Original Article

Strategies of Adaptation in the Finnish Publications of Marvel's Superhero Comics

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We follow Spider-Man in pursuit of the Sinister Syndicate in Coney Island Park and soon see the iconic wooden rollercoaster crash into a pile of dust and rubble. Just as Spider-Man's fight is getting intense, the scene changes on the following page: we see a man entering a spacious office, holding a golden book. The setting is dark, mysterious, and even ominous, with the owner of the office visible only in the shadows. These men are up to something, and it is not good. Turning the page again, we see a full-page panel of Black Cat exercising in her room, singing to herself, "Mä haluun viihdyttää, sua kiihdyttää" ("I want to entertain you, to turn you on"), a Finnish schlager (hit song) from the 1980s. Dressed in a tight purple outfit, Black Cat stretches herself and lifts weights, contemplating her next attempt at robbery. After this page, we return to the main storyline about a hero-for-hire working with Spider-Man (*Hämähäkkimies* 22–24). This example is from a 1990 issue of the Finnish Spider-Man comic book *Hämähäkkimies*. The magazine consists of two identified issues of its American counterpart, *The Amazing Spider-Man*, plus a number of pages from other books that I have not been able to trace. In the middle of a coherent narrative, we see the fan-favorite Black Cat exercising in her apartment, after which the narrative resumes. What is happening here?

Superhero comics are an iconic product of American popular culture. While current film adaptations of the colorfully clad comic book heroes appeal to both audiences and comics scholars, in this article I explore another type of superhero adaptation: translations. Relatively little has been written about the translation of comics, and much of the scholarship focuses solely on the textual elements in comics, so-called "translation proper" (e.g., Zanettin, "Comics"). To call the Finnish versions of Marvel's superhero comics translations, however, would not do justice to the different stages in the process of their adaptation; they are adaptations, made specifically to be published in Finland and altered in other ways besides translation.

In this article, I ask how Marvel's superhero comic books were adapted into the Finnish media culture in the 1980s and 1990s. I investigate translation as a

transnational process in which the meanings and themes of a text move across national borders. I analyze the translations of superhero comic books as adaptations and present the strategies of adaptation used by the translators and editors of the Finnish versions of Marvel Comics's *X-Men* and *Spider-Man* comic books. Through the analysis, I observe how products of popular culture circulate globally.

Superheroes are regarded as distinctively American (Miettinen2012), but in recent years the global circulation of the superhero character has become a point of interest for comics scholars (Bieloch and Bitar2013; Davé2013; Soares2015). Characters such as Spider-Man and DC Comics's Superman are becoming increasingly global, impacting not only the comic books, films, and other mediated narratives about these superheroes but the way other cultures have appropriated the characters and made them their own (Soares 753). American superhero comics were published in Finland during the 1960s and 1970s, but it was in the early 1980s that the Swedish publishing house Semic acquired the rights to all of Marvel's comics in the Nordic countries. At this time, American popular culture had been part of the Finnish popular culture for decades (in television, for example).

Finnish commercial television developed hand in hand with public broadcasting, and since their first airing in Finland in 1959, American TV serials portrayed American culture on television alongside traditional Finnish culture. Although the serials were, on the one hand, criticized for their violence, on the other hand, they were extremely popular with the public. (Keinonen 187–95.2011) Similarly, American comics, notably Disney's Donald Duck, have been extremely popular in Finland since the 1950s.

There has been research on the translation of comics: for example, Klaus Kaindl's1999 typology of the translation processes for different elements in comics; the volume *Comics in Translation* (2008), edited by translation scholar Federico Zanettin; and several articles in the journal *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology*. While Kaindl's typology, containing six categories of translation strategies that describe the relationship between the source and target languages (275–83), is precise and takes into account both textual and pictorial elements of comics, the categories based on film translations do not cover the extent of the changes made in Finnish adaptations of superhero comic book. Adaptation studies, on the other hand, mostly consider adaptations from comics to another medium, such as film or TV, or vice versa (Hutcheon2006; Burke2015). In this article, I argue that the translated versions of a product of popular culture are greatly altered in many other ways besides linguistically. Although superhero comics appear to have spread globally in a relatively uniform package, multiple strategies are used to adapt them for new audiences around the globe. Focusing on comics from the 1980s and 1990s, I investigate this process in a time when not every product of popular culture was yet globally accessible. Although, as Zanettin writes,

some comics publishers such as Disney prepared their comics for transnational publication ("Translation" 202–03), local publishers had the liberty to alter the material to better suit their target audiences. I demonstrate the agency of the Finnish translators and editors in adapting Marvel's comics to the Finnish readers. First, concentrating specifically on the translation of comics, I present a brief outline of the relationship between translation and adaptation, grounding the choice of terms in this article. I then proceed to describe my research material and methods and present my analysis of the different strategies of adaptation used in the Finnish comics.

Adaptation, Translation, or Something Else?

In the introduction to *Comics in Translation*, Federico Zanettin offers a general overview of aspects that affect the translation of comics: genre, readership, as well as production and distribution. As comics are translated, any one or all of these can change. This could mean, for example, a change from serial publication to nonserial, or comic book format to a bound book format, which can result in a change in readership as well (6–9). According to Linda Hutcheon, change in medium or genre is also one of the aspects of adaptation (6–7). In this section, I wish to position myself and clarify why I regard the Finnish translations of Marvel's superhero comics as adaptations, as (re)interpretations of texts.

