# TABLE OF CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

**Theo HERMANS**  
Foreword ........................................................................................................................................... 5

## 1. Theory, Methodology, State of Research / Théorie, méthodologie, état de la recherche

**Christopher RUNDLE**  
History through a Translation Perspective .................................................................................. 13

**Luc VAN DOORSLAER**  
The Relative Neglect of Newspapers in Translation Studies Research ................................. 25

**Martina OŽBOT**  
Translation as an Agent of Culture Planning in Low-Impact Cultures ................................. 35

**Nikolay ARETOV**  
Translation as an Object of Literary Scholarship: From the Perspective of a ‘Small’ Literature ........................ .......................................................... 47

**Antoine CHALVIN**  
Comment écrire une histoire aréale de la traduction? .......................................................... 57

**Nayelli CASTRO**  
Questions de méthodologie en vue d’une histoire de la traduction philosophique au Mexique au XXe siècle ................................................................................. 67

**Jean-Léon MULLER**  
L’histoire de la traduction littéraire en Hongrie : un état des lieux ........................................ 79

**Marie VRINAT-NIKOLOV**  
Pourquoi et comment une histoire comparée de la traduction en Bulgarie et en France? .................................................................................................................................. 89

## 2. History of Translation in Estonia / Histoire de la traduction en Estonie

**Janika PÄLL**  
Translating from Ancient Languages into Estonian: Outlines for Translation History .......................................................... 103

**Maria-Kristiina LOTMAN**  
Equimmetrical Verse Translation in Estonian Poetic Culture ................................................................................. 117

**Aile MÖLDRE**  
Publications of Literary Translation in Estonia in 1901–1917: An Overview .......................... 131

**Elin SÜTISTE**  
Images of Literary Translation in Estonian Translation Criticism 1906–1940 ........................ 145
Anne LANGE
Transitions in the Intercultural Locale: A Case of Two Estonian Translators

Daniele MONTICELLI
‘Totalitarian Translation’ as a Means of Forced Cultural Change: The Case of Postwar Soviet Estonia

Katiliina GIELEN
Authors as Translators: Emerging Hierarchical Patterns of Literary Activity in Early Soviet Estonia

Ülar PLOOM
From Mugandus [Accommodation] towards Discourse-Aware Translation: Some Aspects of an Italian Itinerary in Estonian Translation History

Ene-Reet SOOVIK
Estonian Literary Translation in the Early 21st Century: On the Context and the Content

3. Case Studies from Far and Wide / Études de cas

Saliha PAKER
Translation, the Pursuit of Inventiveness and Ottoman Poetics: A Systemic Approach

Oleksandr KAL’NYCHENKO
A Sketch of the Ukrainian History of Translation of the 1920s

Mary Louise WARDLE
The Time-Travelling Prince: Machiavelli’s English Journey

Sarah VENTIMIGLIA
Traduction, invention poétique, autolégitimation : le cas d’Amelia Rosselli

Chapman CHEN
Rethinking Postcolonial Theories: Two Western Plays in Hong Kong Translation
Theory, Methodology, State of Research
Théorie, méthodologie, état de la recherche
History through a Translation Perspective

Translation in History

When we carry out research on translation history, we face a choice. Are we going to attempt to extrapolate the translation features we uncover in the historical context we are examining in order to contribute to a wider, general or more global history of translation – thereby also making our work more accessible to Translation Studies (TS) in general – or are we going to address those scholars who share our historical subject and introduce them to the insights which the study of translation can offer? In short, is translation the object of our research, or is it the lens through which we research our historical object? In this paper, I will discuss this choice and, drawing on my own area of research in translation history, I will argue that seeking to introduce the insights that the study of translation can bring to a wider community of cultural historians, who do not usually take translation into consideration, should be at least one of the objectives of historians of translation.

So, to reduce my argument to what is, perhaps, an over-simplified paradigm but one which fairly accurately represents my own experience as a translation historian and which I hope will serve as a useful provocation: the more historical our research, and the more embedded it is in the relevant historiography, the less obviously enlightening it is for other translation scholars who are not familiar with this historiography; while the more we address other scholars in Translation Studies, the less we are contributing to the historical field of our choice. Or to put this another way: the more we immerse ourselves in the historical field of our choice the more the other scholars of this field become our natural interlocutors and the less we have in common with other scholars in Translation Studies.

Paul Bandia (2006: 46) suggested something similar when he said that one of the objectives for translation historians was “to start viewing themselves […] as historians – rather than as translation scholars or practitioners ‘masquerading’ as historians” and he also argues that the way to achieve this is to become more closely involved with the relevant historiography, especially in terms of our

1 Note that although the META (50:3, 2005) special issue is entitled The History Lens, the primary object in all the articles is always translation and not history.
methodology. However, it is clear that his prime concern remains TS and the contribution that history can make to historical TS, rather than the reverse.

This is clear from the research questions that he and Georges Bastin set out in the introduction to their volume *Charting the Future of Translation History* (2006: 2), which were: 1) should translation historians draw much more on history and historiography? and 2) should the field develop its own methodology and research techniques? These are both important questions and undoubtedly address issues that scholars with a historical interest in translation need to take into account, but, to my mind, there remains an important third question: should translation historians be branching out and addressing scholars outside of Translation Studies who share the same historical interest?

Another group of scholars to address these issues are those involved in the TRACE project, the Spanish research project on the censorship of translations during the Franco regime. In an article which appeared in *TTR*, Raquel Merino and Rosa Rabadan, two of the coordinators of the project, describe their aims as follows:

We set out to study the role of translation in post Civil War Spain, and, since all culture was passed through the censoring filter, the study of its traces was of utmost importance for writing the history of translation during the period. We focused on translations because we feel it necessary to fill in the gaps in publications about the history of literature and the history of culture that systematically ignore translation, no matter how vital the role translation may have played in boosting or creating culture (Merino & Rabadan 2002: 128).

I would argue that the two objectives that they set out here, that of studying the “role of translation in post Civil War Spain” and that of “writing the history of translation” during the same period, are not as compatible as they might seem because they actually address two different fields of research that do not use either the same methodologies or the same discourse. I would also argue that the TRACE group have, in effect, privileged the second of these objectives precisely because their chosen research methodology is corpus linguistics and their primary field of discourse is Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS). This is a discourse which is accessible to many scholars within TS but which probably excludes most scholars who approach the subject of Franco’s Spain from a historical point of view.

The point, in all these instances, is that, from a historical point of view, TS historians who choose to address other TS scholars and who remain within the methodological frameworks of TS are actually addressing a research community that has little specific expertise on their historical subject, while potentially excluding precisely those scholars who have the background to appreciate the historical significance of their research. One of the implications of this, it seems to me, is that if we are to start viewing ourselves as historians, as Paul Bandia has sug-
gested, and if we would like to contribute to the historiography of our chosen subject, as I am suggesting, then we may actually have to distance ourselves from some of the methodology that currently informs translation history as carried out within TS. I would argue that the methods and priorities of DTS, for example, can actually be incompatible with these aims. Because, if you are intent on establishing patterns of behaviour that are scientifically and quantitatively constructed as norms using abstracted empirical data, in order to contribute to a universal history of translation and/or an overall theory of translation, then in effect you are moving away from those features that are specific to your historical context.\(^2\)

It is important to underline here that the difference is not between what is possible or impossible, true or untrue, valid or invalid; but it is the difference between what you find interesting or not, what has meaning for you and, as a direct consequence, who you are actually addressing when you present your research.\(^3\) In other words, the search for the specifically historical is one that is driven by a desire for a certain kind of meaning, one that a more scientific approach does not provide. In terms of historical TS then, if you are motivated by an interest in your historical subject, rather than a more abstract interest in translation, it is my belief that you will find yourself inevitably drawn to other scholars who share your main interest – that is, other historians of your chosen subject. While these two interests are not intrinsically incompatible and can both co-exist and, to some extent, be informed by each other, I would suggest that in practical/methodological terms it is not possible to pursue both objectives together: you choose to contribute either to a *history of translation* or to *translation in history*.

**Translation and the History of Fascism**

I will now try to illustrate some of the issues I have raised in reference to my own area of research, that of translation in fascist regimes with a particular focus on Fascist Italy. This is an area in which conventional historiography has only very recently, and still only very marginally, begun to take any notice of the historical research being carried out within TS. But I firmly believe TS has a genuine contribution to make to our understanding of the history of fascism. I shall try to show

\(^2\) I am aware that there are translation scholars who in effect try to unite the two approaches that I am describing as separate: what has been described by Venuti, after Berman, as historicising norms (Venuti 2005: 808 who cites Berman 1995: 61 – see also Berman 2000: 296). The point is whether your object is translation, regardless of time and context, or a historical context which you are interested in researching through translation.

\(^3\) Cf. Veyne (1984: 63): “Now the dialectic of knowledge is subtended by a mysterious law of economy of effort. By virtue of that law, if the revolutions of peoples were as entirely reducible to general explanations as physical phenomena are, we would lose interest in their history [...]”
how the same documentary material on translation can be interpreted from two viewpoints, that of the history of translation, and that of the history of fascism.  

My expectations when I first began my research on Fascist Italy were that translations from English would be singled out for special treatment given that for much of the 1930s, the Western democracies, and Britain and the US in particular, were seen as antagonists of Fascist Italy, Fascist culture and Fascist geopolitical ambitions – a situation that evolved around the Ethiopian crisis and the League of Nations sanctions (which Britain sponsored) and that culminated in the Pact of Steel between Italy and Germany and finally World War II.

My aim was to seek out all those features which could be said to be specific to Fascism and which could be put forward as features that characterise the Fascist regime and its relationship to translation and cultural exchange. Given my background in TS, I imagined a situation in which I would be researching potentially ‘subversive’ texts that were exposed to some form of ideological hostility and political repression, and a translation practice that functioned as some form of resistance to the regime.

I was encouraged in this initial idea by conventional wisdom in Italian literary studies which saw translated foreign literature in the 1930s, and American literature in particular, as a channel for the artistic and aesthetic freedom that was supposedly absent in Italy itself, and which saw young writers and intellectuals as engaging in some sort of cultural resistance through these translations. This was a history that was based very much on the interests and concerns of the cultural elite and generally failed to take into account the vast amount of popular fiction that was being translated at the time.

My first objective then was to gain some idea of the scale of the phenomenon. Using statistics in the Index Translationum (1932–39) and in the sector journal of the Italian Publishers Federation, the Giornale della libreria, I was able to establish three key facts. Firstly, and rather surprisingly, it emerged that Fascist Italy, far from being the closed totalitarian system one might expect, actually published more translations than any other country in the world in the 1930s, closely followed by Germany, another fascist state, and France.  

Secondly, and again rather surprisingly, statistics showed that the most frequent source language was English, closely followed by French and German. Furthermore, this dominance of English as a source language was even more marked when it came to literary  

4 The account that follows is based on research which has appeared in a series of articles (Rundle 1999; 2000; 2004), as a monograph on translation in Fascist Italy (Rundle 2010), and in a comparative study of translation under four different fascist regimes: Italy, Germany, Spain and Portugal (Rundle & Sturge 2010).

5 Although Mussolini first came to power in 1922, I focus on the 1930s as international statistics on translation first began to be collected in 1932, with the foundation of the Index Translationum. The Soviet Union also published large numbers of translations but the figures begin later (1934) and are not directly comparable as they include a large number of ‘internal’ translations, i.e. translations between the languages of the different states that made up the Union.
translations, and it became clear that this was the result of a growing market for English language popular fiction, crime novels and romances, and that the translation market as a whole was dominated by popular fiction.

Research in the national archives and in a variety of secondary sources from the historiography on Fascism led me to draw a number of further conclusions which were to have a significant impact on my understanding of my subject. Firstly, from an institutional point of view, translations were not, in fact, restricted or repressed in any specific way until the last few years of the regime. There were no censorship procedures specific to translation until these last few years, and translations were simply monitored and censored in the same way as any other publication in Italy. Nor were there any attempts made to correct the fact that English was the dominant source language in favour of politically more acceptable source cultures. Secondly, when specific measures against translations were finally introduced, these were either the indirect consequence of, or followed in the wake of, a far-reaching anti-Semitic drive which changed the relationship between the regime and the Italian cultural establishment in the late 1930s, early 1940s and, once more, they tended not to be language-specific measures but were instead aimed at reducing the overall number of translations being published in Italy rather than protecting the reading public from a specific author or source culture.

Finally, although from a TS point of view – i.e. taking translations to be our main object/interest – translations did provide the Italian reading public with access to the outside world and to ‘modern’ ways of life as represented in the collective imagination by the USA and its contemporary literature; although translations contributed to the establishment of a market for popular fiction and the appearance of a number of Italian authors writing popular fiction (the most famous example of this process being the birth of crime fiction as a genre in Italy, which is generally accepted to have been the result of the importation of fictional models from abroad); and although translations are also seen by many literary critics as having contributed to the birth of the neo-realist movement in Italian fiction that flourished after the war; there was nothing particularly surprising about this, and nothing that appeared to characterise Fascism in particular, expect perhaps the idea of reading contemporary American literature as a means of escape from the stale and ideologically inflated cultural climate of the time.

When looked at from the point of view of TS, then, it is hard to arrive at any features that appear to characterise the history of translation in Fascist Italy specifically – something I think a historical study should be able to do. Perhaps the most significant thing to emerge is the extent to which Fascist policies concerning

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6 From a historical point of view, self-censorship is virtually invisible and, one could argue, of little significance.

7 Cf. Popper (2002 [1957]: 132): “I wish to defend the view, so often attacked as old-fashioned by historicists, that history is characterized by its interest in actual, singular, or specific events, rather than in laws or generalizations.” (emphasis in the original)
translation do not conform to what most people might expect, i.e. the ways in which it did not behave rather than the ways in which it did. This is certainly important, but of limited interest if you are unable to appreciate the historical reasons for it.

However, if we abandon the conventional perspectives of TS and ask ourselves not what Italian Fascism tells us about the history of translation but what translation can tell us about the history of Fascism, then the situation is quite different and a story emerges that makes a significant contribution to our understanding of Fascist culture and cultural policy.

I have said that the regime was not interested in what was being translated, or from which language and that, at least until the introduction of official racism, it did not see translations as a particular threat. Instead it was concerned by the fact that the statistics on translation gave the image of Fascist Italy as an extremely receptive cultural system – something that was perceived as a sign of weakness. This contrasted with the regime’s propaganda about Fascism having given Italy a new-found influence in the world, a renewed international status. It also gave a very unfascist image of the Italian people, who instead of being the aggressive martial race that Mussolini wanted, were the xenophile consumers of as much foreign literature and film as they could get. There was a lot of debate in the press and in sector journals about the so-called ‘translation deficit’: that is to say, the balance between the number of translations published in Italy set against the number of Italian books being translated abroad – a figure that was consistently negative. The Italians compared themselves unfavourably with the Germans, who like the Italians published a high number of translations but who were also very successful in exporting German works in foreign translation, and who could boast a very positive translation balance. The implication here was that translation could be approved of when engaged in from a position of strength, such as that shown by Germany, but was a political and ideological embarrassment when it became emblematic of the failure of Fascism to generate a successful Fascist culture.

I have identified three different stages, or periods, in the regime’s attitudes towards translation that are directly linked to, and shed light on, its ideological evolution.

The first lasted until the invasion of Ethiopia in 1935. This was a period of great cultural self-confidence on the part of the regime when there was still an expectation that a new and genuinely Fascist culture was in the making. It was a time in which the regime took no active interest in the growing number of translations and the industrialisation of Italian publishing that was prompted by their commercial success, despite a fairly violent campaign by authors, intellectuals, and journalists who felt that both their aesthetic standards and their livelihood were threatened by what they perceived as an ‘invasion’ of translated popular fiction.
After the invasion of Ethiopia and the founding of the Italian Empire in East Africa, however, the situation began to change as the regime started to perceive translation in terms of its own geo-political aims, both as an instrument of colonial expansion and penetration, and as an invasive foreign body. Discussion of the statistics and the embarrassing translation deficit became commonplace. With the call for economic autarky that was Italy’s response to the League of Nations’ sanctions, it became politically correct to show hostility to all that was foreign and to nationalistically prefer all that was Italian, even in the cultural sphere. Also, the role of a colonial power that had to maintain a sense of superiority in its relations with its subject ‘native’ peoples introduced an even more suspicious understanding of cultural exchange. Indiscriminate cultural exchange was like the promiscuous mixing of races, it brought with it the risk of contamination. This period marked the first time that official suspicion and hostility was shown towards translations. The regime started to monitor the industry more closely and began to exert some pressure on the publishers.

It is important to understand that this change in the political climate and in the regime’s attitudes towards translations was not due to the individual translations themselves and the culture they were channelling. In fact, the popularisation of literature and the industrialisation of publishing that were, at least in part, the product of translation, sat quite comfortably within the Fascist project. That the intellectual and literary elite should be driven from their ivory towers by the impact of popular fiction was perfectly in tune with the more revolutionary and anti-bourgeois spirit of Fascism.

It was at this time that the Authors and Writers Union, led by the famous Futurist poet F. T. Marinetti, began a turf war against the Italian Publishers Federation on the issue of translations and tried to turn the political situation to their advantage by launching a call for ‘cultural autarky’. They felt that the principles of autarky should be applied in literature as in all other fields. They called for a Translators Register to be established, not as a means to foster the professional rights of translators, however, but as a means of monitoring them and holding them to account. They also called for a special Translations Commission and insisted that in order to redress the translation balance, a principle of reciprocity should be upheld – that is to say, translations from a specific source language should be allowed in relation to the number of Italian books translated into that same source culture. The authors accused the publishers of unpatriotic behaviour and skilfully placed them on the defensive by casting their legitimate business practices as the favouring of private profit over national interest. However, while it might deplore the Italian public’s taste for foreign fiction, the regime did not actually intervene yet with any concrete measures against translations.

The beginning of the third and final period is marked by the introduction in 1938 of official racism. The idea of cultural exchange as a potential source of contamination now became more acute as purity of the race became a domestic issue.
and no longer just a colonial one. Just as all things Jewish were labelled as corrupted and corrupting, so translations became caught up in the drive for cultural purity that the purge of all Jewish works and authors generated. Mussolini actually spoke of translations as a channel through which Jewish corruption was infecting the Italian culture (De Begnac 1990: 388).

Importantly, the introduction of racism marked a significant shift in the way the regime interacted with the cultural establishment in Italy. After years of sometimes surprising flexibility, and generally constructive collaboration with the publishers, harsh restrictions were now imposed without consideration for their commercial interests: nearly all Jewish authors were banned, all textbooks by Jewish authors were removed from schools, and Jews were generally excluded from public life.

Once the long-standing reluctance to impose too harshly on the publishers had been overcome, it then became fairly logical to impose more strict controls on translations. Having imposed a racial purity, they could now make a show of imposing a more general cultural purity.

It was at this stage, then, from 1938 onwards, that specific censorship procedures for translations were put in place. First, a system of prior authorisation was established. Then, a series of restrictions were imposed: on translated children’s literature and comics, and then on crime fiction, a genre that in the minds of many had come to represent the evils of translation. After long negotiations, which the publishers succeeded in drawing out for some time, the Ministry imposed a quota of 25%. That is to say that translations should not make up more than 25% of the production of each publishing house. “[We have cleared the great current that is our national tradition of this marginal pollution]” – the Minister for Popular Culture said at the time, using the rhetoric of racism to describe translation.8

The history of translations, then, gives us a special insight into the nature of the Fascist regime. It was a regime in which appearance was everything – as is perhaps to be expected considering that it was led by a journalist and master of propaganda. The regime’s reactions to the translation phenomenon are a reflection of its own image of itself and its essential lack of confidence. As long as it could retain belief in the birth of a Fascist culture and its international prestige, and when engaged in from a position of strength, the regime could tolerate, and even approve of, cultural exchange. Once this belief began to fade, once the lack of Italian cultural prestige was made clear in the statistics on translation, and once official paranoia was consecrated in the racial laws, then translations became both a sign of its failure and a potential source of cultural pollution, and cultural misce-

8 The paraphrased quote is taken from a speech given by the Minister for Popular Culture, Alessandro Pavolini, at the annual inauguration of the Italo-Germanic Association. An undated transcription can be found in the Italian State Archives in Rome, Ministry for Popular Culture section, box 103, folder “Discorsi ed articoli del Ministro Pavolini”. It is quoted at length in Rundle (2010: 183).
generation. And it is very significant, and specific to Fascism, that these attitudes towards translation were not the result of the potential impact of the texts themselves or of any perceived changes taking place in Italian literature, but were instead a consequence of the symbolic value that the regime attached to translations as a cultural phenomenon, one that was defined by a notion of culture as an arena in which different nations vied against each other for dominance. Furthermore, the fact that when it came, the official reaction against translations was clearly inspired by and a direct result of its racist policies, is also historically significant – particularly the way in which the publishers complied with the anti-Semitic purge more or less without question, but they did everything in their power to resist the anti-translation measures.

**Conclusion: Translation History as a Part of History**

In her 2005 article on research trajectories in TS, Maria Tymoczko lists six areas which she sees as being significant in the future of translation studies. The fourth ‘strand of research’ which, she argues, will continue to be central to the field is:

the application to translation of various interpretive perspectives based on frames from other disciplines as well as superordinate categories investigated by scholarship in other fields (2005: 1083).

I would suggest that there is a further significant strand that ought to emerge from translation studies and that is, to adopt Tymoczko’s terms, the application to other fields of the interpretative perspectives of TS. While this process is to some extent recognised in literary and comparative studies, cultural and post colonial studies, which have clearly accepted that, at the very least, they need to take into account some of the insights offered by TS, the same cannot be said of historical studies. For me, as I have explained, this is the challenge: to introduce the study of translations as an interpretative perspective that has a contribution to make to the historiography of a given subject.

Interestingly, in his book on *Method in Translation History*, Pym (1998: 193–201) makes a similar point to Tymoczko about Translation History being in a position to influence and enrich a number of disciplinary areas, when he discusses its ‘interdisciplinarity’ and he refers to linguistics, literary history, comparative literature, and cultural studies – but he does not mention history.

He hypothesises an example of interdisciplinary research into the history of translation between French and German at the end of the 19th century, and lists the

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9 One interesting exception is the “Forum on Translation and Historiography” published in *History and Theory* Vol. 42, No. 1, February 2003: 45–81. Unfortunately, it only contains two articles.
number of fields outside of TS that would be involved in such a project. He concludes by saying:

Of course, by the time anyone has covered all these aspects, they will have explained much more than a few translations. The work on translations will have become part of the overall study of a particular interculture; translation history will have become part of intercultural studies. (Pym 1998: 200)

I disagree. I would suggest that, when work of this kind is done, translation history can become a part of history.

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The Relative Neglect of Newspapers in Translation Studies Research

1. A Test by Way of Introduction

It always feels comfortable for a reader when the conclusion of an article seems to be represented in the title. However, the degree of comfortability in this title is to a certain extent problematised by the inclusion of the term ‘relative’. Indeed, it is often experienced and often heard that we seem to neglect newspaper texts as a source for research in Translation Studies in general, and in historical TS research in particular. But is this only an impression, a prejudice, or is it also a demonstrable fact under certain circumstances? There are several possibilities for testing and desubjectivising impressions. Gathering quantitative information is one of them, in order to transform the impressions into indications. Interesting statistics can be derived from bibliographies on TS research, for instance. One of the main examples is the online Translation Studies Bibliography or TSB (Gambier & van Doorslaer 2010), of which I will make use here in order to provide my impressions with a more solid basis.

The TSB is based on software that allows various search and combination possibilities. A search on the keywords ‘translation history/historical approach’, for instance, yields 969 publications in the online bibliography. Within that selection, a combination with the keywords ‘literary discourse’ still produces 169 hits. Whereas combining ‘translation history’ with ‘newspaper/media’ only gives 4 publications. Within the subfield of historical TS research, it seems that dealing with literary materials is much more popular than the use of newspaper or media materials. This first clear indication is confirmed by a second test using the general search option (not only the keywords). The term ‘novel’ appears 702 times in TSB; ‘poem’ yields 699 hits. From the quantitative point of view, both terms are much more present in the bibliography than ‘newspaper’, which only appears 71 times.

On the basis of these indications, one might be tempted to conclude that literary discourse is still the dominant object of study in Translation Studies. This could have been an explanation, yet earlier and more elaborated bibliometrical

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1 All figures in this TSB test case are based on searches in the online bibliography on 15 September 2010.
research has indicated that “[p]ublications on the translation of non-literary texts seem to have clearly gained the upper hand” in the last 15 years in Translation Studies (van Doorslaer 2005). Despite the development of the discipline towards a stronger focus on non-literary materials, it seems that newspaper texts are still largely underrepresented. Is it a valid question to ask whether we are afraid of using newspapers in TS research? In some cases there may be practical reasons for excluding them from historical research. On the other hand, the figures are so very disproportionate that one cannot but ask if they do justice to the impact of literary texts and the impact of media texts in modern societies.

2. Translations as Serialised Newspaper Texts

In recent years, in particular as a part of sociological perspectives on translation and translators, the concept of ‘agent’ has been used regularly in TS research. The intermediary position of the agent “as someone who influences literary trends” as well as the “cultural and political role of the agent of translation” (Milton, Bandia 2009: 2) are central topics and approaches in the volume *Agents of Translation*, edited by John Milton and Paul Bandia. Although several of the case studies in this volume deal with agents or translators who also worked as journalists, it is quite remarkable that neither ‘newspaper’ nor ‘journalist’ nor ‘press’ was selected as an index entry.

In his contribution “Translating Europe” (Demircioğlu 2009), Cemal Demircioğlu discusses the case of Ahmed Midhat, an Ottoman novelist, translator, publisher and journalist in the late 19th century. As a significant ‘cultural entrepreneur’, he was an outstanding example of an agent of translation who combined various functions and made use of his various professions and intermediary role in order to achieve his cultural goals. Demircioğlu refers to Even-Zohar’s theory of culture repertoire when describing Midhat’s activities as a culture planner and his interventions in trying to achieve this. In particular his functions as a journalist and as the owner of a newspaper were used to exert influence on the selection of options for the culture repertoire. In the *Tanzimat* or the re-organisation period (1839–1876), the growth of the press was an important characteristic that made it possible to shape public opinion and to spread his cultural choices.

From the beginning of the literary *Tanzimat* on, there was another medium which fulfilled an essential role in shaping public opinion in relation to political, cultural and literary progress: the press [...]. Newspapers, literary journals and magazines functioned as important means of communication and also started to give considerable space to translations, particularly from French literature. They often serialized translations of novels and short stories, some of which also circulated on the market after being printed in book form. Especially after the first parliamentary regime was established in 1876,
there was a considerable increase in the number of newspapers, journals and literary magazines (Demircioğlu 2009: 138).

Midhat was an opinion and an option maker who used his press and other network contacts to make choices for a cultural repertoire based on Western models. This influence is sometimes underestimated due to the fact that bibliographies of translation often do not take into account anything other than book publications. Yet the general reception image of an author or a literature can change considerably when book publications are supplemented with publications in newspapers or magazines.

Already in my PhD thesis (van Doorslaer 2000), I analysed extensively the case of the translator and journalist Georg Gärtner, the main German translator of the Flemish author Cyriel Buysse (1859–1932). In Dutch literary histories, Buysse is generally mentioned as the most important Flemish naturalist author. During my research, in all translation bibliographies I found seven translated books (novels and short stories) of this author in German. These were of course only the book publications. Traditional bibliographical translation research apparently concentrates on publications in book form. Or to rephrase, translation bibliographies, upon which historical translation research is often based, are apparently limited to book publications. I discovered that several dozens of unknown translations (mainly short stories, but also novels) had been published in journals and newspapers as serial stories. The whole picture of the translation reception of that one specific author in Germany changed completely. Translation history had given the impression (through the data in the bibliographies) that he was only moderately translated. But on taking journals and newspapers into account, it now seems that he was by far the most translated Flemish author of the period. No less than 24 unknown translations of Buysse’s work were published in journals, newspapers and cultural supplements, mostly in the form of serial stories.

Most of the German translations of Flemish literature of the beginning of the 20th century circulated in the then flourishing circuit of the Dorfgeschichte, a popular genre of rural epics. This was particularly the case during World War I, when German authorities adopted the Flamenpolitik (a policy directed towards the Flemish people), a political and cultural strategy aimed at creating a kind of mental solidarity between the Flemish and the German population. At a time when almost all other literatures were translated considerably less (for a number of equally practical reasons, for instance, a shortage of paper during the war), Flemish literature in translation was growing. Under these circumstances, the German translations of many Flemish authors were almost inevitably published by the

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2 Lambert (1991a: 136) mentions a parallel finding in literary research in general: “[...] literary scholars assume the existence of literature in each and every culture at all times; but they normally restrict their interest to written literature, and even to one type of written literature, the one published in books”.
more conservative press and publishers. A remarkable phenomenon then was the translation strategy adopted by Buysse’s German translators. In many respects the expressive qualities of the author’s texts turned out to have been ‘moderated’ and considerably reduced as regards their original emotionality. In this way the translators seem to have integrated Buysse into the circuit of the Dorfgeschichte. The Flemish setting of the narrations, however, remained almost intact.

Although Buysse’s themes were also mostly rural, he appears to be the only Flemish author whose works in translation were published in considerable numbers not only by the conservative-oriented but mainly by the socio-democratic German press. Die neue Welt, Die Furche, the Fränkische Tagespost, the Berliner Tageblatt, the Volksstimme (Chemnitz), the Schlesische Bergwacht and Vorwärts were all socio-democratically oriented newspapers or in some cases even real party organs of the SPD, the socio-democratic German party. Although a great part of the socio-democratic mass press did not differ greatly from the popular conservative press, it is striking that Buysse was the only Flemish author who was so successful in socio-democratic circles. There was only one reason for this: the main translator, who also was a journalist.

Georg Gärtner (1864–1939) translated from several European languages into German, but his preferred source language was Dutch, and his preferred author was Cyriel Buysse. For almost 40 years he edited the regional news at the Fränkische Tagespost in Nuremberg. Gärtner himself was a member of the SPD and had very good contacts with other journalists working for other SPD newspapers. His correspondence with the author shows that he distributed information about Buysse through his network of the Second International, the organisation of socialist and labour parties. It is very likely that the dominant image of translation production and reception in Germany of the most important naturalist Flemish author was the result of the agent activities of one single journalist/translator.

3. Translation, Representation and Images

Another interesting example mentioned in Agents of Translation appears in Akiko Uchiyama’s contribution on the Japanese 19th-century intellectual, translator and journalist Fukuzawa Yukichi (Uchiyama 2009). In this case, the traditional concept of translation as linguistic transfer is broadened to include representation. In his newspaper editorials, Fukuzawa represented other Asian countries, particularly China and Korea, in a way that was believed to instigate Japan’s aggressive attitude towards Asia. His negative remarks about other Asian cultures, represented as resistant to Western civilisation, according to Uchiyama also contain

[...] some ‘translation’ element [...] . Although of course the editorials are not translations from Western sources, they certainly contain traces of Western colonial discourse.
In this sense, Fukuzawa’s representation of Asia is partly a repeat of Western discourse. The dichotomy of the ‘civilized’ and the ‘uncivilized’ in the discourse of the West has been transported (translated) to the dichotomy in Asia with Japan on (or closer to) the ‘civilized’ side in comparison with China and Korea on the ‘uncivilized’ side (Uchiyama 2009: 78).

The use of the term ‘translation’ in this journalistic context is remarkable, because it clearly goes beyond the traditional ‘translation proper’, and even beyond Jakobson’s explicit enlargement to interlingual and intersemiotic translation. This extension also includes the problematic status of the not clearly identifiable source text(s), a situation which is typical of translation in the journalistic field (see also van Doorslaer 2010a). In many cases in a journalistic environment several sources, i.e. several source texts, are used for the production of the target text. A ‘new’ text produced by a journalist is often based on earlier news items, information or feedback from experts, as well as other national and international media coverage of a certain topic. This multiplication of source texts, combined with information processing, and the various transformation, reworking and rewriting procedures involved in producing one new target text, problematises the existence and status of the source text as commonly understood in a ‘normal’ translational relationship. This translational relationship involves the combination of a (barely reconstructable) multi-source situation with a highly pragmatic use of translation in potentially all three fields as described by Jakobson. As a result of this complex combination of factors, studying the position and role of ‘translation proper’ in the day-to-day journalistic practice of text production is very challenging, but not necessarily rewarding. It is often not feasible to deconstruct a news message in order to determine which parts have been edited, and which parts are the result of interlingual translation.

The representation with ‘some translation element’, as used here, is ‘partly a repeat’. In particular where it is linked to the creation or redistribution of (national and cultural) images, such a translational combination of partly repeating (meaning: partly changing) or partly reconstructing (meaning: partly constructing) opens the door for interpretations based on the translator’s or the journalist’s views or convictions. Fukuzawa was apparently a very influential example of re-translation and re-representation (see Uchiyama 2009: 80) which partly formed or supported the stereotypical image of other cultures. This specific case of a journalist rewriting and retranslating national and cultural images was even to have “colossal consequences in the 20th century” (Milton, Bandia 2009: 10).
4. Imagological Framework

Since ‘images’ are a central aspect of this example of ‘translation’, I would like now to turn to some aspects of imagology or image studies. Imagology is rooted in comparative research and concentrates on the transnational culturo-historical study of national stereotypes in order to offer a perspective on a theory of cultural or national images. However, it is clearly not a theory of national or cultural identity. While some may consider it a (sub)discipline that runs the risk of becoming an enumeration of noncommittal judgments and images, imagology has in fact clearly systematised its findings, knowledge and methods over the last years. Beller and Leerssen (2007) is the most recent result of this process of systematisation. Imagology takes a descriptive, rather than an explanatory stand, for “it is the aim of imagology to describe the origin, process and function of national prejudices and stereotypes, to bring them to the surface, analyze them and make people rationally aware of them” (Beller 2007: 11–12).

The selection process of literatures and languages to be imported or translated, a process that an agent or a journalist influences, can have an image setting effect, parallel to the agenda-setting effect described in journalism and media studies. Bernard Cohen’s classic formulation is that the press is not successful at telling people what to think, but highly successful at telling them what to think about; this phenomenon is mainly referred to as the preliminary stage of gaining reader attention. Likewise, setting images, or creating circumstances that encourage the development of images, passes through a similar stage. This applies to journalism, and under certain circumstances also to types of translation. It is not a coincidence that Walter Kühnel links the term ‘agenda-setting’ with stereotypes and images, when he argues that “the concept of agenda-setting is the logical extension and combination of concepts such as status-conferral, stereotyping or image making” (Kühnel 1991: 51). Selection mechanisms and principles (in a pre-textual translation stage) may reveal indirect image creation, i.e. by (not) paying attention to, stereotyping or even consciously excluding certain nationalities and images.

5. Testing a Hypothesis

I recently developed a historical case study to test these mechanisms and principles of national and cultural image setting in combination with translation selection and de-selection. The complete article will be published in van Doorslaer 2010b, here I give a summary of the data, the approach and the results. The case study dealt with translated serial stories in Flemish newspapers in the second half of the 19th century. Belgian society in the period under study can be seen mainly in terms of two antagonistic power relationships: the political-ideological tension of the Catholic vs. the liberal party, and the linguistic-cultural antagonism
French/Walloons vs. Dutch/Flemish. These political and ideological dividing lines did not correlate with the linguistic dividing lines, for French was the mother tongue of the demographic minority, which nevertheless held the economic and political reins of power. One can imagine that constructing the ‘right’ images of oneself and of the other (both ‘auto-images’ and ‘hetero-images’) was an important activity, be it conscious or unconscious, in this complex political, ideological and linguistic situation. In Leerssen’s opinion, journalistic texts are “more ephemeral sources” than literary texts for imagology research (Leerssen 2007: 26). Despite this degree of ephemerality, the impact of media texts may be considerable. My case study dealt with a corpus of translated literary texts published in ideologically differentiated daily newspapers in Flanders. This represents an interesting mixture of literary discourse in journalistic sources, an intersection of literary and media discourses.

It was my hypothesis that in 19th-century Belgium there was a discernible relationship between the ideological orientation of a newspaper and the source language or source culture of the translated literary texts (as part of image construction and cultural bridge building). Languages and (the absence of) translation may be important framing and agenda-setting factors in the media, particularly regarding the countries and nations dealt with. Certain representations and images could be made more available than others. The research concentrated on source text selection (on the contextual level), not on changes in the textual material. To test the hypothesis, I chose three very different newspapers that nevertheless share marked political and/or ideological preferences. And the hypothesis was confirmed by the results: the liberal newspaper focused on French as source language and had no translation from German; the explicitly Flemish daily had a majority of German source texts and only one translation from French; the Catholic newspaper (more in the political centre) achieved a relative balance in the main source languages.

Clear differences in source-language selection for translation would be understandable if some of the languages were exotic or totally unknown. But the corpus of serialised translated literature dealt with well-known, familiar and neighbouring source languages which by no means occupied the same position in terms of frequency in the three newspapers. This may indicate that, in appearance at least, political, and possibly ideological, circumstances direct source-language text selection. As a consequence, other languages were deselected, i.e. excluded from translation. Decisions on the translation or non-translation of literary texts seem to be taken in line with the political or ideological predilection of the newspaper.

This kind of case study shows that sometimes the media system can add important value to the interconnections of the literary and the translational, and that it occasionally even functions as a go-between. Translation selection depends on the media’s function in society: it is either “a tool to promote social change” or “an agent that reinforces what are considered the accepted norms” (Vraneski, Richter
The most explicitly Flemish-oriented newspaper sought social change and attempted to reform the existing dominant political and linguistic order by encouraging change in cultural paradigms. The exclusion of French source texts illustrates the newspaper’s attitude, which aimed at creating a new and more autonomous Flemish self-image. By importing German models through the translation of mainly German texts, the hetero-image of Germany, i.e. the represented image of Germany or Germans in Flanders, seems to have become partly constitutive of the Flemish auto-image. At the other extreme, the liberal newspaper reproduced *la Belgique*’s existing linguistic and political order by mainly selecting French-language authors (from the cultural ‘centre’) for its serial stories in translation. In the corpus studied, this more conservative translation selection implied the exclusion or de-selection of German texts from the cultural ‘periphery’. It seems to be a clear case of a cultural clash through images determined, at least in part, by power relations, where selection mechanisms may play a decisive, albeit silent and often unobserved, role in directing the dynamics of a system.

6. Conclusion

On the basis of the examples dealt with in this article, it seems that translated newspaper texts or translation selection procedures in newspapers can offer interesting new insights and materials for Translation Studies. It is no coincidence that the concepts of cultural entrepreneur, (translation) agent, and image setting in and through the media were already linked by Even-Zohar when he described culture planners as individuals or a group of individuals “producing [images] that can be converted to alternative or new options for the repertoire of culture by which the life of societies is shaped and organized” (quoted in Demircioğlu 2009: 134). This article has referred to some illustrative examples of the combining of agent functions as translator and as journalist. Given the huge impact of media discourse in modern societies, I am convinced that Translation Studies can only increase its relevance by including more newspaper and media texts in its research.

References


Translation as an Agent of Culture Planning in Low-Impact Cultures

1. Defining the Terms

In this paper, I shall deal with the role of translation as a planning mechanism in low-impact cultures. I use the term low-impact cultures in reference to cultures associated with peripheral literatures, i.e. those which tend to receive influences rather than exert them. Among such peripheral literatures one can find, for example, literatures in limited-diffusion languages, literatures written in minority languages, and postcolonial literatures. My observations refer principally to literatures in limited-diffusion languages and in part to literatures in minority languages, but they are not necessarily limited to them. As far as central or canonical literatures and peripheral or non-canonical literatures are concerned, a separate discussion would be necessary to determine exactly what constitutes a canonical and what constitutes a peripheral literature. For our purposes, suffice it to say that among the determining factors are the strength of the literary tradition, the political status of the language in which a given literature is written, and the number of speakers of that language, including its bi- or multilingual speakers, who are a precondition for translation to take place.

The other term from the title, culture planning, is understood to cover a range of activities aimed at changing or directing the state of a given culture in terms of various linguistic, literary and artistic practices as well as those concerning the daily life of its members in the broadest sense. Cultures, like languages, being dynamic organisms, are subject to constant change, which occurs either by virtue of their autonomous developments, or through their contact with other cultures, or through a combination of both. To some extent, culture change takes place in a planned way, in accordance with the preferences and ambitions of individuals or groups who possess the power (economic, political, ideological, etc.) to influence or guide the development of a given culture. As far as contact between cultures goes, translation is of central importance and can, in fact, be used as a powerful instrument in culture planning (cf. Toury 2003), although its actual impact upon cultures is, of course, not always a consequence of planned activities. Moreover, translation is by no means the only vehicle of contact-induced culture change: the latter can also take place through unmediated contact – when members of the source culture and of the receiving culture are able to communicate without the
help of a translator or interpreter, or when the importation of elements from foreign cultures does not necessarily involve verbal communication (ample evidence is provided by music, visual arts, fashion, etc.).

2. The Culture-Planning Potential of Translation

The importance of culture planning by means of translation is, of course, considerably higher in low-impact cultures than in high-impact cultures for the very reason that in low-impact cultures translation has a more prominent role than in high-impact cultures, which tend to be relatively self-sufficient and therefore rely to a greater degree on their own internal resources. So, as is well known, in many low-impact cultures translated texts account for a very significant part of the total number of publications; for example, in Slovenia, about one third of the annual production of books will be translations (SI/RR 2009: 14), whereas in the United Kingdom the amount of translations into English published per year as compared to original works in that language is about ten times smaller, representing only 3% of the total book production, according to the data provided by the Book Trust (BT). As Itamar Even-Zohar (1990: 46–48) has suggested, translation occupies a central position in a literary polysystem in three situations: a) when a given literature is young, i.e. in the process of being established; b) when it is peripheral or weak; c) when it is undergoing a crisis. In principle, any literature can find itself in a situation when one or more of the three conditions apply and when translation is called for as a vehicle to reinvigorate it. To mention a well-known example, such was the case with Italian literature at the beginning of the 19th century when, in her essay De l’esprit des traductions, Mme de Staël suggested that Italian literature regenerate itself through translations from European literatures. Obviously, this is an instance of a literature in crisis, and once it is overcome the perceived need for translations may again diminish.

Peripheral literatures, however, are in a permanent state of being translation literatures. What is more, the cultures to which they belong are translation cultures with a double need for translation: on the one hand, they usually have to produce translations from other languages if their own languages and literatures are to maintain their vitality; on the other hand, peripheral literatures are often forced to provide translations from their languages on their own, simply because very few members of high-impact cultures know the languages of peripheral literatures, so the number of potential translators is usually very limited. Typically, low-impact cultures rely to a large degree on their own resources in their contacts with high-impact cultures – thus giving way to “self-translation” or “autonomous translation” (in Michael Cronin’s (2006: 40–41) terms) – whereas high-impact cultures, due to their self-sufficiency, rather depend on external input when
importing texts from low-impact cultures (thus making use of “heteronymous” or “dependent translation”; ibid.).

In addition to what has been observed so far, it is worth pointing out that there are yet other factors which may contribute to the prominent status translation often has in low-impact cultures. Let us mention just two of them: first, at various points in their history low-impact cultures may not have enjoyed political independence (and for many of them this continues to be the case), and to somehow compensate for their being deprived of political autonomy they sought self-affirmation in cultural expression. In such a context, translation can be considered a means of becoming connected to and of communicating with the wider world and therefore of acquiring some of the missing legitimacy. Second, because of their lack of political autonomy, low-impact cultures were usually forced to learn the language of the politically dominant group and thus become bilingual, sometimes at the expense of nearly losing their own language. This was also the case with Slovene from its earliest history until 1991 when Slovenia gained its independence (Prunč 1997: 549, 2009; Štabej 1998: 22–23). In actual fact, the situation was characterised by diglossia rather than by bilingualism proper; the speakers’ competence in two (or more) languages was hardly ever on an equal footing and was often also socially and functionally conditioned. For centuries, the high code was mainly German and – in western regions of the Slovene-speaking area – to some extent Italian. On the other hand, in the decades between the foundation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia after the end of World War I and the fall of socialist Yugoslavia in 1991, many Slovene speakers were bilingual with Serbo-Croat; although with Slovenia becoming part of Yugoslavia in 1918, and in particular after World War II, Slovene gained unprecedented ground and became the official language in all areas of public life apart from the army. Living with more than one language, Slovenes have often come to perceive translation – which is a special form of bilingualism – as natural and necessary. On the other hand, it may be worth pointing out that bilingualism (individual if not societal) is merely a necessary but not a sufficient condition for translation to take place. In many bilingual, and especially diglossic, settings, bilingualism may be an excuse for the absence of translation, often with detrimental effects for the language representing the low variety and for the community of its speakers (cf. Meylaerts 2009: 10–13).

Translation, apart from being a consequence of bi- or multilingualism, can also mean acknowledgement of bilingualism and be a symbol of linguistic symmetry. A recent example is that of the European Union, which ensures translation between all of its 23 official languages, proclaiming itself officially multilingual and conferring equality on these languages, at least on a declaratory level. On the contrary, the absence of translation can signal a refusal to acknowledge bilingualism. A case in point is reported by Cronin (2006: 86): from the middle of the 16th century, Britain had an official post for an Irish language interpreter in the Lord
Deputy’s office. However, a century and a half later, when Irish ceased to be used in public situations, the interpreting service was also abolished (with the exception of the office of court interpreters, who were indispensable for the functioning of the organs of justice). When the new regime became fully established, it did not want to recognise as important a language deemed inferior to English. Similar cases can still be found in many minority settings, sometimes even in those which are officially bilingual, but in which public authorities fail to provide translations into the minority language. A lack of translation often means self-centredness and disrespect for the other, whereas the presence of translation implies acknowledgement of the other. Of course, besides being a sign of respect for the other, insistence on translation can also represent an act of defence of one’s own language and culture as well as an attempt to strengthen and develop them. And this, again, explains why low-impact cultures practice translation more intensely than self-sufficient high-impact cultures tend to. However, irrespective of the nature of a given bilingual situation, bilingualism and translation remain inextricably linked. If in low-impact cultures more attention is given to translation than in high-impact cultures, this is often also because the former tend to be more bi- or multilingual than the latter.

