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## From Tabermann to Mr. Baudelaire. Allusions and popular culture references in the Finnish comic *Northern Overexposure* and their English translations

Comics, as other written works, contains allusions that serve many functions and might be difficult to translate due to cultural differences. The aim of this article is to analyse the selected allusions and popular culture references in the Finnish comic *Northern Overexposure* and compare the Finnish source text with the English target text. In addition, the function of these allusions as well as the relevant cultural background are covered. The examples were analysed with Ritva Leppihalme's (1997) strategies for translating allusions. The article also provides insight into the Finnish field of comics and the translation process of the selected comic.

**Key words:** comics, Finnish comics, translation, allusions, humour

### Introduction

The constant growth of Finnish comics outside Finland is noticeable. A growing number of foreign readers are able to recognise Finnish comics, graphic novels and artists besides Tove Jansson's famous *Moomins*. *Moomins* have made their way into the hearts of Finns and many Finland enthusiasts around the world, but new artists are getting more and more recognition, for instance in social media, which also helps the artists to find a target audience.

An example of a Finnish comic artist who has gained a fan base outside of Finland with his graphic novels and clever satires is a Tampere based artist JP Ahonen. One of his long-term projects, *Villimpi Pohjola (Northern Overexposure)*, started to appear in a regional newspaper as early as 2003. This humorous comic is full references to popular culture, which makes it a very interesting research subject from the viewpoint of translation. Moreover, JP Ahonen has translated his two first published books by himself, which provides another interesting aspect to the analysis: usually the different source and target text cultures might cause difficulties for

the translator, but in this case the artist is the same as the translator, and, therefore, is able to achieve the desired and intended result.

The data used in this article is based on a Master's thesis *Best served with Batman-clad octopodes. How intertextuality is created and translated in "Villimpi Pohjola 2"*, which was completed at the University of Turku. The aim of the thesis was to collect and categorise the intertextual elements and allusions in the selected comic and analyse how they were translated from Finnish to English. For this article, the same material, *Villimpi Pohjola 2*, an interview with the artist, and a relevant theoretical framework are used. For the categorisation and comparison of the selected examples, Ritva Leppihalme's (1997) research on the functions of allusions and their translation strategies is used.

The main aim of the article is to compare the source and target texts and to see, how the translator has modified the selected examples to provide the same kind of an effect in the target text reader, who might not be familiar with the Finnish culture enough to understand the original references. The article starts by offering insight into Finnish comics and answers the question why comics should be studied more. The artist, the comic and the translation process are also introduced. For the analysis part, three examples from the book *Villimpi Pohjola 2* were selected that contain references to people and phenomena usually Finnish people are familiar with. Therefore, the cultural background is briefly explained before moving on to analyse the examples with the translation strategies for allusions by Leppihalme (1997).

## 1. Research on comics

This section offers a brief overview of the field of comics in Finland and why it is relevant to do research on comics in general. Often, when people think about comics, they might think of the usually humorous three-panel strips in daily newspapers or *Donald Duck*. However, the world of comics has much more to offer – from long graphic novels based on real people's lives to textless, artistic comics and everything in-between.

When it comes to classifying or characterising comics, Klaus Kaindl (2004) says:

The comic strip is a hybrid genre, whose analysis cannot be clearly assigned to any one academic discipline. This is due, among other things, to the techniques involved in designing comics, ranging from various linguistic elements such as text in speech bubbles, narrative texts, onomatopoeia and captions, to typographic elements such as typeface and type size, pictographic elements such as speedlines, ideograms such as stars, flowers, etc., and pictorial representations of persons, objects and situations (Kaindl 2004: 173).

Therefore, it is not easy to analyse comics as one genre. Rather than that, they should “become objects of study for various disciplines” (Kaindl 2004: 173). On the web page of the Finnish Comics Society, Tanja Rasila (2001) has divided the studies on comics into several categories, such as “comics as a form of art”, “comics as teaching or educational tools”, “the language used in comics” and “cultural politics” (my translation). In addition, Aino Saarenmaa (2015) writes that comics studies is multidisciplinary in nature and the “concepts are borrowed from literary studies, cinema studies, visual culture studies and social science” (my translation).