Many scholars regard translations as adaptations that carry cultural messages over cultural borders (Gengshen2003; Jakobson2000), making them intercultural (Chan2012) and intertextual (Farahzad). In comics translation, the verbal signs are not, and should not be, the only ones worth considering and translating, since the words interplay with pictures in the construction of meaning (Zanettin, "Comics" 212008). This interplay can take many forms. For example, textual elements can describe what is also visually present in the image, and they can extend the information present in the image or even enhance it, providing additional context. The relation between image and text in comics is, in many cases, unequal, as Michał Borodo2014 demonstrates, and this can result in different interpretations and translations of the text that encompasses the image (23; 31–34). These relationships between text and images can be altered in translation, either intentionally or unintentionally.

Previous research on comics translation in the Nordic countries has focused on comics published by Disney (Koponen2004; Toivonen2001). Disney's comics are widely read by children and adolescents, and in Finland *Aku Ankka* (*Donald Duck*), has been published since 1951. The translators of *Aku Ankka* have been encouraged to adapt the original comics for the Finnish audience, to make any necessary adjustments and even rewrite the stories if needed (Koponen 30–33). *Hämähäkkimies* and *Ryhmä-X* fit into this tradition of adapting comic books for Nordic audiences.

Derek Parker Royal2011 writes about comics as a medium that transcends

national, cultural and linguistic borders (x), while Jean-Paul Gabilliet2013 claims that the transnational circulation and reception of comics "necessarily involves a measure of distortion" (216; 221–22). Royal's claim that comics are especially translatable due to the medium's reliance on both verbal and visual communication, as well as Gabilliet's view of comics as subject to "distortion" as they are adapted for another culture, do not seem to do justice to the transnational process of bringing a product of popular culture to a new cultural environment. Translations can never be exact replicas of the original text, regardless of how "highbrow" or "lowbrow" the original, so they must be regarded as a form of communication through which the original text can be seen in new ways (Hutcheon 16). Adaptations are recognized reworkings of original texts that can never fully replicate the original and, therefore, allow the audience to see the original texts differently. This is why adaptation is the concept used in this article to describe Finnish translations of Marvel's comics.

Two other concepts used in this article to discuss the changes in the comics are domestication and localization. Sociologist Casey Brienza2016 points out that translation is only one aspect of the transnational publishing of manga in America. Several other work stages are left out if the focus of study is on translation: licensing, adapting, relettering, and retouching of the art. To be able to precisely describe these transnational labor processes, Brienza uses the term domestication (17–18). While Brienza uses domestication to describe the whole process of preparing a text for publication in a new cultural setting, in translation studies domestication usually refers to a translation strategy, whereby foreign aspects of the text are altered to make it more easily approachable to the new audience (Koskinen2012 14–15).

The concept of localization refers to the same process, as it refers to the process of making a product linguistically, technically, and culturally appropriate for the target audience. Localization often refers to electronic products, such as videogames or websites, but it can be used to describe the process of bringing any product of popular culture to a new audience (Zanettin, "Translation" 2002008). Writing about the translation strategies used by translators of Argentine comics artist Maitena Burundarena's work, Sarah Viren2015 argues that the concept of localization "has become increasingly useful in theoretical and practical discussions of translation in the global world" (77). To avoid conceptual confusion in this article, *Hämähäkkimies* and *Ryhmä-X* will be referred to as localized adaptations of their American originals.

Ryhmä-X, Hämähäkkimies, and Strategies of Adaptation

My research material consists of the Finnish *Ryhmä-X* (*The X-Men*) and *Hämähäkkimies* (*Spider-Man*) comic books from 1984, 1990, and 1995. *Ryhmä-X* and *Hämähäkkimies* have been the longest running of Marvel's superhero comics published in Finland and the most popular titles. In the

1980s–1990s, Lauri Narinen edited both comics. He was responsible for choosing the stories for publication, shaping the way that Finnish readers encountered the complicated storylines of Marvel's comics universe. He also translated *Ryhmä-X* from 1984 to 1989. To keep printing costs lower, Nordic countries shared printing equipment in the 1980s, as offset printing was still largely in use. Some issues each year were coprinted in Nordic countries, with similar covers and content. Only a few issues of *Ryhmä-X* were coprinted because, from 1986, the comic was only published in Finland ("Marvel Comics").

All three volumes represent the same phase in comic book publishing in Finland. From 1984 to 1995, a total of 144 issues of *Hämähäkkimies* and 125 issues of *Ryhmä-X* were published. After reading this material, I selected three volumes—1984, 1990, and 1995of each comic book for analysis, using online republications of the American originals to track changes. The purpose of this article is not to construct a chronology but to describe an era when comic books were heavily altered for Finnish publication. It was only in the 2000s that localization was diminished and stories were published unedited. The starting year of 1984, the first year of publication for *Ryhmä-X*, was chosen to analyze the way the new heroes were introduced in Finland. 1995 is the last full year when Narinen worked as the editor of both titles, and 1990 was chosen as the third volume as it falls halfway between 1984 and 1995.

