METHIS

Totentanz and the Graveyard Poetry: About the Baltic German Reception of English Graveyard Poetry[1]

Kairit Kaur

Abstract: This paper explores the Baltic German reception of English graveyard poetry. The first translation of a graveyard poem was published in 1783 by Gottlieb Schlegel (Gray's "Elegy"). Next, a poem by Elisa von der Recke is analysed in its dialogue with Blair's "The Grave" and Schiller's "Resignation". The earliest and the most often talked about graveyard poem with the longest reception was Edward Young's "Night-Thoughts". Heinrich Mutschmann, professor for English at the University of Tartu, interpreted it as late as 1939.

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As I was gathering material for my doctoral dissertation about women who wrote poetry in the Baltic provinces of Estland, Livland and Courland in the years 1654–1800 (see Kaur 2013), I came across an extremely exciting occasional poem that had been printed in Tallinn in 1759, preserved in the Library of the Estonian National Archive, EAA.A2.220 (IV-166). It is the first occasional poem signed by a woman in Estland (Northern Estonia) after the Great Northern War (1700–1721)—signed by "all the maternal female first cousins" of the unmarried Baroness Anna Christiana von Delwig who died young. The poem, written in alexandrine verse, depicts the cousins' dialogue with Death. The relatives of the late person blame Death for hurriedly bereaving them of their loved one (see Kaur 2009, 17, reference 17), and Death replies:

Ihr die ihr mich so haß't, so tadelt und so schmähet
Gut! ich gedenck es euch, ihr habt nicht ew'ge Jahre
Komt! sehet Gottes Hand! sehet was hier stehet
Ich rufe jung und alt, der Reihe nach zur Bahre.
Ich bin des Herren Knecht, ich thu was er befiehlet? [*sic*! i.e.!]
Ich trage das herbey, worauf die Allmacht ziehlet.
Haß't immer meine That, verfluchet mein Beginnen;
Ich lache alle dem, ihr könnt doch nichts gewinnen.

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Gewiß! ihr Freundin irr't, ihr habt euch selbst vergessen;
Wiß't ihr vielleicht die Zeit, wenn eur Sarg wird gemessen?
Wen hat das beste Loos, wohl unter euch getroffen?
Christianen oder euch? gewiß! ihr müß't noch hoffen,
Das was Sie schon besitzt, dereinst noch zu erlangen.
Inzwischen kan Sie dort, da ihr hier leidet, prangen.
Sie wählte nicht der Art, wie sonst die meisten wählen
Der Cranz der jene, hier, als Braut nur zeitlich ziert
Der ists mit dem Sie wird dem Heyland zugeführt;
Um sich als Braut mit Ihm auf ewig zu vermählen.[2]
(Bey dem, den 8ten May 1759)

Here, one may discern allusions to the local culture, in particular to the painting "Dance of Death" (*danse macabre*) by the Lübeck master Bernt Notke in the St. Nicholas Church in Tallinn, which dates from the late 15th century, and also to the caption to the painting in Low German (see Notke, Freytag, and Vogeler 1992; Freytag 1993). At the same time, these lines recall something far more contemporary than the medieval Low German text in Estland. For example:

When men my scythe and darts supply
How great a King of Fears am I!
They view me like the last of things;
They make, and then they dread my stings.
Fools! If you less provok'd your fears
No more my spectre-form appears.
Death's but a path that must be trod,
If man wou'd ever pass to God:
A port of calms, a state of ease
From the rough rage of swelling seas.
(Parnell 1760, 129)

2 [My translation]: You that so much hate me, scold me and ridicule me / Well then! I understand you, your years are not endless / Come! see the arm of God! look at what is here / I am calling the young and the old, one after another, to the coffin. / I am a servant of the Lord, obeying his orders? [sic! there must probably be an exclamation mark here!—K. K.] / I am delivering the Almighty's will. / Always hate my deeds, curse my entreprise; / I am laughing at all that, as you have nothing to gain from it. / Indeed! You, lady friend, are mistaken, you have grown oblivious; / Do you know the time when your coffin is measured? / Which of you has drawn the best lot? / Christiane or you? Indeed! You are still to hope / That one day, you achieve what she already has. / Meantime, she may feel proud over there while you are still suffering. / She did not choose the way that the majority chooses. / The wreath that adorns the brides here temporarily / Is the one that adorns her while she is delivered to the Saviour / To marry Him as His bride forever.

These lines come from the poem "A Night-Piece on Death" (1721) by Thomas Parnell, which is considered to be one of the oldest samples of English graveyard poetry, popular in the 18th century. Besides this poem, "The Grave" (1743) by Robert Blair, the long poem "The Complaint: or, Night-Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality" (1742–1745) by Edward Young, usually just referred to as "Night-Thoughts", and the pastoral ode "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (1751) by Thomas Gray, are also counted as classical graveyard poetry. Therefore, the question arose, how much the author of the dedicatory poem to Anna Christiana von Delwig might have been influenced, besides local models, by the pre-romantic English poetical trend, fashionable in the 18th century. Considering the rhetorical fireworks in the text, the author must have been a learned man rather than any of the female cousins, as access to the study of rhetoric was complicated for women due to the circumstances of that time. However, I could not find any overview of the Baltic German reception of English graveyard poetry or of English literature in Tallinn, or in Estonia as a whole. To date, I have written a preliminary introductory overview of the Baltic German reception of English-language poetry and drama in (Northern) Estonia, based on subclass 12 of poetry and drama at the library of the Literary Society of Estland (Estländische Literärische Gesellschaft, 1842–1940), preserved in the Baltic section of the Tallinn University Academic Library (Kaur 2018). This article focuses more narrowly and closely on the search for traces of the Baltic German reception of English graveyard poetry in the second half of the 18th and the first half of the 19th century.

When did the English graveyard poetry reach the Baltic Germans?

