

*“The Translator Must...”: On the Estonian Translation Poetics of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract.** The paper outlines the main features of Estonian translation poetics in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, examining the expression of the prevalent ideas guiding literary translation in writings about translation (mostly reviews and articles) in juxtaposition with examples from actual translations. The predominant ideal of translating verse and prose has been that of artistic translation, especially since the end of the 1920s. On the other hand, this general principle can be shown to have had somewhat differing emphases depending on the field of application as well as time period, ranging from the mostly form-oriented to mostly content-oriented translation.

**Keywords:** Estonian literary translation; translation poetics; dominant

## Introduction

In this paper our aim is to delineate the most conspicuous, prevailing principles of Estonian literary (limited in our paper to verse and prose) translation as expressed in translation reviews and criticism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We argue that the over-arching general principle of Estonian literary translation has been, especially since the 1920s, the axiom of artistic, creative translation (cf. Sütiste 2009: 911ff, 2011: 167ff). This principle has been remarkably visible in Estonian (predominantly normative) writings about translation and the Estonian leading translators can be shown to have followed it, too. The first part of our paper’s title – “the translator must...” – refers to the verbal formula that has been most repeated in writings about translation striving to influence the behaviour of translators. Employing the distinction

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made by Peeter Torop, we can speak here of the interplay between the **general** (e.g. period-specific) **translation poetics** and the (explicit as well as implicit) **poetics of a translator**. General translation poetics amount to the general rules for translating certain types of texts that are followed in a particular culture or at a particular time. Translation poetics is explicitly presented in various texts, e.g. reviews, articles, forewords and afterwords, comments, letters etc. Often in such texts the cultural norm of translations, a normative formulated poetics is fixated. A translator's explicit (formulated) poetics is usually closely connected to the normative formulated poetics of his/her time. (Torop 1989: 358–359). The principle of artistic-creative translation manifests somewhat differently in different periods and/or authors, among other things in differences what element is considered as most important, in other words, what is the dominant to be conveyed in translation. We use the notion of dominant to mark the most important textual layer or element that serves the guiding principle of how one should translate, here predominantly artistic-creative translating. In poetry, the principle of artistic translation is realized foremost by metrical and prosodic means; in prose, mostly by stylistic, rhythmical and lexical means.

**Dominant.** The notion of dominant evolved in the Russian formalist theory and according to Roman Jakobson, who in 1935 presented a special lecture on this, it was one of the most crucial, elaborated and productive concepts in Russian formalism (Jakobson 1981: 751). It is the dominant that determines a work of art: it is its central component and governs the remaining components which are all related to it. Hence it is the very component that guarantees the integrity of the structure (*ibid.*). Jakobson also stresses that it is possible to seek a dominant not only in the poetic work of an individual artist, but also in a certain poetic canon, poetic school and even an entire epoch (Jakobson 1981: 752). The notion of dominant has been applied as well in translation studies (e.g. Torop 1995, Rogovskaja 2004, Shutemova 2012) and here we can distinguish between two different approaches: studies with prescriptive purposes see the translator's task as finding out the author's dominant and conveying it in translation; in descriptive studies the author's and translator's dominants are contrastively analysed. Here we should draw attention to the shift in the usage of this concept: while for formalists and Jakobson dominant is rather an objective quality of a text, which determines it and holds its structure together, then in accordance with poststructuralist approach the dominant of a reader and hence also that of a translator can be completely different from the author's intended dominant. And the same applies to critics

as well: recently also the dominant of a critic has been separately pointed out (e.g. Bednarczyk 2010), and it may very well be different from that of the author or translator. In the context of translation, it is useful to differentiate between the notions of the dominant and of the purpose of translation (*Skopos*): while the dominant may be characterized as an integrating factor or element of the text, in the process of translation depending on the purpose of translation, the target text may foreground a dominant that is different from the one characterizing the source text.