First, I identified the original comic books of which each Finnish issue consists to note omissions and additions made by the Finnish editor. The number of pages that were omitted from each issue in the three volumes under scrutiny were counted, and the results can be seen in Tables 1 and 2. The next step was to trace all kinds of changes that were made during the adaptation process. Using the digital versions of the American originals, it was possible to compare panel arrangements, omitted pages, and translations. Comparing spread layouts was not possible because the digital versions lack advertisements and other possible interruptions. Regarding the translation of the text elements, special notice was given to the translation of popular culture references; in other words, how names, film titles, songs, etc. were translated.

Table 1 **Total number of printed and omitted pages in *Ryhmä-X***

	Number of pages	**Number of omitted pages**
Ryhmä-X 1984–1985		
1/1984	68	9
2/1984	68	0
3/1984	52	6

1/1985	52	0
2/1985	52	1
3/1985	52	0
4/1985	52	*
5/1985	52	25
6/1985	52	27
7/1985	52	22
8/1985	52	24
9/1985	52	0
10/1985	52	0
11/1985	52	0
12/1985	52	20
Total	812	134
Ryhmä-X 1990		
1	52	0
2	52	4
3	52	6
4	52	0
5	56	16
6	52	22
7	68	13
8	68	4
Total	452	65
Ryhmä-X 1995		
1	68	0
2	68	2
3	68	*
4	68	2
5	68	2
6	68	10

7	68	0
8	68	?
9	68	?
10	68	1
11	68	2
12	68	0
Total	816	19

? = Original comic books cannot be referenced.

*Only a few pages used from one original comic book, most pages omitted.

Table 2 **Total number of printed and omitted pages in** *Hämähäkkimies*

	Number of pages	**Number of omitted pages**
Hämähäkkimies 1984		
1	36	0
2	36	2
3	36	0
4	36	11
5	36	0
6	36	1
7	36	1
8	36	0
9	36	0
10	52	18
11	52	16
12	52	0
Total	480	49
Hämähäkkimies 1990		
1	52	11
2	52	3*
3	52	1*

4	52	1*
5	56	0
6	68	0
7	56	1
8	52	6
9	52	0
10	52	0
11	52	1
12	68	7
Total	664	31
Hämähäkkimies 1995		
1	52	0
2	52	0
3	68	9
4	52	18
5	52	6
6	52	19
7	52	0
8	52	0
9	52	0
10	52	28
11	52	0
12	52	0
Total	640	80

*New pages have been added.

Spider-Man is arguably Marvel's best-known individual hero. Spider-Man's self-titled comic book revolves around Peter Parker, the hero's alter ego, and his struggle to combine his studies, his family, and his daytime job with being a superhero. Peter has learned to use his incredible powers to help the community instead of using them for his own advantage. The Finnish publication is focused on Peter's adventures as Spider-Man, leaving out many

of the character's personal struggles.

The X-Men are a group of mutants, born with exceptional powers that set them aside from the rest of humanity. The heroes of X-Men fight against not only supervillains but also against intolerant humans and their prejudices. During its first run in Finland, 1984–1996, *Ryhmä-X* was a comic book dedicated to the X-Men as well as to other mutant superhero groups; namely X-Factor and X-Force. Thus, several different superheroes and their stories had to fit into the pages of a single magazine.

The American comic book is a format with a determined place on the shelves of comic book shops and an established number of pages, thirty-two including advertisements, although special issues can be double the customary length. Stories in comic books can continue for months, even years, and they typically involve a fixed roster of characters whose adventures are serialized by different writers and artists. In Finland, the common length of a comic book is fifty-two pages, but a lengthier sixty-eight pages is also customary. The Finnish versions come out monthly, whereas the publication pace in the United States changes depending on the comic book. These changes in publication format are part of the adaptation process. For example, original cover pages have been left out, as well as some of the stories' first pages that recap what happened in previous issues. Readership has also changed with the translation, and, in many cases, the translations have been domesticated for an audience that is not familiar with American society or popular culture. The target audience of Finnish comics adaptations in the 1980s and 1990s were children and teenagers. This can be seen in the advertisements in the books: children's products, such as superhero costumes, toys, a variety of collectible cards, and games are advertised in almost every issue. Although the Finnish target audience might not differ from the original so much in age—toys, games, breakfast cereals, and candy were advertised in the United States as well—the young Finnish readers lacked the knowledge of American popular culture.

Adaptors favored a total of three strategies of adaptation: selection, cutting, and pasting, and domestication of the translation. The strategy of cutting and pasting includes four substrategies, which will be presented in detail in the following sections.

Selection

Each issue of *Hämähäkkimies* and *Ryhmä-X* is a collection of different original issues. In *Hämähäkkimies*, stories from several different books were published, but the Finnish comic book was wholly dedicated to the character of Spider-Man. This was not the case in *Ryhmä-X*, which in the beginning, 1984–1985, was divided into two: the first part was dedicated to X-Men-stories from 1978 to 1980 and the latter part to older adventures of the X-Men. In 1990, *Ryhmä-X* mainly concentrated on stories from *X-Factor*,

another comic book in Marvel's "mutant-family," and different team-ups between superhero groups. The 1995 volume consists of issues from several different X-themed original comic books that all contribute to a large story arc.

There are 2080 pages in the three volumes of *Ryhmä-X* under scrutiny, and the material comes from nineteen different American publications. Presented in Table 1 are the numbers of pages in each issue, as well as the number of pages that have been omitted from the Finnish adaptations. In the first volume, 1984–1985, 812 pages were published, and 134 pages were left out of the Finnish publication. In 1990, the numbers were 452 and 65, and the 1995 volume consisted of 816 pages with only 19 pages cut.