Most people are familiar with the traditional three-panel strip comics. Saarenmaa (2015) says that Finnish readers read mostly short strip comics due to their easy availability in newspapers. However, Leena Romu (Saarenmaa 2015) points out that these easily available strips “can give the impression that comics are always humorous, which is not the case” (my translation), and continues by saying that after reading short three-panel strips the reader might find it difficult to orientate to read longer graphic novels due to the nonlinear layout. In fact, the picture and text create a certain kind of a whole that readers need to learn to “decode”. Pekka A. Manninen (1995) has noted that “even the simplest forms of comics require a complex reading act”, and readers need to know how to read and pay attention to what is happening not only in the panels (Manninen 1995: 36). This shows how inseparable text and picture in comics are, and this can cause a lot of problems to the translator, who does not only need to translate the text, but pay attention to the visual elements and the whole these create in order to create a well-functioning translation.

In addition to the previously covered features, comics portray the time when they were published. They contain references to popular culture, politics, global phenomena and important events. They show the current trends of language, slang expressions used by teenagers and, in general, what is considered popular at the moment of their publication. Juha Herkman (1998) points out that besides reacting quickly to changes in the society, the flexibility of comics also makes them good research subjects. By flexibility he means that comics do not necessarily need high-end technology or big publishing houses to be made and published (Herkman 1998: 12–13). There is always a way to publish comics in the internet and social media, where finding an audience is made easy.

In the analysed comic, *Villimpi Pohjola*, Ahonen has used these features and combined different conventions of comics: *Villimpi Pohjola* contains a lot of onomatopoeia, which is one of the main ways to create humour besides the actual story, alongside with endless humorous allusions. On textual level, Ahonen refers to many TV-shows, celebrities, and concepts that are known mostly in Finland, modifying the names into humorous forms. On a visual level, he draws the characters to look like characters of other comics, celebrities or politicians – both Finnish and American, for example. Ahonen also combines different styles and genres in his comics.

## 2. Introducing the material

The artist behind the analysed material, Ahonen, is a Tampere-based freelance illustrator and comic book artist whose books have already been translated into several languages. *Villimpi Pohjola*, one of his oldest projects, started to appear in a Finnish newspaper in 2003. As I noted in the previous section, comics depict their time, which is the case with *Villimpi Pohjola*, too: it concentrates on phenomena that were popular and known when the books were published, but most of them are known even nowadays. *Villimpi Pohjola* concentrates on the daily life of a group of university students. The relatively run-of-the-mill looking life is, however, spiced up with extraordinary, even fantasy-like elements. The target audience of *Villimpi Pohjola* consists mostly of students and young adults who are able to recognise the references.

When it comes to the translation of the books, Ahonen has translated the first two *Villimpi Pohjola* books (*Villimpi Pohjola* in 2007 and *Villimpi Pohjola 2* in 2009) into English by himself and his friend Jussi Kangasluoma. They translated the comics and proof-read the final translation by themselves (Ahonen 2019a). The books are “subtitled”: in both the books, the English translation is placed under each comic the same way as subtitles are placed at the bottom of the screen. In the translation, the panels are numbered, and the utterances of different characters are separated by slashes, as in this example: “1. Which super power would you pick? 2. Hmm... that’s a tough one. Guess being able to fly would rock. / A classic. Sure it would, unless you could only fly super sloooow. / Or didn’t know how to land” (Ahonen 2009: 12). On the other hand, this kind of translation is cost efficient, since no extra effort is needed to translate and publish a separate book, and foreigners who wish to learn Finnish have a very good opportunity to do so by comparing the translation with the original, but, at the same time, looking at the panels to see what is happening there and combining it with the translation might require some extra effort from their side.

