

Testing the Relevance of Translations

A literary canon need not be a scary word violating true histories which would probably be the current politically correct way of treating a canon. Seeing it still as “the relation of an individual reader and writer to what has been preserved out of what has been written” – not as “a list of books for required study” (Bloom 1994: 17) –, the canon can be included in the realm of aesthetic values and tastes, a realm different from that of politicized curriculums. Even though the formulation is inevitably predestined to exclude literatures written in an unattainable linguistic code, in what follows the canon has been primarily seen as defined by Harold Bloom who, true, excludes from his *Codex Librorum* many a writer preserved in the memories of the readers in Estonia. It cannot be helped. What troubles us more are the equally exclusive Estonian literary canons for in case with them the problem is not just linguistic: the list of translations into Estonian is long, and there is a steady critical tradition stressing the significance of translations for Estonian culture. Without wanting to confuse a national literary history with the history of either world literature or that of a culture, it still strikes as questionable to exclude translations willfully from the latter (e.g. Talve 2004) – that is translations as objects worthy of separate chapters or special study.

There are exceptions. The histories of the Estonian book, i.e. of the books published in the Estonian language (e.g. Lott & Möldre 2000, Möldre 2005) do include translations presenting us this way a literary history that does not segregate its authors on the basis of their linguistic origin. Tiiu Reimo, compiling the chronology of the Estonian book, lists as the events of the year 1972, for example, the following: (1) Paul-Eerik Rummo’s *Saatja aadress* (The Sender’s Address) was officially banned; (2) Egon Rannet published part one of his ambitious panoramic novel *Kivid ja leib* (Stones and Bread);

(3) Eno Raud published for children part one of his *Naksitrallid* (Three Jolly Fellows)¹; (4) the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Estonian Communist Party established an additional extra-closed fond for the Estonian books published in exile as especially harmful to the Soviet regime, marked now by the double stamp of the censorial triangle, i.e. by a hexagon; and (5) the publishing-house Eesti Raamat launched its monumental *Varamu*-series issuing within the next 10 years (1972–1983) 40 translations of world literature (Reimo 2000: 95–96).

The short list is enough to juxtapose the conflicting tendencies of the year.² As far as original writing is concerned the situation is more or less as Mart Velsker has described it in his chapter on literature and society of the 1970s in the 2001 canon-shaping Estonian literary history (*Eesti kirjanduslugu* 2001): as censorship exercised harder regulations than in the 1960s, the national culture withdrew in self-defense; in public statements the discrepancy between what had been said and what had been meant increased reinforcing the poetics of allusion (536–7). True, however, is also what Epp Annus and Robert Hughes have written bearing in mind primarily the Modernism of 1960s but the observation is valid also for the early seventies: there can be discerned a perceptible effort from the part of the writers “to bring people back into an existence that was both sensually human and socially contextualized” (Annus & Hughes 2004: 57). The social contextualization is present not only in plots set in distant history (Jaan Kross), but also *Õukondlik mäng* (The Courtly Game) by Valton or some stories in Rein Saluri’s *Mälu* (Memory) but also in undeniably present scenes like in the short stories of Vaino Vahing in his collection *Kaemus* (Insight) where references have been made to the bottomless distress a running stitch could cause for a woman, or

¹ In 1974 the story was included in the Honor List of the Hans Christian Andersen Award and translated consequently into Danish, German, Russian, English, Polish, Lithuanian, and other languages.

² The full bibliography for 1972, including fiction, travelogues, memoirs, essays, polemical writing, children literature, and reprints, includes 179 titles, 89 of them originals, i.e. 50% of the published texts were translations (Soosaar 1979).

routine Soviet spying or the secrecy of dissidents or the intellectual isolation one felt facing the then possibilities of our public libraries.

