

# Self-Translation Enacted in Theodor Kallifatides' Language Memoir *Ännu ett liv (Another Life)*

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**Abstract:** This article examines the significance of self-translation in the Swedish version of the language memoir *Ännu ett liv* (2017) by the translingual Greek-Swedish writer Theodor Kallifatides. A survey of definitions of self-translation is followed by an analysis of how self-translation is enacted in Kallifatides' text. The article discusses implications of self-translation, in various senses, for a reading of *Ännu ett liv*, concluding that it serves to highlight ethical issues of relevance to the Swedish target audience.

**Keywords:** Kallifatides, *Ännu ett liv*, Another Life, self-translation, Sweden, language memoir

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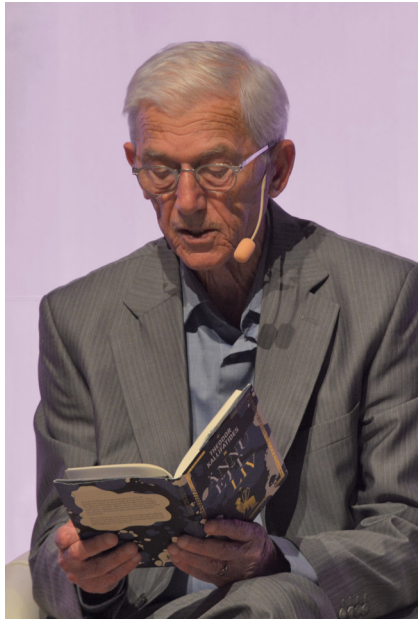
## Introduction

Literary self-translation, previously considered a marginal phenomenon, has begun to attract more scholarly attention since the turn of the millennium (Cordingley 2013, 1; Wilson 2009, 187). Because it combines the roles of author and translator, the practices and products of self-translation defy the binary categories of source and target traditionally applied within translation studies. The phenomenon of self-translation is also related to literary multilingualism, as shown by the work of several prominent self-translating translingual authors. If we take as a starting point Steven G. Kellman's definition of literary multilingualism as the phenomenon of authors writing in "a language other than their primary one" (Kellman 2000, 8), then self-translators can be seen to move in two directions, first plunging into the foreign waters of a new language (in the writing process) and then ferrying the text back to the shore of the native language (through translation).<sup>1</sup> This order can also be reversed, of course, with a literary text being written in a native language and subsequently self-translated into a non-native one, but published translations of this kind appear to be less common. This article will examine one such case: a self-translated autobiographical prose work by the contemporary translingual author Theodor Kallifatides that was first written and published in Greek as *Mia zoi akoma* (2016) and subsequently published in Swedish translation as *Ännu ett liv* (2017).

Kallifatides was born in 1938 in Molai, Greece and emigrated, for political reasons, to Sweden in 1964, at the age of 25. He made his literary debut in Swedish five years

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1 Here I use as a metaphor the etymology of the Latin word *translatio*: *trans* (across) + *latus* (the past participle of *ferre*, meaning 'carry').



Theodor Kallifatides  
reading from *Ännu ett liv*  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki>

later, with a poetry collection entitled *Minnet i exil* (1969).<sup>2</sup> To date, Kallifatides has published over 30 works in various genres, including plays, poetry, short stories, novels, and essays, all written in Swedish, a language he acquired after emigrating to Sweden. He has translated over 20 of his own works from Swedish into Greek, and has also translated literature by other authors in both directions (i.e., from Swedish into Greek and Greek into Swedish).<sup>3</sup> Within this extensive and diverse oeuvre, *Ännu ett liv* represents an exception, as Kallifatides wrote and published it first in Greek and then translated it into Swedish.<sup>4</sup> It thus marks a new development in Kallifatides' long career: after writing for nearly 50 years as an isolingual translingual, i.e., an author who switches literary language and uses the adopted one exclusively, Kallifatides became an ambilingual translingual, writing literature in more than one language.<sup>5</sup>

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2 The title translates as "Memory in Exile".

3 I am grateful to Myrto Veikou, Assistant Professor at the Department of History-Archaeology, University of Patras, for providing me with background on Kallifatides' work in Greek. I would also like to thank the anonymous peer reviewer and editors of this special issue for their helpful comments. For a bibliography of Kallifatides' work in Greek, see the website *Biblionet*.

4 This work has been translated from Swedish to English by Marlaine Delargy as *Another Life: On Memory, Language, Love, and the Passage of Time* (2018). Anthony Cordingley notes "the historically common and currently widespread phenomenon of translations of a text into a third language being made not from the original but from the second version, the self-translation" (2013, 4). Other works by Kallifatides have been translated into several languages. For a discussion of Kallifatides within the context of literary translingualism in the Nordic countries, see Hansen and Bodin 2022.

