

*Poetry for Estonian Peasants. Friedrich Nikolai Russow's volume of translated poetry Ued kandlekeled (New Harp-Strings 1854)*¹

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Abstract. The article examines *Ued kandlekeled* (*New Harp Strings*, 1854), a collection of German poetry translated into Estonian by Friedrich Nikolai Russow (1828–1906), situating it within the broader context of nineteenth-century Estonian translation culture and nation-building processes. During this period, translation played a crucial role in the formation of Estonian-language literature, as German functioned as the dominant language of education and intellectual exchange, while Estonian was largely confined to lower social strata. Russow's volume represents an early and conceptually significant attempt to introduce German lyric poetry to an Estonian peasant readership while simultaneously demonstrating the expressive and poetic potential of the Estonian language.

The article analyses the composition of the volume, Russow's selection of texts, and his translation strategies, showing how translated poems are framed by original compositions and arranged to form a coherent thematic progression. Although the collection contains only a limited number of poems, it functions as a carefully curated early anthology encompassing various lyrical genres, from folk-inspired songs to elegies and ballads. Particular attention is paid to Russow's translations of canonical German poets such as Goethe, Heine, and Eichendorff. The analysis highlights Russow's stylistic flexibility, which ranges from close, metrically sensitive translations to freer adaptations involving omission and substitution, depending on genre and his perception of audience expectations.

The article argues that *Ued kandlekeled* exemplifies a transitional phase in Estonian literary history, characterized by the overlap of translation, adaptation, and original writing as well as a subtle critique of Germanization. The collection thus constitutes a significant milestone in the development of Estonian poetic language and early translation norms.

¹ The research work at the basis of this article was supported by the Estonian Research Council's grant PRG1206 "Translation in History, Estonia 1850–2010: Texts, Agents, Institutions and Practices".

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Keywords: anthology; poetry translation; Estonian translation history; 19th century; Friedrich Nikolai Russow; Johann Wolfgang von Goethe; Heinrich Heine

Introduction

The formation of literature in the Estonian language, the emergence of agents with literary ambitions, and the development of a corpus of literary texts necessary for creating a reading nation all unfolded during the 19th century. As German was the language of higher education, bilingual Estonian intellectuals primarily consumed literary texts in German, corresponded in that language, and engaged in public discourse regarding the future of the Estonian language, literature, and nation in German. Estonian, in contrast, was predominantly used by the lower classes in everyday life and was largely confined to the realm of primary and lower secondary education. Under these circumstances, translation became a vital component of nation-building, particularly gaining momentum toward the end of the 19th century.

Friedrich Nikolai Russow (1828–1906), alongside the well-known names of mid-nineteenth-century Estonian translators such as Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald (1803–1882) and Johann Voldemar Jannsen (1819–1890), was one of the most skilled translators of the era. Early literary translations into the Estonian language produced by these three men and a small number of others tended to fall into two categories. The majority of the translated texts, stories in prose derived from works by German popular authors of the time, were adapted and often shortened. A second group, characterized by the translation techniques that remained closer to the source text, consisted of poetry translations. The aim of the prose texts was to introduce a culture of reading among Estonians by providing books that matched their level of education. Poems, however, were translated in order to prove that Estonian, often regarded as a language of uneducated peasants, could facilitate the complex poetic thought and metrical structures of the German classical poetry, which differed significantly from the poetics of Estonian folk songs. Although the poems were translated for the Estonian peasants, the translators' goal was also to seek symbolic power as facilitators between cultures among the members of the *Estländische Literarische Gesellschaft*, a German-speaking society for the research and enhancement of Estonian culture, connecting educated, like-minded men, both German and Estonian-born. Poetry can be said to have “assumed the role of philosophy and ethics” (Talvet 2023: 186) with the brightest minds of the time trying their hand in it.

The article presents the collection of translated German poetry by Friedrich Nikolai Russow, *Ued kandlekeled* (New Harp Strings, 1854a), analyzes the techniques of translation and shows how the translator structures the pace of the volume by constructing an alternating line of thought. The poems show decisiveness of producing poetry in Estonian according to classical rules, while embedding educational and moral messages for the literary and moral advancement of the Estonian peasant reader. Despite its relatively small number of translated poems (16), *Ued kandlekeled* can be considered a well-selected early anthology of German poetry that covers different lyrical genres and showcases a variety of translatory techniques. This early period of Estonian literature is characterized by the overlap of translation, adaptation and original writing, and literature in Estonian as a whole can be described as translatory to different degrees. Russow's *Ued kandlekeled* provides an excellent example of that phase in which the identities of authors and translators overlap. Russow merged translated content and form with original thought and style, oscillating between a skilled and well-considered closeness to the source text and relatively free decisions of change and adaptation in order to achieve readability. This stylistic flexibility allowed him to combine drinking songs with reflections on life and death, aiming to educate Estonian readers while simultaneously entertaining them.

