

It's Greek to Me

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I think the first translation I ever saw of any of my books was A SUMMER TO DIE, my first book, in Afrikaans. Since then there have been many, 21 different languages altogether, and it is always fascinating to see the different book jackets. (One of those pictured here, in Turkish, chose to stay with the same cover as the American version. The other one is Hungarian) Some of the most beautiful jackets have been the French. Some of the oddest...because they tend to be cartoonish..are the Japanese.

I thought of all of this because today, through the blog, I got a request from a Vietnamese publisher interested in translation rights to THE GIVER. I have replied to him and told him whom to contact, but in fact I think a different Vietnamese publisher has already snapped it up.

Of course I never have any way of knowing how good a translation is...unless it is in German, and then my daughter-in-law and granddaughter can give me an opinion. The book STAY! KEEPER'S STORY has a lot of verse in it, and my granddaughter, then just 10, was able to read it in both German and English and explain to me how they had (quite successfully, she thought) translated the verse and maintained the authenticity of both voice and form. She and I did a TV interview together about translation, and she was very adroit and quite self-assured, talking about how it works and why it works well sometimes and not others. At the end of the show she was asked if, when she grew up, she would like to be a translator; she looked horrified, then laughed and said, "No. It's too HARD!"

I am off tomorrow to Wisconsin, where I am to give the Zolotow Lecture Wednesday night. Sometimes, preparing a speech, I feel as if I have nothing left to say. I have said it all. I am out of material. But then I rev it up again and find something - I hope - new.

I guess I feel the same way about writing books at times.



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