According to Ahonen (2019a), the biggest challenge in the translation process was to be able to leave enough space under each comic strip for the translation. Some of the references to the Finnish way of life turned out to be very challenging to translate to English in the comic. These, in some cases, were paraphrased by Ahonen’s friend Jussi Kangasluoma into a suitable form. (Ahonen 2019b). When commenting on the translation process of his works, he notes that what he calls his own voice tends to get lost in the translation: “you can write the dialogue either in Finnish or English, but as soon as you translate it one way or the other, the voice seems to change” (Ahonen 2019a, transl. L.S.). He also notes that in the translations, the characters need to be retouched, since, even though some word or joke fits one character very well, it might not sound right when translated. As an

example, if a character speaks with a thick *savolaismurre* (dialect used in Eastern Finland), the reader automatically makes assumptions about the person based on this information. In the translation, this effect needs to be created differently. He also aims to add something or leave something out in the translation to achieve the similar effect the source text creates (Ahonen 2019a).

### 3. Allusions in translation

This section will concentrate on defining allusions, analysing their functions and listing the translation strategies for allusions. Just like other literary works, comics, too, can contain allusions and intertextuality. Minna Ruokonen, who has studied intertextuality and translation, refers to the intertextuality between texts as “the network”, which means the connections between different texts (Ruokonen 2006: 57–58). This term is very descriptive, since it describes the intertextuality in a more concrete way. Due to global social media, people are more able to see, share, and recognise different phenomena, and this provides a lot of potential for authors, widening the network.

Leppihalme (1997: 6) has made research on allusions in translation. She has provided the following definitions for allusion:

ALLUSION. Latin *alludere*, to play with, to jest, to refer to. A reference to characters and events of mythology, legends, history (Scott 1965).

ALLUSION. Tacit reference to another literary work, to another art, to history, to contemporary figures, or the like (Preminger 1965).

A reference, usually brief, often casual, occasionally indirect, to a person, event, or condition presumably familiar but sometimes obscure or unknown to the reader (Shaw 1976).

a reference, explicit or indirect, to a person, place, or event, or to another literary work or passage (Abrams 1984).

When these definitions are compared, it is clear that allusions can be casual or intentional references to people, places, other literary works and even art. The first definition includes the humorous function of allusions: Leppihalme (1997: 6–7) notes that “while not all use of allusions is playful, humour is clearly one of its functions”.

Authors and artists use allusions in their works for several reasons. These are, for instance, showing universality between their own works and other already existing ones, drawing attention to their own “wide reading”, and helping to describe

the characters (Leppihalme 1997: 7). Those readers who are able to spot an allusion in a text may actually have a deeper understanding of the given text, and they might even feel as if they are taking part in the process of creating the text. Readers might feel the sense of belonging to the same “in-group of readers, on the same wavelength as the author” (Leppihalme 1997: 32–33). The target audience of *Villimpi Pohjola* might feel a sense of belonging to the same group that is able to understand the given allusions due to their age: the comic is aimed at students and young people, who usually are expected to understand the current phenomena of popular culture.

Leppihalme (1997: 37–46) has divided the functions of allusions into the following categories: thematic allusions; parody, irony and humour; characterisation and interpersonal relationships in fiction. The first category, thematic allusions, usually offers “a suggestion of universality” (Leppihalme 1997: 37), as was pointed out earlier. For the second category, humour, Leppihalme (1997) notes that on the macro-level “parody occurs where a text as a whole is a parody of another text” and on the micro-level “these tend to make use of frequently anthologised poetry” (Leppihalme 1997: 40). When it comes to characterisation, allusions provide a quick way to describe a character and show their level of education. The last category, interpersonal relationships, shows that allusions used in passages of dialogue can help to illuminate the characters. A translator who fails to note the interpersonally used allusions might affect the story and the mutual relationships and communication between the characters (Leppihalme 1997).