**Translation at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.** In Estonian literary culture, translation begins to be more consistently differentiated from the original and from adaptation by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Until then, translations are often marked as having been done “after” some author or translations rework the originals to such an extent that the results are presented as the translators’ original work with the source not mentioned at all. At the same time, it cannot be said that translation as a practice is wholly undifferentiated. For instance, Carl Robert Jakobson reviews in 1867 three small translated books, all of which record their secondary status as translations, but do so in varying wordings. One book has been “rewritten from German languages by J. Jobso”, another “set up from the German language into the country language [= Estonian] by J. Jobso”, and the third one “translated by E. M-l”.<sup>2</sup> In his review of these translated books Jakobson presents also some guidelines for translation, saying that

The art of translating is not at all an easy thing. Whoever takes up this work, must first fully understand written language and be able to write it according to the rules; second, must entirely know the foreign-language book’s peculiar beauty and goodness in terms of both its core and shell; and third, must be able to carry over the book into his own language so that none of the above mentioned things get lost. (Jakobson 1867)

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<sup>2</sup> Here and in the following, translations from Estonian are ours (E.S., M.-K.L.) The three books were: (1) “Willem Molnau, temma hirmsad teud, ello ja surm. Saksakelest umber kirjutand J. Jobso” [William Molnau, his horrible deeds, life and death. Rewritten from German language by J. Jobso]; (2) “Martin Braun ja temma tru Pudel, ehk Wepputus Reini jõe äres. Saksakelest makele üllspannud J. Jobso” [Martin Braun and his trusty bottle, or Flood at the River Rhein. Set up from the German language into the country language by J. Jobso]; (3) “Wiis kenna jutto. Tõlkinud E. M-l [= Ernst Muhel]” [Five nice stories. Translated by E. M-l].

This passage bears significance for poetry translation as well, expressing an uncompromising view that nothing should be lost in translation, neither in its core nor the shell. In other terms, a translator must convey both the content plane and the expression plane, including the verse meter of the original (on the equimetricity in Estonian poetry translation see Lotman 2011).

Alongside acknowledged translation, a great deal of translating is done with minimal or no special marking at all, for instance a significant portion of the literary production of the leading figures of the Estonian national awakening (e.g. Kreutzwald, Koidula) has been later found to be modelled, sometimes quite closely, after some German examples, yet readily accepted as Estonian original writing at the time. A special case in this respect is provided by our first “translation scandal”. In 1890 Jakob Kõrv presents a story titled “Luigemäe Olli”, set in Estonia of 1217–1224, to a competition of Estonian original stories. The story receives the first prize and is three years later published as a book. In 1894 it is brought to the public attention that the text is in fact an adaptation from François-René de Chateaubriand’s “Atala” (or more likely from its German translation); the prize is taken away and the case receives much attention in the newspapers, amounting to the first major plagiarism scandal in Estonia (J. M-s 1896). Although in principle Kõrv does nothing different from many other authors before him, his case stands out because of the marked context – the adapted story has been presented to a competition of Estonian **original** stories. Thus, Kõrv’s adaptation practice inadvertently serves to foreground translation as a practice different from original writing, and makes manifest the shift in the norms regulating the differentiation between original and borrowed or adapted literature. That it is indeed the time of changing norms is signalled also by the organization by the Estonian Charity Society of St. Petersburg of the first translation contest in St. Petersburg in 1896. The competition invites translations from Russian into Estonian for a poem titled “Мой род” (“My kin”) in which the author, a Russian poet Aleksandr Scheller speaks about his Estonian roots. When announcing the winners in 1897, the jury explains their decision as well as postulates three criteria that they have followed in their work of judging the translations. The three criteria are (Issakov 1983: 282):

1. The correspondence of thoughts in the original and in the translation;
2. Purity of language;
3. Poetic beauty.

With these events and with the postulation of translation criteria, the issue of literary translation becomes topicalized to an unprecedented extent in the Estonian culture of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## Translation in the 1900s–1930s

During roughly the next two decades translation as a topic and a cultural phenomenon in its own right is held already in rather constant view among Estonian intellectuals.