The presence of translations, however, prevented the readers from neglecting the reality that human existence is a territory of the unrest anyhow, irrespective of the political realities and the facts of the everyday. This truism, black-and-white visible on and readable from the pages of translations, notably those of Loomingu Raamatukogu, was an assurance of significance in the context of the then propaganda emphasizing the difference of *homo sovieticus*. Comparison is one of the most powerful cognitive tools at the disposal of human beings, and an inquiry into other cultures, involving self-reflexivity, enables flexibility and resistance to hegemonic ideologies. The concerns of Isaac Babel or William Golding or of Albert Schweitzer or Albert Camus could not but affect their readers as antidotes counteracting the moods of national isolation and the public call to stake on over-ambitious social constructions whatever their cost. It was of importance to prevent the public history being performed from turning into nature (to borrow words from Bourdieu 1972), i.e. into a disposition depending on political manipulations with their inauspicious effects. Years later, in 1988, Henno Rajandi has said in an interview (Rajandi 2002 [1988]: 186): *Selleks, et eesti kultuuri-saareke ikka iseendaks jääks, peab ta paljus sarnanema ümbritseva indoeuroopa merega. Ei saa säilitada eripära, kui sa paljus ei sarnane – see on elu tingimus* (the condition for the Estonian isle of culture to preserve its identity is its manifold similarity to the surrounding Indo-European sea. Individuality is possible only where there are similarities – this is a condition of life). In this respect the translations were a condition of life, and as good an indicator of the loyalties of the culture as originals, pointing at them perhaps just better and in clearer terms.

Before going on with a closer examination of a translation published that year – and our primary reason for sampling the year 1972 was that it was in 1972 when Saul Bellow's *Herzog* in the translation of Enn Soosaar came out – let us give a quotation by Theo Hermans who has given us our initial pattern. As Hermans relies on Niklas Luhmann's systems theory, he needs an introduction.

Hermans has picked from Luhmann's analysis of the evolution of communication his key concepts of 'social system' and 'communication'. When Luhmann speaks of social systems (1995) he speaks of self-reproducing systems of communicative acts structured by expectations. That is, the elements of social systems – be them nations or translations – are neither individuals nor groups of people but communications that have to be in a temporal sequence for the system to exist. Society, under these terms, is not a sum of people, but an entity in itself, an environment for people, and vice versa, people are the environment for society. Individual actions are constituted (not defined) by society, and society is constituted (not defined) by the communicative actions of individuals. Communications are momentary, fleeting phenomena. For them to establish systems connectivity is the only possibility to endure over time.

The Estonian prose of the 1970s was predominantly cryptic as has been so aptly summed up by a sentence in Vahing's *Laenatud flööt* (The Borrowed Flute; Vahing 1972: 113): *mis mõte on sõnade järjekorral ja lausejuppidel üldse, kui me mõtleme katkendlikult ja seosetult* (what is the meaning of word order or of the truncated sentences at all if we think in fits and starts our desultory thoughts). This is a statement, not a question, and it is doubtful whether the feel of life and texts of this nature (the censored and self-censored texts prevailing in the original prose) would have been able to preserve the Estonian centuries' long discourse cherishing the cultural code of intellectual advancement, liberalization, integration in the intellectual world culture, etc., etc. Luhmann's particular emphasis on the formative value of communication is what made us favor at this instance his terminology even though we do acknowledge the hazards of dehumanized systems or of intersystemic communications, and highly appreciate what Anthony Pym, Douglas Robinson or Maria Tymoczko (Pym 1998, Robinson 2003, Tymoczko 2007) have done to balance it within translation studies.

But still. For Luhman communication is not just an objective transmission of a pre-given message. Messages are received, and messages are transmitted always selectively. The selectivity concerns among other things selecting the moment to communicate – when do (when *can* one) communicate what – and this is again of significance

here, in this context, treating translation not just as a piece of new information but primarily as an intentional act.

Thus, Hermans enlarges on the communicative meaning of translations:

Their 'meaning', their 'sense', their 'point' as communications does not reside in 'the words on the page', decipherable by means of linguistic and other codes, in a social or historical vacuum. Nor can it be reduced to some semantic or other relation with a source text. In both cases, what is left out is precisely the aspect of selectivity, of selective difference. It is part of the 'meaning' of a translated text as communication that *this* foreign-language text was selected from among the range of potential candidates, that it was selected for translation and not for some other available form of transmission or importation or recycling, and that a particular 'translation mode' was selected, one particular mode of representing the original *against* the possibility of other available modes, i.e. in relation to the alternatives not chosen from among the array of more or less likely candidates, more or less permissible modes (2002: 184).

