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Karen Seago Translating violence in crime fiction

Abstract:

Translational and editorial intervention in the handling of taboo topics or material considered sensitive in the target culture has been well established, especially in the translation of genre literature. These have been discussed in the context of explicit censorship and of self-censorship. Since 2000, authors and academics have articulated growing concern over the escalation of explicit violence in Anglo-American crime fiction and this article investigates how this controversial textual staging of violence is mediated in the German translation of Val McDermid's *Wire in the blood* series. Focusing on the representation of physical violence, I consider to what extent the translator negotiates (or identifies) what the expectancy norms are when norm validating authorities such as publishers and reader reception promote violent content and representations, but critical and cultural reception (academics, authors, cultural pundits) on the other hand problematize and oppose such issues or representations. The first three novels of the series have been translated by three different translators and results indicate that it is the translator's positionality and genre expectations that shape their translation decisions rather than public concerns over violence.

Keywords: crime fiction; self-censorship; violence; genre

Introduction: taboo topics and censorship

Translational and editorial intervention in the handling of taboo topics or material considered sensitive in the target culture has been well established, especially in the translation of genre literature. Sturge (2004), for example has shown how translations of Anglo-American detective fiction into Nazi Germany adapted to strictly defined gender roles and politically acceptable portrayals of authority, while translations of Raymond Chandler under Franco removed or softened representations of homosexuality, female nudity and sexually suggestive dialogue (Linder, 2004). Germany between 1933 - 1944 and Spain between 1936 - 1975 operated in an explicit censorship context.

However, omission, attenuation or adaptation of topics, representations or language is a well-established practice in translation not only in explicit censorship environments but also in response to the unwritten rules, values and conventions of the receiving culture. Epstein (2011) and Seago (in press) have shown gendered neutralisation of non-standard language in the English translation of the Swedish detective series *Martin Beck* (1965 -1975) by Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö and the German translation of the American feminist hard-boiled novel *Indemnity only* (1982) by Sara Paretsky. The degree of intervention in such cultural gatekeeping is more pronounced in secondary system texts (Even-Zohar, 1990, p. 48): non-canonical texts such as children's literature and popular, genre literature tend to be highly sensitive to the recipient culture's values, adapting to its norms and conventions. As Tymoczko points out, 'it is not possible to fully separate translation undertaken in circumstances where there are formal and institutionalised social controls – such as censorship laws – from translations undertaken in circumstances regulated by informal social

controls, including economic controls.’ (2009, p.27) The manipulations in the examples above are the result of non-coercive intervention by the agents involved in the process of translation: translators, editors, revisers, publishers or reviewers. Lefevere discusses this kind of ideological filtering as one of the constraints of translation which is shaped by the personal orientation, or positionality, of the translator (Lefevere, 1992, p. 15). This can be consciously deployed when the translator ‘adapts to normative pressures’ (Tymoczko, 2009, p.31) or operate unconsciously in the cross-cultural negotiation of divergent linguistic systems, cultural contexts and genre (or literary) expectations. In this ‘imprecise middle ground’ we find ‘an abyss which is monopolized by a variety of ‘censorship(s)’ and ‘self-censorship(s)’ which ‘have to be accepted as part of the game, as the nuclei upon which the real translation project is based’. (Santaemilia, 2008, p.221, p. 227)

Bourdieu’s notion of ‘structural censorship’ (1991, pp.138-9) and the distinction made by Allan and Burridge (2006/2009, pp.237-8) between ‘automatic’ self-censoring and ‘conscious’ self-censorship capture the pervasiveness – and inevitability – of language users adapting their discourse to comply with different contexts of use and their norms (or, in Bourdieu’s terms the ‘demands of the field’) in order to achieve acceptability and intelligibility. As the quotation from Santaemilia above indicates, translation deals with establishing acceptable and intelligible discourse across substantively divergent contexts of use, and awareness of the need to engage with this difference has been theorised through such concepts as ‘constraints’, ‘universe of discourse’ (Lefevere, 1992, pp.8-9) and ‘expectancy and professional norms’ (Chesterman 1997, pp. 64-70).

