

Chapter Two

INVENTING F. DAVID: AUTHOR (ING) TRANSLATION

Victor Hugo's spectacular international success was to some extent made possible by readers for whom the French language did not constitute an insurmountable linguistic obstacle. And yet, in the long run it would owe even more to another feature by which literature travels: translation.

Spanning from vacuum-cleaner manuals to Nobel Prize winning poetry, translation is also one of the necessary components of the international conventions, recommendations, and agreements that govern its protection.¹ Despite its creative, financial, moral, and legal implications in the matrix of print culture, the question of how translation interacts with authorship in intellectual property rights has warranted scant attention, while authorship has been extensively theorized and, as I tried to show in the introduction, its status as a critical facet in the analysis of intellectual property rights is today largely taken for granted. Put in somewhat different terms, those who study translation seldom consider its legal repercussions, and those who analyse intellectual property rights on the basis of authorship, rarely consider the translator as author.² No doubt this is because the first tends to be considered a derivative of the second, without valid claims to either intent or originality, and thus to contend with the translator is in some sense to unwittingly destabilize the category of authorship necessary for the analysis of intellectual property rights.

There is no question that to the men of the ALAI, translation was a top priority. Upon their return to Paris following the 1880 Lisbon conference, the participating delegates share their accounts of the event at a meeting at the École Polytechnique, where the discussion swiftly turns to translations. A report delineating ALAI's policy on the matter by Louis Ulbach, president of the organization between 1885–8, gains considerable attention. In the proposed conclusion, translation is de-

scribed as 'this sort of transfusion of a foreign blood into the veins of a nation' that 'should be made with care, knowledge, and honesty.'³ Referred to in terms bordering on genetic determinism, translation was equated with an exchange of bodily fluids whereby national literatures and hence also qualities blend into the bloodstream of other countries by way of a biological, self-regulating apparatus. More a metaphorical than literal view, it was nonetheless articulated in the same emotionally charged tone that earmarked much of the discourse pertaining to intellectual property rights at that time. Behind this flamboyant rhetoric lurked more down-to-earth motives: since translation provided the key to any widespread textual diffusion of literary property, international intellectual property rights were clearly of little use to authors if they did not somehow address the legal side of linguistic conversion. Although a variety of solutions had already been set in place on the level of individual nation-states, translation proved that it was a major stimulus behind the search for international cooperation in the field of intellectual property rights at the end of the nineteenth century when it became the first right recognized in the Berne Convention.⁴

Not all members of the ALAI unreservedly approve of the report, and if my account in the previous chapter suggested a rosy picture of an international fraternity united in their acceptance of the innate superiority of French culture, nothing could be further from the truth. One participant even suggests that the report is coloured by that exclusionary frame of mind Germans always have noticed in the French, bluntly adding that he finds it too narrowly, if not altogether, focused on translations from a French viewpoint.⁵ As if to lend support to his biting comment, George Conrad, despite his English-sounding name one of the German members of ALAI's Comité Executif, recapitulates a meeting with a Portuguese man in Lisbon. On being asked about his possible participation in the conference, he had answered Conrad: 'How would you have me take part in the work of the Congrès? At the end of the day, doesn't l'Association Littéraire Internationale work exclusively for the profit of French authors and playwrights, whose productions dominate the world market to the great detriment of other literatures?'⁶



Two conflicting sets of problems converge when translation is considered in the light of intellectual property rights, historically as well as in the present. The first concerns the ambivalent role of the translator and translations, which posits both in an inconsistent relationship to the

author. Article 2(3) of the Berne Convention states: 'Translations ... shall be protected as original works without prejudice to the copyright in the original work,' a recognition potentially at odds with the ensuing Article 8, where the author is provided with the exclusive right to make and authorize translations. The legal subject designated proprietor of the intellectual property in question resides here in two camps, offering us (at least) two entities whose claims to the text may in effect be equally valid, yet possibly also in dissonance with one another.

The second larger consideration is structural. It connects translation and intellectual property rights with what we – for want of a better word – can call cultural imperialism. The main reason given by George Conrad's Portuguese acquaintance as to why he cannot partake in the Lisbon conference is because he thinks its agenda is exclusionary, catering only to French interests, interests he sees as overshadowing those of other nations. What is being referred to is an underlying, basic manifestation of structural and spatial power inherent in intellectual property rights, namely its construction as an instrument of control primarily serving the purposes of those who, at a given historic moment, can be seen as exporters/producers of assets deemed intellectual property, and not the interests of the importers/consumers of the same assets. The pattern that evolves from this basic cartography logically places the translator/translation on the side of importers/users and not the other way around. From the very beginning of international intellectual property rights, being an exporter rather than an importer implies not only a discursive upper hand, but a competitive *trade-related advantage*. Translations are central in this construction because at the end of the nineteenth century – before the vast media and communications explosion that is to come – they facilitate international cultural flows.

