

*The Shifting Position of German Literature
in the Estonian Canon of World Literature*

“I am sorry for not speaking German and as I am always looking for excuses and reasons to excuse my lack of knowledge, I am blaming this on our Estonian translators thanks to whom I was exposed to German culture early on and could read famous authors of world literature in translation, authors such as Heine, Goethe, Thomas and Heinrich Mann, Hesse, Böll and several other writers who have been important to me. I had access to the best in German literature without knowing German and a large part of what I read became a part of me in such a way that I cannot think of it as not being intrinsically mine, 'German' or foreign.”
(Eeva Park 2006: 192.)

The Estonian “Canon of World Literature”

“Nationalliteratur will jetzt nicht viel besagen, die Epoche der Weltliteratur ist an der Zeit” - declared Goethe, when writing to Eckermann on 31 January 1827 (Eckermann 1868: 224). Introducing the term 'world literature' (*Weltliteratur*, also *Weltpoesie*), in the same breath, Goethe also thought about *Weltbildung*, *Weltbürger* and *Weltkommunikation*. For Goethe, a “canon of world literature” would have sounded as a paradox. Goethe saw world literature as a process of literary communication between literatures and their authors of different nations, aiming at cultural understanding. For him, the notion of world literature was not determined by the classicality of literary works but, rather, by their contemporaneity, their modernity. In Goethe’s sense, world literature can sooner be found in literary journals than in the canon of literary works.

However, soon after, the notion of world literature became related to value and began to mean “the best part of the literary production of all times and all nations” and today, we are used to drawing an equation mark between the notions of world literature and the canon. Although the general validity of this canon (the dominance of the 'white European man' in this canon) is already being questioned, the canon of world literature in its widest sense – meaning

the literature that is worth translating into other languages – still remains. The canon is an agreement with an important cultural and social function. We are not born into a culture, we grow into it. Literature has had an immeasurable role in the development of national identity and in the creation of the feeling of common solidarity. I believe that the sentence “Tell me what you read and I’ll tell you who you are” is still valid. When abroad, we often wish we could meet people who have read the same books as we have. Right now, when we feel that we are lacking in European unity and common solidarity, perhaps a common canon of literature could play a role in the emergence of such common feelings and European identity.

The limits of this canon are pushed to their farthest just by translations, no matter whether the criteria for their selection include the publishers’ concern for the market situation, or the translators’ preferences or their sense of mission. Literary prizes can also have an important role in creating the canon of modern world literature by having a strong effect on the selection of works for translation. Today, world literature is closely related to the whole culture industry. But the main role in perpetuating the canon is carried by education, by the school curricula.

The topic of this article is the shifting position of German literature in the Estonian canon of world literature. First, I shall outline the historical role of German literature in Estonian translations. In the second half of this article, I shall examine the new literature curriculum of Estonian schools, applied this year, and analyse the share of world literature and the position of German literature in it.

The Role of German Literature in the Estonian literary history: from adapted to translated literature

The old [critics] should take some trouble to analyse more thoroughly this effect that has in Estonia already become so close that it cannot even be well seen because of its closeness, I am meaning the German influence. Much of it has already been taken as our own. It is not without reason that the Germans think of themselves as the bringers of culture; in education, they have truly given us much, although our chauvinist pride does not allow us to acknowledge it.

(Oks 1909: 291–292; translation from Estonian by Marika Liivamägi.)