Translators, then, act as ‘tacit censors’ (Gibbels, 2009) in assessing how to meet the expectations of the target readership in terms of form, content and appropriate language to produce an acceptable text. Their understanding of what is ‘acceptable’ derives from their position as linguistic and cultural experts in the target environment, that is, being members of the (target) universe of discourse with up-to-date knowledge of what shapes that environment. Their awareness of changes in language use or sensitive issues is influenced by their familiarity with preoccupations in and of the public domain, and, of course, their own positionality vis-à-vis these concerns.

Violence in crime fiction

In this paper, I will focus on violence to see whether this potentially taboo aspect is subject to manipulation in translation to conform to different parameters of acceptability in the target environment. Both England and Germany have laws which prohibit representations that are likely to deprave or corrupt those exposed to them; in England, this includes depictions of necrophilia, rape and torture¹ and videos ‘depicting the violent mutilation, torture, death and cannibalism’ or ‘such scenes that are explicit and/or lingering [and which] can indicate to the viewer approval or encouragement of the behaviour involved thereby normalising the

¹ Obscene Publications Act, 1959 and 1964

depraving or corrupting behaviours'; these can be prosecuted under a Conspiracy charge.² Germany³ specifically bans depictions of violence which are pornographic or which exalt it, show it in a brutal or callous way, as innocuous or glamorous or inciting racial hatred. In practice, though, violence is the bread-and-butter of much popular culture, including crime fiction.

However, since 2000, there has been growing concern over the escalation of explicit violence in Anglo-American crime fiction articulated by authors, academics and reviewers in England and Germany. All authors agree that gory violence is used to market crime fiction to such an extent that there is 'an arms race' (Davidson, 2013, p.72). According to Foltyn, the 'grisly cadaver of scientific and forensic investigation' has become an infotainment commodity; depictions of dead bodies on prime time television have more than doubled between 2004 - 2008 (2008, p.154) and a disturbing amount of crime fiction textually stages violence to excite a 'perverse sexual element' (Rees, 2011). This has been called 'torture porn': the description of (mostly) female victims presented to the reader's gaze as an object of titillation in the text and on the cover as an unashamed marketing ploy by publishers: 'Never mind that [the victim in the novel is male]. Dead, brutalised women [on the cover] sell books, dead men don't.' (Hill, 2009, online). This perception is not limited to the UK; a 2009 article in the popular German magazine *Stern* also criticised publishers for using excessive violence as their main marketing tag for lists of newly published crime novels, expressing concerns about 'brutality in crime fiction' (Brutalität in Krimis) and a reduction to the obscene only (Bücher werden auf den Aspekt des Obszönen reduziert) (Schlenz, 2007). On-line reader reviews (Krimi-Couch.de) similarly raised the gender question: 'How can a woman [Val McDermid] imagine such cruel scenes' (Wie kann sich eine Frau nur solch grausame Szenen ausdenken?) (Reiss, n.d.).

Val McDermid agrees that the escalation of violence in crime fiction is largely due to publishing pressures but she points to the gender-differentiated reception of male and female authors. Critical responses to male authored depictions of violence interpret these as social and political critique while female authors are challenged on them as inappropriate (Åström, 2013, pp. 99-100). But as McDermid argues, violence is 'not something that is a cheap thrill, it's not something that is a groovy pornography to get off on. It hurts, it damages the lives of everyone it touches' (Lea, 2007). Detailed accounts of violence in her books aim to critically examine violence against women and 'society's contempt for their bodies' (Åström, 2013, p.97). Narrative and critical function are the determining factors whether violence serves as an instrument of social critique or titillating 'torture porn'.

² Crown Prosecution Service, *Prosecution Policy and Guidance, Legal Guidance*
http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/l_to_o/obscene_publications/#a09

³ *Jugendschutzgesetz* (Law for the protection of minors) originally introduced in 1951, revised and merged with the *Gesetz über die Verbreitung jugendgefährdender Schriften und Medieninhalte* (Law on the dissemination of printed matter and audio/visual media content endangering minors) in 2003. Last revised and up-dated in 2009. <http://www.kindex.de/t-jugendschutzgesetz.aspx>

Threat has been a motif in crime fiction from the beginning but the forms this takes have changed over the years. The nineteenth and early twentieth century's threat to property shifted to threatening the body/self (Worthington, 2011, p. xxii) and murder has been an essential component of crime fiction since then: 'There simply must be a corpse in a detective novel, and the deader the corpse the better.' (van Dine, 1939, online). In the last two decades of the twentieth century there has been a further shift from a comprehensible and explainable crime to an incomprehensible one, with serial killers who kill without motive apart from the thrill to kill (Worthington, 2011, p. xxii). Thus, there has been an escalation in violence both in terms of explicitness and extent and, since the 2000s, apparent titillation. The argument in the media and recent critical attention have foregrounded gender; but as we have seen, marketing exploits female victims paratextually even when storylines in the books themselves do not. This raises the question whether the escalation of violence and its gratuitous textual staging is indeed a gendered phenomenon or whether it is part of an increasing normalisation of violence and a more general aesthetics of violence where the display of bodies and body parts has become commonplace.