**The 1910s, Tombach-Kaljuvald and Aavik.** One of the most important translation events at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the translation of *Hamlet* by Aleksander Tombach-Kaljuvald. According to the translator's foreword (Tombach-Kaljuvald 1910: 3–6), the translation aims to be consistently true to sense as well true to words, whenever possible. As concerns the appearance of the text, for the sake of this goal small departures from the original are allowed. For instance, the translation has more verse lines than the source text, since because of the Estonian inflexion, it is rather difficult to accommodate the content of one English iambic pentameter to the same meter in Estonian. Hence, on the one hand, the translator clearly states that he will focus on the content plane (sense-for-sense translation), yet on the other hand, there are certain things in expression plane too, which he holds important to convey, first of all verse meter. He would rather increase the number of verse lines than verse feet to avoid a meter insuitable for drama. What is also very important to Tombach-Kaljuvald is the language of the translation: according to his own words, he has devoted much care to the fluency and purity of language.

Two years later the translation of *Hamlet* is reviewed by an Estonian writer, linguist and translator Johannes Aavik (1912). He formulates the following aspects that any reviewer should, first of all, observe. The first and the most important thing is fidelity and precision in comparison with the original, from which a good translation should never steer too far. Yet fidelity in itself is not enough: some translations are poor because of their very precision. Translation has to be fluent, clear, stylistically beautiful, in short, aesthetically valuable. The third requirement is grammatical correctness: there must be no language errors that would interfere with the aesthetic enjoyment of the translation and spoil the reader's mood. Aavik points out that there are several quite serious (linguistic) mistakes which diminish the value of this translation (e.g. the use of dialectal forms, syntactical errors, Germanisms etc.). Although Aavik's criteria look very similar to those of the translation competition of the 1890s, there are important shifts. First of all, the background has changed: free adaptations are not accepted any longer the way they were in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Secondly, Aavik articulates more specifically the aesthetic demands, introducing also the notion of style. By that time, the leading translators had

in practice already adopted the idea that the style and individuality of the original author should be preserved and recreated also in translation (Issakov 1983: 287).

Despite of the criticism, Aavik's overall appraisal of the translation is positive: the translation is enjoyable and its language is rather correct. This case of criticism is an example of the situation where the translator and critic have an agreement in principle: they both value exact translation, which would be as close to the original work as possible. They both pay meticulous attention to the expression plane and consider it important to convey the verse meter and at the same time achieve clear, natural and fluent language. There is, however, some disagreement about the meaning of the latter: according to Tombach-Kaljuvald, it is acceptable to allow some freedom in case endings, Aavik is much stricter. But these are just technicalities, rather the matter of standards than the dominant, and their approach is still similar in significant ways.

Thus, next to the formerly prevailing discourse about translation that has stressed the utilitarian value of translation (translation as enrichment of Estonian culture, as help to building Estonian culture etc.) there develops another discourse emphasizing the aesthetic quality of translation. Initially focusing mainly on the beauty and accuracy of the target tongue and poetic beauty (e.g. translation contest of 1896, Aavik 1912), it grows into a dominant discourse on translation as art during the 1920s–1930s.

**The late 1920s, Saar.** One name that is closely related to the change of dominant discourse on translation is that of Gustav Saar who, as a 26-year old intellectual, publishes in 1927 two important articles on translation. One is a review of Mihkel Jürna's translation of Shakespeare's *King Lear* (after *Hamlet*, the second Shakespearean tragedy translated into Estonian), saying: "The translation strives to be more philological than artistic. Apparently the translator has been captivated more by the content than the spirit, more by words than poetry: a principle that on its own has not been considered to be enough in artistic translation already for a long time" (Saar 1927a: 177). In his second article "About artistic translation" [Kunstipärasest tõlkest], Saar gives a fairly extensive overview of various questions related to literary translation that are no everyday knowledge for Estonian intellectuals of the time, focusing on the issue of literary translation and formulating several requirements of literary, foremost poetry translation. He emphasizes that a literary translator is also an artist, and it is the best if he is a poet himself; the translator must have the ability to merge with the author's "emotional character", must be congenial to the author; but most importantly, the translator must possess

“a sense of style”: it is the sense of style that is one of the hallmarks of artistic translation (Saar 1927b: 755). For Saar, style as the most important element of the expression plane is the dominant that a translator should by all means attempt to convey in translation.