The unlikely story of the Russow family

The destiny of the Russow family was colourful and extraordinary. Previous researchers have offered a detailed overview of Russow's exceptional social rise (Aarma 2012, Aarma 2013, Kurvits & Pallas 2014) which can be seen as a crucial motivator for the role he decided to take as a translator. Grandfather Anton Russow had been a serf at the manor of Kauksi belonging to Friedrich Gustav von Rosen, who was an affectionate lover of theatre and personal friend of the bestselling German playwright of the time, August von Kotzebue. Anton Russow is said to have acted in August von Kotzebue plays performed at the manor belonging to the Rosens (Aarma 2012: 39). After moving to Tallinn with his master, Anton Russow continued acting in Tallinn's amateur theatre (Revaler Liebhaber-Theater). City air agreed with the family, offering the second generation a wider range of opportunities. Russow's father became a customs official in Tallinn, enabling his family the rare chance to move up the social ladder. This success was put on hold when both Friedrich Nikolai's parents died in his early years. The boy left Tallinn to live with his grandmother Marie Jürgens in Paide, where he received a district-school education. In 1840, Jürgens, together with her grandchildren, moved back to Tallinn, where young

Russow attended a German-language gymnasium. His studies continued at the University of St. Petersburg from 1847 to 1851, where he studied law. Russow's time in St. Petersburg coincided with that of Nikolai Chernychevsky and other progressive-minded thinkers in Russia (Kalda 1966: 158). The wave of revolutions in Europe in 1848 and active disputes among students over the state of the social order influenced Nikolai Russow. However, rather than being a revolutionary, Russow chose mediation. After graduating from university, he returned to Tallinn and tried his hand as a writer, journalist, and translator of literature and law.

Friedrich Nikolai Russow as a mediator – journalist, writer and translator

During his time in Tallinn from 1853 until 1863, Russow belonged to a very small group of Estonian “elite intellectuals”, consisting of 31 men in the whole of Estonia (Karjahärm & Sirk 1997: 34). Mostly doctors (10) Lutheran priests (7) or teachers (6), only 15 to 20 of them were invested in shaping Estonian cultural life (Karjahärm & Sirk 1997: 35). As mentioned above, the most influential figures in that early stage of the Estonian emancipation period were Kreutzwald and Jannsen. However, young Russow made a strong start in 1854 and created some significant landmarks in the history of the written word in Estonia. Besides the collection of poems *Ued kandlekeled*, which will be analyzed below, he founded the first newspaper in Estonian, offering peasant readers real-time news about the Crimean war (1853–1856). The newspaper, titled *Tallinna koddaniko ramat omma söbbradele male* (Tallinn's Citizen's Book for his Friends in the Countryside), was published from 1854 to 1857³ and can be considered the first newspaper in Estonian (Talve 2004: 345). The author positions himself as a mediator between the countryside and the town and addresses the peasants in the first number of the newspaper as equals:

Ni armas se ka minno melest olli, teie keskes maal olla, kalli kewwade römo ja illo maitsdes, ommeti kipitasin linna tagasi, sest kartsin, et ei saaks nähha, kuidas wisi waenlane ka Tallinna al peksa saab, kuidas tännini, Jummal olgo tänatud, igas kohhas. (Russow 1854b: 1)

Although it was so sweet to be with you in the countryside, tasting the joy and beauty of spring, I still felt compelled to return to town, because I was afraid of

³ The style and content of the publication has been described by Juhan Peegel in his early history of Estonian journalism *Eesti ajakirjanduse algus* (1966: 114–130).

missing how the enemy gets beaten up at the gates of Tallinn, as, thank God, everywhere else to this date.⁴

Addressing his reader, Russow uses a familiar, companionable style, a master of which in Estonian journalism is known to be Jannsen, who started his newspaper *Perno Postimees* a couple of years later, in 1857. The stylistic feature of chatting with an imagined peasant reader that both Jannsen and Russow use might stem from Johann Peter Hebel, an influential author of public enlightenment in Germany at the beginning of the 19th century. Hebel was very popular among the first generation of translators in Estonia (Saagpakk, forthcoming). Russow creates contact with the everyday life of his reader, presenting his newspaper as a visitor to a peasant household:

Jõuaks mo raamat õhto aegu teie kätte, kui tullete wälja pealt, palled märjad pakso rukki leikusest, silmis römo-nutto pissarad selle õnnistuse ülle, mis armolinne Jummal tännawo meie põllude peale on külwand. (Russow 1854b: 1)

May my book reach you in the evening, when you come in from the fields, your cheeks wet from cutting thick rye, with tears of joy in your eyes for the blessing that the gracious God has sown upon our fields this year.