Representation of violence in McDermid

This article is interested in how the textual staging of violence is mediated in translation and how translators negotiate expectancy norms (or even identify what they are) when norm validating authorities such as publishers and reader reception (sales figures) promote violent content, language and representations, but critical and cultural reception (academics, authors, cultural pundits) on the other hand problematise them. Since Val McDermid has been so centrally involved in the discussion of the role of violence in crime fiction, and her novels contain a high number of very explicit descriptions of murder, torture and abuse, her series *Wire in the Blood* has been chosen as a suitable corpus to analyse how violence is handled in translation into German. The series consists of nine books (see list of references), published between 1995 and 2015 and eight translations (1997 – 2014) but only the first three books form the basis for a contrastive analysis where all instances of violence have been extracted and analysed with the aim to see whether any discernible patterns in terms of translatorial decision making can be identified. Since the first three books had three different translators, this data also allows scrutiny in relation to potentially individually motivated translation choices: are there discernible patterns where the translator's positionality shapes their translation decisions in relation to a universe of discourse in which the representation of violence is a contested issue?

As we have seen, McDermid has been criticised for excessive, extreme and unnecessary violence (Pauli, 2010). McDermid resists the notion that the violence is gratuitous or exploits women, pointing out that the body count in her work is distributed equally between male, female, and one transsexual victims (Bindel, 2007). This wide spread is also the case in *Wire in the blood* which has a variety of victims consisting of gay men, young girls, a star footballer as well as investigative professionals (police officers, a profiler) or victims that are linked to the investigators (relatives or look-alikes of the DCI). Putting the investigative team in danger is a typical feature of the thriller but it also means that the violence depicted in the books has a personal dimension: a) intradiegetically, for the investigators who are targeted

and become victims, and b) in terms of reception, where the violence portrayed is imaginative and horrifically mutilating, inviting empathetic reader response. These descriptions are highly detailed and the same injury is repeatedly conveyed in a range of narrative formats (focalisation through the perpetrator, crime scene description, pathology reports, etc); the type and incidence of violence over the series also increases. Nevertheless, none of the descriptions are titillating, and while the crime scenes are often staged by the perpetrator, they are not textually staged: the victims are not offered up to an exploitative reader's gaze. Descriptions of the violence done to the victims or evident on their bodies are carefully managed by strategies which critique the violence, counteract it or signal its deviancy. Directly narrated or focalised perpetrator descriptions are explicit expressions of a sick and depraved individual; they are contrasted with descriptions of the mutilated and tortured bodies of the victims where the focus is on the shocked, and often helpless, reactions of the police officers, trying to deal with the enormity of what has been done to the victims. The emotional effect on and the struggle these experienced officers have in maintaining a professional, detached attitude, establishes a control, a normal reaction which critiques the violence and makes any potential normalisation or exploitation of the depraving or corrupting behaviour displayed impossible.

He [psychological profiler Tony] emerged in time to see Simon [constable] reel back from a pair of French windows like a man struck in the face. The young policeman sank to his knees and emptied his guts on the grass, groaning incoherently. [...] The first thing he [Tony] had to do was to stop thinking of this shell as Shaz Bowman. Looking at the body in the chair, he found it wasn't so hard to distance himself from memories of Shaz. The deformed freakish head that faced him bore so little resemblance to anything human. He could see dark holes where her startling eyes had last looked out at him. (*Wire in the blood*, pp. 213-214)

Such detailed description is unusual; more often an indirect, metaphorical depiction of the victim itself is provided: 'Detective Inspector Carol Jordan stared at the broken chaos of flesh that had once been a man, determinedly forcing her eyes to remain out of focus.' (*Mermaids*, p. 20). Compare in contrast the opening of Philip Kerr's *A philosophical investigation*:

The poor woman's red silk suspender belt was tied tight around her neck although by this stage she was already dead. A Simpson's store carrier bag was later pulled over the victim's head covering her ruined features from view. Possibly this took place prior to intercourse.