5 I apply here Kellman's terms (Kellman 2016, 338).

Migration comprises, as Kellman observes, “a powerful motive for translingualism, for assimilating to and through the language of a new environment” (2003, xii), and it can also be a motive for self-translation, which Arianna Dagnino sees as “closely linked to growing migratory flows, diasporic movements and transnational relocations” (Dagnino 2019, 141). There are other conceivable motives for self-translation, for example, as a way to maintain authorial control over a text or to “explore and exploit self-translation as creative device” (142).<sup>6</sup> Self-translation can also serve as a path to recognition, as described by Pascale Casanova in *The World Republic of Letters*:

Translation is the foremost example of a particular type of consecration in the literary world. Its true nature as a form of literary recognition (rather than a mere exchange of one language for another or a purely horizontal transfer that provides a useful measure of the volume of publishing transactions in the world) goes unrecognized on account of its apparent neutrality. Nonetheless, it constitutes the principal means of access to the literary world for all writers outside the center. (Casanova 2004, 133)

The case of Kallifatides, however, stands out because neither Greek nor Swedish can be said to be located at the centre of the literary world today. Furthermore, Kallifatides began to self-translate from Greek to Swedish late in his writing career, long after having achieved recognition in the Swedish literary system. In this article, I will show how self-translation figures in different senses in *Ännu ett liv* and consider possible implications of this for a reading of *Ännu ett liv*.

### **Self-translation defined**

The term self-translation is currently defined in two different ways within translation studies and multilingual literary studies: one set of definitions is literal, the other metaphorical. Literal definitions generally focus on self-translation as a process and/or product. Process-oriented definitions tend to be straightforward and concise, for example, this one offered by Eva Gentes and Trish Van Bolderen: “the phenomenon of an author producing an additional text by translating their own written work into another language” (2022, 369). Sometimes the process of self-translation is defined in contrast to “standard”, or “allograph”, translation. Rita Wilson observes that “the self-translated text is regarded as having a different status to a ‘proper’ translation because it is imbued with ‘authorial intention’, and, being the repetition of a process rather than the reproduction of a product, the self-translated text’s subordination to the original is purely temporal in nature” (2009, 187). As self-translators hold authorial

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6 For a discussion of motives for self-translation throughout history, see Hokenson 2013. For a typology of twentieth-century self-translators as social agents, see Grutman 2013.

authority over both versions and can thereby “bestow upon themselves liberties of which regular translators would never dream” (Cordingley 2013, 2), the practice of self-translation calls into question the conventional evaluative criterion, applied by readers and literary critics alike, of fidelity to the original.

Some product-oriented definitions of self-translation focus on the dual status of the result. Jan Walsh Hokenson and Marcella Munson, for example, define self-translation as a bilingual text “existing in two languages and usually in two physical versions, with overlapping content” (2014, 14). In a study of self-translations by translingual writer Zinaida Lindén (who writes in Russian and Swedish), Marja Sorvari concludes that it is more relevant to view a self-translated text as “encompassing two originals that both entail cultural mediation and translation between two (or more) cultures and languages, for two (or more) target audiences” (2018, 168). As Hokenson and Munson emphasise, translingual authors who write literary texts in a non-native language and also translate them into another language defy certain common assumptions:

Their practice of self-translation between languages, the specific ways in which they recreate a text in the second language and adapt it to a new sign system laden with its own literary and philosophical traditions, escapes the binary categories of text theory and diverges radically from literary norms: here the translator *is* the author, the translation is an original, and the foreign is the domestic, and vice versa. (Hokenson and Munson 2014, 161)

This merging of the roles of author and translator thus prompts us to revise established theoretical categories. Susan Bassnett sees the very term ‘self-translation’ as problematic, noting that the “definition of translation presupposes an original somewhere else, so when we talk about self-translation, the assumption is that there will be another previously composed text from which the second text can claim its origin” (2013, 15). As an alternative, she proposes a conception of self-translation as “rewriting across and between languages, with the notion of an original as a fluid rather than a fixed concept” (19). Similarly, scholar and self-translator Tomoko Takahashi defines self-translation “as a communicative act in which the author-translator communicates with the audience (*interpersonally*) as well as with him- or herself (*intrapersonally*)” (original emphasis; 2020, 28).

The phenomenon of self-translation thus represents a limit case of translation, where “the manifold senses of translation are best articulated” (Nikolaou 2008, 26). Self-translation is further used in a metaphorical sense that expands the definition of the term. As Adrian Wanner observes,

the term “self-translation” is in itself ambiguous, depending on whether we see the “self” as the subject or the object of the translational process. If seen as the subject, the self is the agent of textual production. If the self is perceived as the object, self-translation literally involves a “translation of the self.” Seen from that angle, any literary writing in a non-native language could be considered a self-translation of sorts (Wanner 2020, 9)

Wilson argues that “practices of self-translation afford insights into questions of subjectivity and identity” (2017, 157). Paschalis Nikolaou sees self-translation as a particularly creative enterprise, “a practice that encourages self-reflexivity and fuels creative experimentation, something that through an onset of translation, a movement between languages, always arrives at an undisclosed elsewhere, at places where textualities turn inwards, where different alphabets invade one’s work, where translation turns from a process into a theme, and other selves proliferate in one’s poetic narratives” (2008, 30). Inspired by postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha’s concept of “cultural translation,” many contemporary scholars use translation as a metaphor for migration and cultural hybridity. Moreover, the term ‘self-translation’ is sometimes equated in an abstract sense with translingualism itself.<sup>7</sup> While heeding warnings by scholars such as Anthony Cordingley (2013, 4), Anthony Pym (2014, 153) and Harish Trivedi (2005) that a broader use of translation as a metaphor for phenomena in the contemporary world risks diluting the concept, I will show how different senses of self-translation are relevant to an interpretation of Kallifatides’ work *Ännu ett liv*.