German literature has had a special role in Estonian literary history – for centuries, the German language was the language of power, education and culture as well as communication in Estonia. Estonian literature was born in the lap of German-language culture, based on the model of German-language literature and, at the beginning, it was even created by the originally German-speaking authors. Even later, when Estonian literature was created by the authors of Estonian origin, they still had to follow the German model. German literature prevailed in Estonian translations even in the early 20th century, although the cultural elite of the day was then already rebelling against such cultural colonialism and became interested in the cultural heritage of other European countries.¹ But the knowledge of the German language, German culture and German literature was self-evident even in the new Estonian Republic of the beginning of the 20th century, and for some time, the German language maintained its position as one of the official languages. The leading position of German literature was broken only by the Soviet regime that politically pushed Russian literature to the forefront to replace German literature. It was only during the Soviet period when German literature became a translated literature. Before that, there was no reason to translate German high literature into Estonian because intellectuals read it in the German language. When speaking about the role of German literature in the Estonian literary canon we have to take into account the former special status of this literature for Estonian literature and the mediating role of Baltic-German culture in this literary transfer.

German classics in Estonia and in the Estonian translation

Thus, translated literature in Estonia started with mass production – it was meant for common people, not for the cultural elite. It was not so much translated but adapted literature, and as such, it was an inseparable part of Estonian literature.

Excluding the Bible and the Hymnal, we can say that Estonian translated literature originated from the pietistic and sentimental spirit. The Moravians started translating pietistic literature into Estonian in larger numbers. The first

¹ For the period 1901–1917, Estonian national bibliography lists the total of 417 works of fiction, translated from German (incl. Austrian, Swiss and Baltic-German literatures). In comparison: during the same period, there were published, in book format, 559 Estonian original works, and 168 translations from Russian, 88 from English and American, 68 from French and Belgian and 25 Finnish literatures (see Annus 1993). If we considered the texts of fiction published in newspapers, the share of German literature would be even larger.

works that belong to the Estonian canon of world literature are, besides the Holy Scripture and hymns, Johann Arndt's *Vier Bücher vom wahren Christenthum* and John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, translated in 1740–1750.

The first secular Estonian canon of world literature can be found in the first Estonian-language collection of stories – Friedrich Wilhelm Willmann's *Stories and Acts* (*Juttud ja Teggud*, 1782). The sources for these stories were mostly German authors C. F. Gellert, M. G. Lichtwer, M. Luther, but there were adaptations from other classics of European literature, starting with classical literature, e.g. *Widow of Ephesus* by Petronius, Voltaire, Bernard de Trevier's chivalric novel about beautiful Magelone, Richard Steele's *Inkle and Yarico* up to *Decameron* and *1001 Nights*. After that, for about a century, Estonian readers were in love with the stories of pious Genevieve (Christof v. Schmid, G. O. Marbach) and Robinsonades (Christof v. Schmid, J. H. Campe), based on German examples. In 60 years, eleven different editions of the stories of pious Genevieve were published in the total of 18 prints.

The first canon of world poetry can be found in the Estonian-language poetry anthologies of the late 18th and early 19th centuries – *Some Songs* (*Monned laulud*, 1796) and Heinrich Johann Rosenplänter's anthology *Flowers* (*Lillikessed*, 1814). These books were based on the works of the authors of German Enlightenment, such as Chr. F. Gellert, and more sentimental poets of the group Heinbund (L. H. Chr. Hölty, M. Claudius, G. A. Bürger, Chr. Fr. D. Schubart and others).

But where are Goethe and Schiller? It was “the age of Schiller” in the Baltic provinces at that time! Schiller was the favourite poet of Russian rulers of the time – Alexander I and Alexander II – and the idol of Baltic-German public! Schiller had had contacts with Baltic-Germans (e.g. a Baltic-German poet Carl Grass whose poems Schiller published in his *Thalia*), but he became even more known there via the students' song books. The students idolised Schiller! For one student from Tallinn this love even proved to be fatal: the young man had to spend several years in Siberia because he had used in writing the last strophe of Schiller's *Ode to Joy* that predicts “die Rettung von Tyrannenketten”. (See more Salu 1968)

Schiller was also the author whose works were most often staged in the theatres of the Baltic provinces. The first professional theatre of the Baltics, the Riga City Theatre, opened its doors in 1782 with Lessing's play *Emilia Galotti*, but Schiller found his way into its permanent repertoire very soon: in 1785, the Riga theatre staged *Kabale und Liebe*, in 1786 – *Die Räuber* and soon after,

Maria Stuart, *Wilhelm Tell* and others. The world première of *Don Carlos*² took place in Riga in 1787, even before the play appeared in print.