The representations of death in the late Middle Ages and in the second half of the 18th century are separated by a long period which cannot be focused upon here (for the examples of such discussion see Ars Moriendi 2013 and Kodres 2017). However, these developments could be lightly marked by an interesting transitional form between painting and printing, namely the vignettes in the occasional poems printed in the territory of Estonia. Such vignettes have been discussed in a recent article by the book historian Tiiu Reimo. The same kind of personification of death as in Notke's Dance of Death and in Parnell's poem can be seen in vignettes representing the skull or the Reaper. According to Tiiu Reimo's observation, vignettes with the Death as the Reaper were popular in this area in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. The motif of skulls, which was preferred in local vignettes in the Baroque Age, was used less frequently in the early 18th century. Instead, the motif of the coffin grew popular. In the second half of the 18th century, representations of the coffin gradually vanished. In the last quarter of the century, the hourglass, the scythe and a wing

became the favourite constituents of one small vignette, the use of which can be identified with the period 1776–1828. Once again, the motif of the skull became popular, now in the Rococo style, and this was the case in Tallinn at the time when Axel Heinrich Lindfors became the printer there. In 1775, Lindfors began to use the vignette with a skull entwined with rose twigs, which remained in use till the end of the 18th century (Reimo, forthcoming). Taking such observations into consideration, one can say that the poem dedicated to Baroness Delwig represents an interesting intermediary or transitional phase, as the heading vignette shows a coffin but the vignette at the end depicts a skull. True, the skull is represented in the form which was popular in the early 18th century, along with the motto *Nemo hic excipitur.* Could this re-popularisation of the skull motif be explained by the arrival of the influence of the English graveyard poetry in these areas?

The attentive reader has already noticed that the publication which I relied on for the quotation of the passage of Parnell's poem comes from the collection of poems published in London in 1760, *Poems On Several Occasions*. *Written By Dr. Thomas Parnell, Late Archdeacon of Clogher; And published by Mr. Pope.* To my present knowledge, this is the only book by Parnell in Estonian libraries. Although it was published just a year after the poem of mourning dedicated to Anna Christiana von Delwig, one cannot claim with certainty that it reached Estonia immediately after its publication. Before arriving at the library of the Literary Society of Estland, the book had belonged to Friedrich Wilhelm Schüdlöffel (1791–1837). According to the inscription in the copy (XII-338), he had acquired the work in 1817. Having come from Jõelähtme (German Jegelecht) near Tallinn, he studied philology at the University of Tartu in 1807–1810; subsequently he worked in St. Petersburg as a private teacher, became the inspector of the Tallinn Cathedral School in 1817, and later a teacher and a superior teacher, in which positions he continued until his early death in 1837 (Album Academicum 1852, 15; Album Academicum 1889, 24). Thus, it can be asserted with certainty that Parnell was read in the province of Estland in the early decades of the 19th century, but it is not sure whether the same is true for the second half of the 18th century.

Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" in the translation of Gottlieb Schlegel

Browsing Baltic German magazines of the Enlightenment era, one gets the impression that the Baltic Germans' acquaintance with the English graveyard poetry started with later works than Parnell's "A Night-Piece". The only translation of classical graveyard poetry that was published in the magazines of this region in the 18th century, was "Elegie auf einen Dorfkirchhof, nach dem Englischen des Dichters

Gray" ("Elegy in a Country Churchyard, after the English [Poem] of the Poet Gray"), published anonymously in Riga in 1783 in the first magazine of general knowledge in the Baltics, *Vermischte Aufsätze und Urtheile über gelehrte Werke, ans Licht gestellt von unterschiedenen Verfassern in und um Liefland* (*Miscellaneous Articles and Opinions on Learned Works, Brought into Light by a Number of Authors in and around Livonia*). This magazine aimed to "unite and inspire the Baltic literati for intellectual work" (Jürjo 2004, 217). It was published by the famous Riga publisher Johann Friedrich Hartknoch in 1774–1783 and edited by Gottlieb Schlegel, the rector of the Riga Cathedral School. Alongside writings about theology, philosophy and economy, the magazine also published belletristic works. The translation of Gray's elegy appeared in the third issue of the second volume of the magazine, in the section "Vermischte Gedichte" ("Miscellaneous poems", see Gray 1783), next to another poem inspired by English poetry: "Ode wider den Argwohn. Nach dem Englischen des Akenside" ("Ode against Suspicion. After the English [poem] of Akenside", on pages 151–161; modelled after Mark Akenside's "Ode against Suspicion", 1745). Since the poems were not signed, it is not quite certain who translated or adapted them. Unless there were several authors, they were most likely adapted by the editor Schlegel himself. At any rate, the first poem of that collection, "Ode zum Preise die Religion Jesu bey der Einweihung einer neuen Kirche" had appeared earlier, in 1766, under his name in the Fröhlich printing house, with the title "Ode zum Preise die Religion Jesu. Der Einweihung der Katharinen-Kirche zu Bickern gewidmet von Gottlieb Schlegel".

Julius Heinrich Gottlieb Schlegel (1739–1810) came from Königsberg. At the university of his native city, he had studied theology, philology and law. Having come to Riga in 1765, he worked as rector of the Cathedral School until 1780 and as the inspector of the same educational institution from 1782 to 1790. While working as rector, he acquired the degree of Doctor of Theology at Erlangen University in 1777. After that, Schlegel became a clergyman at the Riga Cathedral and St. Peter's Church. By the end of his career in Riga, he had become the main preacher at St. Peter's Church in 1790. Subsequently, he was invited to Pomerania where he became the general superintendent and professor of theology at Greifswald University.

During his Riga years, Schlegel had undertaken a number of journeys for the refinement of his education: to St. Petersburg in 1768, to Germany in 1771 and, as a real grand tour, to Germany, the Netherlands, England and France in 1782 (DBBL 1970, 681). It may have been the last of these journeys that gave him the inspiration and impetus to render English poetry accessible to the Baltic reader, though an interest in English literature had already been evident in his earlier writings, such as the programmatic work "Von einigen Mitteln, den Werth der Poesie zu erhöhen und ihren Nutzen zu befördern" ("Of Certain Devices for Raising the Worth of Poetry

and Increasing its Benefits", Riga 1779). As was characteristic of the Enlightenment era, in this work Schlegel promotes the poetic ideal of unifying entertainment and benefit, and highlights the contribution of English authors to such poetry:

How many profound philosophical poems, and besides them, how many on arts and civil activities, has the English Parnassus produced? Dyer has thoroughly described the production of wool (as has Vida the making of silk). Granger, in one of his poems, offers instruction on all tasks related to cane; [. . .] Armstrong has written on the craft of preserving health; Downman on the raising of youth; Branston on the art of state. (Schlegel 1779, 7)

Schlegel does not mention Mark Akenside or Thomas Gray here, but obviously the works of both of these men have been translated for the "advancement of virtues" and as examples of the masterful "animation with spirit and colours" of "difficult topics", which Schlegel declared to be the task of poetry in his programmatic writing.[3]In the wording of his translation of Gray's elegy, Schlegel stays rather close to the original, following its pictorial language. At times, he sounds more idyllic, or more "homespun" than the original, as when he replaces "darkness" with "peace" and has the peasant heading for home at a much quicker pace than in the original. Compare the first stanzas:

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The plowman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me. (Gray s.a.)

Die Abendglocke tönt dem Tage, der schon scheidet.