Using a Christian Dior Crimson Lake lipstick from the victim's handbag, the killer wrote some four-letter abuse onto her bare thighs and stomach. Immediately above the pubic line was written the word "FUCK", while on the underside of her thighs and buttocks was written the word "SHIT". Across each breast was written the word "TIT". Last of all the killer drew a happy smiling face onto the white plastic carrier. (1992, pp. 3-4)

Sarah Dunant contrasts this example for titillating and prurient description of a victim with a passage by Chandler where, she argues, the interest is in conveying 'something about the horror and disfigurement of death' (2000, pp. 16-17). McDermid similarly undermines, or

makes impossible, any voyeuristic exploitation of her victims by showing the impact of violence and locating it unequivocally beyond what is 'normal'. Although the first book in the series, *The Mermaids singing*, deals explicitly with torture - young gay men are killed on reconstructed medieval torture devices, the description of building and testing these devices, the perpetrator's documenting of the process of hunting down the victims and recording their agonised dying in diary entries in excruciating detail, provides an appalled insight into a sick mind rather than 'torture porn'. These sections are written in the first person, mediating the violence through the prism of the serial killer's mind and showing the effects of violence in terms of fear and pain as experienced by the victim, or pleasure and arousal for the perpetrator. Similarly, portrayals of the outcome of this violence in the story of the investigation are mediated: there is no direct description of the victims at the crime scene - the reader does not 'see' the victim and only learns about the injuries through the professional interactions between police officers, profiler, pathologist and official reports. The language here is unemotional, respectful and distancing.

In the second and third book, *The Wire in the blood* and *The Last temptation*, there is a shift away from sexual power to vengeance as the main motivation for the rapes, abuse and bodily harm. We again have the narrative switch between detailed descriptions focalised through the perpetrator, although these are far less personal, and descriptions of the crime scenes through the perception of the professionals and the effect the horrific injuries and mutilations have on them. But here again, even though these detailed descriptions are aimed at generating reader response with a noticeable use of emotional modifiers (for example, 'the cruel blade'), the violence, and the victims are not staged for the reader's titillation. The relentless detail invites disgust, rejection or empathy, undercutting any potential eroticisation of the bodies:

Carol lay in a crumpled heap, wrists and ankles bound behind her back with leather belts. Her face was a streaked mess of blood, saliva, mucus and tears. Her nose was swollen and angled improbably. Her eyes were invisible in the puffy purpling of bruised flesh. Smudged trails of blood and shit were visible on her thighs. There was no room for doubt about what had happened to her. (*Last temptation*, p. 487)

A corpus of such relentless accounts of violence produced by the same author in a series of books with the same characters and translated by three different translators offers an unusually controlled case study to consider translatorial decisions on material flagged up in the public domain as problematic. Translators 'can choose to adapt to the system, to stay within the parameters delimited by its constraints ... or they may choose to oppose the system, to try to operate outside its constraints' (Lefevere, 1992, p. 13), but as discussed earlier, in the target 'system' there is a potential conflict between the two 'control factors' which shape literature: the literary professionals (critics and reviewers) and patronage operating outside the literary system (publishers, the media, sales figures) (Lefevere, 1992, pp. 14-15). The three translators of the corpus show markedly different approaches in how they treat violent material, and only one, Doris Styron who translated the third book, renders all violence not omitting or adding anything, and maintaining the style, tone and pace of the

English. Manes Grünwald's and Klaus Fröba's translation choices, on the other hand, show distinctive patterns and these will be discussed in detail in the following.