Today, English has replaced French as the international language par excellence, and the Walt Disney Company is the most translated 'author' globally. Whereas pre-1989 statistics put Vladimir Illyich Lenin in first place with the current translations of Lenin's works estimated at 3000, United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) also concludes that new ones are at a standstill.⁷ Everywhere and nowhere at the same time, translation is an uncanny barometer of changing cultural flows. And yet, as Lawrence Venuti argues, its very omnipresence renders both the activity itself and the those who execute it 'invisible.'⁸

In the following, I would like to frame my arguments around the two English-language translations of Peter Høeg's novel *Frøken Smillas*

fornemmelse for sne (1992) (*Smilla's Sense of Snow* [1993] and *Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow* [1993]), the first by Tiina Nunnally and the second by F. David.⁹ An unlikely international bestseller, it qualified in 1997 as the most widely sold novel by a non-English-speaking author in the United States to date.¹⁰ Twenty-four countries, from Brazil to South Korea, had at that time published the story of the angry, stubborn, Euclid-loving Smilla Qaavigaaq Jaspersen, and at least ten more had bought the rights to do so in the future.¹¹ *Smilla* anchors my discussion precisely because it operates so well on the two levels of subject and structure. First, the troubled question of textual ownership resonates in the account of two conflicting translations, and second, the Danish-Greenlandic colonial experience that was such an important part of the story suitably mirrors the material conditions the book encountered in its global circulation. Drawing on these two versions of *Smilla* should not be interpreted as a normative approach attempting to uncover which text is the most 'accurate' or 'faithful.' Excavating on a lexical level still tends to be a favoured approach when comparing different translations, but I will keep such dissection to a minimum. One of the reasons is that it has already been done in this particular case, and while interesting, the most revealing potential of translation studies lies, not in the infinitesimal, but in providing a larger canvas upon which cultural codes of intellectual property rights and authorship are reinscribed in new and unexpected ways.¹²

I

Numerous components mutually benefited *Smilla's* worldwide triumph, not least of all the swift sales of rights to the American publisher Farrar, Straus and Giroux, even before the book was published in Denmark.¹³ Elisabeth Dyssegaard, a Danish editor working for the publisher initially pushed for Høeg's novel, saying: 'I had been following his career and reading him [*sic*] his work. I was quite excited about an earlier book but I was waiting for something to come along that would travel.'¹⁴ Her comment suggests that for a Danish book to be able to succeed internationally, some sort of special *je ne sais quoi* is needed in order for it to warrant attention in the great onslaught of competing titles. As one of the most powerful textual vehicles shaping our image of a culture, translation is a process that relies on navigating and keeping the 'exotic' elements that come with a book such as *Smilla* as much as it does recasting the same 'foreign' into the expectations of another language and culture.¹⁵ André Lefevere calls this intervention 'refraction,' an

activity that is never ideologically neutral, but encoded with the desires and expectations always present in cultural transpositions.¹⁶

Asking whether or not a book will travel well remains squarely the prerogative of the dominant, since it is seldom asked of representatives of a major language to what extent they possess the appropriate characteristics facilitating a reversed trajectory. Stuart Hall describes this phenomenon when he speaks of the 'English eye' – an eye surveying everything and everyone, placing everybody, and yet being incapable of understanding or looking at itself.¹⁷ Such an inspection is always rooted in the bias that comes with the unreflected belief in one's own universality, taking the success of journeys, such as the one from English to Danish, simply for granted.

What was it then that Dyssengaard saw in a first-person account of a thirty-seven-year-old Danish-Greenlandic leading lady who, in her quest for a boy's murderer, unravels a conspiracy of epic proportions taking her back to Greenland, an ice cave, and a meteor with prehistoric killer worms, that made her think this particular book has the prerequisite qualities? Smilla herself, nonconformist and with a huge chip on her shoulder, was perhaps one of the reasons. Half Greenlandic on her mother's side, half Danish on her father's, her home is the mental and physical exile provided by Copenhagen. Expelled from boarding school, never finishing her university education but with a track record of political activism on the far left in the *Inuit Ataqaatigiit*, her life is a mess, professionally and personally. Uprooted from a Greenland she never ceases to desire, her true passion is snow. Its texture, power, and predictability make it a faithful partner that can be trusted to be both consistent and reliable. Something of a recluse, she has never excelled at either making or keeping relationships. She has no colleagues to speak of, her brother committed suicide, she is alienated from her father, and her lover The Mechanic turns out to be a dubious character, easily swayed by the forces of evil. Her only successful emotional bond of any kind is with the boy Isaiah, and it can hardly be thought of in traditional adult-child terms. Although she provides him with basic physical needs – food, clothing, and care – when it comes to bedtime reading, she displays an eccentric preference for Euclid's *Elementa* or Lewis and Carrisa's *Detection and Classification of Ice*.