3 Der Werth einer Sache wird im gemeinen Leben erhöhet, wenn ihr Nutze erweitert, und sie zu wichtigern und anständigern Gegenständen verwandt wird, als sie bisher gebraucht worden. Pflanzen, die sonst eines kützelnden Wohlgeschmacks oder eines erfrischenden Geruchs wegen geliebt wurden, gewinnen einen erhöheten Werth, wenn man sie zu Arbeiten der Manufacturen nützet, oder sie zu einer andern wichtigen Wohlfahrt der Menschen, etwa zu einem wirksamen Mittel gegen tödtliche Krankheiten tüchtig befunden wird. Die Dichtkunst würde also in ihrem Werthe zunehmen, wenn sie größere, und wichtigere Vortheile zu gewähren suchte; Vortheile, meine ich, für die Ausbreitung der Wissenschaften; Vortheile für die Beförderung der Tugend. Und in der That, die Muse der Dichtkunst kann eine gefällige Lehrerin der Wissenschaft, eine stark in die Empfindung redende Predigerin der Sittenlehre, ein lauter Herold der Geschichte werden. Zwar ist die [6/7] Art des Denkens und des Vortrags in den Werken der Dichter von derjenigen unterschieden, welche in den dogmatischen Schriften geübet wird: aber wird nicht eben dieser Unterschied die Geschicklichkeit und das Verdienst des Dichters erhöhen, wenn er schwere Materien mit dem Geist und den Farben seiner Kunst zu beseelen im Stande ist? (Schlegel 1779, 6–7).

Träg schleicht die Heerde hin, da sie sich satt geweidet.
Der Feldmann eilt im Lauf der Hütte schmachtend zu,
Und läßt die Welt mir und der Ruh. (Gray 1783, 162)

Generally, the translation appears slightly more "baroque" and heavier than the simple, airy and brisk original. One of the reasons may be that Gray's elegy is mostly written in iambic pentameter and in quatrains (abab), whereas the verses in the translation, though iambic, vary in length (the syllables number 13/13/12/8) and are in couplets (aabb). If the last verse in the stanza form used by Schlegel also contained twelve syllables, one would be dealing with the heroic alexandrine, the verse form from which Schlegel most likely obtained inspiration in his search for a suitable counterpart to the stanza form. In German secular baroque poetry, pastorals (*Schäferlied*) were written in alexandrines. As late as the 18th century, the same stanza form was used in funeral poems (Frank 1993, 360: 4.120). Schlegel probably saw these two aspects intermingling in Gray's elegy. The last, short verse might have been a concession to more modern times, to the anacreontic and rococo, the joking sense of life, fond of idylls, which often expressed its moods in 4-foot iambics or trochaics. It may have also been meant to recall the more popular stanza forms that resembled the sounds of folk songs. On the other hand, the "baroque" or learned flavour is added by using ancient mythology, which was quite common in Baltic German poetry in the seventies and eighties of the 18th century. To a certain extent, this may also have been inspired by Ludwig Heinrich Christoph Hölty's poem "Elegie auf den Dorfkirchhof" (1771), also shaped according to Gray's model, in which the names of the deities of antiquity can likewise be found. Hölty's poem was published in the famous almanac of muses of Göttingen that was studiously read in the Baltics. Compare the 5th stanzas, Morn versus Aurora (it is also interesting to note that in Gray, straw (*Streu*) is connected with swallows, in Schlegel, considering the local peculiarities, with people):

The breezy call of incense-breathing Morn,
The swallow twitt'ring from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed. (Gray s.a.)

Aurorens Wiederkunft, wenn Thaue Felder salben,
Der Hähne Heroldston, das Zwitschern muntrer Schwalben,
Des Kühhorns heisrer Klang durchbebt nicht mehr ihr Ohr,
Und ruft sie von der Streu hervor. (Gray 1783, 163)

Elisa von der Recke's Dialogue with Blair's "The Grave" and Schiller's "Resignation"

Adaptation did not always mean translation from the direct source. Thus, Robert Blair's poem "The Grave" seems to have influenced the poetry of Baltic Germans in a less direct way. A set of motifs similar to Blair's poem can be found in the short, four-stanza poem "The Skulls" ("Die Todtenköpfe") by the Courland poetess Elisa von der Recke (the author, born von Medem, 1754–1833, became famous by exposing the false count Cagliostro; for the latest wide-ranging overview of von der Recke see Leyh, Müller, and Viehöfer 2018), which was first published in Schiller's "Die Horen" in 1797. Death destroys beauty:

Sieh den Todtenkopf, wie hohl!
Schönes Mädchen, gaubst du wohl,
Daß ihn Schönheit schmückte?
Gräßlich ist sein Reitz dahin!
Und wem kommt es in den Sinn,
Daß sein Kuß entzückte? (Recke 1806, 76)

Beauty—thou pretty plaything, dear deceit!
That steals so softly o'er the stripling's heart,
And gives it a new pulse, unknown before,
The Grave discredits thee: thy charms expunged,
Thy roses faded, and thy lilies soil'd,
What hast thou more to boast of? Will thy lovers
Flock round thee now, to gaze and do thee homage? (Blair 2015)

Death erases differences of estate. The mighty king and the cruel tyrant are indistinguishable from the ordinary mortal person:

Jener wüste Schädel da—
Wie? du tritts ihm nun so nah?
Ahnst nicht Königswürde?
Sieh nur, wie die Zeit ihn bleicht!
Einst gekrönt, war er vielleicht
Seines Volkes Bürde. (Recke 1806, 76–77)
Proud Royalty! how alter'd in thy looks!
How blank thy features, and how wan thy hue!
Son of the morning, whither art thou gone?

Where hast thou hid thy many-spangled head,
And the majestic menace of thine eyes,
Felt from afar? Pliant and powerless now,
Like new-born infant wound up in his swathes,
Or victim tumbled flat upon its back,
That throbs beneath the sacrificer's knife.
Mute must thou bear the strife of little tongues,
And coward insults of the base-born crowd,
That grudge a privilege thou never hadst,
But only hoped for in the peaceful grave,
Of being unmolested and alone.

[. . .] Here, too, the petty tyrant,
Whose scant domains geographer ne'er noticed,
And, well for neighbouring grounds, of arm as short;
Who fix'd his iron talons on the poor,
And gripp'd them like some lordly beast of prey;
Deaf to the forceful cries of gnawing hunger,
And piteous, plaintive voice of misery
(As if a slave was not a shred of nature,
Of the same common nature with his lord);
Now tame and humble, like a child that's whipp'd,
Shakes hands with dust, and calls the worm his kinsman;
Nor pleads his rank and birthright: Under ground
Precedency's a jest; vassal and lord,
Grossly familiar, side by side consume. (Blair 2015)

Death leaves the eloquent and the glib speechless. Compare:

Und der schlaue Höfling dort
Sprach vielleicht manch giftig Wort,
Spottete der Träne,
Die auf sein Gewissen rann.
Ha, wie grinset ihr mich an,
Lippenlose Zähne? (Recke 1806, 77)
Here the tongue-warrior lies, disabled now,
Disarm'd, dishonour'd, like a wretch that's gagg'd,
And cannot tell his ails to passers-by.