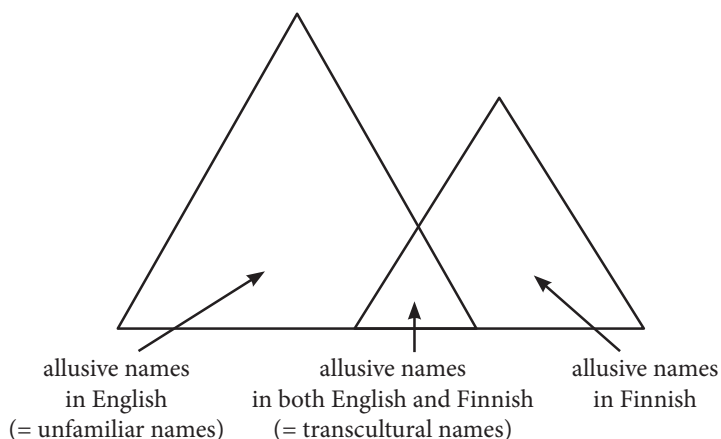
According to Leppihalme (1997: 2–3), when it comes to culture-bound translation problems, even if the source and target culture are not very distant, the concepts that are bound to a certain culture might be even more problematic to translate than the semantic or syntactic difficulties. These problems might be extralinguistic in nature (such as social institutions and brands) or intralinguistic (such as wordplay or idioms). The latter usually includes problems that “involve indirect or implicit messages or connotations” (Leppihalme 1997: 3). The main thing to consider is how the meaning of the source text can be transferred to the target text reader “if ‘just translating it’ turns out to be inadequate” (Leppihalme 1997: 3).

Concentrating more on the reader of the text, Leppihalme (1997) notes that the reader is assumed to participate in the process of understanding a given allusion: the author gives the receiver a clue to what is meant, and it is the receiver’s task to be able either to connect this clue to some other, previously used utterance in another source, or grasp what the given clue is supposed to evoke (Leppihalme 1997: 3–4). As regards Finnish readers, Leppihalme (1997) claims that Finns speak either some or good English, they “share much of the Western tradition and have access to international mass media and popular culture, frequently in English” (Leppihalme 1997: 5).

Leppihalme (1997) groups allusions regarding their qualities in translation into three categories:

- allusive names in English (unfamiliar names from the Finnish reader's point of view),
- allusive names in both English and Finnish (transcultural names),
- allusive names in Finnish (Leppihalme 1997: 80).

She presents these three categories in the form of three triangles (pict. 1):



Picture 1. Allusive names in English and Finnish

Source: Leppihalme (1997: 80).

The first one, the allusive names in English, is the biggest triangle and the third triangle, allusive names in Finnish, is smaller in comparison. The edges of these two triangles overlap and create a small triangle in-between them. This minitriangle represents the allusive names in both languages and “in any Western culture” (Leppihalme 1997: 80). According to Leppihalme (1997), the number of potential allusive names in Finnish is smaller in comparison to the names in English due to the shorter history of literature in Finland. Her example of a purely English-specific person would be John Donne, a poet who, presumably, is relatively unfamiliar to most Finnish readers. An example of people who are known mostly inside the border of Finland, would be *Pertsä and Kilu* (Leppihalme 1997: 80), two boys who find themselves involved in adventures. The smallest triangle represents names that are usually more or less known in the Western culture through literature and popular culture, even though the spelling might differ, such as *the Beatles* (in Finnish, this is often *Beatlesit*) (Leppihalme 1997: 80–81). In the source text comics, Ahonen usually operates with allusive names in Finnish, since those names and references usually demand some knowledge that foreign readers might

not possess, and allusive names in both English and Finnish. Depending on the reference, the target text allusions usually refer to something that might be more familiar to readers outside Finland.

Leppihalme (1997) has classified three strategies for the translation of allusive names, mainly proper names. These are:

- (1) Retention of name (either unchanged or in its conventional TL form [...]); with three subcategories:
  - (1a) use the name as such;
  - (1b) use the name, adding some guidance [...];
  - (1c) use the name, adding a detailed explanation, for example a footnote.
- (2) Replacement of name by another (beyond the changes required by convention); with two subcategories:
  - (2a) replace the name by another SL name;
  - (2b) replace the name by a TL name.
- (3) Omission of name; with two subcategories:
  - (3a) omit the name but transfer the sense by other means, for example by a common noun;
  - (3b) omit the name and the allusion altogether (Leppihalme 1997: 79).

These three categories will be used when providing a more detailed description of the selected comics in the following section of this article.

#### 4. Analysis of selected examples

The examples used in this article are based on the ones used in my previously mentioned master's thesis. The thesis included examples from the whole book *Villimpi Pohjola 2*. These selected examples were categorised according to the previously introduced strategies presented by Leppihalme (1997). For the article, three *Villimpi Pohjola* comics were selected for comparison of the source and target text allusions. The selected examples contain culture specific items and references to real or fictional people and need readers to understand or recognise the context to understand the joke, which is why a relevant cultural background is provided first. Then, dialogue or brief passages of dialogue in both languages are presented in table form and are analysed with Leppihalme's (1997) strategies. The example comic or a cropped version of the main joke is also provided for reference.