2.1. The Slovene Case

The histories of many European (as well as non-European) literatures testify to the importance translation has had in their development when it was used with obvious planning intentions concerning language, literature or culture at large. This is especially the case with peripheral literatures, like Slovene literature, which throughout its documented history has been strongly dependent on translation. For example, *The Freising Monuments* (*Brižinski spomeniki*), the earliest Slovene texts (dating from the 10th to 11th century), contain translations from Latin and German (two confession formulas and a sermon on sin and repentance). In later periods too, translation continued to provide a vital impetus for the development of the language and the literature, especially in the Reformation period, with the first Slovene translation of the Bible by Jurij Dalmatin in 1584. Likewise, local poetry, prose and drama were boosted at different stages of their development by translations from various canonical literatures, mainly Greek and Latin, German, Italian, English and, especially from the end of the 19th century on, also French. Slovene literature belongs to a culture which is a typical instance of a low-impact culture. Yet the role of translation as a mechanism which shapes literary traditions is not limited to cultures which we now perceive as low-impact – let us remember the story of Latin literature, which began with Livy Andronicus’ *Odusia*, a translation of the *Odyssey*.

Slovene cultural history shows that translation as a culture-planning instrument acquired a special significance with the growing importance of secular literature
in Slovene from the end of the 18th century on. The literary renaissance happened in parallel with a growth of awareness of the part of the Slovenes, a small ethnic group living at the edge of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, that they too should constitute an autonomous historical subject – a belief which was reflected in various national political programmes put forward in the first half of the 19th century. It was in actual fact the burgeoning of culture, especially around the middle of the century and in the following decades, that made possible the recognition of the Slovenes as a nation despite their lack of political independence. At a time of developing national sensibility, translation provided vital resources for the growth of literature, especially in the fields of theatre and poetry.

Towards the end of the 18th century, the first Slovene plays, Županova Micka (1789) and Ta veseli dan ali Matiček se ženi (1790), were written by Anton Tomaž Linhart (1756–1795), an author who first tested his literary skills with a series of texts in German. Both of these comedies were free translations (heavily adapted to the contemporary Slovene environment and displaying a nationalistic bias) from German and French respectively: the former was based on Die Feldmühle by J. Richter and the latter on P.-A. de Beaumarchais’ Le mariage de Figaro.

Poetry only started to flourish some decades later, when France Prešeren (1800–1849), now regarded as the Slovene national poet, revolutionised Slovene verse by introducing several poetic forms from different European and non-European literatures, e.g. the sonnet, the terza rima, the stanza, and the ghazal. Initially, Prešeren also wrote poems in German but later embraced the challenge to turn the Slovene language into a vehicle capable of verbalising complex thoughts and feelings on a par with European languages with their more developed poetic traditions. This was an extremely daunting task, given that at the time the Slovene poetic corpus was relatively limited. For Prešeren, translation was a means of polishing his own expression. So, when he was preparing to write an epic, he translated part of Byron’s Parisina, and when he turned his hand to ballad writing, he sought practice by translating the pre-Romantic Lenore by G. A. Bürger, which had already gained wide popularity in the German-speaking world. By producing a Slovene version of Lenore, Prešeren was not only measuring himself up against the author of the German source text, but also against the earlier Slovene writer Žiga Zois, who had translated the poem at the end of the 18th century. (In fact, the ballad had already made its mark on Slovene literature, not as a translation but as an original text – a poem composed by the poet Janez D. Dev and inspired by Bürger’s ballad). There is, however, no comparison between the two translations; Prešeren’s text displays an unprecedented mastery of language, whereas in the earlier version his expression is far less sophisticated. The importance Prešeren himself attributed to his translation of Lenore is also evident from the fact that he included it in his 1846 collection of poems containing what he considered to be his most accomplished works.
Prešeren’s work radically changed the fortunes of the Slovene language and literature. Many Slovene writers, especially poets, of subsequent generations continued his tradition (and still do so) by translating literary works from a variety of languages, thus providing a vital impetus for the growth of their native language and literature.

3. Absence of Translation and Its Consequences

If translation plays a significant role in the formation and development of languages, literatures and cultures, its absence can also have important consequences and may influence the course of history of a given cultural community. As is well known, in many cultures (both low- and high-impact) a decisive turn in their literary and translation histories came with the translation of the Bible, which enabled an unprecedented development of the languages and an expansion of the range of their use. The case of the Bible also allows us to observe the role of translation in the development of national literatures *per negationem*: languages into which canonical texts, such as the Bible, were not translated at a crucial moment in history may have become deprived of the chance to develop into fully-fledged national languages. Such is, for instance, the case with Friulian, a Romance variety spoken in Northeast Italy. And such is also the case with Scots. At the time of the Reformation in Scotland no complete version of the Bible was produced in Scots, and the Scottish Calvinist Church as well as the Scottish parliament adopted the English Bible (though the Bible was to be translated into Scottish Gaelic). In this way, English acquired spiritual prestige and consequently social prestige as well, particularly after the Union of the Crowns in 1603. Interestingly, much later, in the period of the Scottish Renaissance in the first decades of the 20th century, Hugh MacDiarmid’s attempt to make Scots a functionally rich language involved a proposal to build a corpus of translations from various European literatures, which would enable Scots to expand its range of use and finally overcome its perceived subaltern relationship to English (Delisle, Woodsworth 1995: 84–85). On the other hand, translation is not an all-powerful means of preserving languages, literatures and cultures. Welsh, for example, is among the languages into which the Bible was translated relatively early (1588), with a very significant impact upon the development of its language and literature; this could not, however, prevent the language from losing ground to English in later centuries as a result of political and other factors. Nonetheless, the question now is, would Welsh be alive and flourishing to the extent it is today had it not become the main language of worship in Wales after the Reformation, in large part as a result of translation – above all of the Scriptures but also of numerous popular and learned religious works, which in turn helped foster the development of a native tradition of religious prose?
Likewise, in the case of languages and literatures like Slovene, one can also speculate about how different their course would have been if in the earlier periods, up to Romanticism, the production of translations had been more substantial. As has been pointed out above, from the very beginnings of writing in Slovene, translation continued to shape the culture in important ways, but the general production of written texts (literary and non-literary) was for centuries rather modest, the only exception being perhaps the period of the Reformation, when it was limited almost exclusively to religious works. One can therefore hypothesise that it is also the absence of translation, together with a lack of original production, at certain moments of the history of Slovene literature that accounts for its relatively late flourishing; the latter was ultimately made possible by favourable historical circumstances in which Slovene speakers – or at least those involved in culture planning – developed an increased willingness to expand the frequency and range of use of their native language. As a consequence, in the second half of the 19th century, with the increase in the corpus of original writings as well as of translations from a variety of literatures, both classical and modern, Slovene literature grew into a mature literature, comprising a number of high-quality texts of different genres. Although translation was probably never the sole impetus for the advancement of Slovene literature, it always played a decisive role in the process.

To sum up, translation is an exceptionally powerful means which facilitates the rapid advancement of languages, literatures and cultures through the importation and appropriation of foreign models, i.e. through the accumulation of the capital already available in the source culture(s). It is a means of accelerated cultural development – i.e. of “temporal acceleration” (accélération temporelle), to use a term proposed by Pascale Casanova (2002: 12) – or in other words, a gap-filling instrument with which it is possible to make up for literary, linguistic and cultural delays. Whether in the process of the foundation of a culture or its renewal, translation opens up paths to other cultures and enables the consolidation of the receiving culture. However, the expansion of a text corpus in a given language achieved through translation does not by itself guarantee either language survival or the growth of a solid literary tradition, as I have just tried to show with the example of Welsh, where the problem was mainly of a political and economic nature.

4. Resistance to Translation

Nevertheless, in order for translation to help the advancement of cultures, favourable political and social circumstances are not a sufficient condition. What is equally necessary is the speakers’ willingness to use their language in a variety of domains; otherwise translation remains a largely symbolic act. This has happened,
for example, with Corsican, in which there have been attempts over the past decades to extend its uses, partly also by means of translation, as reported by Alexandra Jaffe (1999). However, the translational enterprise has not received unanimous support: opposing voices continue to be heard from those who consider translation an instrument by which French rule is perpetuated, since it is through translation that the oppressor’s linguistic, literary and cultural patterns are absorbed. For some, translation from languages other than French appears more acceptable, though it is not necessarily considered an equally valid means of language advancement as original writing. The Corsican situation is a case of political resistance to translation – to use again a term proposed by Cronin – and similar stories have been reported for various periods in the histories of many other low-impact cultures including, for example, Flemish and Slovene, although they represent isolated examples rather than the norm.

In the Flemish situation in the 1920s and 1930s, which has been studied by Reine Meylaerts (2006), resistance was directed against translations into French as the socially dominant language in Belgium. Since those translations perpetuated the image of the simplicity and ingenuousness of the Flemish people, thus strengthening the dominant position of the Francophone culture, some Flemish circles considered translation into French a betrayal, potentially leading to cultural assimilation, and therefore believed non-translation to be a fairer choice. In the Slovene case, it was German that was considered a threat to the growth of Slovene literature, language and culture, in particular from the last decades of the 19th century to the end of World War I and the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, when Slovenia became part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The influence of German culture spanned over several centuries and was pervasive, affecting language, literature and culture at large (Hladnik 1992: 110 ff.). Therefore it is not surprising that those involved in culture planning felt that for the language, literature and culture to fully develop, it was necessary to free themselves of their historical German shackles and concentrate primarily on original writing rather than on translations and, insofar as translation was necessary, to prioritise literatures written in languages other than German.

However, in spite of being stigmatised, German continued to shape the Slovene translation repertoire in at least two ways: first, works of popular literature and non-literary texts (like manuals or textbooks) intended for a wider audience, part of which could not read German, were mainly translations from that language, although they were sometimes heavily adapted to the target setting, also with the aim of serving the political agenda of a nation struggling for autonomy (Prunč 2007: 60–63). Second, works of high literature continued to be translated, for it was through translations that German literature was emulated in a very direct manner so as to prove that the Slovene language too had its own creative potential. The reason for translating high literature, then, was not to enable monolingual Slovene readers to have access to it, since the circles that were most likely to be
interested in it were bilingual in any case, but rather to enhance the development of the Slovene language and literature. Interestingly, some genres, like the historical novel, were excluded from translation, for it was considered urgent to encourage the writing of historic novels based on events from a genuinely Slovene past. As Miran Hladnik (1992: 114–116), who has critically studied German-Slovene literary relations from a translational perspective, has pointed out, the reasons not to promote translations from German were varied, being, for instance, political, moral and linguistic at the same time. They were political because of the endeavours to liberate the nation from Austro-Hungarian rule, moral because some critics deemed Russian literature “healthier” than German or French literature, and linguistic because of the century-long heavy influence of German on Slovene, which – it was believed – should be resisted and ultimately stopped.

Among the literatures which were considered particularly worthy of being translated into Slovene, were Slavic literatures, not least on ideological grounds. At a time when political programmes envisaged the nation’s autonomy, either within the Austro-Hungarian Empire or outside it, the idea of a cultural and/or political bond with other Slavic peoples was certainly attractive. Therefore translation from Slavic literatures was encouraged, although not from all of them – texts in Serbo-Croat were usually read in the original. As for literatures written in other languages, it was considered sensible to translate both canonical (French, English, American and, in part, Italian literatures) and non-canonical literatures (for example, Scandinavian and Baltic literatures).

In an attempt to limit the overwhelming influence of foreign cultures, especially Austrian and German ones, Josip Stritar, the editor of Žvon, an important Slovene literary magazine published in the 1870s in Vienna, decided categorically to accept exclusively texts originally written in Slovene, the only exception being translations of Slovene literature into other languages (Stanovnik 2005: 53–57). The magazine was a relatively short-lived publication, but the fear of a suffocating German presence continued to be perceived well into the 1930s, when, for the majority of Slovenes, German finally became a foreign rather than a second language. Only then did translations from German begin to be considered less problematic.

However, resistance to translation has not been limited to low-impact cultures; it is also frequent in high-impact cultures, although there it may have aesthetic rather than political motivations. A classical example is Du Bellay’s position as expressed in his Défense et illustration de la langue française (1549), according to which imitation of classical Greek and Latin authors is to be preferred to translation.
5. Tolerance of the Foreign in Low- and High-Impact Cultures

Irrespective of the reasons for the opposition to translation in specific cases – in low- as well as high-impact cultures – it is usually the potential absorption of linguistic, literary and cultural patterns that is considered problematic. This brings us to the question of tolerance of the foreign, which may vary from culture to culture. Since low-impact cultures have a natural need for translation and are therefore used to continually appropriating foreign models, they may in principle be more open to adopting a variety of translation strategies, both foreignising and domesticating. With some simplification, it can be suggested that in central literatures domesticating or target-oriented translation is the typical choice, whereas in peripheral literatures foreignisation (source orientation) has a more important role. This idea can be seen as a reformulation of Even-Zohar’s observation that in central literatures, in which translations occupy a peripheral position, “acceptability” tends to be the norm, whereas in peripheral literatures, where translations are of greater significance, “adequacy” may be a frequent choice too. Or, in Toury’s words “the more peripheral this status [of translation in a target culture], the more translation will accommodate itself to established models and repertoires” (1995: 271). Although any generalisation is hard to sustain – for these are no more than tendencies – Slovene literature seems paradigmatic in this regard: Slovene target texts easily tolerate foreignisation, at least in lexical and rhetorical terms, and appropriation of foreign patterns is a constant feature of translations into Slovene. On the other hand, a study of translations of Slovene literature into some high-impact languages, especially into Italian, has shown that domestication is the prevailing strategy and that the texts which have been received well in the target culture show a consistent target orientation (Ožbot in press). This is, of course, merely a preliminary observation and large-scale empirical research would be necessary before we can draw any reliable conclusions.

It is worth emphasising that the appropriation of foreign elements may be viewed negatively also in peripheral literatures, when these literatures come to perceive the source culture as potentially threatening. As we have seen, for Slovene agents of culture planning the threat came from German, so translations from languages other than German as well as original compositions were encouraged. A somewhat similar attitude has been reported, for instance, in the case of Irish, where there has been a tendency to eliminate possible traces of the source language in translations from English, which was perceived as the language of the coloniser. Many other comparable examples could be given from different periods and different literatures.

By way of conclusion, I would like to highlight the fact that low-impact cultures and their literatures constitute a particularly fertile ground for research in translation history, certainly in a European context. A feature that the majority of them have in common is the prominent role translation has played in their
development. On the other hand, the histories of low-impact cultures may also present considerable translation-related differences in terms of the length of their written traditions, the strength of foreign influences, the political context and the relative size of their populations. Translation histories should, ideally, take into account all of these as well as many other factors.

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Translation as an Object of Literary Scholarship: 
From the Perspective of a ‘Small’ Literature

The development of translation is not always taken as part of the development of literature as a whole (and hence as a legitimate part of the object of literary historicism), at least not within the framework of the modern era. Nevertheless, a focus on foreign texts is evident in some key areas – mainly translations of the Bible into the vernacular. Or, literary history may devote a tiny separate chapter to translation when dealing with some other significant literary events, such as the emergence of a new school of literature that may have manifested itself through the translation of a foreign author (which I believe is primarily the case within modernism and the avant-garde). This approach of literary historicism to translation can be defined as dispersal; in contrast to ignorance of translations, it permits analysis of translations in scattered (dispersed) moments of literary history.

Some histories of literature (or rather some literary historians) are inclined to consider translations as part of the comprehensive literary process. This is more typical of the so-called ‘small’ literatures, such as Bulgarian. In this case, one can speak of a systematic approach. It manifests itself most often when considering the emergence of so-called ‘new’ literature or modern (meaning post-medieval) literature. It seems that for more recent periods the same critics also prefer to adhere to the dispersal approach. Other similar cases when translations are seen as important by (some) historians of literature can be detected in their acknowledgement of other crucial moments in the evolution of a national literature, such as the emergence of modernism or the imposing of the notorious socialist realism.

As to medieval literature, where the distinction between original text, translation, adaptation and copy poses a serious problem, the comprehensive approach is most often systematic, but not openly declared. This means that a translation is analysed as a legitimate part of literature, but the distinction between original and translated text remains in the background.

One might assume that a systematic approach could develop into an integral approach that addresses both translations and original literature and seeks connections between them throughout the development of literature in its continuity. (In this case, the scholar is tempted to accept the idea that there is something called the ‘millenary entity’ of a national literature. In other words, that a great quantity of texts written in more than one language and over a period of more than 1300 years – as is the Bulgarian case – are still part of one unified entity – Bulgarian
One might expect that an integrated approach has to go beyond analysis of literary works alone and focus on other areas of culture, above all, on culture as one complex structure.

A fourth approach, which can be defined as emancipated, sees the history of translation as a separate discipline that could deal with processes in their entirety – from the emergence of literature in one particular language (or from the beginning of modern times) to the present day. In this case, the relations between translations and original literature remain in the background. This so-called emancipated approach is close to, if not inherent in, the perspective typical of scholars and university teachers who specialise in Translation Studies.

This paper offers some observations based on the Bulgarian experience of implementing different scholarly approaches towards translation and attempts to analyse their involvement in the field of comparative literature and shed light on the motives that determine one or another preference. The paper also focuses on one important Bulgarian project dealing with translations that was realised in the last decade.

Fair or not, languages and literatures are defined as ‘big’ or ‘small’. The big ones are associated with (formerly) powerful empires that imposed their language, some form of their educational system, and their culture in areas, other than metropolitan, where these languages are essential. This might be a classic colonial system, but it might also concern another type of area, usually adjacent and directly connected to the metropolitan area, as is the case of Russia and China.

The third type of big language is related to another form of expansion, as in the case of Germany. The number of big languages is gradually decreasing – those of some once mighty nations are no longer perceived as such, for example, Dutch and Portuguese. Currently, in the European context, the big languages are perceived as: first, English; then, Russian, French, and, to some extent, German. Spanish is also a global language, but it is not so widespread in Europe. Chinese, Arabic, Turkish, and some others can be defined as big languages outside Europe.

Large state entities with long cultural traditions, such as India, may have several official languages, among which English – the language of the former colonial ruler – actually dominates.

Big languages are generally related to literatures and cultures that have a long history and significant works of art that are universally known and recognised as values. These languages dominate the universal canon-building process. Relatively less common languages can also form the basis for such universally recognised civilisations, the clearest example being Japan. For their part, big civilisations in separate periods can be perceived as self-sufficient and tending towards isolation and the rejection of values that are perceived as foreign. The ignorance and dispersal approaches are more common among big literatures. Small ones may also exhibit similar trends, but they are generally transitory and, despite
isolationist trends, awareness of the existence of important different values, other models that have an effect on one’s ‘own’ culture, can hardly be permanently suppressed. That is why efforts to overcome the dispersal approach are more consistent among them. Hence, the impulse to become better acquainted with what is ‘alien’ is stronger among small civilisations, co-existing alongside a strong fear of it. Here, I will not deal with the complex question of what is ‘foreign’ and what is the origin of those things and artefacts that are perceived of as one’s own.

Such preliminary explanations are necessary when dealing with the different attitudes towards translation among small literatures. These attitudes can be traced in several directions:

– Analysis of the relationship between one’s own literature and translations.
– Emphasis on cataloguing translations. This accompanies a relatively greater interest in the history of translation.
– More intensive efforts to develop a criticism of translation that adopts the ideas of the emancipated approach. This has to do with the much greater interest in foreign literature on the part of readers, publishers and critics.

The study of translations and attitudes towards other cultures in general in small literatures is often accompanied by a hidden tension between two tendencies. One seeks to highlight the intensity of relationships with foreign cultures; when cataloguing translation, it is disposed to reinforcing the importance of some texts of modest resonance and to showing that ‘we, too, have read and translated Voltaire’. I too have probably been amenable to such aberrations at some point. The second trend, in contrast, emphasises the uniqueness of what is one’s own; it has ancient roots and need only be examined by means of its unique criterion (Мутафов 1998). In actual fact, one can detect a common ground behind these two opposing trends – frustration at the lack of universally known and recognised values of one’s own and an inferiority complex.

A similar phenomenon, which can only be mentioned in passing here, is the strong interest in (even obsession with) the image of what is one’s own in foreign cultures. In recent decades, this has changed dramatically as a result of postcolonial criticism and especially under the influence of Edward Said and his book Orientalism (1st ed. 1978). Among other things, postcolonial criticism has launched several theses that scholars have to bear in mind, even if they do not accept them.

The study of the relations between translations and original Bulgarian literature within the framework of the systematic approach has a long tradition. Quite some time ago, it became mandatory in the history of medieval literature, which is mostly translated and belongs to the Byzantine cultural community. Similar theses have been formulated on the so-called new literature of the 19th and 20th centuries, particularly regarding its origins. The earliest definite formulation and argumentation of a thesis belongs to a literary historian who worked in the late 19th and early
20th century, Stefan Minchev. He wrote several studies on the topic and was convinced that scrutinising...

... [i]ntial manifestations of the Bulgarian novel [...] requires the systematic examination of all translated fiction from the time when the first distinct attempts to write a novel in the Bulgarian language appeared, and not only so far, but even beyond [...] For the history of the Bulgarian novel, translated fiction was a kind of tradition which imposed both linguistic and literary forms used by young novel writers-to-be (Минчев 1908: 1).

This thesis is hardly seriously challenged during the period covered by the author – the mid-19th century. Its relevance was noticed towards the 20th and even the 21st century, and it became fundamental to the integral approach. But in the examination of the literature of the 20th century, this idea tended to be gradually pushed into the background. Literary critics and historians began to point out the negative effect of the relations of specific new works with foreign literature, especially with translations. Although in the Middle Ages, and later in some places, great proximity to some (foreign) pattern is sought, subsequently a similar relationship begins to be seen as not particularly prestigious. In the European context, the change that started earlier is most clearly seen in the quarrel of Ancients et Modernes in French literature of the 17th century, reaching its climax in the age of Romanticism. Later, it was as if the trend began to turn – at one point it again became prestigious for a text to resemble the great examples of either socialist realism or high modernism (for example, Ulysses by James Joyce). This is linked to the desire on the part of the authors to highlight or hide the relationship of their works with certain foreign patterns. Their claims in interviews, memoirs, etc. fluctuate between the two opposing poles.

In this context one needs to distinguish between the impact of foreign and translated literature. Foreign literature can be read in the original, or abroad, or after being translated. This applies to both the average reader and writers. The impact, in turn, can be on specific works from one’s own literature, or a school or group of writers, or readers’ notions about literature.

There is any number of reasons why writers and readers read foreign literature in the original. Selected foreign literary texts may not be available in their own language, either because they have not yet been translated or because some kind of censorship restrictions have been imposed. The reason why foreign literature is read in the original (or in translation in a third language) could be the lack of translations, residence abroad (e.g. because of fewer educational opportunities at home), or educational reasons at home (graduates and undergraduates in foreign languages often prefer to read in the language of their studies). Scholars (and enthusiastic amateurs) have good reason to prefer to read foreign works in the
original; for others, reading in a foreign language is an opportunity to build up a prestigious self-image.

The importance of translations is greater in relatively isolated communities and cultures. Contrariwise, without recognising it, the majority of writers tend to revive the naïve romantic idea that they do not need too much culture, that it may even prevent them from manifesting their nature and the spirit of their time and place (genius loci). Even a relatively limited knowledge of and an interest in contemporary international literature makes authors vulnerable to the influence of phenomena which they know through translations. It seems to me that such was the case with Hemingway, and then with the Latin American magic realism fashion of the 1970s and 1980s in Bulgarian literature, and not only. One should bear in mind that translated literature had to pass through at least one additional selection which was particularly demanding in Eastern Europe before the fall of the Berlin Wall.

It is well known, theoretically speaking, that translation is only one possible interpretation of the source text and that the perception of foreign literature in translation inevitably leads to some distortions. On the other hand, as an avid reader of translated literature, I would dare to say that this risk is sometimes overestimated.

A focus on the reception of foreign literature and the history of translated literature tends to adopt the emancipated approach. In some typologically earlier periods, these areas attracted mainly specialists in their own literature. They mapped the territory, and after them came specialists in foreign culture who were not always fully aware of their own literature. Very often the latter have rightly criticised experts in their own literature for their superficial acquaintance with foreign culture, but they themselves tend to veer in the opposite direction. So there is always some kind of tension between two types of specialisations, two perspectives on translated literature.

The basis of this tension, and of some others that will be mentioned further on, is social. Social not only in the sense of social hierarchy, but also in the sense of an attitude towards literature that is determined by professional predispositions, values and habits. As a rule, specialists in different fields use different systems of reference. To put it in its simplest terms, I would say that when a translator, a critic, a scholar, and a (university) teacher have one and the same text in front of them, they tend to do different things with it.

All these tensions were well known, though not explicitly articulated, before work started on an important project entitled *Reception of Translated European Literature in Bulgaria* [Преводна рецепция на европейска литература в България] (Шурбанов, Трендафилов 2000; Николова 2000; Владова et al. 2001; Павлов et al. 2002; Ганчева et al. 2003; Ничев et al. 2004; Жечев, Станчева 2004). This was not the first step towards realising the idea of creating
a history of translated literature in my country and highlighting the importance of ‘the art of translation’. More than a decade earlier, a volume entitled *Masters of Translation* (Станчев 1984) was published, which presented the key figures in this field from the last two centuries. The same title was used for a series of volumes containing selected works of well-known translators, most of them eminent poets. Other publications and conferences followed. As a rule, inspiration (and funding) always came from the Bulgarian Translators’ Union, with its quite legitimate desire to promote the truly challenging and important work of its members and their predecessors. Two further types of tension could be detected in this context. These are the oppositions between translators and writers (poets and novelists) on the one hand, and between translators practicing criticism of translation and academics on the other.

As a rule, translators have a more modest position in society, and their field is still underestimated. In this particular case, the situation was different – translators had inspired the project and obtained funding, so they had a dominant position. This has had a specific impact on the methodological approach and on the structure of the volumes.

At the outset, the project – *Reception of Translated European Literature in Bulgaria* – was designed to unite the forces of paid translators, scholars, and university lecturers. However, one significant change in the design of the project should be registered here. Attention was redirected from translators to foreign authors, i.e. the focus was transferred from the agent of reception to its object. This was a radical change which can be regarded as the restoration of an initial attitude towards translation and the adoption of the perspective of scholars and teachers in foreign literatures. The word ‘reception’ also came from their jargon. People who interact with translators know that, at least until recently, a significant proportion of serious professionals in this field reacted negatively to such foreign words.

The meaning of reception covers a wide range of phenomena; scholars are focused not only on translations but also on critical texts, on different manifestations of reader response, on the politics of publishers and other structures. Within the framework of the project, the meaning of the word reception was narrowed by the adjective ‘translational’, i.e. attention has been focused on translation, and all other forms of reception have been abandoned or pushed into the background. This choice came closer to the perspective of the translators, but it also has a practical dimension, for a wider understanding of the goal would make the project unmanageable or even unrealisable. On the other hand, such an approach undoubtedly distorts the integral landscape of the reception of foreign cultural phenomena.

The problem of the hierarchy of the discussed phenomena always emerges in such situations and leads to one of the key questions when interpreting Bulgarian culture: how to arrange all the cultural communities which it is claimed to be part
of – Balkan, Slav, Eastern European, European. To put forward every one of them would have serious effects on different aspects. In this case, European affiliation was declared by title, Slav and Balkan attained some kind of parity, Eastern European was neglected. This tacit consensus is fragile and only connected to the particular task in hand; it is distinguished from the ideas that dominated one or two decades earlier and is quite open to a future rethinking.

The traditional grouping of languages in families was adopted by the project as something natural and happened by default. Any attempts to problematise this idea from the 19th century were ignored. This approach produced enormous practical difficulties associated with the grouping of literatures in different volumes. The most difficult case was the place of Hungarian literature – it ended up in the volume of German literature. But more important was the fact that the project completely displaced any possible attempt to problematise the notion of literature as national, to break the bond between nation-state and literature. The clearest example of the complexity of this issue is to be found in the literature of the former Yugoslavia – how many literatures (and how many languages) actually are there in this case? The same was true, at least to some extent, of the literature of the former Soviet Union. And we have the precedents of other multiethnic empires from the past – Ottoman, Habsburg, etc.

Another problem which comparative studies have recently broached was left aside. What is actually perceived through translation – author, work, genre, sample of foreign national literature, or something else? It seems to me that there are different cases. One curious example is that of the popular novel Šōgun by James Clavell. Is the dominant element of reception in this case the author (born in Australia), popular American (British?) fiction, Japanese exoticism, or a text that was successfully adapted for TV?

Another serious debate which accompanied the development of the project was whether to focus on the reception of authors or on other phenomena (e.g. genre). Two opposing positions dominated the individual volumes. Some of them have chapters dedicated only to authors; others also present genres and periods.

Most important, of course, was the selection of authors on which the project would focus its attention. Most translated or ‘most prestigious’? It is clear that we must reach some compromise, especially when it comes to collective work. But even in the preparation of so-called ‘prospectuses’, i.e. the planned content of the volumes, it became apparent that a great many foreign authors who might have been represented posed problems. So, some very popular writers were not granted the right to a separate chapter, while others who only have two or three translations, but enjoy great prestige, become the focus of attention. The project was designed and launched at a time when I call the emancipated approach was at its peak, so questions about the impact of foreign authors (and their translations) on Bulgarian literature were consistently rejected.
In conclusion, I would like to stress that despite all the above-mentioned tensions, despite the disputes and the difficulty of reconciling different perspectives, the project *Reception of Translated European Literature in Bulgaria* and other previous attempts to scrutinise the art of translation have proved very useful, expanding the notions of scholars and translators not only on the specific research discipline (Comparative Literature) to which they belong but also on literary historicism. For the time being, seven representative volumes bearing this title enjoy reasonable interest, and not only among academics in Bulgaria. It is indeed worth trying to deal with translation and its history.

This more or less emancipated approach (as applied in this project) towards reception coexists alongside others, silently distinguishing itself from them. In this sphere, as in many others, the idea that there is one and only one ‘right’ approach is an illusion, and a dangerous one.

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Comment écrire une histoire aréale de la traduction ?

Le présent article se veut une très modeste contribution à la méthodologie de l’histoire de la traduction. Il s’appuie notamment sur la réflexion menée dans le cadre d’un projet du Centre d’étude de l’Europe médiane (INALCO, Paris) visant à rédiger une *Histoire de la traduction (littéraire) en Europe médiane*. Nous désignons sous le terme *Europe médiane* les pays européens situés entre le monde germanique et le monde russe. La notion est donc plus large que celle d’Europe centrale et orientale, puisqu’elle inclut par exemple la Finlande et la Grèce. Dans notre projet, nous avons toutefois exclu la Grèce, pour des raisons que j’expliquerai plus bas.

En évoquant quelques-uns des problèmes méthodologiques généraux posés par une histoire de la traduction couvrant un nombre de langues relativement important, je présenterai évidemment les réponses que nous y avons apportées dans le cadre de notre projet.

1. Qu’est-ce qu’une histoire aréale de la traduction ?

L’histoire de la traduction, parce qu’elle est l’histoire d’une relation entre deux objets complexes que l’on peut appeler, pour simplifier, la *culture source* et la *culture cible*, dispose d’une très large gamme de possibilités pour définir son objet d’étude. Le périmètre d’une étude sur l’histoire de la traduction peut être délimité par six critères principaux, trois concernant la culture source et les trois autres la culture cible:

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<td>3. Œuvre(s)</td>
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On pourrait établir une typologie des champs d’étude en croisant ces six critères. La représentation d’une telle typologie serait en revanche assez difficile, car chacun de ces critères peut se combiner librement avec tous les autres, ce qui

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1 Projet financé par le programme Émergence(s) de la Ville de Paris.
nécessiterait un tableau en six dimensions ! Je me contenterai ici d’approfondir le critère géographico-linguistique, afin de préciser ce que j’entends par « histoire aréale » de la traduction.

Si l’espace est par définition continu, le critère géographico-linguistique applicable pour délimiter le champ d’une histoire de la traduction est, lui, de nature discontinue : pour ce type d’étude, en effet, l’espace pertinent est déjà segmenté en objets individuels, à savoir les entités politiques ou territoriales (États, régions) et les aires linguistiques. Il serait probablement peu intéressant d’utiliser une segmentation géographique différente, par exemple d’étudier l’histoire de la traduction dans les zones montagneuses ou sous les climats tropicaux.

Ces entités géographico-linguistiques pré-existantes peuvent être regroupées de diverses manières pour définir plusieurs échelles ou niveaux, aussi bien pour l’espace d’origine des œuvres traduites que pour l’espace d’arrivée des traductions. L’étude peut concerner un nombre de pays ou de langues illimité (l’ensemble du monde), ou un objet unique (une seule langue ou un seul pays), ou un nombre délibérément limité de pays ou de langues. Dans ce dernier cas, je distinguerai au moins deux façons de constituer l’ensemble : soit en regroupant des entités peu nombreuses et/ou non contiguës (par exemple la France et la Bulgarie) pour former un ensemble que je qualifierai de discontinu, soit en regroupant des entités plus nombreuses et en principe contiguës. Ces deux types de regroupements appellent des recherches ayant une visée différente : dans le premier cas, il s’agira surtout de comparer l’histoire de la traduction dans quelques pays ou quelques langues ; dans le second cas, celui d’un espace large et continu, il sera probablement possible et plus intéressant d’étudier de façon globale l’évolution de la traduction au sein de cet espace.

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2. Problèmes méthodologiques posés par une histoire aréale de la traduction

2.1. Le premier problème que pose la réalisation pratique d'une histoire aréale de la traduction est celui du choix ou de la délimitation de l’aire. Pourquoi étudier l’histoire de la traduction dans tel ou tel ensemble de pays ou de langues ? Cela n’a véritablement de sens que si cette aire présente une cohérence suffisante du point de vue des modalités d’exercice de la traduction et/ou du rôle culturel joué par celle-ci. Il faut, en d’autres termes, que les pays ou les langues étudiés appartiennent, pour la période considérée ou pour une partie importante de celle-ci, à un même paradigme traductionnel, et qu’ils se distinguent à cet égard des régions ou des langues environnantes, c’est-à-dire qu’ils constituent ce que l’on pourrait appeler une aire traditionnelle, ce qui n’est pas nécessairement le cas de toutes les aires politiques, linguistiques ou culturelles.
Il est évidemment impossible de définir le paradigme traductionnel d’une aire avant de l’avoir étudiée, puisque la caractérisation précise de ce paradigme est justement l’objet de l’histoire aréale de la traduction, mais l’on doit tout de même entrevoir l’existence d’un tel paradigme commun pour pouvoir délimiter l’aire à étudier. On peut pour cela avoir quelques intuitions fondées sur la connaissance de l’histoire culturelle et linguistique. Dans le cas de l’Europe médiane, alors que nous sommes encore au seuil de notre étude, nous avons déjà la quasi-certitude qu’elle constitue bien une aire traductionnelle à part entière. Les facteurs de cohérence révélés par l’histoire culturelle et linguistique sont en effet suffisamment forts et distinguent cette aire aussi bien de l’Europe occidentale que du monde russe. Nous avons identifié à ce stade au moins cinq facteurs de cohérence, valables à des degrés divers et avec quelques nuances pour tous les pays de la zone.

1) Toutes les langues écrites qui devaient devenir les langues nationales des États actuels se sont développées grâce à la traduction de la Bible (certes à des époques très différentes selon les sous-ensembles régionaux);

2) Les éveils nationaux ou les mouvements qui ont conduit à la constitution d’États nationaux ont été relativement tardifs (XVIIIe-XIXe siècles);

3) Ces pays ont presque toujours occupé une position « périphérique » du point de vue de la circulation des idées et des courants culturels européens, et ils ont cherché à se positionner par rapport au « centre » incarné par l’Europe occidentale;

4) Pour cette raison, les littératures profanes en langues nationales se sont constituées et ont évolué en grande partie grâce à la traduction : dans la phase de formation, les auteurs sont passés progressivement de travaux de traduction-adaptation d’ouvrages étrangers à des créations personnelles ; par la suite, un certain nombre de courants ou de genres nouveaux sont arrivés par l’intermédiaire de traductions d’œuvres étrangères ;

5) Tous ces pays se sont retrouvés après la Seconde Guerre mondiale dans la sphère d’influence de l’Union soviétique et la quasi-totalité d’entre eux ont connu jusqu’en 1989 un régime totalitaire qui a influencé les modalités d’exercice de la traduction.

Pour des raisons liées à la cohérence du paradigme traductionnel, nous avons exclu la Grèce de notre domaine d’étude. En effet, plusieurs de ces facteurs de cohérence ne sont pas valables dans son cas : la langue écrite ne s’est pas constituée par la traduction de la Bible, la Grèce a été longtemps l’un des centres culturels de l’Europe et non une périphérie, et, contrairement à la Finlande, elle n’a pas fait partie de la sphère d’influence de l’Union soviétique.

Sur la base de ces facteurs de cohérence, on peut raisonnablement supposer que l’Europe médiane constitue ce que l’on pourrait appeler une aire traductionnelle hétérocentrée (cf. figure 1 ci-dessous). Celle-ci se caractérise par des flux traduc-
tifs entrants très importants et des flux sortants faibles. Les flux de traduction internes peuvent être d’importance variable dans les différentes parties de l’aire. Au sein de celle-ci, certains pays peuvent fonctionner comme des centres secondaires pour d’autres pays, comme ce fut le cas par exemple de la Finlande pour l’Estonie au début du XXᵉ siècle.

Figure 1 : Aire traductionnelle hétérocentrée

Une aire traductionnelle autocentée, comme l’Europe occidentale, présente une configuration inverse (cf. figure 2) : des flux entrants relativement faibles, des flux internes importants, et, si l’aire fonctionne comme centre pour d’autres aires, des flux sortants également importants.

Figure 2 : Aire traductionnelle autocentée
Dans la mesure où une histoire aréale de la traduction s’intéresse principale-
ment aux traductions réalisées à l’intérieur de l’aire, c’est-à-dire aux flux entrants
et aux flux internes, l’étude d’une aire hétérocentrée semble à première vue plus
complexes, puisqu’il s’agit d’étudier non seulement les relations de traduction
entre les différents pays d’une même aire, mais aussi et surtout la relation traduc-
tive de cette aire avec une aire extérieure qui constitue le centre par rapport auquel
elle se positionne. En outre, certains chercheurs, comme les représentants de la
théorie du polysystème, considèrent que dans les systèmes littéraires périphé-
riques la littérature traduite joue un rôle beaucoup plus important et exerce une
influence novatrice sur la culture cible (Even-Zohar 1990: 47-48), ce qui accroît
incontestablement la complexité de l’objet d’étude.

Une même aire peut évidemment être hétérocentrée à certaines périodes de son
histoire et auto-centrée à d’autres. On peut ainsi considérer que l’Europe occiden-
tale du Moyen Âge et de la Renaissance était une aire traditionnelle en grande
partie hétérocentrée, le centre présentant la particularité d’être situé à une époque
antérieure (traduction des classiques latins et grecs).

2.2. La délimitation de l’aire n’est évidemment qu’un préalable. Il convient
egalement de définir les aspects de l’histoire de la traduction qui seront étudiés.
Quelles sont les finalités de l’étude ? À quelles questions doit-elle répondre ?
C’est là un thème de réflexion classique en méthodologie de l’histoire de la tra-
duction (cf. notamment Torop 1989, Pym 1998, D’Hulst 2001). Le chercheur dis-
pose en cette matière d’une grande liberté de choisir et l’on ne saurait prétendre
imposer une approche plutôt qu’une autre. Certains, comme Anthony Pym (1998),
privilégient l’étude des traducteurs, d’autres l’étude des traductions en tant que
textes, d’autre encore les rapports de la littérature traduite avec le polysystème lit-
téraire, etc. Dans ce qui suit, j’exposerai simplement les choix que nous avons
faits dans le cadre de notre projet, avec le souci d’écrire une histoire totale, c’est-
à-dire de couvrir par notre questionnement tous les aspects du sujet, et notamment
d’intégrer dans l’histoire de la pratique de la traduction des éléments d’une his-
toire du discours sur la traduction, pour reprendre une dichotomie analysée
notamment par Judith Woodsworth (Woodsworth 1998: 101). Nos questions cor-
respondent en partie avec celles qu’Anthony Pym assigne à ce qu’il appelle
l’archéologie de la traduction : « Who translated what, how, where, when, for
whom and with what effect ? » (Pym 1998: 5), ainsi qu’avec les questions de la
rhétorique antique résumées dans le fameux hexamètre mnémotechnique de Quin-
tilien : Quis, quid, ubi, quibus auxiliis, cur, quomodo, quando ? (Qui, quoi, où,
avec quels moyens, pourquoi, comment, quand ?), questions que Lieven D’Hulst
complète fort justement par cui bono ? (pour le profit de qui) (D’Hulst 2001: 24-
30). Nous organisons nos questions en deux parties et développons davantage la
question des effets de la traduction.
I. La pratique de la traduction. Cette partie inclut en réalité aussi le discours sur la traduction dans la mesure où il procède de la pratique (discours des traducteurs) et où il l’influence (théories prescriptives).

1. Qui traduit ? Le traducteur : statut et visibilité, formation, conditions de travail et de rémunération, etc.

2. Que traduit-on ? Les ouvrages traduits : nombre, langues d’origine, choix, facteurs et contraintes éventuelles qui l’influencent, débats éventuels sur le choix des œuvres, conditions de publication, censure, décalages éventuels entre le corpus traduit et le canon littéraire des pays d’origine.


II. Le rôle culturel de la traduction


2.3. Une fois le questionnement défini, reste à savoir comment apporter des réponses à ces questions en prenant en compte tous les pays ou langues de l’aire étudiée (dans notre cas, seize langues). Se pose ici le problème des compétences linguistiques et scientifiques, de l’accès aux sources et des connaissances préalables permettant d’utiliser et d’interpréter ces sources correctement. La solution la plus évidente consiste à mener une telle étude sous la forme d’un travail collaboratif réunissant des spécialistes de chacune des langues. C’est la voie que nous avons choisie, en constituant une équipe de vingt-deux personnes² (un ou deux spécialistes pour chacune des seize langues concernées). Mais comment organiser concrètement ce travail ? La réponse à cette question dépend en fait des objectifs visés en matière de structuration du résultat.

2.4. Pour tous les types de travaux concernant une aire formée d’un grand nombre d’entités singulières, on peut distinguer principalement deux modèles de structuration.

1) Modèle juxtaposé, fragmenté, procédant par juxtaposition d’études individuelles. Ce modèle est évidemment le plus facile à mettre en œuvre dans le cas

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d’un projet collectif, chaque contributeur se chargeant d’une étude sur un sujet précis. Le degré de systématicité dans la couverture du champ peut varier, depuis des « coups de projecteur » sur quelques cas typiques ou exemplaires formant un assemblage non systématique (exemple archétypal : les actes de colloque) jusqu’à un inventaire complet de chacune des entités constituant le champ (exemple archétypal : les encyclopédies).

2) Modèle intégratif, synthétique, ne séparant pas totalement les différentes entités constituant l’aire, mais cherchant à dégager les grandes tendances, les points communs, les divergences, etc., c’est-à-dire (dans le cas d’une histoire de la traduction) à caractériser de façon globale le paradigme traductionnel de l’aire et ses éventuelles variations locales.

Ce deuxième modèle, plus difficile à mettre en œuvre, nous semble aussi plus intéressant et plus nécessaire dans l’état actuel de la recherche. En effet, il existe déjà de nombreux ouvrages de type juxtaposatif sur l’histoire de la traduction dans différents pays, dont certains présentent un caractère relativement systématique, par exemple la seconde partie de l’encyclopédie de la traduction publiée par les éditions Routledge (Baker 1998), qui couvre quelques pays de l’Europe médiane, ou encore l’Encyclopédie internationale de la recherche sur la traduction publiée par les éditions de Gruyter (Kittel et al. 2004-2007), dont le volume 3 couvrira la plupart des pays de notre aire. En revanche, il n’existe guère d’exemples d’études de type intégratif.

Le modèle intégratif rend nécessaire une méthode de travail spécifique, en deux, voire trois temps :

1) collecte d’informations auprès de spécialistes de chacune des langues et selon un modèle homogène (dans le cadre de notre projet, la collecte d’informations se fait sur la base d’un questionnaire détaillé comportant 112 questions qui reprennent la structure générale du questionnement présentée ci-dessus),

2) analyse et comparaison des matériaux, rédaction d’une synthèse par une équipe réduite (dans notre cas, un comité de rédaction de cinq membres)

3) examen et validation du résultat par l’ensemble des spécialistes des différentes langues.

2.5. Le choix d’un modèle synthétique/intégratif ne résout évidemment pas la question de l’organisation plus précise de l’exposé, en d’autres termes du plan de l’ouvrage. S’agissant d’une histoire de la traduction, il semble naturel que le premier niveau de structuration (les grandes parties ou les grands chapitres) ait une dimension chronologique.