Great man of language!—whence this mighty change,
This dumb despair, and drooping of the head?
Though strong persuasion hung upon thy lip,
And sly insinuation's softer arts
In ambush lay about thy flowing tongue;
Alas, how chop-fallen now! Thick mists and silence
Rest, like a weary cloud, upon thy breast
Unceasing.—Ah! where is the lifted arm,
The strength of action, and the force of words,
The well-turn'd period, and the well-timed voice,
With all the lesser ornaments of phrase?
Ah! fled for ever, as they ne'er had been. (Blair 2015)

Nevertheless, Recke's poem ends on a different note than Blair's, who concludes with the Christian expectation of resurrection, comparing death to the night sleep of a little bird, who is about to wake and rise into the air (gain eternal life) at sunrise (the return of the Saviour). Elsewhere, the Courland poetess proceeded from the rather classical treatment, influenced by antiquity, of the soul as a butterfly (*psyche*) who, when the time is ripe, will abandon its pupa/shell and take flight as a winged creature (see, for example, the letter to Giacomo Casanova from 29 April 1798 [quoted after Watzlawick 2018, 144]; for Recke's treatment of the immortality of the soul see also Conrad 2018): "As the beautiful butterfly rises from the miserable shell of the pupa, so our thinking self will reappear in different shapes after leaving this body which was given for a brief period of time to the creature, capable of eternal happiness."

For Recke the soul is eternal. The body, the privileges, the talents are a temporary shell, not to be overestimated. In this, Recke and Blair are still quite similar, though on the theological level one might ask whether Blair proceeds from the resurrection of bodies after the Judgement Day (the bird does not undergo as complete transformation as the butterfly), or whether he just believes in the continuance of souls, as seems to be the case with Recke. However, Recke goes a step further than Blair, adding the aspect of earthly joy of life; as she is convinced of the immortality of the soul, she recommends not getting dismayed by the finality of everything earthly and not being misled onto the atheist, anti-religious path. Here, she argues not so much with Blair as with Friedrich Schiller's poem "Resignation" (1786). Recke was very much upset by this poem. To her, it seemed to abandon the doctrine of the immortality of the soul and thereby promote immorality (Rachel 1902, 330–331), leaving people merely the choice between pleasure (*Genuss*) and hope (*Hoffnung*).

The preference appeared to be for the former, as Schiller's poem ends with the words: "Was von der Minute ausgeschlagen, / Gibt keine Ewigkeit zurück" (Schiller 1876, chapter 30) = "The minutes thou neglectest, as they fade, / Are given back by no eternity! " (Schiller s.a.). On hearing the poem, Recke even demanded that Schiller refute his ungodly idea in some of his future poems, as she mentions in an entry in her diary from May the 31st, 1790 (Rachel 1902, 330). As no such poem appeared, Recke may have used Schiller's request for contributions (see Holmgren 2007, 128–149, 216–220) as a welcome chance to offer a kind of a poetic counter-argument of her own, published as a reply to the Weimar classic's work that had upset her. Recke could not limit herself to emphasising hope in the afterlife as a generally accepted truth. In her days, this had come to be strongly doubted. Rather, Recke tries to show that one possibility does not exclude another, but rather supports it: seeing skulls not only makes her hope for eternal life, but also leads her to appreciate the present earthly life, which she calls to be treated with warm affection.

Wohl uns, wenn es uns nicht irrt,
Was einst unsre Hülle wird,
Wenn auch wir erblassen.
Komm und laß uns sondern Graun,
Auf das frische Leben schaun,
Und es warm umfassen! (Recke 1806, 77)

Elisa von der Recke is not known to have had a command of English. Therefore, she was probably leaning on some direct or indirect intermediary models. For example, she might have gained inspiration from a translation of Blair's poem published in Regensburg in 1793. According to CERL—Heritage of the Printed Book Database, this seems to be the only German translation of Blair's "The Grave" which appeared in the 18th century in book format. The translation into German prose was done by Friedrich Christian August Berg (Blair 1793).

Young's "Night-Thoughts"—from the literature of devoutness of circles of friends to the psychological interpretation of Heinrich Mutschmann

The way Elisa von der Recke might have come across Blair's poem remains somewhat unclear, but she had certainly read Edward Young's "Night-Thoughts". This was mentioned by one of her first biographers, her long-time life partner since 1803, the German clerical poet and children's author Christoph August Tiedge, who discusses Elisa's beginnings as a clerical poetess in her youth, at the start of her unhappy marriage. He writes:

> In that isolation from everything that she was fond of, her heart was only addressed by the soft language of certain books: Gellert, Cronegk, Neander, the early works of Wieland, particularly Young's night-thoughts [my emphasis—K. K.] and other writings that corresponded with her feelings and stood in line with the receptivity of her spirit, now became the close friends of her lonely hours. Due to the consolation which she obtained from those writings, her withering soul straightened up and achieved an elevation which by giving up earthly things, turned to the spiritual world. (Tiedge 1818, 19)

There is a letter from Recke to her friend Doris Lieven from 10 February 1772 in her 1793 epistolary autobiography she compiled of letters written during her unhappy marriage (1771– 1778), in which she mentions Young in the same breath as the melancholy German poet Johann Friedrich von Cronegk, who similarly discusses the topic of eternity (Rachel 1900, 209). She connects the thought of eternal life with the idea of guardian spirits:

> For you, my Doris, the idea of guardian spirits is as holy, as dear as for myself. That idea has supported me a great deal these days! Thanks to that, I have overcome quite a few things with a joyous mind, which would have depressed me a great deal otherwise. (Rachel 1900, 210)

Further, she connects these thoughts with the idea of moral self-education and aspiration for greater virtuousness which she closely ties with Cronegk:

> Our Cronegk can see into my heart—I was protected and encouraged by the thought that one must aspire for the approval of blessed souls!—God is so great, so perfect, that one has to cultivate even more sublime virtues to rejoice at the approval of that purest creature, but the finite spirit also looks at the weaker virtue with sympathetic benevolence. You, noble Doris, understand me when I say that bliss is achieved by increasing the bliss of some blessed spirit! (Rachel 1900, 210)

As we know from Elisa von der Recke's written memories of her childhood and youth, she aspired to be worthy of her early departed mother whom her Latvian nanny always referred to as the model of goodness. "I am trying to win the love of that blessed soul by cleaning my heart of any ignoble passion; she will then be hovering around me as a guardian spirit!" She expresses her hope to Doris Lieven (Rachel 1900, 210).