### **Kallifatides’ language memoir**

*Ännu ett liv* is an autobiographical work that invites readers to equate the auto-diegetic narrator, named Theodor Kallifatides, with the author Theodor Kallifatides. The concise narrative explores existential and ethical questions. Paradoxically, the premise of the plot is a case of writer’s block that afflicts the narrator at the age of 77, after a long and prolific literary career. The narrative opens with the following three-sentence paragraph: “It was a difficult time. My latest novel had taken up all my strength. I was exhausted, and thinking of abandoning my writing: giving up on it, before it gave up on me” (Kallifatides 2018a, 1).<sup>8</sup> The narrator decides to give up his writer’s studio, where for decades he has done his writing, and tries out life in retirement together with his wife Gunilla. He looks back over his life, recalling significant

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7 For example, Elin-Maria Evangelista uses the term ‘self-translation’ for “the translation process occurring when a bilingual writer chooses to write in a second or acquired language, translation thereby forming an integral part of the ‘original’ creative writing process” (2013, 178).

8 The Swedish version reads: “Det var en svår tid. Min senaste roman hade tagit alla mina krafter i anspråk. Jag var utmattad och övervägde att sätta stopp för skrivandet: att överge det, innan det övergav mig” (Kallifatides 2017, 7).

places and events, as well as friends and family from Greece and Sweden. In essayistic passages, he also comments on how society in both countries has changed in recent years. A sense of crisis hangs over the narrative: in the foreground is the narrator's personal crisis represented by writer's block and signs of ageing, in the background there is Greece's economic crisis and what was referred to in 2015 as Europe's "refugee crisis", as well as signs of rising xenophobia. I will return to the theme of crisis in the section on ethical issues below.

In several respects, *Ännu ett liv* fits the genre of language memoir (also referred to as translingual memoir), which, as Mary Besemeres observes, relates experiences of "cultural and linguistic immersion" (2005, 28) and typically depicts "moving between languages as a matter of learning to live with different concepts – with culturally specific, sometimes conflicting understandings of how to live" (2022, 3). Notable examples of this genre include Eva Hoffman's *Lost in Translation: Life in a New Language* (1989), Tim Parks' *An Italian Education* (1995), and Jhumpa Lahiri's *In altre parole* (2015). Besemeres holds that "the historical spur for the emergence of translingual memoir has been experience of linguistic displacement" (2022, 4). The genre has gained prominence in recent decades (Hokenson and Munson 2014, 208), which is perhaps not surprising considering increased global migration. Hokenson and Munson point out that self-translation is often present in contemporary language memoirs, even if only in an implicit way, "like a faint watermark running through contemporary discussions of bilinguality" (208). As we will see, self-translation, in the literal as well as metaphorical sense, is foregrounded in various ways in Kallifatides' language memoir.

### Language and existential displacement

Language is a recurring motif in *Ännu ett liv*, in which the narrator is attentive to the language he hears and reads, which is, for the most part, Swedish. He reflects with wonder on the qualities of particular words. For example, he describes himself as a "complainer," declaring at the same time his fondness for the Swedish word *gnällspik*: "*Gnällspik!* A fantastic invention. And they say Swedish is a poor language" (Kallifatides 2018a, 11).<sup>9</sup> While sitting at his desk one day, unable to write, he picks up an old newspaper from the Swedish island of Gotland and takes note of two dialectal words: "A wave of happiness swept over me. Some words are irresistible. You have to taste them right away" (37).<sup>10</sup> Later in the narrative, he comments on Swedish synonyms for

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9 "Gnällspik! En genialisk uppfinning. Och sedan säger man att svenskan är ett fattigt språk" (Kallifatides 2017, 17). The Swedish word *gnällspik* is a compound noun comprised of the verb *gnälla*, which means 'whine,' and the noun *spik*, which means 'nail.' This image of a whining nail is used metaphorically for people who often complain.

10 "En våg av lycka svepte över mig. Det finns ord som helt enkelt är oemotståndliga. Man måste smaka på dem på en gång" (Kallifatides 2017, 43).

schnapps and concludes, "I don't know if there's any other language in the world with such a rich imagination in this area" (75).<sup>11</sup> This kind of focus on language is characteristic of language memoirs, which Alice Kaplan describes as holding a magnifying glass up to language (1994, 60).