In the same year, 1854, Russow also published a poem *Sõalaul Eestima tüttarlastele. Wanna wisi järrel* (War Song for the Maidens of Estonia. Set to an Old Tune) which was the first art poem in Estonian to use traditional Estonian runic verse (Kamppmaa 1906; Kisseljova 2016). In his poem, Russow uses a nightingale and a cuckoo to tell the news about an approaching war. The nightingale heralds hard times for the girls, losses of loved ones, sorrow and devastation. In the cuckoo's prophecy, the invading army is portrayed as bridegrooms and the maidens as cannons who receive and destroy them. Russow's war song inspired Kreutzwald to write his own version, developing it further into an even more topical text by mentioning the war parties of the Crimean war in the text (Kisseljova 2016: 510). From the perspective of literary history, the story's formal novelty, the use of folk verse for a contemporary topic, outweighs the novelty of its content. Although there is evidence that Kreutzwald had written poems using a similar pattern a few years before (Kamppmann 1906: 1), it remains a fact that Russow's work was published first.

Russow's talent was noticed by Kreutzwald, the two men exchanged letters and Kreutzwald was appreciative of the younger colleague's work, calling him the most talented among young Estonians (Aarma 2012: 43), which did

⁴ Translations here and below by the author.

not prevent him from publicly condemning Russow for not using the new orthography decisively enough in 1857 (Saagpakk 2025: 119).

Living in Tallinn and not in Tartu, which was the intellectual centre of the time, Russow found a kindred spirit in Johann Daniel Petenberg (1830–1858), an ambitious Estonian, who had worked himself up to become the business manager of the Lindfors' printing house. Petenberg was also active as writer and translator. He offered another parallel text on the topic of war song, *Neekruti laul* (*Song of a Conscript*, 1854), and translated Gottfried August Bürger's beloved story of Munchausen into Estonian (1855). Russow and Petenberg together helped Tallinn to emerge as an additional centre of Estophile activity in the mid-19th century, alongside Tartu and Pärnu. Petenberg's early death ended that promising partnership.

In 1858, Russow published the Estonian translation of the law regulating the affairs of Estonian peasants *Eestimaa Talorahwa Seadus*, using the new orthography. This publication was an important milestone towards emancipation, enabling Estonian peasants to understand and start fighting for their rights within the narrow limits given by the law. The translation also provided readers with bookkeeping templates and a Latin-German-Estonian dictionary of botanical terms.

The translation of *Estonian Peasant Laws* was not the only statement of support to Estonian peasants by Russow. At the end of the 1850s, after the Mahtra peasant uprising, Russow worked for the local government and filled in as a translator in the court when needed (Kalda 1966: 160). The processes gave Russow valuable insight into the situation of Estonian peasants, which he used to draw broader attention to the issue. In Alexander Herzen's magazine *Kolokol*, Russow criticizes the abuse of power by Baltic-German nobility towards the peasants (Jääts 2005: 68). Russow is also considered to be the (co-)author of the critical pamphlet *Der Ehste und sein Herr* (*The Estonian and His Master*) that was anonymously published in Berlin in 1861 (Kurvits & Pallas 2014: 143).

In the early 1860s, Russow tried his hand at a German-language newspaper, and co-published the *Revalsche Zeitung* together with Wilhelm Greiffenhagen (1821–1890). Russow's area of responsibility was news concerning the Russian Empire in the "Inland" section of the journal. Under Russow, the newspaper continued supporting the emancipation process of Estonians. The editors proclaimed clearly that they supported the peasants receiving more freedom, as well as moral and material opportunities that they considered to be crucial for the strength and prosperity of the province (Die Redaction 1861: [1]). Unsurprisingly, the voice of Russow, now in a position of a pragmatic urban intellectual as the editor of a German-language newspaper, differed strongly from his folksy manner in the Estonian *Tallinna koddaniko ramat*, clearly

showing how the target group's interests and level of education formed decisions of style and content. As philologist and theologist Alexander Heinrich Neus (1795–1876) reported in his letter to Kreutzwald in 1861, many readers were shocked to see someone speaking the truth publicly (Kreutzwald 1956: 193).