Since Saar’s article, the issue of translation as art and the necessity to reproduce the original’s style in translation begins to be emphasized in most translation reviews and other writings on translation. From the years 1927–1928 onwards and throughout the 1930s, translation is discussed predominantly in terms of art. Various critics one after another emphasize the creative nature of the translator’s activity – as opposed to seeing translation as a merely utilitarian and unproblematic transfer. This applies to both prose and poetry translation.

**The 1930s, Tammsaare.** The new translation dominant characterizing Estonian literary translation of the late 1920s and the 1930s can be illustrated by an example that relies on Anne Lange’s (2015: 83–126) analysis of A. H. Tammsaare’s translation of Joseph Conrad’s *Lord Jim*, published in Estonian in 1931. This is the time when expectations towards literary translation are already high and centre on the artistic quality of translation, when Conrad is recognized as an esteemed representative of the prestigious English literature, and when Tammsaare is acknowledged not only as one of the Estonian leading writers, but also as a trusted and prolific translator (cf. “The translation is good; this is guaranteed already by A. H. Tammsaare’s name” (Hindrey 1932)). In her analysis Lange expresses surprise over the findings that Tammsaare has predominantly translated Conrad “linearly, almost without changing the sequence of translation units” (Lange 2015: 87, fn. 18) and presents also several examples that corroborate this conclusion.

A similar impression is produced by another exemplary translation from the 1930s: that of Anton Chekhov’s short stories by a revered Estonian author and translator Friedebert Tuglas. As an example, we display here the beginning paragraph of Chekhov’s “Пересолил” [Overdoing It] (1885) and its Estonian translation “Üle soolas” (Tšehhov 1939: 168) in segments interspersed with comparable units from the Russian text:

Maamõõtja Gleb Gavrilovič Smirnov [Землемер Глеб Гаврилович Смирнов]  
 jõudis Gniluški jaama [приехал на станцию «Гнилушки»]. Mõisasse, kuhu  
 ta oli kutsutud piire ajama, [До усадьбы, куда он был вызван для межевания,]  
 jäi veel kolm-nelikümmend versta hobustega sõita [оставалось ещё проехать  
 на лошадах вёрст тридцать—сорок].

Tuglas's translation of Chekhov is praised by his contemporaries as masterful and ensuring the greatest correspondence to the original (Päewaleht, 18. mai 1939). Tuglas is considered "probably the best" possible translator of Chekhov, with his translation at times evolving into independent artwork, showing "linguistic and stylistic ingenuity that rises way beyond the mediocre level" (Sööt 1939: 563).

### The Soviet period

This line of development in relation to literary translation that had reached its apex in the 1930s is interrupted by the Second World War and by the advent of the Soviet regime. The totalitarianism of the new era with regard to translation has been discussed in the paper by Daniele Monticelli and Anne Lange (2014) in which the authors point out that the period of totalitarianism is not homogeneous but contains "discontinuities" and "loopholes".