In part due to Baltic-German enthusiasm for Schiller, Estonia was the first country to commemorate him: the first monument to Schiller in the world was erected in the year of his death, 1805, in the Helme manor park, followed by a monument on Puhtulaid in 1913 (see ill 1).

In 1813, the same year when the Puhtulaid monument was erected, Schiller was first translated into Estonian. As expected, the first work to be translated was “Ode to Joy” (“An die Freude”) which was published even in two different translations (by O. R. von Holtz and Jakob Wilhelm Reinhold Everth) and in two different editions. “Ode to Joy” has been Schiller’s most famous poem in the Baltics and since 1891 it has often been included in the repertoire of song festivals.

After that, there was an almost 50-year break in the translation of Schiller’s poetry into Estonian.

“For us, Schiller is like a tall fruit tree with high branches with the fruit out of reach”, wrote an Estonian newspaper *Perno Postimees* on 18 November 1859, when Schiller’s 100th anniversary was celebrated in Germany, as well as in the Baltics. These celebrations, popular with the Estonian intellectual elite of the time, brought the translation of Schiller’s poetry again into fashion. A new version of *Ode to Joy*, revised by J. W. Jannsen, was published in 1860, (remarkably, omitting the last lines about escaping the chains of tyranny). Schiller became the cult figure for vernacular Estonian Romanticism. Fr. R. Kreutzwald, the author of the Estonian national epic *Kalevipoeg*, admired Schiller and avidly read his poetry and had even translated it into Estonian during his school years.

Among the Baltic-Germans, the cult of Schiller reached its peak in 1905, at the 100th anniversary of Schiller’s death. All the Baltic countries were celebrating the event. Theatres staged all Schiller’s plays in their chronological order and all kinds of meetings were held and presentations were given. For the Baltic-Germans, during this critical time for their existence, Schiller was a model German national poet and the upholder of patriotism.

For the Estonian intellectual elite Schiller was not as much “a national poet” but “a poet of freedom”, “the embodiment of the immortal ideal of freedom and justice” (Suits 1905: 37), as Gustav Suits stressed in 1905.

² There are two versions of this play – a prose version and a jambic version. The Riga City Theatre bought the prose version.

During the years of the first Estonian Republic, Schiller's plays were staged quite often. Estonian translations of Schiller's works (a collection of ballads, a collection of poetry and all the more important plays) were published during Soviet time. During the period of new independence, Schiller's plays have been staged very seldom.

Goethe has fared somewhat better in the newest stage of the Estonian reception of his work, despite the fact that his early reception was much slower, in comparison with Schiller's works.

He had little to offer to the growing literature of popular enlightenment besides *Reineke Fuchs*, the first of his texts to find its way into the Estonian language. The translator Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald knew Goethe's work quite well and made frequent references to him, yet he was forced to admit that translating Goethe's poetry was beyond his ability (Alttoa 1931: 49; Sumberg 1999). In the work of Lydia Koidula, Estonia's "poet of the dawn (national awakening)", translations and borrowings from German literature have an important place but translations of Goethe's poetry are missing altogether, although she mentions him in her correspondence.