Greenland provided an original setting and background for this postcolonial critique, especially in combination with a cynical protagonist acting out an unconventional crime yarn, and *Smilla* raised high hopes. To begin with, the marketing and promotion lavished on the

book by Farrar, Straus and Giroux was remarkable for a translation. In Canada, Doubleday Canada reportedly pursued the rights, largely based on the marketing strategies deployed by the U.S. publisher. Early expectations hovered around a modest print run of 5,000 to 7,000 copies at best, but once the translation reached all those involved in the economics of print culture (sales people, buyers at the chains, book club editors) it apparently soared to an initial 40,000. As a result, U.S. marketing included a massive advertising campaign to the amount of \$50,000 and a Book-of-the-Month Club selection in September 1993.¹⁸ When the paperback version hit the stands in August the following year, the promotional paraphernalia included not only 'Think Snow' baseball caps and snow pillows, but also a reader's companion with sample group discussion questions for booksellers. The mass-market version was at that time expected to hit the two-million-copy range, and the in print total was 770,000. *Publishers Weekly* noted that the paperback sales pattern copied that of the hardback version, with strong sales at the independents. Major advertising campaigns in *Vanity Fair*, *Entertainment Weekly*, and the *New York Times* were scheduled.¹⁹ And apparently they paid off. The Danish daily *Politiken* reported with barely concealed national pride on 16 October 1993 that Høeg's American success was a fact, and that *Smilla* was headed for the number seven spot on the *New York Times* bestseller list.²⁰

Critics were divided over the merits of the book, especially in Scandinavia, where major issues at stake were conflicting views on style/form and content, a critique against Høeg's writing as 'too perfect,' and an apparent anxiety in the face of bestsellerdom. From a postmodern perspective, the story was primarily considered a pastiche, toying with all the high and low elements previously compartmentalized and now fused by the author into a melting pot of irony so typical of postmodern lack of respect.²¹ Some subscribed to this view and did so favourably, others judged *Smilla* a mere play with words, genres, and conventions – too superficial, too neat, too flirtatious. There were those who claimed that the ease with which the story was assembled showed signs of literary engineering. At worst it was a skilful fabrication born out of market considerations, offering the reader a smorgasbord of everything and nothing.²² Others viewed Høeg as nothing but a professional con man, an author deliberately setting out to construct an American bestseller, something seen as definitive proof of the 'speculative' nature of the book.²³ Anglo-American reviews were more favourable, led by the *New Statesman and Society*, where John Williams spoke of 'an arctic

tale worthy of Conrad,²⁴ and *Time Magazine*, where it was voted Best Book of 1993. Stressing its generic angle, *Publishers Weekly* called it an 'absorbing suspense novel,'²⁵ Brad Leithauser coined the term 'techno-thriller' in the *New Republic*,²⁶ and 'brooding detective thriller' was John Skow's choice of phrase in *Time*.²⁷ However, not all critics were as easily won over. Jim McCue, who in the *Times Literary Supplement* accused the author of writing 'like an escapologist,' felt that 'Smilla is as resourceful in the face of extinction as James Bond, and this story too has implausible, entertaining shifts – of gear, tone, direction, genre – whenever a premature ending has to be avoided.'²⁸ Even so, most took to Smilla herself. A new kind of female protagonist had arrived; quirky, angry, yet vulnerable and still not quite housebroken, she was even compared to a Danish Pascal.²⁹

Peter Høeg's own observation that 'Miss Smilla is every bit as tropical as she is polar,' is equally important to consider when trying to understand the extraordinary fate of the novel.³⁰ In making a case for his heroine as a *condition* rather than simply as that of a straightforward fictitious character, Høeg suggests a universality turned upside down, voiced from the vantage point of difference. The advent of a common denominator linking hot and cold, allows the author to hint at the possibility of a *postcolonial universality*.³¹ Connecting ice and heat bears witness to the way in which Smilla's story offers an experience now seen as 'universal' precisely by virtue of its particularity. The exotic locale, the cold, and the ice, may be important, but when it was paired with the ironic style and wit of a postcolonial outsider Dyssegaard knew she had a best-seller: a novel behind which superficial geographical nodes masked more general concerns that came with globalization.

Switching between irony, sadness, and biting postcolonial critique with ease, Smilla's 'dustbin' (147) identity struck a cord with readers who perhaps recognized the constant negotiation of 'otherness,' its function of incorporation and negotiation. A part of her identity is transformed as her proficiency in Greenlandic slowly withers into oblivion, this while she stacks up her encyclopedic knowledge of luxury brand names. As if to confirm her own claim that 'it's always easier to explain away things if you're nicely dressed' (69), Smilla likes Burberry's, packs Louis Vuitton bags, and wears custom-made trousers made from kidskin, fluctuating wildly between Smilla 'Greenlander *de luxe*' (120) and 'Smilla the fake Greenlander' (155). The simultaneous strength and weakness of this hybrid, transformative identity is precisely its incorporated dichotomies, its internalized polarities. Smilla is colonized and

colonizer in the same body. As half Greenlandic, half Danish by birth, she is Greenland and Denmark at the same time, margins and centre in one body; oscillating between two geographical points and between two epistemological ones.