In spring 1863, Russow and his wife decided to leave for St. Petersburg. Russow's attitude and his uncompromising publications had caused a clash with the local Baltic-German authorities. This might have made the decision for the Russow family to leave Estonia easier.

**Reval verlassend, sagen wir allen Freun-
den und Bekannten, von denen wir nicht
persönlich haben Abschied nehmen können,
ein herzliches Lebewohl.
Friedrich Russow. Elise Russow.**

Figure 1. The announcement translates as: Leaving Reval [Tallinn], we bid a heartfelt farewell to all friends and acquaintances whom we were unable to say goodbye to in person (Russow & Russow 1863: 4)

Although Russow remained active for a few more years as the editor of the *Eesti-Ma Rahwa Kalender* (*Estonian Peoples' Calendar*, published by Lindfors' heirs), his active role as a promoter of early emancipation ended in the mid-1860s. However, his ties to the local intelligentsia persisted for a while longer. He donated books (Anon. 1865: 9) and is reported to have been working on a Russian-Estonian-German dictionary (Anon. 1870: 1). The dictionary could not be completed and since the 1870s Russow began to distance himself from the Estonians.

Russow's once good Estonian suffered from distance and time. In 1878, Russow sent an article in German to be published in Carl Robert Jakobsons (1841–1882) newspaper *Sakala*, apologizing for the work of translation he had caused and claiming to have become unaccustomed to writing in Estonian (Russow 1878).

In the course of Russification and heightened ethnic tensions, Russow rejected an honorary position in the board of the Estonian Peasants' Society in Tartu. Referring to himself as German, Russow explained:

[...] kaunis suure hulga Sakslaste meelest kõik uuemal ajal asutatud Eesti selt-sid, ni kui Aleksandre-kool, salajad sõariistad Sakste wastu on. Kui nüüd üks Sakslane ni awaliku auuga Eesti eestwedajate hulka wastuwöetakse, siis on tema [Russow] – pealt näha – ju Sakste wastane. (Russow 1881)

[...] in the view of a considerable number of Germans, all Estonian societies established in recent times – such as the Alexander School – are secret weapons against the Germans. If a German is now accepted into the ranks of Estonian leaders with such public honour, then he [Russow] is – to all appearances – an opponent of the Germans.

As Russow's statements and actions demonstrate, it is futile to debate whether the intellectuals of this period were more Estonian, German, or Russian. An examination of Russow's origins, life, and views reveals that he must be regarded as a hybrid figure. Russow engaged himself in the Estonian cause, felt most at home in the German language and culture, and lived and worked most of his adult life in Russia. In terms of lifestyle and educational background, he had nothing in common with the Estonian peasantry; however, he possessed an enlightened mission to improve the people's standard of living and elevate the level of Estonian culture. Translating literature was one of his tools for achieving this purpose.

Ued kandlekeled (1854)

Russow's short collection of German poetry was published in 1854 and consists of 18 poems. It includes German folk songs and contemporary authors like Joseph von Eichendorff and Heinrich Heine as well as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Gottfried August Bürger. As stated above, the identities of writers and translators of the era overlapped, and it will be shown in the analysis below that Russow saw the source literature as an offer and not as a constraint. The fact that he presents a short anthology of German and not Russian poetry, although he had just arrived from St. Petersburg, can be explained by the absolute predominance of German culture and literature at the time. All translations into Estonian in the 1850s used source texts in German, the first translations from the Russian language appeared only in the 1860s.

In the period of the emerging translation culture of the mid-19th century Estonia, the author and the title of the original usually went unmentioned, the translator could be marked on the cover, at the end of the text or not at all. Russow's collection is an exception, here a clear connection to the source text is established by offering the first line of the original after the Estonian title.