The Swedish language is, of course, the primary tool of Kallifatides' trade, which accords writer's block an existential dimension, linking language to the meaning of his life. The moment of the subject's linguistic displacement belongs to the past: more than half a century has passed since he immigrated to Sweden, and he is now a successful writer in his adopted country and language. His sense of displacement is thus existential rather than linguistic or geographical, brought on by the fear of losing the ability to write. In a way that recalls Descartes' philosophical principle, *Cogito, ergo sum*, he wonders, "if I wasn't writing anymore, what should I think about?" (Kallifatides 2018a, 37).<sup>12</sup>

Interestingly, emigration is described in the narrative as "a kind of partial suicide" (56).<sup>13</sup> The narrator posits, "You don't die, but a great deal dies within you. Not least, the language. That is why I am more proud of not having forgotten my Greek than of having learned Swedish. The latter was a matter of necessity, the former an act of love, a victory over indifference and forgetfulness" (56).<sup>14</sup> Monika Kallan notes the prevalence in Kallifatides' fiction of marginalised immigrants in Swedish society, arguing that this serves to show "his readers how strange their familiar world can appear to a foreigner" (2003, 133). She argues further that his narrators "observe language from the outside, as a phenomenon, because, as they gain proficiency in a second language, they lose their initial innocent approach to language itself" (133–134), noting that several are "people who have lived in exile so long that they are out of place everywhere" (133). This observation is borne out by *Ännu ett liv* (written more than a decade after Kallan's article), in which the narrator often comments on societal developments as if he were an outsider looking in. He looks back on his own experience as a new immigrant in Sweden and sympathizes with the new refugees he encounters in both Sweden and Greece.

### **Ännu ett liv as a self-translation**

Interestingly, there is little extra-textual evidence that *Ännu ett liv* is a self-translation. This is not unusual according to Gentes and Van Bolderen, who note that

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11 "Jag vet inte om det finns något annat språk i världen med en sådan fantasi i det avseendet" (Kallifatides 2017, 79).

12 "Om jag inte längre skrev, vad skulle jag tänka på?" (Kallifatides 2017, 43)

13 "Emigrationen är en sorts *partiellt självmord*" (Kallifatides 2017, 61, italics in the original).

14 "Man dör inte, men det är mycket som dör inom en. Inte minst språket. Därför yvs jag mer över att inte ha glömt grekiskan än över att ha lärt mig svenskan. Det senare var ett verk av nöden, det förra en kärleksgärning. Det är en seger över glömskan och likgiltigheten" (Kallifatides 2017, 61).

“[o]ften, paratexts do not make the fact of authorial translation visible, which results in a self-translation that is opaque, rather than transparent” (2022, 376). They hold that this has potential consequences for the reading process, “as paratextual declarations about the writer’s self-translator status and, by extension, the self-translation status of the text” serve to create an “implied reading protocol” (376). Paratexts are defined by Gérard Genette (1997) as providing information external to, yet connected with, a text that influences how it is approached by readers. While the paratexts surrounding *Ännu ett liv* are silent about the fact that it is a translation, the process of translation is written into the plot. In light of this, such a paratext might have the effect of a spoiler, because it is not until the antepenultimate page that the circumstance of self-translation is revealed.

This turning point in the plot occurs during the narrator’s visit to his hometown of Molai, where he is publicly endowed with the kind of literary consecration described in the above-quoted passage from Casanova. There he attends a performance of a play, Aeschylus’ drama *The Persians*, by local school pupils who had read Kallifatides’ work in Greek translation and now perform an ancient Greek play for him. Hearing his native language has a physical effect on the narrator, who states, “I got goose bumps as soon as they uttered the opening words” (Kallifatides 2018a, 124).<sup>15</sup> He quotes the opening lines of Aeschylus’ play in Swedish and comments, “We were not an audience; we were a part of the play” (125).<sup>16</sup> Noticing how it affects him, he concludes, “Aeschylus’s words fell like cooling rain on parched earth. This language was my language” (125–126).<sup>17</sup> His encounter with Greek is depicted here as a return to a mythical *Ursprache* that transports and transforms the narrator. Yet this experience of language is not as direct as the narrator’s words make it appear, for the play itself represents a translation from Aeschylus’ ancient Greek into modern Greek for contemporary audiences.

On the following morning, he rises early with a plan to begin writing in Greek. Again, he is affected physically: “My pulse rate must have been somewhere in the region of one eighty, my heart was pounding like a jackhammer. I opened the computer, changed the language from Swedish to Greek, and waited for the first word” (Kallifatides 2018a, 128).<sup>18</sup> Success is not immediate, however:

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15 “Redan vid de första orden fick jag gåshud” (Kallifatides 2017, 128)

16 “vi var inte en publik utan vi spelade med” (Kallifatides 2017, 128)

17 “Aischylos ord föll som svalkande regn på uttorkad jord. Detta språk var mitt språk” (Kallifatides 2017, 129)

18 “Min puls måste ha varit uppåt 180, hjärtat bankade i bröstet som en hammare. Jag öppnade datorn, bytte språk från svenska till grekiska och väntade på det första ordet” (Kallifatides 2017, 131)



I waited. Nothing happened. I tried to think in Greek, but that didn't help. Swedish was the language in which I had written all my books.

I switched back to Swedish, but nothing was going on in my brain. I had gathered so many impressions during this trip, made so many notes, but everything felt lifeless, stone dead.