Translations of Goethe's poetry, most often his ballads, started to appear in the early 1860s and by the turn of the century their quality had gradually improved. The first extensive Estonian translation was *Hermann and Dorothea* in 1880 (A. Kurrikoff, *Härman ja Doora*). The first translation of *Faust* was published in 1897. It was an unpretentious adaptation made for musical performance. The influential Danish literary critic Georg Brandes has said that the translation of *Faust* is the right criterion for measuring a culture's maturity (Brandes 1922: V). In view of this, we should admit that Estonian culture acquired maturity much later than Latvian culture, as Janis Rainis's exemplary translation of *Faust* into Latvian was published already in 1898. Estonian literary culture gradually matured indeed in the 1920s but one certainly cannot take as a sign of maturity Anton Jürgenstein's translation of *Faust's* First Part (1920). *Faust's* slow and late coming into the Estonian language was fully compensated after World War II by two different masterful translations – one was made by Ants Oras and published in Sweden in 1955/1962, the other was made by August Sang and published in Soviet Estonia in 1946/1967. The latter is still used in Estonian schools.

German Modernism and Estonian Literature at the Beginning of the 20th Century

In the early 20th century, Heinrich Heine, as well as post-Romantic poets, such as Emanuel Geibel, Ludwig Uhland, Friedrich Rückert, Eduard Mörike and others offered good competition to Goethe and Schiller. After that came the turn of authors of the Naturalist school (Cäsar Flaischlen, Otto Ernst) and *Heimatkunst* (Carl Busse, Julius Wolff). The list of prose translations into Estonian reveals the touch of the “easy Muse” of German family magazines, with some additions of social trivial novels or social dramas that were drawn from the Naturalist school, then the great favourite of the era of Historicism – the historical novel, also both the feminine and masculine trend literature (e.g. Nataly Eschstruth, Margarete Böhme), and a large share of *Heimatkunst* (Peter Rosegger, Ludwig Ganghofer, Gustav Frenssen, Lulu von Strauss und Torney and others). The generation of Realist prose authors is represented by some works of Paul Heyse, Friedrich Spielhagen and Theodor Fontane (Lukas 2008).

Estonian theatre remained true to the spirit of its founder August von Kotzebue and the audience loved Austrian and German popular plays (Nestroy, Schönthal, Kadelburg, Blumenthal, Schönherr etc.). Next, came the turn of authors of the Naturalist school (Cäsar Flaischlen, Otto Ernst, Hermann Sudermann) and *Heimatkunst* (Carl Busse, Julius Wolff). Critics have said that after those, Estonian theatre was far too long enchanted by Otto Brahm’s “Freie Bühne” in Berlin (Lukas 2008).

In the early 20th century, the emancipating Estonian literature saw its main task in shedding the “Baltic mindset”, which was thought to be reactionary, in order to “benefit even more from foreign, and, especially, from German education” (Luiga 1908).

The arrival of German modernism in Estonian lagged behind and speeded up only with the emergence of the new “Young Estonia” generation in Estonian literature. The “Young Estonia” movement initiated an unprecedented polemics about aesthetics in Estonia and attempted to create a new literary taste, free from the too strong German influence. They wanted to enrich the Estonian cultural scene with impulses from other European cultures, primarily from French, Finnish and Scandinavian literatures and to establish new relations with German literature. Critics from the ranks of “Young Estonia” found fault with the Estonians’ “unchanging acceptance of the already historical and outdated trends from German literature with all their

weaknesses. Concerning the thoughts and trends that rule the present of this nation [the Germans] – we have always been far behind, at least 20 years behind.” (Linde 1911: 219). Although the literary “consumer goods” from Germany could still for a long time be found in the Estonian newspapers and they shaped the taste of Estonian (petty) bourgeois taste, the influence of “Young Estonia” in the first two decades of the 20th century introduced new directions and names from the German-language literary space to the Estonian public: Gerhart Hauptmann, Max Halbe, Dichard Demel, Friedrich Nietzsche (the first translation of Zarathustra was published in 1901), Frank Wedekind, Eduard von Keyserling, Thomas Mann and others. The year 1910 marks the breakthrough of Vienna Modernism in Estonian literature: Artur Schnitzler’s collections of short stories were published; several publications contained Peter Altenberg’s miniatures and introduced works of Rainer Maria Rilke, Stefan George and Hugo von Hoffmannsthal. The collection *Valik saksa uuemast lüürikast* (*A Selection of German Newer Lyrics*), translated by Marie Under (Under 1920), and Under’s own works of this period testify to an extraordinary influence of German Expressionism on Estonian poetry. Such congeniality between German and Estonian literature was never equalled later, except perhaps Kafka’s unique impact on Estonian literature during the Soviet period.