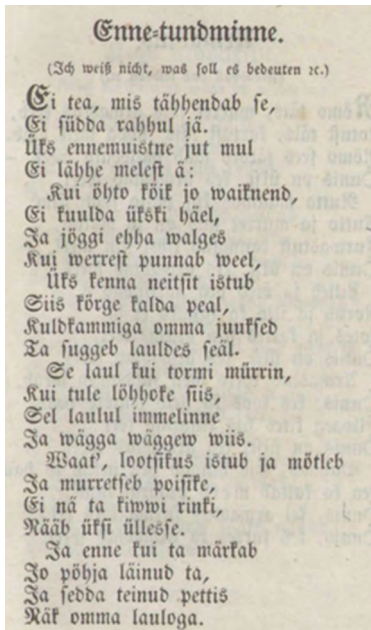


Figure. 2. Heinrich Heine's poem "Enne tundminne" ("Lore-Lei") in *Ued kandlekeled* (15).⁵

Mentioning the original title could be read as a stronger move away from the prevalent translation culture of adapting and modifying the originals. However, there are examples of books with nonreligious content consisting of song texts, which feature the title of the original next to the translation.⁶ In that case the priest or teacher supervising Estonians, or the Estonian reader himself was expected to know the German songs and sing the Estonian translations using the same melodies.

By adding the first lines of the originals, the originals of Russow's volume are easier to trace and find compared to other texts of that era. However, the exact publication from which the translator took his source texts remains unestablished. The comparisons below are therefore made in good faith that the translator was using a volume that presented originals in an un-adapted form.

⁵ In this chapter all the page numbers in brackets refer to *Ued kandlekeled*, if no additional information is given.

⁶ An example of a similar practice is a song book by Johann Schwelle *Kaunid wastsed lustilikkud römolaaulud ja üts illus ennemuistne jut* (1852).

Translated poetry in the volume is framed by two original poems by Russow. The first poem “Manitsus” (“Admonition”) uses a *memento mori* theme, giving the reader an excuse to sing and enjoy their earthly journey: “Lähme lauldes ello teed! / Miks siis rööm meil antud?” (“Let’s go on the journey of our life singing / Why else is joy given to us?”) (3). The poem concludes “Enne kui jo kurw ja küllm / Surm ta auda mattab, / Rõmust hiilg’wa silma tal / Pimme öga kattab.” (“Before t sad and cold / Death buries him in a grave, / His eye beaming with joy / is covered by the dark night”) (3).

Starting with this thoughtful poem, the collection moves to folksy and light poems about home, love and drinking. The first part concludes with a didactic poem in an alliterating style which is common for Estonian folk songs. The poem “Nä immet!” (“Look at the miracle”) (12–14) mocks Estonians who want to deny their upbringing by attempting to become Germans and stresses the value of folk songs, which embed the knowledge and kindness of earlier generations. After this second admonition Russow places three poems by Goethe, Heine and Eichendorff which can today be seen as the most important texts of the volume. These are followed by elegiac poems culminating in August Mahlmann’s “Mälestus” (“Memory”) about childhood, which takes the reader back to the first poem of the book dedicated to the meaning of life.

The importance of Russow’s poem collection in the framework of Estonian translation history cannot be overlooked. According to the present state of research, the volume presents the first translations into Estonian of three German classical poems: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s „Freudvoll und leidvoll“ (1788), Heinrich Heine’s „Ich weiß nicht, was soll es bedeuten“ (1823), as well as Joseph von Eichendorff’s „Ich kann wohl manchmal singen“ (1837) (Kalda 1966: 162). Whereas Goethe had been translated into Estonian before, Eichendorff and Heine make their first appearance in Estonian in Russow’s volume. All three poems are translated carefully, without shortening and with minimal adaptations.

Among these three, Goethe’s “Armastus” (“Freudvoll und leidvoll”) (16) is a particularly interesting case. The stanza consisting of four verses stems from the author’s early drama *Egmont* (1788). The other three stanzas were later added by C. A. Lasch (1821). In a recent anthology of Goethe’s poems translated into Estonian, a significant milestone of Goethe studies in Estonia, Jaan Otstavel’s “Armastus” (“Love”) is mentioned as the first translation of “Freudvoll und leidvoll” (Aabrams et al 2021: 118). However, Otstavel’s version is clearly based on Russow’s, with the later translator replacing some words and adding some punctuation marks. In the 20th century, further translations of the poem were published by Martin Lipp (“Ilus ja valus” (“Beautiful and Painful”), 1909), Anna Haava (“Südames armastus” (“Love in the Heart”),

Table 1. Translations of *Ued kandlekeled*, presented according to their order in the book

