Translation Quality Assessment
A Model in Practice

Christoffer Gehrmann
English - Linguistic Specialization
Master's Paper, the spring of 2011
Supervisor: Monica Karlsson
# Table of contents

1. Introduction ................................................................................................................. 2
   1.1 Aim ......................................................................................................................... 2

2. Background .................................................................................................................... 3
   2.1 Terminology and Concepts ..................................................................................... 4

3. Research Question ......................................................................................................... 8

4. Method .......................................................................................................................... 8

5. Results .......................................................................................................................... 9
   5.1 Analysis of the Original ......................................................................................... 9
      5.1.1 FIELD ............................................................................................................... 9
      5.1.2 TENOR ............................................................................................................. 12
      5.1.3 MODE ............................................................................................................. 14
      5.1.4 GENRE ............................................................................................................. 15
   5.2 Statement of function .............................................................................................. 16
   5.3 Comparison of Original and Translation ................................................................. 16
      5.3.1 FIELD ............................................................................................................... 17
      5.3.2 TENOR ............................................................................................................. 19
      5.3.3 OVERT ERRORS .............................................................................................. 20

5 Discussion ....................................................................................................................... 21

6. Concluding remarks ..................................................................................................... 23

References ......................................................................................................................... 25

Appendices ......................................................................................................................... 27
1. Introduction

When J. R. R. Tolkien’s trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* was published in Swedish 1959-1961, the translation by Åke Ohlmarks was considered by most critics to be excellent. According to Ohlmarks, even J. R. R. Tolkien himself and his son Christopher were very pleased with it, which Ohlmarks was told by Christopher when he met him in 1975. This is, however, contradicted in the authorised biography of Tolkien by Carpenter (1978), in which Tolkien is said to have been most negative towards the way Ohlmarks handled the text. Before the biography was published, Christopher Tolkien and Ohlmarks had become bitter enemies, which might explain the re-evaluation. The schism has been described by Ohlmarks in his book *Tolkiens arv* (1978). But ever since *The Lord of the Rings* came out in paperback in 1971 there has been a discussion about the translation quality also in Sweden. When I first read the books in English I had the Swedish translation beside me. I soon discovered that Ohlmarks had taken great liberties with the text. I noticed that the descriptions were often more detailed in the Swedish translation than in the original and it was this fact that first roused my interest. Therefore, I decided to try to make a translation quality assessment of a part of the text, using a model by Juliane House.

1.1 Aim

The aim of this paper is to make a statement about the translation quality of the Swedish version of J. R. R. Tolkien’s book *The Lord of the Rings*. Unfortunately, there is no standard model for translation quality assessment, but the most elaborate
one presented so far is the revised model by Juliane Rouse (1997). Since I will analyse only two pages out of more than a thousand I will not be able to claim that my results are valid for the entire translation, but considering the studies by Leif Jacobsen (2000), all the reviews in Lamm’s book ‘Ohlmarks VS. Tolkien. Om översättningsteori: ett försök till normbeskrivning’ (1987) and my own experience when I read the complete work, I believe that they are representative.

2. Background

I have found two previous comprehensive studies regarding the translation of Tolkien into Swedish. However, the first work, ‘Ohlmarks VS. Tolkien. Om översättningsteori: ett försök till normbeskrivning’ by Carl Lamm (1987), analyses reviews of the translation in newspapers and not the translation itself. Lamm introduces a model for establishing the attitude of the critic towards the translation, by making a distinction between impression and ideal; i. e. how the critic conceives the translation in relation to his opinion of the ideal translation. Most of Lamm’s essay falls outside the scope of my investigation, but it provides a list of all newspaper articles about the translation of Tolkien that were written in Sweden until 1985. These articles (41 in total) are mostly short ones, in which the writer gives a general opinion with reference to a few examples supporting his view.

The second one, ‘Sagan om Ringen = The Lord of the Rings? En kritisk komparativ granskning av Åke Ohlmarks översättning av J.R.R. Tolkiens The Lord of the Rings’ written by Leif Jacobsen (2000), points out several mistakes in the Swedish translation, and aims at showing the importance of a new translation (which was also done in 2005).
When it comes to the analysis of the source text not many critics have done extensive stylistic studies of the *Lord of the Rings*. However, I have found one book of great use, *Tolkien: A Critical Assessment*, written by Brian Rosebury (1992). It is a comprehensive and discriminating introduction to Tolkien’s work.