**The 1950s, Jõgi, Tammsaare, Kauba.** One of the earliest texts after the war, not stemming immediately from a need to review one or another translation but striving for some theoretical generalisations, is Otto Samma's essay of 1954 titled "Of typical shortcomings and mistakes in translating prose from Russian into Estonian" [Tüüpilistest puudustest ja vigadest proosa tõlkimisel vene keelest eesti keelde]. This essay starts as follows:

In recent times both all over the Soviet Union as well as in our own republic, more and more attention is being paid to questions of translation. The view that translation is not a technical, but creative work is spreading wider and wider. It is being emphasised more and more that translation is one branch of literature; that translated literature enriches the culture of this nation into whose language it is translated, that translators have an important cultural mission to carry out. (Samma 1954: 348)

On the background of the detailed and informed discussions concerning various aspects of translations of world literature in the 1930s, the words of Samma bring to the fore the huge disruption that has taken place: it is as if all the discussions on the nature of translation are back where they were around the beginning of the 20th century. On the other hand, the memory of the previous era of the free republic has not been erased completely. Among others, it is Tammsaare's translation of Goncharov's *Oblomov* (1934), brought up for comparison with the new translation of the same text by Felix Kauba in



1953, that helps to restore the severed links to the tradition of translating of the 1930s. Thus, reviewer Olev Jõgi writes:

His [Tammsaare's] translations can be read with enjoyment also today. These show that the translator has not seen his task in the mechanical "carrying over" of a foreign text, but has remained also in the role of translator a writer who considers translating to be creative work. [...] It is foremost with regard to style that Tammsaare's translation is stronger than Kauba's. [...] Kauba's translation is an exemplary illustration of an exact and careful work. His translation is much more "correct" than Tammsaare's, but there is less Goncharov in him than in Tammsaare. [...] Literary translation is creative work. (Jõgi 1953: 633, 635, 636)

Jõgi brings many examples to illustrate the contrast between the stylistic appropriateness and the lexical accuracy of the two translations, for instance (Jõgi 1953: 634, 635):

Кто тебе внушил эту мысль? – Kes sulle selle mõtte pähe pani? [Who has put this thought into your head?] (Tammsaare) – Kes on sulle sisendanud selle mõtte? [Who has inculcated this thought in you?] (Kauba)

не всегда его удалось видеть чисто обритым – mitte alati ei õnnestunud teda näha puhtaks aetud näoga [not always could he be seen with a clean-shaven face] (Tammsaare) – sageli oli ta isegi raseerimata [often he was even unrazored] (Kauba)

продолжала скороговоркой – laskis ruttu edasi [[she] carried on in haste] (Tammsaare) – jätkas kiirkõnes [continued in rapid speech] (Kauba)

Jõgi concludes that in those and many other similar instances Kauba's "modern words" make the sentences uninteresting and inflexible, while Tammsaare has translated the same places with understanding and style (Jõgi 1953: 635). We can generalize that Kauba has followed primarily the principle of accurate translation (most prominent in the first years after the Second World War) while Tammsaare has followed the principle of artistic translation. The critic's preference for translation principle coincides here with Tammsaare's rather than Kauba's understanding.

**The 1960s, *Iliad*.** With regard to poetry translation, the next important translation event which we will discuss is the translation of the *Iliad*. Although the *Iliad* was translated into Estonian already before the Second World

War, the canonical translation is still the one published in 1960, which is the translation of the full text, consistently in dactylic hexameters. There are two translators: August Annist is responsible for the first draft and the versification, while Karl Reitav focuses on the precision of content.

The dispute over this translation starts even before it is published: in 1958, August Annist writes a paper on Estonian translations of ancient epics and its versification problems, where he comments on his own practical experience in translating the *Iliad*. The main focus is on how to convey in the Estonian language ancient quantitative metre, which is based on the alternation of heavy and light syllables. According to Annist (1958: 88), the main rule of the Estonian quantitative hexameter is very simple: a heavy initial syllable should not occur in the metrically weak position and a short initial syllable should not occur in the strong position.

The translation itself is published in 1960 and in 1961 the translation is reviewed by Ülo Torpats who admits that it is probably the most successful attempt to translate hexametrical texts into Estonian, but does not agree with Annist in some smaller details concerning the interpretation of the length of some syllables and the treatment of caesura.

