(Trans)forming national images in translation

The case of the “Young Estonia” movement

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The article explores the relations between translation, cultural identity and national self-image, focusing on a case study from early 20th century Estonia. The analysis of different aspects of the “Young Estonia” cultural movement’s project of literary and linguistic renewal reveals that the translational attitude adopted by the movement – well expressed in their slogan “Let us be Estonians, but let us become Europeans too” – does not describe a linear trajectory of “self-colonisation”, as some scholars have recently claimed. It points rather to the “processual inseparability” of translation, cultural renewal and national self-imagining that is studied in the article through an analysis of Young Estonian poet Vilem Ridala’s experiments with emotion vocabulary as a privileged place of cultural difference in his controversial 1913 translation of Gabriele D’Annunzio’s L’innocente.

Keywords: cultural identity, national images, translation, language renewal, Young Estonia movement, self-colonisation, modernism

Introduction

The following research investigates the role of translation in the (trans)formation of national self-images, asking why and how such images should be understood as a translational construct. The case to be studied was chosen from the conviction that the most fruitful way to organise a situated encounter between image and translation studies is to focus on historical periods which present us with ruptures and conflicts in national self-identifications and, at the same time, bring to the fore the centrality of translation in cultural dynamics. This is what happened in many Central and Eastern European countries at the beginning of the 20th century, when the new modernist trends in literature and culture provoked an extensive revision among intellectuals of the 19th century’s essentialist understandings of...
national belonging. This revision was generally accompanied by intense translation work and the emancipation of translated literature within the national literary polysystems (Even-Zohar 1990). National literatures had often occupied a central position in the ideological construction of cultural nationalism in the 19th century (Dović 2010, 53); the growing centrality of translated literature at the turn of the century represented instead an important cultural challenge to the monolithic purity of national self-images.

In Estonian history, the early 20th century was a period of accelerated change that began with the 1905 revolution, which affected the country as a part of the Russian Empire, and continued up to Estonia’s independence in 1918. At that time a new generation of Estonian intellectuals inspired by contemporary European trends tried to bring about a profound renewal of Estonian literature, language and culture under the banner of the Young Estonia [Noor-Eesti] movement. By promoting form-conscious art and educated specialist criticism, the movement interested itself mostly in aestheticist forms of artistic expression. Scholars nowadays often stress the paradoxical gap between the scarcity of original belles lettres actually produced by Young Estonians and the acknowledged importance of the movement for Estonian literature (Olesk & Laak 2008, 8). The explanation for this paradox requires a shift of attention to Young Estonians’ activities in literary translation, critical reception and, more generally, cultural mediation, all of which tend to dethrone original literary creation as a means of national self-imagining.

The complex nature of such activities is the reason why the term “translation” is used here with two different meanings: the narrower or “proper” meaning of “interlinguistic translation of literary texts”; and a broader meaning which coincides with Juri Lotman’s understanding of translation as a general mechanism of cultural dynamics. Lotman describes the latter as the tension between two opposite and complementary forces which correspond to two different ways of “translating”. Acting in one direction, the drive to cultural homogenisation gives rise to “self-descriptions”, which Lotman defines as “ideological self-portraits” or “mythologised images” translating the different elements of a given cultural space into a single, coherent, homogeneous meta-language (Lotman 1997; 2000, 129). This attempt at self-enclosure is always counterbalanced by the immersion of any cultural space in a broader semiotic environment – what Lotman (2005) calls the “semiosphere” – which is constitutively made up of different, heterogeneous and incommensurable systems. The unavoidable cultural translation between such systems – what Lotman defines as “translation of the untranslatable” (Lotman 2009, 4–6) – generates new and unpredictable meanings which escape homogenising self-descriptions and question cultural unity. Lotman’s self-descriptive translation and translation of the untranslatable may in some way be considered to generalise the distinction between “domesticating” and “foreignising” translations.
to the workings of culture as a whole. However, it has to be noted that Lotman does not concentrate on their alternative nature. He focuses, in contrast, on the interaction of these opposite forces, which will be exposed in this analysis of the Young Estonians’ translational activity.

The adaptational origins of the Estonian national image

The Estonian nation was imagined for the first time in the 19th century by Baltic Germans, who had been the landowners and the cultural colonisers of the country for centuries, and by the first generation of Estonian intellectuals. From a broader translational point of view, we can describe the period of national awakening as an adaptation of German national-romantic cultural patterns to what had already been represented by Baltic-German colonisers as the “Estonian peasant people” [maarahvas], a kind of cultural otherness in need of its own history and national epic (Ploom 2011, 216). Good examples of this adaptational attitude are the two cornerstones of Estonian literature and culture: the pseudo-original Estonian national epics Kalevipoeg [“The Son of Kalev”], written in 1857–1861 by Friedrich Kreutzwald, and the Estonian song festival [laulupidu], which was first held in Tartu in 1869 in imitation of the German Liederfest.