Pour notre projet, nous avons prévu quatre grandes parties chronologiques reflétant l’évolution des finalités, des modalités d’exercice et du rôle de la traduction en Europe médiane :

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3 Antoine Chalvin, Maryla Laurent, Jean-Léon Muller, Katre Talviste, Marie Vrinat-Nikolov.
1. Au fondement des langues littéraires européennes : la traduction des textes sacrés.
2. La traduction et la formation des littératures profanes.
3. La traduction et la modernité littéraire.
4. Traduire sous le totalitarisme.

Ces parties découlent assez naturellement des facteurs de cohérence de l’aire traductionnelle énumérées plus haut. Elles peuvent être qualifiées de chronologiques à condition de comprendre ce terme sans rigueur excessive, car ces périodes peuvent en réalité correspondre à des dates différentes selon les pays. Elles constituent plutôt quatre grandes étapes dans l’évolution du paradigme traductionnel, des étapes qui se succèdent dans le même ordre pour chacun des pays, mais pas nécessairement au même moment (à l’exception de la dernière). Les quatre grandes parties de l’ouvrage présenteront donc inévitablement des chevauchements chronologiques, et certaines périodes intermédiaires entre deux de ces grands moments risquent d’être étudiées moins en détail parce qu’elles sont moins essentielles pour notre problématique principale. Celle-ci étant centrée sur l’étude du rôle de la traduction, elle conduit naturellement à privilégier les périodes où ce rôle était le plus novateur ou le plus important.

L’organisation de l’exposé au sein de ces parties chronologiques dépend du mode de rédaction choisi, c’est-à-dire principalement du mode d’utilisation et d’intégration des données relatives aux différentes aires linguistiques. C’est un problème délicat à résoudre et que nous n’avons pas encore tranché, notamment parce que la solution dépendra des informations que nous recueillerons. Une possibilité théorique consiste à organiser l’exposé en suivant la structure générale du questionnaire (les six grandes questions). Pour chacune de ces questions, il faudra dans un premier temps exposer de façon synthétique les points communs et les différences. Il faudra voir ensuite si ces points communs et ces différences permettent de délimiter des sous-aires au regard de tel ou tel trait, un peu comme un dialectologue trace des isoglosses pour définir des aires dialectales. D’éventuelles sous-aires pourraient alors constituer un principe de structuration pour la suite de l’exposé. Enfin, au sein d’une section consacrée à une sous-aire ou à un point du questionnement général, il semble préférable d’éviter une segmentation par langue, mais il doit être en revanche possible de donner, sous la forme d’encastrés, des éclairages sur quelques cas remarquables empruntés à telle ou telle langue. Ce type de structure concilie donc l’ambition synthétique de l’ouvrage avec un traitement plus approfondi et encyclopédique de quelques cas, ces derniers intervenant de préférence comme une illustration d’un processus ou d’une caractéristique déjà exposés à un niveau plus général.

Notre objectif et notre méthodologie me paraissent aller dans le sens des exigences formulées par Armin Paul Frank dans un article de 1992 où il esquissait l’objectif d’une histoire universelle de la traduction littéraire (ou, selon ses
it is no doubt necessary to work out, at least in outline, the histories of national translation cultures, or parts and portions thereof. We first need to establish dates and facts about translations in terms both of external and internal translation history that are reliable (i.e. gained by methodically and terminologically explicit procedures), comparable (i.e. gained at least by similar if not identical procedures), and so numerous that they can be integrated into pertinent and reliable “area surveys” which, in turn, might serve as component parts of such universal and, potentially, revolutionary syntheses (Frank 1992: 382-383).

Une histoire aréale de la traduction présente donc une utilité réelle non seulement pour une meilleure connaissance de l’histoire culturelle de l’aire étudiée, mais aussi en tant que synthèse intermédiaire en vue de l’élaboration d’une synthèse plus vaste et plus ambitieuse qui serait une histoire universelle de la traduction.

Références


Questions de méthodologie en vue d’une histoire de la traduction philosophique au Mexique au XXᵉ siècle

Cet article examine quelques-uns des problèmes théoriques et méthodologiques relatifs à la rédaction d’une histoire de la traduction philosophique au Mexique au XXᵉ siècle. Un tel projet présente des liens étroits avec l’histoire de la philosophie dans ce pays et partage avec elle certaines de ses préoccupations méthodologiques, telles que la périodisation. C’est pourquoi je considérerai en premier lieu les problèmes de périodisation et les solutions apportées par certains historiens de la philosophie mexicaine et latino-américaine, mais aussi par la perspective sociologique. Je présenterai ensuite les répertoires bibliographiques qui constituent les principales sources documentaires permettant de construire un corpus de traductions philosophiques, et j’évoquerai les problèmes relatifs à l’organisation et à l’analyse d’un tel corpus. Dans la conclusion, je tenterai de montrer comment la traductologie, en se combinant avec les approches historique et sociologique, peut apporter une contribution à l’histoire de la philosophie.

1. Les problèmes de la périodisation : entre l’histoire et la sociologie

Toute périodisation présente des risques importants. On peut dire d’emblée que le besoin de définir une période à étudier présuppose déjà une certaine philosophie de l’histoire. La définition des périodes constituant l’histoire universelle fait partie de l’héritage romantique allemand selon lequel l’histoire peut être décomposée en « totalités individuelles » (Lyman 1932: 449), telles que les nationalités, les classes sociales, les révolutions, les groupes religieux, les périodes historiques, etc. Cette conception s’oppose à une vision généralisatrice soutenue par les encyclopédistes du XVIIIᵉ siècle (Chiaramonte 2007: 189), qui conçoit l’histoire comme un tout cohérent.

Des difficultés supplémentaires surgissent lorsqu’il s’agit de faire l’histoire de la philosophie. À l’encontre d’une histoire hégélienne qui consisterait à suivre le déploiement immanent de la vérité tout au long des différentes époques et des courants de pensée, au cours du XXᵉ siècle, les historiens de la philosophie mexicaine et latino-américaine ont proposé une réflexion sur les manières de faire de la philosophie dans un contexte américain. Une bibliographie considérable témoigne ainsi de l’intérêt manifesté en Amérique Latine pour l’histoire des idées et en

L’une des préoccupations majeures de ces historiens semble être le rapport à la tradition philosophique européenne. En d’autres termes, l’étude de la pensée locale doit souvent partir de catégories conçues pour l’étude de l’histoire de la pensée européenne, catégories parmi lesquelles figurent en bonne place les périodes qui composent cette histoire. Ces périodes sont envisagées comme les fragments d’un ensemble plus vaste qui constituerait le corpus philosophique partagé. Or, quels seraient ces fragments pour la pensée produite au Mexique et en Amérique latine ? Est-il possible d’écrire l’histoire de la philosophie locale en suivant les traces de la pensée produite et exportée par l’Europe ? Quelle serait la contribution de la production philosophique locale au corpus philosophique ?

1.1. Les réponses des historiens de la philosophie

Les questions posées ci-dessus révèlent un souci constant chez les historiens de la philosophie en Amérique latine : le rapport à la tradition intellectuelle européenne. On critique souvent la dépendance de la pensée locale à l’égard de la philosophie importée, mais on prétend également montrer que cette pensée locale peut contribuer au grand corpus philosophique. Deux philosophes de la première moitié du XXe siècle illustrent cette position quelque peu paradoxale : Samuel Ramos (1943) et Francisco Romero (1943). Dans _El perfil del hombre y la cultura en México_, Ramos considère que la culture mexicaine, philosophie comprise, ne peut être que _derivada_, parce qu’elle a été « transplantée » par la langue et la religion (1934 : 29). Cela ne signifie pour autant qu’une philosophie originale soit impossible. Ce qu’il faut, c’est établir une distinction entre une phase de transplantation et une phase d’assimilation ou d’appropriation. Ainsi, dans son _Historia de la filosofía en México_ (1943), Ramos propose une relecture de la production intellectuelle mexicaine du point de vue de cette assimilation :

[...] une fois que nous nous sommes familiarisés avec la totalité de la production philosophique européenne, se pose le problème de l’incorporation de cette philosophie à notre esprit national et de son assimilation. On peut affirmer que l’un des soucis qui dominent notre monde philosophique est celui de la construction d’une philosophie propre (Ramos 1943 : 161, ma traduction).

Cette affirmation de Ramos coïncide avec le projet théorique du philosophe argentin Francisco Romero (1943), qui, lui aussi, a proposé une histoire de la philosophie argentine dont le point de départ est constitué par les philosophes _fundadores_ et le point d’arrivée par les philosophes _normalizados_. Les philo-
sophes *normalizados* représentent, dans le récit de Romero, la maturité de la philosophie argentine, c'est-à-dire son intégration à l'université, tandis que les *fundadores* sont considérés comme les pionniers d'une pensée possible (Cerrutti 1986). On retrouve donc, chez ces deux penseurs, un récit téléologique en vertu duquel la pensée locale parvient progressivement au niveau de la « vraie » philosophie.

Ces perspectives sont nuancées par la contribution de José Gaos. Dans *En torno a la filosofía mexicana* (1952), il montre les limites des récits téléologiques et propose de repenser l'histoire de la pensée locale à partir du concept d'importation. Il y aurait, d'après lui, deux types d'importation : celles qui relèvent d'un esprit colonial et celles qui relèvent d'un esprit espontáneo y nacional. Ces deux modalités d'importation ne sont pas de nature temporelle ou chronologique, mais correspondent aux motivations des agents importateurs à des moments historiques déterminés. Les importations faites par les jésuites mexicains au XVIIIe siècle, par exemple, sont « spontanées et nationales », même si le Mexique n’est pas encore indépendant à cette époque.

Les périodes de l'histoire de la philosophie mexicaine ne correspondent donc pas avec celles qui ont été forgées pour étudier la philosophie européenne. Elles doivent être définies à partir de « catégories autochtones » ou de motivations particulières. En d’autres termes, il est question de faire une histoire de la philosophie « située » dans son contexte. Il faut entendre par là une histoire qui serait en mesure de rendre compte, non pas du caractère imitatif des importations, mais bien au contraire des manières dont les importations ont cherché à répondre à des questions authentiques. Il s’agit, en somme, d’inclure dans le tableau historique de la pensée le travail de réflexion et d’appropriation des sujets qui lisent, réfléchissent et traduisent les philosophies étrangères. Pour citer Gaos, « il est vain de vouloir faire de l’histoire si l’on évite de parler des hommes et des collectivités humaines » (Gaos 1952: 19, ma traduction).

Il s’agit, on le voit, d’une perspective très proche du travail sociologique, perspective que, dans son *Historia de la filosofía en México* (1943), Ramos décrit de la manière suivante :

L’idéal d’une histoire mexicaine de la philosophie consisterait peut-être moins à simplement exposer des doctrines, à l’instar de l’histoire européenne, qu’à produire en même temps une sorte de sociologie de la connaissance philosophique (Ramos 1943: viii, ma traduction).

Cette « sociologie de la connaissance philosophique » devait fournir les outils pour repenser la façon dont la philosophie, une fois transplantée en territoire américain, pourrait contribuer à la tradition humaniste européenne à travers les lectures et les écrits des philosophes mexicains et latino-américains. Au fond, il s’agissait d’admettre l’existence de communautés intellectuelles en Amérique.
1.2. Les réponses des sociologues de la philosophie

Sans l’explicitier, les philosophes mexicains semblent se servir de la notion de « communauté intellectuelle » proposée par le philosophe allemand Max Scheler, dont Gaos avait traduit les *Problèmes de sociologie de la connaissance* (1924) dans les années trente avant de s’exiler au Mexique.

La notion de « communauté intellectuelle » pourrait s’avérer un critère utile pour la définition d’une période à étudier. En effet, au-delà des interminables critiques que les historiographes avancent contre la périodisation, comment s’en départir ? Étant donné que l’écriture d’une histoire englobant toutes les époques est de plus en plus difficile à concevoir, force est de reconnaître qu’on doit procéder à un découpage. La notion de « communauté intellectuelle » permettrait de le faire sans avoir recours aux essentialismes et aux lieux communs de l’histoire. Autrement dit, au lieu de procéder à un découpage temporel aveugle aux réalités étudiées, on repérerait sur le terrain les particularités qui permettraient de mieux construire « les totalités individuelles » que l’on cherche à analyser, en l’occurrence la communauté intellectuelle mexicaine engagée dans la traduction et la production philosophique.

Pour situer cette « communauté intellectuelle » dans le temps, on peut encore avoir recours aux rapports intergénérationnels qui contribuent à la renforcer. La notion de « génération », proposée par Ortega y Gasset ainsi que par Ramos pour l’étude de l’histoire culturelle espagnole et mexicaine, a été aussi l’objet de la sociologie des philosophies proposée par Randall Collins (1998). Pour celui-ci, les rapports intergénérationnels permettent de reconstituer des « réseaux intellectuels » sur la base desquels il est possible de réaliser une étude comparée de différentes traditions philosophiques. En d’autres termes, ce changement de perspective permet de se centrer sur l’interaction et les agents, et non sur des fourchettes temporelles arbitraires :

It would be theoretically more illuminating to describe intellectual history in terms of active generations, about 3 per hundred years. A 33-year period is the approximate length of an intellectual’s creative work. By the end of that time a cohort of thinkers will be virtually replaced by a new adult generation (Collins 1998: xix).

L’étude de la traduction philosophique au Mexique pourra se servir de la définition des « groupes » d’intellectuels actifs dans le milieu philosophique mexicain au XXe siècle. Grâce aux apports des historiens de la philosophie mexicaine du XXe siècle, il est possible de repérer trois groupes dont la convergence entre 1940 et 1970 constitue un phénomène intéressant à étudier, du fait que la traduction, la production et la diffusion de la philosophie sont au centre du travail intellectuel qu’ils accomplissent.

Il sera donc question de déterminer le rapport de ces intellectuels avec la traduction de textes philosophiques et la fonction de ceux-ci dans l’ensemble plus
vaste de la production philosophique locale. La recherche viserait à mettre en lumière l’intervention des philosophes-traducteurs, éditeurs, professeurs d’université et intellectuels agissant dans le milieu culturel mexicain comme importateurs, mais aussi comme producteurs de philosophie. Pour ce faire, dans un premier temps, il convient d’interroger les archives des maisons d’édition et les répertoires bibliographiques dans lesquels est recensée la production éditoriale qui nous intéresse, à savoir les traductions de philosophie.

2. Les sources documentaires : la construction d’un corpus de traductions


de deux groupes antérieurs, dont les figures les plus représentatives sont peut-être Luis Villoro (1922) et Leopoldo Zea (1912-2004).

La convergence de ces trois groupes permet de fixer les limites de la recherche entre 1940 et 1970 sur la base de certains événements historiques : l’intégration des intellectuels espagnols à la vie culturelle mexicaine au début des années quarante, la fondation du Centro de Estudios Filosóficos de l’Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (1940), la création de la collection « Filosofía » de la maison d’édition Fondo de Cultura Económica (1941), le développement de l’industrie éditoriale mexicaine, la mise en place d’une politique culturelle pour laquelle l’éducation était synonyme de développement et de progrès. La fin des années soixante est marquée, quant à elle, par la crise de l’industrie éditoriale mexicaine, des changements dans la politique culturelle nationale, la transformation des relations entre les intellectuels et le gouvernement après le massacre des étudiants à Tlatelolco (1968), mais aussi la création de la revue Crítica (1967), qui a représenté une évolution importante dans la conception du métier de philosophe.

Parmi les événements de cette époque qui permettent de délimiter le périmètre spatio-temporel de la recherche, le développement de l’industrie éditoriale est particulièrement important. En effet, à partir du monde de l’édition de l’époque, il est possible de construire un corpus de traductions de philosophie. En d’autres termes, la recherche documentaire à laquelle on aura recours permet d’entreprendre l’archéologie proposée par Anthony Pym (1998) pour la recherche en histoire de la traduction. Passons donc aux sources de données et à leur constitution.

2.1. Les sources de données

Nos sources de données sont constituées par les catalogues historiques de deux maisons d’édition très importantes pour l’histoire culturelle mexicaine (celle de l’Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México et du Fondo de Cultura Económica) et par des répertoires bibliographiques construits tout au long du XXe siècle pour recueillir l’important travail d’édition accompli pendant cette période (Berroa 1961, Anuario 1958, Boletín bibliográfico mexicano depuis 1939).

Les répertoires bibliographiques et les catalogues permettent de repérer les agents participant à la traduction, à la publication, mais aussi à la diffusion de la philosophie, car le Boletín bibliográfico mexicano contient aussi une section de critique de livres, où les membres de la communauté intellectuelle se prononcent sur les ouvrages publiés.

Il convient maintenant de donner quelques précisions sur la constitution de ces sources. En 1940, Eduardo García Márquez a fondé le Centro de Estudios Filosóficos, institution consacrée à la recherche spécialisée en philosophie, qui au sein de l’Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México a eu une activité éditoriale

À l’aide de ces répertoires bibliographiques, on peut également observer que, contre toute attente, le nombre d’ouvrages traduits dépasse à peine celui des ouvrages écrits en espagnol (environ 362 traductions contre 352 originaux). Le problème pour retrouver les traductions de philosophie n’est donc pas l’absence de sources, mais plutôt leur prolifération.

C’est là un deuxième écueil méthodologique. Une fois résolu le problème de la périodisation, on se trouve en effet confronté à une surabondance de données. Les différents répertoires ouvrent un panorama qui dépasse les limites de la spécialisation universitaire pour inclure les manuels destinés aux cours d’introduction dispensés dans le cadre de l’enseignement secondaire.

Nous avons donc affaire à des questions méthodologique auxquelles il est impossible de répondre sans revenir sur les questions scientifiques à la base de cette étude. En d’autres termes, on doit s’interroger de nouveau sur les lignes directrices de la recherche. Qu’est-ce que les données dégagées des sources permettent d’observer ? La réponse à cette question dépendra de la manière dont ces données seront organisées, c’est-à-dire de la structure du corpus.

2.2. Le corpus

Les dimensions de ce répertoire permettent d’envisager plusieurs voies de recherche. Un premier pas consisterait à interroger le répertoire de traductions issu de la recherche documentaire. L’identité des traducteurs et leurs liens avec la communauté intellectuelle, les courants de pensée traduits, les langues et les traditions source, le public visé par ces ouvrages, les interventions textuelles et paratextuelles des traducteurs et des éditeurs, les types d’ouvrages traduits (avec des objectifs de vulgarisation ou spécialisés) sont autant de questions à envisager pour déterminer la fonction de ces traductions.

La première série de questions posées, on peut distinguer entre trois grandes catégories d’ouvrages. En premier lieu, on peut construire une catégorie consacrée
aux histoires de la philosophie et aux textes d’introduction aux disciplines, telles que l’éthique, la logique et l’esthétique, qui sont intimement liées à la philosophie. Dans cette catégorie, on trouve une soixantaine de titres, dont le *Diccionario de filosofía* de Nicola Abbagnano, traduit par une équipe de traducteurs dont les noms sont absents du panorama intellectuel de l’époque, et publié en 1963 par le *Fondo de Cultura Económica*. On inclut également *Las grandes filosofías* de Pierre Ducasse, traduit par Adolfo A. de Alba et publié chez *Diana* en 1965. Mentionnons encore l’*Introducción a la ontología* de Louis Lavelle, traduit par José Gaos, et publié par le *Fondo* en 1953 dans la collection *Breviarios*, inspirée des *Que sais-je* ? français.


Il serait intéressant de dessiner le rapport entre ces catégories pour déterminer les auteurs ou les écoles de pensée qui motivent la traduction des ouvrages de la deuxième catégorie. On pourrait se demander par exemple si *La filosofía de Heidegger* de Maurice Corvez, traduit par Agustín Eczurdia Hijar et publiée par le *Fondo* en 1970, reprend ou non la terminologie employée par Gaos dans sa traduction d’*Être et temps*.

Il serait possible aussi d’interroger les catégories elles-mêmes. Les traductions figurant dans la première catégorie sont-elles conformes aux exigences de textes d’introduction ? Les traducteurs qui participent à l’importation de ces ouvrages sont-ils des spécialistes ?
Les phénomènes de la retraduction et de la réédition sont également intéressants. La troisième catégorie, celle qui regroupe les sources que nous avons appelées « directes » ou « primaires », comporte de nombreuses traductions et des rééditions de textes de l’antiquité gréco-romaine qu’il serait intéressant d’analyser de près pour déterminer leurs emplois et leur fonctionnement dans le milieu philosophique mexicain de l’époque et pour analyser les rapports que ces traductions entretiennent entre elles.

Une autre piste de recherche consisterait à montrer que les philosophes qui agissent au sein de la communauté intellectuelle à laquelle cette recherche s’intéresse ont le souci du rapport direct aux textes. Pour eux, la construction d’une philosophie originale passe par la lecture des textes étudiés. La littérature secondaire ou de commentaire est certes un outil important, mais ne doit pas remplacer la lecture des textes « primaires ». Or, ces textes « primaires » ne sont guère lus dans leur langue originale, mais dans les traductions fréquemment produites par les membres de la communauté intellectuelle.

En raison de l’importance accordée à la lecture directe des philosophes, j’ai décidé de me concentrer sur l’étude de cette troisième catégorie. Le nombre d’ouvrages qui en font partie est encore la source de difficultés méthodologiques importantes. Pour les résoudre, on peut procéder à une sous-catégorisation des titres en fonction des courants de pensée. Le résultat permet de dégager dix sous-ensembles de traductions qui regroupent les titres appartenant 1) à l’antiquité gréco-romaine, 2) à l’axiologie, 3) à l’esthétique, 4) à l’existentialisme, 5) à l’ontologie, 6) au marxisme, 7) à la philosophie de l’histoire, à l’historicisme, au romantisme ou au néokantisme, 8) à la philosophie de la science, la logique, la philosophie comme science, 9) à la philosophie politique, au néo-thomisme, à la philosophie du droit et 10) à la philosophie de l’éducation ou à la psychologie.

Il sera question, entre autres, de déterminer le rôle des traducteurs dans le processus de spécialisation de la communauté philosophique de l’époque. On pourrait ainsi poser la question de savoir si les traductions de textes dits « primaires » comportent des paratextes, si ceux-ci constituent des interventions actives de la part des traducteurs et des éditeurs des textes traduits, s’il y a d’autres agents qui participent au processus, des réviseurs par exemple. On peut également s’interroger sur les maisons d’éditions qui se consacrent à la publication de ce type d’ouvrages et sur les conditions de travail des traducteurs (délais, rémunération, droits d’auteur, correspondance avec les auteurs et les éditeurs), etc. Il s’agit en somme de dévoiler une facette du travail intellectuel peu étudiée par les historiens de la philosophie mexicaine et de contribuer ainsi tant à l’étude de ce domaine qu’à la traductologie contemporaine d’orientation sociologique.
3. Une sociologie de la traduction philosophique


L’étude des traductions de philosophie au Mexique pourrait grandement bénéficier des deux premiers volets décrits par Wolf, à savoir la sociologie des agents et la sociologie des produits. D’une part, les outils de la sociologie pourraient permettre d’analyser la position des traducteurs dans la communauté intellectuelle et de dessiner le profil du traducteur de philosophie de l’époque étudiée. Dessiner ce profil consisterait moins à reconstruire des parcours biographiques qu’à déterminer dans quelle mesure la traduction philosophique a été prise en charge par les membres d’une communauté intellectuelle. Il serait par ailleurs souhaitable de déterminer si les ouvrages traduits, ainsi que la façon dont le travail de traduction a été pris en charge, correspondent aux intérêts théoriques des traducteurs, et donc d’inclure dans l’analyse les conceptions philosophiques des agents traducteurs.

Une sociologie des produits pourrait également permettre de déterminer la place des philosophies traduites par rapport aux philosophies écrites en espagnol, de cartographier leur diffusion, d’éclaircir les publics visés, voire les lecteurs concernés. Ce volet sociologique pourrait s’avérer très pertinent pour étudier la fonction des traductions. Cependant, on ne saurait faire l’économie d’un travail critique, notamment celui qui est mené à l’aide des instruments de la sociocritique et de l’analyse du discours.

À l’aide du travail d’archive et du panorama sociologique qui permet de repérer les agents de l’histoire de la philosophie à l’œuvre, la traductologie pourrait construire le récit explicatif proposé par Pym. Il s’agit de considérer le travail de traduction non seulement comme un instrument d’appropriation, mais comme une stratégie employée par les membres d’une communauté intellectuelle pour s’insérer dans le courant des traditions philosophiques auxquelles ils revendiquent le droit d’appartenir. Il s’agit en somme d’expliquer pourquoi, quand, où et com-
ment les philosophies traduites voient le jour et quel est le rapport entre les auteurs de ces traductions et leur milieu intellectuel.

La recherche traductologique peut ainsi puiser aux recherches de type documentaire produites par les historiens et aux analyses contextualisées proposées par les sociologues pour éclairer la construction des traditions intellectuelles et le rôle joué dans ce domaine par la traduction.

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Jean-Léon MULLER

L’histoire de la traduction littéraire en Hongrie :
un état des lieux

1. Introduction

Cette contribution a pour objet d’esquisser un bilan de l’état des connaissances et des recherches en matière d’histoire de la traduction littéraire en Hongrie. Il n’existe pas, à ce jour, d’étude retraçant cette histoire dans son ensemble et aucun programme de recherche systématique n’est actuellement engagé. Comme nous allons le voir, ce constat ne signifie pas pour autant que cette thématique ait été ignorée. L’histoire de la traduction apparaît notamment dans des études monographiques ou en marge de recherches sur le livre imprimé et les bibliothèques hongroises.

Le corpus étudié se limite aux ouvrages sur la traduction littéraire de parution récente, où une place centrale, mais pas forcément exclusive, est faite à l’approche historique. Notre but n’étant pas de présenter une étude exhaustive, nous en avons volontairement exclu les articles qui, si on se limite strictement aux recherches en histoire de la traduction, se révèlent d’ailleurs plutôt rares. Les éditions Balassi de Budapest ont récemment créé, en collaboration avec des universitaires, une collection spécialement dédiée à la traductologie. C’est le seul éditeur hongrois à avoir pris une initiative d’une telle ampleur. Les ouvrages publiés dans le cadre de cette collection constitueront nos sources premières.

Quant à la grille de lecture que nous allons tenter d’appliquer, elle répond aux nécessités de la rédaction d’une histoire de la traduction la plus totale possible.

Elle reprend la périodicité historique et les grands thèmes du questionnaire élaboré à l’INALCO, dans le cadre du projet Histoire de la traduction en Europe médiévale (voir la communication d’Antoine Chalvin). Ce questionnaire vise à laisser dans l’ombre le moins d’aspects possibles de la traduction littéraire. Il pose des questions d’ordre théorique mais aussi plus concrètes, comme l’identité des traducteurs ou le mode de diffusion des textes.

2. Constatations d’ordre général

L’examen de la production récente d’études sur la traduction en Hongrie permet de faire d’emblée plusieurs constatations.
2.1. Un intérêt croissant

En Hongrie, les deux dernières décennies ont été marquées par une multiplication des publications scientifiques traitant de façon exclusive ou non de traduction littéraire. Nous ne disposons pas de données quantitatives bien établies, mais cette augmentation s'impose à tout lecteur attentif.


2.1. Des sources plus accessibles

Comme le suggère notre dernière remarque, la production récente d’études en traductologie s’est accompagnée d’un important effort de réédition de textes anciens, le plus souvent assortis de nouvelles présentations critiques et de mises en perspective. Citons, entre autres, un recueil des préfaces et d’avis au lecteur, placés en exergue des traductions hongroises de la bible des xviᵉ et xviiᵉ siècles (Zvara, Jankovics 2003) et une anthologie de textes de réflexion sur la traduction littéraire allant du xviᵉ au xxᵉ siècle (Józan 2008).

Outre ces rééditions, ces dernières années ont aussi vu la mise à disposition sur internet d’écrits critiques comme l’intégralité des éditions, de 1908 à 1941, de la revue Nyugat (voir bibliographie, sites internet). Enfin, on a assisté à la première publication ou la réédition de la version hongroise de textes étrangers sur la traduction. C’est notamment le cas d’une importante sélection d’écrits fondateurs, de l’époque de Saint Jérôme à la fin du xxᵉ siècle (Józan, Jeney, Hajdu 2007) et de l’édition hongroise d’essais d’auteurs étrangers : par exemple ceux de Walter Benjamin et, plus près de nous, ceux de George Steiner. Les chercheurs hongrois en littérature comparée et en histoire de la traduction bénéficient donc aujourd’hui d’un accès beaucoup plus aisé à des sources autrefois dispersées ou disponibles exclusivement en langue étrangère.

2.1. Des textes théoriques en vedette

Les exemples cités l’illustrent bien : c’est dans le domaine des théories et des écrits critiques sur la traduction que les travaux historiques disposent des bases les
plus solides et sont donc les plus aboutis. Nous reviendrons sur ce constat dont la raison tient sans doute aussi à la nature même de la traductologie, l’étude des textes théoriques y tenant une place centrale.

3. Bilan des recherches par période historique

Nous arrivons à présent au bilan plus détaillé de l’état des recherches pour lequel nous avons adopté un découpage en quatre grandes périodes historiques. Ces dernières reprennent la chronologie définie dans le cadre du projet *Histoire de la traduction en Europe Médiane* de l’INALCO :
- la naissance de la langue littéraire et la traduction des textes sacrés
- la traduction et le développement de la littérature profane
- la traduction et la modernité littéraire
- la traduction sous le totalitarisme.

Nous allons tenter, pour chaque période, de dégager les grandes tendances de la recherche actuelle et de pointer les domaines encore peu explorés.

3.1. Naissance de la langue et traduction des textes sacrés

Les premiers textes traduits font depuis longtemps l’objet d’analyses linguistiques approfondies, car ils constituent des témoignages précieux de l’histoire de la langue hongroise.

Dans ce contexte, l’histoire de la traduction en tant que telle s’est avant tout penchée sur l’évolution de la manière de traduire et le discours qui l’accompagne. C’est notamment à cette préoccupation que répond la publication d’une anthologie de préfaces des traductions hongroises de la bible, déjà évoquée plus haut (Zvara, Jankovics 2003). Mentionnons aussi en particulier l’analyse attentive des conceptions de plusieurs traducteurs du XVIᵉ siècle (Benedek Komjáti, János Sylvester et Gáspár Károlyi pour les textes sacrés, Gábor Pestj pour les premières traductions de textes profanes) et du XVIIᵉ siècle (János Somosi Petkó). En définitive, les chercheurs contemporains en histoire de la traduction réexaminent les premiers textes théoriques, autrefois négligés, en leur accordant une place plus importante. Ce passage d’une étude d’Ildikó Józan est particulièrement révélateur de cette attention renouvelée :

> Au cours des XVIᵉ et XVIIᵉ siècles […] la recherche de l’identité de la langue hongroise et l’élaboration d’une théorie linguistique qui puisse s’y appliquer jouent un rôle significatif. À cette époque, la comparaison avec les langues étrangères revêt une grande importance dans la réflexion sur la théorie linguistique : c’est grâce aux traductions […] qu’une identité linguistique hongroise originale a pris forme. (Józan 2009: 32–33)
L’auteur rappelle ensuite que cette même époque voit aussi la naissance de catégories comme les traductions dites érasmiennes, catholiques ou protestantes. Toujours utilisées aujourd’hui, ces qualificatifs s’appliquent à l’origine aux différentes écoles de traduction de la Bible, qui furent en concurrence au XVIᵉ siècle. Pratiquée par des clercs formés à l’exégèse érasmienne, la première se caractérise par l’attention portée au choix des sources (retraduction du Nouveau Testament par Érasme à partir du grec), mais aussi et surtout au sens qu’il s’agit de rendre accessible au lecteur de langue hongroise. La traduction dite protestante s’inscrit dans une démarche similaire. Son initiateur, Gáspár Károlyi, auteur de la première traduction intégrale de la Bible, accorde lui aussi une grande place au lecteur. Il le suppose suffisamment averti et même susceptible de lui faire des propositions pour améliorer son texte. Il s’en explique dans la préface à sa version de la Bible, éditée en 1590 (Károlyi 2003). Quant à la tradition dite catholique, elle est centrée sur la lettre du texte de la Vulgate, désignée comme unique source officielle par le concile de Trente en 1546. Ces catégories illustrent le caractère précoce du débat sur la tension entre texte source et cible visée par la traduction.

Comme on vient de le voir, le corpus des textes théoriques et critiques anciens est bien établi et fait l’objet de lectures et de mises en perspectives nouvelles. Quant aux aspects plus socio-historiques comme la question des commanditaires, des modes de diffusion des traductions et de leur réception ont été beaucoup moins étudiées. Une des raisons de cette différence est le caractère très fragmentaire des données. Une des pistes de recherche pourrait être le croisement des informations disponibles en matière de traduction avec celles rassemblées par les historiens spécialistes des débuts du livre et de l’édition en Hongrie. Mentionnons simplement ici une histoire du livre et des bibliothèques magyares des origines à 1730, dont une édition revue et augmentée a été publiée en 2003 (Madas, Monok).

On peut dire pour conclure que s’il existe de nombreuses études ponctuelles sur tel ou tel aspect des débuts de la traduction en Hongrie, la synthèse des connaissances actuelles reste encore à faire.

3.2. Traduction et développement de la littérature profane

Dans les siècles qui suivent les premières traductions de textes sacrés, on ne saurait surestimer le rôle de la traduction dans le développement de la langue. Ce rôle va aller croissant, surtout dans le dernier tiers du XVIIIᵉ siècle et la plus grande partie du XIXᵉ siècle. Cette époque très féconde, plus connue sous le nom de nyelvújítás (rénovation de la langue), marque l’acccession du hongrois au rang de langue de culture et de littérature capable de dire le monde. Les traducteurs se font alors critiques, grammairiens et néologues ; d’abord les traducteurs de textes scientifiques, toutes disciplines confondues, mais aussi les traducteurs littéraires, auxquels le hongrois moderne doit une partie importante de son vocabulaire. Fait révélateur de l’importance accordée alors à la traduction littéraire, le terme spécifique qui la désigne en hongrois, műfordítás, formé à partir de mű (œuvre) et
fordítás (traduction), apparaît aussi à cette époque (plus précisément dans les années 1830). La traduction littéraire a définitivement gagné ses lettres de noblesse. Elle est désormais considérée comme un genre littéraire à part entière.


Les questions du statut des traducteurs comme de la diffusion et de la réception des traductions sont déjà mieux connues que pour la période précédente. On dispose de données plus abondantes et précises sur la biographie et le rôle joué par les traducteurs, mais leur présentation et leur analyse et plus le fait des historiens de la littérature que des chercheurs en histoire de la traduction.


Si la traduction joue un rôle majeur pendant la nyelvújítás, l’écriture de sa propre histoire pendant cette même période est loin d’être achevée. Aucune étude synthétique sur cette question n’a encore vu le jour. Pour expliquer ce paradoxe, on peut émettre l’hypothèse que l’abondance des études et des connaissances établies en linguistique et en histoire de la littérature n’a pas favorisé l’émergence d’approches transversales comme celle que nécessite une histoire de la traduction en tant que telle.
3.3. Traduction et développement de la littérature profane

La période considérée commence dans la première décennie du XXe siècle, par la fondation en 1908 de la célèbre revue *Nyugat* (Occident) et s’achève quarante ans plus tard avec l’installation des communistes au pouvoir. Elle marque l’âge d’or de la traduction littéraire en Hongrie. Dans un article paru dans *Nyugat* dès la première année de son existence, Lajos Hatvany, un de ses membres fondateurs, résume ainsi la place éminente qui revient, selon lui à cette discipline :

Montrez-moi […] un seul homme, une seule période, une grandeur et un excentrique, dans lequel ou chez qui l’artiste pouvait trouver l’inspiration. J’ai peur que cela ne soit trop difficile ! Il me semble que nous vivons une époque qui ressemble à la fin du XVIIIe et au début du XIXe siècle, où il n’y a rien à chercher chez soi et où il faut plutôt aller chez les voisins. Mais que faire si toute l’Europe est notre voisine ! (Józan 2009: 117)

La tâche est donc vaste et la quasi-totalité des écrivains s’adonne à l’exercice, ouvrant ainsi la voie à une large diffusion des littératures étrangères en Hongrie. Les traductions concernent alors aussi bien les classiques que la littérature plus contemporaine. C’est la poésie qui est considérée comme le genre le plus prestigieux et les principes de sa traduction font l’objet de vifs débats.

Une étude fort complète a été récemment consacrée à cette question, toujours par Ildikó Józan sous le titre *Baudelaire traduit par les poètes hongrois* (2009). Le choix de Baudelaire ne doit rien au hasard. La réception et la traduction de son œuvre jouent un rôle essentiel dans l’émergence de la modernité en Hongrie. Rappelons enfin, et cela a aussi un sens pour les poètes hongrois, que Baudelaire a été un traducteur, un fait qui n’est pas si fréquent pour un poète français. Mais au-delà de ce choix, l’intitulé de l’étude est trompeur. Loin de se limiter à un travail monographique, l’auteur balaie toute l’histoire de la traduction en Hongrie en s’attachant à rechercher les origines lointaines des diverses théories de la traduction.

C’est donc une fois de plus l’approche théorique de la traduction qui est mise en avant. La chercheuse propose une analyse très fine du dialogue qui s’engage entre quatre écrivains majeurs qui sont aussi quatre traducteurs d’exception : Mihály Babits, Dezső Kosztolányi, Árpád Thôt et Lőrincz Szabó. Elle suit ensuite la postérité des théories élaborées à l’époque, qui continuent jusqu’à aujourd’hui à influencer la manière de traduire et la lecture des textes. Elle les met enfin à l’épreuve des modes de lecture plus contemporains, où intervient notamment la notion d’intertextualité.

En ce qui concerne la réception des textes traduits et leur influence, leur mode de diffusion, ou les aspects plus sociologiques comme le statut du traducteur, on est plutôt confronté à une surabondance d’informations qu’à une pénurie. Il n’est pas possible ici d’en faire l’inventaire. Constatons toutefois que les recherches transversales qui permettraient de mettre ces données en perspectives n’en sont
qu’à leurs débuts. Le caractère aujourd’hui quasi-mythique de cette époque glorieuse des lettres hongroises n’a certainement pas favorisé les approches quantitatives et socio-historiques, peut-être considérées comme trop prosaïques. Elles font aujourd’hui défaut à l’historien de la traduction.

3.3. Traduire sous le totalitarisme

On peut affirmer qu’en Hongrie, la période qui va de 1948 à 1989 est un territoire presque vierge en termes de recherche sur l’histoire de la traduction. Le rejet suscité par le régime communiste et l’absence de recul suffisant expliquent sans doute en grande partie cette situation. Quant aux données quantitatives disponibles en matière de diffusion, elles doivent être considérées avec prudence. Elles reflètent en effet une organisation de l’édition qui répond aux objectifs de l’État et non à la demande des lecteurs. Elles ne sont toutefois pas totalement inexploitables, même si la réalité de la réception des œuvres reste difficile à évaluer.

L’analyse des choix éditoriaux est elle aussi, à faire, tout comme celle des éventuelles évolutions de la manière de traduire. En la matière, une piste a cependant commencé à être explorée. Elle concerne la sacralisation des normes esthétiques de la traduction définies dans la première moitié du début du XXème siècle. Certains chercheurs y voient le signe de la volonté du régime communiste d’empêcher toute forme de subjectivité. Le statut du traducteur est aussi un domaine où les données existent mais n’ont pas encore été analysées.

Rappelons ici, pour l’anecdote, le cas désormais célèbre en Hongrie de l’écrivain Péter Esterházy. Ce dernier a découvert récemment que son père avait été à la fois traducteur et indicateur de la police politique. Le romancier a fait de cette découverte le sujet de son livre autobiographique Jávitott Kiadás (Esterházy 2002).

4. Conclusion

En guise de conclusion, on peut soutenir qu’en Hongrie les études historiques sur la traduction font aujourd’hui preuve d’un véritable dynamisme mais laissent encore de nombreuses questions dans l’ombre, comme les aspects socio-historiques de la traduction et les liens multiples que celle-ci entretient avec l’histoire de la culture hongroise et la conception que les Hongrois se font de leur langue et de leur littérature. Laissons une dernière fois la parole à Ildikó Józan, qui résume fort bien cette situation et pointe les nombreux aspects qui restent à explorer par l’historien de la traduction littéraire :

L’analyse du rôle de la période antérieure à 1770 est notoirement défaillante. Certains faits du XIXe siècle sont moins connus et analysés que les phénomènes postérieurs, au tournant des XIXe et XXe siècles. Le premier quart du XXe siècle a exclusivement retenu l’attention. Les œuvres traduites alors […] disposent d’un appui théorique solide […]. Les générations suivantes, des années 1940 à aujourd’hui, ont été incapables de critiquer leurs [propres] théories, qui se sont contentées de radicaliser l’exigence de l’équivalence [entre texte original et texte traduit] dans la forme et le fond […]. Enfin, la critique et l’histoire littéraire ne se sont guère souciées jusqu’à aujourd’hui de la description historique de l’époque en question. (Józan 2009: 25)

Références

Pourquoi et comment une histoire comparée de la traduction en Bulgarie et en France ?

L’idée – voire la pulsion, au sens où l’emploie Antoine Berman (Berman 1995: 74-75, note 83) – d’écrire une histoire comparée de la traduction en Bulgarie et en France doit sa genèse à plusieurs rencontres (au sens de circonstances fortuites qui ont influencé, en l’occurrence, un parcours personnel). La première est liée à L’Épreuve de l’étranger, d’Antoine Berman (Berman 1984), découverte que j’ai faite au moment où je préparais mon mémoire d’habilitation, plus que découverte, révélation – de même que ses autres ouvrages sur la traduction : un réseau conceptuel m’était offert, ainsi qu’une voie à explorer dans l’histoire de la traduction en Bulgarie. La seconde a été celle de Jean Delisle, professeur à l’université d’Ottawa bien connu des milieux traductologiques et auteur d’un CD-ROM d’une grande richesse documentaire sur l’histoire de la traduction. Nos échanges épistolaires, la collaboration à son ouvrage Portraits de traductrices (Delisle 2002) ont été un encouragement fort à travailler dans ce domaine. Enfin, l’invitation qui m’a été adressée à enseigner l’histoire et les théories de la traduction dans les deux universités de Sofia (Université nouvelle de Bulgarie et université « Saint Clément d’Okhrid ») à des étudiants d’études romanes ou slaves, ce qui m’a permis de réaliser ce projet dans un contexte de dialogue toujours fructueux avec des étudiants, et non pas dans l’isolement, relatif d’ailleurs, du chercheur.

C’est ce qui a orienté le contenu de mon premier ouvrage, Отвъд пределите на превода (La traduction à l’épreuve des extrêmes), paru en Bulgarie (Врина-Николов 2004), ainsi que sa présentation : c’était donc, avant tout, un cycle de cours, destiné à guider les étudiants, ainsi que tous ceux qui s’intéressent au parcours, aux « erreances » de la traduction, longtemps ballottée entre les deux extrêmes d’une dichotomie opposant l’esprit et la lettre, le sens et la forme, depuis Cicéron en passant par les étapes qui m’ont paru les plus significatives, principalement dans deux cultures, française et bulgare (avec des incursions dans l’Empire arabe du IXe siècle, l’Andalousie des XIIe et XIIIe siècles et l’Allemagne classique et romantique, époques qui me paraissaient particulièrement importantes pour la réflexion sur l’activité traduisante).

Cet ouvrage a été bien accueilli en Bulgarie, comme en témoignent les recensions dont il a fait l’objet, parce qu’il manquait une étude générale sur l’histoire de la traduction. En revanche, tel n’est pas le cas en français où l’on dispose, entre autres, des travaux de Michel Ballard (1995), Jean-Louis Cordonnier (1995),

Deux grands champs de réflexion m’attiraient plus particulièrement : d’une part, la conviction acquise après avoir lu les travaux fondamentaux d’Henri Meschonnic (1999) et d’Antoine Berman, mais aussi l’ouvrage édifiant de Jean-Claude Chevalier et de Marie-France Delport (1995), que le traducteur est prisonnier de la doxa qui lui impose des représentations (sur la traduction, sur le bon français, etc.) et que seule l’histoire des modes de traduire peut l’aider à s’en affranchir ; d’autre part, le rôle de la traduction dans la constitution, l’élargissement, l’enrichissement de la littérature, entre tradition et innovation (ce que, bien souvent, la littérature comparée et l’histoire littéraire ne mettent pas suffisamment au jour).

« Un traducteur sans conscience historique est un traducteur mutilé »
(Berman: 1995)

Il importe, en effet, de connaître les différents modes de traduire qui ont eu cours dans l’histoire, mode liés à la représentation que se sont faite traducteurs, usagers des langues et représentants du pouvoir sur leur propre langue/culture et sur celles des autres, considérées comme supérieures et plus belles, ou, au contraire, comme inférieures et négligeables, pour savoir pourquoi on a traduit de telle ou telle manière, avec telle ou telle visée, en privilégiant telle ou telle conception de la fidélité, quelles ont été les différentes positions traductives assumées par les traducteurs au sein de normes, d’un tissu de relations liées au pouvoir et à la culture ambiante : c’est seulement cette épaisseur historique, cette « archéologie » de la traduction, qui peuvent permettre au traducteur de mieux comprendre ce qui aujourd’hui encore gouverne les modes de traduire, de prendre plus de recul par rapport à sa propre pratique, mais aussi à sa propre culture, pour être ouvert à l’Autre, dépasser l’ethnocentrisme ambiant et être plus conscient de ses choix.