German-language literature as a translated literature in Soviet Estonia

The Soviet regime attempted to disrupt cultural continuity and erase cultural memory and it started to shape ideologically controlled Soviet people. A large number of books were destroyed or put into closed archives. Publishing was submitted to censorship. The first blows were aimed at “hostile” translated literature – first, “fascist” literature, later also “bourgeois-capitalist” literature. In 1944–1955, literary fiction formed only 14% of Soviet Estonian book production, where the share of western literatures was extremely small. The Soviet “policy of quotas” prescribed that of the bulk of translated literature, Russian literature had to fill 45%, literatures of other Soviet republics – 15%, and literatures of Socialist countries – 13%. The position of German-language literature was somewhat more fortunate, as it had its socialist counterpart – literature of the German Democratic Republic, where a part of older history of German literature had already been selected and accepted. In this way, due to Soviet cultural propaganda, such antifascist and anti-war authors as Erich Maria Remarque (who is the most translated German author in Estonia), Anna

Seghers, Johannes Becher, Lion Feuchtwanger, Leonhard Frank, Willi Bredel, Arnold Zweig and others were introduced to Estonian readers.

A new era started with the launching of a book series *Loomingu Raamatukogu* in 1957. It was specially created for publishing translated literature. The official status of a magazine of this series helped it to evade the strictly controlled planned economy. The censorship was somewhat eased in the years of ideological thaw in the 1960s and Estonian readers had finally access to the works of German literature, the translation of which could not have been possible earlier (e.g. by Heinrich Böll, Robert Musil, Werner Bergengruen, Martin Walser, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Friedrich Dürrenmatt, Max Frisch, Peter Handke, Elias Canetti, Heimito von Doderer). However, the greatest impact in Estonian literature was had by Hermann Hesse (translations of *Steppenwolf* in 1973, *Glasperlenspiel* in 1976, *Siddhartha* 1986) and Franz Kafka (translations of *Ein Bericht für eine Akademie* in 1962, *Der Prozess* 1966, *Amerika. Der Prozess. Das Schloss* 1987).

Hesse's works arrived in Estonia in the aftermath of the hippie movement, when the thaw period of the 1960s had aroused hope for personal freedom and intellectual and moral independence. The reception of Hesse in Estonia was undoubtedly helped by his indirect Estonian (Baltic-German) origin. Kafka has even been called an archetextual author of Estonian literature (Krull 2000: 85) whose text-creation and understanding mechanisms had an important effect on Estonian literature and its readers in the 1970s and 1980s. Kafka's depiction of the "high-handedness of bureaucratic and soulless state apparatus" pierced the essence of Soviet totalitarianism as well. The kafkaesque traits like dreamlike reality, irrationality, allegoricity, metaphoricity became poetic means of expression behind the frontlines of the official and obligatory socialist realism.

Fortunately, the Estonian-German cultural exchange could to a certain extent be continued by Estonian exiles in the free world and through private secret channels information reached also the Estonians behind the Iron Curtain. (Close contacts between a writer and translator Ain Kaalep in Estonia and an exile-Estonian writer, translator and interpreter of German literature Ivar Ivask, who lived in the USA, were especially fruitful.)

