c. 1972, 15, 236).

73 "Man kan tenke seg med hvilken henrykkelse og stolthet hun siden besøkte fru Bingley for å snakke om fru Darcy og fru Darcy for å snakke om fru Bingley" (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, 1947, 332).

has no match in the source text. In addition to doubling the sentence, the point that Mrs Bennet loves to boast to her neighbours about her daughters is lost; it would not satisfy her to talk only to Jane and Lizzy. At the same time, the original sentence reminds us of her preference for Jane (whom she visits), and her awe of Darcy's rank (which she talks of). This little detail is also gone.

In such cases, translators seem to have been inventing rather than translating. Similarly, the Hauges reinvent the final description of the Wickham's future life-style: "Their manner of living, even when the restoration of peace dismissed them to a home, was unsettled in the extreme" (387). This becomes: "When peace came, they had to help them get a place to live".⁷⁴ They do the same when a striking narrative irony on Elizabeth's vanity is lost, and the sentence is changed to being about Jane. Elizabeth considers telling Jane of Darcy's proposal, which would "so highly gratify whatever of her own vanity she had not yet been able to reason away" (218). In the Hauges version this is transformed into "console her [Jane's] wounded feelings".⁷⁵

Like Knutsen, the Hauges do not understand the part of Darcy's letter where he mentions reasons why Bingley should not marry Jane, and he himself should not think of Elizabeth. These particular causes, he writes, "I had myself endeavoured to forget, because they were not immediately before me" (198). What he is saying is that he had now tried to forget the deplorable manners of the Bennet family members, but they were the reason he separated Bingley from Jane. In the Hauges' version he writes of reasons: "which would then [in my case] have meant less because I would not have been so affected by them".⁷⁶ Knutsen has "because they had not the same crucial importance for me". This not only rephrases the original, but gives it a new meaning.

Jokes Lost

Humour is an inherent quality of Jane Austen's novels. The author who declares that she cannot avoid "laughing at myself or other people" always writes with a humorous and ironic distance to her world.⁷⁷ She embeds wry comments

74 "Og da freden kom, måtte de hjelpe til med å skaffe dem et sted å bo" (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, c. 1972, 309).

75 "legge et plaster på hennes sårede følelser" (*ibid.*, 176).

76 "men som da ville hatt mindre betydning fordi jeg ikke ville bli så belastet" (*ibid.*, 160); "fordi de ikke hadde same avgjørende betydning for meg" (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, 1947, 173).

77 In a letter about the impossibility of her writing romances, April 1st 1816 (*Jane Austen's Letters*, 1995, 312).

and witty perspectives of the characters and their activities, as well as comical dialogues. Humour is a particular challenge for any translator, as it demands a familiarity with culture as well as language.⁷⁸ Knutsen apparently does not grasp Elizabeth Bennet's joking attitude to the problem of judging between Wickham and Darcy: "There is but such a quantity of merit between them; just enough to make one good sort of man; and of late it has been shifting about pretty much" (225). Knutsen renders it "We have to change our opinion of them, but only one can be a good human being".⁷⁹ This is not funny, but on the contrary a serious statement.

Likewise, the joke at the end of 11, 9, with its irony on Charlotte's match-making plans for Elizabeth, is not at all understood by the Hauges. Listing the pros for Colonel Fitzwilliam, Charlotte concludes that: "his situation in life was most eligible; but to counterbalance these advantages, Mr Darcy had considerable patronage in the church, and his cousin could have none at all" (181). The meaning of this is completely changed when rendered: "Besides, he was an eligible match, even if Mr Darcy was a much better one". In contrast, Harbitz has a good solution (although slightly rewritten): "But Charlotte preferred Darcy, for he had several rich livings to bestow, and his cousin none". Alfsen has also understood the sentence, but is less ironical in her choice of words: "But Mr Darcy had something that compensated for these advantages, namely the right to several clerical livings, and his cousin had not".⁸⁰

Even more striking is the loss of Elizabeth's joke about the market price of the younger sons of earls. Colonel Fitzwilliam is one of them, and as the two of them have been flirting, he evidently deems it cautious to warn her off, twice repeating that younger sons have to marry money. Elizabeth takes the embarrassing hint, and resorts to a joke: "And pray, what is the usual price of an Earl's younger son? Unless the elder brother is very sickly, I suppose you would not ask above fifty thousand pounds" (183–184). The joke about buying eligible marriage candidates, and sorting them into price categories according

78 David Bellos briefly considers and demonstrates the translatability of humour in Chapter 25 of *Is That a Fish in Your Ear?* (283–90).

79 "Vi må skifte oppfatning av dem, men bare en av dem kan være et godt menneske" (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, 1947, 196). Three translations, Harbitz, the Hauges and the 1974 serial, simply omit this sentence, and only Alfsen gets the joke.

80 "Dessuten var han et fordelaktig parti, selv om nok Mr Darcy var et langt bedre" (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, c.1972, 147); "Men Charlotte foretrakk Darcy, for han hadde flere fete pretekall å gi bort og hans fetter ingen" (Austen, *Elizabeth og hennes søstre*, 1930, 132); "Men mr. Darcy hadde noe som oppveide disse fordelene, nemlig kallsrett til flere kirkelige embeter, og det hadde ikke fetteren" (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, 2003, 174). Knutsen and the 1974 translator both delete the sentence.

to future prospects, although a humorous exaggeration, is still uncomfortably near the truth. Elizabeth could have bought Colonel Fitzwilliam had she been rich, and as Mr Collins so considerably reminds her, she risks having no other proposals than his own, since her fortune consists of only 40 pounds.⁸¹ The significance of the joke is not caught by the Hauges, who render it: "And what does a younger son need, then? Unless the elder brother is very sickly, he cannot very well be content with less than fifty thousand pounds?"⁸² The joke about marriage as a market has disappeared. Luckily, most other translators have caught it.

Although it is not her most frequently preferred type of humour, Austen seems to have allowed herself a pun on bass/base when the sisters find Mary "deep in the study of thorough bass and human nature" (60). Mary had practised her left/bass hand while they were away, as well as moralizing on the baseness of humankind. Harbitz deletes the lines, Knutsen deletes the entire chapter, the Hauges rewrite it,⁸³ and Alfsen loses the pun when she translates thoroughbass as "harmonics".⁸⁴ A quite demanding form of joke to translate, the pun tends to require an entirely new version in the target language, playing with other words than the original. However, this could have been achieved without great difficulty in this case.

Whether banal or complex, mistakes of translation influence foreign readers' perception of the work in question, sometimes giving them a significantly different story than that of the source language readers. More examples of the troubles of translators will follow in the next chapter.

81 For a discussion of this example in the context of courting as shopping, see Sørbø, *Irony and Idyll*, 50.

82 "Og hva trenger så en yngre sønn?" (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, c. 1972, 148). The joke is intact in Austen, *Elizabeth og hennes søstre*, 1930, 134; Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, 1947, 162; Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, 2003, 176.

83 "fordypet i studier og underholdt dem med kvasifilosofiske betraktninger" (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, c. 1972, 56–57).

84 "fordypet i studier av harmonilære og den menneskelige natur" (Austen, *Stolthet og fordom*, 2003, 61).