The translation of *The Mermaids singing*

Manes Grünwald's translation *Das Lied der Sirenen* follows the English closely and renders all instances of violence without omission. However, he tends to opt for concrete renderings where the English is abstract or metaphoric. In thirty-one instances he spells things out and makes violent descriptions more specific, usually through addition, expansion and at times intensification. So, for example the simple 'gag' (p. 103) is rendered as 'Klebeband über dem Mund' (p. 123) (sticky tape over the mouth), or 'sucking and biting' (p. 132) becomes a more sexually explicit 'saugte an der nassen Haut, biss zärtlich zu' (p. 152) (sucked on the wet skin, tenderly bit) while 'a lake of gore' (p. 37) becomes 'ein Meer aus geronnenem Blut' (p. 53) (a sea/ocean of clotted blood). Frequently, the German replaces pronominal references with direct referents, often to the body or parts of the body: 'they' (p. 93) become 'die Fleischstücke' (p. 114) (the pieces of meat), 'him' (p. 209) - referring to the victim - becomes 'der After' (p. 233) (the anus) and 'leaned over him' (p. 132) becomes 'Ich beugte mich über sein Gesicht' (p. 152) (I leaned over his face). There are many descriptions of actions in the text and these are frequently spelled out, added to and made more specific. The concise 'strap from the Judas chair' (p. 280) is explained as 'Lederriemen, der sich schon beim Judasstuhl bewährt hatte' (p. 308) (leather strap which had already proved its worth at the Judas chair) and in the following example, each step of the action is expanded or specified:

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| McDermid: | I tipped him into the wheelbarrow I'd left out there, wheeled him through the cottage and emptied him down the flight of steps. (p. 54) |
| Grünwald: | Ich zerrte ihn in eine Schubkarre, die ich nach den Ausbesserungsarbeiten zurueckgelassen hatte, schob ihn damit durch das Cottage und kippte ihn dann über die Treppe in den Keller . (p. 72) |
| Back translation: | I pulled him into a wheelbarrow which I had left behind after the improvements/works , pushed him with it through the cottage and then tipped him across the stairs into the cellar . |

In contrast to the many expansions, there are only four instances where the German is less concrete or explicit in its rendering of violence, but they have a significant effect on the text.

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| McDermid: | Cut away the tape from the dog's legs and spread him out on his stomach. I fastened the strap round his middle to hold him tightly against the rack . (p. 55) |
| Grünwald: | ..., schnitt die Fesseln durch und drehte den Hund auf den Bauch. Mit einem Lederriemen um den Ruecken zurrte ich ihn in dieser Position fest. (p.72) |
| Back translation: | Cut through the bonds and turned the dog onto its stomach . With a leatherstrap round its back I tied it up in this position |

The less detailed description of ‘turning the dog onto its stomach’ loses the vulnerability in the English of being ‘spread out on his stomach’. Even more importantly, avoiding direct mention of the rack in the very general ‘in this position’ means that the German text does not generate the suspense of potential torture which mention of the rack produces in the English. Similarly, the description of a body as ‘**open** to the elements’ (22) is translated with the more formal collocation ‘den Elementen **ausgesetzt**’ (exposed to the elements, 36)’ which does not convey the horribly evocative picture of the body literally opened up. The German translation overall is less expressive: 84% of cases are less expressive while only 16% are more expressive. For example, the German shifts to a direct and quite detailed description of how an almost decapitated head is ‘connected with’ the rest of the body, rather than the expressive and dehumanising ‘hinged’ of the English.

- McDermid: ... leaving the head tilted as if **hinged** at the back of the neck. (p. 38)
 Grünwald: ... der Kopf war zur Seite gekippt und schien nur noch im **Genick mit dem Rest des Koerpers verbunden zu sein**. (pp. 54-5)
 Back translation: the head was tipped to the side and **seemed now only to be connected at the neck with the rest of the body**.

Selectional restrictions in English mean that ‘hinged’ is not used with human bodies except when explicitly referring to joints – this is lost in the unmarked, and quite abstract, German ‘connected’. Similarly, rendering ‘emptied down the stairs’ of a victim who had been transported in a wheelbarrow as ‘kippte’ (tipped, p. 72) is not as dehumanising, especially as a corresponding verb is available in German.