The share of German-language literature in translated literature in Estonia today

A breakthrough in the translation of German literature occurred in 1987, when the control of censorship was loosened and many new publishing houses were

created. The share of translated literature among book production rose sharply. Publishers tried to compensate for all that had been prohibited during the Soviet period. During that time, mainly Russian books had been translated, but having regained independence, Estonian society turned to Anglo-American culture and the number of books translated from English many times exceeds translations from other languages.³

The German language that had been the predominant foreign language in Estonia up to World War II lost more of its importance still when compared to even the Soviet period. However, due to cultural closeness, translations from German still occupy the second place after English in the bulk of all translated literature, replacing Russian. The percentage of translations from German (9% in 1992–1998) in all translated literature is still higher than the percentage of translations from Finnish, French or Russian (Möldre 2005: 246).

During the Soviet period, it was mostly possible to translate literary classics and the modern literature of “capitalist countries” was held in contempt. After regaining independence, publishers attempted to fill this gap, as well as to compensate for the biased selection of works of German literary classics. Already in 1987, at the very end of the Soviet regime, appeared such masterworks of German literature as Kafka’s novels and Thomas Mann’s *Doctor Faustus*, followed by a long list of established masterpieces (Günther Grass’ novels one by one, Robert Musil, Heimito von Doderer, Heinrich Mann, Elias Canetti, Hermann Broch, George Saiko, Franz Kafka, Rainer Maria Rilke, Georg Trakl, Max Frisch, Joseph Roth, Ingeborg Bachmann, Friedrich Hölderlin, Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, Stefan Zweig and others), as well as books by modern authors (Christa Wolf, Elfriede Jelinek, W. G. Sebald, Karsten Dümmel, Christoph Hein, Herta Müller, Christoph Ransmayr, Bernhard Schlink, Daniel Kehlmann and others). All this was possible thanks to enthusiastic translators among whom we should mention Ain Kaalep, Rita Tasa and Mati Sirkel. The Estonian state is also supporting the promotion of German culture: Goethe-Institut is working in Estonia, special reading rooms of Austrian and Swiss literature have been established at the Estonian National Library with the support of the embassies of these countries, etc. Estonian publishers participate in the Frankfurt Book Fair.

³ About translations from the German language after the regaining of independence in Estonia see Pappel 2007.

Baltic-German literature

Baltic-German literature, with its history reaching back to the 13th century, whose development continued in Estonia up to the relocation of Baltic-Germans to Germany in 1939, covers a specific chapter in the history of Estonian-German literary relations. It is not easy to specify the borders between these two literatures. Up to the second half of the 19th century, Estonian literature can be treated as an “extension” of Baltic-German literature in the Estonian language. Texts written in this area in Estonian (resp. in Latvian) and in German belonged together and were the different-style branches of one and the same literature, depending on the addressee (irrespective of their origin) the bilingual authors had in mind. The emancipating Estonian literature saw its main task in shedding the “Baltic mind”, which was thought to be reactionary, in order to “benefit even more from foreign, and especially, from German education” (Luiga 1908). However, Baltic-German literature was still read and translated even during this period of emancipation. Theodor Hermann Patenius’s novels about the history of the Baltic countries and Manfred Kyber’s stories about animals were widely read by the Estonians as well. A collection of short stories by Eduard von Keyserling was named the best translated work in 1912 and Keyserling had a wide and positive reception in Estonian newspapers. A member of Young Estonia Gustav Suits recommends Keyserling to all those readers “who have with boredom turned away from the wishy-washy and dull German bourgeois literature (which is flooding all our newspapers)” (Suits 1912).

Baltic-German literature disappeared from the Estonian literary field during the Soviet period and appeared again in newly independent Estonia, when numerous memoirs again opened the heavy gates of Baltic manors for Estonian readers.

The presence of world literature and especially German literature in the curricula of Estonian school

Still another important indicator of “adopting” the culture and literature of other countries is the school curriculum. Let us look at the canon of world literature (see tables 1–4) as it is applied in the curricula of Estonian literature in Estonian basic school and gymnasium (www.oppekava.ee).