### 2.1 Terminology and Concepts

When it comes to analysing literary texts there are established and well-elaborated techniques for carrying out stylistic analyses. This is however not the case with translation quality assessments. I have not yet found any universally accepted criteria for judging translations. Leading authorities in the field of translation studies have suggested different methods for evaluating a translation. Nida and Taber (1969) have invented the dichotomy ‘dynamic equivalence’ versus ‘formal correspondence’. A dynamic equivalence is attained when the manner in which receptors of the translation text respond to the translation text is equivalent to the manner in which the receptors of the source text respond to the source text (1969:24). It is hard, however, to empirically test whether the translator has succeeded in producing a dynamic equivalence. The methods suggested by Nida-Taber provide means to make sure that the translation is idiomatic, but they lack reference to the source text regarding form and semantics.

According to Reiss (1971:32) the evaluation of translations should start with the establishing of what kind of text type the source text belongs to. She claims that different text types have different functions and therefore need to be treated differently. She distinguishes four types: ‘informative’, ‘expressive’, ‘operative’ and
‘audio-medial’. But she does not indicate how to establish that the desired function is prevailing in the translation.

The first one to create an applicable model for comparing a source text to a translation text was Wilss (1977:24). His model considers syntax, semantics and pragmatics and on each level the translation is evaluated. This is also the kind of model that Juliane House presented in 1977 and revised in 1997, and which I will use in my study. Her model can be described with the following scheme:

‘Field’ refers to the nature of the social action that is taking place: field of activity, topic, content or subject matter. ‘Tenor’ refers to who is taking part, to the nature of the participants, the addresser and the addressees, and the relationship between them. This dimension includes the addresser’s temporal, geographical, social provenance as well as his intellectual and emotional stance, i.e. his personal viewpoint vis-a-vis the content he is portraying and the communicative task he is engaged in. The ‘social role relationship’ may be either symmetrical (marked by the existence of solidarity or
equality) or asymmetrical (marked by the presence of some kind of authority).

‘Mode’ refers to both the channel and the degree to which potential or real participation is allowed for between the interlocutors. On each dimension House distinguishes between syntactic, lexical and textual means, ‘although it might not always be the case that all three categories are found to be operative on a particular dimension’ (House 1997:44). The textual means include three main textual aspects: theme-dynamics, clausal linkage and iconic linkage. ‘Theme dynamics charts the various patterns of semantic relationships by which “themes” recur in texts (e.g. repetition, anaphoric and cataphoric reference, pro-forms, ellipsis, synonymy, and near-synonymy)” (House 1997:44). The notion of theme dynamics also covers word order as the means of realising a theme-rheme distribution. Iconic linkage is a structural parallelism that occurs when two or more sentences cohere at the surface level.

When describing ‘social attitude’ House adopts a tripartite division into formal - consultative - informal. She states that the most neutral style is consultative. it is the norm for conversations between strangers, and is mostly marked through the absence of formal and informal style markers. In the formal style the addressee participation is to a large degree omitted. Formal texts are well-structured, elaborate, logically sequenced, and strongly cohesive. Informal texts are marked by various degrees of implicitness and used with friends or people with whom the addresser has something to share or desires or imagines that there is something to share (House 1997:41).

In the scheme, “’Mode’ refers to both the channel - spoken or written (which can be
“simple”, e. g., “written to be read” or “complex”, e. g., “written to be spoken as if not written”), and the degree to which potential or real participation is allowed for between the interlocutors’ (House 1997:109). Participation can also be either simple or complex. An example of simple participation would be a monologue with no addressee-participation while complex participation involves various addressee-involving mechanisms characterising the text, e.g. ‘a characteristic use of pronouns, switches between declarative, imperative and interrogative sentence patterns or the presence of contact parentheses, and exclamation’ (House 1997:40).

House defines ‘Genre’ as ‘a socially established category characterized in terms of occurrence of use, source and a communicative purpose or any combination of these’ (House, 1997:107). When discussing the function of the text, House uses the notions ‘ideational function’ (using language to describe things in the external world and to present and evaluate arguments and explanations) and ‘interpersonal function’ (using the language as an expression of a speaker’s attitudes and his influence on the attitudes and behaviour of the hearer).