Visually, the text also has less of an impact in terms of illustrations, fonts and lay-out. In the English text, each chapter is headed by a childish drawing – a crucified stick figure, splayed out with its arms and legs pinned down like an insect in a display case. The German publisher has not included this chilling, visual reminder of the objectification of the victims by the perpetrator. Furthermore, the lay-out in the German version also smoothes out the differences between the story of the investigation and the perpetrator sections, making them – visually – a continuous narrative without the break which the English text enforces through the use of italics. A slightly different font is used in the German but it is not sufficient to set these sections off and foreground them as the English does: the source text signals the perpetrator sections as deviant, as ‘other’ from the main narrative, while the German presents them in conformity with the ‘norm’ of the text world, the same as the investigation. This is important if we remember that the unmediated, excessive, violence in these sections is counter-acted, pulled into perspective by descriptions of the same victim / injuries in the other strands of the narrative which foreground the horrified reaction, the appalled humanity of the investigators faced with what the perpetrator’s violence means. The fact that the German edition uses italics for newspaper reports and other inserted text types makes this lay-out decision even more significant, even if the reader may perhaps only notice this on an unconscious level.

In this first book, it is the psychological profiler, Dr Tony Hill, who becomes the last victim of the perpetrator and it emerges that he has been the main target from the beginning:

exciting Tony's interest and involvement in the investigation to have him in his control, break his will, and make him into an object of abjection is the ultimate aim of the perpetrator. Tony's understanding of psychology allows him to eventually manipulate the perpetrator and free himself just before the police arrive. But what is interesting in this section is that the German translation choices tend to increase Tony's control and ability, in particular in the final fight scene where the English 'raised his hands' (p. 429) becomes 'Riss blitzartig die Arme hoch' (Lightning-fast, pulled his arms up, p. 464). In the extended description of this fight the German reinforces the intentionality of Tony's actions and control over his body although Tony has been suspended from his hands tied behind his back, and so should have been physically and cognitively impaired from the extended torture. One effect of this is that the German counteracts the absolute control the perpetrator appears to exert over his victims (one of which was a police officer from the investigating team) and contributes to a reassuring closure of containing and managing the psychological and physical violence and overwhelming power of the perpetrator.

A central feature of crime fiction is reader involvement: emotional engagement when the investigator is threatened, and cognitive participation in working out the puzzle alongside the investigative process. Both are somewhat muted in the German translation: the fear for Tony is lessened by showing him to be more in control over his mind and his body, and the cognitive dimension of puzzle solving is affected through translations choices which impact suspense and the clue-building ability for readers because echoes are not rendered which allow them to recognise potential links. A crucial clue is presented when the perpetrator talks about 'rebuilding' the recording of his latest victim's torture. In the German, the 'rebuilding' is rendered as 'geniessen' (enjoy). This does not allow the German reader to connect the perpetrator with potential suspects: in order to manipulate the recordings, the perpetrator must be highly computer literate and aware of recent developments in video games technology which he deploys in 'rebuilding' his recordings. DCI Carol Jordan (and the reader) are eventually able to recognise this IT expertise because her brother had mentioned video game manipulations when they catch up on their work and life. This crucial information allows her to close in on and identify the perpetrator much later in the book.

Similarly, the German does not build semantic chains which interlink the different murders through descriptions of the body, injuries sustained and how they have been caused, in police and post-mortem reports and the perpetrator sections. The phrase 'across his/the face' is very marked and is repeated across the range of crimes committed, linking the different cases which initially are not recognised as part of a series. In the German, this recognisable form of action is translated variously: 'knallte auf seine Wange' (banged on his cheek, p. 447), 'beigefügt' (inflicted, p.161), 'ins Gesicht' (into the face, p. 325) or even omitted so that the recurrence is lost.

This linking of the different cases is also not possible when the perpetrator muses about Tony's 'disposal' (342) and this is translated as 'seine Vernichtung' (his destruction, p. 373). The shift in translation from getting rid of somebody to destroying them makes sense because the perpetrator is setting out in his diary that he needs 'to punish' Tony Hill, that he is 'going to have to pay for his arrogance' and that he is 'the target' (p.342). McDermid very carefully

builds up the suggestion that Tony Hill is potentially the next victim. An important part of this inference is the use of ‘disposal’, the semantic link to all the previous murders where the bodies are ‘disposed’ of again and again. Without this link in the German, a building block in foreshadowing is missing and this cuts down on the reader’s involvement recognising the links between the murder victims and Tony Hill. This is particularly important because initially it appears as if Tony’s abductor and torturer is female (as opposed to the distinctly male, homosexual framing of the previous murders) and not related to the serial murders being investigated but linked to Tony’s private life.