II

The novel is in three parts: *The City* (Byen) precedes *The Sea* (Havet), and the novel ends with *The Ice* (Isen). Although these three places mark out a very real journey from Copenhagen to Greenland, they are also indicative of different moods, tempos, and concerns. Approaching Greenland and the truth about what happened to her young friend, Smilla's movements become more restricted in *The Sea*, where she finds herself confined to the perimetres of the icebreaker, *Kronos*. Seeking vengeance for a child that could be a mirror image of herself – Isaiah is killed at the same age as Smilla was when she was brought to Denmark by her father and where she encountered a different sort of death – she explores the ship and its menacing crew with a screwdriver as her only defence. 'Wounded children killing wounded children, wounded children avenging wounded children,' Mary Kay Norseng succinctly comments, 'is the underlying *modus operandi* of *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne*.'³² The *Kronos* strips Smilla of her need for style and fashion, and the well-dressed Copenhagen persona quickly withers away. This segment has her body no longer dressed to kill, but rather dressed to be killed, as she is constantly attacked, beaten, and threatened.

As Paul Gilroy notes in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993), the ship is a useful metaphor for the relationship between the empire and the colonies, wherever they may be located. In this respect, even the North Sea comes with its own colonial problematics. Despite the ever-presence of Greenland in Copenhagen and Copenhagen in Nuuk, the condition that Smilla seems to be analogous to, even conjoined with, is that of the *Kronos*. It was from this in-between, the no man's land at sea predicated on the necessary correspondences and dependencies between Greenland and Denmark, or between the British Empire and India, or any other such relationship that involves those submitted to colonialization and those implementing its power, that some saw as the book's ultimate strength. In the Swedish daily *Dagens Nyheter*, Sara Danius argued that those who liked the book but were content to underscore its allegorical potential as well as those who criticized *Smilla* outright had failed to recognize the most

important feature of the book – its contemporaneous quality. *Smilla's* generic identity as a crime story is essential, but resting there only means skimming the surface. According to Danius, *Smilla* is first and foremost a text about the contemporary conditions of postmodern uncertainty and postcolonial ambivalence, and only second a literary pastiche.³³

Thus, the sorry bunch of half-petty criminals, mad scientists, and corrupt physicians bound for the Gela Alta ice tells a modern-day parable of travels that historically went in very different directions. We should hardly be surprised that Smilla in her mind's eye compares her own journey on-board the *Kronos* to other ominous transits: 'Isn't this an example of history repeating itself? Hasn't Europe always tried to empty out its sewers into the colonies? Isn't the *Kronos* once more the convicts on their way to Australia, the Foreign Legion on its way to Korea?' (279).



If the *Kronos* returned Smilla to Greenland in the text, then the equivalent vessel that contributed to the success of the book on a larger scale was its translation. John North visualized the hurdles facing *Smilla* when he wrote in his *Toronto Star* review: 'What are the odds of a translated novel by a relatively obscure Danish author and featuring a part-Inuit female scientist/detective living in Copenhagen succeeding in the crowded North American book market?'³⁴ Overcoming the barriers meant first of all speaking in a language other than either her mother tongue or that of her adopted Danish. Later, when the novel was successful enough to motivate the transfer from paper to celluloid, international, well-known actors were considered necessary for a major motion picture with a budget of \$35 million and so was the choice of language: English.³⁵

Despite the scale and ambition of Bille August's 1997 film, which included Julia Ormond as Smilla, Gabriel Byrne as The Mechanic, and Richard Harris as evil Hviid, critics this time around proved merciless. Brian D. Johnson wrote that *Smilla's Sense of Snow* is 'a profoundly unintelligent movie, a pedestrian thriller with a congested plot that creaks to its climax with the pacing of pack ice,' and Lee Bacchus was even more outspoken when he described the result as 'La Femme Nikita Meets the X-Files.'³⁶ Reports from Greenland were much more positive. When the movie premiered at Nuuk's very first cinema in

1997, more than 3,500 tickets had been sold in advance, an impressive number considering the size of the population. Spontaneous applause was noted as the first icebergs came floating and as Julia Ormond started talking with a Greenlandic accent.³⁷

Returning to the time of the U.S. hardback publication in 1993, Tiina Nunnally, a respected translator whose credits include the three-volume translation of Sigrid Undset's *Kristin Lavransdotter*, for which she received the PEN/Book-of-the-Month Club Translation Prize in 2001, was asked to undertake the translation. Entitled *Smilla's Sense of Snow*, Nunnally's work received numerous accolades. 'Nunnally has outdone herself,' wrote Brad Leithauser in his *New Republic* review, underscoring that this book was no fluke, but rather the crowning achievement of an already impressive career, stressing that the book 'must have been ferociously difficult to translate, not only for its length and wealth of technical detail but for its diverse subtlety.'³⁸ Robert Nathan seconded his opinion in the *New York Times Book Review*, calling her work 'engaging.'³⁹ Nunnally won the Lewis Galantière translation prize from the American Translators Association in 1994 for *Smilla*, and she continues to be favourably noticed in reviews of the Scandinavian literature she translates.⁴⁰