From a post-colonial perspective, we can describe this adaptational attitude as an attempt to naturalise foreign cultural patterns in order to make them into signs of one’s own maturity and autonomy (Jacquemond 1992, 142). In the process of national awakening, Estonians learnt to look at their translated image in the Baltic German mirror, and this image was unquestioningly adopted as a genuine and original expression of Estonian nationality, thus becoming a culturally homogenising self-description. The industrious Kalevipoeg in peasant’s clothes (Figure 1) and the singers in folk costumes on the stage of the Song festival (Figure 2)

Figure 1. Kalevipoeg, Oskar Kallis, 1914  Figure 2. Singers at the Estonian song festival
thus continue to represent today for many Estonians the unquestionable imaginary core of national identity.

From the narrower point of view of translation proper, the period of national awakening is characterised by phenomena that confirm the broader translational attitude just described:

a. Translations from German were predominant. In the second half of the 19th century, they made up over 40% of all literary translations (see Table 1), which was four times more than translations of Russian literature even though Estonia was a province of the Russian Empire at the time. Works from other foreign literatures were often translated not directly from the source language but from German compilations or adaptations.

b. Translations were mostly adaptations, with many omissions and additions aimed at domesticating foreign works for the Estonian public.

c. The translator’s name was generally not noted and, in many cases, even the author’s name was omitted. This is why the origin of a conspicuous number of translations remains unknown.

d. The first originals produced by Estonian writers of the period are, in many cases, adaptations of mainly German literary works and motifs. There is therefore no clear borderline between translations and originals, they simply represent different degrees of adaptation.

Table 1. “Original” and translated *belles lettres* from 1851 to 1900 (source Möldre 2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Source) literature</th>
<th>1851–1900 number of titles (share of all translations)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estonian</td>
<td>768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>492 (41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>129 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>91 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French/Belgian</td>
<td>52 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finnish</td>
<td>24 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>35 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>53 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collections</td>
<td>37 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origin unknown</td>
<td>293 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1206 translations (61% of all <em>belles-lettres</em>)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Unhinging” the national: Young Estonia’s diffraction of the national image

The Young Estonia movement can be seen as a critical reaction to the cultural and linguistic heritage of the period of national awakening, taking as its main target the unquestioning naturalisation of German linguistic and cultural patterns by the older generation of Estonian intellectuals. In the defiant manner typical of 20th century avant-gardists, Young Estonians defined old Estonian culture and language as ‘poor’ and ‘vulgar’, ‘ugly’ and ‘stagnant’, and directed their efforts towards an elaboration of ‘refined’ and ‘rich’, ‘graceful’, ‘noble’, even ‘aristocratic’ linguistic and stylistic features. The radical translational drive at the basis of the renewal thus evoked is well expressed by writer Gustav Suits’s call, which opened the first issue of the movement’s journal in 1905 and became its main slogan: “Let us be Estonians, but let us also become Europeans!” This paradox of identity will be discussed further after a presentation of the key features which fundamentally distinguish Young Estonia’s “Europeanisation” of the national image from the 19th century “Germanisation” of it.

The “aesthetic principle”

From a broader translational point of view, the fundamental move of the Young Estonians was to “denaturalise” culture, by introducing into it what they called the “aesthetic principle”. Poet Villem Grünthal Ridala claimed that: “Young Estonia has brought a new and unprecedented concept into literature: the question of aesthetics” (Ridala 1918, 81). Far from being limited to literature alone, the aesthetic principle covers all the different aspects of culture in the view of the Young Estonians. Writer Friedebert Tuglas enunciated the general primacy of the aesthetic principle, by quoting Oscar Wilde’s aphorism – “Truth is entirely and absolutely a matter of style”, which he explained in the following way: “It is impossible to express the same thought in two different ways, so that the thought remains entirely the same” (Tuglas 1912a, 33). The “aesthetic principle” therefore not only sanctions the privilege accorded to literary forms over contents, but even more importantly it also points at the performative role of formal devices in the (re)construction of content and implies an understanding of cultural phenomena as artefacts which are not given originally, but are always already being pulled into a process of artificial/artistic (re)creation. In the Lotmanian terms used here,

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1. Here and henceforth all the quotations from Estonian authors are translated by the author, D.M.
one could say that the Young Estonians became aware of the constitutively translational nature of cultural dynamics and started to exploit it for their own ends.