Table 1. Literary texts in basic school curriculum:

Erich Kästner, *Das doppelte Lottchen*

James Krüss, *Timm Thaler oder Das verkaufte Lachen*

Astrid Lindgren, *The Brothers Lionheart* or *Ronia the Robber's Daughter*

Alan Marshall, *I Can Jump Puddles*

Ferenc Molnar, *The Paul Street Boys*

Christine Nöstlinger, *Das Austauschkind*

Joanne Kathleen Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *The Hobbit*

Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

One book of prose fiction and one poetry book at choice.

Paulo Coelho, *The Alchemist*

Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*

William Golding, *Lord of the Flies*

George Orwell, *Animal Farm*

Erich Maria Remarque, *Im Westen nichts Neues*

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*

Jerome David Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*

One novel by Terry Pratchett at choice;

one novel by Agatha Christie or Arthur Conan Doyle at choice;

one book of new prose fiction, one poetry book, one travelogue at choice

Table 2. High-school. Authors, connected with different topics, mentioned in the curriculum:

Homer, Sophocles, Vergilius, Dante Alighieri, Francesco Petrarca, Giovanni Boccaccio, Thomas More

William Shakespeare, Miguel de Cervantes, Pedro Calderón, Molière

Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Swift, Voltaire, Johann Wolfgang Goethe

Alexander Pushkin, George Gordon Byron, Victor Hugo, Walter Scott, Prosper Mérimée,

Honoré de Balzac, Gustave Flaubert, Stendhal, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Lev Tolstoy, Émile Zola

Oscar Wilde, Walt Whitman, Charles Baudelaire, Rainer Maria Rilke, Eino Leino, Rabindranath Tagore

Anton Chekhov, Henrik Ibsen, August Strindberg

Ernest Hemingway, Herman Hesse, Erich Maria Remarque, Jerome David Salinger, Anton Chekhov, Oscar Wilde, Virginia Woolf

Alexander Blok, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Thomas Stearns Eliot, Federico García Lorca, Anna Akhmatova

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James Joyce, Franz Kafka, Marcel Proust, Knut Hamsun, Herman Hesse, Virginia Woolf, William Faulkner, Mikhail Bulgakov, Vladimir Nabokov, Kurt Vonnegut, Jerome David Salinger, Mika Waltari
 Ernest Hemingway, Erich Maria Remarque, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus
 Maurice Maeterlinck, Luigi Pirandello, Berthold Brecht, Samuel Beckett, Eugène Ionesco, Tennessee Williams, Edward Albee
 Jorge Luis Borges, Gabriel García Márquez, Milan Kundera, Umberto Eco, Günter Grass.

Table 3. Texts read in Estonian High-school

Novels:

Emily Jane Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* or Selma Lagerlöf, *Gösta Berlings saga* or Prosper Mérimée, *Carmen* or George Sand, *La Petite Fadette*

Honoré de Balzac, *Father Goriot* or Fjodor Dostojevski, *Crime and Punishment* or Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary* or Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir*.

Jack London, *Martin Eden*, Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*

Gabriel García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* or Toni Morrison, *Beloved* or Daniel Kehlmann, *Die Vermessung der Welt* or Knut Hamsun, *Victoria* or Boris Vian, *Froth on the daydream* or Doris Lessing, *The Fifth Child*

Franz Kafka, *Die Verwandlung*; Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* or John Fowles, *The Magus* or Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five*

Novellas:

Giovanni Boccaccio or Edgar Allan Poe or William Faulkner or Thomas Mann or Jorge Luis Borges

Plays:

William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*; Molière, *Tartuffe*; Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Faust* (I part) or Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll's House* or *The Wild Duck* or Bernard-Marie Koltès, *Roberto Zucco*.

Table 4. High-school: The Newest World Literature

Poetry books at choice: Guntars Godiņš, Harvey Lee Hix, Juris Kronbergs, Lassi Nummi, Wisława Szymborska.