Yet, when I was trying to locate the book and, pressed for time, had to rely on the first version I could find – a British paperback version from 1996 entitled *Miss*⁴¹ *Smilla's Feeling for Snow* and not *Smilla's Sense of Snow* – Nunnally's translation was nowhere to be found. Instead, the cryptic F. David was listed as the book's translator. Not until Thom Satterlee's article, 'A Case for "Smilla,"' appeared in *Translation Review*, did the reasons for the two versions become clear. Knowing Danish, Satterlee read the Tiina Nunnally and the F. David versions alongside the Danish original, and found that they were remarkably alike. Perplexed enough to pose as 'the Colombo of the publishing world,'⁴² Satterlee contacted both publishers asking for further clarifications and the identity of F. David. Only Guido Waldman from Harvill Press replied, and did so in the following way:

Farrar, Straus and Giroux commissioned an English translation by Tiina Nunnally. The author went over it with his Danish publishers, both of them highly proficient in English usage, and made a number of suggestions on it. Some of these the translator accepted, some she rejected. The American publishers chose to go with their translator's version, while Harvill [the British publisher], working more closely with the author and

his Danish publisher, chose to accept the text as it was approved by them. The translator therefore repudiated the version to be published by Harvill and asked for her name to be removed from it. Therefore the Harvill edition has gone out with a pseudonymous translator, F. David.⁴³

As downplayed and discreetly formulated as it is, Guido Waldman's comment cannot hide the apparent: a major rift must have taken place, a conflict that sets in motion two different strategies by author and translator. Objecting to Nunnally's translation, Peter Høeg chose to collaborate with his editor in order to mould the book into a different linguistic form, a teamwork I have referred to elsewhere as 'transediting.' Combining translation with editing, 'transediting' indicates instances when an editor – with or without the participation of author or translator – rewrites a text for the purpose of achieving a more fluent or, in his/her eyes a more suitable translation. Høeg and his editor formed such an alliance, adding the latter into *Smilla's* brew of authors. Generally, major textual interventions involving editing or translation, such as deleting passages or inserting new text, are considered less acceptable in 'high' literature than in popular literature. The second category tends to be constructed as both 'author-less' and 'text-less' in some sense, which in mass-market publishing – such as the enormous amount of translations that make Harlequin Enterprises' romances truly global literature – usually means that both author and translator are subsumed under the work-for-hire principle. Global mass-market publishing of this kind instead indicates a reversal of roles whereby the translator – who needs to rework the text in order to accommodate it to the local market – may in fact be given much broader leeway in terms of creativity, and it is instead the author who finds herself/himself subordinated to the demands of the 'importing' market.⁴⁴

Authors who take an active part in the translations of their own texts are not altogether uncommon. Nobel Prize laureate Rabindranath Tagore's own translations of his Bengali poetry into an English that would conform to expectations has been well documented,⁴⁵ as has Milan Kundera's struggles with the English-language translations of *The Joke*. In his note to the fifth – and last, according to him – English-language translation of *The Joke*, Kundera retells his experiences with previous, unsatisfactory versions, and describes his own work with his editor on the now definitive translation in a way that substantiates the collaborative nature of the undertaking.⁴⁶ As Alison Stanger notes, both the French and English texts that Kundera promotes as definitive

reworkings/translations, share a number of deletions from the original Czech version, making her question just how final and complete we should consider such 'definitive' versions.⁴⁷ When Harriet Beecher Stowe went to court in *Stowe v. Thomas* to fight a translation, she was concerned, not only with the moral or abstract right to her own literary property, but with protecting the market for the translation she *had* authorized.⁴⁸

Although she was paid by the word and received no royalty for her translation,⁴⁹ Tiina Nunnally's decision to back away from the U.K. *Smilla* published by Harvill Press is a radical and dramatic choice. Nunnally is asserting authorship by removing her name from the version she no longer considers hers, becoming visible by choosing total invisibility. In the Farrar, Straus and Giroux edition, the copyright is attributed to the U.S. publisher, but Farrar, Straus and Giroux and Harvill Press hold the British version jointly. This conflict pushes to the fore the previously mentioned tension in intellectual property rights which posits the translator as both an infringer *and* an author of a derivative work, protectable in its own right. Sam Ricketson explains: 'While the person making a derivative work may be an infringer of the rights in another work, he has altered the form of that work in such a way for him to be regarded just as much an author as the author of the primary work.'⁵⁰ It would seem then, that as far as translations are concerned, there are two kinds of authors recognized in the Berne Convention, and that the balancing act between them is sometimes dislodged to the extent that extraordinary consequences ensue.