Overall then, the German translation has less of an impact even though it does not omit any passages or instances of violence. However, the sustained explicitation produces an accumulation of detail which dilutes the narrative force and mitigates the emotional involvement of the reader. Suspense is affected in the formulaic reshaping of Tony Hill into a more generic crime fiction ‘hero’ and a less intricate web of references throughout the text - which pull the English reader in, attempting to recognise the links ahead of the investigative team – undermines cognitive involvement. Thus, rendering violence is not so much an issue in this translation, however the choices made have an impact on genre conventions.

The translation of *The Wire in the blood* (1997)

Klaus Fröba’s translation *Schlussblende* (1999/2008) is such an uneven rendering that one might suspect it to be a co-translation: certain passages are translated very carefully and render every detail, while other passages are in effect an adaptation, or even a rewrite where scenes are rendered in broad terms but do not follow the source text. There are many omissions, frequent additions and some, quite significant, reframing. Almost every incidence of violence has some omission which can range from significant words and phrases to whole paragraphs. Usually, it is the detailed description of violence which is cut down or repetitions within the description of a violent scene are deleted which reduces emphasis and impact. Almost any mention or description of pain – what its sources, effects or the method of inflicting it are – is omitted or partially omitted.

Similarly, various aspects of the perpetrator’s sexual behaviour are significantly manipulated. An important feature of the perpetrator’s MO – and pathology - is that he has engaged in posthumous sex; this is deleted in the German. When he abducts a young, female officer training as a profiler, the description of how she is manhandled and positioned by the perpetrator before he tortures and kills her, does not render allusions which suggest that he might rape her. For example, the description that his ‘hot breath penetrates the hood’ over her head is omitted, and when he then pushes his legs between her spread knees, the ‘heat of his body’ is omitted, so there is no allusion to the ‘penetration’ established before.

In contrast, the very detailed descriptions of the sexual violence against the young girls the perpetrator lures to his custom made hide-away are expanded and reframed so that the experience of the rape is focalised through the victim’s perception by rendering agentless clauses ‘knickers were in a **trn** heap’ and ‘deep welts in her side’ (p. 146) with the victim as subject: ‘Donna hörte etwas zerreißen’ (Donna heard something tear) and ‘Aus den

Augenwinkeln konnte sie die Rillen sehen' (Out of the corner of her eyes she could see the grooves, p. 144).

- McDermid: **The breaking of her hymen went unnoticed** (p. 147)
Grünwald: **Sie spürte es gar nicht**, als **ihr** Jungfernhäutchen zerriss. (p.145)
Back translation: **She didn't even feel it** when **her** hymen ruptured.

The additions add to the impact of the rape on the victim, foreground her suffering, and – together with the reorganisation of one complex sentence into two sentences separated by a new paragraph break which sets off the moment of penetration -- put it centre stage and emphasise it.

- McDermid: Shaking with sobs, her voice a mumbling of meaningless pleadings, she had no resources left to resist as he unzipped his trousers and thrust his cock into her. (p.147)
Grünwald: Zitternd und schluchzend murmelte sie **nutzlose, flehentliche** Bitten vor sich hin, **denn** wehren konnte sie sich nicht.
Auch nicht, als er den Reissverschluss seiner Hose öffnete und seinen Penis in sie hineinstieß. (p. 144)
Back translation: Shaking and sobbing she mumbled useless, imploring pleadings to herself, **because** she could not defend herself.
Also not [Neither could she defend herself], when he opened the zip of his trousers und pushed his penis into her.

The victim's begging is increased and her inability to resist is – unusually - repeated (through the ellipsis of 'auch nicht') since normally this translation omits any repetitions in the English. These are also the few occurrences in the text where the description of pain is not reduced but expanded and intensified: 'agony' becomes 'never ending agony', 'splintering' is rendered as 'dreadful cracking sound as ... splintered'; 'inconceivable pain' and 'as the vice tore deeper and deeper into her arm' are added. The change in tone, partly because the experience is focalised through the victim's perception, rather than the impersonal, bluntly factual description in the English, and partly through more emotional, almost clichéd lexical and syntactic choices, and the changed narrative tempo and focus through the changed paragraph lay-out, produce a text which is more reminiscent of a particular style of romance. Radway (1984) defines the overwhelming dark hero through his 'inability to master his desire' (p. 126); he hurts the heroine physically and emotionally and uses women as 'tools for achieving sexual release' (130); the threat of rape is a central feature but is differentiated into the hero's 'love-crazed taking of the heroine' (p. 133). Nevertheless, when he 'forces his attentions' on the reluctant heroine, 'this inevitably awakens her sexual feelings' (p. 126).