Here then is the list of our topics: (1) the meaning of choosing this particular text; (2) the meaning of translating it instead of, say, writing an article on it; (3) the meaning of the mode or style of the translation.³

³ To recall the year let us list some of its events: ongoing Vietnam War and Israeli-Palestinian conflict; the US broke diplomatic contacts with Sweden after Olof Palmer had compared the American bombing of North Vietnam to Nazi massacre; East Germany and West Germany recognized each other; the Winter Olympics in Sapporo, Japan; Okinawa returned to Japan after 27 years of US Military Occupation; the Summer Olympics in Munich with 11 Israeli athletes murdered after 8 members of the Arab terrorist group invaded Olympic Village; the Watergate burglaries; Richard Nixon and Leonid Brezhnev signed the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty in Moscow; the US sold grain to the Soviet Union for \$750 million; in Derry, Northern Ireland, British Army killed unarmed marchers, and anti-British riots took place, burning the British Embassy in Dublin to the ground. The Nobel Prize for literature went to Heinrich Böll; Joseph Brodsky was sent out of the Soviet Union. A chronology for the Estonian history lists as the events of

The meaning of the translation can be guessed while paraphrasing what *Herzog* is about. The protagonist of the novel, published originally in 1964, has got his namesake in *Ulysses* (Cyclops) where there is an episodic character, a merchant trading without license described as “a bit off the top”. The first attribute, trading without license, is apt for the translation not only in its primary referential sense (for translations back then were made without paying royalties to the author) but also, and more significantly, in the sense that Bellow’s *Herzog*, emphasized as an intellectual living in an anti-intellectual age, and living through a major crisis of his life, is a man who himself thinks the reason of his unrest is his wife’s dependence on ideologies (372⁴) while he considers “the explained life unbearable” (322). *Herzog* also pinpoints as a problem his continued faith in God even though never admitting it (231). Having left his unkempt home, his perfidious second wife and his academy, handicapped by “ideas that depopulate the world” (95, *ideed, mis maailma inimestest tühjaks teevad*, 111), he resorts to writing letters he never sends to his dead mother, to God, to both the long dead and living Western intellectuals that balances him at his never intended but still attempted murder of his wife and her lover so that the end is realization: “The life /---/ has been curious, and perhaps the death I must inherit will turn out even more profoundly curious” (326, *Elu*

the year the 8th Supreme Soviet of the Estonian SSR (with 122 of its 183 delegates being CP members); the 3rd Youth Song and Dance festival in Tallinn; the first color program of the Estonian TV; Hotel Viru that was opened in Tallinn; and Jaan Talts and Jüri Tarmak who won Gold Medals at the Summer Olympics (Vahtre 1994). Also, in 1972 the Estonian National Front (*Rahvuskomitee*) published his underground journal *Eesti Demokraat* seeking a referendum on the self-determination of Estonia. At the same time a letter was smuggled out for the publication in Estonian newspapers abroad, protesting against Russification policies, and general lack of freedom and the Russian occupation of the Baltic countries. 1972 was also the year of ESTO, the world-wide cultural festival for expatriate Estonians.

⁴ The numbers in brackets here and hereafter refer, depending on the context, to the page numbers of Saul Bellow’s *Herzog* as published by either The Viking Press in 1967 or *Eesti Raamat* in 1972.

/---/on imeline olnud, aga võib-olla osutub surm, mille ma pärin, veelgi suuremaks imeks, 363).

Summed up like this, or anyhow, Bellow's *Herzog* is a comedy as the vocabulary of the narrator undeniably admits. Its protagonist is "a little soft-headed or impractical but ambitious mentally, somewhat arrogant, too, a pampered, futile fellow whose wife had just been taken away from him under very funny circumstances" (30, *pea laiali otsas ja vähe praktilist meelt, küll aga vaimset auahmust ja omajagu upsakust, saamatu eluhellik, kellelt löödi hiljaaegu üpris põnevalt üle naine*, 39). Herzog describes himself as an earnest, frightful earnest person (21) burdened by self-development (92), "responsible to civilization in his icy outpost [his unheated cottage], lying in bed in an aviator's helmet /---/ fitting together Bacon and Locke from one side and Methodism and William Blake from the other" (127, *Herzog, kes pidi jääkülmas talumajas tsivilisatsiooni saatuse eest vastutama, lebas voodis, peas lendurimüts, kui ahjud ei küdenud, ja püüdis kokku sobitada ühest küljest Baconit ja Locke'i, teisest küljest metodismi ja William Blake'i*, 145). At that, Bellow's focus is not on comedy but on his character for *the* character, obsolete as it may sound, was the concern of Bellow as he so patiently explains in his 1976 Nobel Lecture. Bellow the conservative, a Jew of East-European background, was writing against the tide of the mainstream Western fiction, and against the respectable leaders of intellectual community, the latter emphasizing an individual's dependence on historical and cultural conditions. The dependence is there as Bellow the *cum laude* graduate anthropologist undeniably sees, but this is only a part of the truth, and a part of little importance for him, the writer, who can penetrate "what pride, passion, intelligence and habit erect on all sides – the seeming realities of this world" (Bellow 1976). The writer's task is to struggle with dehumanization any discursive development of whatever an idea inevitably entails; this was Bellow's conviction that kept him writing his divine comedies, and his essays.

