

## Between Scylla and Charybdis: On individual variation in translation

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In the *Odyssey* we read the story about the dangerous passage between Scylla and Charybdis, two sea monsters on either side of a narrow strait that Odysseus had to pass through. Which of the two monsters should he confront? It was a difficult choice. Translators are also faced with a difficult choice, though not as dangerous. Should they stay faithful to the original text or adapt to the reader? In practice, I should think that translators try to find a sensible compromise between the two extremes, taking into account the type of text, the function of the text, the intended receiver, and other features of the situation. But even in the same situation translators may make quite different choices.

In my paper I examine individual variation in the English-Norwegian multiple-translation corpus, consisting of texts produced by professional translators who were faced with the same translation task. The study focuses on the translation of a short story by A. S. Byatt. The following aspects are studied: statistics on word types and word tokens, sentence division, clause building, subject selection, and sentence opening. Although there are some general tendencies in the translated versions as compared with the English original, there is also a great deal of individual variation. Two of the ten versions stand out as being different on almost all the aspects examined. These could perhaps be taken to represent different translator profiles.