Later, the idea of the immortality of the soul connected with the idea of guardian spirits also led Recke on erroneous paths. It was the desire to communicate with dear departed souls that led her into the trap of the confidence man Giuseppe Balsamo, also known as Count Cagliostro, who was visiting Mitau on his way to St.

Petersburg in 1779. The man offered the young lady an opportunity to attain contact with the souls of the dead and to be introduced into the requisite secret knowledge. By that time, in addition to her mother, the lady had lost her only child and her close brother. She was in deep despair. Afterwards, influenced by her friends, who were fond of the Enlightenment, and by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Nathan the Wise* (*Nathan der Weise*), she revised her attitude toward Cagliostro and abandoned the search for contact with departed souls through magic. However, she held fast to the idea of the immortality of the soul. As one might get the impression from the passage of Tiedge's biography, Recke not only read Young in solitude, but also frequently in the company of friends and relatives. For example, from the letter to Charlotte Stoltz of 23 June, 1772:

> Now all the girlfriends of my youth in Mitau are rejoicing!—they must be making dressing plans for tomorrow's ball. I am missed by my friend Lisette, my friend Stoltz, my sister and Lotte Hahn! With my good brother Fritz, I am also thinking about you, my dear ones! The soul of that wonderful youth is on its way to maturity. With him, this bleak castle does not look so forlorn at all. Once in a while, he reads parts of Young's "Night-Thoughts" aloud for me, or translates something from his favourite, Horace. (Rachel 1900, 35; about similar readings in common, see also page 437)

It was Young's extensive poem, consisting of nine "nights", "on life, death, and immortality" that appears to have been the best known work of the English graveyard poetry in the Baltics. Numerous copies of it can be found in Estonian libraries: in the Baltic section of the Tallinn University Academic Library, in the Estonian National Library, as well as in the Library of the University of Tartu, both in the English original and in German and French translations. During the period surveyed here, French was the most widespread foreign language among Baltic Germans, while rather few knew English. "Night-Thoughts" may have been the first work of English graveyard poetry with which the Baltic Germans had contact. The first excerpts in German were published in 1743, alongside the English original, in Part Seven of the anthology *Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott* (*Earthly Delight in God*) by the Hamburg alderman, the poet Barthold Hinrich Brockes. Part Seven of the anthology was definitely read in the Baltic region: an extract from it, actually from one of Brockes' own poems, was used as the motto for the first longer Baltic German nature poem, the verse narrative, *Hinter-Bergens allgemeine und eigene Winter- und Sommerlust* (*The General and the Specific Winter and Summer Joys from Beyond the Hill*, Riga 1745) by Johann Bernhard von Fischer. Passages from the "Night-Thoughts" in the German translation of the Swiss Johann Jakob Bodmer were also published in Zürich in 1749. A couple of years later, in 1751–1752, these were fol-

lowed by the first—initially monolingual and uncommented—translation by the German Johann Arnold Ebert who came from Hamburg and was a teacher, later professor, of English at Collegium Carolinum in Braunschweig, who also taught the language to the local crown prince (Pelters and Socha 2017). Parts of that translation, although in slightly more recent editions (from the period 1755–1763), have been preserved in the library of the Literary Society of Estland (1842–1940), which forms the foundation of the Baltic collection of the Tallinn University Academic Library (location mark XII-682). Thus, it was theoretically possible that the scholar who wrote the poem of mourning in memory of young Baroness Delwig could have been familiar at least through a German translation with that classic of graveyard poetry. Unfortunately, references to the owners of the book are missing from copies of that translation. Therefore, there can presently be no definite answer to the question of when this version of the translation may have reached Estonia.

What became really famous was the commented edition of the translation with parallel texts in German and English, first published by the heirs of Ludolph Schröder in Braunschweig in the years 1760–1771. Several copies and later printings of that issue have also been preserved in Estonia's libraries, including a few references to the provenance of the book. A first volume of *Night-Thoughts*, published in 1760, seems to have originated directly from the Halle Library in Germany (Hallische Biblioth. 1763, XII-342), possibly from the time of someone's university studies. At the disposal of Friedrich Wilhelm Schüdlöffel, mentioned above, there was a second, revised edition from 1768 (XII-383). It may have been through that work that he arrived at his interest in Parnell. Of the classical graveyard poets, Parnell appears to be the latest to reach the sphere of interest of local readers, since access to it required a more serious anglophilia, an interest in philology, and a command of English.

For the wider circle of readers in the region, Parnell probably remained unknown. A revised and supplemented edition of *Night-Thoughts*, printed in the Schwickert publishing house in Leipzig in 1790, belonged to the book donation of Maria Aurora L'Estocq, which formed the foundation of the University of Tartu Library (R XIV 2335, impression MGL). Maria Aurora L'Estocq (born von Mengden, 1720–1808) was a noblewoman born in the Latvian part of Livonia, a grandchild of Gustav von Mengden, known in Baltic German literary history as a clerical poet. Life had taken her to the court of St. Petersburg, where in 1747 she married the personal physician of Empress Yelizaveta, Count Johann Hermann (Jean Armand de) L'Estocq. When he fell into disfavour, she followed him both to prison and into exile (GHBR 1929, 1196; Müller-Dietz 1985).

Three issues of *Night-Thoughts* in English have been preserved in Estonian libraries: the Baltic section of the Tallinn University Academic Library holds two volumes of an issue published in London, ostensibly in 1743, but in fact around the year 1750, without data about the publisher or printer (XII-222). A new edition, corrected by the author, was published by Andrew Millar and Robert and James Dodsley in London in 1760 (XII-2540). The latter edition belonged to the library of the Tallinn Cathedral School. Thus, we can surmise that "Night-Thoughts" became part of the Baltic German school canon. A copy of an edition published in London in 1787 has been preserved (4 XIV A-36595) at the University of Tartu Library. French translations by Pierre Le Tourneur ("Les nuits d'Young") have been preserved at the University of Tartu Library , published both in Paris by Cailleau (1783; 4 XIV A-36220) and in Amsterdam by Harrevelt (1770; 4 XIX A-37048); a selection of "Night-Thoughts", "Esprit, maximes et pensées d'Young, extraits de ses nuits par l'Auteur de l'Ouvrage intitulé L'Ame élevée à dieu", translated by Barthélemy Baudrand (Paris 1787, RBL-787/Young) is preserved at the National Library in Tallinn.