In the first example of a comic (tab. 1, pict. 2), the male characters are going for a cruise trip, which is a very typical Finnish leisure time activity. The concept of going for a one-day cruise usually includes second-hand embarrassment, since large quantities of alcohol are usually consumed on those ferries. This is something that a foreign reader might miss. In addition, to understand the joke, it is worth knowing



something about a crime mystery that happened in Finland, near the capital city of Helsinki, in the 1960s. A group of four teenagers set out for an overnight camping trip near Lake Bodom. Three of them were killed, and the only one who survived was Nils Gustafsson (Vuolteenaho 2019). This incident is still occasionally discussed in the media even today. A reference to the Swedish fairy-tale *Nils Holgersson* is also made. This tiny boy is known as *Peukaloinen* in Finnish. The word “peukalo” means a thumb. The name is, therefore, a reference to the character’s height.

During the cruise, the characters have an argument, and one of them sits alone in a bar while a stranger overhears his monologue and joins him:

Table 1. Cruise trip example

Finnish original	English translation
<p>Kaikien muun leikkimielisen kuittailun kestäen kyllä, mutta kun kaverit löylyttävät Nils Gustafsson -vitsillä niin se on jo liikaa! [swear words] mä mikään Peukaloinen ole!</p> <p>(literal translation: I can put up with all kinds of [negative] playful comments, but when your friends hit you with a Nils Gustafsson joke – that is too much! I’m not a Peukaloinen!) (my transl. – L.S.)</p>	<p>I can deal with all kinds of shit, but the Thumbellina [sic] joke is just too much. I mean, I don’t ride bloody pumpkins or anything.</p>
<p>Tuntematon: Tarkotat varmaan Holgerssonia. Niin, Holgersson on peukaloinen, Gustafsson se Bodom-järven kaveri.</p>	<p>Stranger: You’re thinking of Cinderella. Yeah, Thumbellina is the tiny dude, Cinderella the one driving pumpkins.</p>

Source: Ahonen (2009: 24).

The Finnish reader needs to connect these two references – Nils Gustafsson from the Lake Bodom incident and *Nils Holgersson* from the fairy-tale – to understand the joke. The first names are similar and both surnames end with -son, which makes the confusion even more evident. The translation, however, operates with different allusions: Ahonen has changed the references to two fairy tales: *Thumbelina* created by Hans Christian Andersen and Disney’s *Cinderella*. *Thumbelina*, in the same way as *Nils Holgersson*, is a small fairy-tale character. In the original, the similar looking names were mixed, but in the translation the key thing is the small size of the characters. In this example, Ahonen has managed to maintain a similar effect by using different target language variants. The strategy for translating allusions by Leppihalme is 2b; finding a target language term to achieve the similar effect in the reader.



Picture 2. On the cruise (cropped)

Source: Ahonen (2009: 24).

In the second example of a comic (tab. 2, pict. 3), Ahonen uses a real person in both the original and translation. In the first panel, a female character complains about how she managed to do nothing during the day. Her boyfriend says that he, on the other hand, was very productive. The other panels consist of many close ups of magnetic poetry, little magnets of words that can be arranged into the form of a poem – on a refrigerator door, for example. Many of these little poems on the refrigerator are sexual or romantic in the tone. In the last panel, the female character says:

Table 2. Refrigerator poetry example

Finnish original	English translation
Ei jääkaappirunoja lasketa, Tabermann.	Refrigerator magnets don't count, Mr. Baudelaire.

Source: Ahonen (2009: 64).

In this example, Ahonen refers to Tommy Tabermann, who was a Finnish poet and famous for his romantic poems. Charles Baudelaire was a poet, too, and like Tabermann, he was known for writing about similar themes as well. Ahonen has replaced the name by using a target language name that creates the same effect as the original. Both of these, the source and the target text characters, were actual people and poets. Here, again the strategy that is used is 2b, finding a target language term to achieve the similar effect.