In *Hämähäkkimies*, 1784 pages were printed during the years 1984, 1990, and 1995, and the material was taken from eleven different original comic books. As can be seen from Table 2, the 1995 volume has a high number of omitted pages, as does the first volume from 1984. The high number of omitted pages in the 1995 volume is due to the increasing number of publications revolving around Spider-Man in the United States in the mid 1990s. As can be seen from Table 2, most issues of *Hämähäkkimies* in 1995 have no omissions whatsoever, while few issues, notably issues 4, 6, and 10, have several pages left out. Issue 6 (1995) is a condensed adaptation of three original American issues: *Peter Parker, the Spectacular Spider-Man* #204, #205, and #206. The Finnish editor has compressed what was originally a three-issue story arc into one single issue.

During the 1980s and 1990s, both *Ryhmä-X* and *Hämähäkkimies* were collections of stories from different original comic books. The first strategy of adaptation, selection, was crucial in determining the storylines and character development in both of the Finnish comics. After selecting the stories, the next step was to construct meaningful wholes by cutting and pasting.

Cutting and Pasting

The strategy of cutting and pasting includes four stages: (i) leaving out original title pages and recaps; (ii) including "important information only"; (iii) leaving out fillers—short stories that are featured at the end of the original comic book; and (iv) addition. The last stage of cutting and pasting is very rare and happens only in three occasions. In those instances, the editor has added pages from another original with no explanation or mention of it.

Leaving Out Title Pages

The first substrategy of cutting and pasting, omitting original title pages and recaps, is very straightforward. It is best exemplified with the 1984 volume of *Hämähäkkimies*. In 1984, each issue constituted of approximately one whole and one half of an American comic book; after the twenty-two pages that

were one story from one American comic book, the remaining pages of the Finnish publication were used to start the next story. This way, every other issue of *Hämähäkkimies* in 1984 would start from the middle of a story. Because of this rhythm, it was customary to leave out the first page of a comic book, as they usually recapped the events of the previous story. The purpose of this substrategy of cutting and pasting was to avoid repetition.

Only Important Information

After selecting which stories to publish in the Finnish magazine, the next step was to piece together an entity to fill the pages of one comic book. Some stories have been shortened significantly, such as "Second Genesis" in *Ryhmä-X* 5 (1985), originally published in *Giant Sized X-Men* #1. The original adventure of thirty-seven pages has been reduced to a twelve-page introduction of the characters' pasts. This was the case with many of the stories published in *Ryhmä-X* as so-called secondary stories. In the early years of the comic book, the first half of each issue was dedicated to the ongoing adventure with a continuous plot, while the latter included stories from earlier years of *Uncanny X-Men*. After the main story in issue 6 (1985), seven pages from *Uncanny X-Men* #94 and five pages from #96 were used to recap the new X-Men's origins. These secondary adventures were often cut significantly, as their main purpose was to fill the remaining pages of the comic book and introduce the new team to the readers, instead of advancing the plot.

Cutting several pages from the original story to introduce new characters is part of the substrategy I have named *including only important information*. Another use of this substrategy is omitting pages or panels for clarity. Subplots and scenes that are not advancing the main plot have been omitted, making the events of the comic books more straightforward. Issue 5 (1990) of *Ryhmä-X* is a prime example. This single issue has five different comic books as its source material: *X-Factor* #10, #12, and #13, and *Thor* #373 and #374. These issues are all part of a comic book event called "Mutant Massacre" (1986). "Event storylines are one of the more obviously commercial ventures that superhero comics go for" (Kaveney 1762008), and in the 1980s, Marvel had already published such massive, multicomic book spanning events as "Secret Wars." In 1986, Marvel was publishing three mutant-themed comic books: *Uncanny X-Men*, *New Mutants*, and *X-Factor*. By creating a story that spread into all three books and into *Thor*, *PowerPack*, and *Daredevil* as well, Marvel was persuading their readers to buy more comic books.

In *Ryhmä-X* 5 (1990), the strategy to include important information only served the purpose of plot advancement: all the segments used in the issue are from the Mutant Massacre event. Although they have been cut from different original comic books, they are parts of the same narrative. To best adapt the Mutant Massacre story arc for the Finnish audience, the editor-translator has taken only those parts of the story that are essential to the advancement of its

plot, since in Finland only one comic book dedicated to Marvel's mutants was published. The events of *Ryhmä-X* 5 conclude a story that was published in Finland two years before, in 1988. With the number of new titles published in the United States in mid-1980s to the early-1990s rising, it was impossible for the Finnish publication to keep up with the pace. The strategy of choosing only important information from several original comic books was used to follow the plotlines of the increasingly intertwined Marvel Universe.

Ryhmä-X 5 starts with a three-page introduction to the issue's heroes, a team of mutants called X-Factor. The scene is set with a spread showing the team working together all over North America, from Denver to Mexico. On the next page, the heroes are in the middle of a fight scene. In this narrative, one of the heroes, Angel, is kidnapped by villains in the abandoned subway tunnels under 34 New York City and saved by another superhero, Thor. The adaptation combines *X-Factor #10*, with ten pages from the middle of the story omitted, followed by three pages from *Thor* #373, and several pages from *Thor* #374.