Title in Estonian (literal English translation)	Title of the original (as published in the volume)	Author of the original	Publication date of the original	Content	Comments on translation strategy in case of differences
Manitus (Admonition)				Elegy	Original
Kuld ja hõbbe (Gold and silver)	Gold und Silber preis ich sehr	August Schnelzer	1828	Folk song, love	
Tunnistamine (Confession)	Die Würzburger Glöckli	rahvalaul	1628	Folk song, love	Shortened, adapted
Kerge meel (Light mind)	Als mich mein Liebchen angeführt	Ernst Weyden	1834	Folk song, love	
Saks ja matüdruk (The nobleman and the peasant girl)	Nach dem Deutschen			Humoresque	
Kosja laul (Courtship song)	Wenn ich die Blümchen anschau	Franz Ignaz Castelli	1819	Humoresque	Shortened
Kõrtsi laulud [1] (Drinking song)	Meine Schuhe sind zerrissen	Albert Graf von Schlippenbach	1830	Humoresque	Partial translation. Schlippenbach's text is a translation of a Swedish folk song Den lustiga Gesällen 17 th cent.
Kõrtsi laulud [2] (Drinking song)	Grad' aus dem Wirtshaus komm' ich heraus	Heinrich von Mühlher	1840	Humoresque	Partly adapted
Laisa nädal (Week of a lazy person)	(Wanna wisi järeel) (After an old song)			Humoresque	
Nä immet! (Look at the miracle)				Humoresque	Original

Title in Estonian (literal English translation)	Title of the original (as published in the volume)	Author of the original	Publication date of the original	Content	Comments on translation strategy in case of differences
Halle meel (Sadness)	Ich kann wol manchmal singen	Joseph von Eichendorff	1837	Elegy	
Enne-tundminne (Sensing)	Ich weiß nicht, was soll es bedeuten	Heinrich Heine	1823	Elegy / humoresque	
Armastus (Love)	Freudvoll und leidvoll	Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, C. A. Lasch	(1. stanza Goethe 1788, 2.-4. Lasch 1828)	Elegy	
Kojo tahhaksin (I wish to go home)	Nach der Heimath möchte ich wieder	Karl Beils	1828	Elegy	Shortened, adapted
Kurwlahkumine (Sad departure)				Elegy	
Sallaja armastus (Secret love)	Was klinget und singet die Straße herauf	Ludwig Uhland	1806	Love	Shortened
Lapsetapja (Child-murderess)	Des Pfarrers Tochter von Taubenheim	Gottfried August Bürger	1782	Folk song	Adapted
Mällestus (Memory)	Ich denk an euch, ihr himmlisch schönen Tage	August Mahlmann	1801	Elegy	Adapted

1913/14) and August Sang (“Lootes” (“Hoping”), 1983) (Aabrams et al 2021: 118–119). Russow’s translation of the refrain “õnnis on üks, kes armastab veel” (blessed is only the one who loves) is repeated in Otstavel’s translation (plagiarism) and after some variations by Lipp, “õnnelik hing on, kui armastab ta” (happy is the soul only if he loves) and by Haava, “üksnes, kes armastab, õnnelik on” (only the one who loves is happy), the last translator August Sang returns to the first, Russow-Otstavel version, “õnnis on üks, kes armastab veel!”. Russow’s translation thus proves to be the most successful and has inspired several generations of translators. Alas, Russow’s “Armastus” moves what has been described as the third translation of Goethe’s poems in Estonian, Johann Voldemar Jannsen’s “Laulo palk” (1860) to fourth place and takes the position of the third translation of Goethe in Estonian after Carl Heinrich Gehewe’s “Kes väikse asja man ei taha vaiva näta” (1841) and Johann Sommer’s, also known as Suve Jaan’s, “Kalamees” (1843).

The first translation of the well-known German Romantic poet Joseph von Eichendorff, according to previous research, was “Talve öö”, translated by teacher and translator Juhan Kunder and published in the magazine *Linda* in 1889.⁷ Russow’s translation “Halle meel” in *Ued kandlekeled* establishes the first translation of Eichendorff in Estonian many decades earlier. The translation circulated for decades as a song and appears in the textbook of the song festival of 1896 (28–30).

Both poems, Goethe’s and Eichendorff’s, are treated by Russow with care, as he tries to stay metrically close to the original. However, the translator has modified some aspects of the content of Eichendorff’s poem. Russow alters the middle stanza by adding the feeling of the lyrical I which goes contrary to the original. The original stanza carries a feeling of longing and there is no “chest pounding with joy” by the lyrical I, which seemingly dismisses the sorrow of the nightingale.

⁷ According to Sonett.ee, this is the first translation of Eichendorff into Estonian. In my current research I have also discovered Eichendorff’s “Morgengebet”, translated into Estonian as “Hommiku laul” by Aleksander Martin Saar (1866–?), published in the magazine “Meelejahutaja” in 1887.