Thematically *Herzog* has its counterparts in the Estonian fiction, especially that by Vahing and Saluri. There are letters written and particular philosophers studied in Vahing, there is a "frightful earnest" figure in Saluri's *Krahvi poeg* (The Son of a Count; 98). But

the Count is not much of “a character” for it is impossible to establish one on about 20 pages. He is rather a markedly unreliable figure of a narrator whose everyday context is the Estonia of 1970s, while his mental space is back in a distant and doubtful history. Psychological realism, of course, is a deterritorializing realism but – as humankind cannot bear too much reality so probably it cannot bear too much unreality also (Bellow 1976). At least Rein Saluri, the 1972 author of *Mälu* (Memory), a collection of short stories of allusive power indicating at muffled writing, in 2009 translated, as if to animate the still-life quality of much of his original writing, Vladimir Nabokov’s *Speak, Memory*.

Lawrence Venuti has accustomed us to the idea of treating translations as the minor literature (the latter concept borrowed from Deleuze and Guattari). Translations, of minoritarian position if compared to the original literature, share with originals their major language affected now with a high coefficient of deterritorialization, while the writer, the translator, marginal in his community, can the better reveal another potential community formulating the means of its different consciousness and sensibility. Minor literature is in the language of becoming, not of representing, it is not in the vernacular language spoken here, but in a vehicular language operating everywhere, and in a referential language spoken over there (Deleuze & Guattari 1998).

This is what *Herzog* is: it offers us a vocabulary diverting our determined concentration on “what forms us externally” because “that need not actually govern us internally” (Bellow 1994: 14). *Herzog* formulates the ways of doubting ideas like history as an expression of class struggle, or the need to resent the civilization we live in, or view the present moment always as some crisis, or refuse from any consolation in order to value one’s intellectual honor, or the need to take seriously the Darwinian struggle for existence, etc., etc. It must have been a curious book back then crying for “a vanished Central European epoch” (56), cursing “those Bolsheviks” (143), refusing “the canned goods of the intellectuals” (75, *haritlaste konservitoit*, 88) that preach “Got is no more. But Death is” (271), but stating luckily also “back of it all is bourgeois America” (133, *kõige selle taga seisab kodanlik Ameerika*, 151). That is, it was a book

including both reasons to ban and favor its translation. The intellectual content of the novel made porous the borders of here and there, home and away – even though the translation was not reviewed after its publication and the postword by Enn Soosaar makes no attempt to adjust the message to the target context.

What if the novel had been represented by an article acquainting Estonian readers with an outstanding American novelist? A vague guess of an answer can be seen on the cover of the translation (by Marju Mutsu) presenting motifs of the US flag. An illustration is a paratext like an article in an Estonian literary periodical would have been, and like all paratexts it has to establish the link between the text proper and its receiving context. The latter under the Soviet regime had to be publicly as naïve as the regime, and the cover – especially in comparison with that of the original (presenting the contours of the face of a troubled man, or the burning bush) – reveals the then discursive possibilities without needing much explanation.

The mastery of the poetics of silence is one of the factors that made Enn Soosaar a translator who found fame wearing just a translator's hat. Only years later he became a political figure, a polemicist, an author, but not back then, in the 1970s when he published his translations of Donald Barthelme, Richard Brautigan, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, Scott Fitzgerald, and Thornton Wilder. It is with the help of his later publications only, noticeably with his autobiographical texts *Isa ja aeg* (My Father and the Time; 2007) and *Nuripidine aastasada* (A Topsy-turvy Century; 2008), that one can guess: translation for Enn Soosaar was just one leg in his intellectual engagement. It could have been first a means of survival in years of both personal and national hardship to become later the foundation of his mental capital he could use in the open society waiting ahead.