Figure 1 shows page 22 of *X-Factor* #10 and page 21 of *Thor* #373, as two consecutive pages in the Finnish adaptation. The original comic books were written and penciled by different people, although they share a similar style. Figures 2 and 3 show how page 19 of *Ryhmä-X* 5 (Figure 2) consists of five panels from different pages of *Thor* #374, pages 18 and 19. The pages left unpublished from *X-Factor #10* (9–18) feature a subplot with characters that are not crucial to the advancement of the main plotline with Angel, and part of the unpublished scenes take place in another setting, an office building. The omission of subplots as part of the strategy of featuring only important information resulted in the Finnish comic books focusing on straightforward action.

Fig. 1 Pages from two different comic books, *X-Factor* #10 and *Thor* #373, were printed as consecutive pages in *Ryhmä-X* 5 (1990). MARVEL ©2019 Marvel

Jean, ota Enkeli äkkiä telekineettiselle makuupatjalle. Anna hänen olla rentona. Emme tiedä kuinka pahasti hän on loukkaantunut, joten hänet täytyy saada heti lääkäriin!

Anteeksi, Thor. Et tunne meitä, mutta...

Tunnenhan minä teidät.

Ettekö te kolme kuuluneet alkuperäiseen Ryhmä-X:ään vuosia sitten, jolloin Kostajat ja Ryhmä-X kohtasivat Luciferin?

Puvut ovat uudet, mutta nimet ja voimat samat.

Öh, totta.

« Kyse on ikivanhoista X-Menin numeroista.

Mitä Xavierille kuuluu?

Öh... kai hyvää. En ole tavannut häntä vähään aikaan... emmekä ole yhteistyössä Ryhmä-X:n kanssa.

ARGH!

THOR?

Tuolla käytävissä Ruho hyökkäsi kimppuuni uudelleen ja rusikoi käteni.

Tosin hän maksoi siitä hengellään.

Tämä pitää kätesi paikoillaan, kunnes luut alkavat kasvaa yhteen.

Nyt on huolehdittava Enkelistä.

Mutta mitä teemme kuolleille? Ei heitä voi jättää mätänemään.

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Fig. 2 *Ryhmä-X* 5 (1990), page 19, combines panels from two pages of *Thor* #374. MARVEL ©2019 Marvel

Fig. 3 *Thor* #374, pp. 18–19. The last panels from both pages have been omitted from the Finnish adaptation. MARVEL ©2019 Marvel

Leaving Out Fillers

The third substrategy of cutting and pasting is leaving out what I have named "fillers," short stories of five to twelve pages placed at the end of a comic book. In my research material, there are five examples of this, all in *Hämähäkkimies*. These stories do not advance the ongoing plot, and all five have a different theme, in some cases even a different style, than the regular monthly storyline. The first is an eleven-page story "The Kid Who Collects Spider-Man," originally published in *The Amazing Spider-Man* #248. The story is a side step from the ongoing plot of Spider-Man trying to catch the villain called Hobgoblin, and it involves a human-interest theme of the hero visiting a sick boy who admires him. The story's style, reminiscent of Will Eisner's style, is very different from the average issue of *The Amazing Spider-Man*, and it has become a classic due to both its touching story and inventive visuals. Its omission from *Hämähäkkimies* 4 (1984) fits the bigger picture of

the magazine, an almost "villain of the week" style of handling of the hero. There is no time to stop the adventures for a slow-paced human-interest story. The other four short filler stories concentrate on recurring supporting characters in *Spider-Man* comics, J. Jonah Jameson (two stories, one of five page and one of six) and Venom (two 12-page stories). These short episodes show glimpses of the lives of their protagonists, rounding the characters of Peter Parker's egocentric boss Jameson and Spider-Man's nemesis Eddie Brock, or Venom. These fillers have been omitted from the 1995 volume of *Hämähäkkimies*.

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Addition

At the very start of this article, Spider-Man's adventures were abruptly interrupted by a full-page coverage of Black Cat's exercise routine (Figure 4). Although cutting and pasting often led to the omission of pages, in this issue (as well as issues 2 (1990) and 4 (1990)) the final substrategy of adaptation, addition, has been used. The editor has added pages from a different original comic book or books whose origin has proven difficult to trace. The two pages, the first one with two men trading a golden book, and the second one with Black Cat exercising and singing to herself, have been added between pages 21 and 22 of *Amazing Spider-Man* #280. The final page of the original comic book has been left out.

Fig. 4 Black Cat exercising in *Hämähäkkimies* 3 (1990), original issue unknown. MARVEL ©2019 Marvel

The original issues from which the Finnish magazine consists of are mentioned on the pages of *Hämähäkkimies* 3 (1990). However, there is no reference to the two extra pages or their source. The editor has mentioned the original issues where most of the contents come from but has not seen it necessary to include proof of cutting and pasting. On the letter pages, some readers have complained about missing pages or about splash pages that have been spread wrong, and it could be that the editor wants to hide this part of the adaptation process.