Another important distinction House also makes is the dichotomy ‘overt’ versus ‘covert’ translation. The ‘overt’ translation is one in which the addressees of the translation text are not being directly addressed: ‘thus an overt translation is one which must overtly be a translation not, as it were, a “second original”.’ (House, 1997:66). The source text is tied in a specific manner to the source language community and its culture. The ‘covert’ translation enjoys the status of an original source text in the target culture, and is not tied to the source language and culture.
Finally there is another model presented by Rune Ingo (1990:246). His model takes four different aspects into consideration: syntax, language varieties, semantics and pragmatics, i.e., aspects that are also covered by House’s model, but organised differently. When analysing the style of the source text and the translation text, Mick Short’s book *Exploring the Language of Poems, Play and Prose* (1996) is also very useful, especially the discussion on foregrounding and the check sheet regarding style features of narrative description.

3. Research Question

The main question of this study is:

- What is the quality of the Swedish translation by Åke Ohlmarks of Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Ring*?

4. Method

In my study of the Swedish translation of *The Lord of the Rings* I have chosen to take a closer look at only two pages of the entire work. This means that I cannot make certain assessments of the translation as a whole, but to choose a larger mass of text would have been impossible, considering the method I am applying. The two pages that I will examine are to be found in the second book of the first volume, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (pages 458-459). I did not want to select a passage from the first book of the novel, since - as many critics have pointed out - there is a difference in style between the first book and the rest, and thus it is not as representative. This difference has even caused some critics to suggest that someone other than Tolkien wrote the books 2-6 (Ohlmarks 1982). I have chosen the beginning of the chapter called *The Mirror of Galadrien*, not because I thought that I would find more of
interest in this chapter than in any other, but because the passage contains a lot of
descriptions and only a little dialogue. In this respect it represents ‘the style of The
Lord of the Rings at its distinctive best - not in moments of instantaneous action, or
in dialogue, but in narrative that is at once dynamic and sensuously alert.’ (Rosebury
1992:76).

Both the source text (ST) and the translation text (TT) are analysed in the same
manner and then compared for their relative matching. Any mismatch along the
dimensions is an error. Such dimensional errors are referred to as ‘covertly erroneous
errors’, in contrast to ‘overtly erroneous errors’, which result either from a mismatch
of the denotative meanings of source and translation text elements or from a breach
of the target language system.

I will first analyse the source text according to House’s model, then analyse the
translation text in the same way and compare the results.

5. Results

Below I will account for the analysis of the source text and establish the function.
Then I will list the mismatches along the various dimensions and finally make a
statement of the quality.

5.1 Analysis of the Original

The roman numerals refer to the text parts of the source text found in the appendices.

5.1.1 FIELD

The Lord of the Rings is set in a world called Middle-earth, of which the regions we
encounter are broadly similar, in climate, geology and vegetation, as well as in scale,
to Europe. The world is populated principally by Men, Elves, Dwarves, Orcs and half-Man-sized Hobbits. Sauron is the evil spirit who wants to conquer and destroy the western regions of Middleearth from his stronghold in the south-east, Mordor, by recovering the One Ring of Power. The Ring has come in the possession of the Hobbit, Frodo Baggins, and he is the only one who can save Middle-earth by destroying the Ring in the fire of the mountain Orodruin in the heart of Mordor itself. Most of the tale is about the journey that Frodo and his company undertake.

In the passage that I have chosen to examine the Company comes to the City of Trees where the Elves live. Haldir is an Elf they have recently met and he leads them to the gates of the city. On their way they notice the beautiful surroundings and scenery. The lights, the trees and the colours of gold and silver evoke the magic of the Elves.

The story is a fictional prose narrative. Tolkien’s prose is straightforward, competent but without great range, and like a painter his descriptions appeal to emotions through the senses, and not the other way round. He describes the scenes in a rather neutral way and the readers may make their own interpretations. The tale is designed to be read by children as well as adults.

When it comes to lexical means, Tolkien uses a simple, descriptive and general vocabulary with denotative meanings and few connotations. I found few uncommon or literary words: fosse, bole, limbs. There is also a certain lexical repetition. The passage contains a lot of nouns and verbs and only half as many adjectives. Adverbs are rare. The verbs are mostly intransitive and imply motion: was sinking, went, had
gathered, came, walked, running, rose, moving, turned, climbing, crossing, etc. But at the same time this is in a sense a paradox since most of them refer to static features of the landscape. The nouns are almost exclusively concrete: thickets, trees, lamps, stars, fosse, grass, wall, hill, lights, gates, bridge, feet, stairs, etc. They have often neutral or positive connotations, if you enjoy nature and the inherent beauty of it. The adjectives mostly describe size or colour: great, taller, short, high, wide, green, gold, silver, white, grey, etc.