Que nous enseigne l’histoire des traductions ? Plusieurs choses : d’abord, que la pensée sur la traduction s’est trouvée très tôt écartelée entre sens et forme ou esprit et lettre et que cette dichotomie a perduré jusqu’au XXe siècle où le structuralisme l’a ravivée. Dans cette perspective duelle, la littéralité est conçue comme un asservissement, image, ou plutôt véritable topos, qui sera reprise en France durant plusieurs siècles, du Moyen Âge au XXe siècle, un Guillaume Colletet
allant même jusqu’à affirmer au siècle des Belles Infidèles, dans son *Discours contre la traduction* en vers (1637):

> C’est trop m’assujettir, je suis las d’imiter, / La version déplait à qui peut inventer ; / Je suis plus amoureux d’un vers que je compose, / Que des livres entiers que j’ai traduits en prose. / Suivre comme un esclave un Auteur pas à pas, / Chercher de la raison où l’on n’en trouve pas, [...] Certes c’est un travail dont je suis si lassé, / Que j’en ai le corps faible et l’esprit émoussé. (Zuber 1995: 58)

Au début du XXe siècle, en 1911, Paul Claudel reprend ce *topos* à propos d’une traduction de Perrot d’Ablancourt : « Elle réalise l’idée que je me fais d’une bonne traduction qui, pour être exacte, doit ne pas être servile et, au contraire, tenir un compte infiniment subtil des *valeurs*, en un mot être une véritable trans-substantiation. » (Claudel 1911: 145)

Dans le sillage de l’opposition platonicienne entre « l’âme » et le « corps », en effet, l’apparence, changeante et donc périssable, et l’essence immuable et éternelle, le sens est conçu comme le seul élément vrai, stable, universel, la lettre apparaissant comme une enveloppe qui change selon les langues, donc secondaire. Au début du XXe siècle, avec l’avènement du structuralisme en linguistique, la dualité du signe, qui instaure la dichotomie entre signifié et signifiant, revivifie en traduction le primat du sens sur la forme, de l’esprit sur la lettre.

Suivre l’origine de ce *topos*, ses développements tout au long de l’histoire de la traduction en France permet aussi au traducteur de s’en distancier et de constater souvent que les éditeurs et correcteurs y sont toujours, plus ou moins, asservis. Il semble cependant qu’en ce début de XXIe siècle la situation change, peut-être, j’aimerais le croire, sous l’influence des écrivains qualifiés de « francophones » qui nous font entendre un autre français, fortement métissé et enrichi par les autres langues avec lesquels il cohabite, un français qui « sent » souvent la traduction.

L’histoire de la traduction nous enseigne aussi qu’il faut se méfier des idées reçues, des clichés, des mythes qui ont la vie dure, de concepts que l’on manie si fréquemment qu’on oublie de les interroger : le vieil adage pseudo-italien dont on ne cesse de nous rebattre les oreilles, *traduttore, traditore* ; la notion de fidélité qui, comme un parcours historique le montre, ne veut rien dire en soi. Au XVIIIe siècle, par exemple, Anne Dacier, défendant sa traduction de l’Iliade en prose (1711), invoque dans la préface sa conception de la fidélité :

> Quand je parle d’une traduction en prose, je ne veux point parler d’une traduction servile ; je parle d’une traduction généreuse et noble, qui en s’attachant fortement aux idées de son original, cherche les beautés de sa langue et rend ses images sans compter les mots. La première, par une fidélité trop scrupuleuse devient très infidèle car pour conserver la lettre, elle ruine l’esprit. (Delisle 2002: 27)
À l’opposé, en 1759, madame de Bontemps, traductrice des *Saisons*, de Thomson, lie fidélité à traduction littérale :

J’ai toujours cru que le principal mérite d’une traduction consistait dans la plus scrupuleuse exactitude ; de manière que si une traduction pouvait être, pour ainsi dire, transparente et laisser voir l’original dans tout son naturel, elle serait la plus parfaite. En vertu de cette opinion, j’ai sacrifié presque partout l’élegance de notre langue, la délicatesse de nos oreilles et mon amour-propre au plaisir de rendre littéralement le nerf et la force des pensées et des épithètes de mon auteur. J’ai poussé la fidélité jusqu’à maudire ou braver notre nation en bon anglais. (Delisle & Lafond 2002)

Enfin, le mythe de l’effacement du traducteur, du gommage de la traduction, d’où l’assertion selon laquelle la bonne traduction est celle qui ne sent pas la traduction, qui laisse entretenir l’illusion que le texte a été écrit en français dans l’original. Or, un traducteur qui s’efface, cela signifie une traduction qui reste, encore et toujours dans le même, au lieu d’être l’espace de rencontre avec l’autre. Et l’on oublie que la traduction « est la rencontre de deux subjectivités dans l’espace de leur différence » (Ancet 1999: 185). Un traducteur qui s’efface, c’est la non-rencontre entre les cultures. Antoine Berman va même jusqu’à affirmer qu’« une traduction qui “sent la traduction” n’est pas forcément mauvaise (alors qu’inversement on pourrait dire qu’une traduction qui ne sent pas la traduction est forcément mauvaise) » (Berman 1984: 147).

À défaut de réinventer une conception nouvelle de la traduction, le traducteur doit continuellement se positionner par rapport à celles qui nous ont été léguées.

Toutes ces idées, j’en conviens, ne sont pas nouvelles. Cependant, l’héritage des Belles Infidèles et sa doxa étant encore prêgnants, tant auprès du public que de beaucoup d’éditeurs et de certains traducteurs, il convient de les rappeler inlassablement… Cela éviterait, par exemple, la description érotisée d’un paysage à l’aurore là où il n’y a nulle trace d’érotisme dans l’original, mais, la métaphore d’une naissance1, ou encore une traduction archaïsante et sur-poétisante de poèmes de Boris Christov là où l’on a une poétique qui se veut simple et proche du lexique de tous les jours. Autant de tendances déformantes selon Berman ou de « figures de la traduction » très vivaces et fort bien analysées par Jean-Claude Chevalier et Marie-France Delport (1995).

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La traduction, miroir de l’altérité

Au point de départ de ma réflexion, donc, deux États-Nations : l’un catholique, l’autre orthodoxe, l’un dans l’orbite latine, l’autre dans la sphère d’influence de Byzance, l’un à l’ouest de l’Europe, l’autre à l’est, qui se forment dans des conditions un peu similaires et dont la langue-culture se constitue à peu près au même moment, soit au IXᵉ siècle, si l’on prend pour « début », d’un côté les « Serments de Strasbourg » (842), de l’autre la création du premier alphabet slave, l’alphabet glagolitique, par Constantin-Cyrille le Philosophe (environ 862). Ce qui est frappant, ce sont les convergences durant le Moyen Âge : politique culturelle de leurs souverains respectifs assez similaire (ils encouragent les traductions et jouent le rôle de mécènes et protecteurs des hommes de lettres-traducteurs) ; mêmes topoi exprimés par les traducteurs sur leur projet traductif et leur pratique qui, dans les deux cas, se caractérise par le respect de l’esprit plutôt que de la lettre. Le contexte religieux et culturel dans lequel s’effectuent ces traductions explique la récurrence du topos de captatio benevolentiae : les traducteurs français comme bulgares sont conscients du décalage entre la langue à partir de laquelle ils traduisent (grec ou latin) et celle dans laquelle ils écrivent. Voici par exemple ce qu’écrit à la fin du IXᵉ siècle Constantin de Preslav dans son prologue à un évangéliaire pour les fêtes :

C’est pourquoi, misérable que je suis, lorsque je me suis convaincu, comme je l’ai dit, et décidé à traduire les commentaires du saint évangile du grec en slave, j’ai tremblé, en proie à l’effroi, en voyant des mots qui dépassaient ma faculté de compréhension et mes compétences. […] Je supplie tous ceux qui aiment le Christ de prier pour le succès de mon travail : que notre maître à tous et souverain Jésus Christ m’accorde de remplir jusqu’au bout ma tâche pour la gloire du Père, du Fils et du Saint Esprit, Amen. (Иванова & Николова 1995: 83)

Ce constat et cette prière font écho à de nombreuses préfaces rédigées par des translateurs français, par exemple celle de Pierre Bersuire à sa traduction des Décades de Tite-Live, vers 1352.

Mais, à partir du XIVᵉ siècle, les conditions dans lesquelles se développent ces deux cultures au fil du temps se distinguent de plus en plus radicalement, la grande ligne de faille étant la Renaissance dont sont isolés, aux XVᵉ et XVIᵉ siècles, les pays balkaniques incorporés à l’Empire ottoman. On connaît le prestige, voire l’ascendant, que prennent peu à peu le français et sa culture au sein de l’Europe jusqu’au XVIIIᵉ siècle, tandis que l’État bulgare est vaincu au XIVᵉ siècle par les Ottomans et devient l’une des provinces chrétiennes de ce vaste empire, isolée des mouvements culturels (la Renaissance par exemple) qui traversent l’Europe occidentale. D’un côté, donc, culture dominante, de grande diffusion, de l’autre culture dominée, largement méconnue. Et pourtant, même mode de traduction : annexant, « francisant » et « bulgarisant » respectivement, au nom
de principes et présupposés totalement divergents. Dans la France du « Grand Siècle » qui régente, codifie et en fin de compte appauvrit la langue, puis dans celle des Lumières, les traducteurs se sont affranchis du sentiment qu’ils traduisaient dans une langue plus pauvre que celle(s) de l’original, au point de revendiquer la suprématie de la langue, du génie et du goût français. Il s’agit de « rendre la copie plus belle que l’original » (Gaspar de Tende en 1660, in Delisle & Lafond 2002), de « transformer les rochers et épines de l’auteur en jardins délicieux » (Vaugelas, in Delisle & Lafond 2002), les Belles Infidèles étant la forme la plus aboutie de ce mode de traduire pas du tout inconscient, au contraire voulu et argumenté, par exemple par Jules Pilet de La Mesnardière, dans sa préface à sa traduction du _Panégyrique de Trajan_ de Pline le Jeune (1638) :

Mais il est temps que je m’explique touchant quelques circonstances qui regardent ma traduction. Il est certain qu’elle est conçue d’une façon particulière et qu’elle tient davantage de cette honnête liberté que l’on prend dans les paraphrases, que de la contrainte des traductions littérales. Si vous demandez la raison de ce dessein, je vous dirai seulement que le style de mon auteur et la nature de notre langue m’ont forcé d’en user ainsi. Car même si le français peut se vanter désormais d’être capable de grandes choses et de pouvoir les exprimer, il est néanmoins impossible qu’il rende toutes les beautés des langues grecque et latine, à moins que de s’étendre au large ; et on peut dire du langage ce qu’on dit de la Nation, que la pleine liberté est l’élément du français. (Horguelin 1981, repris in Delisle & Lafond 2002)

Cette conception du « génie » de la nation et de la langue françaises culmine dans le discours de Rivarol sur l’universalité de la langue française, en 1783, dans lequel, rappelons-le, il affirmait : « Tout ce qui n’est pas clair n’est pas français » (Rivarol 1998 : 73).

La « bulgarisation » des textes traduits obéit à d’autres motivations, d’autres débats : le texte est avant tout, dans la Bulgarie du Réveil national (première moitié du XIXe siècle), un instrument – de connaissance, de formation, d’enrichissement – que l’on peut modifier à une époque où l’on déplore l’indigence des lettres bulgares (dans des termes qui ne sont pas sans rappeler ceux de Du Bellay quelques siècles auparavant en France). À ce moment crucial de l’histoire de la traduction, mais aussi de la littérature bulgare qui s’enrichit et se dote des genres occidentaux par la traduction, les questions fondamentales que se posent les traducteurs-hommes de lettres, sont les suivantes : qui traduire ? quel type de littérature (didactique, fictionnelle, classique, contemporaine), quels textes ? Faut-il choisir des auteurs exigeants ou une littérature plus facile, plus « digeste » pour un public encore peu lettré ? N’y a-t-il pas un danger à perdre la « bulgarité » par la traduction/adaptation/imitation de l’Autre ? (Mentionnons au passage que cette tension dialectique entre Soi et les Autres ne cesserá de traverser la littérature bulgare jusqu’à nos jours.) La littérature bulgare, au contraire, n’a-t-elle pas tout à
gagner à s’inspirer de l’expérience des autres ? C’est ce qu’exprime par exemple le traducteur Nešo Bončev :

Et ainsi, nous avons besoin d’examiner avec attention tout le long chemin parcouru par les autres peuples. Lorsque nous le connaîtrons, alors il nous sera aisé de nous connaître nous-mêmes ainsi que la nouvelle vie culturelle qui nous attend. (…) À l’heure actuelle, ce sont des étrangers qui sont nos guides. Mais cela ne doit pas nous effrayer. Il en a été ainsi avec chaque peuple au début. (…) De même que la flamme d’une bougie se propage à beaucoup d’autres bougies, de même cette étincelle spirituelle s’est communiquée d’un peuple à l’autre. (Бончев 1983: 116).

La bulgarisation des textes traduits s’effectue à des niveaux divers : « simple » bulgarisation des noms propres et géographiques (comme dans La crue du Rhin, de Christoph von Schmidt, devenue dans la traduction faite par Stefan Bobčev, La crue du Danube, où tous les héros reçoivent un nom bulgare) ; bulgarisation plus poussée des référents culturels et des événements étrangers. L’écrivain et traducteur Petko Slavejkov justifie en ces termes une bulgarisation plus achevée des œuvres traduites :

Il est souhaitable que nos traducteurs et adaptateurs de romans n’oublient pas l’état de développement de notre peuple. Revêtir une Française ou une Allemande ou une Russe d’un soukman ne veut pas dire qu’on l’ait bulgarisée, car il faut encore une petite chose, il faut qu’elle s’adapte aux mœurs bulgares. (Славейков 1859)

La conception de la traduction caractéristique du Réveil national est totalement mise en cause au début du XX\textsuperscript{e} siècle, avec l’avènement, dans la littérature bulgare, de la modernité puis du modernisme et des avant-gardes, en grande partie grâce à la traduction. Ce qui devient important, c’est l’europeanisation voulue de la littérature jugée « arriérée » par les créateurs du début du XX\textsuperscript{e} siècle et la revendication du « moi » comme instance créatrice d’une esthétique particulière. Or, cette européanisation se fait une fois de plus par la traduction. À des conceptions utilitaires succèdent donc des critères esthétiques et de nouvelles exigences en traduction (indiquer le nom de l’auteur, celui du traducteur, traduire à partir de l’original et non par le truchement de plusieurs langues) exprimées, par exemple, dans les innombrables recensions parues dans la rubrique « Critique et bibliographie » de la revue Misăl à laquelle le public bulgare doit l’édition en bulgare d’un nombre considérable de textes majeurs des littératures principalement russe, française, allemande, italienne, anglaise.

Ainsi, aux XIX\textsuperscript{e} et XX\textsuperscript{e} siècle, si la traduction accompagne les processus de naissance des genres littéraires modernes en Bulgarie, d’élargissement et d’enrichissement de la littérature, aussi bien à l’époque du Réveil national qu’au début de notre siècle, entre ces deux moments, la « bulgarité » ne s’affirme pas de la
même manière, on ne traduit pas avec les mêmes objectifs ni, par conséquent, la même méthode.

Dès lors, la tentation était grande de partir de L’Épreuve de l’étranger de Berman, notamment du schéma qu’il propose concernant le type de rapport qu’une culture peut entretenir avec la langue maternelle et les langues traduites (Berman 1984: 238), pour essayer d’instaurer un dialogue entre les cultures française et bulgare aux grands moments fondateurs où elles se forment, et de suivre à chaque fois les modes de traduire qui y ont lieu dans des circonstances parfois très différentes, parfois analogues selon les horizons culturels, religieux et politiques aussi bien des traducteurs, des éditeurs que du public. Le schéma de Berman, appliqué à la traduction en France et en Bulgarie en ce qui concerne les époques emblématiques, peut être le suivant :

langue/culture française classique
→ expansion/domination exercée au détriment de langues étrangères « partielles » ; prisonnière de canons
→ traductions adaptations
→ traductions ethnocentriques, « amenant l’auteur au lecteur » (« Belles infidèles »)

langue/culture bulgare du Réveil national
→ langue/culture « complétée » par des littératures et des langues plus « abouties » ; conception utilitariste de la traduction et de la littérature
→ traductions adaptations (bulgarisation)
→ traductions « amenant l’auteur au lecteur »

langue/culture bulgare au début du XXe siècle
→ langue/culture « ouverte »
→ affirmation de la langue maternelle et production d’œuvres propres
→ traductions moins ethnocentriques ; exigences formulées

Du point de vue méthodologique, après avoir lu et relu des histoires (générales ou centrées sur une époque donnée) des littératures française et bulgare, des études spécialisées sur le statut de la langue française à travers les siècles, ou plus pointues encore, portant sur le mode de traduire en France à telle ou telle époque, j’ai dégagé plusieurs thèmes de réflexion qui m’ont servi de fil conducteur dans mon analyse : le rôle de la traduction dans l’émergence et la formation des littératures qui m’intéressaient ; la naissance de genres inexistants dans le système littéraire par un processus de traduction/adaptation/imitation/appropriation ; le rôle de la traduction comme compensateur lorsque la littérature originale est faiblement développée, comme laboratoire permettant aux hommes de lettres de « se faire la main » avant de créer dans leur langue, comme « éducateur » du goût du public qu’elle ouvre à des thèmes, des genres, des horizons nouveaux ; les rapports entre
le pouvoir et la culture (politiques linguistiques et culturelles des monarques ou gouvernements, notamment à l’égard de la traduction et des traducteurs); le rôle des traducteurs dans le choix des auteurs et des genres à traduire; les relations entretenues par la langue officielle avec d’autres langues jugées tantôt dominantes ou plus riches (latin pour la France au Moyen Âge; grec mais aussi russe et langues occidentales pour la Bulgarie), tantôt «mineures» ou ne correspondant pas au «goût» et au « génie » français (XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles); d’où les représentations qu’ont les traducteurs à la fois de la (ou des) langue(s) qu’ils traduisent et de la langue dans laquelle ils traduisent; les normes culturelles et linguistiques (la perception et les représentations que les traducteurs et le public ont du « bon français », par exemple); le développement de la littérature d’accueil (en pleine formation ou en période d’élargissement/enrichissement, ou au contraire hégémonique); la réception (étude des critiques parues dans des revues culturelles, des débats et polémiques sur la traduction); les traités de traduction écrits aux différentes époques.

Tout au cours de ce travail, ce qui a été pour moi le plus passionnant, le plus riche en informations et en perspectives de recherche, c’était le « dialogue » particulier instauré avec des traducteurs français et bulgares d’époques diverses, à travers leur discours, sous quelque forme qu’il ait été écrit. Car je me suis beaucoup appuyée sur le discours conscient des traducteurs, utilisant, côté français, l’abondante matière mise à disposition par le CD-ROM de Jean Delisle : nombreuses préfaces de traducteurs et traductrices, discours et traités sur la traduction, anthologie de Paul Horguelin (1981) et autres ressources. Quant aux préfaces bulgares, pour ce qui est du Moyen Âge et du Réveil national, elles constituent un corpus relativement restreint qu’il m’a été possible de consulter quasi-intégralement. Ces préfaces et prologues ne nous renseignent évidemment pas sur le mode de traduire de ceux qui les ont rédigées; en revanche, elles sont une mine d’informations concernant aussi bien les représentations qu’ils ont de leur propre pratique, de leur statut et de leur activité, que leur projet de traduction et leur position traductive, les enjeux de la traduction à telle ou telle époque, en relation avec le pouvoir, l’autorité, l’Église, etc.

En ce qui concerne l’organisation de l’ouvrage, j’ai adopté une approche chronologique en tentant à la fois de montrer le parcours propre à chacune de ces deux cultures et aux modes de traduire en vigueur, et d’entrechoquer les chapitres consacrés à la Bulgarie et ceux consacrés à la France, afin de mieux faire ressortir les parallélismes et différences.

Je me suis arrêtée au début du XXe siècle pour deux raisons : après la Seconde Guerre mondiale, la traduction connaît l’essor que l’on sait en France et il aurait fallu un ouvrage entier pour en rendre compte; d’un autre côté, les conditions de création, originale ou par la traduction, dans un régime totalitaire obéissent à des mécanismes totalement différents (politique autoritaire et mainmise d’un Parti, censure développant à son tour l’auto-censure, etc,), ce qui risquait de rendre plus
artificielle l’analyse comparée avec l’histoire de la traduction dans la France de la même époque.

Dans cette entreprise de mieux cerner les modes de traduire qui ont eu lieu en France et en Bulgarie, du IXe au début du XXe siècle, à la fois pour mieux éclairer les liens, au sein d’un système littéraire donné, entre littérature originale et littérature traduite, leur part et leur fonction respectives, mais aussi pour illustrer l’importance pour tout traducteur d’acquérir une conscience historique, je me suis donc appuyée à la fois sur le discours des traducteurs eux-mêmes et sur les données et informations « statistiques » récoltées, en tentant de les mettre en relation avec l’histoire des textes et l’histoire des idées. Il s’agissait, en somme, de suivre la mise en garde d’Antoine Berman :

Il est impossible de séparer cette histoire de celle des langues, des cultures et des littératures – voire de celle des religions et des nations. Encore ne s’agit-il pas de tout mélanger, mais de montrer comment, à chaque époque, ou dans chaque espace historique, la pratique de la traduction s’articule à celle de la littérature, des langues, des divers échanges interculturels et interlinguistiques. (Berman 1984: 12)

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History of Translation in Estonia
Histoire de la traduction en Estonie
Janika PÄLL

Translating from Ancient Languages into Estonian: Outlines for Translation History

The tradition of translating ancient Greek and Roman classics into Estonian is short. According to a remark by August Annist, the beginning of the tradition may be seen in an anonymous manuscript from the end of the 18th century that contains a translation of the opening of the *Odyssey* (Annist 1960: 426). It is more clearly seen in the close adaptations of two Anacreontic poems (21 and 24, West 1984, Peterson 1976) written in 1818 by the first Estonian poet, Kristjan Jaak Peterson, but printed much later (Undusk 2001: 13–20). The history of continuous translating began in 1878; of this, only the initial period (1850–1940) has been studied (Kurs 2003, with a bibliography). At present, a new, extensive, and regularly updated bibliography with a database of earlier translations is being created within the framework of the project for Estonian language and cultural heritage (EKKM 09-86, leader Ivo Volt, see EAB 2010). As for the last 90 years, only verse translation has been studied intensively (Kolk 2009: 629); we still lack systematic translation studies in the context of the reception of ancient literature or of Estonian literary life, as well as a bibliography.

In accordance with studies that are in their early stages, sections one and two of this article are devoted to methodological problems concerning the definition of the corpus (based on single publishing events), possibilities for a quantified analysis, problems related to gathering and classifying data, and discussion of material omitted. In sections three and four, the main periods and some general trends in the translation of classical texts are described, followed by the conclusion.

1. The Subject: Translating Ancient Literature vs. Translating Classical Languages

As in many other European countries, Estonian translation history begins with the translation of the New Testament and ecclesiastical literature in the 16th and 17th centuries. This presents the first problem for the definition of the corpus: if we study translation from ancient Greek and Latin, then translations of both pagan and Christian texts should be included. Secondly, as classical languages have a history that spans three thousand years (Neo-Latin is still alive), being used for various purposes from administration to science and poetry, the corpus of trans-
lations from these languages is not coherent. Therefore certain restrictions have been applied – the exclusion of strictly ecclesiastical literature as well as texts which appear later than the 5\textsuperscript{th} century AD. The reasons for this and some exceptions are explained below.

1.1. The Bible and the Catechism and/or Classical Literature

Already at the beginning of the large-scale Christianisation of Estonia in the 13\textsuperscript{th} century, a set of translated standard formulae and religious texts were in use, but all of these have been lost (Paul 1999: 94–116). The first remains of manuscript translations date from the 16\textsuperscript{th} century, beginning with the Lord’s Prayer, the \textit{Ave Maria} and the \textit{Credo} in the manuscript from Kullamaa (from 1524–1532; Ehasalu, Habicht, Kingissepp, Peebo 1997: 28–29, 59–60) and some excerpts in the manuscript of the Jesuit father Völcker (in 1582; ibid. 38–39, 80–87). These and other 16\textsuperscript{th}–17\textsuperscript{th} century ecclesiastical translations (Saareste, Cederberg 1992) have been studied principally as the first monuments of the Estonian language and its dialects, not as translations that had a target language, a source language, and perhaps one or two intermediary languages. We now have confirmation of one manuscript translation for which the primary source language was Greek: Göseken’s manuscript translation of the New Testament, based on Gutslaff’s work (Tafenau 2006, 2009). Gutslaff had preferred the original language instead of the Lutheran Bible in his translations of the Old Testament as well (Ross 1997).

Among printed translations, the catechism by Wanradt-Koell from 1535 (Ehasalu et al. 1997: 30–31, 65–76), the first printed book in Estonian, from which some pages have survived, should probably not be taken into account, as the parallel text suggests Low-Saxon (Niederdeutsch) as the (primary?) source language. Even the first complete printed translations of the New Testament into Southern and Northern Estonian (in 1685 and 1715 respectively) were (in spite of the original intentions of their translators) not translated directly from Greek, but from German (Luther’s Bible) and from Southern Estonian respectively, although the Greek text was consulted (Roosimaa 2004: 11, 36, 39).

As we are not aware of the extent of the influence of intermediary languages on these translations, Bible translations should be omitted from the statistics for now. Another reason for omitting the study of Bible translation is its very special place in Estonian translation history (Paul 1999). Due to its late start at the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, the translation of ancient (pagan) literature belongs to the context of popular education and rapidly developing Estonian literary life, which has little in common with ecclesiastical circles. Certainly, from time to time there are (and were) translators who belong to both circles, in which cases the translation activity forms a whole and cannot be separated into ancient vs. medieval or modern, or religious vs. lay. However, this is not usually the case.
1.2. Ancient or Medieval and Modern: Christian or Pagan Authors

The division of Greek and Latin text corpora into ecclesiastical and non-ecclesiastical texts is not sufficient to solve corpus-related problems. Several medieval and early modern works are not easy to classify, for example, Carmina Burana, the Henrici Chronicon Livoniae, or early modern authors: in these cases the authors were Christians, but their work was not necessarily of a religious nature. For example, the Henrici Chronicon Livoniae can be read as a source for the history of Ancient Livonia or for the history of the Christianisation of Estonia and classified either as a religious or a non-religious work.

Moreover, several church fathers from late antiquity represent the best traditions of ancient literacy. If we omit, for example, Christian authors like Clement of Alexandria, Gregory of Nazianzus, Augustine or Symmachus, it would misrepresent the development of the classical tradition and distort our picture of literary life in late antiquity. Therefore, only a chronological criterion has been applied for the statistics here, including all translations of pagan or Christian authors before the 6th century AD.

Two exceptions have been made: first, the exclusion of the Bible, which was formed during the period in question, but reflects Semitic rather than Greek traditions. Another exception has been made for Anacreontic poetry. Although written during the Middle Ages, such works belong to the classical tradition, as for centuries the translators and readers did not distinguish Anacreontic imitations from Anacreon’s much earlier poetry (see Kurs 2003: 23–25, 58–59 vs. correct attributions in EAB 2010).

2. Possibilities for Quantification: The Single Publishing Event as a Statistical Unit

The quantitative study of translations of ancient literature into Estonian could be neglected on account of the small amount of data, making comparison with ‘big’ literatures (like English or French) difficult. Paradoxically, the same reason may facilitate the creation of a comprehensive bibliography. However, the statistical unit for this bibliography and quantified analysis cannot be a book because there are other media to be taken into account: translations published in journals or anthologies, manuscripts, and other reflections of the classical tradition.

2.1. Studying Printed Books with Translations from Greek or Roman Authors

Ancient literature is difficult to classify because Greek and Roman traditions are often taken as a whole in reception history. This is clear in the case of anthologies of translations which represent both of them either separately (e.g. Väike Antiigi-
antoloogia [A Small Anthology of Ancient Literature] by the journal Vikerkaar in 1996) or together with other texts from the ancient world. For example, in Estonia the anthologies of ancient literature for schools or universities (enjoying probably the widest public) include ancient Sumerian, Akkadian, Egyptian, and Hindu literatures alongside the ancient Greek and Roman literatures (Talvet 1993; Annus, Kolk, Puhvel, Päll 2001).

Anthologies present a further problem: when the counting of data is based on the number of published books, an anthology of 700 pages containing numerous works or parts of works by over 30 (Kaalep, Torpats 1964 and 1971) or 50–60 authors (Kolk 2009; Päll 2006a) would still count as one statistical unit, just as one Greek tragedy, a romance or a single poem published as a separate book. For statistics to be representative, we have to distinguish such publication events by simultaneously counting the number of works, their length, etc.

Although the lengths of published translations are not always comparable, we should not underestimate the importance of single publications. As far as classical authors in Estonia are concerned, publishing translations in periodicals (newspapers, and literary or popular education journals) is one of the most significant trends. For example, during the first 50 years (1878–1919), we can count 32 publishing events of translations from ancient Greek and Roman literature, but it took 30 years until the first book, Prometheus Bound by Aeschylus, appeared in 1908, whereas the next book – with a selection of Aesop’s fables – appeared in 1918 (see below).

2.2. Counting Single Publishing Events of Ancient Literature vs. Studying the Classical Tradition

For the above-mentioned reasons, the statistical unit in this study is a publishing event of ancient literature. The scope of the reception history of ancient literature is still much broader because of a large number of translations appearing in the framework of other works. Sometimes poets inspired by antiquity have included translations among their own poetry: for example, Sappho’s 104th fragment (Voigt 1971), which appeared as the motto and the title for the collection of poetry Öhtu toob tagasi kõik [Evening Brings Back All] by Jaan Kaplinski (Kaplinski 1985); the first translations of Anacreontics appeared among the poems of Kristjan Jaak Peterson (Undusk 2001). These translations do not represent the same trend as the translations of Anacreontics or Sappho published for educational purposes.

Much more important is the number of translations appearing as parts of other works. These publications have some other purpose than the publication of the translation, which usually serves as an illustration. The translations generally appear as quotations in the body of the text, often in histories of ancient literature or articles on ancient culture (as shorter or longer examples), but also in historical
novels. The further removed the subjects of the quoting text and the quotation, the more difficult the translations are for researchers to find.

As translations, the quotations constitute a very disparate group of texts: if such passages appear in articles or books written in Estonian, they are usually either translated by the authors themselves (directly from the source language or through some other language) or taken from previously published translations. In the case of articles or books in foreign languages, the translators and/or publishers use either the help of specialists, who translate the passages from the original (a recent example is the case of Umberto Eco’s History of Beauty), or they translate them from the language of the given book, thus using an intermediary language. Although the latter practice is discouraged by Estonian classical philologists, the choice between original and intermediary languages remains open, and many publishers are not interested in hiring a Latinist or a Hellenist to translate such quotations.

The importance of studying such quotations is revealed by two examples. First, long passages from Plato’s Menon were translated as examples in an article on the Socratic method by V. Orav in Eesti Kool 1936 (Kurs 2003); the next passages of substantial length from Plato appeared as a supplement to the translation of Valentin Asmus’ Plato in 1971 (cf. also Kaalep, Torpats 1964). Knowing this, we cannot claim that translating Plato into Estonian only began with the first published book, the translation of his Symposium and Apology in 1985. Secondly, if we discount the quotations of ancient authors in some articles or histories of literature from the 1940s–1950s, it would appear that there was no translating activity of ancient literature during this period. Although it is true that the Stalinist era was bad for the study of antiquity, we should not underestimate the impact of those fragments which did appear.

2.3. Neglected Areas in Reception Studies: Unpublished Translations and Quotations

In the history of the translation of the Estonian Bible, there are some manuscript translations which circulated for several decades and had a great impact on the tradition (Tafenau 2006, 2009; Ross 1997). During the Soviet period, the typescript translations of the church fathers (e.g. the Lives of St. Jerome) by Uku Masing circulated with remarkable, but little studied, influence. A comparable impact can be supposed in the case of the above-mentioned manuscript translations by Kristjan Jaak Peterson.

The influence of unpublished translations is evident in the case of Greek drama. During the 1920s, several Greek dramas were translated from Russian (Euripides’ Heracleidae by Nigol Andresen in 1924) or German (Sophocles’ Oedipus Rex by Anna Haava and his Antigone by Marie Under). Antigone was printed by Draamastuudio in 1928 and performed to great acclaim during the
summer song festival. *Oedipus Rex* had several open-air stage performances as well. However, it was heavily criticised for having been translated through an intermediary language (Kurs 2003: 47–49).

After the publication of Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex* by Ain Kaalep and Ülo Torpats in 1964, the following translations remained in manuscript form for years, although they enjoyed popularity on stage: Euripides’ *Bacchae* and Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata* by Anne Lill in the 1990s, Menander’s *Dyscolus* (1996) and a partial translation of Aristophanes’ *Birds* (2001) by Mari Murdvee, performed by her Antiigiteater [Ancient Theatre], where she staged many different programmes based on the texts of ancient authors between 1993 and 2007 (see Murdvee 2001; Lepajõe, Lillemets 2008).

Secondly, we must pay attention to two verse translations of Homer’s *Iliad* by Jaan Jõgever (1927) and Jaan Lõo (1940) which were rejected by publishers but known to the literates. Especially important is the translation by Jaan Lõo (now edited in Lotman, Lotman, Sütiste 2004), who tried to introduce strictly quantitative verse systems into Estonian. By its mere existence, causing vehement opposition (justified in view of its obvious flaws) and polemics, this translation has influenced the development of Estonian verse translation. The fact that it is possible to use quantitative verse in Estonian for translating ancient verse types, especially the hexameter, was a great challenge at first (see Roos 1938); now, largely as a result of Ain Kaalep’s influence, quantitative translation (albeit its moderate type, more adapted to Estonian prosody) has become the norm (Merilai 2002; Päll 2006b).

Other unprinted translations that enjoy remarkable influence are from Greek philosophy, especially the website for Pre-Socratic philosophy by Sven-Olav Paavel, as well as Jaan Unt’s translation of Plato’s *Ion* which has been circulating as a text file among his students and their students for at least 10 years. Although there are unpublished translations which have remained without influence, several of them are worth consideration.

### 3. The Main Periods in Translations from the Classical Tradition

According to translation dynamics and political events, the translation of classical literature can be divided into the following periods:

1. 1878–1919 (with 32 publishing events, including 2 printed books and 11 manuscript translations and/or texts with quotations, representing 16 authors in total);
2. 1920–1940 (24 publishing events, including 12 printed books and 15 manuscript translations and/or texts with quotations, representing 34 authors);
The dynamics reflect a gradual increase in almost every aspect. However, the statistics are liable to change as a result of ongoing research (see EAB 2010 for updates).

3.1. The Establishment of Continuous Translating Activity in 1878–1919

Continuous translating activity did not begin at once. It started in 1878, when Jaan Bergmann’s quotations from Greek poetry appeared in his articles on Greek culture in the Yearbook of the Estonian Literary Society [Eesti Kirjameeste Selts]. The next year, this was followed by his translation of the Greek comic epic Batrachomyomachia in the newspaper supplement Meelejahutaja [Entertainer]. The continuous activity took ten years to establish itself (from 1887 onwards), but even then some years passed without publications.

The translations were published in daily or weekly newspapers or their supplements, and in yearbooks and almanacs of literary societies, e.g. the Estonian Students’ Society [Eesti Üliõpilaste Selts]. Sometimes they formed series (Xenophon in Eesti Postimees in 1887, Anacreontics in the supplement to Sakala in 1898–1899). Altogether eleven periodicals published translations from ancient authors, but four of them did so only once, and only four did so more than twice (EAB 2010).

The choice of works overwhelmingly favoured Greek (only 2 out of 32 were Latin authors); this has been explained by the influence of German national romanticism on our literates, and the need for moral education (Kurs 2003). Although this explains the choice of Xenophon’s Memorabilia, Aeschylus’ Prometheus Bound, fables and initially also Homer’s epics, there might be other reasons at work. Jaan Bergmann began his translating activity from Homer with the pseudo-Homeric Batrachomyomachia (The War of Frogs and Mice) and continued with the 9th (Cyclops) and 12th (Sirens) songs from the Odyssey, which are of a more entertaining nature. Only after this did he undertake to translate the whole of the Odyssey (the 1st and 2nd songs; the 3rd appeared posthumously). The same aim (to entertain) also explains the love for Anacreon and Anacreontic poems published by three authors on 11 publishing occasions (43 poems altogether), as well as Alcaeus and Sappho in 1917.
Another reason for choosing Greek emerges from the dynamics of translation activity (Chart 1 below). In 1897, the Greco-Turkish war took place and was actively covered in the Estonian newspapers. We can explain the increase from two publishing events to five and four in the following years by a growing interest in Greece and its cultural heritage (the absence of such an increase after the Balkan wars in 1912–1913 can be explained by the approaching World War I).

![Chart 1. Translation of Greek literature in the period 1887–1917](image)

The first translators did not always have the best knowledge of Greek – several translations were supposedly made through intermediary languages (Kurs 2003). Similarly, several works of unknown origin were attributed to popular authors, including Anacreontics under the name of Anacreon, a ‘Simonides’ epigram’, poems by ‘Alcaeus’ (Sappho’s fr.137+Alcaeus fr.184) and ‘Sappho’ (fr.168b), and a series of ‘Aesop’s’ fables.

In general, the choice of works corresponds to gymnasium curricula. As the curriculum of Latin authors is usually more oriented towards moral education, the relative absence of Latin (only two odes by Horace) can be explained by a greater tendency towards entertainment in this period (confirmed by the inclusion of a story about Amor and Psyche by Apuleius in J. Aavik’s manuscript journal in 1901). But the absence of Latin can be explained by yet another reason: the knowledge of Latin was much greater, so there was more demand for Greek literature.
The next period of translation (1920–1940) is different. Estonia had become a state (1918) and confirmed its independence through war, and a new Estonian university had been founded in Tartu on the basis of the *Kaiserliche Universität Dorpat* (1919). The most striking change in translating antiquity is a clear shift of focus onto Latin (Kurs 2003). We could look for reasons in the change of gymnasium curricula, which resulted in the abandoning of Greek lessons in most schools (and a subsequent lack of qualified translators, as the translation of plays from German or Russian reveals).

But there is another aspect to the change in the curriculum. Students associated the study of classical languages with boring old professors from the period of German rule. This is revealed in the satirical memoirs of a schoolboy by Oskar Kallas (OK 1894: 123–124) as well as in polemics between Estonian writers at the beginning of 1920s. Eduard Luiga criticised the tendency to stress the importance of classical authors and the aristocracy of the mind in his article *Maitsepolitsei* [The Police of Taste], whereas August Anni replied by stressing the importance of the classics (*Eesti kirjandus* 1925, see ERNI 2002). But already one of the first translators of ancient literature, Friedrich Kuhlbars, had expressed his preferences in his poem *Eesti heal* [Estonian voice] in 1880: *Tahad Eesti kalju pealt koidul kuulda kandle healt: jäta koju Greeka keel ja ka Rooma uhke meel!* [If you want to hear the voice of Kannel from Estonian rocks at dawn, leave at home the language of the Greeks and the haughty mind of the Romans as well! in Lotman, Lotman, Sütiste 2004]. Thus we see the continuation of earlier tendencies in the 1920s.

However, some Greek classics were still translated, mainly drama (see above) and some songs from Homer. But it seems that the situation of Latin in schools was bad, as word-for-word school translations of Caesar, Cicero, Virgil and Ovid appeared (Kurs 2003); these might have been used as a support for classroom reading in Latin classes.

At the same time, this period gives us the first enjoyable poetic translations as many of Estonia’s best poets turn to translating authors of the classics (Ridala, Visnapuu; and later Semper, Oras) and study or experiment with classic verse forms (Lotman 2000) or prose (see Kurs 2003 for Aavik).

### 3.3. The Depression (1940–1959) and a New Growth (1960–1989) in Translation

Due to the war and the Stalinist regime, the 1940s–1950s do not see the separate publication of translations of the classics. The only publications are some quotations illustrating the histories of ancient literature or articles discussing the problems of translating hexameter (Annist had begun translating Homer in 1952, see Kaalep 1997: 68). The quotation practice in the histories of literature (usually
presenting some verses by important poets) misrepresents prose and epics, but even so the number of translated authors is impressive.

The 1960s bring a new surge in translation, ending with the publication of two anthologies which include a representative selection from Greek and Roman authors (Kaalep, Torpats 1964 and 1971). The choice of authors and works was strikingly representative and barely influenced by the political situation (except the strong presence of Lucretius in the Roman anthology or the presence of Prometheus Bound (in a new translation) or Lucian in the Greek anthology). The editor of these anthologies was Ain Kaalep, a poet himself and a philologist in the true Alexandrian sense, who must be considered responsible for the poetic quality of the translations which were edited strictly according to his poetic principles (Kaalep 1997).

This was a time of new translators of the old school, with a clearly educative vision that united philologists and poets. For the first time, they translated and published both epics by Homer and major works by Virgil, as well as Sophocles’ Oedipus Rex, Plato’s Symposium and Apology, and large selections from Herodotus and Lucian – all in separate books. Although the department of classics at the university was closed, these scholars (together with Richard Kleis and Lalla Gross) educated a new generation of translators (Unt, Lill, Lepajõe) who started their work teaching new classical students when the department was reopened in 1990.


Since the beginning of the 1990s, translations of ancient authors have been published every year. A new wave of translators enters in 1996 with a small anthology [Väike Antiigiantoloogia] in the journal Vikerkaar, thus presenting the first two years of classical students from Tartu University. Compared to previous periods, this period sees a great increase in the number of publishing events, but the statistics hide the fact that the increase is mainly achieved through two new anthologies, publications in journals and occasional publications in other contexts. Among the new books, the percentage of reprints is significant (13 reprints out of a total of 26). Accordingly, the number of completely new translated works and authors slowly increases.

Systematic translation aspirations are revealed in individual and collective projects: peripatetics (Anne Lill, Ivo Volt), Plato (Marju Lepajõe), Seneca (Ilmar Vene, Kaspar Kolk), Latin Historiographers (Kai Tafenau, Maria Lotman). We can see the continuation of old trends: occasionally translating shorter works or parts of works, although individual preferences seem to exert the strongest influence on the choice of work.
4. Main Trends in Translation from the Classical Tradition

Almost every period has its own specific trends, beginning with the focus on Greek and the role of periodicals in the first, the stress on Latin and gymnasia in the second, the almost total abandoning of the classical tradition during the war and the Stalinist period, a forceful comeback with the most important classics in the 1960s, and expansion in the 1990s. The overall trends are: increasing specialisation, the important role of periodicals, and the tendency to achieve two goals – to educate and to entertain.

At first, translators of classical languages were mostly amateurs who had studied classical languages at gymnasium level. We see increasing specialisation, and now almost all active translators from ancient languages have a background in classical philology. Previously, the best poets of Estonia translated ancient authors: beginning with Kristjan Jaak Peterson and continuing with Ridala, Visnapuu, Under and Semper in 1920–1940, and Kaalep, Kaplinski, Sang and Masing in 1960–1989. These poets set the highest standard of poetic quality in poetry translations.

The second trend is the presence of antiquity in periodicals. Although one large anthology contains much more text material than a couple of poems published in a daily newspaper, the newspaper usually has more readers than the book. It has been claimed that publications in newspapers are hidden for researchers and critics – among other material (Kurs 2003: 8). This may be true, but in the minds of contemporary readers short poems published in a series over several months in a daily newspaper may be more present than a book by an unfamiliar classical author.

Another important feature regarding periodicals and other partial translations is their importance as a laboratory or a work in progress. Although the role of periodicals is most striking during the first period and remains stable later, the tendencies are the same. At first, a single quotation, a poem or a part of the work is published, then it is continued in a series, or the complete translation of a work is published. This can be seen in Jaan Bergmann’s translations of *Batrachomyomachia* and the *Odyssey*, in the two series of anonymous translations of Anacreon or Xenophon, in Visnapuu’s translations of Propertius in the 1920s, in Annist’s translations of Homer, and in Viiding’s recent translations of Tacitus’ *Germania*.

Finally, there is a strong tendency to educate readers by introducing the most important classical authors to the public. This can best be seen in the anthologies (Kaalep, Torpats 1964, 1971). The newest anthologies (Päll 2006a, Kolk 2009) aim to be representative but rely more on the compilers’ personal taste or the availability of translations, which results in the greater importance of lesser known authors in comparison with the so-called ‘school authors’. But both anthologies and publications in journals indicate that most works or authors are only partially translated. As explained above, the choice of works depends on the
demand of the readers. This is most obvious in publications in newspapers, which try to educate the public without being too serious. If moral education is to be given, it is preferable to use ‘easier’ authors such as Aesop, Horace, Xenophon or The Lives of the Caesars by Suetonius.

5. Conclusion

The translation of classical authors in Estonia is steadily increasing. However, the small number of books reveals the actual situation: classical authors are mostly introduced in the publication of smaller pieces intended to educate or entertain readers; the number of entire works translated and published is still small, although the range of authors is large.

Therefore, the history of translation from classical literature remains a work in progress which cannot be concluded until most classical authors have been translated into Estonian.

References


Equimetrical Verse Translation in Estonian Poetic Culture

Some Notes on the History of Verse Translation in Estonia

Translated texts have played an important role in the formation of Estonian literature. The same applies to poetry and versification: translated poetry has had a significant influence on the evolution of Estonian verse structure. The tradition of translating poetry into Estonian can be traced back to the 17th century with the syllabic-accentual and rhymed translations of biblical hymns. More systematic translation began with the establishment of Estonian literary poetry in the middle of the 19th century: first the translations involved mostly the syllabic-accentual forms of German poetry, then also the accentual-syllabic forms. From the 1870s, the proportion of translations from Russian poetry started to grow, and later other languages were added, including the ancient Greek language in the translations of Homer. In the cases of these earlier translations, we often have to face the problem of authorship: translations tend to be rather Nachdichtungs, adaptations, compilations (Liivaku, Meriste 1975: 13). Also, the authors and titles of translations are often not mentioned: we can speak of the stricter distinction between the original and translation only as late as the beginning of the 20th century.