In the next issue of *Hämähäkkimies*, 4 (1990), a similar addition has happened. Before the very last page of the issue, between Spider-Man's battle against a villain called Crusher and a sneak peek into next month's issue, is a spread where Black Cat breaks into an office. Her thoughts are concentrated on Spider-Man and their relationship, and she appears to be caught up in her emotions as she is breaking her way into a building (Figure 5). One thing links these two pages to the exercising scene of the previous issue: Black Cat's extremely tight outfit and the way her body is drawn. In every panel, she is shown from a "sexy" angle. There are three panels that show her body from the back, concentrating on the buttocks and narrow waist, and two that show her front. In one of them, she is on the floor on her hands and knees, dodging a trap. Her body is in the impossible position shared by numerous female superheroes: her buttocks and breasts are emphasized in a single panel, while she is crawling on the floor.
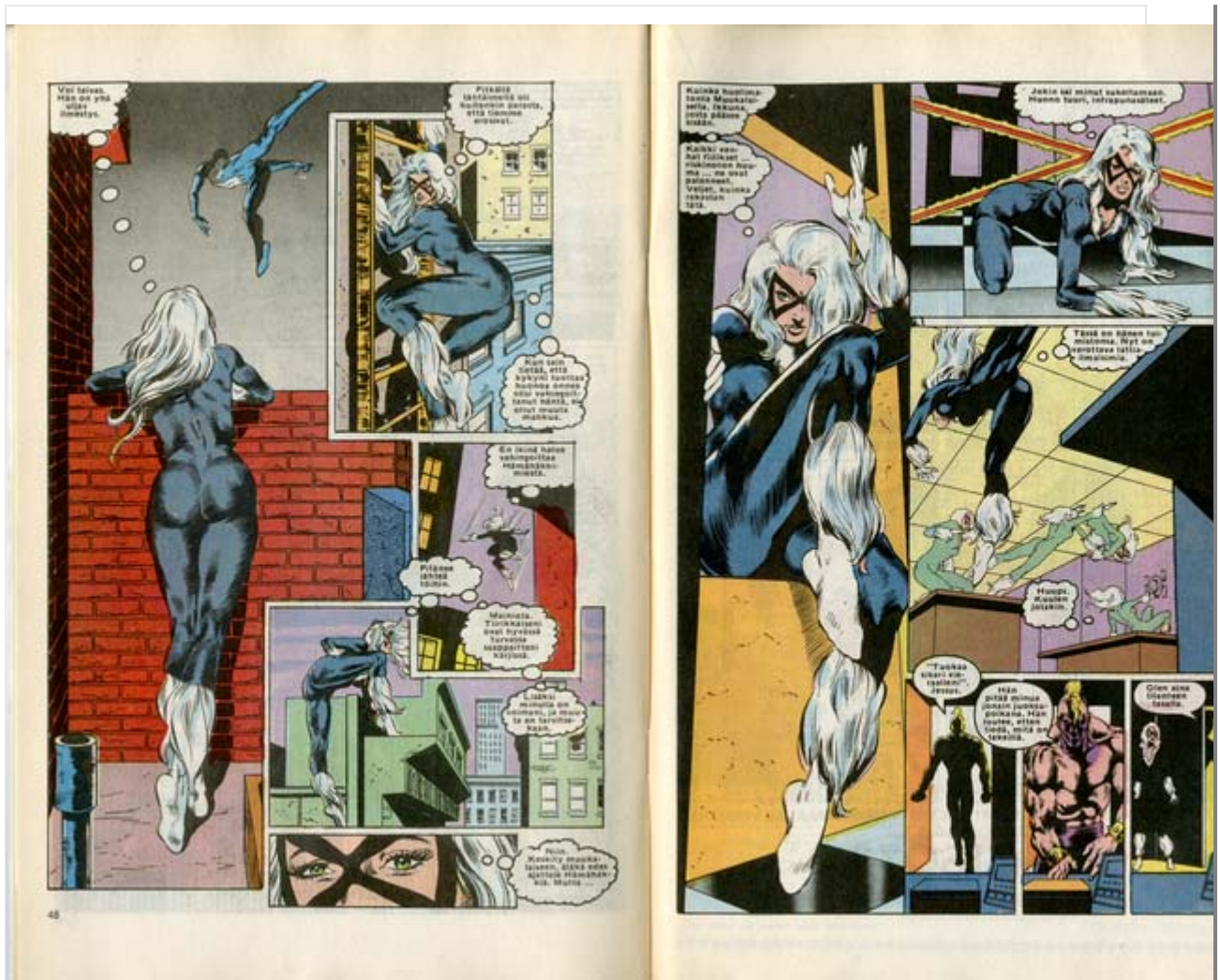
Fig. 5 Added pages showing Black Cat in *Hämähäkkimies* 4 (1990), originally from *Peter Parker, the Spectacular Spider-Man* #115. MARVEL ©2019 Marvel

These added pages with Black Cat do not serve the purpose of advancing the plot or making the storyline more understandable to the readers. They seem to be there to please the eyes of the assumed young male readership. Black Cat's sexualization is further emphasized by the song quote in her only speech bubble in Figure 4: "Mä haluun viihdyttää, sua kiihdyttää"(*Hämähäkkimies* 3 [1990] 24). These are lyrics from a 1989 song by Finnish singer Kikka, known for her sexy image, reminiscent of the British singer from the same era, Samantha Fox. As it has not been possible to track down where this particular page has originally been published, it is unclear what the character was saying in English.

It is clear that cutting and pasting have been used in multiple ways as an adaptation strategy. As shown through the example with *Thor* and *X-Factor*, including only important information was a way to facilitate the flow of events and the advancement of the plot, as was leaving out filler storylines. The purpose of addition, as can be seen in *Hämähäkkimies* 3 (1990), is not as clear. The addition of pages featuring a character liked by readers—probably

also by the editor—has meant that something else has been omitted.