When looking at the syntactic means, you can find that the passage contains rather complex syntactic structures featuring long sentences, subordinated clauses and multiple embedding. Tolkien also often uses the semicolon to punctuate a single complex sentence, e.g. ‘Upon the south side of the lawn there stood the mightiest of all the trees; its great smooth bole gleamed like grey silk, and up it towered, until its first branches, far above, opened their huge limbs under shadowy clouds of leaves.’

Finally, I have looked at the textual means. Strong textual cohesion makes the text easy to read and understand. The cohesion is achieved through several different methods. First of all, there are examples of iconic linkage: ‘There was a wide treeless space (...) running ...’, III. ‘There was a road (...) running’, I ‘Upon the further side there rose ...’ V. ‘Upon the south side (...) there stood...’, I. ‘In their many-tiered branches and amid their ever-moving leaves’. Furthermore, you can find the use of theme dynamics: chains of theme-rheme sequences to secure given-new ordering. In addition, there is a repetition of lexical items: I. went, went, green, green, fosse, III. fosse. Yet another method used by Tolkien is anaphoric pronominal reference: I. Beyond it, its brink, it glowed, Their height, they stood up, their many-tiered
branches and their ever-moving leaves. The ample use of opposites is also noticeable: I. thickets - treeless space, sun, light - dusk, night, shadows, deep fosse - to a great height a green wall, III. night deepened - more lights sprang forth. Finally, there are also examples of clausal linkage: when, as, but, for, until.

5.1.2 TENOR

5.1.2.1 Author’s Temporal, Geographical and Social Provenance

According to House’s terminology (1997,:), Tolkien uses standard, middle-class British English. It is unmarked geographically and socially, but marked temporally through the use of inversions and the ‘potentially dignifying, or “biblical” cadences “and... and... and”’ (Rosebury 1992:67).

5.1.2.2 Author's Personal (Emotional and Intellectual) Stance

The author looks upon the world he has created with empathy, involvement and feelings for the beauty and the magic of the realm of the Elves that he describes. When it comes to lexical means, this can be seen through the use of intensifiers (taller, countless, huge), superlatives (mightiest) and concrete lexical items, but also through the ample use of similes to express emotive involvement: I. ‘as if it glowed still...’, ‘like living towers’, III. ‘like a green cloud’, IV. ‘like soft rain’ V. ‘like grey silk’.

The syntactic means used by Tolkien are mainly lively descriptions with switches between declarative and dialogue structures.

Last, but not least, the textual means are notable through the use of foregrounded, rhematic structures: IV. ‘but of guards Frodo could see no sign’, ‘No folk could they see’, and the use of iconic linkage.
5.1.2.3 Social Role Relationship

The author puts himself on a par with his double-tiered addressees, i. e. both adults and children, even though he sometimes gets rather solemn. But he never addresses the reader directly, i. e. the passage does not show any feature of an intrusive narrator. Tolkien also adopts the perspective of one of his characters, Frodo.

The lexical means are, e.g. ordinary vocabulary and the frequent use of concrete noun phrases and intensifiers. There is however an absence of first and second personal pronouns, if you disregard the utterance of Haldir.

When it comes to textual means, the author most often talks about the whole company, but sometimes only of Frodo, which might suggest that the entire passage is described from Frodo’s point of view: IV. ‘but of guards Frodo could see no sign’, V. ‘and Frodo saw that they were tall ...’. There are also examples of foregrounded structures (see above).

5.1.2.4 Social Attitude

The text might be labeled: Formal-Consultative. Both labels are justified as the author uses clauses that are well planned and logically constructed and the text has strong cohesion (formal aspect), but at the same time it involves the addressees through an emotive language, which reduces social distance (consultative aspect). This characterisation is based on the following linguistic evidence:
Regarding lexical means, the absence of interjections, qualifying modal adverbial expressions and other subjectivity markers add to the formal aspect. However, the concrete nouns and the intensifiers make the text also consultative.

When it comes to syntactic means, the formal aspect is achieved through complex sentence structures featuring long clauses, ample subordination and appositional constructions: 1. ‘Upon the further side there rose to a great height a green wall encircling a green hill thronged with mallorn-trees taller than any they had yet seen in all the land’. There are also few elliptical clauses and contractions, but a frequency of impersonal constructions using there: 1. ‘There was a wide treeless space (...)’; ‘there rose to a great height’; III. ‘There was a road (...’). The consultative aspect is shown by simple noun phrases lacking pre-and postmodification: The sun, the mountains, the woods, Night, the grass, the Company, gates, guards, the hill.