For the most part, translated poetry was versified already in the earlier literary period. Translations into prose, however, have been rather marginal (though there are a number of exceptions, for instance, the prose translation of Christoph Martin Wieland’s fairytale in verse “Oberon”, and Jaan Bergmann’s prose retellings of ancient epics [later he opted for verse form]; then in the first decades of the 20th century, a number of passages from Virgil and Ovid were translated into prose). The so-called mimetic (see, e.g. Weissbort, Eysteinsson 2006: 460–461) or equimetrical (see, for example, Wachtel 1998: xii) translation,1 which attempts to follow the versification of the source text, has prevailed until now, but there are also examples of analogical translation (see, for example, Weissbort, Eysteinsson 2006: 461), where another verse form has been chosen for the translation, for instance, a form with which the audience may be more familiar. Such verse form is often a functional equivalent, as in the translation of the following fragment of

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1 In Peeter Torop’s terms, formal or macrostylistic translation (Torop 1999: 147); in André Lefevere’s terms, metrical translation (Lefevere 1975: 37–42; Lefevere claims that since this method concentrates on only one aspect of the source text, it fails completely to convey the sense, communicative value and syntax in the target language; see also Bassnett 2002: 84–85).
Hesiod’s *Works and Days* (290–292), translated at the beginning of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century by A. Leppik:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source text</th>
<th>Target text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ὀθένοσκοι μικρὸς δὲ καὶ ὀφθαλὸς ὦμος ἐς αὐτήν καὶ τρίχᾳ τὸ πρῶτον ἐπὶν δ’ ἐς ὄρων ὑκτησι, ῥιμίδη δήπετα πέλει, χολεπῆ περ ἑόσια.</td>
<td>Pikk ja järgk küll on see rada, Mis sind voorusele wiib; Ränk on alguses ta käia, Väga raske sulle näib.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kui sa aga juba üles Oled jõudnud tungida – Siis on kerge ja nii hõlbuss, Ehk küll raske oli ta.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here, three hexametrical lines have been translated into two four-lined stanzas of trochaic tetrameters, the most popular verse form at the time. It is also significant that the meter of the Estonian folk song is also trochaic tetramer, although, differently from the translation above, not syllabic-acentual (for more detail, see Sarv 2008a).

Yet sometimes the verse form of the translation may be a random choice, for instance, the first stanza of the translation of Horace’s 1.34 by Ivo Volt in 2004:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source text</th>
<th>Target text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parcus deorum cultor et infrequens, insanientis dum sapientiae consultus erro, nunc retronsum uela dare atque iterare cursus</td>
<td>taevastist ei tea mu tarkus on meeletus nüüd laev vastu tuult</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this case, the poem in Alcaic stanzas has been translated into 17-syllabic haiku form.

This paper is devoted, first of all, to the mimetic or equimetrical strategy of translating poetry into Estonian. However, it should be emphasised that the equimetrical strategy of translation can be carried out with varying degrees of strictness. Thus, equimetrical translation may follow only the meter of the source text; the meter and the rhyme scheme of the source text; the meter, the rhyme scheme and the division of text into verse lines (so-called equilinear translation); all the above-mentioned, as well as the versification system (so-called equiprosodical translation\(^2\)); all the above-mentioned, as well as various finer rhythmical and/or euphonic nuances.

\(^2\) However, neither equiprosodical nor equilinear translation are necessarily always equimmetrical: accordingly, it is possible to translate ancient epic hexameter into quantitative regisong or Pushkin’s poetry into equilinear vers libre. Equilinear translations are fairly common in literal translations, for instance, in scholarly editions, etc.
1. Verse Meter in Translation

Estonian translators of poetry have been quite attentive to verse form, proceeding from the understanding that a poem is an organic whole in which the content and the form cannot be separated; if we choose not to convey the meter, a part of the source text will be lost. Verse translations are regarded as works of art in their own right (see also Sütiste 2009: 7–8). Equimmetrical translation prevails; thus, the bulk of translated poetry in Estonian includes three full hexametrical translations of the *Iliad*, as well as translations of the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid* in Estonian, the Finnish national epic in Kalevala meter (which is different from Estonian regi-song, see, for instance, Sarv 2008b), equimmetrical translations of Shakespeare’s plays, Pushkin’s poetry, and so on.

The tendency is that the more regular the meter, the more closely its structure is followed. Therefore, for instance, syllabic-accentual forms are usually translated equimetrically. But, if there is deviation from the meter or if licence is taken with the metrical rules in the original, then there is a tendency to adjust and correct these in translation. This is particularly the case with irregularities in syllabic-accentual verse, such as, for instance, additional or missing syllables. Let us take an example from the poem *In taberna quando sumus...* from *Carmina Burana* as translated by Mati Soomre (2006).\(^3\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source text</th>
<th>Target text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X x X x X x X x</td>
<td>X x X x X x X x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In taberna quando sumus,</td>
<td>Kui me külakõortsis käime,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X x X x X x X x</td>
<td>X x X x X x X x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non curamus quid sit humus,</td>
<td>surnumatjad küll ei nää me,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/.../</td>
<td>/.../</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X x X x X x X x x x</td>
<td>X x X x X x X x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quater pro Christianis cunctis,</td>
<td>neljas: kes on Kristust näinud,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X x X x X x X x x x x</td>
<td>X x X x X x X x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quinques pro fidelibus defunctis,</td>
<td>viites: looja karja läinud,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X x X x X X x x x x x</td>
<td>X x X x X x X x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sexies pro sororibus vanis,</td>
<td>kueves: õed, kes lustlõöjad,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X x X x X x X x x x x x</td>
<td>X x X x X x X x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>septies pro militibus silvanis.</td>
<td>seitsmes: Kroonuleiva sööjad.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first two stanzas of the original poem in Latin are in regular four-footed trochees. It is from the third stanza that the irregularities occur. While in the case of the numerals at the beginning of lines there is also the option of interpreting the second and the third syllables of a word with synizesis, that is, as a disyllabic word with a trochaic pattern, then the ablatives in the second part of the line result in longer, disyllabic and even trisyllabic intervals between accented syllables: *fidelibus, sororibus, militibus*. Although it would have been even easier for the

\(^3\) X marks a stressed syllable, x an unstressed syllable.
translator to allow such licence here and there, he has preferred the recurrent trochaic structure, without any rhythmical deviation, as we can see from the translation of the given fragment.

Let us consider also the Estonian translation of Osip Mandelstam’s poem *Sisters heaviness and tenderness*. In the original, the main rhythm of the poem is the five-footed anapest, but there are several deviations: additional syllables, omitted syllables, and so on. Therefore, we are dealing here with a transitional form towards stress-meter. For instance, already the third foot of the first line contains an unstressed additional syllable:

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccccccccccc}
\text{x} & \text{x} & \text{X} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{X} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{X} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{X} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{X} \\
\end{array}
\]

Сестры тяжесть и нежность, одинаковы ваши приметы.

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccccccccccc}
\text{x} & \text{x} & \text{X} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{X} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{X} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{X} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{X} \\
\end{array}
\]

Медуницы и осы тяжелую розу сосут.

The second line is a regular five-footed anapest. The first line of the second stanza misses a foot – there are only four feet:

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccccccccccc}
\text{x} & \text{x} & \text{X} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{X} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{X} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} \\
\end{array}
\]

Ах, тяжелые соты и нежные сети,

The second line of the second stanza misses a syllable in the third foot:

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccccccccccc}
\text{x} & \text{x} & \text{X} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{X} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} \\
\end{array}
\]

Легче камень поднять, чем имя твое повторить!

In the penultimate line, the rhythm changes, and there is a strong dactylic tendency:

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccccccccccc}
\text{X} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} \\
\end{array}
\]

В медленном водовороте тяжелые, нежные розы,

The translator Kalju Kangur has chosen a regular, recurrently anapestical form for his translation, where there are no additional or omitted syllables. See, for instance, the first two lines of his translation (1990):

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccccccccccc}
\text{x} & \text{x} & \text{X} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} \\
\end{array}
\]

Ühenäolised olete – kaksikõed õrnus ja raskus.

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccccccccccc}
\text{x} & \text{x} & \text{X} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} \\
\end{array}
\]

Roosiõiel käib mesilind, hõljub seal vaablase tiib.

Anapest is retained also in the last two verse lines:

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccccccccccc}
\text{x} & \text{x} & \text{X} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} \\
\end{array}
\]

Roose raskeid, õhkõrnu see aeglane veekeeris puutub,

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccccccccccc}
\text{x} & \text{x} & \text{X} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} & \text{x} \\
\end{array}
\]

kaksikpärjana raskuse, helluse õied on koos.

120
When analysing metrical irregularities, we could take as an example the Estonian translations of Virgil’s *Aeneid*. In the original, one of the most conspicuous deviations from meter is to be found in the so-called half-lines or unfinished lines. There has been much discussion as to whether these lines in the epic were intentional, related to the semantic structure of the text, or just a sign of an unfinished text. The general view seems to favour the latter option (see, for instance, Sparrow 1931). Thus, every translator of Virgil has to resolve the question: should this incompleteness be retained in the translation or not? Ants Oras, whose translation of the whole *Aeneid* was first published in 1975, has chosen to do so.

![Chart 1. The structure of half-lines in the translation of the Aeneid by Ants Oras](image)

Analysis reveals that Oras follows the metrical rules of hexameter and also leaves these lines unfinished, but we can see from the first column in Chart 1 that in more than half of the cases the target text does not follow the number of feet in the source text; the exact syllabic configuration of the lines is reflected even more.

---

4 It is interesting to see how this problem has been approached by translators into other languages. For instance, in English the *Aeneid* is usually translated into blank verse instead of hexameters (see, for instance, Gransden 1996: xxvi–xxvii). One of the first translators of Virgil, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, conveyed the half-lines freely: he sometimes used dimeters, sometimes trimeters, but occasionally transmitted the line with the full pentameter. Joseph Trapp, the translator of the 18th century version, also uses mostly dimeters and trimeters. The 17th century author John Dryden translated the *Aeneid* into rhymed couplets and occasional triplets in iambic pentameter, half-lines are not transmitted. Similarly to the Estonian translators, Sergey Osherov, who translated the *Aeneid* into Russian in dactylic hexameter, has transmitted the incompleteness, but not the exact number and structure of verse feet.
rarely: only in about 10% of the cases, as we can see from the second column. The exact disposition of word boundaries in the half-lines is never reflected in the translation. This is actually quite predictable as the natural position for the word-accent is different in Estonian from that in Latin: in Estonian it falls on the first syllable of a word, in Latin on the penultimate or antepenultimate syllable. Therefore, the word-boundaries are positioned differently, and the exact reflection of these would demand special attention.

The other Estonian translator of the Aeneid, Leo Anvelt, has similar preferences to Oras: he too decided to transmit the half-lines but was not faithful to the structure of the original verse. That is, what was most important for both of them was the fact of incompleteness but not its rhythmical effect.

2. Rhythm in Translation

The successful transmission of rhythmical properties is inherent in only the most refined translations: some features are conveyed more frequently (usually more distinct rhythmical tendencies, such as the prevailing dactylic foot in hexameter, also caesurae, etc.), but there are also features which are rarely reflected (for instance, the number of main stresses in a line in the case of the syllabic-accentual versification system).

Let us compare two different translations of Homer’s Odyssey in the accentual-syllabic hexameter.

Table 1. The proportion of contracted feet in Homer’s Odyssey and its translations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>1st foot</th>
<th>2nd foot</th>
<th>3rd foot</th>
<th>4th foot</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homer</td>
<td>37.9%</td>
<td>42.3%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaan Bergmann (1889–1916)</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna Öpik (1938)</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>55.0%</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The main difference between Bergmann’s rhythm and that of the source text is the low incidence of contracted feet (cf. the average number of contracted feet in Bergmann’s hexameter, 12.8%, vs. 31.8% in Homer’s verse). Also different is the secondary rhythmics (see also Gasparov 1993: 87): in Bergmann’s hexameter the lowest number of contracted feet is in the second foot, while in the source text it is in the third foot. At the same time, in Homer’s verse the second foot has the highest incidence of contracted feet in the verse line (excluding the sixth foot, which is always disyllabic). Anna Öpik’s version was translated 50 years later, when the hexametrical tradition had already been established in Estonian, and

5 The data on Homeric verse rely on Gasparov 1997: 236–237.
thus her verse is more elaborated. The average percentage of contracted feet is even higher than in the source text; therefore, in this aspect she is more attentive to the rhythm of the original. Yet, the secondary rhythmics is similar to Bergmann’s: in her verse as well, the lowest incidence of contracted feet is in the second foot, while the third foot has the highest rate of contracted feet per line.

One of the first translations in accentual-syllabic hexameters was that of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Hermann und Dorothea* by Andreas Kurrikoff (1880). The translator followed the metrical rules of hexameter quite closely, but its rhythmics was secondary for him. For instance, in Goethe’s hexameter there are 16 different rhythmical variations (see also Chisholm 1995), in Kurrikoff’s verse only 10. The more frequent variations are xo xoo xo xoo xo (18%), xo xoo xo xoo xoo xo (14%) and xo xoo xoo xo xoo xo (13.5%), that is, variations with at least two contracted feet. Kurrikoff’s hexameter, on the other hand, is mainly dactylic: the variation xoo xoo xoo xoo xoo xo prevails absolutely (77.2%), followed by xoo xoo xo xoo xo xoo xo (6%) with one contracted foot. Verse lines with more than two contracted feet are merely exceptions.

Some especially form-conscious translators have paid attention not only to the metrical structure, but also to some finer rhythmical nuances. Let us observe, for instance, the translations of Sapphic hendecasyllables into Estonian.6

The metrical model of the Sapphic hendecasyllable can be seen in this scheme:

\[-\text{H L H L H L H L} \]

See, for instance, Sappho fr. 1.2: 7

\[\text{παι ∆ιος, δολόπλοκε, λίσσομαι σε} \]

The fourth position, which according to the scheme is an anaceps (i.e. it can be filled with either a heavy or a light syllable), is here filled with a light syllable. When this meter was adopted by Latin metrics, different authors treated it differently (see also Crusius 1961: 106–107; Boldrini 1999: 148–149; Loomis 1972: 14–33). Catullus adopted the Greek model, occasionally allowing light syllables in the fourth position; see, for instance, Catullus 11.6:

\[\text{H L H L H L L H L H} \]

\[\text{seu Sagas sagittiferosve Parthos.} \]

Horace, on the other hand, develops a stricter form of the hendecasyllable, where the fourth position is always filled with a heavy syllable (see also Sturtevant 1939: 296). It is interesting to compare the Estonian models of the Sapphic hendecasyllable with the ancient ones – the two different models, that is, the Greek model, where the fourth position is treated as an anaceps, and the classical Latin model, established by Horace, where the fourth position is filled with a

---

6 For more detail, see Lotman in print.

7 H marks heavy syllables, L light syllables.
heavy syllable. Although Estonian authors incline toward the trochaic beginning, there are some more form-sensitive authors (Ain Kaalep and Ants Oras, who have translated mainly the Sapphics of Horace) who clearly prefer the Latin model. At the same time, the translators of Greek authors (Janika Päll, Ellen Niit and Valmen Hallap) have preserved the Greek model.

Let us also discuss briefly the question of caesura, which can be quite difficult to render in Estonian translation. For instance, it is often difficult to transmit the obligatory caesura in a number of Russian verse meters. As already mentioned, the accent in Estonian is on the first syllable, and it determines a rather steady pattern of word boundaries: in trochaic meters they tend to occur after the foot, in iambic meters within the foot. Therefore, a meter where an iambic foot requires a caesura after it is a challenge for a translator. Compare, for instance, the first lines of Alexander Pushkin’s *Nereid* in the original and in translation (by Kalju Kangur in 1974):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source text</th>
<th>Target text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Среди зеленых волн,</td>
<td>Kus kohab laine Tauria kaljustiku julgel,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>лобзающих Тавриду,</td>
<td>vees någin nereiidi kahkjal puhevalgel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>На утренней заре</td>
<td>ja hingas puidas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>я видел Нереиду.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Скрытый меж дерев,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>едва я смел дохнуть:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the source text, we can see the regular caesura after the sixth syllable in every line. The translator has not succeeded in transmitting this, therefore the rhythmicity of the original has been lost in the translation.

There is also another translation of this text by Ants Oras (1936):

Kus Taurist suudleb laht, | ta kaunelid kaldaid uhtes,|
olivipuie paost | pooljumalannat puhtes|
ma aralt vaatlesin: | pääs hiuste voolav siid,
| pääs hiuste voolav siid, |

Here the translator has perceived the caesura in the original text and transmitted it rather successfully.

It is also important to pay attention to the caesura in the transmission of ancient meters. The situation here, however, is somewhat less complicated because the position of the caesura is not fixed in all meters: it must be present in the line, but can be, for instance, in the third or in the fourth foot, a feminine or a masculine caesura. There can also be certain positions where the caesura is avoided, for instance, the medial caesura between the feet in the hexameter or iambic trimeter. This restriction is not convenient from the viewpoint of Estonian prosody, since, according to the rhythm of natural language, this is the position where the word boundaries tend to accumulate, as we can see from the following example (Horace *Satires* 1.1.24–27 by Iseõppinud Ladinlane in 1902):
Jutustan (ehk kes küll võiksivad l naerjatgi keelata tõde
Rääkimast? Nõnda kui vanasti l poistele andsivad kooki
Koolmeistrid, et need siis õppima l hakkaksid raamatu tähti;
Ometi põõrame eemal l mängust ja nõuame tõde.)

In quantitative hexameter the caesura is easier to achieve; however, here as well, monosyllabic words are often used which allow for the interruption of the natural pattern of word boundaries that we saw in the previous example. This is illustrated by an excerpt from Ain Kaalep’s translation of Ovid’s Tristia of 2001 (5.7.21–24):

Source text
Viuit in his heu nunc, l lusorum oblitus amorum,
hos uidet, hos uates audit, amice, tuus:
atque utinam uiat l non et moriatur in illis,
absit ab inuisis et tamen umbra locis.

Target text
Nendega koos – oh küll! –lläind lustlik arm puha meelest;
neid sinu laulik siin = saab nää-kuulda ju vaid.
Nii, jah, nendega koos l eluastaid peab tema veetma –
kui teeks varjugi priiks = surm ja ta endaga viiks!

In these elegiac distichs the translator has transmitted the masculine caesura of the third foot, which is the typical Ovidian caesura that we saw also in the source text. It should be mentioned that in the Estonian hexametrical tradition it is Ain Kaalep whose hexameter has been elaborated almost to perfection: on the one hand, he has achieved the quantitative contrast of the non-initial syllables, which is not so easy from the viewpoint of Estonian prosody; on the other hand, he has elaborated the rhythmics and paid attention to the pattern of word boundaries. He has also increased the proportion of spondaic feet and attempted to achieve the Latin effect of the interrelationship between word accent and quantity: the harmony of the verse end and the conflict between accent and quantity in the middle.

3. Versification System in Translation

The prosody of the Estonian language allows us to transmit the syllabic versification system which is based on the number of syllables, the accentual versification system based on the number and placement of word stresses, and the quantitative system based on the placement of quantities. More frequent are combined types, for instance, those which are based on both the number of syllables and the placement of accent, but there are also systems where all three principles are involved.
At the same time, more problematic has been the transmission of purely syllabic versification. As this form can be difficult to perceive, it has often been replaced with different accentual-syllabic or syllabic-accentual meters; see, for instance, the translations of French alexandrine by Ants Oras (see also Lange 2004: 249–250) or the translations of Pierre-Jean de Béranger by Jaan Kross (1963).

Hexameter is a meter in which the different possibilities of versification systems have been successfully brought into practice; at least five, and possibly more, versification systems can be distinguished:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Features and examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accentual-syllabic versification system</td>
<td>• number of accents is fixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• number of syllables varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• quantity is irrelevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hoidis võimukas nümf Kalüpso, suur jumalanna</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syllabic-accentual versification system</td>
<td>• number of syllables is fixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• number of accents is fixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• quantity is irrelevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virgudes avasid udused silmad ja mõõtsid mind aralt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accentual-quantitative-syllabic versification system</td>
<td>• quantity is regulated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• number of accents is fixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• number of syllables varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>varjud nii haljad ja valged nad langevad aeglaselt, pikka</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative-accentual-syllabic versification system</td>
<td>• quantity is regulated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• number of accents is fixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• number of syllables varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hoitelgem ilust läätmud täitmise tööd, ematunnet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative-syllabic versification system</td>
<td>• quantity is regulated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• number of syllables varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• accent is irrelevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nii sõnas; seesuguseid ükstöisele jutlesid asju</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The earliest hexametrical translations belong to the period when translators were not yet aware of the contrast of quantity. At that time, ancient meters were translated without regard for the versification system, using the configurations of accents and syllables. Later, translators became more conscious of versification
systems and started to convey them in translation (although there are exceptions to this tendency even today).

4. Rhyme in Translation

Rhyme has been one of the biggest challenges for Estonian poets and translators. There are three main reasons for this: first, Estonian is rich in vowels (see, for instance, Lehiste 1960: 25); second, there are many diphthongs, as we can see from this table:

Table 3. Diphthongs occurring in native words in Estonian (Ross/Lehiste 2001: 40)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First component</th>
<th>i</th>
<th>e</th>
<th>a</th>
<th>o</th>
<th>u</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/i/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>iu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/e/</td>
<td>ei</td>
<td>ea</td>
<td>eo</td>
<td>eu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/a/</td>
<td>ai</td>
<td>ae</td>
<td>ao</td>
<td>au</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/õ/</td>
<td>oï</td>
<td>oe</td>
<td>oa</td>
<td>ou</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ü/</td>
<td>üi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/õ/</td>
<td>ŵi</td>
<td>Ôe</td>
<td>ŵa</td>
<td>ŵo</td>
<td>ŵu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ä/</td>
<td>åi</td>
<td>åe</td>
<td>åo</td>
<td>åu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/õ/</td>
<td>oï</td>
<td>üe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ü/</td>
<td>üi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here, Ilse Lehiste presents 27 different diphthongs, but Tiit-Rein Viitso distinguishes 25 in native words, in addition to 10 diphthongs in loan words (Viitso 2003: 105).

The third factor is the presence of the contrast of quantity. In Estonian prosody three different durations are distinguished: short, long and overlong, and it is generally accepted that a good rhyme is not between syllables of different quantity. That is, rhyme-pairs like *noore-toore* are perfect eye-rhymes, but many poets avoid such rhymes on principle, since they are of different durations – the first is of the second duration, the second is of the third duration. However, this is not an absolute and steadfast rule, as in practice we often come across rhyme-pairs of different durations.

Let us consider some examples of different treatments of rhyme in translations from medieval poetry.

Mati Soomre’s first intention has apparently been to convey rhyme, at the same time, his translations have been criticised for departing too far from the content plane of the source text (Viiding 2006). See, for instance, his translation of *Fortune plango vulnera* (2006):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source text</th>
<th>Target text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Fortune plango vulnera</em></td>
<td><em>Haavu, mis Fortuna lõi,</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>stillantibus ocellis</em></td>
<td><em>kurdan pisarsilmsi:</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
quod sua michi munera
subtrahit rebellis.
Verum est, quod legitur,
fronte capillata,
sed plerumque sequitur
Occasio calvata.

Although he has been attentive to the rhyme scheme, there are still relevant differences from the source text. First, in the original, not only the last syllables are rhymed, but also the penultimate syllables (although in the second stanza the translator has succeeded in doing so). Second, the original always has a polysyllabic verse end; monosyllables are avoided, as is the general tendency in medieval versification. Mati Soomre, however, allows (and in some texts even prefers) monosyllabic endings. In that respect, Úlo Torpats’s translation, for instance, is more pursuant to the structure of the original: there are a few monosyllabic verse endings in his translation of Sacerdos et lupus (1962), but these are, as a rule, non-lexical; see, for instance, 5–9:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source text</th>
<th>Target text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sacerdos iam ruricola vivebat amans pecudis, hic enim mos est rusticis.</td>
<td>Kord elas külavaimulik, Ta armus hoidis lojukseid, nii nagu maamees kaitseb neid.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And finally, an example of inaccurate rhyme transmission, where the translator’s dominant focus has clearly been on the content plane. See an excerpt from The Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer, translated by A. Kaal (1962):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source text</th>
<th>Target text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Therto he strong was as a champioun. He knew the tavernes wel in every toun, And everich hostiler and tappestere Bet than a lazar or a beggestere. For unto swich a worthy man as he Acorded nat, as by his facultee</td>
<td>kuid ise tugev nagu vägimees. Ta kõiki kõrtsse tundis linnades ning körtsemehi, veinivalajaed, ja paremini veel kui kerjuseid. Sest arvestades väärikut ja võimeid, ta säärestega seltsida et võinud.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here the translator has not paid particular attention to the rhyme scheme: she has not attempted to convey the exact configuration of masculine and feminine endings. Also, she has disregarded the quantities (vägimees and linnades – the last syllables are of different durations, the same applies to võimeid and võinud). Furthermore, in veinivalajaed and kerjuseid there are different vowels in rhyming syllables, and the same applies to the non-initial syllables of võimeid and võinud. Yet, this example is rather an exception: on the whole, Estonian translations of medieval poetry follow the rhyme schemes of the source text as closely as possible.
5. Summary

Accordingly, Estonian translators of poetry in general have attempted to convey verse structure. First, attention has been paid to meter and rhyme scheme, then also to versification system and rhythm. Meter and rhyme are usually transmitted, and versification system is reflected by the more form-conscious translators, while the rhythmical nuances such as the exact combination of syllables, the disposition of main stresses, word boundaries, and so on have been conveyed only occasionally. Although in the Estonian language it can be problematic to achieve the rhyme scheme of a source text, there is still a tradition of conveying rhyme in translation. The realisations, however, vary considerably, depending on the translator’s principles and aims: if the dominant strategy is to convey the expression plane of the source text, then the principles are stricter, but if the emphasis is on the content plane, then imperfect rhymes, rhyme pairs of different durations, altered syllabic structures, and so on are allowed.

References


VIIDING Kristi 2006. Ületõlgitud “Carmina Burana”. – Sırp, 8. IX.


Aile MÖLDRE

Publications of Literary Translation in Estonia in 1901–1917: An Overview

1. Introduction

The years 1901–1917 were a period of rapid development and big changes in Estonia, which was part of the Russian Empire until becoming independent in 1918. Estonia had belonged to the Empire since 1710, but the ruling class consisted of Baltic Germans who had conquered the area in the 13th century. The Baltic German nobility maintained its privileges and dominated local cultural life for centuries. It was only during the last decades of the 19th century that the Russification reforms, aimed at the unification of the Empire, brought about a more extensive use of the Russian language in administration and education.

The first decades of the 20th century include historical events like the revolution of 1905, World War I, and the February and October revolutions of 1917, all of which had a notable impact on the Estonian people and on the relations among the nations living here. The historian Toivo Raun (2009: 115) has pointed out that under the still repressive but weakening Russian Empire the early years of the 20th century provided a unique opportunity for an Estonian engagement with modernity which combined socioeconomic, political and intellectual transformations. During this period the Estonians took a significant step towards becoming a civilised nation in the Western tradition. A crucial role in this development was played by the Young Estonia [Noor-Eesti] movement, established in 1905. Its aim was to broaden and deepen the basis of Estonian culture, and this involved the translation of Western authors beyond the scope of German literature. Its influence, however, exceeded the cultural sphere to include the treatment of socioeconomic processes and acute political issues connected with the existence of the tsarist regime.

2. Methodology and Sources

The present article is written within the framework of research on book history. The history of books represents a discipline that encompasses all aspects of the history of the production, publication, distribution and consumption of books. This field of research could be characterised with the help of the model of
Thomas R. Adams and Nicolas Barker, which includes five events in the life of a book – publishing, manufacturing, distribution, reception and survival – and whose sequence constitutes a system of communication which is studied in its economic, social and cultural contexts. According to Adams and Barker, book history does not apply a specific discipline (such as history or physics) to all the events, but all disciplines to specific events, in this case, books, which are the most important and numerous of human artefacts (Adams, Barker 1993: 7). Its innate interdisciplinarity leads to the use of methods and theoretical conceptions from library and information studies, bibliography, sociology, history, literary studies, etc., bringing it close to translation studies, another interdisciplinary field that draws upon similar branches of learning.

According to the British book historian Simon Eliot, the subject of book history is rooted in the material world, in artefacts which are characterised and understood, in part, as countable quantities. Publishing statistics, including production figures, provide the broader context from which to confer on the details established by individual case studies a proper significance (Eliot 2002: 283–284).

Existing research on Estonian book history of the beginning of the 20th century is relatively scanty, and existing statistics present data on annual title production alone. Works on general book history, Eesti raamat 1525–1975: Ajalooline ülevaade (1978) [Estonian Book 1525–1975: A Historical Overview] and Eesti raamatu lugu [The Story of Estonian Book] by Uno Liivaku (1995), treat this period along with the second half of the 19th century, and this hinders the in-depth analysis of the modernisation of the book industry. Research on publishing concentrates mainly on the activities of societies (Kalvik 2004, Liivakivi 2003). Mari Kalvik has studied the publishing activities of the Estonian Literary Society, which played a significant role in fostering the development of the humanities, arts and education. Several research works are devoted to the development of printing in different towns in Estonia, for example, Tallinn (Robert 1991), Pärnu (Muinaste 1969) and Võru (Kuljus 2005). Various aspects of the history of book-selling are studied by Signe Jantson (2004, 2009; Jantson and Reimo 2006). A monograph by Ilse Hamburg (2001) is dedicated to the history of bibliography during this period. Studies on individual societies, booksellers, and printers or histories of printing in various towns include valuable data but are insufficient in providing a more comprehensive picture of the period, actualising the need for contextualisation through quantitative analysis.

One aspect of the analysis of book production trends is the proportion of original works and translations, including the share of different source languages or literatures, the distribution of publications of translations over time, and the publishers and other agents involved in the production of translated books. The present article includes a quantitative analysis of literary translations into the Estonian language with a view to establishing the broad trends in the output of translations. Adopting the approach used by Peter France and Kenneth Haynes (2006) in The
Oxford History of Literary Translation in English, the word ‘literary’ is taken in a broad sense to include philosophy, psychology, social and natural sciences, geography, history and other discursive writing; it excludes applied sciences, and technical, medical and utilitarian translations. Religious literature, which forms a large share (17.5%) of the book production for the wider readership, has been omitted from this paper as it is a subject for specialist research.

In establishing the entire body of translations the most complete source of information is the retrospective bibliography Eestikeelne raamat 1901–1917 [Estonian Book 1901–1917] (1993). This fundamental work includes all publications in the Estonian language or which have parallel texts of a volume exceeding four pages. Translations and adapted works are listed according to the author of the original or the title, with the inclusion of the translator’s name or a note indicating that the work is a translation. Reference works have been used to identify the nationality of foreign authors, the title of the original and the year of first publication where possible. Thus, the source provides the paratextual information necessary to distinguish between translations and non-translations. Still, there are a number of publications with neither an author’s nor a translator’s name which cannot be identified as original works nor as translations. The relative amateurism of the publishing practices of the period is further demonstrated by errors in distinguishing between authors and translators found in books and various book lists where the translator is sometimes presented as the author. The ineffectiveness of paratext manifests itself also in the rare indications of the source language of the translations. This is also the reason for using the concept of source literature instead of source language in this article – with the help of the author’s name it is possible to classify a work under a certain literary culture, but it is often impossible to identify the language of the text from which it was translated into Estonian.

The bibliography includes various indexes which allow the information to be reprocessed by the user. In order to compile statistical data, the subject index has been used to extract corpora of translations. In the case of fiction and drama, the index differentiates works by Estonian authors from translations, presenting data on different literatures separately. The data on other subjects does not distinguish between original works and translations; therefore, in order to identify the translational status of the publications, all the bibliographic records indicated in the index have been checked one by one. Additional data on the publications of 1901–1917 is available in the supplement to the bibliography Eestikeelne raamat 1525–1850 [Estonian Book 1525–1850] (2000). The online catalogue ESTER (http://ester.nlib.ee/search/), which is the union catalogue of the Consortium of Estonian Libraries Network, has been used for further identification of the translations. A publication has been considered a translation when this is clearly stated in the paratext (the name of the translator or an indication that the text is translated), when the bibliographic notes include the title of the original in a foreign language, or when the author of the book is clearly a (well-known) person who

133
could not have written the work in Estonian, for example, Wilhelm Liebknecht or Vladimir Miljutin. The bibliography treats reprints and different volumes of the work as separate titles and, in order to compare the data, this principle has been preserved in this article.

Categorisation, of course, includes a degree of arbitrariness. Thus, I have in some cases excluded from the statistics titles classified under a certain subject in the index. For example, exclusions include a work of religious fiction classified under geography, and several temporary regulations, decrees, instructions, and a collection of poetry that were classified under history. On the other hand, some works, for example, by Ludvig Büchner, which are not classified as philosophical literature in the subject index have been added to philosophy in translation based on their inclusion in overviews of philosophical literature in the Estonian language (Matjus 2009). Such differences derive from different interpretations of a certain subject, or in some cases it might be due to human error in compiling the indexes for such a large list.

3. Publishers and Publishing Conditions

Similarly to other spheres of life, the book industry experienced rapid growth at the beginning of the century. The total number of agents in the book industry – publishers, printers and booksellers – increased as growing sales turned the book into a commodity which could support a larger number of entrepreneurs than ever before. Two hundred and seventy-seven private entrepreneurs and organisations were active as publishers in 1850–1900 (Jantson 2009: 234) and 383 in 1901–1917 (Hamburg 2001: 154). The majority of the books were published by 30 larger publishers. At the end of the 19th century, the hitherto existing division of roles in the production of books changed – printers withdrew from publishing and were substituted by booksellers. At the beginning of the 20th century, publishing gradually became an independent activity, although the number of people dealing only with publishing was small. Societies too were active in publishing, for example, the Estonian Literary Society (1907) and the Estonian Society for Public Education (1906) issued valuable textbooks, belles-lettres, and scholarly and popular science books. The publications of these societies played a significant role in the modernisation of reading matter in the Estonian language.

The number of printing offices increased from 44 firms in 1900 to 58 in 1910 (Talve 2004: 559). Among the characteristic features of the period was the increasing involvement of persons of Estonian nationality in the printing industry, hitherto dominated by German entrepreneurs. There were 50 active bookshops in Estonia in 1910 (Jantson 2004: 30).

The annual title output also increased considerably – from 186 titles in 1890 to 444 in 1901. A notable leap took place after 1908 when the political situation had
calmed and the general atmosphere had become more favourable. Annual output exceeded 500 titles, reaching a peak of 773 titles in 1913 (Eestikeelne 1993: 9). This active period continued until 1914 when, as might be expected, the war had a negative effect on book production. At that time, the population of Estonia was only about 958 000 inhabitants (Kudo, Laas 2002: 245).

Limits were imposed on publishing by censorship, which up to 1905 was based on the press law of 1865. Censorship regulations issued in 1890 prohibited the publication of any critique of the Russian political order or laws, the Orthodox Church, or harmful teachings such as socialism and communism, immorality and libel (Устав 1912: 74).

The law imposed pre-publication and post-publication censorship which were applied differently to different types of publications. Original works with a volume of not less than 10 printed sheets and translations with a volume of not less than 20 printed sheets, as well as scholarly publications, were exempt from pre-publication censorship (Жирков 2001: 145). Hence, censorship distinguished between academic books and publications for elitist readership and publications which were targeted at mass readership – it was especially important to control the reading matter available to the wider audience who read less voluminous and cheaper books.

The revolution of 1905 changed the situation. Civil rights, including freedom of the press and freedom of speech, were granted to the people through the manifesto of 17 October 1905. Pre-publication censorship of non-periodical publications was abolished on 26 April 1906 (Жирков 2001: 192). However, post-publication censorship remained in force. The reactionary offensive that followed the revolution included the prohibition of publications containing reprehensible ideas on politics, religion or morality which had been published during the revolutionary years. This process started in 1906 already and continued until the beginning of World War I. So it was that censorship had a constant impact on the selection of books (both original works and translations) available to readers.

Copyright issues, which had been included in censorship regulations since 1828, became part of the property law in 1887. A special copyright law was only adopted in 1911 (Pisuke 1994: 101). The new law changed the attitude towards translation rights – namely, domestic authors were granted translation rights for their work for a period of ten years. The same rights were granted to Russian authors who had published their works abroad (Положение 1912: 199).

The discussion that preceded the adoption of the law highlighted the importance of the previously existing freedom to translate enjoyed by the small nations of the Russian Empire (for example, Latvians and Estonians), who thus gained easy access to Russian literature (Александровский 1911: 11–12). It was believed that restriction of this opportunity would have a disastrous effect on the cultures of these small nations who were considered totally dependent on the achievements of Russian culture and science.
At the same time, foreign authors whose works had been published abroad remained unprotected except by interstate treaties. This issue led to heated debate during the elaboration of the law – some considered accusations of piracy humiliating for Russia, but the majority of the board adopted a pragmatic stance, arguing that free translation of foreign literature served the development of education and science in Russia (Александровский 1911: 40–41). The fact that there was no need to pay for translation rights on foreign authors’ works helped to keep book prices low.

Article 36 of the law of 1911 included translators’ rights on translations. Translating was characterised as intellectual and at times intense work, demanding both acquaintance with the subject matter of the text and literary talent; therefore, a translation could be treated as a work in its own right (Александровский 1911: 110–111).

4. Translations of Belles-Lettres in Estonian-Language Book Production

Belles-lettres comprised 34% of all the books issued for a wider readership in 1901–1917. In comparison with the second half of the 19th century the share of works by Estonian authors increased from 29% to 48%, and the share of translated works decreased correspondingly from 61% to 52% (Table 1).

Table 1. Titles of original and translated belles-lettres in 1901–1917 and 1851–1900

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Source) Literature</th>
<th>1901–1917 number of titles; share of all translations</th>
<th>1850–1900 number of titles; share of all translations</th>
<th>1901–1917 number of titles; share of all translations</th>
<th>1850–1900 number of titles; share of all translations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estonian</td>
<td>1024 (1%)</td>
<td>768 (1%)</td>
<td>12 (1%)</td>
<td>9 (0.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>391 (35%)</td>
<td>492 (41%)</td>
<td>8 (0.7%)</td>
<td>3 (0.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>168 (15%)</td>
<td>129 (11%)</td>
<td>7 (0.6%)</td>
<td>7 (0.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>68 (6%)</td>
<td>91 (8%)</td>
<td>6 (0.5%)</td>
<td>2 (0.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French &amp; Belgian</td>
<td>68 (6%)</td>
<td>52 (4%)</td>
<td>6 (0.5%)</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finnish</td>
<td>42 (4%)</td>
<td>24 (2%)</td>
<td>6 (0.5%)</td>
<td>4 (0.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danish</td>
<td>24 (2%)</td>
<td>5 (0.4%)</td>
<td>3 (0.2%)</td>
<td>3 (0.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>20 (1.8%)</td>
<td>35 (2.9%)</td>
<td>1 (0.1%)</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvian</td>
<td>20 (1.8%)</td>
<td>3 (0.2%)</td>
<td>Oriental</td>
<td>12 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norwegian</td>
<td>20 (1.8%)</td>
<td>1 (0.1%)</td>
<td>Collections</td>
<td>45 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austrian</td>
<td>20 (1.8%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>169 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>15 (1.3%)</td>
<td>4 (0.3%)</td>
<td>In total</td>
<td>1119 (52% of belles-lettres) 67.5 titles per annum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If we compare these figures with Finnish statistics for the years 1900–1919 (Table 2), then the proportions of original and translated literature are quite similar, especially during the first decade of the century. During the second decade, original works marginally outnumber translations in Finland.

Both countries had passed the first stage of development of a literary culture during the 19th century, when the national literature was built on the basis of translations. At the beginning of the 20th century, local literary life had become more active and capable of supporting a growing number of national writers representing various literary trends. At the same time translations continued to play an important role in the process of creating a ‘great literature’ in conditions when the national literature was still considered to be weak (Jõgever 1906: 283–284). There was discussion in literary circles as to the need to translate numerous classical works that had not yet been published in the Estonian language.

**Table 2. Publications of belles-lettres in Estonia and Finland (book titles)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Original works</th>
<th>Translations</th>
<th>Source literature of translation unknown</th>
<th>In all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Estonia</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901–1917</td>
<td>1024</td>
<td>949</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>2142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Finland</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900–1909</td>
<td>957</td>
<td>972</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>48.1%</td>
<td>48.8%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910–1919</td>
<td>1545</td>
<td>1437</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>51.4%</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Suomennoskirjallisuuden 2007, Eestikeelne 1993

The leading place occupied by translations of German belles-lettres (Table 1) is hardly surprising since Estonia belonged to a Baltic cultural space characterised by a Baltic-German cultural hegemony. The number of translations of Russian literature had started to increase since the 1880s. Interest in Russian culture has been attributed to several factors: the support of some of the leaders of the Estonian national awakening for a Russian orientation, the strengthening of economic and political ties with official and, more importantly, with oppositional, democratic Russia, and an increased knowledge of the Russian language (Issakov 1983: 274). The latter was a direct result of the Russification reforms in education. Alongside other effects, Russification created a new cultural pluralism that helped to decrease the Baltic German cultural dominance (Raun 2009: 116). Russian became the language of instruction at all levels in school, including elementary education. A better knowledge of Russian offered Estonians more possibilities to continue their studies in secondary schools and at Tartu University. Estonians could also go to study in universities in Russia. In 1915, 386 Estonian students (46.5% of all Estonian students) studied at Tartu University and around 410 (49%) in the universities of St. Petersburg, Riga and Moscow (Karjahärm, Sirk
These people formed the new cultural elite that was also active in translating. Modernisation fostered cultural exchange not only with Western European countries but also within the Russian Empire. The influential Young Estonia movement had a rather dismissive attitude towards Russian literature, which they criticised for being overly political. Some activists from the movement, however, took an interest in new trends in contemporary Russian literature.

Although German and Russian dominate the body of translated belles-lettres, more than 20 literatures were represented in the repertoire of translations. The marked increase in the number and share of translations of Finnish, Danish, French and Belgian literatures reflects the literary taste and preferences of the Young Estonia movement. But these translations were published not only by this movement but by numerous other publishers. For example, French translations were published by over 20 publishers who issued one or two titles each. A similar dispersion of translations among various publishers can also be detected in publications from other source literatures. Translating was a common sideline for students, journalists, writers, booksellers, teachers, actors and others. For example, sixty people used their knowledge of Russian to translate fiction.

Indirect translation was fairly widespread in the early years of the 20th century. This also applies to the most common foreign languages which were widely used in Estonia – German and Russian. Sometimes German texts were translated via the Russian language, for example, some political works by August Bebel or Robert Seidel, and vice versa – the play The Lower Depths by Maxim Gorki was translated from German. Scandinavian authors including Henrik Ibsen were often translated from Russian. This was also the case of works by Maurice Maeterlinck. The Young Estonia movement introduced the requirement to translate from the original, stressing the importance of the quality of translations, but this practice did not become predominant during this period.

Due to the first publication of translated fiction in newspapers or in supplements, texts achieved wide distribution even prior to their publication in book form. The popularity of books is demonstrated by the relatively large average print run of translated works of fiction – 1570 copies (Eestikeele 1993: 10). The prices mostly ranged from 10 to 80 kopecks. In order to promote distribution, many translations were issued in fascicles. The family of a factory worker would have been able to spend about 5%, or 16 roubles, of his annual earnings on cultural and educational activities (Pihlamägi 1990: 303), so he could, in principle, afford at least some books.

5. Translations of Non-Fiction

Besides the reception of modern literary trends and classic works, this was also a period that saw a broader mental transformation in Estonia, involving science,
philosophy and social concepts. This period marks the beginning of Estonian-language scientific literature, both original and translated, the majority of which could be classified as popular science. Translations dominated in philosophy and in many fields of science – psychology, natural and social sciences, and especially political science, where the share of translations formed over 60% of the published books. Among the books on mathematics, as well as geography, biography and history, the share of translations remained under 50% of all publications. In general, original Estonian works comprised 45% (225 titles), translations 49% (249 titles), and books of unknown origin 6% (30 titles) of all the non-fiction titles treated in this article.

The hierarchy of source literatures (Table 3) is similar to that of belles-lettres, although the share of other literatures than German and Russian is much smaller. Still, it is noteworthy that the communication of ideas was not limited to these two predominant sources but sought new impulses also from Finnish, French, American and Scandinavian scholarship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source literature</th>
<th>Philosophy</th>
<th>Psychology</th>
<th>Social Sciences</th>
<th>Mathematics Natural Sciences</th>
<th>Geography Biographies</th>
<th>History</th>
<th>In all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>105 (42.2%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>93 (37%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finnish</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10 (4%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6 (2.4%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5 (2%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austrian</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 (1.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swiss</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 (1.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 (1.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 (1.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (0.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (0.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (0.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danish</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (0.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norwegian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (0.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origin unknown</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9 (3.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In all</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>250 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Estonian-language literature on political and social issues emerged simultaneously with the political awakening of the people during the revolution of 1905. The growing interest in liberal ideas manifests itself in numerous translations issued after the revolution (Karjahärm, Sirk 1997: 235). The publication of John Stuart Mill’s *On Liberty* in 1909 is an important landmark, complemented by the works by Franz Lieber, Theodor Hertzka and Rudolf Diesel. The last three authors were translated by Konstantin Päts, journalist and politician, who later
became the president of the Republic of Estonia. The liberal outlook on life was strongly challenged by socialist ideas, which were immensely popular during and after the revolution of 1905. Karl Kautsky was the most popular author with seven translations. The Young Estonia movement also showed interest in the theoretical concepts of Alexander Bogdanov, the most outstanding theorist among the Russian Bolsheviks, whose *Brief Course of Economic Science* was issued in Estonia in 1907. However, the rather large print run of 2000 copies was difficult to sell (Undusk 2005: 11).