I sat there for almost an hour without writing a single word. I was caught between my two languages like Buridan's famous donkey, who died of both hunger and thirst because it couldn't decide whether to eat or drink. (Kallifatides 2018a, 128–129)<sup>19</sup>

The narrator is confronted with doubt and – again – writer's block: "How could I possibly write in a language I hadn't used in a literary context since the age of twenty?" He recalls the scepticism expressed by others when he began writing in Swedish decades earlier: "How could I possibly write in a language that wasn't mine? But I did" (129).<sup>20</sup> Writer's block is finally overcome when he downplays the situation in his own mind: he sees his wife Gunilla writing postcards and he decides to write as if to "a dear friend in Sweden" (129). Interestingly, he does so not in Swedish, but in Greek, thus giving rise to a gap between the intended audience and the language of composition, a gap that would seem to require translation as a further step in the creative process.

At this late point in the narrative, the same sentence that opens *Ännu ett liv*: "It was a difficult time" (129), reappears in the context of the staging of the writing process. It is followed by resolution: "After the very first word I was aware of an incomprehensible sweetness in my mouth, as if I had eaten honey. Sweetness and relief [ . . . ] I wasn't afraid of making mistakes, even though I knew I would. This was my language" (129–130).<sup>21</sup> The sweetness described here stands in contrast to the description, on the first page, of writer's block, when "the words didn't taste right in my mouth" (1).<sup>22</sup> This passage is conveyed entirely in Swedish, yet the reader understands at this point that the narrator has begun to write in Greek; that the narrative, as well as the narrator, has come full circle; and that the text at hand must have been translated from Greek into Swedish. The narrative trajectory of *Ännu ett liv* is thus the opposite of that found in

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19 "Jag väntade. Ingenting hände. Jag försökte tänka på grekiska utan resultat. Svenskan var språket på vilket jag hade skrivit alla mina böcker. Jag bytte tillbaka till svenska, men det hände ingenting i min hjärna. Jag hade samlat så många intryck från denna resa, gjort så många anteckningar, men allt kändes utan liv, stendött.

Jag satt så i nästan en timme utan att skriva ett enda ord. Jag var fångad mellan mina två språk som den bekanta Buridans åsna, som dog av både svält och törst eftersom den inte kunde välja om den skulle äta eller dricka." (Kallifatides 2017, 131)

20 "Hur skulle jag kunna skriva på ett språk som jag inte hade använt litterärt sedan tjuugoårsåldern?

Jag hade hört allt detta när jag började skriva på svenska. Hur skulle jag kunna skriva på ett språk som inte var mitt? Det gjorde jag" (Kallifatides 2017, 132)

21 "Jag kände redan efter första ordet en ofattbar sötma i min mun, som om jag hade ätit honung. Sötma och lättnad. [ . . . ] Jag var inte rädd att göra fel, även om jag visste att jag skulle göra sådana. Detta var mitt språk" (Kallifatides 2017, 132).

22 "orden smakade illa i min mun" (Kallifatides 2017, 7).

the typical translingual memoir; instead of finding a voice in the adopted language, the narrator finds his voice by returning to his native one.

The narrator then goes one step further and begins to translate his own text, describing this act as rewriting in a manner that recalls Bassnett's above-quoted description of translation as "rewriting across and between languages, with the notion of an original as a fluid rather than a fixed concept" (2013, 19): "I rewrote the first sentences in Swedish, trying to be completely faithful to the original Greek", concluding that this was impossible: "In order to be anywhere near good in Swedish, it had to be changed. Not completely and not too much, but the world of the one language was different from the other" (Kallifatides 2018a, 130).<sup>23</sup> This is immediately followed by an observation that recalls the mid-twentieth-century debate over the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis on linguistic relativity and translatability: "Each language is unique. You can't write the same book in two different languages. You write a book that resembles the one you've already written. That's all" (130).<sup>24</sup>

The narrator's reflection bears similarities with translation scholar Lawrence Venuti's call for an ethics of translation in order "to contribute to more democratic cultural relations" (Laaksonen and Koskinen 2020, 132). The recognition of incommensurability is central to Venuti's ethics, which "urges that translations be written, read, and evaluated with greater respect for linguistic and cultural differences" (Venuti 1998, 6). The foreignising approach advocated by Venuti seeks "to dispel the illusion of originality and to expose the reader to the conditions in which translation takes place" (Laaksonen and Koskinen 2020, 132). Kallifatides' self-translated language memoir can be seen to do exactly this: the revelation towards the end dispels the illusion of originality and lays bare translation as part of the creative process.

Significantly, the final two chapters contain performances: Aeschylus' play is staged by Greek school pupils for the narrator Kallifatides, and the act of self-translation is staged for the reader by the narrator Kallifatides. Thus, this self-translated book contains the story of its own genesis, which, if we choose to believe the narrator, involves both the processes of writing and translating. The fact that the Swedish version is a self-translation from the Greek is revealed only toward the end of *Ännu ett liv*, when the narrator Kallifatides sits down to write it in Greek. It is through this narrative twist that the existence of a Greek original is revealed. By depicting the conditions of pro-

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23 "Jag skrev om de första meningarna på svenska och försökte vara fullständigt trogen det grekiska originalet. Det var inte möjligt. För att bli något så när bra svenska måste det ändras. Inte allt och inte lika mycket, men det ena språkets värld var en annan än det andras" (Kallifatides 2017, 133).