The textual means adding to the formal aspect are rhematic structures and the use of the passive voice: I. ‘Their height could not be guessed’.

The consultative aspect is shown by the repetition for redundancy (see FIELD).

5.1.3 MODE

The ‘medium’, or the channel, is what House would call simple, i.e. written to be read (if you disregard the dialogue). The lexical evidence is the absence of interjections and subjectivity markers. When looking at syntactical means, one notices the absence of spoken language phenomena, such as elliptical clauses, contractions, contact and comment parenthesis, gambits, modal particles. There is
also a frequency of long and complex clauses with subordination: 1. ‘where the dusk had already ...’, ‘as if it glowed still...’, ‘until all the hill ...’. Regarding the textual means, you can say that the text is emic, i.e. there are no explicit references to the text’s author and its readers, because the immediate circumstances of the text’s production and reception are irrelevant for the organisation of the message. Still, through the presence of a number of rhetorical devices such as patterned repetition, iconic linkage, foregrounded rhematic structures, etc. the text is also strongly “involved”.

Mode refers also to what House calls ‘participation’, and according to her definition this text would be complex, i.e., a monologue with built-in fictional dialogic parts. The syntactic evidence is the predominance of first and second personal and possessive pronouns to indicate direct conversational interaction inside the story: II. ‘we cannot enter’, ‘We must go round’.

5.1.4 GENRE

The question of genre is much disputed regarding The Lord of the Rings. It clearly is a fictional prose narrative, but is it a novel? Many critics claim that it stands apart from the mainstream traditions of the novel:

If The Lord of the Rings stands at a tangent to the novel as a genre, it is not because of a general abstention from realism or archaism of style – neither of which can really be attributed to it – but because of a highly specific feature for which precedents are hardly to be found in the novel tradition: the complex, and to an extent systematic, elaboration of an imaginary world.

(Rosebury 1992:21)
Tolkien himself preferred the notion ‘tale’ or ‘story’, but sometimes he uses ‘romance’.

5.2 Statement of function

*The Lord of the Rings* has both an ideational and an interpersonal function, which indeed was the aim of Tolkien himself: ‘The prime motive was the desire of a tale-teller to try his hand at a really long story that would hold the attention of readers, amuse them, delight them, and at times maybe excite them or deeply move them.’ (Tolkien 1954:10). In other words, he wants to tell a story and promote emotional responses, and this dual function is present in all the described dimensions. The particular genre which in certain respects is Tolkien’s own invention determines that the interpersonal function is somewhat more important. On the dimension of FIELD the ideational function is however strongly marked with strong cohesion and complex syntactic structures. The interpersonal function is present through the simple, descriptive and general vocabulary. On TENOR both functions are marked by the Author’s personal stance as well as the social role relationship and social attitude. On MODE the text feeds into the ideational function component because of the emic character and the relative absence of spoken language phenomena.

5.3 Comparison of Original and Translation

I found mismatches along the following dimensions in my analysis of the translation and the comparison of translation and original.
5.3.1 FIELD

A comparison of the main parts of speech in the two texts shows many lexical mismatches, since the vocabulary of the TT is considerably richer:

![Table 5.3.1: Lexical mismatches]

The exact numbers in the table above are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Different</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeated</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>91</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not only does the TT contain more nouns and adjectives but it also has fewer repetitions. Even if the total number of verbs is higher in the ST, there are more different verbs in the TT. Many verbs, nouns and adjectives are also more descriptive and detailed:

I. Plötsligt var de åter ute på öppna fältet under en blek kvällshimmel, på vars gulnade turkosvalv endast några tidiga aftonstjärnor blinkade vs Suddenly they came out into the open again and found themselves under a pale evening sky pricked by a few stars; en vid, kal slätt utan träd vs a wide treeless space; en smaragdgrön kulle vs a green hill. III. en skimrande grön sky vs a green cloud; ljus tändes i staden vs ligths sprang forth; som utåt överkragade portvalvet vs that overlapped; höga och mycket starka vs tall and strong; en mångfald glindrande lyktor vs many lamps. IV.
Portarna svängde ljudlöst och **sakta upp** vs the gates opened soundlessly; **jätteträdens stad** VS the City of the Trees; **fotsteg på stigar och gator** vs feet upon the paths; från åsens krön **tonade sång med fall som av stilla regn på vissna löv** vs sound of singing falling from on high like soft rain upon the leaves. V. **skimrande och spelande** vs shimmering; **en klarvit stråle** vs a white stream; **guldlöv** vs leaves; **höll vakt** vs were seated. The invented word **mallorn** in **mallorn-trees** is translated in the TT: **gyllenträd**. The meaning of **mallorn** has been explained earlier in the text, wherefore the invented word could have been used in the translation in order to add flavour.