Many social democratic publications which had been published during the revolutionary period were forbidden by post-publication censorship. For example, *What do Men Live by?* by Szymon Dickstein and *Down with the Social Democrats* by Wilhelm Bracke were issued in 1906 and seized in the same year. *Wage Labour and Capital* by Karl Marx, the first translation of his works into the Estonian language, was issued in Petersburg in 1906 and seized in 1914; copies found by the police were destroyed. Other banned books included works by Leo Tolstoi and August Bebel (Eestikeelne 1993: 95, 121, 499).

The intensity of the translation of political texts was closely connected with social developments – the next peak in translations of Marxist and socialist literature can be detected in 1917, when the second bourgeois-democratic revolution in February was followed by the Bolshevik coup in October.

The selection of translated history books ranges from official texts devoted to the 300-year history of the Romanov dynasty, written by the director of Estonian elementary schools Iwan Rogosinnikov, to translations of books by the Baltic-German authors Garlieb Helwig Merkel and Johann Christoph Petri that treated the past and contemporary living conditions of local peasants. A favourable attitude towards the ideas of the French Revolution inspired the Young Estonia movement to consider, already in 1905, the translation of a book on this event written by the German author Wilhelm Blos (Linde 2005 [1918]: 21), but the Estonian translation was only published in 1914. This book was later characterised as one of the most important scholarly publications of the period (Karjähärm, Sirk 1997: 261). The scholarly work with the largest circulation, however, was *General History* by the Finnish historian Kaarle Olavi Lindequist, first published in fascicles, followed by two editions with print runs of 3000 and 4600 copies.

Among the characteristic features of the period studied is the emergence of materialistic, atheist and Darwinist ideas in book production, represented in the translations of Paul Lafargue, Ludwig Büchner and Anton Pannekoek. The introduction of this way of thinking generated ideological confrontation, whereas objections were also made through translated literature, for example, books by Eberhard Dennerdt or Hermann von Schwarz. Although Charles Darwin’s texts were not published in Estonian during this period, his contemporary Ernst Haeckel was represented by the translation of *Gotti-Natur*. In addition, the Society
of Estonian Students – Ühendus – compiled a special collection of his texts dedicated to Haeckel’s 80th birthday in 1914.

6. Conclusions

The beginning of the 20th century was a period of unprecedented development in industry, agriculture, education and culture in Estonia. This coincided with the political awakening of the Estonian people. All these developments marked a move towards becoming a modern Western nation. Among other things, modernisation led to an expansion of the book industry – the establishment of new printing offices, publishing firms and bookshops which produced and distributed a steadily increasing number of titles. The books, in their turn, fostered changes in all areas of life. The Revolution of 1905 brought with it an easing of censorship in the abolishing of the pre-censorship of books in 1906. This facilitated the circulation of previously suppressed ideas.

Translations continued to lead the field in title output, both in belles-lettres and in non-fiction publications. As expected, half of the translations of belles-lettres were from German and Russian literature. This period is characterised by the increasing share of translations from Russian. The increasingly widespread knowledge of the Russian language was due to the Russification of education and closer economic and political ties with Russia. In addition, the number of translations from French, Finnish and Scandinavian literature increased considerably, indicating a discovery of new layers of world literature, above all, by the new intellectual elite that modelled Estonian literature on European patterns. In translated non-fiction the dominance of German and Russian literature, which comprised nearly 80% of all translations, was even more conspicuous than in belles-lettres. These literatures, however, served as sources of ideological innovation, including socialist and atheist literature, and introducing Darwinist ideas and a materialist worldview. Thus, the intensive translation activities of the period enabled rapid acceptance of modern artistic, scholarly, philosophical and social ideas.

A large number of people were active in translation, which was a common sideline for white-collar workers and intellectuals, many of whom translated only a couple of books. The newly formulated requirement of translating from the original language draws attention to the accuracy and quality of translations. The range of publishers who issued translations was also wide. There was little specialisation among publishers in terms of different genres or source literatures. As translations comprised a considerable share of the total title output, they occupied a notable part of the production of all publishers.
References


АЛЕКСАНДРОВСКИЙ Ю. В. 1911. Авторское право: закон 20 марта 1911 г.: исторический очерк, законодательные мотивы и разъяснения. – С.-Петербург: Товарищество по изданию новых законов.


Introduction

Conceptualisation of translation is one part of the multifaceted field of translation history, the enormity and complexity of which can be well grasped and mapped with the help of – among other possible options – parameters originating from classical rhetorics. As proposed by Lieven D’hulst, translation history can address the following questions: quis? (who? i.e. the translator and his/her background, translation concepts, implicit and explicit poetics, etc.; the same question can also be asked with regard to translation schools and translation scholars), quid? (what? i.e. what has been translated and what has not; what have been the selection criteria; what has been written on translation; which genres or modes of translation thought does a culture generate, etc.), ubi? (where? i.e. where have translations been written, printed, published, distributed; where did and do the translators and translation scholars/students live and work; in which educational and research structures are translation studies embedded, etc.), quibus auxiliis? (with whose help? i.e. with whose support have translators done their job; what kind of patronage and other control mechanisms, including censorship have been involved, etc.), cur? (why? i.e. why do translations occur; why do they behave in the way they do (e.g. types of relationships with their source-texts, stylistic features, etc.), quomodo? (how? i.e. how have translations been processed; how do translational norms change in time and space; how do translation theories and other forms of conceptualisation come about, etc.), quando? (when? i.e. when in history – during which periods, with what kind of frequency patterns – does translation take place; when and where has translation reflection emerged, spread, declined, under which circumstances, etc.), cui bono? (to whose benefit? i.e. what is the effect of translation, its function, its use in society, etc.) (D’hulst 2001: 24–30).

Like literary history, translation history too draws information from two main sources: from the texts (translations) themselves and from the surrounding metatexts. To reconstruct a more balanced picture of, for instance, some period’s translation culture, the two sources should be combined: information obtained from the translations should be juxtaposed and complemented with information obtained from the metatexts, and vice versa (cf. Torop 1989: 358–360). But, if approached with an understanding of the limitations of using just one source, even
metatexts by themselves can offer interesting and valuable information. If anything, it is the metatexts, the utterances about translation that provide the explicitly articulated views on how translation is understood in a certain culture at a certain time.

From the parameters listed above, the present article addresses some aspects of the questions *quid, quomodo, quando*, aiming to explore the dominant images and expressions used to conceptualise literary translation in Estonian translation criticism and to give thus an account of the overall explicitly formulated translation poetics in Estonian culture from the beginning of the 20th century until World War II. To this end, I have conducted a complete analysis of all the reviews of literary translation as well as articles treating the topic of literary translation (‘literary translation’ here means translation of literary works) published in the two main Estonian literary journals of the time, *Eesti Kirjandus* [Estonian Literature], the publication of the Estonian Literary Society, and *Looming* [Creation], the publication of the Estonian Writers’ Union. I have focused on the question of how translation is discussed in these journals; more specifically, I have extracted from the reviews translation-related imagery and metaphorical language, systematised the material obtained, and I present here the principal findings. As regards *Eesti Kirjandus*, I have studied the journal throughout its publication history (1906–1940); as to *Looming*, the journal has been studied from its beginnings in 1923 until 1940. Thus, the period observed begins with the publication of the first issue of *Eesti Kirjandus* and ends with the beginning of the Soviet occupation in 1940, which left a grave mark on translated literature and translation criticism.

1. Translation as Transplantation

For the first generations of Estonian intellectuals, still closely connected to the land, the parallels between cultivating the soil and the intellect apparent in the etymology of the word ‘culture’ must have felt quite natural and relevant. In translation criticism at the beginning of the 20th century, one recurrent motif in characterising translation is the imagery of *transplantation*, formulated also as *planting into Estonian soil or into the Estonian language*. Related to the theme of planting, translation is also discussed in relation to the *field* of literature, the *field* of poetry, *virgin soil*, (bad translations as) *weeds* or *chaff*, buying *grain* from a foreign *garner*, *sowing* and *harvesting* (here and in the following all translations of terms and quotations from Estonian are mine). For example: “Valuable beyond any doubt is his attempt to plant Homer into Estonian soil” (Visnapuu 1916: 323); “Among the first numbers of the series is an interesting work which offers true virgin soil to our readers” (Oras 1924: 93).

This is how translation is viewed also by the editor of *Eesti Kirjandus* Jaan Jõgever in the first year of the journal’s publication:
No society, even if it has millions to spare, can lift original literature if there are no talents. But the best products of world literature can be transplanted into Estonian soil without much effort (Jõgever 1906: 284).

From Jõgever’s words it appears that translation is to be seen as a fairly simple enterprise, certainly not something to be discussed in terms of art.

2. Translation as Art

But already a few years later, especially in circles connected to Noor-Eesti (the literary group Young Estonia), there emerges a distinctly different view of translation. For example, Aino Kallas, in her overview of literature published in 1910, also speaks of the most important translations of the year: Shakespeare’s Hamlet and the first canto of Dante’s La Divina Commedia. Aino Kallas mentions the names of the translators and also emphasises the fact that the translations are made directly from the source language, not via a third language (Kallas 1911: 90).

Of course, this does not mean that the shift of emphasis is characteristic of all critics – some of them retain a more pragmatic attitude, among others the aforementioned Jaan Jõgever, who in 1913 voices fairly modest expectations regarding literary translation (it must be mentioned, however, that his choice of words may be coloured by the fact that he himself has translated the work under consideration):

How well or badly the translation has turned out is not for me to decide. If it is more or less reminiscent of Schiller’s work, the aim has been achieved. Should we want to have classic works also in the future, we have to be satisfied even if not all translations are classical (Jõgever 1913: 44).

The years of World War I and the Estonian War of Independence (1918–1920) witness a low point in almost all criticism, not just translation criticism. But in the 1920s, literary translation begins to attract new and growing attention in both journals, and, especially from the years 1927–1928 onwards, translation begins to be discussed predominantly in terms of art. Various critics, one after another, start emphasising the creative nature of the translator’s activity – as opposed to seeing translation as a utilitarian and an unproblematic phenomenon. This applies to both prose and poetry translation.

For example, with regard to prose translation, we encounter opinions such as the following: “K. Martinson’s translation is but a weak echo of the original, not a re-creation of the original” (Sillaots 1928b: 392), or “For Tammsaare, translating was not a craft, but a creative activity” (Roos 1940: 671).
With respect to poetry, there appear opinions that poetry can be translated only by another poet (Saar 1927: 755), that poetry translation (almost) equals original creation (Raudsepp 1938: 580), that poetry needs to remain poetry when translated – it has to retain “the indefinable scent of poetry” (Oras 1936: 584). Since poeticalness comes to be considered the highest priority, the translator is allowed some freedom in transferring (the details of) the content of the poem. According to the prevailing view, poetry translation actually means writing a new poem, *Umdichtung*, and literary translation in general equals re-creating the original.

The dominant view of translation as art reveals itself also in various sub-aspects.

2.1. *Art vs. Craft*

One of these aspects is the opposition between art and craft, which becomes active at the end of the 1920s. For example: “Translation is not a craft. It has the same aesthetic and artistic requirements as original art” (Palm 1927: 390). In most cases the concept of craft has negative connotations, such as mechanicalness, dullness and ineptness, for example: “[…] it cannot be emphasised enough: drop the clumsy craftsmen; bring stylists to the work of translation!” (Palm 1930a: 449). In more positive vein, craft is associated with skill and mastery, thus bringing to the fore the overlap between and the common ancestry of art and craft: “Translation is not just a craft, it is also an art. […] But besides everything else it is also a craft: it cannot do without certain skill” (Reiman 1928: 611).

2.1.1. Recasting

The ambivalence of the opposition between art and craft can be seen in the phrase “(re)casting”, used fairly often at the end of the 1920s and in the 1930s. (Re)casting is associated with metal casting, an operation that can equally be part of mechanical mass production or of creating an individual work of art. However, in the discourse on translation, (re)casting mostly appears as a distinctly non-mechanical activity; recasting and a mechanical way of translating even appear as opposites, for example:

Here we do not see the mediocre machine-like, almost bureaucratic, copying that has lately become so usual, but an attempt to recast the original into a new form, to remould it into a new piece of art (Sillaots 1933: 41).

The image of recasting is internationally known, it has become famous in the writings of the Romantics: Percy Bysshe Shelley (*A Defence of Poetry*, written in 1821, published in 1840), Arthur Schopenhauer (*Parerga und Paralipomena*, 1851) and Valeri Bryusov, who quoted and elaborated on Shelley’s words (*Фиалки в тиelage*, 1905). These authors regard translation as an alchemic pro-
cess: that which is to be translated needs to be melted down and recast (Schopenhauer 1908: 603), which in the case of poetry translation amounts to throwing a violet into a crucible, with the aim of thus capturing the essence of the flower’s colour and odour (Shelley 1978: 420) or decomposing a violet into its basic components and then creating a new violet from these elements (Bryusov 1987: 97).

2.2. Style

Style, how something is written as distinguished from what has been written, has been a central topic throughout western translation history. In Estonian translation criticism of the first decades of the 20th century, the emphasis on the sense of style, on the ability to express oneself with style is one of the traits that characterises the notion of translation as art. Style is considered an important element during the entire time period discussed here; for instance, we find this view expressed in 1915: “K. Martinson is an accurate and understanding translator who has been able to transfer Maupassant’s simple yet compelling style into Estonian” (Hindrey 1915: 235). The importance of style is forcefully expressed in many of the writings of the critic August Palm, for example:

In each translation there exist a certain number of mistakes, misunderstandings and diverging interpretations. But much is forgiven [...] if the translation has style. If the translator has no reliable sense of style, all is lost – even verbal accuracy cannot rescue the translation (Palm 1930b: 393–394).

The requirement of style acquires particular prominence at the end of the 1920s and in the 1930s, together with the overall growth of the idea of translation as art.

2.3. Congeniality

Another old motif accompanying the view of translation as art is the presumption of congeniality, of spiritual affinity between the translator and the original author: it is considered a precondition for a successful translation that the translator be similar to the original author in temperament and intellectual disposition. In history, the idea of spiritual affinity between the translator and the author appears perhaps in its most radical form in the Pythagorean notion of metempsychosis or migration of souls (Hermans 1985: 126f.).

In Estonian translation criticism before World War II, the presumption of congeniality or at least empathy between the translator and the original author is in active use, for example: “Translation requires full congeniality and where this is missing, the results are felt in the translation at once” (Linde 1912: 131); or “Ideal translation requires spiritual affinity between the translator and the translated” (Sang 1940: 321).
2.4. The Work of Art as a Living Being

One facet of the greater complex of imagery related to the concept of translation as art is the perception of a work of art as a living being, a well-known motif that goes back to antiquity (cf. the myth of Pygmalion and Galatea). In the case of translation, the translator is seen as a creator whose work can result in the rebirth of the work of art: “The Estonian translator gives more than a translation, it is a re-creation, – from Tuglas’s pen, Aino Kallas’s works are born anew in a new virginity” (Sillaots 1928a: 611) or “The translator of poetry needs to be a poet – only a creative author is capable of bringing life, in his own language, to another creator’s work” (Sang 1940: 321). The other side of the same coin is that if a translator is not able to rise to the occasion, the work can instead die in his or her hands. For example: “Many of the […] translations seem dry and dead” (Palm 1930a: 449). It appears that translating is a risky business: a work’s fate, its very life or death depends on translation. There appears a parallel with the work of the surgeon:

“In the main, [the translator] has a firm hand in removing the “proud tissue” of the original: although the poems often become more general in wording, they acquire greater clarity and purity of outline (Talvik 1936: 232).

2.4.1. Soul

The imagery relating to a work of art as a living being is often accompanied by expressions indicating that the work is assumed to have a soul, for example: “It is beyond doubt that for the translator, the inner life of the poems, their pulse, their ‘soul’ is more important than their literalness” (Oras 1935: 329). Variations appear as to where a work of art acquires its soul from: either it is the soul of the source text that is transferred to the translation (as in the example above), or it is the translator’s soul (Reiman 1928: 611), or it is an ‘independent’ soul originating neither in the author nor in the translator (Sang 1940: 319, 321).

3. Translation as Commerce

In the first four decades of the 20th century, alongside the imagery related to the idea of translation as transplanting and as art, translation is sometimes also interpreted in terms of commerce – the importation and exchange of goods. Thus, critics speak of intellectual, literary and cultural treasures, of enriching culture and literature with the help of translations, of literary productions and their acquisition, of cheap, poor, shoddy, valuable, etc. goods, of translation import and even contraband. At the beginning of the 20th century, we find the idea of similarity
between the workings of intellectual and economic spheres formulated quite explicitly:

Wouldn’t it be more than strange if the law of mutual exchange – on which our entire economic world view rests – did not apply to intellectual property. Small nations in particular can hardly do without foreign intellectual treasures (Menning 1908: 148).

On several occasions critics express their discontent with translations of cheap literature, while the translation of valuable works is held in esteem as the enrichment of culture:

It is as if we were blind and did not see that when translated well, these works are already our literature, not foreign anymore, and that in this case they enrich our literary treasures in reality much more than our mediocre originals, which in comparison are much lower in value (Annist 1939: 220).

With no hesitation, translation is expressly understood as an appropriation of foreign literature:

[…] we should appreciate the opportunity to merge the world’s greatest into our own intellectual world. The foreign values merged into our cultural sphere become our own cultural treasures. When translated, it is no longer an English or a German master, but our own Shakespeare, our own Goethe, our own Molière (Sang 1940: 318–319).

The discourse of ‘appropriating foreign riches’ acquires intriguing connotations of cultural imperialism, especially if at the same time translation’s ‘law of mutual exchange’ is disregarded. The roots of this attitude go back to the times of the Roman Empire when for Romans “translating literary and philosophical works meant looting those elements from Greek culture that would enhance the aesthetic dimensions of their own culture” (Schulte, Biguenet 1992: 2). One of the most aggressive advocates of this line of thinking, Karl Vossler, has portrayed translators as raiding neighbouring languages and literatures, grasping “with the wolf’s hunger of esthetic imperialism […] whatever they lust after” (Lefevere 1977: 97). But, in its milder appearances, especially when associated with the topic of enlightenment (translation as making foreign intellectual and aesthetic riches accessible to one’s own people), the discourse of translation as appropriating foreign treasures is accepted as wholly legitimate also today.

Conclusion

During the first four decades of the 20th century, translation criticism in Estonia grew considerably both in bulk and in quality, reaching its highest level in the
1930s. In these decades, translation was discussed in various terms but, out of these, three main groups of related images emerge. The idea of translation as transplantation as well as other images relating land cultivation to culture are active foremost in the first decade of the period (until 1916). The treatment of translation as art becomes pervasive by the end of the 1920s and dominates the critical stance until the end of the period observed, that is, until World War II. The most persistent – although not prevalent in terms of quantity – of the three groups of expressions is the one that treats translation in commercial terms: translation is seen as an enrichment of culture, as importation of cultural values, etc. during the whole period observed.

The characterisation of translation as art and as transplantation highlights a common feature in their portrayal of a literary work as a living being. In both cases, translation plays a pivotal role in determining the fate of the work, which can survive translating/transplanting for better or for worse; in the worst cases, the work of art may not live at all. In both the case of transplanting and the case of translating, what matters is the competence in separating the plant/work from its original environment and its habitual relations, and in transferring it to a new environment to which it may or may not adapt. In the case of interpreting translation in commercial terms, on the other hand, a different, more utilitarian, worldview is activated: translation is seen as a means of increasing cultural treasures or exchanging goods with other cultures.

It may be assumed that the prevailing images of interpreting literary translation have reached Estonia mainly through German culture. Some evidence for this is offered by words such as ümberluuletus and järelluuletus, which are calques from German (Umdichtung and Nachdichtung respectively). In general, it appears that the images are not specific to Estonia: they are well known internationally, at least in the European context, and in many cases date back to the early days of European history. An awareness of history gives us an insight into our present-day attitudes towards translation: the past often helps to explain the origins and the formation of our modern ideas and to view them in a proper perspective, showing among other things their originality or triviality in a wider context.

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History cannot be easily written if one limits oneself to description and avoids explanation. Even a brief look at the translations of the early 20th century in Estonia suffices to recognise their basic difference from those of the end of the century. The temporal target circumstances are of explanatory help, but on their own they are not enough because translation is an intercultural enterprise. Anthony Pym (1998, 2009) has emphasised that ‘intercultural’ in this context refers not to cultural heterogeneity (multiculture) but implies an intersection: translators work in a fairly specific locale which is neither the source nor the target but draws on both while being wholly determined by neither. Besides, translators do bear in mind their immediate social context even if working for a minor community (Venuti 2002 [2000]), carefully preserving their selective difference from their major environment so as not to lose the performative potential of the interculture.

This article draws its empirical evidence from the translations of two influential critics of Estonian culture, writers keenly aware of translation as a functional system of its own, opposed to its environment (although they could not possibly have conceptualised this in the terms of Niklas Luhman or Theo Hermans). Ants Oras (1900–1982), man-of-letters, translator and academic, is of systemic influence on the intellectual milieu of pre-World War II Estonia, and Enn Soosaar (1937–2010) on that of the Estonia subjected to the hardened sovietisation of the 1970s and 1980s. Both are translators whose choices (selection of texts, translation poetics) highlight not only their personal engagement and awareness of their responsibility as agents of the target culture, but also the diametrically different political contexts in which they were working.

In the context of translation history, Pym has influentially advocated the need to humanise textualised studies. Indeed, by reading all the work of one translator, including his original texts, and hopefully remembering the rhetoric and the logic that permeate them and his relevant, even if debatable, translational choices, it is possible to understand not only the poetics and politics of one writer but also the social and historical rationale behind his choices. The historicity of translations manifests itself at every level of a text, from the largest levels of content and form to the smallest linguistic levels (Tymoczko 2007), justifying arguments for a broader approach to translating culture that takes into account cultural configu-
ations as such, instead of limiting oneself to political agendas alone. The circumscribed space of an article can neither conceptualise nor even articulate these configurations with satisfactory thoroughness but has to limit itself to pointing out the theoretical issues and the empirical puzzles that are present.

If the beginning of translation is the word [that makes sense] (Derrida 2001 [1998]: 180), the beginning of the history of translation – the point where we actually read translated texts – tends to be words that make no sense. Words have to be supplemented with a description that is thick enough to provide instructions that would enable communication (cf. Appiah 2002 [1993]).

1. Ants Oras

Nineteen sixty saw the publication of an Estonian translation of T.S. Eliot’s “Burnt Norton”. Part two is about an epiphanic moment reconciling the past and the present, and the original contains the German word Erhebung. Ants Oras, the Estonian translator, has translated this too, replacing it with an interpretive phrase which turns the original Erhebung into the translational ülendav tõus [elevating ascent]. Why did he de-Germanise the text?

By the time Oras came to translate “Burnt Norton”, his list of translations was long. Having published the first one in 1920, he continued with both prose and poetry, and not only from English, but just as much from German, Finnish, French and Russian. He was a translator of classical texts, and in 1960, when “Burnt Norton” was in the process of publication, he was in the middle of Virgil’s Aeneid and Goethe’s Faust.

A circumstantial explanation for the paraphrase is that Oras was translating in exile, in Gainesville, Florida, with limited opportunity to use Estonian on a daily basis. Writing in his mother tongue was an Erhebung in itself, an act of sentiment that did not pass without leaving traces. But there is more to this paraphrase than an expatriate feel. The de-Germanised German word, together with another replacement in the translation, that of ‘abstraction’ by the Estonian phrase alasti mõte [naked thought] – although the loan word abstraktsioon had already been accepted in Estonian – seem to address the polemical reception of Oras’s prewar translations, and as such they are of historical relevance.

Oras was a translator whose works were acclaimed and rejected with equal passion when he established himself in the 1930s, the reason being his linguistic deviation from the received standard. Part of this deviation was his abundant use of a direct method of translating – transcribing the form to represent the content: frugaalne [frugal], kvadrupedantne [quadruped], dessäär [desert]. Such words belong neither to the past nor to the future of Estonian but are still there – in his translations. Even if one can guess their semantic meaning, pragmatically, the
linguistic instrument fails unless it is supplemented with historical information that can be found in Oras’s newspaper articles.

Three newspaper articles were written by Oras in 1929. These were intended to explain to the wider audience the controversies related to editing a normative dictionary of Estonian usage against the backdrop of the linguistic innovation of the time, as advocated and designed by Johannes Aavik (1880–1973) to fill the linguistic lacunae in Estonian. Convinced that all natural languages are fatally inapt and incomplete, unable to express subtleties or determine relations that other languages can perform with elegant ease (Aavik 1974 [1924]: 12), Aavik set to providing Estonian with new resources, both lexical and grammatical. He welcomed any word from any language as long as the meaning was needed and the sound adjusted to Estonian phonology (ibid. 33). Part of this innovation can be explained with the help of J.C. Catford’s internationally well-known notion of transference. Distinguishing between translation and transference, Catford considered the latter an operation in which the target language text or parts of it have source language meanings (Catford 1965: 43). This, among other things, is what Aavik practiced.

Oras was a member of the committee preparing the second edition of the Estonian normative dictionary. He observed the same standard while working as an editor for the publishing house that had adopted the norm (Lange 2009a: 359), but he deviated from it in his own translations. While agreeing with Aavik that language is an instrument that has to be perfected to the level of a Stradivarius, the two men disagreed on one point which Oras made clear in the press: he admitted his liking for the “energising rhythm of Latin words” as long as the style is not too intimate. “Foreign words as suggestions of the grotesque are widely practiced in some circles,” he wrote (Oras 1929). What does this mean? His ad hoc loans have to be pronounced with a hint of irony, as tropes with a tone.

It may be that when contemplating the history of translation we treat poems or prose primarily as art for the eye, not for the ear, to repeat the helpful distinction made by John Hollander (1975). In the case of Estonia, with its erstwhile enthusiasm for linguistic innovation, we often get texts that look alien, though we have no access to their audible aspects. On trying to read the translations anew, aloud, with particular emphasis on their probable aural component, the exaggerated loans begin to make sense. They are reserved primarily for certain subjects and attitudes.

Loans were not the only peculiarity of Oras’s deviation. They, along with contracted forms and rearranged syntax (all components of the innovation), lead to a degree of incomprehensibility that can only be fathomed with the help of intralingual interpretation and recourse to the original. When providing a general profile of Oras’s translations, I once described him as stopping in the space between the two languages without reaching that of Estonian (Lange 2004: 398). My reviewer, Professor Toomas Salumets of the University of Toronto, observed
that such a failure in translation proper, together with Oras’s essentialist predisposition, creates a potentially productive and balancing tension between the salutary role assigned to change, on the one hand, and a poetics (and mentality) informed by desire for the absolute, on the other. As a means to develop this tension, he proposed the concepts of Donald W. Winnicott, i.e. to view translating as a mechanism of the mental constitution of the self.

In the 1930s the constitution of an identity, be it individual or professional, had to consider the then attempt to map Estonia’s cultural orientation which had been on the agenda since the late 1920s – not for the first time, but again and with renewed vigour (Karjahärm, Sirk 2001: 251–274, 330–379). Traditionally, the broadest geographical identity for Estonia has been Europe, and the construction of Estonian identity as European was understood in intertextual terms. Translations had to enrich the receiving culture (Sütiste 2009), and they had to enrich the translator, as a much quoted letter by Oras admits: when explaining his principles of translation, Oras quotes Shakespeare, saying that translators undergo “a sea-change. Into something rich and strange” (Olesk 1997: 115). This seems to justify the suggestion that there was a self-constructivist aspect to translating.

Winnicott’s transitional experience hints at a bridge between the familiar and the unfamiliar, enabling one to come to terms with the latter. “This intermediate area of experience, unchallenged in respect of its belonging to inner or external (shared) reality, constitutes the greater part of the infant’s experience” (Winnicott 1953: 97). As the self and objects separate, the transitional object (‘not me but mine’, my teddy bear) loses its significance while the mental process as a way of change continues to shape the dynamic relation between the Umwelt and the self. Winnicott’s proposal was that the psychoanalytical notion can also be used in other contexts for it is throughout life “retained in the intense experiencing that belongs to the arts and to religion and to imaginative living, and to creative scientific work” (ibid; cf. Grolnick et al. 1995 [1978]).

The transitional aspect of translations used in the construction of Estonian high culture is a discourse characteristic of intellectuals. It was translation into Estonian that was to prove that the subtleties of Western culture could be expressed in Estonian so that we would be verbatim in Europe, our cherished regional identity. The case of Estonia followed the repeated pattern of “a cultural political agenda, wherein the educated elite controls the formation of a national culture by refining its language through foreignizing translations” (Venuti 1991: 131). Can we also label as such other translations, thus synchronising writers who are contemporaries only in terms of the logic of the general conventional chronology? Clearly, Oras was by no means a representative translator, i.e. the occasional translator of entertainment who, after one book, gives up the job (Lange 2009b: 155). The presence of Bourdieuan fields is evident, e.g. with Anna Bergmann, the most productive translator of British fiction of the period, who published 26 of her 27 translations using a pen name, trusting her real name for the title page of her only
translation to be included in the prestigious series of Nobel Prize winners. Translations were polarised by their orientation towards either restricted or mass consumption, by their division into consecrated and unconsecrated work. The same goes for English, the language of prestige of the time, which had no prior history in Estonia and which was viewed as an antidote to German and Russian, the languages of hegemonic traditions in the region.

However, many a translation of entertainment of this period can also be aptly described in terms of foreignisation or by resorting to a visual analogue – these remind the reader of David Suchet’s Hercule Poirot, distinguished in their innovated Estonian and with a retouched flavour like that of the Monsieur’s moustache. The walk of the texts is often stiff, but the upper lip is not; their charms lie in their linguistic distinction. Many of the crime stories of the period have been reissued under the name of the same translator, their language simply edited into the standard one.

2. Varying the Modes of Presenting the Source Material

One way of differentiating translations could be their different modes of presenting their source material. Of the options listed by Maria Tymoczko (2007), representation was the most prevalent for translation in prewar Estonia. Tymoczko argues that the ordinary meaning of representation, rather than the various technical meanings, can serve as a useful frame of reference for the type of cultural interface found in translations. Her explanation of the concept relies on the Oxford English Dictionary: representation creates an image while bearing in mind a particular (social) purpose, and it intends to convey a particular view and to effect some change. It substitutes one thing for another in awareness of the ideological aspects of the created image. Translations, representing the originals and the French, English or whatever other culture, were constructing Estonian high culture as a European culture. Translations were not us but ours, taking us into a transitional space.

The specifics of representation become clearer when contrasted with transculturation, another of Tymoczko’s possible modes of source presentation and the one characteristic of post-World War II Estonian translation. Transculturation is not exclusively or even primarily a linguistic process but takes into account, inter alia, the transposition of discourses and worldviews, and the uptake of practices and beliefs under their impact. One of the distinguishing aspects of transculturation, in contrast to representation, is that it entails the performance of specific aspects of another culture, obscuring the point of origin of a specific cultural element. In post-World War II Estonia, translations, oriented prevailingly towards transculturation, were performing Estonia’s presence in either the East or the West as split by the Iron Wall; they were meant to be not only ours but us,
underlining the shared overlap of the source and the target. The emphasis was on sustaining what was common to the receiving and the source culture against a backdrop of public propaganda that stressed the special status of homo sovieticus. In the case of translations, however, this sustenance cannot but imply difference from both the source and the target, but the difference under these circumstances has to be understood for what it is: never pure. Bearing in mind translation as both process and product, the Estonian history of translation can be seen to fall into two clear-cut periods which can be labelled according to the dominant mode of source presentation as i) representational and ii) transcultural. These two modes are further related to the different motives of translating in the pre- and postwar periods. In both periods the ability of translations to do things only translations could do under the circumstances of the receiving culture was recognised and explicitly stated.

The different possible modes of presenting the source are helpful in understanding history even if we begin with the agents in the translating culture, the translators. Their interculture, and its difference from both the source and the target, can explain the causality of translation, and it may also explain the philological texture of translations, their mode and their style (cf. Pym 1998: 5). History in its empirical diversity can never offer a solid and simple answer, but it may suggest some. The de-Germanised Erhebung of 1960, addressing the innovation and the tone of many prewar translations, takes us simultaneously to the concept of translating in the period before the occupation of Estonia in 1940 and to that of the post-occupation years. In the former period, translation was of symbolic significance, undertaken principally to mark an end to the traditional German/Russian cultural hegemonies of Estonia and marking it with a new foreignness pronounced with a primarily sober feel for the grotesque. In the latter period, it was performing conflicting worldviews, underlining Estonia’s allegedly native adherence to either this or that side of the Iron Wall.

3. Enn Soosaar

Turning now to Enn Soosaar and the Estonia of the 1970s and 1980s, one must take into account the possibilities for book production. The publishing houses of the postwar era had to observe quotas that defined the proportion of translations from Russian and all other languages. In the 1960s, for example, the share of translated fiction in book production was 59.9% – 28.9% translated from Russian and other SU literatures and 31% from all other languages; for the 1970s, the figure was 51% – split into 29% and 22% for Soviet literature and all other literatures respectively; and for the 1980s (1981–1988), 45.4% – split into 25% and 20.4% (Mõldre 2005: 180). For the whole Soviet period, the average number
of titles from French, German, British and American literatures was about 4 of each per year (Soosaar 1994: 53).

Soosaar was a prolific translator and outspoken about the engagement of translating. Besides translating, he also regularly reviewed others’ translations in his column in a cultural weekly in 1979–1987. The reviews were not the type of translation criticism that compared source and target texts but concentrated instead on adapting the translations to their receiving context, estimating their cultural value. While writing for professional or academic journals, Soosaar worked within the constraints of the obligatory muffled writing by frequently resorting to comparative statistics, presenting relative figures for Estonian book production as compared to Russian figures (e.g. in 1969, 1979). He did not impose on Estonian translators a ridiculous and impossible sense of competition with their colleagues who were translating for an audience that was incomparable in size to that of the Estonian readership. Rather, he advised the use of these relative figures to justify an Estonian interest in covering the world, both geographically and historically, with translations; otherwise the Estonian Weltanschauung would remain “obscure and subject to fantastic and absurd speculations” (1987c: 192). His meticulous statistical analysis enabled him to show that the share of literatures other than that of the Eastern bloc had been decreasing considerably during the 1970s and 1980s and had decreased in Soviet Estonia more than in Soviet Russia. Moreover, from the statistically privileged literatures it was not always the best that was translated; instead translators wasted their time on works that were, in literary terms, inept and mediocre but had strong party principles (1986a).

He himself was primarily a translator of contemporary American fiction, something he explained in terms of protest against “the Oxford orientation” of his university (1981). The author he started and finished with was Ernest Hemingway, who had “his second homeland” in the Soviet Union (Soosaar 1987a: 4), i.e. he, or any other representative of the Lost Generation, was a possibility in the Soviet Union (although his texts were censored). Hemingway, a writer of linguistically univocal meanings, can be contrasted to William Faulkner, another author that Soosaar worked with for longer, parts of whose work can be formally interpreted in multiple ways while still keeping to the semantic compass of the words used and the relations between them as determined by grammar. That Soosaar had a feel for diametrically different treatments of language and literary techniques is amply shown by the list of authors he translated: Stephen Crane, Bernard Malamud, Francis Scott Fitzgerald, Truman Capote, John Updike, Saul Bellow, Donald Barthelme, Richard Brautigan, Thornton Wilder, E. L. Doctorow, I. B. Singer, John Gardner, Joan Didion, et al., 42 titles in all.

In his autobiographical work Nuripidine aastasada [A Topsy-Turvy Century], Soosaar has written that he does not believe the lament that Soviet brainwashing and muffling robbed two generations of Estonians of their chance to have a different education and a capacity for individual reasoning (Soosaar 2008: 159). His
own efforts at coming to terms with the regime manifest themselves in his severe criticism of the practice of translating without considering what it is that the translators communicate (e.g. translating James Aldridge and underlining that he is a communist, 1979: 572). Soosaar was not a product of his profession, nor was he a product of his translations, for these are stylistically too manifold in nature. Rather, his translational choices grant him his material presence and his message, as repeated verbatim in his critical reviews and echoed in his choice of originals – he preferred writers who do not offer simple answers to complicated problems and who question the absolute dependence of men on their historical and cultural circumstances, which is only a part of the truth about the human condition. “Although there may be reasons to be profoundly pessimistic about the options of one particular man in his particular circumstances, there are causes for optimism about the possible self-realisation of a man unattached to the limits of his time and his space” (1970: 58). With Soosaar, his material presence and “the difference a body can make” (Pym 1998: 160–161) serve to amplify this statement for he spent his adult life in a wheelchair. True, translating was for him a mundane necessity, but he turned it into his cultural and philosophical credo of wider resonance.

Convinced that Estonia, born in and through translation (cf. Meschonnic 1999: 32), should acknowledge its dependence on translations (1986b), Soosaar was concerned more with translating than with translators. Translators can never be the Iovi but remain the bovi of the translating culture, he wrote (1984: 664). And yet, he would write against the scandalous tendency to ignore translators in public, pointing out that often it has been translators who have introduced new stylistic devices in Estonian (1991). However, the “only justification” he could see for the “huge army” busy translating, editing and producing books was “to serve their people” (1987c: 4) and be accountable to their source texts (1984: 664).

This brings us to the micro-levels of his translations. He had his reservations about the linguistic innovation of prewar translation, for obvious reasons: neologisms are stylistically heavily marked, and if the source does not have them, they are “automatically a taboo” (1984: 666). But the realia of the Soviet everyday were considerably different from those of the authors he was translating. Studying his translation strategies with this in mind, it can be seen that his choices are not made within the framework of the crude possibilities of foreignisation or domestication but oscillate between the two in order to preserve the pragmatic relevance of each translation.

To give an example: when Herzog, the father, is looking at his 5-year-old son eating in a café at the zoo, the Estonian reader gets for the original ‘hamburger’ – for Estonians at the time, this was an item of realia seen on Finnish TV commercials only, representing an unattainable world – the descriptive phrase kotletiga sai [white bread and croquette (of minced pork and beef)]. It is domestication of the form in order to preserve its meaning as a simple food that children loved. But
when it comes to the culinary specifics that Herzog enjoys with his lover Ramona, the translation is as refined as it should be, even if referentially vague for many of its then readers.

Or, when translating Isaac Bashevis Singer and supplementing the text with notes, Soosaar writes: “The Estonian translation has noticeably less words/expressions in Hebrew and Yiddish than the English original” (Singer 1980: 95). Denationalisation? Anti-Semitism? Rather, an acceptance of the lacunae in the translating culture. The Jewish Cultural Autonomy in Estonia had come to an end with the end of the Republic of Estonia in 1940, and Jewish realia had been wiped out. So, Jewish holidays have been replaced by their Estonian equivalents while the meaning of all of them has been explained in the notes, with the Hebrew jōm kippurīm or roʾš haššānā also given in brackets. In this way, translations (leaving aside the paratexts that restore the original) move into a deterritorialised locale and make visible the translator whose style is considerate of both his author and his reader.

The visibility of the translator depends on the backdrop: it has to be that of the original. Otherwise he would be the domesticating, invisible and fluent translator of Venuti. Certainly, Soosaar, or any other translator published by the few publishing houses existing under the Soviet regime, neither was nor could be a conflicting linguistic dissident opposing the norms and standards. Only by presenting his originals in an Estonian that did not abuse the readers’ linguistic expectations, could he publish Thornton Wilder, Saul Bellow or Donald Barthelme, whose concerns were a far cry from those of Soviet culture. In this context, the linguistic strategy served two ends: neither the source author nor the target reader could be interpreted as a cultural Other (cf. Robinson 1997).

“Translators, these oxen, are a folk who willingly listen to the advice of language administrators,” Soosaar wrote (1984: 667), later adding a few lines about how his exams in the history of English had taught him an irrefutable fact – that all languages and every aspect of a language is subject to change unless the language is a dead one. His main doubts in relation to the prescriptive standard of Estonian, which was subject to hectic changes in orthography, concerned foreign words, that traditional bone of contention of Estonian writing. Foreign words adapted to Estonian phonetic spelling are frequently adjusted to a ‘more correct one’ in every new edition of the Estonian normative dictionary. He questioned the need to remember two versions of one and the same word (western/vestern). Encouraged by his experience of reading Thomas Mann, who has spelled many a French or an English word in his novels in the French or English way, deviating from the Duden standard, Soosaar recommends considering the same possibility; for we never pronounce the words or names exactly as they are pronounced in the original, and the rules of transliteration would just give us words that do not look Estonian anyhow and are merely a nuisance for those who have to follow their ever-changing spelling.
This linguistic taste, and practice, different as it is from prewar writing, seems to be in discord with the proposition of the present article – in the postwar years constructivist translation was replaced by transcultural translation – for it denies assimilation on a linguistic level. Indeed, this was the point – not to make anyone or anything Estonian by force; there was no platform for essentialist thinking anymore. Soosaar wrote:

Words signifying concepts and things that Estonians never meet in their environment, other than fleetingly, could be used for the sake of their local colour or their exact meaning, but we should not correct their spelling (1984: 670).

He was keeping in mind the realia of cultures distant from his target culture in either time or space, i.e. titles of respect, military and other ranks, varieties of wine or of grapes, monetary units, etc. It would have been more elemental to naturalise them as this was the norm then practiced, while the acceptance of spellings from other traditions is an aspect of transculturation, the transposing of forms for their recognition as forms of other cultures, hinting at their specifics. Translators do draw on more than one culture, and the uptake of this practice is a suggestion Soosaar performs. The overlapping locale of the two cultures in which he works, depending on his inevitable adjacency to the socio-political realia of the receiving culture, turns the overlap into a fairly specific locale which is neither the source nor the target, nor a third way of its own, but an intersection affirming the potential of different perspectives and negotiating possibilities for the presentation of the source.

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This article is aimed at presenting some elements of reflection on the functions of translation and the role of translators in what can be considered as the time of the transformation of Estonia into a Socialist Soviet Republic from 1940, when the country was annexed to Soviet Union, to 1955. I will concentrate especially on what the Estonian literary scholar Maie Kalda has defined as the years of “total Stalinism” (Kalda 2001) from 1950 to 1953.

Researchers in the field of literary and cultural studies have emphasised the violence of this transformation, defining it as an interruption, a radical discontinuity with Estonian cultural and literary traditions, a discontinuity which had been conceived by Soviet ideologues as an irreversible process of ‘renewal’. Sirje Olesk has described this process from a literary point of view as the substitution of Estonian literature with a huge number of foreign texts, or more precisely, foreign patterns for textual creation. This is why, in order to characterise literary production in the period of “total Stalinism”, Olesk does not speak of “Estonian literature” but employs instead the more appropriate concept of “Soviet literature written in Estonian” (Olesk 2003: 465). Ideological control and censorship are usually considered by researchers as the main instruments for this reshaping of the Estonian cultural and literary field. Translation is sometimes mentioned, Pekka Lilja, for instance, claims that the ideological transformation imposed by the leaders of the Estonian Communist Party was carried out in the most severe way precisely in the field of translation (Lilja 1990: 158). In any case, in Lilja’s research, as in other works on postwar Estonian culture and literature, translation does not occupy a central position.

On the other hand, we have data collected and analysed by Estonian book historians which give us precise information on publishing figures, tendencies and policies at the time of the first Republic of Estonia (1918–1939) and in Soviet time. These data include figures on translations which allow us to compare the share of translated works in book production and the share of, for example, different genres and source languages in translated works at different times.

In this paper, I will make a first attempt at bringing together these different lines of research, starting from a comparison of the data on translation in the first years of the Soviet period with analogous data referring to the prewar period; on the basis of this, I will define what I call ‘totalitarian translation’, an uncom-
fortable way of understanding the functions of translation and the role of translators which could be of general interest in translation studies. As Itamar Even-Zohar has stressed, “translation is no longer a phenomenon whose nature and borders are given once and for all, but an activity dependent on the relations within a certain cultural system” (Even-Zohar 1990: 51). The direct relations of totalitarian translation with political and ideological issues will be evidenced here through a brief analysis of statements on translation by politicians and intellectuals which helps reconstruct the ‘translational discourse’ of the period under consideration. Finally, I will suggest some elements for a case study of the figure and the work of the prominent Estonian writer, intellectual and translator Johannes Semper.

1. The data

Tables 1 and 2 show the share of translations in book production of the last 10 years of the first Republic of Estonia and the first 10 years of the Soviet period respectively:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Original works</th>
<th>Translations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1929–1939</td>
<td>16350 ca</td>
<td>13900 ca</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Publishing during the last ten years (1929–1939) of the Republic of Estonia.¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Original works</th>
<th>Translations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1940–1954</td>
<td>10162</td>
<td>5243</td>
<td>51,5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Publishing during the first ten years (1940–1954) of Soviet time – excluding the period of German occupation (1941–1944).²

These figures clearly show that the ‘transitional’ period has also been a ‘translational’ period, with the new Soviet Estonia’s culture drawing heavily on translation. At first sight, this seems to fit Itamar Even-Zohar’s hypothesis, according to which translation comes to occupy the centre of a given literary and cultural system at turning points and times of crisis (Even-Zohar 1978). However, it is important to stress a fundamental difference between the general assumptions made in translation studies and the functions of translation during the period under consideration. In translation studies the increase of translational activity within a given culture is generally understood as a sign of openness, intensified

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¹ Richard Antik’s figures for the years 1929–1933 (Antik 1935: 68) have here been integrated with the help of the chronology of Estonian books for the years 1934–1939 (ERÜ 1938, ERÜ 1941), Hansen 1989 and Liivaku 1989.