The first consequence of this is that their critique of the culture of the times cannot aim for a return to origins, to some authentic Estonian culture, before Germanisation. There is no way out from cultural translation and mirror-images to origins and originals. Cultural renewal implies instead a radical broadening of the receptional horizon, which would call into question the limited boundaries of Estonian culture and, as Young Estonian poet and translator Johannes Semper had it, “expose Estonia to all the winds, storms, quests and findings in the intellectual domain” (Semper 1918a, 33). The second important consequence of the primacy of the aesthetic principle is the legitimation of individual intervention in culture. When renewing cultural forms, artists and writers no longer represent “the people” as they claimed to do in the 19th century, but in contrast, they realise their own creative will and independence. Thus, cultural renewal is accompanied by the formation of a new intellectual elite and opens up a gap within national imagining itself with important consequences for Estonian cultural identity.

Figure 3. Covers of the Young Estonia journal “Noor-Eesti”, no. III and IV
Translation and/as cultural renewal

The general translational attitude described above in terms of the “aesthetic principle” is clearly implemented in the Young Estonians’ systematic work of literary translation and reception. Translation and the Young Estonia project of cultural and linguistic renewal are linked in two ways. Firstly, translation becomes a fundamental premise for achieving the movement’s aims. This connects Young Estonians to other European Modernists for whom translation was not simply “a minor mode of literary production or an exercise of apprenticeship”, but constitut-ed “an integral part of the Modernist programme of cultural renewal” expanding “the range of cultural, linguistic, and generic fields in which they could actively participate” (Yao 2002, 6–7). Secondly, Young Estonia’s broader translational orientation provokes fundamental changes in the policies and norms of translation. This is evident from the following phenomena which mark a reversal of the 19th century attitude toward translation described above:

a. Young Estonians shift their attention from German literature mainly to Romance literature, and also to Finnish, Scandinavian and Anglo-American literatures. The function of this shift is clearly stated by Tuglas: “In order to find a counterbalance to the univocal foreign influences which dominate our culture today, we need to acquaint ourselves with various other foreign, and often opposite, cultures” (Tuglas 1912b, 264). If culture is constitutively translational, it can be reshaped by modification of the share of source-literatures and languages in translation (see Table 2); the esprit fin de siècle and symbolism (Baudelaire, Bourget, D’Annunzio, Maeterlinck, Poe, Rimbaud, Verlaine and others) in particular come to occupy a pre-eminent position in the Young Estonians’ renewed canon.

b. Translated literature is clearly emancipated from original works and comes to occupy an autonomous place within the Estonian literary polysystem: the name of the author, the source language and the name of the translator are systematically reported on the title pages of translations.

2. Modernist W.B. Yeats made the same point when laying out his plan for the Irish Literary Theatre in 1901: “performing Spanish, and Scandinavian, and French, and perhaps Greek masterpieces rather more than Shakespeare”, he argues, the Irish Theatre “would do its best to give Ireland a hardly and shapely national character by opening its doors to the four winds of the world [recall Estonia’s exposure to “all the winds and storms” in Semper’s quotation reported above]” (quoted in Yao 2002, 9).
c. The Young Estonian translator (who is also a writer, poet and intellectual) becomes an agent of conscious cultural change and the role of translation as a means of intervention in the target language and culture is explicitly thematised. The five volumes of language innovator Johannes Aavik’s “Experiments and examples. Collection of translated short stories as linguistic experiments” (1915–1920) are a good illustration of this attitude. Translations from mainly French and Spanish authors become a safe place for Aavik freely to explore radical possibilities for a linguistic renewal that exploits the syntax of Romance languages in order to deconstruct the Germanised syntax of the Estonian language.

d. The transformation of translation into a place for boundless experimentation with Estonian linguistic norms implies the adoption of foreignising strategies by Young Estonians.

e. Finally, translations are accompanied and framed by a systematic work of reception. Their paratextual apparatus grows to include long prefaces by translators, afterwords and dictionaries of neologisms, and the Young Estonians also publish separate reviews and articles on translated authors, their works and style and the new trends in European literature.