Table 2. Eichendorff’s metrics and rhyme compared to Russow’s translation, added literal translation and translation by Alfred Baskerville.

Eichendorff 1837	Transl. by Russow 1854	Transl. by Baskerville 1860
So lassen Nachtigallen,	Eks <u>laula</u> <u>puris</u> <u>wangis</u> So sings in the cage imprisoned	Thus sings the nightingale,
Spielt <u>draußen</u> Frühlings <u>luft</u> ,	Nis <u>ammoti</u> ka <u>lind</u> , In a same way also the bird	When vernal breezes wave,
Der Sehnsucht Lied erschallen	Kui <u>kewwade</u> on <u>õues</u> When spring is outside	Her love-descanting tale,
Aus ihres Käfigs Gruft.	Ja <u>rõmust</u> <u>põksub</u> <u>rind</u> . And the chest pounds with joy.	From out her cage’s grave.

In a time when translations used to be published many years, sometimes decades later than the originals, it is remarkable that Eichendorff’s poem was translated in the author’s lifetime, since Eichendorff died in 1857. The same can be said of Heine (1797–1856). Russow chooses to translate the most famous poem by Heine “Ich weiß nicht, was soll es bedeuten”, sometimes known as “Die Loreley” (1823). By the middle of the century, the poem belonged to the classical canon of German gymnasium education. The Estonian translation uses the descriptive title “Enne-tundminne” (“Sensing”) and fails to mention the heroine Loreley’s name, but transmits the rhyme scheme and metre of the poem successfully.

Table 3. Heine’s metrics and rhyme compared to Russow’s translation, including a literal translation and Alfred Baskerville’s version.

Heine 1832	Transl. by Russow 1854	Transl. by Baskerville 1860
Ich <u>weiß</u> nicht, was <u>soll</u> es <u>bedeuten</u> ,	Ei <u>tea</u> , mis <u>tähhendab</u> <u>se</u> , I don’t know what it means	Methinks the waves will swallow
Daß ich so <u>traurig</u> <u>bin</u> ;	Ei <u>südda</u> <u>rahul</u> <u>jä</u> . My heart will not calm	Both boat and boatman anon;
Ein Märchen aus <u>alten</u> <u>Zeiten</u> ,	Üks <u>ennemuistne</u> <u>jut</u> <u>mul</u> An ancient story I	And this with her sweet singing
Das kommt mir nicht aus dem <u>Sinn</u> .	Ei <u>lähhe</u> <u>melest</u> <u>ä</u> . Cannot forget	The Lore-Lei hath done.

At the end of the poem, Russow translated the ironic turn of the plot that many contemporary Germans, who chose to interpret the poem tragically, failed to notice. Russow ends dryly: „Ja seda teinud pettis / Näk omma lauloga.“ (And that was done by the deceived / mermaid with her song).

In order to transfer the meaning and make it comprehensible to the target culture, Russow uses substitution and deletion⁸, with different motivating factors at work. In a poem about a drunkard coming from a pub late at night, “Kõrtsi laulud” (2), the German poem depicts dancing lantern posts, which were not familiar in the context of an Estonian village. The drinker in the Estonian translation sees a spade dancing with a pitchfork and a post with a broom. The drinker goes back to the pub, because he cannot stay out in this crazy world where he might hurt himself by dancing. It is remarkable that this ending is not changed into a more moralistic one that would condemn this kind of behaviour. We need to be reminded here that the tone of literature in the Estonian language was dominated by Baltic German doctors, teachers and Lutheran pastors, who were careful to support a moralistic stance. Jannsen and Kreutzwald also condemned drinking and consistently attempted to warn their readers away from the moral and physical decay that follows drinking.

In the poem “Tunnistamine” (“Confession”), which mentions the church bells of Würzburg in the original, the translation deletes the name of the town. The verses dedicated to the most beautiful girl in the church choir are reduced from 24 to 12. The poem “Kuld ja hõbbe” (“Gold and silver”) talks about the value of a girl exceeding gold and silver. In the original, the girl has no name; in the Estonian version, she is called “Tio”, a name that was often used in folk poetry and in early Baltic German poetry written in Estonian.