Annist replies with a short comment in 1962 where he mainly focuses on the issue of caesura and argues that the Estonian caesura does not necessarily have to follow the same rules as the Greek caesura.

Much more critical than Ülo Torpats is Paul Maantee, whose review is published in 1962. He reproaches the unperformability and flawed Estonian of Annist's hexameters. According to Maantee, word stress should participate in Estonian quantitative verse and strong phrasal accent can even lengthen a syllable.

Both Annist himself and Ain Kaalep, a tireless poetry translator as well as a theorist, respond to this review. In a somewhat ironic tone, Annist welcomes Maantee's attempt to explain the complicated questions of the usage of hexameter, but finds it regrettable that he does not know a better solution than the absolute abandonment of the quantitative principle and thus a complete forgery of the original (1962: 99). This could be interpreted even more generally: it is a completely uncompromising attitude, according to which even the change of a detail in expression plane would result in forgery. Kaalep agrees that Maantee does not suggest anything acceptable and in fact, his claims are contradictory: he holds it necessary to distinguish between quantity and stress, but seems to constantly confuse these two in the solutions he offers.

Despite the vehement polemics, the translator and the critics are all in agreement on the most basic principles. They are all convinced that Homer should be translated to quantitative hexameters and to achieve

that, a translator should make the best use of all possibilities offered by the Estonian language. Not just meter, but also finer rhythmical nuances should be conveyed, starting from the spondaic contractions and ending with the caesura. Hence, in actuality, both the translator and the critics have the same dominant. This kind of approach that regards very specific levels of the expression plane (metre, prosody) as dominant, is not characteristic of translating the classics only but becomes standardized in poetry translation and lasts throughout the whole Soviet period.

**The 1960s, Sepamaa and Hemingway.** The naturalness and idiomaticity of the target language as criteria of artistic prose translation gain more and more prominence and in fact become a hallmark of Estonian literary translation during the Soviet era from the late 1950s–1960s onwards. Together with that, the opposition between **mechanical** and **creative translation** becomes a frequent analytical means for describing translations in reviews. Thus, especially from the 1960s onward, several critics repeat the following thought: "Translation has to be literary [~artistic] and so adequate both in content and form as if the author had written directly in Estonian" (Sepamaa 1967: 66). Henrik Sepamaa, himself a prolific translator, is also one of the most outspoken supporters of the **compensation method** in translation. Since due to linguistic differences not all stylistic peculiarities of the original can be adequately transferred in translation, literary translators are encouraged to use the compensation method, that is, to compensate for losses in one part of their translation with more pronounced stylistic devices elsewhere if considered appropriate (and where the original itself is using more neutral devices). Sepamaa argues that if translators do not use the compensation method, translations will inevitably be poorer and more boring than their originals (Sepamaa 1967: 70–71).

Many writings of those times address the question how to reconcile the demands placed on the translator who needs to convey an author's style with the means of a different language. Among others, Urve Lehtsalu (1965) discusses problems of recreating Hemingway's style in Estonian. She argues that attempts to imitate Hemingway's style as closely as possible usually fail, resulting in a style reminiscent of a child's writing. Lehtsalu (1965: 335, 336) brings examples of how repetitions of whole sentences characteristic of Hemingway's style have been imitatively translated into Estonian and complements the examples with her own more natural-sounding versions that replace full repetition with an elliptic sentence. Lehtsalu argues that in order to translate Hemingway's terse and natural-seeming dialogue into Estonian, it is not sufficient to imitate the author's manner of expression: we must not

ignore the characteristics of colloquial Estonian such as the “extensive use of particles, modal and other adverbs (*aga, ju, küll, ometi, siiski* etc.), also the use of suffix *-ki*” (Lehtsalu 1965: 334). According to the critic, the linguistic differences make it rather inevitable that the “laconic, seemingly emotionless manner of expression characteristic of colloquial English must often be replaced with a more distinctive one [in Estonian translation]” (ibid.). Lehtsalu (1965: 334, 335) brings several examples of what she considers very successful renditions, e.g.:

“This is country,” Bill said – “Näe, kus alles maastik,” ütles Bill [~ “Look, what a landscape,” said Bill]

“Aren’t you interested?” Bill asked – “Noh, kas ei huvita vōi?” küsis Bill [~ “Well, doesn’t interest you or what?” asked Bill]

“Lucky beggars,” said Krum – “Neil sunnikutel veab,” ütles Krum [~ “These bastards are lucky,” said Krum]

Here again we can see that the critic endorses the same kind of translation principle as her preferred translator: not the principle of accurate (here, imitative) translation, but creative, artistic translation.

**The 1980s, Rajandi.** A similar creative-artistic approach to translation has been observed to be characteristic of Henno Rajandi, one of Estonian model literary translators whose career as a translator extends over the greater part of the Soviet occupation, from the end of the 1950s into the 1990s. Analysing Rajandi’s 1985 translation of Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* along with several examples from Rajandi’s other translations, Anne Lange observes that Rajandi’s translations are characterized by a wide variety of translation shifts from the change in point of view and breaking up or merging of sentences to explicitation and the change in modality etc. (Lange 2015: 151). To bring a few of examples of a common practice of *addition* in Rajandi’s translation of *Pride and Prejudice* (examples are from Lange 2015: 171, 172):

Poor Eliza! – to be only just tolerable – Vaene Eliza... Kurb on olla võrdlemisi talutav [Poor Eliza... It is sad to be comparatively tolerable]

Such girls – nii noortelt tüdrukutelt [such young girls]

They held her in contempt for it – nad teda sellepärast südamepõhjas põlastasid [at the bottom of their heart they held her in contempt for it]

The day that was to make him the happiest of men – päeva, mis teeb kosilasest kõige õnnelikuma mehe päikese all [the day that was to make the suitor the happiest of men under the sun]

Rajandi is a good example of a congenial translator whose best translations perhaps indeed reach the effect desired: the creation of the illusion that the original author had written directly in Estonian. Rajandi expressly follows the principle of creative-artistic translation, and accuracy of translation is for him, at least sometimes, of secondary importance. Of course, creative translation implies the problem of the border between creative translation and adaptation, but in Estonian translation reviews this has been topicalized with much lesser intensity than the too strict, mechanical translation.

To sum up, the focus of Estonian literary translation in the decades following the Second World War is increasingly on the artistic, creative translation practice that maximally uses the resources of the Estonian language in order to convey both the style and content of the source text: “[...] from the end of the 1950s until the end of the 1990s translators rather unanimously shared the conviction that literary translation is creative by its nature” (Lange 2015: 143). The present-day author Hasso Krull has referred to the 1960s and 1970s as the era when the standard of literary translation became established: “Now [in the 1960–70s] the standard is ready. There emerge certain principles what a translated sentence must look like, what kind of losses are allowed, and how much the translator himself can add to the text. Translations homogenize. In response to homogenization there appear some experiments, but in the main the standard stays the same until the beginning of the 1990s when the scene suddenly becomes varicoloured again.” (Krull 1998: 81–82). It has to be emphasized, however, that the understanding of what is artistic or creative translation undergoes some changes since the 1920s–1930s: in the earlier period, creative prose translation is still rather form-oriented, while after the Second World War literary translations become more content-oriented. On the other hand, poetry translation remains (with very few exceptions) mostly form-oriented.