While the Estonian national awakening of the 19th century presents us with an unquestioned adaptation of German models into a national self-description, the Young Estonia movement lets us speak of a conscious use of translational devices as a means of challenging that very same self-description. With reference to Lawrence Venuti (2004), we can say that the translational inscription of the foreign into the domestic scene was exploited by Young Estonia to reveal, activate and enhance the internal heterogeneity of Estonian culture. Semper defined this attempt as an “unhinging of the national” [lahtirahvustamine] which would undermine the presumed homogeneity of Estonian cultural identity. Each culture,
argues Semper, “is first and foremost transnational [rahvusväeline]” (Semper 1918b, 64), which means, in our terms, a translational, heterogeneous and therefore always debatable construction.

**Oneself as another: The utopian efficacy of impossible identifications**

We can now return to the paradoxical guiding slogan of Young Estonia, the analysis of which helps us to reinterpret the relations between translation and national imagining in terms of the double linkage between translation and cultural renewal.

What was earlier called a paradox of identity can now be more exactly defined as the processual inseparability of translation and identity (trans)formation, which I have tried to illustrate in Figure 4: on one side, the renewal of the Estonian language and culture presupposes the translation and reception of European, mainly Romance, literature; but then this translation and reception presupposes in its turn a renewed Estonian language and culture. As Tuglas observed, “in order to adopt a particular influence, a certain number of prerequisites are first of all needed” (Tuglas 1918, 21). However, in the activity of the Young Estonia movement, that “particular influence” was in itself precisely the prerequisite for the creation of that “certain number of prerequisites”. Gustav Suits conceptualised this in terms of an impossible possibility: “Young Estonia has been an attempt to make possible, in both material and spiritual terms, that which was considered impossible in Estonia” (Suits 1931, 44). Venuti has described this paradoxical aspect of the translational exchange as the utopian projection of a receptive domestic community: “In supplying an ideological resolution, a translation projects a utopian community that is not yet realised” (Venuti 2004, 499).

![Figure 4. The processual inseparability of translation and identity (trans)formation](image_url)
However, a community imagined in the form of a utopian projection must take, as the very word “utopia” and the tradition of utopian thinking clearly show, the form of “another place” in which one mirrors, at the same time, one’s own present inadequacy and one’s ideal future image. As Jacques Rancière has argued, utopia “est la construction intellectuelle qui fait coïncider un lieu de la pensée avec un espace intuitif perçu ou perceptible” (Rancière 1998, 40). The “Europe” of the Young Estonians’ slogan is the “intuitive perceptible space” that their utopian intellectual construction makes coincide with the movement’s “place of thought” of a renewed Estonian language, culture and national community. At any rate, it would be wrong to interpret this coincidence in a static way, as if the question were simply the replacement of the existing Estonian culture and language, first of all with a purely ideal construction (the movement’s “place of thought”) and then with an already existing and perceptible “equivalent” of the latter, in this case European culture and linguistic patterns.

The utopian dimension of the Young Estonia project is better understood when situated in what I have called the processual inseparability of translation and cultural renewal. From this perspective, the new utopian intellectual community and cultural space is neither here (Estonia) nor there (Europe), but rather it emerges from the progressive and bi-directional dislocations brought about in translation. It is in the never-ending movement where an Estonian is neither just an Estonian nor simply a European that national images are never-endingly constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed in translation.

Pleasure out of the foreign: The scandal of translation

Young Estonian poet Vilem Grünthal Ridala’s translation of Gabriele D’Annunzio’s *L’Innocente* is a good example of the movement’s attempt to make the country into a cosmopolitan and fully-fledged member of the European set of nations by translating prestigious authors from abroad. I have chosen it as a case study for verifying what has been said so far, because it most remarkably and explicitly instantiates (1) the change of orientation in the Young Estonians’ linguistic and literary preferences and the primacy of the aesthetic principle; (2) the role of translation in linguistic and cultural innovation; and (3) the double linkage between translation and identity (trans)formation.

These are also the reasons why the publication of the translation in 1913 became a real cultural scandal and a favourite negative example in conservative attacks against Young Estonia. Linguist Johannes Voldemar Veski criticised the “exaggerations” in Ridala’s use of unnecessary “international” and “very rare” words, which turn entire sentences into “an irresolvable riddle” (Veski 1958, 52–
55), and he accused Ridala of making the Estonian language into a “Babelic confusion” through the “implementation of mechanic translation” (Veski 1958, 49). Even Young Estonian Tuglas described Ridala’s translation in a private letter to Aavik as “the most frightening linguistic fantasy” (Vihma 1990, 88). Such critical remarks make clear that the estranging effects of Ridala’s translation primarily derived from its radically experimental attitude to the Estonian vocabulary, which made of the translation, according to the sympathetic Aavik, “the highest peak” in the process of lexical renewal of the Estonian language (Pilvre 1988, 723). Before proceeding to an analysis of the translation, we must therefore briefly consider the main principles of the Young Estonians’ lexical renewal, highlighting their function in the movement’s general project of national and intellectual regeneration.