24 "Varje språk är unikt. Man kan inte skriva samma bok på två olika språk. Man skriver en bok som liknar den man redan har skrivit. Det är allt. Man kan säga det som ska sägas på alla språk i världen" (Kallifatides 2017, 133). For background on the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, see Sergay 2019.

duction through self-translation, the narrative of *Ännu ett liv* decentres the Swedish language, which is Kallifatides' adopted language as well as the primary language of the readers who have, for more than half a century, accorded him literary recognition. The next section considers possible effects of this language switch for the readers of *Ännu ett liv*.

### Reading *Ännu ett liv* as a self-translation

I do not possess knowledge of Greek and therefore cannot compare the Greek original *Mia zoi akoma* (2016) with Kallifatides' self-translation *Ännu ett liv* (2017). What Marilyn Gaddis Rose (1997) calls a "stereoscopic reading"<sup>25</sup> of a translation is not possible for me, and thus I encounter the Swedish version in the same manner as the majority of Kallifatides' readers, i.e., as a fact of Swedish culture, "with the concomitant assumption that whatever [its] function and systemic status, these are constituted within the target culture and reflect its own systemic constellation", as Gideon Toury writes of translations (2012, 18). Regardless of whether readers possess competency in both Greek and Swedish, the fact that this is a self-translation prompts interesting questions about the reading process. As Wanner points out, self-translation "raises the problem of reception and reader response. Do we read and judge a self-translated text differently from a monolingual creation? Who is the intended, or the ideal, reader of such texts? Does such an audience even exist? Is it growing today?" (2020, 14).

The depiction of a language switch at the very end of the narrative comes as a surprise. Although earlier in the text, the narrator explicitly states that he has translated part of the text (a friend's speech) from Greek into Swedish, the passage comprises a text within the text, clearly demarcated by quotation marks and italics (Kallifatides 2018a, 50). Nothing in the narrative prior to the penultimate chapter hints that the Swedish text as a whole might also be a translation from Greek; an "implied reading protocol" for self-translations, as conceptualised by Gentes and Van Bolderen (2022, 376), appears to be missing in this case. Thus, the revelation that self-translation comprises part of the creative process behind the text prompts a readerly recalibration. As a reader of the Swedish version, I found myself wondering how Greek readers might react to the many passages about contemporary Swedish society, which appear to address contemporary readers in Sweden as an audience of insiders through the use of culturally specific references, as well as the pronouns 'we' and 'you'. Are these references conveyed in Greek, and if so, how? Once the narrative reveals that the text

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25 Rose attributes this term to translator-educator Joanne Englebort and defines it as "using both the original language text and one (or more) translations while reading and teaching. Stereoscopic reading makes it possible to intuit and reason out the interliminal" (1997, 90).

at hand is a translation from Greek, both language and location become unstable reference points.<sup>26</sup> For example, when the narrator says “everyone without a roof over their heads as people say here”,<sup>27</sup> the reader might wonder where, exactly, is “here”.<sup>28</sup>

These and other questions serve to engage the reader in the activity of perspective-taking that is concomitant with language-switching and self-translation. By presenting the work as a self-translation, the narrator both performs this activity and engages the reader in it. The idea of translation as a performance involving both translator and reader is developed in Clive Scott’s essay “Translation and the Spaces of Reading”, which describes the “blank space of the page” as “the place of the translator’s imagination, the stage on which the ST [source text] will be performed, the site of the convergence of a whole bundle of virtualities: the virtual spaces of the reader/translator’s own mind as it reads the ST into its own solitudes; the virtual spaces of the reader of the translation, as the process begins all over again” (2008, 35). Like the audience of Aeschylus’ play who become “a part of the play” (Kallifatides 2018a, 125), readers of *Ännu ett liv* become, in a sense, participants in the translation performed by Kallifatides. In the next section, I will consider how this aspect of self-translation can be seen to represent an ethical stance.

### Self-translation as an ethical stance

Let us return to the sense of crisis that pervades *Ännu ett liv*. The narrator declares: “I had a problem. Not only with myself but also with society” (Kallifatides 2018a, 10).<sup>29</sup> He feels out of sync with the times and is critical of neoliberal reforms:

It was agonizing to see Sweden changing, step by step. Social justice and solidarity were giving way to the visible and invisible power of the market. Education was becoming increasingly privatized, as was [health]care. Teachers and doctors were turning into entrepreneurs, students and patients were becoming clients. [. . .] The pay gap was growing year by year. Greed was in the driver’s seat, the boundless freedom of the individual was now the guiding star. (Kallifatides 2018a, 10–11)<sup>30</sup>

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26 The performative quality of the revelatory passage, foreshadowed by the depiction of the drama performance, might further prompt the reader to question the narrator’s reliability and approach the text as autofiction rather than language memoir. I am grateful to Rainier Grutman for his comments on this aspect in the role of discussant when I presented a draft of this article at the Tallinn seminar on the topic of this special issue.