Since regaining independence

Speaking of poetry translation, one of the most interesting translation events since the regaining of independence in 1992 took place in 2000 together with the major wave of interest in Baudelaire, when a number of new translations

were published in journals and even two collections of translations of Baudelaire's poems were published. Contemplations over how to translate French syllabic meters, especially the Alexandrine verse, into Estonian started already before the war and Ants Oras published in 1931 a paper "On Rendering French Syllabic Verse in Estonian Language: Reflections and Proposals" (in English, Oras 2015), where he discusses the methods how to translate it in a way that it would function as an Alexandrine in Estonian as well as possible. He does not even consider the non-equimetrical approach. The next translations and their reviews are in the same spirit and when a selection from Baudelaire's "The Flowers of Evil" is published in Estonian in 1967, translated by several outstanding authors, including Ain Kaalep and Ants Oras, the poems are, of course, rendered equimetricaly.

One collection published in 2000 contains the reprinted classical translations, which follow the standards of the Estonian canon of poetry translation, including the equimetricity and pure rhymes (in addition to Oras's and Sang's translations there are also translations by a present-day author Indrek Hirv).

The other collection published in the same year is different. The translator is Tõnu Õnnepalu, an esteemed writer, poet and translator. Õnnepalu abandons the equimetrical principle and presents his reasons in the afterword of the book. He writes:

As concerns Baudelaire's verse meters, it is, of course, possible to imitate these in Estonian, but it demands sacrifices, which in my opinion are not worth the result. Although French in writing does not seem that much shorter than Estonian, in pronunciation the same thing in Estonian is shorter by one-third on an average, as compared to French. (Õnnepalu 2000: 485–486)

This is the same problem that Tombach-Kaljuvald had when translating *Hamlet*. Yet the solutions are different: for Tombach-Kaljuvald it is unthinkable to change the meter (even just by adding one foot) and the solution is to add extra lines, while Õnnepalu argues that since the meaning of Alexandrine is inevitably different in Estonian, its loss is not a severe one. Thus he dismisses the Formalist idea that has been governing the Estonian poetry translation for a long time, according to which content and form cannot be separated from each another, form also creates content and is a dynamic component of structure. Õnnepalu's approach, however, gives rise to heated polemics among literary critics over the methods of poetry translation.

With regard to literary prose translation, it can be said that the axiom of artistic, creative translation is revered also at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> as well as in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the critics lament the too mechanical, word-for-word or

simply “not sufficiently literary” translation just in the same manner as several decades earlier. For example, comparing a new translation of W. B. Yeats’ *Stories of Red Hanrahan* by one of the most prolific and renowned Estonian contemporary translators Krista Kaer (2002) with its first Estonian translation by Mart Luht (1939), writer Jüri Ehilvest concludes that Krista Kaer’s version is better – as a translation: but as literature it has significant shortcomings (Ehilvest 2003).

On the other hand, it appears that the liberties that the axiom of artistic-creative translation allows the translator to take are not as great as in the former decades. For instance, an esteemed contemporary writer and translator Indrek Koff says in an interview:

When a “creator’s sparkling nature” begins to show in my translations, please give me a sign! [...] A translator has to be a creator, otherwise he can bake only one variety of bread – but not all books are bread rolls! And at the same time the translator has to have humility in order not to deform the author according to this own taste. I think a good translator must be very empathic, which helps to direct the essential creativity into the channel fitting with the work created by the author translated. (Kaus 2010)

Thus, to sum up it appears that the ideal of literary translation has in general remained more or less the same for over a century. As at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, so also at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century a literary translator is expected to (“must”) first understand the author and the work translated and, second, convey it in such form that is regarded adequate. What this “adequate” more specifically consists in is decided by the more specific norms prevailing in different periods. A formalist understanding that the content plane and the expression plane are in an active and dynamic relationship and that giving up on conveying one of them means doing harm also to the other plane, comes forth at various periods both in prose and poetry. In poetry it is through the relationship of content and verse structure, in prose style and language.

In case of poetry translations even such experiments have been discouraged where a different *Skopos* has motivated the translation of the dominant, i.e. when for a textbook verse is not translated using a poetic metre or when in academic texts verse is translated word-for-word into prose. Thus, although at times there seems to have been more freedom and experimenting, the mainstream has nevertheless been such that the translator is expected to convey the dominant of the source text.

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