Having shifted now the focus from the translation to the translator the meaning of the translation will be highlighted in a new way: it could be an embodiment of ideas that can outlive social circumstances and textual frames. Treating this as the dominant of the translation the models of discussing it in terms of both fidelity-based evaluation and target-based systemic approach become questionable. Moreover, as Anthony Pym has argued (Pym 2009), translators work

in a fairly specific intercultural locale anyhow, which is neither the source nor the target but drawing on them both while being wholly determined by none. Pym calls the locale *interculture*, stressing that it means neither transfer from one culture to the other nor cultural heterogeneity (multiculture) but refers to an overlap, intersection of the source and the target, their common section of vital importance.

How to indicate at it linguistically? This takes us to the style of the translation, its poetics.

Douglas Robinson has included in the anthology of *Western Translation Theory: From Herodotus to Nietzsche* he edited (1997, 2nd edition 2002) the First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians contrasting speaking in a tongue to speaking edification (1 Cor. 14). The traditional dichotomy of describing translations is that of Schleiermacher, or of Venuti, i.e. describing them in terms of foreignization and domestication. The different proposal by Robinson has an advantage not in the sense that it takes translations to elevated realms but it enables us use the discrimination discerned by St. Paul: speaking in a tongue one speaks into the air, staying a foreigner, while speaking with understanding one interprets a tongue.

Interpreting a tongue is what the translation is. The translator's target heritage is by no means invisible in fragments like *Ludeyville*'is läks simmaniks (216; glamorous life began in Ludeyville, 191), *õhtusöök on tipsen-topsen valmis* (212, dinner is all ready, 186), *ma olevat üks "toru-loru"* (217, she accused me of being a 'meek kick', 192), *anna mulle rüübet* (253, give me a drink, 226), *tudengi pillapalla* (298, graduate-student filth, 267). To use a phrase from *Herzog*, this has been piety that has determined the style of the translation (*pieteet määrab stiili*, 216, piety describes the style, 191) and guided the linguistic choices of Enn Soosaar that aim at an effortless Estonian in the service of the content of the original. In a few cases this has resulted in resorting to what have been called translation universals, i.e. to translating expanding and supplementing the original in order to make it logically clearer and more definite (*tal ei ole õigust seda kõike rääkida, teist inimest oma jutuga vaevata*, 178; he had no right to tell, to inflict it, 157). But Bellow was an author who drew much from the 19th century pre-modernist European novel that had trusted the immediate ability of language to

convey a meaning, i.e. his style is not being lost in an infrequently increased clarity.

The translation acknowledges the different realia of the readers of the original and of the translation. When Herzog the father is looking at his daughter eating in a zoo café, the Estonian reader gets *kotletiga sai* (120) standing for the original “hamburger” (103), an unknown realia in Soviet Estonia. In case with the culinary specifics Herzog enjoys with Ramona, his lover, however, the translation is as refined and culturally distant as it should be: *pärast garneele à la Arnaud ja salatit pakkus ta juustu ja vesikringleid, rummijäätist, georgia ploome* (212). These two examples serve us well to show that the translational choices are seldom made in awareness of the theoretical possibilities of foreignization or domestication but stem, as said, from the intercultural space and the need for a translation to be performative and do things with words that sometimes have to come from the source, sometimes from the target context in order to be effective.

The selective difference on every, textual but also metatextual level, is what defines a relevant translation the ‘meaning’ of which cannot be found in neither the source nor the receiving context but remains oscillating between the two, deferring its fixation. *Herzog* in its Estonian translation impresses as an accomplishment of Derrida’s classical paper (2004) on the possibilities of a translational text to be of relevance by preserving its difference from the originals of the both cultures involved because there is a *via media*, an intercultural in-between that is the territory of a vehicular language, different from the vernacular one.

Another aspect related to the relevance of translations concerns translation *from* a literature. It goes without explanation that translation in itself could be a criterion for considering a text of canonical value. In case with Estonian literature translated into Russian – and in the 1970s for reasons obvious enough Russian was the primary target language – we could still have second thoughts for “the Soviet school of literary translation has left us with not only many a great of its examples but also with a certain amount of anecdotes about the day hands of the capital who, sunbathing on a beach, could turn a national or tribal verse-maker no one had heard of into a celebrity of

all-Union significance. /---/ Or, they could present however botchy translations the author of the original had to accept gratefully because the sole fact of a book published in Moscow included a writer among great authors” (Rastorgujev 2008).