The poem “Lapsetapja” (“Child-murderess”) is based on a sad ballad by Gottfried August Bürger. He was a popular author in the 19th century and his poems were well known and used as school literature. Especially popular was Bürger’s “Lenore” (1773), which was translated by Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald (1851) some years before and received highly positive feedback. In Bürger’s original “Des Pfarrers Tochter von Taubenhain” (1782), a nobleman seduces the pastor’s daughter and the desperate girl kills her newborn child. The poem then depicts a girl burying her newborn child and the accusation expressed by the nature around her. However, for his translation Russow uses a German folk song based on the ballad by Bürger. In this shortened German folk song known as “Des Pfarrers Tochter von Taubenheim”, the story starts after the murder has taken place. The Estonian version by Russow omits some verses where the girl curses the man who seduced her and reduces the story to the guilt of the child-murderess. The poem thus attempts to guide the peasant reader using the principles of popular enlightenment.

The act of seduction is mentioned in another poem of the volume “Saks ja matüdruk” (“The nobleman and the peasant girl”), where the nobleman

⁸ For modes of translation see Delabastita 1993, as well as Verschik & Saagpakk 2023.

approaches the girl but gets rejected, giving the story a happy end from the girl's perspective. This poem is the only one in the volume with a comment "Aus dem Deutschen" (from German) instead of a title or a first verse of the original, which might indicate that the translator used his memory instead of a printed text. It could also have been an original poem by Russow disguised as a translation to avoid criticism for depicting a societal problem in the rural areas and showcasing immoral behaviour by German landlords.

The collection ends symbolically with August Mahlmann's "Mälestus" ("Ich denk an Euch", 1801), a depiction of a life starting with cheerful moments of the youth and ending with the solemn waiting for eternal peace following death. The pseudonym "ss" (for Russow) appears at the end of the final poem.

Conclusion

Ued kandlekeled (*New Harp Strings*) contains a wide range of German songs and poems. In translating them, Russow creatively employed different translation techniques according to the needs of the target audience, the general message being the empowerment and emancipation of Estonian peasants by providing them with elements of classical (German) education and offering a variety of poetry that differs from folk songs and church repertoire. Although this is not the first selection of poems in Estonian, as earlier research has claimed (Raag 2008: 57), many conceptually new elements are introduced. The volume consists only of poems; earlier publications usually mixed poems and prose, as can be seen in Johann Schwelle "Wäega tullolikko nink kennad, õppetlikkud laulud nink juttud" (1850) and "Kaunid wastsed lustilikkud römo-laulud" [1852], or Berend Gildenmann "Lillekessed" (1852). Russow's collection is also the first to consequently distinguish between original and translated texts. Although the motivation behind adding the first German verse to every translation might have been mostly practical and was aimed at singability rather than introducing the original, it is still an important milestone.

The collection *Ued kandlekeled* was a step towards creating a library of world literature in Estonian. Similarly to Bürger's "Lenora" (1851), translated by Kreutzwald, Russow introduces a more source-text-oriented approach and remains highly conscious of the rhythmic and metrical aspects of translating poems. Additionally, Russow's remarkable translatory skills and the volume's careful thematic organization deserve credit. The selection follows a clear narration, grouping different themes and creating space for both thoughtful and cheerful poems.

The collection offers a selection of German poetry of various kinds, thereby widening the horizons of Estonian readers. This content is, however, embedded

into an overall message of critiquing the of Germanization of Estonians. The translator seems to want to stress that reading German poems does not mean becoming German. One of the two original poems in the collection is “Nä immet” (“Behold a Wonder”), which satirically points out the absurd ways of “wannabe-German” Estonians. This group was called “juniper Germans” (Est. “kadasakasaksad”), juniper is neither fully a tree nor a bush. Russow scolds: “Tallopoeaga, wabbadikko: Kõik saand saksikuks, kaddakasaksaks” (“Peasants, landfree men: All turned German-like, into juniper Germans”) (Russow 1854: 12). Germanization means that the peasants are forgetting their “wanad wisid” (“old ways/tunes”) and “kaunid kombed” (“beautiful customs”) (ibid: 13), and along with them, “wisdom” and “generosity”. Thus, the *regivärss*-style (runo song) poem “Nä immet” forms a distinctive contrast to the collection’s translated texts, which were intended to enrich the Estonian language and culture in terms of both expression and thought. In that context, it is ironical that at the end of his life, Russow distanced himself from Estophile activities and referred to himself unequivocally as belonging to the Germans.

Ued kandlekeled is one of the most remarkable translation collections of the decade, remaining memorable and readable for a long period. Upon Russow’s death, Mihkel Kampmann (1906: 1) wrote praisingly of him as a bearer of pure, vernacular Estonian, emphasizing the collection *Ued kandlekeled*, and stating that its translations “succeeded very well and are influential until this day”.

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