Domestication of the Translation

According to translation scholar Leo Chan, "adaptations are like domesticated translations, where target values, conventions, and norms are superimposed on the source text, cultural differences are erased, and the foreign becomes palatable for the local audience" (415). The transnational adaptations of comic books and other cultural commodities are processes of adjusting foreign concepts into the domestic cultural industry's expectations (Gabilliet 222). Selecting the stories to be published and cutting and pasting them together to form a coherent whole are as important to the adaptation process as translating the textual matter, but translation from English to Finnish is the part of the Finnish adaptations most obvious to the readers.

Translation as the rewriting of a text in another language is key to the distribution of an adapted text. However, the concept of localization allows for a wider perspective as it covers the work of editors, marketing professionals, and translators whose team effort produce the adaptation and translation of a text (Viren 77). Localization can be used to describe a number of changes made in an adaptation process, such as adjusting a digital or printed product for languages with a different reading direction, using different alphabets than the original language, or transposing of currency rates and measures inside a text (Zanettin, "Translation" 200–01). Adaptations that aim to make a foreign text palatable for the local audience can either imply a neutralization of the foreign or accentuate the work's foreign qualities (Viren 77). In Sarah Viren's analysis as well as Michal Borodo's comparison of two different Polish adaptations of a Franco-Belgian comic, it is made apparent that the translation process and strategies used by the translators can affect the meanings of the comic. The translator may recreate the original text as literally as possible, but they may also decide to divert from the textual (Borodo 40).

In a storyline published in 1990 in *Hämähäkkimies*, Spider-Man encounters Silver Sable, a bounty hunter from the fictional Eastern European country of Symkaria. Silver Sable is a hero-for-hire, a businesswoman, and, in the original American comic book, she is constantly thinking and talking about her finances. She calls herself the "cornerstone of the Symkarian economy," (*Amazing Spider-Man* #279 11) bringing themes of working life, the economy, and business to the midst of a superhero adventure. The Finnish translation ignores the work- and profit-driven conversations the characters have. Silver Sable states in the original version that she cannot "make a profit here" (*Amazing Spider-Man* #281 5; while in the translation, she says, "tämä ilta on ollut fiasko" ("this night has been a fiasco") (*Hämähäkkimies* 3 [1990] 32). The villains of the story, Sinister Syndicate and Jack O' Lantern, also talk about their criminal endeavors in financial terms. Jack O'Lantern uses expressions such as "cost-effective," "lucrative," and "criminal career"

(*Amazing Spider-Man* #281 6). The translation does not refer to profit-making or earning money, and "more lucrative assignments" has become "other things," and "we don't have any work" is "we don't have anything to do" (*Hämähäkkimies* 3 [1990] 33). The business language is missing from the translation.

Both Silver Sable and the villains use business- and work-related language when talking about the actions they take. Silver Sable decides to help Spider-Man out of trouble, even when there is no considerable profit in sight, because she is afraid that Peter's "heirs will sue" her if he dies. Again, the translation differs greatly: "It will cost me if he dies." (*Hämähäkkimies* 3 [1990] 36; *Amazing Spider-Man* #281 9). As, according to Viren, narratives of gender were altered in the translations of Burundarena's comics, in the Finnish adaptation of *Spider-Man*, this business narrative has been altered. This diminishes the differences between Spider-Man, a true hero working for the common good, and the other characters, who are greedy and unheroic because they work for profit.

Real-life events and the political climate of the 1980s–1990s affected the contents of the comic books, notably in storylines such as "The X-Men Vs. The Avengers" (originally from 1987, printed in Finland in 1990) where the group of heroes called Soviet Super-Soldiers collaborate with the Avengers. This storyline was published unaltered in Finland, while a politically inclined storyline featuring Spider-Man and involving the Roxxon company, Marvel's malevolent megacorporation, was omitted entirely. The omission of the Roxxon-storyline, as well as removing business language from *Hämähäkkimies* in 1990, demonstrates that it was not political storylines as such that were omitted but rather those that were assumed to be beyond the scope of the assumed young readership.

Domestication and foreignization are two concepts in translation studies that are often considered as contradictory. Domestication is considered as bringing the translated text close to the reader, making it easily understandable to the new audience. Foreignization is connected to staying close to the original text. In translation studies, domestication means using idioms and metaphors from the target language instead of literally translating them and removing references that would be unfamiliar to the new audience (Koskinen 14–15). The previous examples demonstrate how the meaning of a text is altered as it is domesticated for the assumed audience of young Finnish readers.

Throughout the research material, references to popular culture are domesticated. In *Ryhmä-X* 1 (1985) one of the characters says, "*Star Warsissa* on kauheampia tarinoita" ("There are more horrible stories in *Star Wars*") (40), while, in the original, Iceman refers to *Star Trek*: "I've seen scarier stories in *Star Trek*" (*Uncanny X-Men* #65 5). The story in question was originally published in 1970, which makes the reference to *Star Wars*

anachronistic; *A New Hope* premiered in 1977. In addition to changing the reference to something more familiar to young Finnish readers in 1985, in many cases the foreign references have simply been left out. In the original American Spider-Man comics from the 1990s, the location of Peter Parker's apartment is frequently referred to in the caption boxes that set the scene and orient the reader to interpret the events of the comic. "But while things warm up in SoHo, at a house in Forest Hills" (*Amazing Spider-Man* #381 9) and "While at a fashionable brownstone" (*Amazing Spider-Man* #387 8) are ways to orient the reader to interpret the characters' social status, wealth, and values. For someone to live in "a fashionable brownstone" in SoHo means something to the American audience but not to the Finnish readership of *Hämähäkkimies*. Leaving out references to locations or building types in New York and minimizing the business references indicate that the translators assumed their young target audience would lack knowledge about American culture and way of life.