When looking at the syntactic mismatches, it is clear that the translation contains no colons or semicolons, punctuation marks that are common in the ST. Tolkien’s frequent use of semicolon is a distinctive stylistic feature that could have been retained in the translation. In the source text there are also several examples of clauses constructed with a formal subject, while the Swedish translator has used a determinate subject: I. ‘There was a wide treeless space before them, running ...’ vs ‘En vid, kal slätt utan träd utbredde sig...’; III. ‘There was a road paved with ...’ vs ’En väg belagd med...’; IV. ‘but there were many voices ...’ vs ‘däremot nådde dem ekon av röster’. These changes are however justified, since the original constructions would have sounded less natural in Swedish.

Finally, there are examples of textual mismatches, e.g. loss of iconic linkage: I. ‘In their many-tiered branches and amid their ever-moving leaves’ vs ‘I deras vittfamnande grenverk mellan de ständigt darrande löven’. But this loss is compensated for a few lines below: ‘Här är Galadrims stad. Här bor kung Celeborn’
unch drottning Galadriel’ vs ‘Here is the city of the Galadhrim where dwell the Lord Celeborn and Galadriel the Lady of Lorien’.

5.3.2 TENOR

When it comes to tenor, there are mismatches along the dimensions Author’s Personal (Emotional and Intellectual) Stance and Social attitude. Lexical mismatches along the first-mentioned dimension are additions of intensifiers and emotive lexical items that emotionally involve the readers (see FIELD). Textual mismatches are shown by the loss of rhetorical repetition: III. ‘and they were tall and strong, and hung with many lamps.’ vs ‘Portarna själva var höga och mycket starka samt behängda med en mångfald glindrande lyktor.’

Along the latter dimension, Social Attitude, a lexical mismatch could be that the translation contains a greater number of uncommon words and the style is therefore somewhat more formal, or “literary”, which widens the distance between author and reader: turkosvalv, glindrande, tonade, överkragade, omsider. But at the same time it involves the addressees to a greater extent through a more emotive language, using qualifying modal adverbials and other subjectivity markers: III. ‘mycket starka’ vs ‘strong’; IV. ’Portarna svängde ljudlös och sakta upp’, vs ’the gates opened soundlessly’. Lastly, an example of textual mismatches is that the TT contains less repetition (see FIELD).
5.3.3 OVERT ERRORS

The translation text contains many semantic additions, many of which I have mentioned above, but these are the ones I think are not justifiable:

I. 'Plötsligt var de åter ute på öppna fältet under en blek kvällshimmel, på vars gulnade turkosvalv endast några tidiga aftonstjärnor blinkade’ vs 'Suddenly they came out into the open again and found themselves under a pale evening sky pricked by a few stars’; 'en smaragdgrön kulle’ vs ’a green hill’.

III. ’en skimrande grön sky vs ’a green cloud’; ’en mångfald glindrande lyktor’ vs ’many lamps’

IV. ’Portarna svängde ljudlöst och sakta upp’ vs ’the gates opened soundlessly’;

V. ’skimrande och spelande’ vs shimmering; ’en klarvit stråle’ vs a white stream;

V. ‘och det höjde sig likt en ofantlig kolonn’ vs ’and up it towered’; ’de första bastanta grenarna’ vs ’its first branches’.

There are also a few examples of omissions:

I. ’natten föll på’ vs ’Night came beneath the trees’; ’högre än några de dittills skådat’ vs ’taller than any they had yet seen in all the land’.

V. ’Vid dess sida stod en bred, vit stege, vid vilken tre alver...’ vs ’Beside it a broad white ladder stood, and at its foot three Elves...’