² The sources here are the chronology of Soviet Estonia’s books for the years 1940–1954 (NER 1956) and Soosaar 1987.
dialogue and contact with cultural others, all of which are in some way considered *a priori* consequences of translation; as Sherry Simon remarks, and this is only one example of a widespread rhetorical attitude, “the poetics of translation belongs to a realization of an aesthetics of cultural pluralism” (Simon 1996). In contrast, the Estonian book historian Uno Liivaku has employed the concept of ‘isolation’ when commenting on publishing figures in Soviet Estonia with particular reference to translation. According to Liivaku, books become, under Soviet rule, not only an object but also “a subject of isolation, the means through which people are separated from the rest of the world, from the past, from other people and much more” (Liivaku 1989: 467).

We begin to understand what Liivaku means when we consider the fact that 86% of the translations published in Estonia between 1940 and 1954 (excluding the period of German occupation) were translations from Russian. The following table may serve as an illustration of Liivaku’s claim for the field of literature which interests me here:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Estonian literature</th>
<th>Literary translations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>33 50%</td>
<td>33 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>68 44%</td>
<td>85 56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>44 36%</td>
<td>78 64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>48 38%</td>
<td>77 62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>57 48%</td>
<td>61 52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>69 55%</td>
<td>56 45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>42 34%</td>
<td>83 66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>27 21%</td>
<td>99 79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>53 41%</td>
<td>77 59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>46 39%</td>
<td>73 61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>56 44%</td>
<td>70 56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945-55</td>
<td>543 40%</td>
<td>792 60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3. Literary works published during the period 1945–1955 (including children’s literature).*

3 This table elaborates the data collected by Aile Möldre (Möldre 2005: 99). Notice that the figures for Estonian literature include also reprints of earlier works. So, for instance, only 77 of the 191 books by Estonian writers published in the years of ‘total Stalinism’ (1950–1953) were new works. Among the few translations of foreign literature, classics such as Goethe, Balzac, Cervantes and Dickens dominated.
There are no systematic data about translations of poetry and short stories in literary journals, but my preliminary research of *Looming* – the only literary journal published on a monthly basis in the period considered – shows that the tendencies emerging from Table 3 for books are even more pronounced in periodicals. From 1950 to 1952, *Looming* publishes exclusively translations from Russian; only after 1953, can one find translations from Biron, Becher, Petőfi, and Go Mo-žo, together with lamentations for Stalin’s death; in 1955, Schiller and Whitman appear; in 1956, Heine and Aino Kallas.

2. Totalitarian Translation

I will use the term ‘totalitarian translation’ for the kind of situation where, firstly, translations have a strongly hegemonic position in book production, and secondly, only one source language and culture is absolutely hegemonic among translations. I will exploit some observations by Lawrence Venuti and Susan Bassnett in order to suggest an outline of a theory of totalitarian translation. This implies a major change in the meaning, or rather, the rhetorical impact of a couple of concepts employed by the two scholars. It is here that the above-mentioned unpleasantness of totalitarian translation as an object of research for translation studies emerges.

According to Venuti, the greatest danger for translation is domestication, the “ethnocentric violence” by which a nation defends an identity metaphysically imagined as a homogeneous essence threatened by foreign contaminations (Venuti 2005: 177–178). In his view, translation actually succeeds when it brings about an “inscription of the foreign context” on the domestic scene, this inscription being a positive generator of heterogeneity (Venuti 2000: 473, 477). Of course, totalitarian translation represents a serious challenge to domestic cultural identity, it functions as a powerful mechanism of disidentification, but the inscription of the foreign context does not here lead, as I will show, to a heterogenisation of the domestic community. This is why Venuti’s notion of inscription must be revised in order to describe the function of translation in postwar Estonia.

When discussing translation as a method of “imposing meaning while concealing power relations”, Susan Bassnett presents the following hypothesis:

It is also interesting to speculate on whether the development of dubbing industries in certain countries is related to the existence at different points in time of totalitarian governments. Why do Italy, Germany, Greece, Spain, the former Soviet Union, China and numerous other countries that have endured dictatorships or military regimes have established dubbing industries as opposed to the use of subtitles? For dubbing erases the original voices, and restricts access to other languages. (Bassnett 1998: 136–137)
Dubbing does not interest me here, whereas the idea of erasure is of the greatest importance. In fact, the notion of ‘erasure’, together with a modified concept of inscription (let us call it ‘overscription’), is what we need to define the functioning of totalitarian translation as a general ‘translational mechanism’ deploying Stalinist cultural policy in postwar Estonia.

**Erasure** took as its target Estonian culture during the prewar period of independence. Erasure means:

- **Censorship and destruction of books**
  
  At the beginning of the fifties, 118 Estonian authors were completely prohibited, to which one must add over 400 prohibited foreign authors – this means much original Estonian production and many of the translations published before 1940. Thousands of works were withdrawn from publishing houses, bookshops, libraries and private collections and destroyed (in millions of copies) or displaced in libraries, in special archives that were inaccessible to the public (see Veskimagi 1996: 173–214).

- **Repression of living authors**
  
  Confinement, imprisonment and rescission of contracts with the State Publishing House led to the disappearance of repressed authors from the public domain. This does not simply mean a ban on their already published works and the impossibility of publishing anything new, but also passing over in complete silence their names and works in anthologies, histories of literature and literary research published during that period. Naturally, the ban and the silence extended to those writers who fled Estonia in 1944, choosing voluntary exile. The disconcerting figures on Estonian literary production at the beginning of the fifties (see Table 3 and footnote 3) are a direct consequence of this kind of erasure.

**Overscription** fills in the blanks generated by erasure with:

- **Translations from Russian**
  
  The absolutely preponderant share (see Table 3) of postwar literary translations into Estonian was restricted to the classics of 19th century Russian literature (A. Pushkin, M. Lermontov, A. Chekhov, L. Tolstoi, etc.) and mostly contemporary Russian authors (primarily M. Gorki, but also M. Sholokhov, D. Furmanov, A. Fadeyev, etc.). Translations from Russian not only came to occupy the centre of the Estonian literary polysystem but they also provided matrixes for the generation of new ‘original’ Estonian works according to the canon of socialist realism – what Olesk calls “Soviet literature written in Estonian”.4

- **Reconfiguration of the past**
  
  Regime ideologues reinterpreted the whole Estonian cultural heritage in the light of Soviet ideology, and many writers active after the war had to publicly

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4 The most prolific Estonian author of the postwar period, the playwright August Jakobson, is a good example of this kind of literature.

171
make amends at party meetings or on the pages of literary journals for the ideological errors in their literary and intellectual activity of the prewar period.

Totalitarian translation can thus be conceived of as a general mechanism of erasure and overscription of which translation *stricto sensu* is the most important aspect. Contrary to Bassnett’s view, erasure is here directed against the domestic not the foreign context; contrary to Venuti’s view, overscription does not lead to a differentiation within the domestic community; overscription means rather the radical substitution of the domestic (in this case Estonian) culture, of its internal differences and manifold external influences, with a highly homogeneous foreign cultural pattern (in this case the Soviet-Russian one).

3. Working at the Ideological Front

The kind of translational discourse described above is reflected in the writings of Soviet Estonia’s political and cultural leaders after the war. A key text here is an article written by the most powerful Estonian politician of the time, the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party Johannes Käbin, and published in *Pravda* in May 1950. The article is entitled “The Tasks of Soviet Estonian Literature” and draws the party line into the matter. A significantly large part of the article is devoted to translation and in it Käbin makes explicit the mechanism of erasure (of the “dead-end streets of formalism and decadence” that characterised prewar Estonian literature) and overscription (of “the sound realistic position”) through translation from Russian:

> The translation of Russian writers, the profound acquaintance with their works has helped the best Estonian writers to adopt sound realistic positions […] We must admit that without translations of classical Russian literature [elsewhere in the article he mentions Pushkin, Gogol, Tolstoi, Turgenev – D.M.] and works by contemporary Soviet authors [here he mentions only Gorki – D.M.], many Estonian men-of-letters would still ramble for a long time in the backyards and dead-end streets of formalism and decadence (Käbin 1950).

In the same article, Käbin pinpoints the precarious position of translators within the paradigm of totalitarian translation by criticising the low quality of Estonian translations of Soviet literature, which in his opinion are too often trusted to “suspicious persons”. So, for instance, the “irresponsible” and “inferior” translation of A. Gonchar’s “Flag Bearers” by the Estonian writer Hugo Raudsepp is used by Magnus Mälk, Secretary of the Union of Estonian Soviet Writers, to demonstrate that the translator underestimates “the excellent results of Soviet literature” (Mälk 1950: 532). This accusation would become a reason for the repression of the translator. Or, Johannes Semper may be accused by functionaries of the State Publishing House of having falsified Neruda in his translation, the main
reason for this being the fact that Semper translated Neruda directly from Spanish and not from Russian! According to his accusers, this meant that Semper was unable to benefit from the treasures of the Russian language, and his translation was therefore impoverished (Smuul 1954: 853). These are particularly absurd examples of how this “establishment of the Bolshevistic order in translation”, which Käbin considers in his article as a fundamental achievement, could affect the position of translators. Translators, just like writers and artists, were “workers at the ideological front”, as party people used to say. On the one hand, they were irrelevant instruments of ‘totalitarian translation’, and on the other hand, exposed to all the risks that the ideological front presented under the Soviet rule.

4. The case of Johannes Semper

The translating activity of Johannes Semper (1892–1970) is an interesting case study in the verification of what I have just claimed about the functions of translation and the role of translators in postwar Soviet Estonia. I will focus here on the place of the translator within the literary and intellectual domain, his (in)capacity as an cultural agent.

Semper belongs to the generation of Estonian intellectuals which was formed “between two revolutions” (Suits 1931). In 1905, he was a politically engaged pupil at Pärnu gymnasium and in 1917, a revolutionary officer in the Russian army (Estonia was at that time a part of the Russian Empire). In those years, Semper joined the movement of cultural and linguistic renewal “Young Estonia” (Noor-Eesti) and the Estonian Socialist Revolutionaries. Later, at the time of the Republic of Estonia, Semper’s efforts concentrated on the enlargement of the domestic cultural horizon, its internationalisation and internal differentiation. Semper’s intellectual credo can be summarised in his description of the “Young Estonia” programme as the “inextinguishable will of exposing Estonia to all the winds, storms, quests and findings in the intellectual domain” (Semper 1918a: 33).

Translation understood as Venuti’s “inscription of the foreign context” in the domestic scene and positive generator of internal heterogeneity was Semper’s means for bringing about what he, in an Estonian neologism, termed lahtirahvustamine (Semper 1918b: 64), which may be translated as the “unhinging of the national”. His translational preferences were those of contemporary Western poetry – Emile Verhaeren, Johannes Becher, Walt Whitman, Corrado Govoni, Paul Valéry, Arthur Rimbaud, to mention but a few. In the field of prose, he translated mainly French literary classics – Hugo, Stendhal, Zola, and also Gide. Although Semper has left us only a few commentaries on his activity as a translator at that time, we gain an understanding of his intentions and performative capacity if we consider the complexity of his approach. This included intense work in writing prefaces and forewords for his own translations if they were...
published in book form or accompanying them with articles about the authors and their works if the translations were published in literary journals. One must add to this Semper’s work as literary critic and theorist with its particular focus on French literature and the question of style. After the authoritarian political turn of the Estonian president Konstantin Päts in the thirties, Semper’s “unhinging of the national” and foreign inscribing translational activity conflicted strongly with the hegemonic nationalist discourse. Semper and the literary review *Looming*, which he directed in those years, were repeatedly attacked by Estonian nationalists for their “scepticism, internationalism, derisive attitude towards the state and the nation” (Siirak 1969: 141).

This, together with the revolutionary spirit of his youth, may be one of the reasons why Semper decided, along with other Estonian intellectuals, to join the communists in the political turn of June 1940 and became Minister of Education of the first Soviet government of Estonia. After the war, he was President of the Union of Estonian Soviet Writers from 1946 to 1950. In his writings of this time, we notice a clear shift in translational attitude from the kind of foreign inscribing approach of the preceding period to the overscribing approach of totalitarian translation. In an article published in the autumn of 1940, he claims that the capitalist West must also be opposed on a cultural level, shifting attention to Soviet literature in all its complexity as representing the fresh young energies of different “Soviet peoples”. Nonetheless, Semper still stresses here the importance of the classics of 19th century Western literature and of 20th century Western “oppositional literature”, as he calls it, the same preferences that he inclined towards at the time of the Republic of Estonia. As for prewar Estonian literature, he claims that it would be wrong to repudiate it and that it must be given critical attention (Semper 1940). Five years later, Semper returns to the question, this time going further in stressing the need to take Soviet writers and artists as models for the development of Estonian socialist realism. He also states that the new Soviet culture requires an irreversible leap out of the prewar Estonian tradition (Semper 1945). In 1946, he reaffirms the need for a “rapid break” with old Estonian culture, a break comparable to that which was made in Russia at the beginning of the 30s. And Russian literature as a whole is already for Semper, as it would be for Käbin in 1950, a fundamental signpost: “Russian literature with its ancient love for humanity, its passionate search for truth and justice and its traditions of fighting for a better future is a great model for many other literatures” (Semper 1946: 786). Semper himself translates very modestly from 1940 to 1949, but the change in orientation is very clear; among his translations of that period we find Blok, Mikhailov, Krolov, Prokofiev and Belinski.

Yet all this was not enough for the party, the overscription did not completely cover the traces of an insufficient erasure in Semper’s case, just like a palimpsest where the original text is still readable under the new one. In March 1950, the eighth plenum of the Estonian Communist Party sanctioned a major change at the
highest level of Soviet power in Estonia, accelerating, under the leadership of Johannes Käbin, the process of totalitarian translation in the broad sense described above. The ‘re-evaluation of the Estonian cultural heritage’ in the light of Marxism-Leninism is the means by which the political turn of the screw makes a tabula rasa of the remains of the prewar Estonian cultural elite. The party plenum is in fact anticipated and followed by heavy critiques and accusations addressed to those Estonian writers and intellectuals who joined the communists in 1940 but who had already been active at the time of the Republic of Estonia.

When the witch-hunt starts, Semper becomes one of the major targets. The attacks point directly at his translational activity during the time of the Republic of Estonia; he is accused of cosmopolitanism, formalism and worship of Western culture (see Laossosson 1950 and Mälk 1950). He is expelled from the Communist party and the Union of Estonian Soviet Writers; his contract with the State Publishing House is terminated and all his works are banned; his name does not feature in the histories of Estonian literature published in 1950 and 1953 (Sõgel 1967: 186). This situation lasts until 1954.

The destiny of Semper as a translator in this period illustrates well the mechanisms of totalitarian translation. There are two aspects to the question: firstly, those of Semper’s translations from the prewar period (often commented in a translator’s preface or afterword) which were still in circulation in the 50s, because they were not included on proscription lists; secondly, Semper’s new translations during the period of repression. In the first case, we observe the mechanism of erasure and overscription at work in all its materiality. I will consider here just one example. Figure 1 shows the original title page of the Estonian translation of *The Red and the Black* [*Punane ja must*], first published in 1938. Under the title, we can see the name of the translator [*Tõlkinud J. Semper*].

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5 Käbin’s above-mentioned article on the tasks of Estonian literature is an important moment in this operation.
Figure 2 reproduces the last page of Semper’s afterword signed by “The translator” [Tõlkija]. This copy of the book was probably held in a private library and thus escaped the censors. Censored versions of the first Estonian edition of *The Red and the Black* are reproduced in Figures 3 and 4.

Figure 3. Title pages of the 1938 edition after censorship.
The name of the translator has been scratched out or inked over on the title page (Figure 3) and the translator’s afterword has been completely torn out (Figure 4) in the censored books, which continued to circulate thus without any trace of Semper. Here, erasure implies a total annihilation of the translator, resulting in a paradoxical new original *Punane ja must* written by Stendhal in Estonian! But this was only a temporary solution. In the second edition of Semper’s translation of Stendhal, published in 1952, overscription has already concealed erasure; the name of the translator is displaced from the title page (picture 5) to the back page, the smallness of the characters reminiscent of Venuti’s “invisibility of the translator”.

**Figure 4. Semper’s ‘afterword’ after censorship.**

**Figure 5. Title page of the second edition (1952).**
In the 1952 edition, Semper’s afterword has been replaced by A. Ivaschenko’s afterword, where Stendhal’s work is placed within the ‘right’ framework of interpretation. The same kind of treatment was applied to other prewar translations by Semper (and other repressed translators).

At the same time, translation was for many repressed writers the only means of maintaining an income at the beginning of the 50s. In Semper’s case, the Secretary of the Union of Soviet Writers Alexander Fadeyev personally writes to Käbin in 1951, asking him to allow Semper to translate French and Russian classics and Soviet literature so that he could earn some money (Siirak 1969: 219). Thus, in Semper’s personal bibliography we find no original work from 1951 to 1954, only translations of (mainly) contemporary Soviet authors and French classics such as “The Song of Roland” and Corneille’s “The Cid”. The translations are commissioned by the State Publishing House and published without any comments by the translator, mainly in anthologies for schools or the wider public, and with no mention of Semper as translator. Semper is allowed to translate, but in this case too, his ‘authority’ as translator is nullified. A significant example of this lack of agency and subjectivity is to be found in what is perhaps the most interesting of Semper’s translations from this period, an anthology of Pablo Neruda’s poetry published in 1953 – the book does not even feature in the complete bibliography of Semper’s translations published in 1967. A long preface to the translation is presented in the book, with no reference to its author, this being a clear sign that it was written by the unmentionable Semper himself. In 1968, a new anthology of Neruda’s poetry is published in Estonian translation by Semper. This time the name of the translator appears in large characters on the title page of the translation and the brief afterword is signed by “The translator”. At the beginning of the afterword, Semper refers to his earlier translation of Neruda (1953) and to its preface where he writes in 1968, “someone introduced”/“introduced were” (the Estonian verbal form tutvustati is both impersonal and passive) Neruda’s country and life (Semper 1968: 123). The passivity and impersonality which Semper himself attributes to the author of his own writing in 1953 in effect characterises the position of translators within the paradigm of totalitarian translation.

5. History, Translation, History of Translation

In 1968, Estonia continued to be a Soviet country, but much had changed in the functions of translation and the role of the translator in comparison with 1953 and the postwar years. In 1954, when the worst period of Estonian Stalinism was coming to an end, the president of the Union of Estonian Soviet Writers Juhan Smuul, in his speech at the Congress of the Union, criticises the excesses of the preceding years of critiques and accusations against translators (Smuul 1954: 853). In 1956, the director of Tallinn Central Library Valdu Reekna publicly
complains about the lack of translations of foreign literature, mentioning, for instance, Ibsen, Shaw and Tagore, and initiates great debate on “readers’ unsatisfied needs” in the cultural journal Sirp ja Vasar (Reekna 1956). The “translational turn” (Tammi 2010) at the end of the 50s sees translations from Russian fall to under 40% and translations from foreign literature rise to over 50% of all literary translations published in Estonia in the following ten years. During that period, translations of Western literature play an important role in the renewal of Estonian literature, and translators regain part of their autonomy as cultural agents.

This means that during the Soviet period the functions of translation and the role of translators undergo fundamental transformations which should be studied in relation to changes in the politics of the Party and their influence on the Estonian cultural milieu. In this article, I have tried to define the dominant translational mechanism of the period of Estonia’s transition to Soviet rule (1940–1955) as ‘totalitarian translation’, which is in the narrower sense characterised by the hegemony of translation on original production and of only one source language and culture among translated books. The aim of totalitarian translation in the broader sense is the erasure of local cultural traditions and the overscription of the new Soviet values. In this context, translators become workers at the ideological front and as such they are exposed to all the dangers of the front and lose their capacity as autonomous cultural agents.

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Authors as Translators: Emerging Hierarchical Patterns of Literary Activity in Early Soviet Estonia

The translation of the introductory phrase from Stalin’s teachings on how to write and study history, a collection that was published in Soviet Russia in 1936, reads: “certain historians, especially those dealing with Soviet history, have deeply rooted anti-Marxist, anti-Leninist, annihilating and unlawful views on history” (Stalin 1949: 22). What follows is a detailed prescription, accompanied by elaborate schemes and graphs, on how to compile a textbook on Soviet history. In the same piece of writing, Stalin announces the formation of commissions for the reviewing, fundamental correction and, if necessary, rewriting of history textbooks. This article by Stalin was first published in Estonian in 1946. On the cover there is a standard remark often found on the covers of political texts translated from Russian into Estonian and dating from the same period: Сталин на эстонском языке [Stalin in the Estonian language]. This particular translation of a Stalin speech with a publishing date in Estonia just after World War II, and with its very clear message of a turn in the writing of history in an occupied country, is a convenient starting point for an insight into a purposeful hierarchical system of literary activity, including translation, in early Soviet Estonia.

The years following World War II, the beginning of the so-called Soviet time in Estonia, bear witness to, among other things, severe political and ideological confusion. However, Soviet time, a term deemed suitable by some historians, presents scholars with difficulties. The general postwar periodisation of Soviet time in Estonia usually includes, first and foremost, the Stalinist period, which, according to the Estonian historian Enn Tarvel, lasts from 1944 to 1956 (Tarvel 2000). Proceeding with Tarvel, the second distinguishable period is the meltdown in 1956–1968, followed by the stagnation period of 1969–1987, and finally perestroika in 1987–1991, before independence is regained in 1991. Each of these periods has distinct features, and, in Tarvel’s view, all of them can be divided into smaller sub-periods depending on the subject matter and field of study. For example, taking into account the literature of the time, the Estonian literary scholarSirje Olesk proposes that the Stalinist period be named a period of Soviet literature in Estonian (Olesk 2008: 84, 85), that is, a period devoid of Estonian literature. Olesk uses the metaphor of a wave to describe the Stalinist period, saying that in 1940–1941 and 1944–1953 (Stalin’s death) the place that had been reserved for
Estonian literature was invaded by alien texts, or rather alien models of text formation (Olesk 2003: 465).

However, having established that Soviet time is not a continuously consistent period of time in Estonian history and that narrower segmentation is not possible without reference to different fields of study, I will use the available terminology and look at the function of the hierarchy in literary practices in the Estonia of the 1940s and 1950s as a means of relatively smooth transition from one socio-political system to another. Translation has a special function in this transition; it is a vehicle for pushing previously central Estonian authors to the periphery and, in certain cases, returning them to the centre again later. Itamar Even-Zohar, with his focus on translation in the history of any literary polysystem, provides a useful point of reference by regarding translated literature as an integral system within that literary polysystem (Even-Zohar 2008 [1990]). But rather than looking at the peripheral or central position of translated literature as compared to the target culture’s own literary production, I will concentrate on translational activities, taking into account the translator’s position and regarding translation as a less visible practice in comparison with writing within the literary polysystem. Whereas Itamar Even-Zohar argues that translated literature does in certain conditions occupy a central position in the target culture’s literary polysystem, I maintain that even though translations can be central to the polysystem at any given moment (during turning points or crises), the position of the translator is still peripheral in comparison with the position of the author within the given culture. Moreover, hegemonic cultures, especially during the phase of implementing their power, tend to make use of the rhetoric of the lack of certain literary items in the target culture with the intention of importing those items along with hegemonic literary and/or political models.

A politically loaded hierarchical relationship between authorship, translation, and different editions and reprints can be seen when looking at the period 1945–1955 from the point of view of changes in Estonian society. These changes involve many former public figures being pushed aside, among them Estonian writers and translators. In an attempt to explicate the mechanics of transfer from one political system (the Republic of Estonia, 1918–1940) to another (the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic, 1944–1991), I will concentrate on three Estonian writers and translators, members of the Estonian Writers’ Union, who were active and well known in the field of literature before Estonia became one of the Soviet Socialist Republics. The authors under scrutiny are Friedebert Tuglas, Marta Sillaots and Betti Alver. These authors differ from one another in terms of their preferred writing genre and life story, but what is comparable is how translation came to play an important role both in their marginalisation and in the process of their rehabilitation. My choice of these authors is due in part to the availability of firsthand sources (diaries and letters), since an examination of such personal material side by side with publicly available articles and official data of the time
reveals the dynamics of the system I intend to describe. However, the conclusions drawn are by no means exclusive to these three individuals.

Having already experienced difficulties in getting work published during World War II (under Soviet, German, and again Soviet occupation), many established Estonian authors gradually became invisible in the years following 1945. This invisibility is the result of marginalisation to the extent of becoming either physically or socially non-existent. I intentionally use Lawrence Venuti’s term denoting the position of the translator in the Anglo-American world in order to highlight a slightly different kind of invisibility that is also connected to a specific socio-cultural situation. I will take the relative invisibility of translators as compared to authors for granted and use the concept to show how established authors are pushed aside by a less visible activity – translation. Like the one suggested by Venuti, this invisibility is not only concerned with the social position of the writer/translator, but deviation from it can be seen as a form of resistance on the part of the translator to the regime outside texts as well as to the regime of fluency within texts (as we shall see in the case of Betti Alver).

The most burning issue in literary circles in the early days of the Estonian SSR, the Stalinist period, was that of ideological competence. Stemming from a need for reassessment in the light of changing circumstances, ideological competence overruled issues of language and style, and expressions such as right and wrong literature appeared in the rhetoric of both officials and writers. Each writer tried to cope with the new system to the best of his or her abilities. Attempts have been made to group the writers who were active in this period according to how they reacted to the new political system. Jaan Roos, a figure close to the literary circles of the former Republic of Estonia, very bluntly devises four basic groups of writers in a diary entry dating from November 1945. He labels the writers in the following manner, providing a list of names for each one. First, the category of active collaborators, containing 12 Estonian writers; second, the spineless followers of the collaborators, a list of 6 writers follows, Friedebert Tuglas among them; and third, those who maintained their integrity, a list of 16 writers follows, Betti Alver and Marta Sillaots among them. The fourth group consists of exiled Estonian writers (Roos 1997: 288). With such divisions Jaan Roos voices the feelings of people in Estonia at the time. It is not difficult to see the logic behind his classification. Active collaboration meant holding a cultural functionary position in Soviet Estonia, whereas followers of active collaborators were writers who became Communist party members and remained visible on the cultural scene by adapting their work to the new models of social realism. The group that was seen as writers who retained their integrity had apparently already become silenced, kept a low profile or was openly not very enthusiastic about the political changes. However, things grow more complicated as we move along the timeline, rising from 1945–1946 towards the crest of the wave in 1949–1952 and beyond. These
divisions become blurred, categories become inconsistent and volatile, and authors move from one to another.

The years from 1945 to 1949 can be seen as building up to a climax in re-evaluating and rewriting Estonian literary history. During this phase of such active re-evaluation and rewriting of culturally established notions, an article entitled *Some Notes on Estonian Literature and Literary Criticism* by Max Laosson (1949), a cultural revolutionary and official dealing with cultural issues in the Estonian SSR at the time, was published in the June and July 1949 issues of the journal *Estonian Bolshevik*. This article initiated a series of severe and prolonged public attacks on formerly established Estonian literary figures that led exclusively to further repressions as the ideological wave crested in 1949–1952. The individuals under attack, mainly referred to as bourgeois nationalists, were accused of being ideologically incompetent, promoting national cultural values or following Western decadents. Official approval was granted to such public attacks and punishment of these so-called bourgeois nationalists at the eighth plenum of the Estonian Communist Party held on 21–26 March 1950. As the criticism was directed at both independent authors and literary societies formed during the Republic of Estonia, many writers soon acquired the status of *persona non grata* in the Estonian SSR, or in other words, became invisible.

In order to show the usage of the hierarchy of literary practices in the process of marginalisation, the life writing of the individuals concerned is of importance. In what follows, I will give an account of the chronology of events based on the diaries and letters of Friedebert Tuglas, Marta Sillaots and Betti Alver. On the basis of emerging patterns, it is possible to draw preliminary conclusions on the functions of translation as a vehicle for marginalisation in early Soviet Estonia.

Friedebert Tuglas (1886–1971) was one of the most renowned literary figures of the time of the Republic of Estonia, a leading name in the literary societies *Noor Eesti* [Young Estonia], *Siuru*, and *Tarapita*, Head of the Estonian Writers’ Union, Chief Editor of the literary journal *Creation* and member of the Academy of Sciences. His novels had been printed and issued many times, and he was a renowned translator who had translated from Finnish (Aleksis Kivi, Aino Kallas) and also from Russian. Tuglas was initially placed, by Jaan Roos, in the second category of spineless followers of the Soviet system, since he tried to continue his activities in the changed political system, and it seems that the system also tried to make use of his services at first. Tuglas’s most cautious postwar diary entries do not reveal any major changes to his routine in 1945. His life was full of social as well as work-related events. In 1946, he was given the title of the People’s Writer of the Estonian SSR, a title taken from him in 1950, after the climax of ideological pressure, as manifested in the public verbal battery of Max Laosson and others. Although Tuglas had already experienced problems when trying to get his collection entitled *Ten Stories* published in 1945, his translation of Chekhov’s *Selected Short Stories* was published without any major problems in January 1946.
Still an active and appreciated public figure, Tuglas faced growing pressure to publicly denounce his activities of the time of the Republic of Estonia, a common procedure at the time that was carried out at the meetings of the Writers’ Union. He, unlike many others, never succumbed to the pressure.

From 1944, Tuglas waited in vain for the publication of a new edition of his novel *Little Illimar* (first published in 1937). From 1946 to 1949, he was busy translating the established Russian authors Turgenev, Chekhov, Tolstoi and Mayakovskii, mainly for a literary reader. In January 1950, Tuglas (along with other well-known writers who initially remained true to the Soviet system) was excluded from the board of the Writers’ Union of Soviet Estonia, the issue being a lack of ideological competence. A diary entry dating from March 1950 reads: “I hear that all my books are prohibited. The publishing of the literary reader and a collection that happens to contain my translations has also been brought to a halt” (Tuglas 1997: 48). In April 1950, Tuglas’s pension is suspended. But in September 1950, he writes: “Finally, my Artamonov translation has been published, but – without my name” (Tuglas 1997: 49). Tuglas refers to his translation of Maxim Gorki’s *The Artamonov Business*, which he took up after Betti Alver (see below) had rejected it. And indeed, in libraries and internet book sales this translation is still nameless. It bears the name of the designer, Evald Okas, but no mention of a translator. Apparently, one of the reasons for publishing the translation in the first place was the exemplarity of the author of the original; Maxim Gorki was one of the proposed model authors of the period of Soviet literature in Estonian (to use Olesk’s term). The second reason must have been the eagerness of the authorities to show increased production of the right kind of culture in Soviet Estonia. In the following months, the repression continued and Tuglas was stripped of his awards and titles. What marked absolute rock bottom for Tuglas was his exclusion from the Writers’ Union of Soviet Estonia on December 1950. A subsequent period as *persona non grata* lasted for about two years.

The recovery started with reprints of Tuglas’s translations, followed by editions of his translations. After some time, he was offered new translation jobs. In November 1952, the publication of Tuglas’s translation of Aleksei Tolstoi’s *Peter the Great*, this time with his name on the cover, marked the beginning of the normalisation of his situation. Soon a contract for a new edition of a previous translation (Aleksis Kivi’s *Seven Brothers*) and a new translation contract (Maxim Gorki’s *Collected Works*) followed. Nonetheless, in January 1955, Tuglas was still experiencing difficulties in getting his own work published. He writes angrily: “Illimar’s [*Little Illimar*] original had ‘got lost’ in the publishing house. Knowing that I have no protection, every young career climber can behave the way they please with me” (Tuglas 1997: 61). However, in May 1955, *Little Illimar* (Tuglas’s first novel after seven years of silence) was finally published. At the same time, he was reinstated as a member of the Estonian Writers’ Union.
Marta Rannat-Sillaots (1887–1969) was a writer and literary critic, but principally an extremely prolific translator who published close to 60 literary translations during the period prior to the Soviet occupation of Estonia. She translated from French, English, German and Russian. Among the writers translated by Sillaots are: R. Rolland, A. France, G. Flaubert, Jerome K. Jerome, J. London, Ch. Dickens, É. Zola, J. Galsworthy, Th. Mann, M. Maeterlinck, J. Verne, R. Kipling, I. Turgenev, F.M. Dostoevskii and L. Tolstoi, to name but a few.

In 1946, Sillaots published five books of translations from Russian, among them an edition of the earlier translation (1941) of Tolstoi’s War and Peace. In the following years, 1947 to 1949, ten translations were published by Sillaots (Dickens’s The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club (1948) and a reprint of Tolstoi’s War and Peace (1941) among them). However, from 1949 until as late as 1956, there is no sign of Marta Sillaots, the reason being that on the 21 December 1950 she was arrested, accused of corrupting the Soviet youth (Sillaots 2009: 160), apparently on account of the literary salon she hosted. Sillaots spent five years in different prisons and prison camps, first in Estonia and then in Siberia, and was released in 1955, but not officially rehabilitated until 1964.

In 1956, a year after her return from Siberia, reprints of her translations of Tolstoi, London and Twain were published without consulting or even notifying the translator. Over the following years and until very recently, there have been several reprints (recently also new editions) of Marta Sillaots’s translations (Dickens’s David Copperfield 2007). It was only in 1963 that she was invited to edit her translation of A. France’s Thais (first published in 1929). Although rehabilitated and readmitted to the Writers’ Union of the Estonian SSR in 1964, her health had suffered during the repressions and she died in 1969.

Betti Alver (1906–1989), a member of the Estonian Writers’ Union from 1934, was an established poet by 1945. In 1943, Alver had a collection of poems entitled Elupuu ready and waiting for publication, but due to bureaucracy, as Karl Muru subtly puts it in his monograph (2003: 97), or more likely because of her position in the literary elite of the Republic of Estonia, the collection was never published in Soviet Estonia. The official reason was, as with Tuglas, ideological incompetence. Years followed that offered no opportunity to publish her poetry, years that are marked by translations. In 1945, Alver’s husband Heiti Talvik, a literary scholar, poet and translator, was arrested and deported to a Siberian prison camp where he died two years later. The translations Talvik had started remained unfinished and Betti Alver was able to take over the contracts. The translation of Maxim Gorki’s Childhood, attributed to Alver and published in 1946, was for the most part translated by her husband. In April 1947, according to her diaries, Alver had four contracts for translation: Pushkin’s poems Poltava and The Bronze Horseman, Gorki’s The Artamonov Business, which was later taken up by Friedeberht Tuglas and appeared in 1949 without the name of the translator, and
Goethe’s *Götz von Berlichingen*, the beginning of which had also been translated by Talvik.

In May 1948, along with a proposition to translate Pushkin’s *Eugene Onegin*, Alver received an official letter demanding the re-evaluation of her work according to Marxist-Leninist standards (Alver 1947–1950). Pushkin’s *Collection of Poems*, which included both *Poltava* and *The Bronze Horseman*, was published in 1949. After Max Laosson’s infamous article in the *Estonian Bolshevik* (June/July 1949), Alver, like Tuglas and many others, was exposed to severe criticism. In a clumsy attempt at damage control, Alver submitted to the Writers’ Union a creative plan for the year 1950 (such plans were compulsory at the time) promising to write poems on topics such as reshaping nature, the fight for peace and democracy, and the transition from socialism to communism (Alver 1947–1950: 35). Nevertheless, on 5 May 1950, her membership of the Estonian Writers’ Union of the Estonian SSR was terminated, the reason being: “her work is in contradiction with socialist mores” (Muru 2003: 110). In a public attack, following Laosson’s example, Magnus Mälk deems Alver a mere follower of Western decadents who has monopolised the publishing of certain translations (Muru 2003: 111). The reference is to her translations of Pushkin. As the wave of ideological rewriting of cultural models crested, Alver found herself in the trough of the wave. By 1950, she no longer had the possibility to publish her own work or her translations. A friend and partner, Mart Lepik from the Estonian Literary Museum, found a solution for the poet – to translate Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald’s correspondence from German to Estonian. This translation for the Estonian Literary Museum was published after a delay of some years, but the translator was paid by contract in advance. This was a sufficiently invisible way for the former poet to make ends meet at a time of forced invisibility. According to Karl Muru, the first public notice of Alver’s existence was the publication of Pushkin’s poem *The Upas Tree* in the daily newspaper *Postimees* in February 1952 (Muru 2003: 112).

An examination of the chronology of diaries and letters shows that the first results of the so-called *meltdown*, the loosening of ideological restraints, had already started before Stalin’s death in 1953. In Alver’s case, an edition of Gorki’s *Childhood* was published again in 1953, but according to her diary she only received payment (2948 roubles) for this in 1955, more than two years afterwards (Alver 1955–1956: 92).

Nineteen fifty-five is an important year in the investigation of Alver since the negotiations for the contract of Pushkin’s *Eugene Onegin*, her major translational contribution, started again. But these were marked by difficulties; on the one hand, the publishing house delayed the contract on various grounds and on numerous occasions; on the other hand, the poet herself was not very eager to comply with the authorities, nor with the demanding editors. Without wishing to go deeper into the translational norms of the time, it is important to say that the pre-
vailing requirements for poetry translation, apparent from Alver’s correspondence with the editors, were easy readability and the use of rhyme.

In September 1955, after Alver had submitted a translation of the first chapter of Eugene Onegin for editing, a major setback upset the translator. She received a letter from the editor, Ilmar Sikemäe, criticising the poor quality of the rhyme in her translation (Alver 1955–1956: 92). This letter is of interest because it gives us an idea of Alver’s deviation from normative, transparent translation. The editor praised Alver’s accuracy and easy readability, apparently essential features, according to the existing norms, but then continued with a long list of poor end rhymes that inhibited a fluent reading and jeopardised the strong rhyme pattern necessary to the fluency of Onegin (Alver 1955–1956: 92).

This incident allows us to draw a parallel with Venuti’s regime of fluency. Among other things, Venuti (2008 [1995]: 90) refers to Schleiermacher’s foreignising translation in the 19th century German context as a strategy designed to counter the translation practice that dominated in France at the time – les belles infidèles. Although Alver’s translation cannot be viewed as conscious resistance to the existing norms through the practice of foreignisation, certain traces of an unwillingness to fully domesticate the text can still be found. A well-known example is that of the word няня [nanny] in Onegin, and Alver’s insistence that the Russian orthographic image be retained in the translation despite strong editorial resistance (Alver 1955–1956: 92). As for the methods of translation, Alver explained her preferences in a letter to a possible commissioner in connection with the translation of the German poems of F. R. Kreutzwald in 1952:

I see two possibilities as regards translation methods for these poems. 1. Translation in which a tint of the original is preserved and 2. mechanical rewording. The first method is impossible given the short deadline, my other responsibilities, ill health and my lack of skills. The other method simply will not do (Metste et al. 2007: 188–189).

This quotation reveals Alver’s creed as translator. Furthermore, it is a clear manifesto to counter the existing norms or, in Venuti’s terms, the regime of fluency within texts that Alver might have regarded as political. In addition, the quotation is also a clear indication of the honest and modest nature of the translator, qualities that put her in the category of Estonian writers (Roos 1997) who retained their integrity.

Comparing Betti Alver’s diary entries from 1947 to 1956 with Friedebert Tuglas’s diaries (1944–1959) and Marta Sillaots’s letters and diary entries from approximately the same time period, a pattern emerges that suggests forced inner exile. The relationship between translation and authorship functions as a vehicle in the process of marginalisation as well as recovery from it. At a turning point in Estonian history, when translations of politically favoured authors can be said to have formed the centre of the literary polysystem, established Estonian writers
were pushed aside using a hierarchy in literary production that emerged through the order of publishing. This marginalisation process functions in the way that a writer’s own production is followed chronologically by new editions and then reprints of his or her own production; later translations, editions of translations, and, after that, mere reprints of translations form a hierarchy that ultimately leads to the complete silencing of the author. A reverse movement can also be seen. After being expelled from the Writers’ Union of the ESSR in 1950, Tuglas’s public recovery started in 1952 with the publication of a new edition of his translation of Tolstoi’s *Peter the Great* (Tuglas 1997: 50) and later the same year the finalisation of a contract for a new translation, Gorki’s *Collected Works* (Tuglas 1997: 51). The first public sign of Betti Alver’s existence was the publishing of her earlier translation of a poem by Pushkin in the daily *Postimees* in February 1952 (Muru 2003: 112). The next step in Tuglas’s recovery was the publishing of a new edition of his novel *Little Illimar* in the summer of 1955. Unlike Alver, Tuglas never fully returned to the literary scene with any major works of his own although by 1956 conditions were favourable due to a general relaxing of ideological pressure. The *meltdown* can be seen in the publication of Tuglas’s *Collected Works* in 1956, a collection that, according to Jaan Undusk, has formed the established canon of Tuglas’s texts, in other words, Tuglas’s canon is still a Soviet canon (Undusk 2009: 13).

As a result of this step-by-step marginalisation, Marta Sillaots acquired such a degree of invisibility in the Estonian cultural scene that despite the flood of reprints and then new editions of her translations, she has fallen into oblivion. Sillaots’s name appears twice in passing remarks in the recent volume of Estonian Literary History (Annus et al. 2001), namely, two quotes from her reviews, written and published before 1940, are included there. In addition to the assumption that literary histories only mention translations when there is no way of avoiding them (Even-Zohar 2008 [1990]: 199), it is reasonable to add that although literary histories might at times include separate influential translations, they never mention translators unless the translators themselves are established writers in the target culture. Stemming from that, the need for a separate translation history is strikingly obvious, especially with regard to such authors/translator as Marta Sillaots.

In conclusion, we might infer, with reference to Even-Zohar, that while the position of translated literature fluctuates between central and peripheral in a given literary polysystem, the position of the translator can still be considered as peripheral, unlike that of the author in the target literary polysystem. Thus, due to its generally more invisible nature, translational activity can be used on the temporal axes of cultural histories not only as a means of transfer of different values or entire value systems from centre to periphery and/or vice versa, but as a means of manipulating the individuals who carry these values. In the Estonian SSR of 1945 to 1955 and beyond, more and more of the ideologically acceptable
(Russian) authors were translated by the ideologically incompetent authors of the target culture. In this way two goals were accomplished. First and foremost, the formerly active producers of culture (if we may refer to well-known literary persons in such a manner) were conveniently pushed aside, and secondly, the all-important figures of cultural production were increased. On the other hand, the use of translation as a form of resistance can also be detected within the actual texts as well as in the behavioural patterns of the translators. The mechanics of the system (in the political sense) of rewriting histories and the changes in the literary polysystem emerge through the life writing of the individuals involved: diary entries, notes and letters of the translators.

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From Mugandus [Accommodation] towards Discourse-Aware Translation: Some Aspects of an Italian Itinerary in Estonian Translation History

1. Methodological Remarks

The theoretical aim of this paper is to discuss some of the problems involved in drafting an Estonian translation history according to the broader socio-cultural contexts within which concrete text transfers occur. The practical aim is to provide a guideline for its ‘Italian itinerary’ in view of these problems. The basic principles of a possible methodology for constructing such an itinerary derive from the polysystems theory of the Tel Aviv school, with a special bias towards the study of the functions of translated texts within the network of all translated texts in a target culture as a system in relationship with the whole literary system of the target culture (Even-Zohar 2000 [1978]: 191–192). The problem, of course, is whether the object of study in this case be text models, with the focus on structural characteristics, which Juri Lotman has defined as metasemiotics, rather than the fortuitous and structurally ‘non-relevant’ features, which are the object of cultural semiotics (Lotman 1990: 272). The latter would emphasise more the historical aspect. The Tartu-Moscow semiotic school understands texts as at least double-coded messages. Hence the concept of a text which combines elements of both primary and secondary modelling systems (ibid. 46–47). Of special interest in the history of translated literature is in what way the interrelation of different modellings occurs in single texts as historical landmarks, and what their function is within the target system as a whole. For example, a specific language with its particular prosody and traditional poetic forms may embrace new poetic forms in translation. The Estonian language with its accent on the first syllable naturally favours apposite metrical forms (e.g. trochee). Yet a great many texts in iambic metre have been translated as iambic, and as a result Estonian poetry has developed something like its own iambic tradition. Therefore, Even-Zohar’s seminal suggestion to study the correlation of translated texts (1) “in the way source texts are selected by the target literature”, and (2) in “the way they adopt specific norms, behaviours and policies […] in their use of the literary repertoire”, is relevant to my purpose in studying the Estonian ‘Italian itinerary’. The same holds true for another issue, that of the position (central/peripheral) of translated literature within the target system.
But there is one more problem to tackle. The merit of the Tel Aviv School was to put the emphasis on the system and norms of the target culture. Gideon Toury’s statement (1995: 29) that “translations are facts of target cultures” depending on domestic “acceptability”, in which various shifts constitute a type of “equivalence” conforming to domestic values at a certain historical moment, has become a point of some critical discussion and reinterpretation. For example, Venuti (1998: 27) contests “the inscription of domestic values in the foreign texts”. Venuti insists on separating translations as “facts” from translations as “values” (ibid. 29). Therefore, the methodology of an Italian or any other itinerary in Estonian translation history has to decide whether to basically adhere to the descriptive target-based model of the Tel Aviv school and its supporters or to adopt also some positional attitude: the localising from within (emic) or the generalising from without (etic) (cf. Anderson 2003: 390–391). I, as one who has been brought up and educated as a subject of Estonian culture, occupy the emic position, but this is a useful reminder only in relation to the etic. Fortunately (or not), my ‘from within’ has been different in different periods as I have seen both the Soviet period and the new period of state independence. So perhaps it is easier with such a subject split to “unfamiliarize the familiar” (ibid. 391). The subject-split is most useful in tracing any comprehensive itinerary in Estonian cultural history, for the very fact that due to tensions and shifts in power (from Baltic-German to Estonian national to Soviet Estonian to the most recent Estonian mono-cultural vs. multi-cultural community interests), the shifts in the selection of cultural texts and their normativity paradigms have been different. Even-Zohar, in a relatively recent article (2003), introduces the notions of the active and the passive aspects of the making of a cultural repertoire. It may also be understood as the active and the passive subjects of a culture during a certain historical period or the “interaction between agency and structure” (Inghilleri 2005: 126; my emphases – Ü.P.) in Bourdieu’s terms. In other terms, the transferrers and the translators make their selections and develop their discursive strategies not only depending on the nature of the text, as postulated by Skopos Theorie, but also from within their position in respect to group and community interests at a given historical moment. Ideally, the question seems to be best defined as a tension between what translation actively does within the target culture (the performative and transformative aspects) and what it does not do (the passive conservative aspect), in which aspect and in whose interest. My attempt at a periodisation of the Italian itinerary in the history of translation in Estonia wishes to follow this principle.