Considering this dramatic turn of events in the translation of *Smilla*, what is the outcome of Satterlee's reading? Locating all those differences that tend to emerge the moment you scrutinize and compare a translated text word for word with its original, he tries to assess which text feels the most 'English,' or the most truthful to the Danish language, weighs one option against another, and returns in intervals to the standard question in any undertaking of this kind: is the book best served by fidelity or betrayal? At the end Satterlee sides with Tiina Nunnally, concluding that Høeg's efforts at having the translation stay as close to the original Danish as possible in fact work in just the opposite way: 'By offering British readers a less readable version of his novel, Peter Høeg betrays his own work.'⁵¹ Siding with the U.K. version, Kirsten Malmkjær takes the opposite stance and argues that the F. David version gives a clearer picture of the book and that the American translation fails to do complete justice to the original. In his correspond-

ence with Malmkjaer, Guido Waldman provides this time a somewhat different chronology of the events than in his letter to Satterlee, stating that the changes to the Harvill Press edition were undertaken by the British publisher and then agreed to by the author and his Danish editors.⁵² Finally, while both Satterlee's and Malmkjær's readings provide valuable clues to how texts are localized, they largely limit themselves to the interpretation of linguistic, rather than cultural choices.

Whether or not the appreciation of the novel will differ or if the pleasure of reading it will somehow be diminished depending on which version you read is, of course impossible to uncover, but the fact that there existed two translations of the book did attract the attention of the readers who discussed *Smilla* online in the so-called Book Group List in 1997.⁵³ Although their discussion did not officially start until 1 May and continued for two weeks, the earliest posting in regard to *Smilla* surfaces as early as 8 January. In this, one of the readers informs the others that there is more than one translator of the novel into English, and continues: 'If I recall correctly ... which one you read does make a difference.'⁵⁴ Immediately there is a follow-up question sent out, asking if she recalls which translator was the better.⁵⁵ To this she replies: 'My recollection ... is that some thought the translator of *Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow* was closer to the Danish as opposed to whomever translated *Smilla's Sense of Snow* (the version I read – which I really liked).'⁵⁶

Translations are generally thought to be superior when they seamlessly bridge source- and target-language. This particular reader does raise the issue, saying that, although she believes *Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow* (approved by Høeg but repudiated by Nunnally) was closer to the Danish, she really liked *Smilla's Sense of Snow* (Nunnally's translation), the version she read. Yet her posting makes it clear that she has no idea that F. David is an invention and that Tiina Nunnally withdrew her name from the British version, since she speaks of 'the translator' in the first case and 'whomever' in the second. Inclined to consider the U.K. version executed by a professional and the translation important enough to reflect on it as a crucial part of her reading experience, in both cases the translator is unknown to her, cancelled out, without name and yet somehow still of critical importance.

During the ensuing two weeks much of the discussion continues to have this preoccupation with translation at heart. In no part of the discussion log, however, is there any mention of F. David's non-existence. Comments such as 'It had great potential but maybe it would

have been better in Danish' suggests that translation is a handy scapegoat when a foreign book offers its reader resistance.⁵⁸ Another participant is having so much trouble that she completely loses track of the original language, saying 'I kept thinking that maybe something was lost in the translation of the book from Dutch to English.'⁵⁹ Others concur, but then there is a crisp message consisting of one word only that same day from another participant who tries to set the record straight by coldly asking, 'Danish?'⁶⁰

Sometimes used as a scapegoat, translation can also take on a different function. In one of the reviews published at the amazon.com web page, *Smilla* receives five stars out of five: 'This is one of our finest thrillers for lots of reasons: the plot and characters of the story are very well characterized, there are lots of clever twists, and it is written by an author from far away from USA and England' (my emphasis). This reader, allegedly from Brazil, expresses a kind of deep-seated satisfaction with the success achieved by a minor-language bestseller, clearly prompted to give such a favourable review at least in part because Høeg does not write in English.⁶¹ Taken together, these comments suggest that translation operates in a kind of double mode; its amorphous nature and invisible 'author' allows it to be filled with whatever meaning the reader requires at the time of her/his reading. On the one hand, translation can be seen as a nuisance, hindering a good read because a book needs to be accessed in its original language in order to capture its most essential elements of style. On the other hand, a successful minor-language translation can be construed as close to a subversive act, to which all sorts of high hopes and promises are attached. *Smilla* proved the impossible: a Danish book could conquer obstacles raised by the Anglo-American book market.