Prose fiction at choice: Michael Cunningham, *The Hours*, Jostein Gaarder, *Sophie's World*, Nick Hornby, *Slam* or Peter Høeg, *Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow*, Nora Ikstena, *Dzīves svinēšana*, Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio, *Ritournelle de la faim*, Daniel Kehlmann, *Die Vermessung der Welt*, Hanif Kureishi, *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Doris Lessing, *The Sweetest Dream*, Cormack McCarthy, *The Road*, Ian McEwan, *The Cement Garden*,

Toni Morrison, *Beloved*, Haruki Murakami, *Norwegian Wood*, Sofi Oksanen, *Purge*, Orhan Pamuk, *Snow*, Viktor Pelevin, *The Helmet of Horror*, Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*, Jeanette Winterson, *Weight*.

Plays: Harold Pinter, *The Caretaker*

As compared, for example, with the Literature curriculum in Germany, we have to admit that teaching of literature at Estonian schools is much more concerned with world literature. Let us take, for example, such undoubtedly canon-creating work as *Duden. Basiswissen Schule. Literatur. 7. Klasse bis Abitur* (Duden 2006). Germany has a rather clearly shaped literary canon, which is strongly centred on national literature, and other literatures are examined here only if they have in any way been models for national literature, or if they have at least developed in the same trend. In Estonian schools, as well as in Estonian culture at all, the translated literature plays an important role. It seems that small cultures have a different notion of world literature – they cannot escape the existence of other.

The curriculum does not focus only on large Western literatures but gives a chance also to smaller European literatures (including Finnish, Latvian, Polish, Danish, Norwegian, Czech literatures). Our notion of world literature does indeed begin with our close neighbours and proceeds from similar social and cultural experiences. One unified canon of world literature is, perhaps, impossible and even unnecessary.

I am interested in the share of German literature in the Estonian curricula. We have to admit that German classics have disappeared from the school curricula: Schiller's name is not even mentioned and Goethe is known only as the author of *Faust*, but unfortunately, as the author of only the first part of the tragedy, thus unmercifully reducing the cultural meaning of the whole work. We should also mention that as the curriculum allows many options, schools could discuss Ibsen's *A Doll's House* or *The Wild Duck*, or Bernhard-Maria Koeltès's *Roberto Zucco* instead of *Faust*.

The number of German authors included in the curriculum is rather small – only Kafka's *Die Verwandlung* has a firm place there, together with some optional short stories by Thomas Mann. As a remnant of the preferences from the Soviet period, Erich Maria Remarque has maintained his position in the curriculum – he is the most translated German author in the Estonian language. All Estonians have read his novels *Im Westen nichts* and *Arc de Triomphe*. The inclusion of Hermann Hesse in the canon can be explained by his great influence on Estonian literature. The curriculum does not include any

other authors of Baltic-German origin. Modern German literature is not represented by a winner of the Nobel Literature Prize Herta Müller, whose subjects could be close and understandable for Estonian readers, but Daniel Kehlmann's easily readable and humorous *Die Vermessung der Welt*, which has even twice been mentioned in the curriculum. Younger schoolchildren read Erich Kästner's *Das doppelte Lottchen*, James Krüss' *Timm Thaler oder Das verkaufte Lachen* and Christine Nöstlinger's *Das Austauschkind*. Due to a popular Estonian TV play from year 1975, already several generations of Estonian children know Otfried Preußler's *Die kleine Hexe*.

In conclusion we have to say that German literature has lost its previous leading role in the Estonian canon of world literature. The story of the role of German literature in this canon is the story of disappearance of one cultural dominant. This is a postcolonial story. Although German literature is quite often translated into Estonian, these books only rarely reach the lists of bestsellers, which are ruled by Estonian and Anglo-American popular authors. In Estonia, German translations are made by specialists for readers who are truly interested in them. This is elitist literature – excellently translated and annotated and meant for knowledgeable readers. If we think about it, this is not a bad position at all.

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