Picture 3. Fridge magnet poetry (cropped)

Source: Ahonen (2009: 64).

A third example (tab. 3, 4, pict. 4) contains the same characters as in the previous example. They talk about finishing their studies, and the female character asks her boyfriend about his future plans. He starts to imagine himself receiving a degree, thanking his professor, ripping off his graduation suit and revealing the *He-Man* themed outfit he is wearing under it. His appearance changes too, to look more like *He-Man*, who was a popular American animation character. The comic includes many textual and visual references to the animated series. The male character says to his professor while receiving his degree:

Table 3. He-Man example

Finnish original	English translation
Kiitos, professori! Nyt olen vihdoin maister of the universe!	Thank you, professor! Now I finally am the Master of the Universe!

Source: Ahonen (2009: 13).

As can be seen, both include a reference to *He-Man* and the Masters of the Universe animation, which certainly was something many readers used to watch at home. In Finnish, master, as a person having a degree, is ‘maisteri’, which Ahonen uses in the original, but with intentional typo to make it better fit the context. Both the original and the translation, operate with the same reference. It can be argued whether this is a translation, since in this case it is the original that is referring to a fictional character that is not originally Finnish, but is known among the target readers, and the translation is using the name as it should be written. In English a person having a degree is a “master” in the same way as *He-Man* is “the master” of the universe. However, this is allusion, taken from non-Finnish culture and spelled the way it suits the Finnish context better. In terms of the strategies for translating allusions, the strategy 1a, which is to use the name as such, fits here.

Moreover, in Finland, students receive a monthly allowance to cover their living costs. An institution called Kela (full name Kansaneläkelaitos; in English, the Social Insurance Institution of Finland), is in charge of providing the student allowances. However, in some cases, higher education students might be required to pay back their monthly allowance, if they have not managed to gather enough academic credits, or ECTS points (Kela). In the comic, the male character's, opponent is *Kelator*, which is a direct reference to Kela. In *He-Man*, his opponent was an evil skeleton like creature *Skeletor*.

Table 4. He-Man example

Finnish original	English translation
Kelator	Dolator

Source: Ahonen (2009: 13).



Picture 4. Kelator/Dolator

Source: Ahonen (2009: 13).

Ahonen has clarified that the English name *Dolator* refers to “being on the dole”, being unemployed (Santoo 2015: 48). The translation uses a different name, but the form of the name of the villain is more or less the same: the -lator ending does not change. In the original, the opponent’s name refers to Kela, the institution that might claim the allowances back, and the translation refers to being unemployed – both operating with money-related associations. In this case, the strategy is 2b, since even though Ahonen has omitted the reference to Kela, which might be unfamiliar for the target text readers, the name itself is not omitted altogether, but is replaced with a name that fits in the context and which, as well, aims to create similar, negative effect.

## 5. Results

The results are presented in a form of a table below. The first column, source language (SL) reference, contains the name or term that was used in the example comics in Finnish. The numbers in brackets indicate the number of the example provided in the previous section. The second column, target language (TL) reference, contains the translation in English. The third column, type of reference in source language (SL) and target language (TL), describes what kind of this reference is; whether it is a reference to a fictional or real person or to an institution. The fourth column provides the number of the translation strategies for allusions that were presented earlier (tab. 5).

Table 5. Types of references and their translation strategies

SL reference	TL reference	Type of reference (SL and TL)	Strategy
1) Peukaloinen	Thumbelina	fictional + fictional	2b
1) Nils Gustafsson	pumpkin carriage; Cinderella	real + fictional	2b
2) Tommy Tabermann	Mr. Baudelaire	real + real	2b
3) maister or the universe	The master of the universe	the same fictional character	1a
3) Kelator (+ Skeletor)	Dolator (+ Skeletor)	Finnish institution + idiom (to be on dole) [originally both references were made to a fictional character]	2b

Source: own study based on: Ahonen (2009).