Finally there are examples of plain semantic errors:

I. ’Som väldiga torn’ vs ’like living towers’.

V. ’en skimrande och spelande springbrunn (...) och dess vatten sprang i en klarvit stråle av kristall’ vs ’a fountain shimmering (...) and it fell into a basin of silver, from which a white stream spilled’.
In this last example, I interpret *fountain* as a spring that falls into a pool with the colour of silver, in which a rill has its source.

5 Discussion

The analysis of original and translation has revealed a number of mismatches along the dimensions of FIELD and TENOR. Most striking are the many *Overt Errors*, and especially the semantic additions. Cross-cultural pragmatic research between German and English has established a difference in communicative preferences, which includes a greater explicitness in German (House 1997: 131). I have not been able to find out whether this is true concerning Swedish and English as well, but if that is so, then the translation is clearly *covert* and a cultural filter has been applied. This is also in line with the aim of the translator, who consistently refers to his profession as *interpreting*, and who admits that he did everything to make the translation a Swedish original (Ohlmarks 1978 and 1982).

On FIELD a greater explicitness and a richer vocabulary in the translation was established in a number of cases. The additions sometimes increase the aesthetic pleasure, but since they guide and direct a reader’s imagination and interpretation more closely, the interpersonal function is changed. I will come back to this below.

On TENOR the *Social Attitude* is changed in that the style level is made more literary through the addition of qualifying adverbials. Since Tolkien has invented his own GENRE, it is not possible to establish any mismatches along this dimension, and on MODE I could not find any mismatches worth mentioning. Undoubtedly the translator has succeeded in avoiding any kind of English influence on the Swedish
text. Sentence structures, idioms and collocations are perfectly Swedish and you would not know that it is a translation unless you were told. But are you allowed to make as many additions as Ohlmark has done? I will argue that you are not. First, Tolkien himself had a theory about evoking emotions through the language:

Should the story say ‘he ate bread’, the dramatic producer or painter can only show ‘a piece of bread’ according to his taste or fancy, but the hearer of the story will think of bread in general and picture it in some form of his own. If a story says ‘he climbed a hill and saw a river in the valley below’, the illustrator may catch, or nearly catch, his own vision of such a scene; but every hearer of the words will have his own picture, and it will be made out of all the hills and rivers and dales he has ever seen, but especially out of The Hill, The River, The Valley which were for him the first embodiment of the world.

(Tolkien 1947:67)

This means that any attempt to guide the feelings of the reader more than Tolkien has done conflicts with his idea of writing. Some critics have maintained that this theory of his is invalid: “‘He climbed a hill and saw a river in the valley below” does not, I suggest, evoke any kind of scene at all. It is a cog in some narrative machine (...) None of this has anything to do with what words as words can communicate; the question of style is simply not at issue.’ (Raffel 1969:226). Raffel argues that Tolkien does not provide the reader with any sense impression. He thinks that the language is perilously close to stereotyped prose and not notable for anything more than the bare transmission of information. He concludes that the language of literature must do more than this, must transmit information as well as sense impressions of some sort, and to effect this the language must be both more deeply felt and more deeply worked. This seems to be the point of view of the Swedish translator as well. In his book Tolkiens arv (1978) he mentions that if he had been assigned the task to
translate *The Silmarillion*, edited by Christopher Tolkien, he would have tried his very best to embellish it as much as possible, since he considered it to be appallingly boring, with a stereotyped declamatory style (1978:201). The quotation of Tolkien suggests however that Tolkien deliberately refrains from giving too detailed descriptions. In this respect the Swedish translation has altered the function of the original text.

Another aspect of the problem of semantic addition is that the passage in question might be viewed from Frodo’s perspective, and hence features his syntactic and lexical register. As I have shown on TENOR in my analysis of the ST, there are circumstances that suggest that this is true, especially if you consider the passage that precedes the one I have chosen. It is quite clear from other passages in the book that the hobbits have another register than for instance Gandalf, the wizard, which has also been shown by Tom Shippey in his work *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* (2000). And if the passage is supposed to render the register of Frodo, then the semantic additions are even more serious.

6. Concluding remarks

The model for translation quality assessment proposed by House has proved to be very useful. It works very well on a very limited number of pages, but it would however be nearly impossible to use it on a complete novel with hundreds of pages. My analysis, which is based on only a few pages taken out of a work with more than a thousand pages, is of course not entirely representative as a sample. But this study has only convinced me even more that the impression that I got when I read the
entire story was correct: the translator has seized almost every opportunity to embellish the language of the original. The many errors that I have shown prove that the quality of the translation is not acceptable. My personal opinion is that the readers of the translation should be allowed a less distorted access to the author’s original voice.