27 “alla som saknar tak över huvudet som man säger här” (30).

28 I am currently working on an article, in collaboration with Myrto Veikou, that addresses these questions through a stereoscopic reading of the Greek and Swedish versions.

29 “Jag hade problem. Inte bara med mig själv utan också med samhället” (Kallifatides 2017, 16).

30 “Det var plågsamt att se Sverige förvandlas steg för steg. Den sociala rättvisan och solidariteten gav vika för marknadens synliga och osynliga hand. Utbildningen privatiserades mer och mer, vården likaså. Lärarna och läkarna blev företagare, eleverna och patienterna blev kunder. [. . .] Girigheten satt i förarsätet, individens gränslösa frihet blev ledstjärnan” (Kallifatides 2017, 16).

Later in the narrative, he offers a critical assessment of the current situation in Sweden and goes on to compare it with a past one in Greece:

Young men and women, some born and raised in Sweden, turned to ISIS. My generation of Greeks left our country in order to escape poverty. Young Swedes were leaving one of Europe's wealthiest and definitely most modern countries in order to ... what? Presumably they didn't recognize the ancient and the free, as the national anthem says. Sweden had become a marketplace where everything was for sale, but not to everyone. They were wrong, but that was how they felt. (Kallifatides 2018a, 48)<sup>31</sup>

This passage concludes with an existential reflection on humans' need to find meaning in life that ends with an ethical reflection: "Life both ends and continues, not in heaven or the Islands of the Blessed, but in the consequences of our actions" (48).<sup>32</sup>

Two tendencies in contemporary Europe particularly preoccupy the narrator, each comprising public reactions to crises: rising xenophobia toward refugees and the stereotypical portrayal of Greeks in connection with the ongoing economic crisis. While visiting Athens he notes that refugees are blamed for an increase in crime, and offers the following reflection:

The collective gaze saw only the collective guilt. I had felt it too, in Sweden, when the crisis surrounding the Greek national debt began. After fifty-one years of life in Sweden, I became a Greek again, shuttling from one radio station to the next, from one TV channel to another. I had my part in the national guilt of the Greeks. (Kallifatides 2018a, 27)<sup>33</sup>

Of Sweden he observes, "Society was divided. Some people wanted nothing to do with the refugees. Others thought that Sweden ought to uphold the rights of asylum seekers without reservation" (39).<sup>34</sup> The narrator makes his own opinion clear when he relates how Sweden's government, led by the Social Democrats, essentially closed the border in 2015:

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31 "Unga män och kvinnor, en del födda och uppväxta i Sverige, sökte sig till ISIS. Min generation greker lämnade landet för att undgå fattigdomen. Unga svenskar lämnade ett av Europas rikaste och definitivt mest moderna länder för att ... vad? Förmodligen kände de inte igen det gamla och det fria. Det hade blivit en marknadsplats, där allt var till salu, men inte till alla. De hade inte rätt, men det var så de kände" (Kallifatides 2017, 54).

32 "Livet både tar slut och fortsätter, inte i himmelen eller på de saligas öar, utan i konsekvenserna av våra handlingar" (Kallifatides 2017, 54).

33 "Den kollektiva blicken såg bara den kollektiva skulden. Jag hade känt den på mig också i Sverige när krisen om den grekiska statsskulden började. Efter femtioett års liv i Sverige blev jag grek igen och sprang från den ena radiostationen till den andra och från den ena tv-kanalen till den andra. Jag hade min andel i grekernas kollektiva skuld" (Kallifatides 2017, 33).

34 "Samhället var delat. En del ville inte veta av flyktingarna. Andra tyckte att Sverige utan reservationer borde respektera asylrätten" (Kallifatides 2017, 45).

The move was described as unavoidable. I didn't share this view, and I said so. Partly because human rights cannot be negotiable on a case-by-case basis, and partly because in the near future Sweden would need these people in order to maintain a healthy demographic balance and a functioning employment market. My words did not fall on fertile ground. (Kallifatides 2018a, 39)<sup>35</sup>

In an interview with the Swedish press after the publication of *Ännu ett liv*, Kallifatides repeats this criticism of contemporary Swedish society and then describes himself using one of the words he declares appreciation for in the book: *gnällspik*: "Now it is my mission to save as much as possible of what I love about this country, and to be a complainer, and I'm proud of that" (Kallifatides 2018b, 8, my trans.).

### Conclusion

In some language memoirs, as Besemeres observes, "the other language is itself given a voice in the narrative, with the potential to displace the narrator's cultural assumptions" (2005, 30). The Swedish version of Kallifatides' language memoir gives voice not only to the Greek language, but also enacts self-translation as a creative process. Moreover, self-translation serves as a literary device that allows the narrator to speak about Sweden to Swedish readers from the position of insider and outsider simultaneously, writing from the experience of a citizen-participant, as well as with a foreigner's gaze. In this way, self-translation in *Ännu ett liv* is like a lens that brings into focus ethical aspects of transnational movement, inviting the reader to join the author-narrator in critical reflection on our time. What is first described in the text as a state of being "caught between" two languages (Kallifatides 2018a, 128) is ultimately overcome through a translation process that affirms the significance of both languages in the author-narrator's life, as well as the insights generated by moving between the two.