In *Hämähäkkimies* 3 (1984), the story "Haihattelijat," originally published as "The Daydreamers!" in *The Amazing Spider-Man* #246, reveals key characters' daydreams to the reader. In Mary Jane Watson's dream, she is a famous actress, the subject of a new Broadway musical, and as the show is being cast she is praised by its director Woody Allen: "She makes Diane and Mia look like Laverne and Shirley!" (14). In the Finnish adaptation, Allen refers to Armi and Danny, a Finnish schlager-singing duo from the 1970s and 1980s (13). In *Hämähäkkimies* 9 (1990), a poem by William Blake has been replaced with the Finnish lyrics to *Itsy bitsy spider* (16), and, in issue 5 (1995), a reference to Oprah Winfrey and Vanna White (*Unlimited Spider-Man* #2 10) has been completely left out (28). In *Ryhmä-X*, the domestication strategy is also in use. For example, Jubilee calls her teammate Jean Grey "Ms. Sally Jeangrey Raphael," (*Uncanny X-Men* #303 4), which is translated as "Mirja Jeangrey Pyykkö" (*Ryhmä-X* 2 [1995] 48) after the Finnish talk show host Mirja Pyykkö. These examples show that, in the process of adaptation, the local and global nature of popular culture is merged. Superheroes are global both in the sense that the characters hail from different parts of the world and in that their stories have spread all over the globe. At the same time, film stars, literature, and TV personalities are local phenomena and domesticating them makes the comic more relatable to readers.

Conclusions

During their first two decades in Finland, Marvel's superhero comic books were adapted for the Finnish audience using three strategies: selection, cutting and pasting, and domestication of the translation. These strategies were part of a localization process: selecting the American stories for publishing, combining them to fit the requirements of the Finnish publication format and readership, and translating them for the assumed young Finnish audience.

In the 1980s and 1990s, American popular culture spread all over the globe,

including Finland. The globally spread of the superhero phenomenon still needed to be anchored in Finnish culture by domesticating popular culture references and removing some of the more unfamiliar details. Other changes accommodated the original American comic books to the Finnish readership, included omitting pages to fit two or more original issues into one Finnish issue, choosing to publish only the essential parts that advance the ongoing plot, leaving out filler stories, and adding pages from other issues.

This analysis of the transnational adaptations of Marvel's superhero comics has shown that the concept of adaptation offers an understanding of transnational comics publishing that concepts of translation studies cannot. Analyzing the Finnish publications of *Spider-Man* and *X-Men* as adaptations, reworkings of texts that can never fully replicate the originals, allows for a new perspective on the local publications of global products of popular culture. It is, however, beyond the scope of this article to analyze in depth the political influences behind the comic books' storylines. By concentrating on the process of adaptation, the purpose of this article is to lay ground for a deeper analysis of the stories themselves. After focusing on the strategies used by the translators and editors of Marvel's superhero comics in Finland, the next step would be to focus on the content of the stories themselves—how the topics and themes of the comics have been altered in the adaptation process.

Notes

Ryhmä-X was published in 1984–96 and in 2001–13, and *Hämähäkkimies* has been published since 1980.

Lauri Narinen used the pen name Mail-Man, not revealing his identity to the readers. In addition to editing and translating, Mail-Man was also responsible for the letters pages in all of Marvel's comic books in Finland. From 1990, Narinen started to focus on the letters page and his role as the editor, translating only two issues of *Ryhmä-X* in 1990. Three other people started to translate *Ryhmä-X* in the early years of the 1990s: Topa Ylinen, M. Ahmed, and Verlaine, and in 1993 M. J. Tuovinen took over these responsibilities. *Hämähäkkimies* was translated by different people from the beginning of its publication, and during 1984, 1990, and 1995 it was translated by T. Metsänen, Veikko Ranta, Lauri Narinen, and M. Kinnunen.

Avengers, *Avengers Annual*, *Cable*, *Classic X-Men*, *Giant Sized X-Men*, *Marvel Fanfare*, *Marvel Team-Up*, *New Mutants Annual*, *Solo Avengers*, *Spider-Woman*, *The Uncanny X-Men*, *What if?*, *X-Factor*, *X-Force*, *X-Men*, *X-Men Annual*, *X-Men Unlimited*, *X-Men vs. Avengers*, and *X-Men vs. Fantastic Four*.

The Amazing Spider-Man, *Amazing Spider-Man Annual*, *Fantastic Four*, *Marvel Fanfare*, *Marvel Team-Up*, *Peter Parker the Spectacular Spider-Man*, *Spectacular Spider-Man*, *Spider-Man*, *Spider-Man Unlimited*, *Spider-Man vs. Wolverine*, and *Web of Spider-Man*.

The story has been printed in collections such as *The Very Best of Spider-Man* and was voted to be featured in a Top 10 Spider-Man stories collection by Wizard.

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