The fact that there had been a certain controversy surrounding the translation was enough for me to begin to look closer at the various versions. Locating the British edition but still having difficulties finding the American, I turned to the Swedish translation, and above all the Danish original. My own project was somewhat different from Satterlee's and Malmkjær's. In juxtaposing larger chunks of text, bits and pieces I felt could not be reduced to single words but that stood out as segments particularly persistent in the context of postcolonialism and globalization, I was searching rather for key moments in the text and their transformation in translation. Moving through *Smilla* I noticed something that neither Satterlee nor Malmkjær, despite their detailed readings, apparently had not seen. In the part where *Smilla* stands on the

Kronos, thinking about those other convoys, the British version was incomplete. In the Danish original – and in the Swedish translation I already had in my home – the sentence does not end with the Foreign Legion being en route to Korea, but actually with a reflection on ‘engelska commandosoldater på vej til Indonesien?’ (English commandos on their way to Indonesia?).⁶²

If the English commandos are deleted from the British *Smilla* – authorized by Høeg – but certainly remain in the original, in the Swedish translation, and in a few other translations I have consulted since,⁶³ the pressing question was what the American edition would reveal. Finally getting my hands on the book, and looking up the by now so familiar passage, I read that this time, *Smilla* thinks to herself: ‘Hasn’t Europe always tried to empty out its sewers in the colonies? Isn’t the *Kronos* a repeat of the prisoners on their way to Australia, the foreign legion off to Korea, and *British commandos going to Indonesia?*’ (*Smilla’s Sense of Snow*, 319; my emphasis).

III

When *Smilla* undertakes her international journey, she does so in a very specific linguistic and cultural setting. According to UNESCO, almost 50 per cent of all translations are made from English into various languages. But only 6 per cent of all translations are into English.⁶⁴ A mere 2.96 per cent of the books published in the U.S. in 1990 were translations; in Britain the number was 2.4 per cent that same year.⁶⁵ In 1994, 1,418 of the 51,863 books published in the U.S., or 2.74 per cent, were translations.⁶⁶ Between 1968–92, only 2 per cent of the books on *Publisher’s Weekly* annual list of bestsellers came from non-English-language authors.⁶⁷ In Sweden on the other hand, the number of translations falls somewhere around 50 per cent annually.⁶⁸ A comparison of book translations in so-called SIACS (States in Advanced Capitalist Societies), France, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, UK, and the United States between 1983–5, substantiates these findings. English is the language from which most translations occur, a tendency of domination additionally corroborated by the reciprocally minimal ratio of translations going the other way. TV programming presents a similar picture, where the level of imported programming on the major American television networks hovered between 1 and 2 per cent in 1973–83.⁶⁹ Although we see tendencies that the number of web sites in English on the Internet decreased from 80 per cent at the end of

1995 to about 57 per cent in August 1999, the Internet still largely communicates in English.⁷⁰

If we look for statistics in express terms of export/import, our options are severely limited. *The UNESCO Statistical Yearbook*, one of the few sources available anywhere as far as information on the global production of books is concerned, is a notoriously dicey instrument.⁷¹ Based on the 1999 edition, most countries have a negative trade balance when it comes to import/export of print culture, and if we should accept these numbers at their face value, we can basically conclude that the entire world engages in the importation of what the U.K. and the U.S. exports. There are compelling reasons why our understanding of these statistics must be more nuanced. We can almost certainly discern tendencies of exclusion, whereby entire continents such as Africa, almost to a fault, display negative trade balances over time, whereas the U.S. and the U.K. consistently display positive trade balances.⁷² In addition, the merits and disadvantages of being an 'importer' as opposed to being an 'exporter' suggest far too sweeping generalizations on the part of both categories. The idea that cultural trajectories have one direction only can be refuted by the strong presence of local and regional cultural flows that cut across sweeping geopolitical assumptions of sender and receiver.⁷³

When we frame this situation in the light of *Smilla's* particular travels, two main points should be made. The first would seem to suggest that at any given time in the conflict between author and translator, the author prevails. However, nothing demonstrates as clearly as translation the immense changes, refractions, alterations, and new identities that texts take when they are transported into new cultural contexts. So what if the author has the final legal say-so? The text is still free to do what it wants, just as much as we are free to use it in the way we see fit. With this in mind, does it matter if *Smilla* is translated with or without British commandos? And what is the role of the author and/or the publisher in such a situation? Did Høeg deliberately lose the British commandos because he thought that sales would suffer if they were left in? Why not then get rid of the Foreign Legion in the French version? And what relevance, if any, has the replacement of the 'engelske' in the original Danish text with 'British' in the American edition?

Lew Gloin, reporting on *Smilla* for the Associated Press, noted that the translation encouraged 'publishers in nine other countries to jump on the bandwagon for a Danish novel they couldn't read in the original.'⁷⁴ I would argue that the most profound question that needs to be

raised by the disappearance of the British commandos is this: if English has become a sort of 'clearing-house' language and the British F. David translation is the gate through which subsequent translations into other languages pass, then the British commandos *do not exist* in those translations. Even if much indicates that Nunnally's translation was the one from which *Smilla* made her passage into other international markets (and I have based my argument on the disappearance of five words), we are still faced with the fact that the Danish original – where there are commandos – by now has lost its importance in the wider circulation of the text. I am not suggesting that Danish needs to be widely mastered, just this: *any* language running the risk of becoming, or already being established as the vernacular of the world, will enable *and* disable interpretation at the same time. This is not only an issue of linguistic competence, it is a question of perspective and epistemology and as relevant for translation as it is for the understanding of the implicit perspective that must follow when all or nearly all scholarly work – all *visible* scholarly work, that is – must take place in English. We should not make too much of this, but we should understand that the dominant position of the English language takes on its most crucial immediacy when considered in relationship to the so-called cultural industries, and the knowledge-based economy as a whole.