In the light of what has been said above about Young Estonia’s inclinations, it is not surprising to discover that aestheticism and eclecticism have been considered (Erelt 2000, 80) the two main pillars of Aavik’s and Ridala’s method of lexical enrichment of the Estonian language. New words were not just to be used to fill Estonian’s lexical lacuna, which translation had helped to make evident. This kind of functionalistic “filling” had to be accompanied by internal “differentiation” and “proliferation” (see Monticelli 2009), which would increase the number of synonyms carrying slightly different nuances of meaning and avoid derivational repetition of the same root in different words. In Aavik’s view, such “phonetic monotony” is an obstacle to “the aesthetic effect” (Aavik 1924, 17), while the proliferation of synonyms and different root words becomes a distinctive feature of “the languages of culture”, which individualise words and give them the “suggestive effect” needed for the development of a valuable literature. Proliferation and differentiation are, as means of lexical enrichment, indifferent to the origin of the new words (eclecticism). According to Aavik, they could be constructed from existent material (derivation), or loaned from Estonian dialects, Finnish or “foreign languages, which contain in the first place international cultural words of mainly Greek or Latin origin” or even created ex-nihilo.

D’Annunzio’s translator Ridala concentrated particularly on the semantic aspect of lexical enrichment, insisting on the need for “linguistic refinement” [keelepeenendus], by which he meant the creation of lexical means to distinguish between the most refined concepts and emotions with the aim of expressing more sharply their different shades and degrees (Ridala 1911, 300–303). The translation of L’innocente becomes a privileged place for experimenting with this kind of

3. “Language of culture” [kultuurkeel] or “educated language” [haritud keel] are the concepts used by Young Estonia’s language renewers when referring to the European languages with rich literary traditions like French, Italian, English and, consequently, the ideal Estonian language they tried to develop.
“linguistic refinement” as Ridala makes clear in the unusually long preface where he presents D’Annunzio and his novel as paradigmatic illustrations of “modernity” [modernsus] from both a thematic and a stylistic point of view. Partly this is because D’Annunzio very effectively describes the “sounds” and “tones” of “modern man’s disordered psychic life”, all the sophisticated things that people can ever do with their own “soul” (Ridala 1913, v, xvii); at the same time, D’Annunzio does all this with the “perfection of his amazing verbal art” and “rhetoric of beautiful speech” (Ridala 1913, v, xxi), a plenitude and abundance of forms which fill the “feeling of emptiness” that the artificiality of D’Annunzian characters and situations evoke in the reader (Ridala 1913, xv, xxv).

Ridala is clearly conscious of the high degree of foreignness which both the D’Annunzian “modern man” and the related literary style introduce into the Estonian context. First of all the artificiality of D’Annunzian “high society’s elegant people” (Ridala 1913, ix, xi) is alien to the Estonian peasant or petty bourgeois cultural tradition and the still overwhelmingly rural society of the time. The same can be said of the stylistic abundance of D’Annunzio’s works in which Ridala detects “something as cold as marble, that general property of Southerners, which has taken its most typical form in D’Annunzio’s rare combinations”. Ridala directly opposes this to “the sentimental Nordic people” who “pretend from art more ideal and ostensible values and do not accept excessively formal solutions. We are too serious and often too insensible to the beauty of forms to taste fully such works of art as the majority of D’Annunzio’s creation” (Ridala 1913, xix).4

Ridala is therefore aware of the problematic reception that his translation will encounter among Estonian readers of the time. However, he decides to exploit exactly the estranging psychical complexity and artificiality of L’innocente’s characters and their literary aesthetisation to refine the Estonian vocabulary:

The making of this translation has become a new touchstone for our language and what it is capable of. As we did not want to adopt the frequently used method of simplifying the original text, we had to mobilise all the lexical resources of language – we had to employ not only the new words which now so happily refresh our language, neologisms and loans, but even some rare and very little known dialect words which could help to express the complicated psychological phenomena described in the present work. But this was not enough to express the richness and variety of D’Annunzio’s observations on the life of the human soul – we also had to revert to some very little known foreign words.

(Ridala 1913, xxxii)

4. Notice that Ridala makes his point here in terms of stereotyped categories.
The dictionary of “new and rare words” that Ridala added to his translation as an aid to his reader contains items from 16 different sources used for “linguistic refinement” in the translation: foreign languages, both modern like Italian, French, English and Finnish and the classical Greek and Latin; different Estonian dialects; and earlier Estonian written sources like the Estonian-German dictionary published by Ferdinand Johann Wiedemann in 1869 and “Kalevipoeg.”