What fascinated the Baltic Germans of the Enlightenment era (which in the Baltic region lasted approximately from 1740/1760 till 1840) in this voluminous poem on the topic of death? The Estonian literary critic and playwright Hugo Raudsepp (1883–1952), who lived about a century later, merely shakes his head at it in confusion in his essay "The Awakening and Development of Emotional Life in English Literature in the 18th Century", published in 1923: "The obstinacy with which Young keeps playing his harp on the same plaintive string, strikes the modern reader as not only tiresome, but even frightening" (Raudsepp 2012, 124). The motives for reading it must have been as different as there were readers. Elisa von der Recke had lost her mother at an early age after her mother gave birth to her brother. As a young woman, she had lost her brother and daughter to illness. She suffered from relationships with her relatives whom she perceived as being spiteful, and from her unhappy marriage. Thus, she was doubtless fascinated by the idea of the immortality of the soul, emphasised in the poem. The same idea might have offered consolation to the Livonian noblewoman Maria Aurora L'Estocq, who had experienced court intrigues and life in prison and exile. "Night-Thoughts" belonged to the literature of devoutness, *Erbauungsliteratur*, literally the "literature of self-edification". Besides the opportunity to contemplate the great topics of life, the schoolteacher of the early 19th century may have been interested in the acquisition of "Night-Thoughts" for the reason that it was commonly recognised at the time as a canonical literary work, to be discussed with the students. The bilingual issue with parallel texts may have been used for the development of English skills. The ownership of Young's works

may have also indicated a general interest in the English language and culture. As an interesting example, one may point to the issue of Young's collected works, printed in Mannheim in 1780, which belonged to the Tallinn merchant family, the Kochs (the Baltic collection of the Tallinn University Academic Library, XII-114). The book was solely in German, but among the family's possessions, we also find the reader *The Select Miscellanies In Prose And Verse, For The Improvement And Entertainment Of Such, As Have A Mind To Learn This Language. Compiled By B. Tanner, Prof. L. A*. (the Baltic collection of the Tallinn University Academic Library, XII-285). In addition to "Night-Thoughts", Young's *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759) also appears to have been a familiar work in this region. For example, it was discussed in the essay "Zerstreute Anmerkungen über die Dichtkunst" ("Diverse Remarks on Poetry" 1774) in the magazine *Vermischte Aufsätze und Urtheile*, edited by Gottlieb Schlegel, mentioned above.

However, even more mysterious than reasons why Young's "Night-Thoughts" so captivated the Enlightenment reader may be the fact that in this area, interest in Young's poems appears to have persisted for an exceptionally long time. Both in England and in Germany, interest in this work seems to have waned by the middle of the 19th century. At least, the appearance of new editions of the work had ended by that time. The main arguments of literary scholarship on Young's German reception emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Yet even in the late 1930s, the professor of English philology of the University of Tartu, Heinrich Mutschmann (1885–1955) writes a number of articles to explain the phenomenon of Young's "Night-Thoughts" (see Mutschmann 1936; 1939). Was this an argument in reply to Raudsepp's opinions? Or was it an attempt to explain the meaning of the work to the literary group Arbujad ("Sorcerers" or "Soothsayers"), who had gathered around the University of Tartu's other, extraordinary professor of English philology, Ants Oras (1900–1982). For these writers, were the paragons of poetry rather the English romantics, Pushkin, Goethe, Heine, and members of the French Parnassus? Or did Mutschmann wish to polemicise with the English and perhaps also (Baltic) German tradition of treating Young as a paragon of morality? In any case, Mutschmann (1939, 13) feels the necessity to refute widespread prejudices about the work and to offer "the real and definitive key to the strange mystery of the famous poem".

Thus, in the introductory passage of his article "The origin and meaning of Young's Night Thoughts", which appeared at the Matthiesen publishing house in Tartu in 1939, Mutschmann states:

> As he [Young] was the author of a famous poem dealing with religious problems, it was considered desirable by the official writers of the history of English Literature to represent him as an

> intensely pious and orthodox person. This legend has to be completely abandoned if a correct interpretation of the Night Thoughts is to be obtained. (Mutschmann 1939, [3])

By producing this argument, Mutschmann was referring to the essay "Worldliness and Other-worldliness: the poet Young", by George Eliot (the pen name of Mary Ann Evans). Not questioning Eliot's evaluation of Young's moral aspect, Mutschmann nevertheless claims that the final word cannot be left to Eliot: "It is the duty of the literary historian to probe deeper into the complicated psychology of this unquestioned poetic genius [. . .] (4). (This can also be read as a polemic with Estonian critics: *Raudsepp, you are not delving deep enough!*) In his further arguments, Mutschmann refers to Hippolyte Taine, who observed that England is exceptionally rich in personalities characterised by *hypertrophie du moi*, the hypertrophy of the self, or an extreme individualism (4–5). He also agrees with Taine. However, he adds that the country is also represented by individuals with an exceptionally fine social nerve, such as Shakespeare, Walter Scott and Charles Dickens. Among self-centred types, Mutschmann lists Marlowe, Milton, Byron, Oscar Wilde and others, including Young. "The reader of his "Night Thoughts" cannot long remain in ignorance on this point. Young, too, is obviously interested in his own self only" (5). Referring to the exclamation found in "Night-Thoughts", "Man! Know thyself!", "all wisdom centres there", Mutschmann likewise explains the reason for Young's preference for the night: at that time, there are few external disturbances. "This is why he was justified in titling his poem, that specimen of passionate self-revelation, the "Night Thoughts"" (5). Mutschmann considered Young to be a follower of Bishop Berkeley, according to whom the whole world of the senses is just a reflection of his own mind or "reason", without real existence. "The soul is the only reality that will endure," he quotes "Night-Thoughts" for evidence (6). To support his thoughts, he also produces quotations from Young's treatise "Conjectures on Original Composition", which focuses on the figure of the original genius (6–7), "completely independent, original and self-reliant" (7). As Mutschmann points out, the treatise did not gain much attention in England but it greatly influenced the development of German literature, bringing about a wave of young authors who regarded themselves as "original geniuses", including the young Goethe (7). In an imaginary dialogue with Oras, the Arbujad, and Raudsepp, he might say: *Nota bene, friends of Goethe! The "tiresome" Young has his merits in the development of your paragon and poetic ideal! And if you wish to find the entire world in yourselves, take into account that the result may turn out to be something as monotonous and monomaniac as you find Young's poem to be.* But Mutschmann goes on to ask, what it was that Young found in the depths of his soul, and gives a positive reply: "It was the awful question of survival after death to which he found no satis-

factory answer" (7), "His self-centeredness made him desire survival with the full force of his emotion: "Religion's all!" we hear him exclaim" (7–8) and "Eternal life is nature's ardent wish" (8). Here, Mutschmann can see Young arguing with Pope's *Essay on Man* (1733) and with other deists who in Young's opinion did not sufficiently emphasise that aspect of immortality. But Mutschmann regards Young as a split soul, who himself had difficulties believing in the immortality of the soul, though he ardently affirmed it: "His reason, too, made him doubt the immortal nature of the human soul; he, too, was addicted to the tempting pleasures of this world" (9). He was therefore trying to console himself, but to no avail. In this respect, Young was merely an outstanding representative of a great number of his contemporaries:

> In the minds of a large section of the latter, the religious element in the human soul, by clashing with the prevailing rationalism, called for similar reactions. This observation explains the tremendous success of this poem. (Mutschmann 1939, 10)

According to Mutschmann, the impulse for Young's poem came from an intensive fear of death and from the conflict between the real, earthly, sinful self and the ideal and pious self, personified in the two characters mentioned in the poem, Lorenzo and Philander (14–15). Referring to Young's conversation with a young person from Switzerland named Tscharner, Mutschmann refutes the theory that the poem had its beginnings in the death of three persons close to the author. Mutschmann regards the data about the first two deaths as being probably true: Tscharner identified the character of Lucia as the poet's wife who died in 1740 and the character of Narcissa as the poet's stepdaughter who died in 1736. However, he disagrees with Tscharner's claim that the third impulse originated in the death of "Narcissa's" husband, Henry Temple, in 1745 (13–14). Instead, he considers the real impulse to have come from a severe attack of illness that seized Young during a journey from France to England, causing the poet to face the possibility of his own death. He was only saved from an unexpected death that would have taken him to the grave unprepared (for the life in heaven) by the intervention of his doctor, Meade, to whom he expressed his gratitude in the poem (15). Mutschmann concludes:

> The situation, thus, is as follows: the poet feels that there are two souls inhabiting his bosom—to use expressions taken from Goethe's *Faust*—one of which tends upwards, whereas the other clings to the things of this world. These two souls, or tendencies, are, so to speak, personified in the characters of Philander and Lorenzo respectively. Having thus externalized the internal conflict, Young preaches, in his long drawn-out poem, to his real self, i.e. Lorenzo, to become like the

> dead Philander, his ideal self. This is the scanty plot of the Night Thoughts: all the rest is lyricism, philosophizing, and moral exhortation. (Mutschmann 1939, 16)

A few more references and discussions follow, which were intended to support the claims of the interpretation.

Later echoes in Estonian literature

In spite of Mutschmann's interpretation, which attempted to gain "Night-Thoughts" a position equal to *Faust,* the poem has acquired no foothold in Estonian literature. (*Faust* was translated into Estonian by Ants Oras in exile, and by one of the Arbujad, August Sang, in Estonia.) There is no information about "Night-Thoughts" ever having been translated into Estonian. However the poem has not totally escaped the attention of Estonian poets: the facsimile printing of the first Swedish translation of "Night-Thoughts" (*Sömnlösa nätter*, 1770) belonged to the library of an Estonian exile poet, the surrealist Ilmar Laaban (now in the Archival Library of the Estonian Literary Museum, EKM IL 1411). In the foreword of the issue, published by Surrealistförlaget in Stockholm in 1988, the relevance of "Night-Thoughts" as a source of inspiration for several precursors of Surrealism and for early Surrealists is emphasised (Jacobs, Strömberg 1988, I). The only classical work of graveyard poetry that has been translated into Estonian, appears to be Gray's elegy. There exists an unpublished translation of it by Ants Oras, preserved in the Estonian Literary Museum (EKM F 237: 2: 1). The final epitaph from that translation has appeared in the magazine *Vikerkaar* (1990 (1), page 1). This year, the full Estonian translation of Gray's elegy by *Vikerkaar's* long-time editor-in-chief, translator, critic and lecturer in literary theory at Tallinn University, Märt Väljataga, was published for the first time in Väljataga's one-man anthology of English poetry (Väljataga 2018, 70–74). The elegy also seems to have inspired the literary scholar and poet Ivar Ivask to write his *The Baltic Elegies* (1986/88).[4] In a way, the circle closes here, as Ivask, the son of a Latvian mother and an Estonian father, whose domestic language was German, lived for a remarkable part of his life in Riga, as did Gottlieb Schlegel.

Translated by Lauri Pilter

4 I thank Tiina Kirss for the reference.

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Kairit Kaur—PhD in Comparative Literature. Chair of Comparative Literature at the University of Tartu, Research Fellow; Academic Library of Tallinn University, Research Fellow. Main research interests: Baltic German literary culture, its contacts with Western Europe, history of women's writing in the Baltics.
e-mail: kairit.kaur[at]ut.ee, kairit.kaur[at]tlulib.ee

METHIS
SUMMARY

***Totentanz ja graveyard poetry*: inglise kalmuluule baltisaksa retseptsioonist**

Kairit Kaur

Märksõnad: baltisaksa, retseptsioon, inglise, luule, surm, surematus

Tõukudes ühest 1759. aastal Tallinnas trükitud matuseluuletusest, mis meenutab nii hiliskeskaegset Niguliste „Surmatantsu" kui 18. sajandil populaarset inglise kalmuluulet (vt Kaur 2018, 365–366), vaadeldakse käesolevas artiklis inglise kalmuluule baltisaksa retseptsiooni. Ehitamaks silda Notke „Surmatantsu" järgse ja 18. sajandi teise poole baltisaksa surmakujutuste vahele, on alustuseks lühidalt resümeeritud raamatuteadlase Tiiu Reimo artiklit surma visualiseerimisest 17.–18. sajandi Eesti ala võõrkeelsetes matuseluuletustes, täpsemalt vinjettides. Selle põhjal võib aimata, et uudsem, barokist inspireeritud, kuid nüüd juba rokokooliku kuju võtnud surmakäsitlus hakkas siinkandis maad võtma alates 18. sajandi teisest poolest, selle kõrgaeg jäi aga 18. sajandi viimse veerandi ja 19. sajandi esimese kolmandiku vahele. Kas võiks seostada sellise surmakujutuse populariseerumist inglise kalmuluule mõjude jõudmisega siiakanti?