It would have been interesting to study the different registers used by Tolkien in order to verify my hypothesis regarding the register used in the passage. The book also contains a plethora of different names, which present many difficulties for the translator. The names alone could be a topic for further investigation. Finally, it would certainly also be of great interest to make an assessment of the new translation of *The Lord of the Rings*, by Erik Andersson from 2005.
References


Appendices


I.

The sun was sinking behind the mountains, and the shadows were deepening in the woods, when they went on again. Their paths now went into thickets where the dusk had already gathered. Night came beneath the trees as they walked, and the Elves uncovered their silver lamps. Suddenly they came out into the open again and found themselves under a pale evening sky pricked by a few early stars. There was a wide treeless space before them, running in a great circle and bending away on either hand. Beyond it was a deep fosse lost in soft shadow, but the grass upon its brink was green, as if it glowed still in memory of the sun that had gone. Upon the further side there rose to a great height a green wall encircling a green hill thronged with mallorn-trees taller than any they had yet seen in all the land. Their height could not be guessed, but they stood up in the twilight like living towers. In their many-tiered branches and amid their ever-moving leaves countless lights were gleaming, green and gold and silver. Haldir turned towards the Company.

II.

‘Welcome to Caras Galadhon!’ he said. ‘Here is the city of the Galadhrim where dwell the Lord Celeborn and Galadriel the Lady of Lórien. But we cannot enter here, for the gates do not look northward. We must go round to the southern side, and the way is not short, for the city is great.’

III.
There was a road paved with white stone running on the outer brink of the fosse. Along this they went westward, with the city ever climbing up like a green cloud upon their left; and as the night deepened more lights sprang forth, until all the hill seemed afire with stars. They came at last to a white bridge, and crossing found the great gates of the city: they faced southwest, set between the ends of the encircling wall that here overlapped, and they were tall and strong, and hung with many lamps.

IV.
Haldir knocked and spoke, and the gates opened soundlessly; but of guards Frodo could see no sign. The travellers passed within, and the gates shut behind them. They were in a deep lane between the ends of the wall, and passing quickly through it they entered the City of the Trees. No folk could they see, nor hear any feet upon the paths; but there were many voices, about them, and in the air above. Far away up on the hill they could hear the sound of singing falling from on high like soft rain upon the leaves.

V.
They went along many paths and climbed many stairs, until they came to the high places and saw before them amid a wide lawn a fountain shimmering. It was lit by silver lamps that swung from the boughs of trees, and it fell into a basin of silver, from which a white stream spilled. Upon the south side of the lawn there stood the mightiest of all the trees; its great smooth bole gleamed like grey silk, and up it towered, until its first branches, far above, opened their huge limbs under shadowy clouds of leaves. Beside it a broad white ladder stood, and at its foot three Elves were seated. They sprang up as the travellers approached, and Frodo saw that they were tall and clad in grey mail, and from their shoulders hung long white cloaks.
I.
Solen sjönk bakom bergen, och skuggorna djupnade i skogen, när de åter fortsatte sin färd. Stigen förde dem in genom snår, där skymningen redan tätnat, och natten föll på medan de vandrade. Alverna tände sina silverlampor.


II.

III.
En väg belagd med vita stenar förde längs vallgravens yttre kant, och den följde de i västlig riktning medan staden hela tiden höjde sig för deras blick likt en skimrande grön sky på vänster hand. Ju mer natten mörknade, desto fler ljus tändes i staden, tills

IV.

V.
På många stigar vandrade de, uppför otaliga trappor, tills de omsider nådde höjden och framför sig hade en vidsträckt gräsmatta med en skimrande och spelande springbrunn i dess mitt. Den belystes av silverlyktor, som hängde ner från jätteträdens grenar, och dess vatten sprang i en klarvit stråle av kristall. Vid gräsmattans södra sida reste sig det största och högsta av alla träden. Dess enorma, helt släta stam glänste likt grått siden, och det höjde sig likt en ofantlig kolonn, tills högt uppe över deras huvuden de första bastanta grenarna gick ut likt takbjälkar under ett enormt moln av skuggande guldlöv. Vid dess sida stod en bred, vit stege, vid vilken tre alver höll vakt. När vandrarna närmade sig sprang de upp, och Frodo lade märke till att de var högvuxna och klädda i grå brynior, och att från deras skuldror hängde långa vita mantlar.