Concluding his preface, Ridala admits that his foreignising approach to D’Annunzio – which he describes as privileging “the precision and scrupulousness of the translation” over its “readability and simplicity” – will probably limit the number of its readers. At any rate, he presents the reading of the translation in the terms of a ripening process, which should lead to a change not only in the receptive attitude, but in the very emotions of the reader:

I have a request to the public […] do not let a sense of estrangement [võõrastust] rise after the first pages, but go on with the reading, even if it seems a bit difficult at the beginning, and you can be sure that getting acquainted with estrangement will change the latter into an opposite feeling, and pleasure will grow out of foreignness. (Ridala 1913, xxxiv)

Making Estonian(s) emotional

The “sentimental journey” that Ridala expects from the reader of the translation should therefore parallel and sanction the equivalent ripening of the Estonian language in the translation process. I have tried to follow the latter in a comparative analysis of the vocabulary of feelings and emotions used to denote “psychological phenomena” in D’Annunzio’s original (D’Annunzio 1996) and Ridala’s translation. My analysis does not aim to determine the overall strategy of domestication, foreignisation, or other adopted by the translator, but rather to highlight the fluidity of the relations between source and target emotion vocabulary in the course of the translation process. I will analyse this fluidity as an empirical instantiation of the processual inseparability of linguistic/cultural renewal and translation and more generally Young Estonia’s drive toward identitarian de/reconstruction described in Figure 4 above.

5. The use of old and vernacular Estonian forms alongside modern European languages as a source of lexical enrichment does not contradict Young Estonia’s commitment to cultural and linguistic renewal. As Venuti has observed, translational utopias often exploit “domestic cultural traditions through deviations from the current standard dialect or otherwise standardised languages – through archaisms, for example, or colloquialisms” (Venuti 2004, 499).
In collecting textual items belonging to the vocabulary of feelings and emotion, I have followed the criteria suggested by the Estonian linguist Ene Vainik (2004) and included in the list (1) “primary emotion terms” such as viha (hate), kannatus (sufferance), rõõm (joy); (2) “secondary emotion terms” which describe the process of experiencing emotions and are, in the Estonian language, mainly verbal derivatives such as vihka-mine (hatred), kohku-mine (reluctancy), meeleheit-mine (desperation); and (3) “states of mind” like erutus (excitement), kärsitus (impatience), meeletus (insanity). I have added the corresponding adjectival derivatives to the list of nouns.

The quantitative results of the analysis are displayed in Table 3 and clearly show what Ridala defined in his preface as the “the richness and variety of observations on the life of the human soul” in D’Annunzio’s L’innocente, which contains an average of two new emotion terms per page. More surprising is the fact that the total number of different emotion terms used in the translation surpasses the number in D’Annunzio’s original by one third. We could say that Ridala passes the translational trial for the Estonian language by making it even more complex than D’Annunzio’s Italian through lexical experimentation. Over 100 of the 564 emotional terms (adjectival derivatives included) used in the translation are

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotion terms and adjectival derivatives of which</th>
<th>G. D’Annunzio</th>
<th>V. Ridala</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>original’s emotion terms with two different translation equivalents</td>
<td>433</td>
<td>564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>single translation equivalents for two different emotion terms of the original</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>original’s emotion terms with three different translation equivalents</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>single translation equivalents for three different emotion terms of the original</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>original’s emotion terms with four different translation equivalents</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>single translation equivalents for four different emotion terms of the original</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>original’s emotion terms with more than four different translation equivalents</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>single translation equivalents for more than four different emotion terms of the original</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
listed in the dictionary of new and rare words added to the translation. Only 20% of the Estonian emotion terms used by Ridala translate more than one emotion term of D’Annunzio’s original, while 40% of the emotion terms in D’Annunzio’s original are translated with two or more Estonian emotion terms.