To Besemeres' observation we might add that the cultural assumptions of readers may also be displaced during the reading process. This in turn has ethical potential, in line with literary theorist Rita Felski's argument that the very "act of reading enacts an ethics and politics in its own right, rather than being a displacement of something more essential that is taking place elsewhere" (2008, 20). The revelation, at the end of the narrative, that the Swedish text is a self-translation prompts a readerly recalibration that engages the reader in an activity of perspective-taking concomitant with language-switching and self-translation. The readers of *Ännu ett liv* can thus be seen to participate in the self-translation enacted by Kallifatides in — as well as through — his text.

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35 "Åtgärdarna framställdes som ofrånkomliga. Jag var inte av den åsikten och det sa jag. Dels därför att mänskliga rättigheter inte kan vara förhandlingsbara från fall till fall och dels därför att Sverige i en nära framtid skulle behöva dessa människor för att hålla en sund demografisk balans och en fungerande arbetsmarknad. Mina ord föll inte i bördig jord (Kallifatides 2017, 45).

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## Jõustatud enesetõlge Theodor Kallifatidese keelememuaaris „Veel üks elu“ („Ännu ett liv“)

Julie Hansen

**Võtmesõnad:** Theodor Kallifatides, „Ännu ett liv“, enesetõlge, rootsi keel, keelememuaar

Terminid enesetõlge defineeritakse praegu tõlkeuringutes ning mitmekeelse kirjanduse käsitlemisel kahel moel: üks definitsioonidest on sõnasõnaline, teine metafoorne. Käesolevas artiklis vaadeldakse enesetõlkimise implikatsioonide mõlemat tähendust tuntud keeleülese kreeka-rootsi nüüdiskirjaniku Theodor Kallifatidese (s. 1938) keelememuaari „Veel üks elu“ („Ännu ett liv“) rootsikeelse versiooni lugemisel. Kallifatides emigreerus Kreekast Rootsi 1964. aastal ning debüteeris rootsi keeles kirjutava kirjanikuna viis aastat hiljem. Tema keelememuaar ilmus kreeka keeles („Mia zoi akoma“) ning seejärel 2017. aastal rootsi tõlkes. Autori enese poolt kreeka keelest rootsi keelde tõlgituna tähistab see pöördpunkti Kallifatidese viljakas kirjanduskarjäär ning annab alust huvitavale kirjanduslikku enesetõlget käsitlevale juhtumiuuringule.

Pärast lühikest ülevaadet enesetõlke definitsioonidest ning keelememuaari žanrist analüüsitakse artiklis enesetõlkimise kirjeldamist „Veel ühes elus“. Kallifatidese keelememuaar vaatleb keele, elu, surelikkuse ja demokraatia teemasid, pakkudes mõtisklusi eksistentsiaalsete ja eetiliste küsimuste üle. Artiklis käsitletakse mitmesuguste kriiside kirjeldamist selles narratiivis, alates autori isiklikust kriisist, mida põhjustasid kirjutamistöрге ning vananemise tundemärgid, kuni majanduskriisini Kreekas ning kasvava võõraviha märkideni Euroopas.

Kallifatidese tekstiga seoses läbi viidud enesetõlkeanalüüsist ilmneb, kuidas seda sooritatakse kahes etapis: esimene neist kirjeldab Vana-Kreeka näidendi lavastamist ja teine jutustajat „Veel ühte elu“ sissejuhatava lausega algava teksti kirjutamis- ja enesetõlkeprotsessi vältel. Edasi vaadeldakse enesetõlke toimet lugemisprotsessile, väites, et narratiivi lõpu lähenedes toimuv avalikustamine, et rootsikeelne tekst on enesetõlge, käivitab lugejapoolse ümberkalibreerimise, mis haarab lugeja keelevahetuse ja enesetõlkega kaasneva perspektiivikehtestamise tegevusse. „Veel ühe elu“ lugejaid võib seega pidada osalisteks Kallifatidese poolt sooritatud tõlkeaktis.

Artikli lõpuosas näidatakse, kuidas selle teksti enesetõlge aitab kaasa eetilisele hoiakule, mis väljendub jutustaja mõtiskluses ühiskondlike kriiside üle ning Rootsi ühiskonnas avalduva ksenofoobia temapoolses kriitikas. Seda võib omakorda seostada Lawrence Venuti ideega võõrapärastavatest tõlkestrateegiatega kui demokraatlikust projektist. Läbi kogu Kallifatidese keelememuaari toimib enesetõlge kirjandusliku võttena, mis pakub jutustajale võimalust rääkida Rootsi lugejatega Rootsist ühtaegu nii seespool kui ka väljaspool viibija positsioonist, kõneldes ühiskonnas osaleva kodaniku kogemuse pinnalt, aga ka võõramaalase pilgu läbi. Sel moel toimib enesetõlge läätsena, mis toob fookusesse rahvusülese kogemuse eetilised aspektid, kutsudes lugejat tänapäeva ühiskondlikes probleemides kaasa rääkima.

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