While the global economy thrives on increasingly complex flows that no longer can be outlined in a straightforward connection between language and nation-state, and several of the most powerful TNMCs today are non-U.S. based and owned, they are still building their empires on the presence of the English language – in research, in entertainment, in literature. If all we needed in order to prove linguistic power were numbers, then Chinese would do just fine. As it is, English is the vernacular of the world because power is assigned in the interstices between linguistic supremacy *and* control of the industries that capitalize on content, information, knowledge, or other assets of intellectual property *in that language*.

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Let us in conclusion return to the ALAI and their position on translation, a contentious enough issue to solicit profound disagreement within the ranks of the organization. As we saw, reactions to the way in which translation was presented in the report following the 1880 Lisbon Conference expressed serious concerns for the hegemonic position of

France and the French language, connecting them to cultural imperialism of the highest order. It is clear from Victor Hugo's speech and the claims the French language could make in the domain of symbolic representation at that time, that France wanted translation inserted in the Convention because it was considered an indelible asset in the wider dissemination of their own intellectual property – the universal literature of Hugo, Sand, Balzac – and thus also in the larger project of exporting French culture.

During the 1884 and 1885 Diplomatic Conferences in Berne, France sought therefore to subsume translations under the right to reproduction, whereas the Scandinavian countries resisted such a move, arguing that their relative isolation made them depend substantially on translations.⁷⁵ If further circumscribed, domestic education, reading, and wider access to knowledge would be seriously impeded and these countries would find themselves at a distinct disadvantage at a time when the new infrastructures of communication and information were laid out. Not until the Berlin Revision Conference in 1908 did translation rights become completely assimilated under reproduction rights and former opponents, notably the Scandinavians, relented.⁷⁶

The Scandinavian countries relied on a discursive weaponry almost identical to the one that newly decolonized nations would launch during the tumultuous Stockholm Revision Conference in 1967, where they argued that the straightjacket imposed on them by the intellectual property laws of their former colonizers effectively delayed their participation in the international community. After the 1960s provided the temporal backdrop for a wave of new technology and communication networks to emerge, developing nations asked for special provisions in the Berne Convention so that they could have any chance to achieve equal terms with developed countries in the face of these challenges.

Even the United States perceived itself as a developing nation for a long period of time. Widespread piracy of British books was legitimized by the special demands of a country that had cast off its colonial shackles comparatively recently. No doubt, this position contributed to the reluctance of the United States to adhere to international conventions, and left the country a bystander to the Berne Convention until 1986. The complex and pivotal role of the United States in respect to the development of international intellectual property rights will be explored in detail in chapter 4.

What this chapter demonstrates is that the importance placed on intellectual property rights is related to (contingent) forms of market

dominance and the discursive (also contingent) right to name the symbolic and material resources classified as such. M. Friedmann argued that the French were in a unique position to do this in 1880; today it is articulated in English and from the strong U.S. position in intellectual property rights. Both draw their relative strength in different historical eras based on their position as exporters/producers. If we rethink this in terms of one of the basic dichotomies in intellectual property rights – between the French emphasis on the author and the Anglo-American emphasis on the market – then we can see that both rely on colonial prowess to organize the world according to an economic, political, and cultural infrastructure that serves its interests. Pierre Bourdieu brilliantly describes the relationship between France and the United States as ‘a confrontation between two imperialisms of the universal.’⁷⁷ To Bourdieu, France and the United States are similar in the sense that they have managed to use specific forms of symbolic capital in the service of specific forms of imperialism, something we can see in respect to intellectual property rights.

As this power balance has shifted during the last century, France has come to reinforce what could be described as a position based on ‘high’ culture, one which includes protectionism in the shape of an isolationist linguistic policy and the active promotion of cultural quotas, in many cases to counter what is being perceived as a mass-market assault by the U.S. cultural industries.⁷⁸ The United States on the other hand, blissfully amnesiac when it comes to its previous role as both a pirate nation and a developing nation in intellectual property, aggressively pursues a very distinct intellectual property rights policy defined in terms of global free trade, all while constructing its own market protectionism on the domestic front by, among other things, the marginalization of translations.

Translation is a profoundly destabilizing activity, not only because it can make us question who a text’s owner really is, but also because it was and is a major incentive behind the ordering of intellectual property rights into an export/import matrix in which authorship and colonialism interacts textually as well as materially. As French supremacy in this particular form of cultural imperialism declines, the American, and in particular, the English-language based, ascends. Both, however, have put the intrinsic belief in the universality of their positions to good use in respect to intellectual property rights, and in that project, translation was and is a pivotal key.