Ridala’s experimental strategy in the refinement of the Estonian(s’) emotional thesaurus emerges particularly well in the growing tensions between the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes (Jakobson 2003) of the translation. In the vocabulary of languages, emotion terms are structured by paradigmatic relations; they are grouped under semantic hyperonyms, which oppose one another (“attraction” vs “repulsion”, “joy” vs “sadness”, “agitation” vs “calm”) and whose hyponimic elements are internally structured by synonymity and gradation. For instance, the rich emotional paradigm of “repulsion” in D’Annunzio’s L’Innocente can be described as a scale going from less intensive emotion terms to more intensive ones:

\[\text{Disistima (halvakspidamine, 53)} < \text{Disamore (külmenemine, 19)} < \text{Fastidio (tiüüts, 115; vastumeelsus, 133, igavus, 231)} < \text{Inimicizia (vaen, 202)} < \text{Ostile (vae-nuline, 270, 273, 318)} < \text{Avversione (tılgastus, 141, 211, 269, 314, 321; pööritus, 259, 261; jäälestus, 310)} < \text{Disdegno (pahandus, 146)} < \text{Insofferenza (kammatamatu, 155, 232)} < \text{Intollerabile (talumata, 189; kamnatamatu, 287; väljakammatatu(a), 114 290)} < \text{Repulsione (vastumeelsus, 47, 55; eemaletöukumine, 197; tılgastus, 235, 256)} < \text{Disgusto (tılgastus, 30, 166; tüdimus, 13; vastumeelsus, 36, 263, 278; läälius, 155, 197, 195, 214)} < \text{Disprezzo (põlgamine, 34)} < \text{Spregevole (põlast, 165)} < \text{Detestato (põlatud, 227)} < \text{Nauseante (läilastav, 55)} < \text{Stomachevole (läilas, 174)} < \text{Mostruso (koletu, 175)} < \text{Ribrezzo (vastumeelsus, 155; jähm, 182, 198, 328; tılgastus, 214, 230)} < \text{Raccompricció (värin, 145; pahaneel, 188; vabin, 210; jähm, 238; jäälestus, 273)} < \text{Ripugnanza (vastumeelsus, 193, 214, 315; tılgastus, 151, 155, 201, 263, 292, 311; äratõükus, 261; vastaseis, 310)} < \text{Abominievole (jäälestav, 165; jäälestatav, 173)} < \text{Ributtante (tılkav, 171; tılgastav, 254, 261; tilge, 273)} < \text{Odio (viha, 194, 285, 332; vihkamine, 146, 165, 229, 269; vimm, 310).}\]

When Ridala starts translating, he does not have at his disposal a language where similarly refined paradigmatic distinctions are already in place and selectable. As he states in his preface,

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6. I will mark them with a “*” in what follows. New and rare emotion terms are particularly productive in the translation; for instance, *tılgastus (disgust) translates D’Annunzian disgusto, repulsione, ribrezzo, ripugnanza and avversione, and *kich (excitement) translates eccitazione, feroce, gelosia, orgasmo and brama.

7. There is of course a certain degree of subjectivity in this arrangement of emotion terms. At any rate, what matters here is that the author’s/translator’s choice of emotion terms is clearly based on their perceived degree of intensity.
a novel like D’Annunzio’s ‘L’Innocente’ which is full of psychological ruminations is very difficult to translate from such a different language into a language like our Estonian which is still not used to and not flexible enough for the expression and communication of the most refined psychological situations.

(Ridala 1913, xxxii)

Insofar as the emotional refinement of the Estonian language is contemporary to the translation process, paradigmatic/synchronic systems of relations are (re)created by particular selections and combinations of linguistic elements on the syntagmatic/diachronic axis of the target text. Thus the D’Annunzian emotional paradigms shift and change while being exploited in the refinement of the emotional paradigms of the Estonian language; but at the same time, the Estonian emotional paradigms remain fluid too until the very end of the translation process. We can observe this in the different translation equivalents for the emotion terms of the D’Annunzian “repulsion” paradigm reported above, where the page numbers referring to the occurrences in the translation of different equivalents for the same emotion term from the original evidence Ridala’s experimentation on the syntagmatic axis of the text.

The translational tension between paradigmatic refinement and syntagmatic experimentation can be analysed in greater detail through consideration of smaller paradigms like that of the “metahyperonyms” for emotion terms. L’innocente presents us here with the following Italian terms, 

\begin{align*}
\text{Senso} \ (\text{sense}) & \quad \text{Sensazione} \ (\text{sensation/feeling}) & \quad \text{Sentimento} \ (\text{feeling}) \\
\text{Passione} \ (\text{passion}) & \\
\end{align*}

the first three of which are derivatives of the same Latin verb sentire. Ridala seems, at first glance, to reproduce this in the translational (re)construction of the equivalent Estonian paradigm,

\begin{align*}
\text{Tunne} & \quad \text{Tundmine} & \quad \text{Tundmus} & \quad \text{Kirg} \\
\end{align*}

where the first three terms are all derivatives of the Estonian verb tundma, “to feel”. However, a closer analysis of the translation process as it is reflected on the syntagmatic axis of the translated text evidences the fluidity of the Estonian paradigm of emotional “metahyperonyms” as a consequence of Ridala’s linguistic experimentation.