Conclusion

It is very clear that the treatment of violence in the corpus is entirely dependent on the translator. Each of the three translators demonstrates a distinctive approach with only Styron maintaining the same level of violence. Since she has also rendered the rest of the 9-book series, it can be assumed that her approach conveys the publisher's or editor's vision. And

since there is no attenuation of violence in Styron's translations, it can be assumed that the Knaur Verlag, like other publishers, does not perceive violence as a problematic feature, despite the critical reception in the public domain. While early cover images showed stereotypical, remote, English rural or city scenes, since 2008, all cover images of the Carol Jordan/Tony Hill series show a weapon: the blade of a knife for *Das Lied der Sirenen*, a gun for *Schlussblende*, and an axe for *Ein kalter Strom*. Paratexts representing local settings or iconic images of weapons are central features of identifying crime fiction on the world market (Nilsson, 2017, pp. 111, 114, 119). The image shift from locale to threat foregrounds violence and places the series within the 'death aesthetic' (Nilsson, 2017, p. 119) typical of contemporary marketing. However, the fact that the covers do not use exploitative images of female victims, and a final choice of a translator who conveys the texts without shifts, points towards recognition of McDermid's socio-critical rather than exploitative orientation by the publisher.

There are no common patterns in the translatorial decisions; each translator has a distinctive approach which does not appear to demonstrate any form of self-censoring in response to concerns articulated in the public domain. Neither Grünwald (book 1) nor Styron (books 3-9) soften or omit violent depictions, although Grünwald's extensive explicitations might slow up narrative pace and impact. It is the translator of the second book, Klaus Fröba, whose considerable interventions are interesting in their pattern of reducing almost all incidences of violence through omission or softening, but reframing and expanding the sexual violence in the description of the rape scene. This pattern suggests a gender-specific treatment of violence, with ideological attenuation of non-sexual violence and a shift towards romance porn by casting the rape as a forceful seduction. Given that Grünwald introduces an action hero dimension reminiscent of American thrillers, and Fröba deploys dark romance characteristics, their translatorial decisions seem to have been shaped more by different genre expectations rather than constraints associated with titillating violence.

Recent research suggests that in popular culture, products are not so much adapted within a cultural or national frame but are targeted at a very specific target audience regardless of 'national' context. This research also supports that differential consumption patterns of popular culture are determined far more by age group than by nation (Esser, Keinonen, Jensen & Lemor, 2016) and transnational reception is not shaped by cultural proximity as the determining factor but proximities based on genre, values and themes (Straubhaar, quoted in Esser, 2016, p. 28). Thus, the reception of violence is not so much determined by a move across lingua-cultural environments but is accepted as a genre feature and so not subject to particular patterns of adjustment across different linguistic contexts, although translatorial decision making is shaped by their positionality. What has been surprising is that even though the data only consisted coupled pairs which show some feature of violence, the translation decisions taken by the two translators whose approach introduces shifts in the target texts have such a genre-relevant impact, affecting genre-constitutive features such as emotional/empathetic reader involvement, cognitive involvement/puzzle solving and suspense.

The corpus⁴ - original publication dates

1. *The mermaids singing* (1995) – *Das Lied der Sirenen* [The song of the sirens] (1997). Trans. Manes Grünwald.
2. *The wire in the blood* (1997) – *Schlussblende* [Final aperture] (1999). Trans. Klaus Fröba
3. *The last temptation* (2002) – *Ein kalter Strom* [A cold stream] (2003). Trans. Doris Styron

Remaining series translated by Doris Styron:

4. *The Torment of Others* (2004) - *Tödliche Worte* [Deathly words] (2008)
5. *Beneath the Bleeding* (2007) – *Schleichendes Gift* [Sneaking poison] (2014)
6. *Fever of the Bone* (2009) - *Vatermord* [Patricide] (2010)
7. *The Retribution* (2011) – *Vergeltung* [Retribution] (2012)
8. *Cross and Burn* (2013) - *Eiszeit* [Ice age] (2014)
9. *Splinter the Silence* (2015) – *Schwarzes Netz* [Black net] (2017)

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⁴ Editions used in the analysis are given in the list of references.

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