The number of titles of Estonian literature translated into Russian but also into other languages of the Soviet republics in 1972 is considerable. Relying on the bibliographical data as presented by Naftoli Bassel (Bassel 1984), Osvald Kivi (Kivi 1978) and *Knizhnaja letopis*, the state bibliography (Helm 1972) it is as big as 590 titles, including separate books and collections, and individual pieces published either in Russian in the periodicals of Russia, Estonia and other Soviet republics or in other languages of the Soviet Union (in the form, again, of either a book, a collection or a piece in a periodical issue). The bibliography of just one year, of course, is not sufficient for a deeper analysis: the list is static and cannot reveal periodic fluctuations, the probably different quantity of translations of different years that would be evident in, say, 10-year period. Moreover, the process of choosing-translating-editing a text can be of very different length depending on the place and the circumstances. So, bibliographical lists, even if encompassing a longer period, have to be supplemented with background analysis. Without it would be difficult to explain, for example, why, in the period of 1966–1975, the peak of translations from Estonian into Uzbek is in 1968, while for the translations into Ukrainian it is (in the same period) in 1975.

Admitting the limited possibilities of what follows, the full bibliography of the year in its 36 pages is still impressive. Its 590 titles include 26 separate books by individual authors in Russian, 3 in Latvian, Lithuanian, and in Ukrainian, 2 in Armenian, 1 in Azerbaijan, and in Georgian; in addition Estonian authors were included in 69 collections (mostly of poetry) in Russian, but also in Ukrainian, Moldavian, Kazakhstan, Byelorussian, and Georgian. In Estonian periodicals Russian translations were met in 29 cases, for Russia the figure is 61, for the Ukraine 64, for Lithuania 57, Latvia 38, Byelorussia 35, Georgia 22, and Moldova 21. In order not to turn the paper into a list let us focus just on the authors translated, and more particularly those translated in a book form, excluding translations into other languages than Russian that could have been in high

probability indirect translations from Russian. Otherwise it would be difficult to explain why a text, after it had been translated into Russian, was often soon translated also into other languages. This was the case with Paul-Eerik Rummo's "Ballad of the Shell Splinter in My Heart". Its two different Russian translations were published first in the all-Union collections, and then in journals and papers in Russia as well as other Soviet republics, to be followed soon by translations into Moldavian, Lithuanian, and Tadjik languages. There are other similar examples following the same pattern from an all-Union collection to native languages.

The translated authors issued in a book form in Russia were V. Beekman, V. Ilus, R. Kaugver, P. Kuusberg, O. Luts, E. Maasik, I. Maran, H. Mänd, E. Niit, V. Panso, R. Parve, H. Pukk, V. Saar, J. Smuul, and A. Hint. All the authors were represented by just one book.

In Estonia the same list shows a certain incline towards classical texts as it includes alongside with E. Vetemaa, V. Gross, J. Smuul, A. Hanschmidt, M. Traat, A. Liives, E. Raud, and S. Rannamaa, also Eduard Bornhöhe and Fr. R. Kreutzwald. Neither of the lists contained what Rastorguev has called tribal nonentities.

Including also collections, and all titles, we can point at the champions of the translation of the year. These were Debora Vaarandi with her 41 titles, Ralf Parve with his 29, Ellen Niit 28, Juhan Smuul 26, Vladimir Beekman 21, and Lilli Promet 19 titles.

The translators were both, from Estonia – Arvo Mets, Boriss Stein, Svetlan Semenenko, Aleksei Sokolov, Valentin Rushkis, Genadi Muravin, Elvira Mihhailova, and a dozen more translators, but there were also Estonians (or a Finn) living in Russia like Aleksander Tomberg and Robert Vinenen, or half-Estonians likes Vera Ruber or Nora Javorskaja.

What strikes the eye in the bibliography is that these could be the major writers of Russia who were translating Estonian authors – Anna Ahmatova and David Samoilov translating Debora Vaarandi, David Samoilov and Joseph Brodsky Jaan Kross. The visibility of the translators in the literary field of Russia fostered, no doubt, the classical status of Estonian authors and favored their reception.

Another observation of importance in this context is that one of the translated authors was Paul-Eerik Rummo. This must have been a

fact of not only intercultural but also of intrapersonal relevance back then maintaining for the writer his presence in the literary fields whatever the fate of his Selected Poems in Estonia.

To sum up: including translations (from and into a studied canon) in the national corpus as texts of relevance, we can reveal better both the loyalties and possibilities of a culture as well as its means of sustaining viability.

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