The Estonian equivalents for sentimento and senso are very stable throughout the text of the translation, while for the more problematic sensazione, Ridala experiments with three different terms – tundmine, tunne and the new Italianism *sensatsjoon. Their distribution on the syntagmatic axis of the translation (see
Figure 5) shows that Ridala’s choices are not determined by the different local contexts in which the word *sensazione* is employed in the original. The syntagmatic complementarity of *sensatsjoon, tundmine, and tunne* as translation equivalents for *sensazione* reflects instead Ridala’s different experiments at different stages of the translation process. We could draw similar diagrams showing the syntagmatic variation of the terms (and the consequent fluidity) of other emotional paradigms of the text. If we consider, for instance, the four most recurrent translation equivalents for the emotion terms and adjectival derivatives of the “repulsion” paradigm described above, we can visualise Ridala’s experimentation in the following way:

![Diagram showing syntagmatic variation](image_url)

**Figure 6.** Experimentation with emotion terms of the “repulsion” paradigm on the syntagmatic axis of the translation
The diagram evidences once again the logic of Ridala’s lexical experimentation and its relative independence from the original. While vastu(a)meelsus is employed throughout the text, the use of the remaining three terms thickens at given syntagmatic segments of the text, changing at different moments of the translation process.

In general, the complex relations between the paradigmatic (systemic) and the syntagmatic (processual) (re)creation of the Estonian emotional paradigms follow three different patterns in Ridala’s translational experimentation:

1. a stable translational choice is maintained throughout the translation, with minor context-dependent variations – this happens quite seldom;
2. the experimentation with different translation choices lasts until the end of the translation, different emotion terms often occurring in waves as shown in Figures 5 and 6;
3. the experimentation moves toward stabilisation in the course of the translation as, for instance in the case of dolce (sweet) which is progressively translated as hõrn (pp. 6, 58, 80, 83, 92 97), armas (72, 107, 154, 174, 183), mahe (102, 108, 138, 158, 180, 186, 191, 294, 318, 329) and magus (131, 135, 142, 176, 240, 264, 311, 340) or gelosia whose translation equivalents move from *kihk (43) and kiirus (43) to kadedus (197) and, eventually, *kiivus (142, 146, 148, 165, 276).

Conclusion

I have tried to analyse the refinement of the Estonian emotion vocabulary in Ridala’s translation as a particularly significant instantiation of what has been described above as the processual inseparability of translation and cultural/linguistic renewal within the Young Estonia project of transformation of the national identity.

The unstable and incessantly varying refinement of the Estonian emotional paradigms throughout the translation of D’Annunzian emotion terms embodies the equally unstable and incessantly varying inscription of “European” cultural patterns into the Estonian situation. Just as L’Innocente’s emotional paradigms are constantly transformed in the translational process of being (re)created in (and as) Estonian, so the translational relations between the “Estonians” and “Europeans” of the Young Estonia slogan are, as we have seen, far from a linear simplicity.

8. Vastumeelsus, *tülgastus, jälestus, läilus all translate several different emotion terms of the original as can be observed in the “repulsion” paradigm reported above.
In translating D’Annunzio, Ridala never ceases to increase the speed of the translational exchange on the syntagmatic axis of the text in order to make the utopian place of an emotionally refined Estonian language perceptible and, through it, an emotionally refined intellectual community, for which the foreignness of D’Annunzian motives would become a source of pleasure. The de-/re-construction of the Estonian language through translation thus becomes a means for a general revision of the Estonian national image, which would become a place for the D’Annunzian “modern man” with all his complexity and sophistications. In Aavik’s visionary style this performative capacity of the renewed language on the very same structure of Estonian society is described as follows:

At last the time will come when the Estonian language will be mature and when it, equal sister of the other languages of culture, will be able to express and communicate the highest culture. A more refined and educated society will then use it. It will be read in the most luxurious editions and finely bound volumes; it will be spoken in the most tastefully and finely furnished interiors; it will sound from the most classily formed mouths and accompanied by the most aristocratic gestures.

(Aavik 1924, 151)

Notwithstanding the apparent deterministic linearity of such statements, I have tried to show here that Young Estonia’s de/re-construction of the national image should be studied as a complex translation process, not univocal but open-ended, where the utopian self-description of oneself as another – “let us be Estonians, but become Europeans!” – serves as a means for “unhinging” the national and

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opening up a space for free experimentation with self-identity and otherness instead of mechanical imitation or forced foreignisation.

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