As can be seen, strategy 2b, using a target language term, was the most used, as it was, too, in the data used in the thesis. Using this strategy, the translator ensures that the target language reader can experience more or less the same kind of reading experience. Using this strategy is not surprising, since the references to Finnish people and institutions might not be familiar at all for the target language readers, and omitting them altogether would affect the story line and the entity that the picture and text form. In addition, popular culture and the global social media make it possible to find good equivalents that are more familiar for the target language readers and make the same impact. The strategy 1a was used once in the analysis; however the reference in both cases, the source and target text, was to the same fictional person, who does not originally come from Finnish culture, but is American. Due to the impact of the American movie industry, animations, films, and other works are widely known around the world.

As mentioned before, Finnish readers are more or less familiar with current global phenomena and Western literary tradition, so for them the references to fictional characters, as in *He-Man* or *Nils Holgersson* in this case, probably did not cause problems in understanding. However, being able to understand the joke in the first example requires some more knowledge of history, since not all Finns are familiar with the Lake Bodom incident. In the second example, a reference is made to a well-known Finnish poet, who should be familiar to the readers from their upper secondary school literature course. The last example requires a somewhat wider knowledge and might not be clear to younger readers of the comic, since *He-Man* was very popular in the 1980s. In the comic, Ahonen uses different colour for the font when the male character claims that he is now “the Maister of the Universe”, which makes the reference more obvious. Finnish readers should be able to connect the reference to Kela, that might claim the student allowances back, referring to *Skeletor*.

As for the target language references, Ahonen has used references that are more familiar outside Finland. For instance, *Cinderella* is familiar to the majority of readers since Disney films are certainly familiar in many countries. If readers are not familiar with the fairy-tale of *Thumbelina*, at least they are able to pay attention to the name that includes the word “thumb,” which is reference to being small, to being able to ride a pumpkin. The context helps the reader to grasp the idea in this case. In the second example, Ahonen has made the reference to Baudelaire, who, after a quick search, seems to be widely quoted and read among English speakers. The last example is aimed at English speakers or people with very good English skills, since being able to understand idioms requires more than just basic knowledge.

When it comes to the functions of allusions presented by Leppihalme (1997) in the previous section, these selected examples, as in general the multiple other

references in Ahonen's comics, are used to create humour. Both the visual and textual references spice up the comic, and readers can feel connected to the target audience by being able to understand the given references. The allusions are also used to show the mutual relationships among the characters and show their level of education, as can be seen in the poetry example: the female character compares her boyfriend to a poet, but it can be interpreted as being a sarcastic comment, since he only composed some humorous love poems on the refrigerator door. The characters in *Villimpi Pohjola* are all university students, so they should be familiar with the poet. The references can be seen linking the comic into the network of popular culture, worldwide audience of movies, TV-series, books, and widely known phenomena.

## Conclusion

This article aimed at comparing the allusions in the source and the target text of JP Ahonen's comic *Villimpi Pohjola*. The aim was to see what kind of strategies Ahonen had used to translate the allusions for an English-speaking target audience. After providing general information on the field of comics in Finland, the material and artist were introduced, giving the artist a chance to explain the translation process. After this, allusions were defined, their functions were explained, and their translation strategies were discussed using the research of Leppihalme (1997). Because of the length of the article, only three examples were selected, but those particular examples are all different.

The most common translation strategy employed by Ahonen was to replace the source language term with a target language term – for instance a fairy-tale character, such as in the first example *Nils Holgersson* was replaced with *Cinderella* – or using a reference to a real person, as in the second example reference was made to a Finnish poet and in the English translation to a French poet. The first and primary function of these allusions in the comic is to create humour. *Villimpi Pohjola* depicts the life of university students, and the target audience is the same. The references were made bearing this intended group of target readers in mind. The fact that this strategy was the one most used in the texts reviewed in this article shows how widely known popular culture references are, how home culture references can be replaced with more widely known ones that still contain the same meaning and create the same effect among the readers.

The interview with the artist was also helpful in terms of analysing the translation process. Translating allusions can cause difficulties for the translator due to cultural differences, and the process requires a broad common knowledge from the translator. In this case, the artist had a chance to translate the references the

way he wanted, knowing exactly what he was referring to and what would be a perfect equivalent to achieve the intended meaning. Due to global social and mass media, both the artists and readers of comics, and other written works, are provided with endless opportunities to refer to material in order to widen the network of their texts.

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