Esimene teadaolev inglise kalmuluule tõlge Baltimail (nüüdsel Eesti-Läti alal) ilmus 1783. aastal Riia toomkooli rektori Gottlieb Schlegeli sulest ajakirjas Vermischte Aufsätze und Urtheile. Selleks oli Thomas Gray „Külasurnuaial kirjutatud eleegia" („Elegy Written on a Country Churchyard", 1751), tõlgitud ilmselt „vooruste edendamiseks" ja näitena, kuidas „raskeid teemasid" meisterlikult „vaimu ja värvidega hingestada", nii nagu Schlegel ühes oma 1779. aastal Riias avaldatud programmkirjutises luulele ülesandeks seadis. Schlegel jääb oma Gray eleegia tõlkes sõnastuslikus plaanis üsna originaali lähedale, järgneb sellele pildikeeles, mõjudes ehk sellest kord veidi idüllilisemalt, kord „maavillasemalt", kuid ka baroksema ja õpetatumana; baroksele muljele aitab kaasa ka stoofivormivalik, mis erineb originaali lihtsast ristriimilisest viisikjambist.

Järgmise retseptsiooninäitena on vaadeldud kuramaalanna Elisa von der Recke dialoogi Robert Blairi poeemiga „Haud" („The Grave", 1743) ja Friedrich Schilleri luuletusega „Resignatsioon" („Resignation", 1786) luuletuses „Surnupead" („Die Todtenköpfe", esmatrükk Schilleri „Hoorides" („Die Horen") 1797). Nagu Recke päevikust ilmneb, oli ta Schilleri teosest väga häiritud, kuna see näis tema jaoks hülgavat kristlikku hinge surematuse doktriini ja nõnda edendavat moraalitust (Rachel 1902, 330–331). Tundub, et toetudes just Blairile, astub Recke Schilleri käsitlusele vastu, Blairi poeemi siiski edasi arendades. Teadaolevalt Elisa von der Recke inglise keelt ei osanud ja tugines tõenäoliselt mingitele vahe-eeskujudele.

Kõige enam retsipeeritud kalmuluule teoseks paistab olevat olnud siiski ulatuslik, üheksast osast või „ööst" koosnev Edward Youngi pikk poeem „Kaebus ehk Öömõtteid elust, surmast ja surematusest" („Complaint, or, Night-Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality", 1742–1745), mida kinnitavad nii teose arvukad eksemplarid Eesti raamatukogudes kui ka mainimised kaasaegsete kirjades ja mälestustes. See kujutas endast nii harduskirjandust kui ka lugemisvara sõpruskondade ühisteks ettelugemisteks. Selle omamine võis anda märku üldisemast huvist inglise keele ja kultuuri vastu (kõige tuntum oli inglis- ja saksakeelse rööptekstiga Braunschweigi õpetlase Johann Arnold Eberti tõlge saksa keelde aastatest 1760–1771). 19. sajandi alguskümnenditel paistab poeem „Öömõtteid" olevat jõudnud ka baltisaksa koolide kirjanduskaanonisse. See võis olla ka kõige varem baltlaste huviorbiiti jõudnud kalmu-

luule teos: esimesi katkeid saksakeelses tõlkes avaldas sellest Hamburgi luuletav raehärra Barthold Hinrich Brockes [loe: Brooks] oma antoloogia „Maine rõõm Jumalas" („Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott") 7. osas (1743), just siit pärineb aga Baltimaade ühe esimese pikema loodusele pühendatud poeemi, Johann Bernhard Fischeri värssjutustuse „Mäetaguse üldine ja eriomane talve- ja suverõõm" („Hinter-Bergens allgemeine und eigene Winter- und Sommer-Lust", Riia 1745) moto. Seevastu ilmumisajalt varaseim klassikalise kalmuluule teos, Thomas Parnelli „Ööpala surmast" („A Night-Piece on Death", 1721) tundub olevat jõudnud vaid tõsisemate anglofiilideni, kes oskasid inglise keelt ja kõige hiljem, 19. sajandi alguskümnendeil. „Öömõtteid" jäi baltisaksa retseptsioonis oluliseks ka erakordselt kauaks. Kui nii Inglismaal endal kui ka Saksmaal näib huvi selle teose vastu 19. sajandi keskpaigaks raugevat, vähemasti lõpeb selleks ajaks uustrükkide ilmumine teosest ja peamised kirjandusteadus-likud kokkuvõttedki saksa Youngi-retseptsioonist jäävad 19. sajandi lõppu, 20. sajandi algusse, siis veel 1930. aastate teises pooles kirjutas Tartu Ülikooli inglise filoloogia korraline professor Heinrich Mutschmann (1885–1955) mitmeid artikleid Youngi „Öömõtete" fenomeni selgitamiseks (vt Mutschmann 1936 ja 1939), pakkudes teosele välja oma, psühholoogiast inspireeritud tõlgenduse. Viimast artiklit on siin ka lähemalt vaadeldud.

Eesti kirjanduses ei ole „Öömõtetel", vaatamata Mutschmanni seda Goethe „Faustiga" võrdsustavale tõlgendusele, õnnestunud kanda kinnitada. Ei ole teada, et seda oleks tõlgitud. Päris eesti luuletajate tähelepanuta see teos siiski ei ole jäänud: faksiimiletrükk esimesest rootsikeelsest „Öömõtete" tõlkest (1770) kuulus väliseesti poeedi, sürrealist Ilmar Laabani raamatukokku. Ainus eesti keelde jõudnud kalmupoeesia klassikasse kuuluv teos paistab olevat Gray eleegia. Sellest leidub Eesti Kirjandusmuuseumis avaldamata tõlge Ants Oraselt, mille lõpuepitaaf on ilmunud ajakirjas Vikerkaar (1990, nr 1, lk 1). Trükki jõudis täiemahuline tõlge sellest Gray teosest Märt Väljataga tõlgituna alles 2018. aastal (vt Väljataga 2018, 70–74). Ka inspireerinud see teos kirjandusteadlast ja luuletajat Ivar Ivaskit tema „Balti eleegiate" („The Baltic Elegies", 1986/88) loomisel (tänan vihje eest Tiina Kirssi). Siin ring omamoodi sulgub, sest ka Ivask, lätlasest ema ja eestlasest isa poeg, kelle kodune keel oli saksa keel, oli märkimisväärse etapi oma elust riialane nagu Gottlieb Schlegelgi.

Kairit Kaur – PhD maailmakirjanduse alal, Tartu Ülikooli maailmakirjanduse teadur; Tallinna Ülikooli Akadeemilise Raamatukogu teadur. Peamised uurimisteemad: baltisaksa kirjakultuur, selle kultuurikontaktid Lääne-Euroopaga, naiskirjanduse ajalugu Baltimaades.
e-post: kairit.kaur[at]ut.ee, kairit.kaur [at]tlulib.ee