Last but not least, I wish to highlight the distinction between cultural transfer and text transfer. Text transfer is actually a somewhat hazy term. Texts cannot be transferred materially, as they change in translation. But they can be transferred semiotically, with the resulting effects in the target cultures (Even-Zohar 2003, Pym 2003). In this sense, new forms and new models may be transferred via translation. In the process of transfer, the what that is being transferred (facts of
the secondary system) very often undergoes a change, meeting some sort of modifying reaction or even resistance from either the embracing primary system (the natural language) or the ideological agents. Sometimes the transfer itself is not recognised as such.

2. A Possible Periodisation of Estonian Translation History

Let us take a brief look at the possible stages in Estonian translation history from the point of view of the interaction of the primary and secondary modelling systems, i.e. language in relation to forms of cultural and ideological discursive practices. Rather than strict periodising with clear-cut stages and precise structural features, I attempt to define some landmarks which emphasise changes in translation policies and practices from the 19th century to the present day and which might prove useful for a more precise historical account:

1. accommodational writing/translation – *mugandustõlked* (19th century translations)
2. translations of linguistic and cultural innovation  (the *Noor-Eesti* [Young Estonia] movement in 1905)
3. ideologically resistant and linguistically conservative translation (the Soviet period of double reception)
4. discourse-aware translation (from the 1990s)

The first and the third stages are characterised by a sharp split in the cultural subject for political and ideological reasons, to which I shall return later. The second and the fourth stages are also ideologically similar – differences in the cultural subject are not so manifest, although they do exist. In any case, it should be stressed that several translation discourses are present within any given period.

3. Mugandus

The Estonian term *mugandus* is a peculiar one. It has been used by Estonian cultural historians to denote cultural adoptions and borrowings in a somewhat apologetic way; therefore, I prefer to translate it as ‘accommodation’ rather than the more neutral ‘adaptation’, which may, depending on the context, suggest a derogatory attitude. My deliberate choice of ‘accommodation’ also stresses that in the process of *mugandus* we are dealing with a complex phenomenon, for in the field of original writings and translations it often means an amalgam of translated parts and adapted parts, borrowed forms and original inscriptions. *Mugandus* is very closely related to the problematics of the change of the cultural subject.

It is a common notion that it is possible to speak of the change of the subject of cultural transfer in Estonia mainly from the 19th century, particularly the latter
half. Up to that point, the local German intellectuals were the active subject of transfer in most of the cultural transfers made, with their performative aspirations (performative in its extended sense, cf. Pym 2004: 114ff): spreading the Lutheran confession, making their subjects aware of the Baltic German law system, and also creating a kind of cultural otherness within their own territory (e.g. the Baltic German author Georg Julius Schulz-Bertram insisted in his famous speech in 1839 that the Estonians should have their own history and national epic, cf. Talve 2004: 349). This holds true in the case of the translations of the Bible; the translation of the civil law, especially after the abolition of serfdom (the Estonian law of peasantry was printed in Estonian in 1816 and the Livonian law in 1820, cf. Kahk 1992: 607ff); and the creation of Estonian literary language, modelled on the grammar of the German language and greatly influenced by the afore-mentioned translations (for biblical translations in Estonia and their impact on the development of the Estonian language cf. e.g. Ross 2002, 2008). True, there are examples of different subjectivities, especially some popular forms of the religious practice of the Moravian Brethren [Vennastekogudus], etc.

The main stage for subject change opens up with the transfer of some forms of popular culture towards the middle of the 19th century, when a great many secondary forms of modelling were transplanted onto the primary form, the subjects of this transfer being also Estonian intellectuals, or predominantly Estonian intellectuals. New forms of culture had to be imported, but in the spirit of the national awakening movement they were to be transplanted as something which emerged as original rather than adopted, whereby very soon it was consciously forgotten that these were adoptions.

I will present a few of the more striking examples. The first is the laulupidu, the Song Festival (1869), which many Estonians still believe is our own invention. It is quite clear, however, that the Estonian laulupidu is a form of cultural transfer from the German Liedfest (the same is true in Latvian culture). The name itself is a calque from German.

Another example is the national epic Kalevipoeg, 1857–1861. The Romantic wave of folklore had risen much earlier (the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century) with the translations and transfers of McPherson’s The Songs of Ossian, which for a long time had passed for original Celtic folk songs. So Kalevipoeg is a more recent reverberation of this kind of need to translate original folk songs into intellectual pseudo- originals. The alliterative Estonian folk song regilaul is very old, dating from the pre-conquest period (i.e. before the 13th century), as such it is an authentic manifestation of the oral Estonian language and culture; yet it was necessary that it have its own intellectual pseudo-original national epic too. Here we see an instance of cultural transfer with a new Estonian subjectivity – the transplantation of a new European cultural form, the national epic as a secondary cultural system, onto the primary system, the natural lan-
guage, and by extension, its own secondary modelling system, that of the alliterative regivärss.

It is in this very spirit of the attempt at blending foreign cultural forms with one’s own language and discursive models (to the extent of consciously ignoring and gradually forgetting the foreignness of the secondary forms themselves) that the first great wave of national literature in the Estonian cultural climate of the 19th century is also to be understood. It is very often the case in the context of allegedly original poetry, e.g. that of the national poet Lydia Koidula (Waino-lilled in 1866) or the compiler of the national epic Kreutzwald (Angervaksad 1861); also in various earlier theatre performances and in some pieces of music, for example, the well-known Estonian national song Kas tunned maad, mis Peipsi rannalt, with its Estonian lyrics blended with a French popular song Ma Normandie. Perhaps one of the most notorious cases is that of Lembitu (Lembitu was an Estonian chief who fought the German crusaders in the 13th century and who is mentioned in the Henrici Chronicon Livoniae), another attempt at a national epic by Kreutzwald and the first example of the introduction of ottava rima into the Estonian poetic tradition. This peculiar work (first published after the author’s death in Helsinki in 1885) in seventeen songs with an unequal number of stanzas was for a long time taken by the national critique to be an original composition; only in 1927 was it discovered to be a calque in form, a translation and adaptation of several parts of Josef Viktor Widmann’s Buddha (1869), yet with altogether different ideological implications. (Certainly, accommodation was not an unknown practice in the German cultural space of the 19th century, but the question is whether borrowings and elaborations were presented as original composition or not. For example, the repertoire of the German theater in Tallinn (Revaler Theater) comprised a great many accommodations, but this was common knowledge.)

As I have pointed out, there are two main characteristics (besides the basic ideological function) which connect all these phenomena: (1) they are centred upon the Estonian language and (2) the subjects of transfer are Estonian intellectuals who are testing the possibility of combining foreign secondary modelling systems and the national language. The performative nature of the whole process is to prove and ensure that the Estonian language can be used by Estonians in several cultural forms and thus also prove and ensure that they are subjects of culture with a cultural identity of their own. Viewed from the inside, this is certainly not something which might merely generate a poor copy or a performative violation of the original text; instead, it is something which is presented to the new self-projecting cultural subject as an original expression in the national awakening process, as an original expression in the national language. It is mugandus par excellence.

Accordingly, the first wave of book translations should also be viewed and understood in the spirit of this kind of cultural transfer and self-projection – mugandus – from the learned to the most popular and even exotic.
This idea of a particular ideological climate somewhat refines Even Zohar’s assumption of the centrality of translation during the period when a culture is still young and when translation occupies a central position in the polysystem. It appears that the frontiers between originals, translations and adaptations are very fluid in all fields of culture.

3.1. Mugandus and the Early Translations from Italian

Several phenomena enter into the process of mugandus, and their functions are not always the same. In the early phase of translation from Italian, there is a manifest wish to entertain, not only to raise the awareness of the Estonian public’s self-identity. There is also a wish to satisfy the need for cultural exoticism (Italy being far removed from the consciousness of the ‘average’ Estonian of the time). The author’s name is very often not mentioned in these translations. For example, the first four translations of allegedly Italian works during the period from 1874 to 1900 bear no witness to the author’s identity. The titles are also very curious as they seem to have the characteristics of enlarged paratexts which in English translation would go as follows: “Star-Maiden. A Beautiful Story for my Young Friends for a Pleasant Pastime”, “The Countess of Mirandola. A Serious Story from the Land of Italians”, “The Fisherboy of the Island of Capri. A Nice and Merry Story for Youth”. The translators’ names are mentioned, but in one case it says on the cover that M. Mäe has “written [the text] into Estonian” and on the title page that M. Mäe has “delivered [the text] into Estonian”, evidence that the translating activity is not always clearly differentiated from the writing activity. In at least two of the four cases it is very probable that the text has not been translated from the Italian, and perhaps we are even dealing with a German author whose stories depict an Italian scene.

It is also curious that the first two translations from Boccaccio’s Decamerone, in 1906 and 1908, are partial, abbreviated and mainly perform an entertaining or even erotic function, particularly the later one. In this edition, the heading has been changed into Wabadel tundidel, something like ‘during the hours of leisure’, with “only for adults” added in brackets. It is even more curious that the name of Boccaccio has not been mentioned. Nor is it clear whether the translations were made from Italian or via some other language. There is, however, a short translator’s foreword to the 1906 edition, not all selected stories aim at entertainment, but the translator’s name is not mentioned. In the 1908 edition, the translator’s name is mentioned, but the translation is a very strange mugandus, with a great many omissions and curious additions. For example, in the novella which relates how Rustico and Alibech tame the devil, it appears that Rustico is an old monk, while in Boccaccio’s work he is a youngster. Alibech, although a pagan, visits a Lutheran (!) clergyman to learn more about Christianity, etc. So it is an incredible mixture of performative falsification and hints at eroticism, although the descrip-
tions themselves are much more modest than those of the original. Yet strangely enough, it is a period in which, at least at Tartu University (the third biggest in the Russian Empire and still mainly a German and then Russian university in this period, despite the growing number of students of Estonian and Latvian origin), the study of Italian language and culture cannot be underestimated (e.g. the first lecturer of Italian was employed in 1814, and the director of the University library, the classical philologist Karl Morgenstern, was also a keen scholar of Italian culture and literature, cf. Nurmekund 1975). But it was evidently normal to entertain the wider Estonian public in Estonian with foreign and exotic tales in such a form. The cultural subject (comprising the active and the passive parts) therefore determines the nature of cultural performatives and transformatives.

In summarising this period of mugandus, it should be reinforced that for various performative functions, either for the awareness of the cultural subject of one’s own language or for the needs of this emerging subject, different kinds of cultural transformations are possible – from learned forms to popular forms, from law texts to texts for entertainment.

4. Translations from Italian during the Period of Linguistic and Cultural Innovation

This period is characterised by a growing awareness of the active subject of another need of national identity – the need to belong to a particular cultural community.

During this phase Estonian intellectuals in a sense take up the earlier initiative of the German intellectuals, but with a different performative function. While the German intellectuals wished to create a civilised subject of the Estonian peasants that would be comparable to civilised subjects with their own historical point of reference (i.e. German culture in the European and the world context), then the Estonian intellectuals posited the Estonian national identity as part of European identity, at the same time trying to discard both the German and the Russian filters. In translation this means a transition stage from mugandus to the conscious (though surely not systematically planned) translation (cf. Toury 2003) of Weltliteratur. The Estonian language, so much cherished by K. J. Peterson in his ode Kuu (“Moon”, probably written in 1818 and blending the classical form of the ode with the national language), now acquired its own Faust in 1897 and Daani prinz Hamlet in 1910. As to the Italian itinerary, Villem Grünthal-Ridala translated the first Canto of Dante’s Inferno in 1910.

Therefore, the most important phenomenon of this stage of Estonian translation history might be called the movement of linguistic and cultural innovation with two performative functions: (1) to make Estonian culture part of European culture, which in literature meant (a) the translation of classics in order to have a
common patrimony and (b) the translation of contemporary authors in order to begin an up-to-date dialogue with contemporary culture, and (2) to innovate, even radically reconstruct, the Estonian language, which was felt to be too strongly influenced by German and Russian, both of them colonising languages and cultures. In compensation, strong efforts were made to innovate the Estonian language both from its own resources and those of the closely related Finnish language, but also with the help of the Romance languages and English. This was the so-called keeleuuendus (the term was coined by the innovators themselves), postulated by the intellectuals of the Noor-Eesti [Young Estonia] movement, which was born in 1905. It is interesting to note that part of the strategy was built on an extensive translation project, whereas the method was to be radical: to reconstruct in the process of translation the Estonian language itself (cf. e.g. Monticelli 2005). Villem Grünthal-Ridala is the author of one of the most radical translations in Estonian translation history, that of the Innocente by Gabriele D’Annunzio which appeared in Estonian (Süütu) in 1913. D’Annunzio was immensely popular among the Young Estonians, although his fame later vanished. His example was perhaps also due to his linguistic programme which had appeared in the preface to the Triunfo della morte. But the Young Estonians had their own programme, different from that of D’Annunzio. While D’Annunzio discarded everything popular from his ideal language, willingly borrowing lexical items from very old noble forms of literature, but not from popular works written in dialect, the young Estonians were very open to all sorts possibilities for linguistic enrichment, including both archaic and dialectal words, and also borrowing morphological elements and even syntax (especially the syntax of French and Italian). Therefore Grünthal-Ridala, while translating D’Annunzio, sometimes uses syntax which might be defined as an almost iconic transfer of D’Annunzio’s Italian syntax into Estonian (Ploom 2005). The same holds true for word order, e.g. the adjective following the noun, which is not ‘proper’ in the Estonian language, and some punctuation habits which Ridala adopted in the process of translating the Italian romantic poet Aleardi and the neo-classicist Carducci and which also found their way into Ridala’s own original poetry (Ploom 2008).

Similar aspects, perhaps slightly less radical but more systematic in respect to those of Ridala, are to be seen in the translations of Johannes Aavik, the main champion of keeleuuendus, in his translations of Poe and Baudelaire (Sisask 2008).

As to contemporary literature, translated authors include the likes of the Nobel prize winner Carducci and the well-known and notorious D’Annunzio, mainly by Grünthal-Ridala, who also filled in various cultural gaps in the classics. For example, he translated a sonnet by Petrarch (CCCX) and a song by Leopardi (L’infinito). The translation of excerpts is even stronger proof of Grünthal-Ridala’s idea of conscious culture planning. Other similar attempts were made during this period which extends from 1910, when Canto 1 of the Divina Commedia
appeared, to World War II, with translations of works by the Nobel prize winners G. Deledda and L. Pirandello, the *New Life* by Dante, and of course Manzoni’s *I Promessi Sposi* (translated by Juuli Sarv in 1939), etc. At the same time, more translations into Estonian begin to be published with forewords, especially during the last decade before World War II. As to the Italian itinerary, Grünthal-Ridala’s explanatory preface to his ‘thick’ translation of *Innocente*, with its survey of D’Annunzio’s works and style and a glossary of innovative terms in translation, is pioneering, and that of Indro Montanelli to Pirandello’s short stories in 1938 is almost commonplace. As to poetry, Johannes Semper, who had translated Dante’s *Vita Nuova* in 1924, managed to transfer the contemporary spirit of Italian poetry in its most novel forms from futurist to other avant-garde poets, such as Lucini, Civignini, Palazzeschi, Campana, Buzzi, Govoni and Saba.

On the whole, this second stage might be defined as facing in the opposite direction from *mugandus* and its domesticating features; for indeed, foreignisation is already manifest in the slogan of the Young Estonians: let us remain Estonians, but let us also become Europeans. Perhaps, with the security of having established one’s own culture and one’s own literature (even if at the expense of denying its accommodating nature and suppressing the source culture), it was now time to take a radical turn – at least in some more clamorous manifestations, which were not, of course, shared by everybody – in declaring the need for the foreign element. The performative function reveals itself mainly in linguistic innovation, although not all of the radical suggestions find their way into the standard national language. As to the secondary modelling system with its apposite forms, it is interesting to note that Semper’s translations of modernist poetry paved the way for their original Estonian expression by Johannes Vares-Barbarus, although, on the whole, modernist tendencies remain marginal in Estonian literature.

5. Translations from Italian during the Soviet Period of the Ideological Split and the Linguistically Conservative Phase

The third phase in Estonian translation history might be defined as the linguistically conservative phase, a kind of resistance to the overt sovietising policy in Estonian culture. Let us recall one of its central mottos: socialist in content, national in form. Curiously enough, this slogan partly holds true in translation practice, but in a somewhat reversed manner, for the strong editing of ideological content also reverberated in the strong and very normative linguistic editing, wherefore the Estonian language underwent a phase of conservation. Never before had the translation process been so slow and so checked. During the *mugandus*-accommodation period, and even during the second innovative period, gaps in translation (by gaps I mean omissions of parts) were caused by the fact that some things were consciously omitted as not so important in adaptation or too erotic, or the trans-
lator had perhaps failed to understand, or occasionally gaps were simply due to inattention. Now, these gaps became voluntary and programmatic deletions from the originals (cf. Monticelli’s article in this volume). This corresponds to ‘socialist in content’. We do not, however, witness any decisive transformative turn in language. While Grünthal-Ridala had practically transferred Italian syntax in an iconic shape, which can of course be explained in part by the fact that punctuation norms (among others) were still very weak during the period of Noor-Eesti, the Soviet period was linguistically very normative. The most important translators of Italian of this period are Johannes Semper, Aleksander Kurtna and Harald Rammets. Kurtna, a polyglot who did not know Estonian well, was very thoroughly edited by professional editors, specialists of the Estonian language. Consequently, in his (and others’) translations of this period, there is a strong bias towards linguistic conservation. I remember that when I started as a young translator, editors were very keen to distinguish between Russian and Estonian forms of expression; there was a keen interest in keeping the language ‘clean’ and ‘intact’ from russianisms and sovietisms. But this tendency was also liable to wipe out possible influences of the ‘strangeness’ of the original language.

As to younger translators, discourse awareness became increasingly complicated due to a lack of knowledge of the cultural codes. Texts not only communicate, they also autocommunicate and intercommunicate; they compare themselves to one another and dialogue with other texts either written before them or written in the same period. Nor do they only dialogue with literary texts, but also with texts of mass communication. Therefore, the wider context of reception, criticism and theory becomes highly important. I am of the opinion that a good many translations of the Soviet period should be studied from this perspective.

Another phenomenon of domestication, and even contamination, arises in connection with so-called double reception (cf. Brisset 1991; Pym 1993 and 2004; Robinson 2003), which in a distorted way ‘compensates’ for losses in the source culture’s context. But of course, it gave both original literature and translated literature their characteristic of presentness in the Gadamerian sense. Gegenwart – albeit in a distorted mirror. Texts were often selected to resist or counterbalance the official Soviet translation policy of translating the literatures of the other Socialist republics, other accepted democratic countries, and the Third World. Thus, the translation of American writers became very important in the 1960s, a kind of resistance to this ideology – though they were basically writers who criticised the American dream and passed as ‘progressive’, as acceptable to the ideological canon. Also, the existentialist writers – Camus and even Sartre, who in 1963 visited the Soviet Union and also Estonia, were translated and received as the undermining force of the Soviet ideology of socialist internationalism. Officially, Sartre was, of course, welcomed from the point of view of Soviet ideology as a critique to Western society. On the whole, texts were understood strictly in the context of the target culture’s needs (doubly so), not in the context of the
source culture. Therefore, the conservative line in language was often counter-balanced by the performative function of translated texts, although very often in a distorted manner – either strengthening the Soviet ideology (the official line) or a counter-attempt to subvert this line. The official line of the Italian itinerary is seen in the fact that translations from Italian either include innocent classics (e.g. the full translation of *Decamerone* in 1957 by Semper and Kurtna, and the translations from Italian in the anthologies of Medieval and Renaissance literature, etc.) or the politically accepted neorealist canon.

Cases of double reception very often occur in prefaces. For example, in Kurtna’s translation of *Enrico IV* by Pirandello, which tackles the extremely uncomfortable topic of madness (e.g. in relation to dissidents), the topic is made acceptable by emphasising in the translator’s preface that Pirandello was on bad terms with the Roman Catholic Church.

### 6. Translations from Italian during the Period of a Shift towards Discourse-Aware Translation

The fourth and hitherto final stage emerges in the 1990s, but there is still a long way to go to what I would call a discourse-aware translation tradition. This would mean both the translators’ knowledge of the social and cultural codes of the source text, including the ideological encoding, and also a wide public discussion of collective discursive practices to educate both translators and readers. All sorts of translators’ scholarships involving long stays in the countries of the source cultures have certainly enhanced translators’ intertextual grasp of the source texts. It is also possible to point out several projects aimed at filling the gap in cultural discourse awareness through translating both classical and contemporary works of the human sciences (*Avatud Eesti Fond* – the Open Estonian Foundation, initially supported by George Soros, the European Culture 2000 project, etc.). Therefore, in Estonia today translation occupies a central position in the formation of theoretical awareness in the field of human sciences. Translators often do not hesitate to contact authors for immediate know-how (Merike Pau communicated with Umberto Eco when translating *The Name of the Rose*, and Maarja Kangro visited both Andrea Zanzotto and Valerio Magrelli to ask for advice). At the same time, the levelling-off tendencies of globalisation have brought cultural horizons closer, and it is easier to grasp irony, for example. When Zanzotto was translated by Kangro in 2005, we already had many cultural codes in common, e.g. in order to understand the idiotic babble of advertising by loudspeakers in supermarkets. Why are Italian children happy in the 1980s? Because they have *Standa*. This requires some factual knowledge; namely, that *Standa* is a supermarket chain, and also some common cultural codes which tell us that it is somehow connected with this kind of babble – when you go to a big store for something that you need and

203
somebody tells you in a baby voice how good it is to buy this or that thing, and perhaps a small child tells you that it is very happy that there is Selver or Rimi (supermarket chains in Estonia). So there was no need for extra allusions in the footnote when translating Zanzotto, except to mention that Standa is a supermarket chain. But to translate and read Zanzotto, it is necessary to know some background theory of the sliding signifier in Zanzotto’s verse, his parallels with Lacan, etc., which can be achieved either by individual reading or by following the articles and interviews that accompanied Zanzotto’s translation into Estonian.

I do not wish to suggest that Semper or Kurtna were not aware of the problematics of codes, yet they did not, or could not, make such a conscious effort to stress the foreign discursive aspect in their translation, and there was much less possibility for adequate reception. Discourse awareness can develop only out of the interaction of many factors: more theoretical studies of translation, more reviews of translation criticism and discourse analyses, university degree courses and international conferences.

7. Conclusions

Translation has always occupied an important place in Estonian culture, being very often at the very centre of cultural life. Towards the end of the Soviet occupation period in 1986, crowds of people gathered in the main hall of Tartu University library to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of H. Stillverk’s translation of Voltaire’s *Dictionnaire philosophique*. The Tallinn-Tartu train was so packed with people who wanted to attend the event on that cold winter morning that many could not get on. Of course, the event must be understood in the context of the general fervour of the approaching years of perestroika (cf. the curious Estonian translated term *uutmine*, a newly coined term for ‘innovation’) and the new national awakening movement. Yet it is also symptomatic of the central, though differently central, position occupied by translation in Estonian language and culture. The changes in the relation of the performative and transformative aspects vs. the conservative aspects in Estonian translation history discussed briefly here with the help of its Italian itinerary will hopefully serve as a guideline for lengthier and more systematic research.

References


Eeste kultuur kui tõlkekultuur: mõned ajalooolised ja statistilised ekskursid

Estonian Literary Translation in the Early 21st Century:
On the Context and the Content

It does not happen very often that translation as a phenomenon is given extensive attention in the Estonian press. In 2010, however, the March issue of Dipломaatia, the monthly supplement to the Estonian cultural weekly Sirp, was dedicated to the memory of two eminent and respected translators and public intellectuals – Linnart Mäll and Enn Soosaar, who had passed away earlier in the year. The articles on their achievement as translators, accompanied by accounts of Linnart Mäll’s work as a scholar and active supporter of the study of oriental cultures and Enn Soosaar’s engagement as a political analyst and newspaper columnist, were framed by a thorough introductory essay by the academic and critic Marek Tamm. The essay was titled Eesti kultuur kui tõlkekultuur: mõned ajalooolised ja statistilised ekskursid [Estonian Culture as a Culture of Translation: Some Historical and Statistical Excursions] and, while contextualising the life work of Mäll and Soosaar, it also briefly charted the tendencies on the Estonian translation scene in the 20th century and later. Its presumed audience was the Estonian reading public in general, and thus the opinions formulated would not have struck a specialist in the field as decidedly novel; yet it was a welcome attempt to bring this ‘common knowledge’ to the awareness of the ‘common reader’ while supporting it with statistics. The present article departs from Tamm’s survey, attempts to contextualise its empirical claims from an international perspective and proceeds to suggest possibilities for a more nuanced study of the topics raised.

1. Some Historical Excursions

Tamm (2010: 2) starts his discussion by recalling Henri Meschonnic’s claim that Europe was born out of and in translation and observes similar mechanisms operating in the translation history of Estonia. He traces the growing importance of translation before and during the emergence and establishment of Estonian national independence in the first half of the 20th century, goes on to comment on the persistence of Estonian-language culture during the Soviet occupation in the second half of the 20th century, and concludes his survey by commenting on the country’s reintegration into the European cultural scene after 1991, accompanied by a rocketing growth in the number of translations.
Having located the birth of Estonian translation criticism in the early 20th century and noted a simultaneous rise in requests for unmediated translations directly from the language of the original work, Tamm proceeds to another turning point in Estonian translation history which he detects in the 1960s – the same time that Mäll’s and Soosaar’s prolific careers were launched. This is a decade in which Estonian culture, after the frozen period of the Stalinist mid-century, reopens to literary imports to such a degree that Tamm considers it worthy of the label of a translational turn. At the time, 31% of literary titles published in Estonia were translations from outside the then Soviet Union, while translations from other literatures produced within the Soviet Union formed 29% of the titles and Estonian literature accounted for 40% (Tamm 2010: 3). The following decades, however, saw a decline in the number of literary translations published in the country – one of the possible reasons, as Tamm suggests, being the fact that in 1973 the Soviet Union finally joined the Universal Copyright Convention (Tamm 2010: 3).

A new turning point occurred in the early 1990s with Estonia’s newly regained independence. The centralised state system of publishing fell apart and was replaced by innumerable private publishers – Tamm cites the figures 435 for 1992 and 756 for 1993 – whose lists became increasingly long during this period, while the number of copies in print runs was steadily diminishing. Literature in translation played a major role in this publishing explosion – according to the Estonian National Bibliography, which Tamm uses as his source, there were 191 works in translation published in 1991, while in 2008 the number of translations published amounted to 1780 titles, which constituted 47% of all titles appearing in Estonian that year. These figures cover all publications, literary and other, and Tamm suggests that as regards literature, the percentage of translations is likely to be even higher. Concerning source languages, he remarks on the expected advance of English (33 titles in 1990, as compared with 1194 in 2008), observes a growth in the number of titles translated from German and French and comments on the relatively steady numbers of Russian source texts, with lists of 67 and 71 titles representing 1991 and 2008 respectively (Tamm 2010: 3).

2. Estonia and the International Scene

The empirical findings Tamm presents in his survey neatly corroborate some sweeping claims made by different translation scholars in the 20th and 21st centuries whose comments have not been made with Estonia in mind, but are aimed at charting more general international tendencies. To start with, there is the premise that Estonian culture was born out of translations and has been maintained with their help. The Meschonnic trope obviously functions as a rhetorical introduction to the topic and does not purport to claim something radically new about Estonian culture. Yet, in addition to this parallel that embraces Europe as a whole,
the importance of translation has been repeatedly underscored when speaking of the cultural development of small nations and literatures. According to the census of 2003, the Estonian population was 1,356,000 and of that number 922,100 people, i.e. 68%, spoke Estonian as their first language. Although there is a certain diaspora of Estonian speakers abroad, it is this community that comprises the audience at whom any works in Estonian translation would primarily be targeted. Thus, it comes as no surprise that Tamm’s view of Estonian culture’s dependence on translations should echo Itamar Even-Zohar’s (2000 [1978/1990]: 194) suggestion that the literatures of smaller nations find themselves in peripheral positions and, for this reason, are considerably more dependent on translational input than are the major literatures; this to the degree that, historically, their initial models have been provided by exterior literatures. Speaking of a more contemporary situation in the era of globalisation, Jean-Marc Gouanvic (2000: 104) has expressed his conviction that translation is generally unidirectional and that the need for translation is more urgent on the part of the dominated, while a laissez-faire market economy only tends to boost the already existing cultural hegemonies, catering for cultural import into the dominated regions. The welcome that Estonian culture has given to translated materials since its early years as a culture of an independent nation can be accounted for by using both of these opinions.

The multiplication of the number of books in translation published in the newly independent Estonia further supports Edwin Gentzler’s (2001: x) observation that the political events of the 1990s have been followed by an increase in translational activity, particularly in Eastern Europe, which had now freed itself from the restrictions placed on publishing activities by the Communist regime. Gentzler also suggests that the cultural conditions surrounding each community that experiences such a rise are so diverse that particular strategies employed in these situations are also bound to diverge. What emerges from Tamm’s survey is the fact that in the Estonian case the initial growth did not halt after the political breakthrough had been made and that the volume of translation has been on the ascendant ever since. It can also be added that even the observation that it was the 1960s that emerged as a translating decade in Estonia has international parallels: Lawrence Venuti (2002 [1995]: 12) has noticed a rare surge in the percentage of translations even in the US and the UK in the early 1960s, manifested by a rise from a steady 2% to up to 7% of all publications.

Venuti (ibid. 12–17), famously, has also explored the topic of dominant source languages, which Tamm touches upon in his essay. Venuti illustrates his statements with statistics drawn from the British and American publishing industries, as well as from the French, German and Italian publishing worlds. In comparison with the US and the UK, the percentage of translations among published materials is considerably higher in these major European languages, but regarding the source languages of translations, Venuti detects a noticeable disproportion between the number of texts translated from English and the number rendered
from other languages. His statistics derive from the early 1980s, yet the situation in early 21st century Estonia is not that different – the position of English as the leading source language has become firmly established. Venuti described the situation as a case of dire cultural colonialism:

By routinely translating large numbers of the most varied English-language books, foreign publishers have exploited the global drift toward American political and economic hegemony in the postwar period, actively supporting the international expansion of Anglo-American culture (Venuti 2002 [1995]: 15).

This constitutes a warning against Americanisation, which many would say is simultaneously a warning against globalisation, only we are some 20 years further into it as compared to the time described by Venuti, who is certainly not alone in holding this view. There are numerous voices underscoring the consequences that such tendencies may have, particularly for smaller languages and cultures. For instance, commenting on the intensification of translational activity in the contemporary world, Gentzler (2001: 187) raises a note of alarm, warning his readers that globalisation puts what can be termed “lesser known languages” in increasing peril. Along the same lines, Michael Cronin (2004: 5), who has been paying particular attention to translation issues in connection with minor languages and cultures, has made the ominous comment: “Not only are the majority of the world’s minority languages being threatened with extinction this century, but few languages are likely to escape the condition of being “minority” languages if present developments go unchecked”.

All in all, it can be seen that the developments in Estonia do indeed match the international patterns detected in other, often broader, contexts, and the related warnings also seem relevant to the Estonian context. Thus, the question might be raised whether the celebration of translational freedom and increased interchange with the outside world could actually backfire and prove pernicious to Estonia’s vulnerable culture and language. Indeed, an awareness of the potential dangers seems to be felt even on the national level. As of August 2004, the Government of the Republic of Estonia approved the official Development Strategy of the Estonian Language for the years 2004–2010. The document promises official state protection to the language and also lists several factors that are perceived as having an adverse effect on its maintenance and development. The list starts with the following items:

* increased multilingualism of entire communication, the impact of other languages, particularly English;
* rapid movement of Estonia into the sphere of global mass culture and media environment, including the Internet, which especially affects the younger generation;
explosive growth of linguistically uncontrolled text production and heterogeneity of authors caused by expanded needs and opportunities of language use (development of information technology, simplification of publishing); (Development Strategy 2004: 21).

While the new media are seen as a potentially more dangerous factor than traditional book publishing, the developments in both areas are likely to intersect at some point, as do the issues of language and culture. And it is the increase in publishing as well as the predominance of English influences that the strategy explicitly evokes. This seems to make for a rather bleak perspective for Estonian language and culture, with translation possibly operating as a subversive agent, undermining their status. To check this view, a more nuanced discussion of what is happening in particular sectors of Estonian publishing might be in order, to find out, on the basis of a circumscribed segment, whether the sample selected actually mirrors the general tendencies as sketched by Tamm and as predicted on an international level. To do this, the article proceeds to a survey of the literary translations issued by six Estonian publishers in the years 2000–2005, by which time possible new patterns in Estonian publishing had had time to become settled, and any possible millenarian anxiety had evaporated as the world had safely entered the 21st century.


The output of the six publishing houses observed included literature in translation on a regular basis during the period under discussion. Proceeding from the length and variety of the lists, the publishers can be divided into two. Firstly, there are the firmly established major publishers that produce numerous translation titles, e.g. Varrak, already established in 1991 and generally considered the pre-eminent contemporary Estonian publisher of translated literature. Tänapäev is a slightly younger and smaller publishing house that has fairly similar aspirations. While these two are products of the enterprising spirit of independent Estonia, Eesti Raamat is the successor of a state-owned publishing house of the same name from Soviet time. It continues a decades long tradition, a fact which might be suspected of making it less flexible concerning new developments.

The remaining publishers included operate on a smaller scale than the three mentioned above. Huma now seems to have more or less abandoned publishing literature – although in 2009 they issued a collection entitled The Man Who Made the Sun Stand Still: South Estonian Fairy Tales, which is an example of a rare reversal of the translation direction, introducing tales selected and retold by the poet Kristiina Ehin in Ilmar Lehtpere’s English translation. However, earlier in the century they did run a series of fiction in Estonian translation. Olion has books on politics, history and the social sciences on its list, but has also published a
number of novels in translation. *Pegasus*, founded at the end of 2001, is the youngest of the six and publishes literature in translation, but also advertises itself as a publisher of books on economics and business. Thus, roughly speaking, the sample consists of three major publishers and three smaller but reputable houses with a steady output.

The data on the publications again derive from the Estonian National Bibliography, compiled and maintained by the Estonian National Library. While the statistics that Tamm’s comments were based on took into account any titles, irrespective of their content, the publishers’ lists have been sifted to consider works that presumably would be sold in the fiction sections of bookshops, thus excluding, for instance, genre writing. Admittedly, setting such a limit excludes from consideration whole branches of *Varrak’s* output, but the differentiation allows for the drawing of separate conclusions on the situation at the high-prestige end of publishing, giving evidence not only of the publishers’ economic considerations, but also the cultural capital attributed to the works considered for translation. To use André Lefevere’s (2000 [1982]: 236) terminology, it presumes differentiated patronage, in which the economic component can be seen as a thing apart, not necessarily serving as a simultaneous marker of the most prestigious ideology or poetics. The publishing of genre fiction is presumably largely influenced by purely economic considerations, even if its status may otherwise be low. However, while it is obvious that publishers will never abandon certain economic considerations, reputable publishing houses may also want to add an element of prestige to their lists and therefore commission translations of works regarded as having a high cultural status, even though they are not expected to reach as many readers as, for instance, gripping crime novels. Thus, so-called serious fiction may be considered a more subtle indicator of the prevailing value judgements in a society insofar as cultural value attributed to the imported texts is concerned. The considerations certainly vary in the case of the publication of each particular work, but a general survey might help to discover if there is also a source language and/or culture that holds an uncontestedly hegemonic position as regards its cultural prestige.

Still, to give the more commercial end of the publishing spectrum its due, a couple of comments could be made on the genres of romance, science fiction and crime writing as well. In this area, English is by far the dominant source language, particularly with regard to romance, to which variation is brought only by a couple of translations from German. As for science fiction, here there is also a Russian dimension, although it remains a distinct minority in comparison with English. Crime fiction, which usually stems from particular social circumstances, is represented by the greatest number of source languages, English being followed by French, Russian and the languages of two neighbouring countries, Finnish and Swedish.
If we rank these genres according to the hypothetical status they are perceived to have – anecdotal evidence might suggest that many people will admit to reading a detective story now and then, while many will feel the need to make apologies for reading romance, with science fiction tending to have its own ardent followers and occupying an in-between position – it could be said that the higher the genre’s status, the more source languages seem to be involved and the smaller the proportion of English is among the source texts. This tendency continues when it comes to high-status literary fiction. During the period under observation, the six publishers issued 328 titles of what could be labelled as ‘serious fiction’ translated into Estonian from 20 languages. *Eesti Raamat* accounts for 112, *Var-rak* for 107 and *Tänapäev* for 55 works, while *Olion, Huma* and *Pegasus* issued 19, 18 and 17 literary translations respectively (Figure 1).

The number of titles is roughly comparable to the number of original Estonian titles published by the same houses during the same period. A similar result was obtained by Tamm as regards the general picture concerning any translated material – his analysis of the undifferentiated bulk showed that 47% of all publications are translations. The guess that when it comes to literature, the proportion of translations might be even higher, would certainly be valid if genre literature were also included in the discussion.

Among the high-status works, it is again English that emerges as the most popular source language, towering above the rest and, with 154 works out of 328, accounting for 47% of the translated titles. It is also the only source language that all the publishers have on their lists. While it was clear from the outset that English was not likely to be confined to the status of the source of (mindless) entertainment alone, it also appears that publishing translations from English involves a certain prestige. However, English as a source language does not hold an absolute majority as it did in case of genre fiction, accounting for less than half of all titles, which need not add up to the overwhelming deluge evident in the ominous pictures painted by more generalised accounts and predictions. This situation has
come about without the launching of a national programme for prioritising or subsidising the translation of European literatures, of the kind that Michael Cronin (2004: 56) describes as arising from the feeling that “the market alone could not ensure the translation and dissemination of different national literatures, particularly in view of the hegemony of English-language writing”.

Venuti, whose statistics, like Tamm’s, are not limited to literary fiction either, also provided a list of the most popular source languages in three consecutive years, 1982–1984. While his table (Venuti 2002 [1995]: 14) comes with the caveat that it represents but a selection of languages, it shows English, French and German leading the chart, holding firmly established positions that any possibly excluded language is not likely to have challenged seriously, particularly considering the four- to sixfold advantage English has ahead of the others. In Venuti’s table the top three are followed by Russian, Italian and Scandinavian languages, meaning Swedish, Danish, Norwegian and Icelandic viewed together. The Estonian translation scene twenty years later presents a roughly similar picture, again demonstrating how closely it parallels international developments. The 154 works translated from English are followed by French (45) and German (31), making the three- to fivefold advantage of English comparable to Venuti’s findings. The list continues with Russian (19), Norwegian (13), Danish (10), Spanish (10), Finnish (9), Swedish (9) and Italian (7) (Figure 2).

![Figure 2. Distribution of titles between source languages](image-url)
On the world scale, Finnish in the top ten would probably be surprising, yet from the Estonian perspective one might rather wonder why there should be so few translations from a fellow Fenno-Ugric language spoken in a neighbouring country, as competence in Finnish is arguably far more widespread in Estonia than a knowledge of, say, Spanish. Here, the answer apparently lies in the cultural capital as well as the aura of power attached to the major European languages and cultures that is felt less when it comes to Finland, itself not so powerful a nation and with a history devoid of mighty rulers and far-reaching imperial projects.

Up to this point, the discussion has been limited to source languages, as have the accounts by Venuti and Tamm. The number of source literatures, however, is different from that of source languages, which shows that it is possible to take an even more nuanced view on the matter. As regards the number of source languages, it is 15 for Eesti Raamat, 13 for Varrak and 10 for Tänapäev; the smaller publisher Olion commissioned translations from six languages, while Huma and Pegasus both published works translated from five different languages (Figure 3).

![Figure 3. Number of source languages](image)

Literature-wise, most variety is shown by Eesti Raamat (26 literatures), followed by Varrak (17), Tänapäev (16), Olion (8), Huma (7) and Pegasus (6) (Figure 4). For instance, translations from German published during the period mean renderings from German, Austrian, Swiss and Baltic German literatures into Estonian, and to these can be added the undefinable ‘minor’ literature of Franz Kafka. The menacing presence of Anglo-American monoculturalism appears to be divided in a similar manner. Literature of the US, with its 57 titles, only makes up roughly 37% of all English-language source texts and lags behind the 71 titles of English literature – an umbrella term which, for the purposes of this discussion, is employed to cover everything first published in Great Britain, unless explicitly Scottish or Welsh, and that thus includes authors such as, for example, Kazuo Ishiguro and Hanif Kureishi. In addition to these two major groups, the English-
language source texts also include Irish, Scottish, Canadian, Indian and Australian works of fiction, as well as a work by a Japanese author (Figure 5).

While the threat of neocolonialism often associated with Anglo-American cultural hegemony is not to be taken lightly, it can paradoxically first manifest itself in the tendency to attach all too readily a homogenising definition to the various literatures that happen to use the English language as their medium, yet give expression to different cultures and come from different continents. The cultural values presumably promoted by works authored by people as diverse as E. A. Poe and Arundhati Roy, both published in Estonia during the period in question, are
certainly bound to differ as well, neither of them promoting a stereotypical idea of Americanisation. Yet even if postcolonial literatures are not written out of existence by glibly using the ‘Anglo-American’ label, the hegemony of the Northern hemisphere can still be noted, with South Africa or New Zealand, for example, absent from among translated literatures. Along anecdotal lines, this preference is evidenced by the experience of a translator who early in the century was working on the Australian novelist David Malouf, yet was asked to suspend the project and switch assignments, as the publisher came up with the prospect of issuing yet another work by the British fantasy writer Terry Pratchett. Of course, it is not only the author’s country of origin that is a decisive factor here (the highly literary Malouf was certainly a less promising venture economically than the immensely popular Pratchett), but a certain preference for works coming from imperial centres, past and present, is still obvious. It is not absolute, however, and favouring one particular high-prestige culture and literature does not seem to have become an established norm.

Still, among the English-language source texts there was a curious occurrence that might have been a harbinger of a possible shift in norms. In the Estonian translation tradition indirect translation is frowned upon – as Tamm (2010: 2) remarked, direct translation became the requirement already in the early 20th century, although in Soviet time Russian was occasionally used as an intermediary language to produce translations of works of other Soviet authors whose publication was deemed necessary, mostly for ideological reasons. However, in the early 21st century a novel by Haruki Murakami was translated into Estonian from English. The decision to opt for a mediating language is evidence of a breach of the existing norm and also of the path via which the Japanese author’s work has reached the awareness of Estonian publishers. This practice has not been followed up though, as further – and acclaimed – translations of Murakami’s work have been made directly from Japanese. But should this practice of indirect translation continue, it may result in the reduction of language and cultural competencies available within the nation, together with the diminishing of appreciation of authors and works not first available through the reception prisms of hegemonic cultures.

Conclusion

Speaking of the emerging profiles of publishers regarding their output of literature in translation, they do not seem to specialise overduly; there appears to be a rough correlation between the length of the publisher’s list and the number of source languages/literatures represented in it. It is interesting to note, though, that while Varrak’s excellent publicity seemingly makes it the leading publisher of translations, it is actually Eesti Raamat, a ‘relic’ from bygone times, that holds the lead.
position in literary translations both quantitatively and with regard to variety. The reason for this may indeed be in its tradition-bound history, which renders it less market-oriented than the other publishing houses, because types of literature that are considered more prestigious, and thus presumably appealing to smaller audiences, were seen to derive from a greater variety of sources.

The survey of literary fiction in translation published in Estonia in the early 21st century shows that close parallels can be drawn between Estonian developments and those described or predicted by Western European and American scholars when looking at the data without adding a qualitative dimension. However, the distribution of source languages and cultures is not even in terms of different genres of fiction. As regards the statistical tendencies within high-prestige literary translations published in the country, they cannot be said to diverge immensely from the features observable in the general picture; yet they still testify to a greater variety and inclusiveness than the fairly absolute claims of imminent Americanisation to which all smaller cultures are doomed would make us believe. Thus, Anglo-Americanism, cited as a danger to minor and major languages and cultures alike, holds no absolute sway, at least not in the output of ‘high literature’ in Estonian translation. This tendency may also have parallels in international developments, or else prove to be Estonia’s specific way of translating “elements of the global and informational economy into local circumstances” as Cronin (2004: 34) has put it. This remains to be checked, yet all the more should this make us attentive as to future developments – will the present fragile balance be overthrown in favour of more aggressive monocultural importing? As it stands now, the Estonian translation scene seems to be able to accommodate both Enn Soo-saar’s translations of William Faulkner and Linnart Mäll’s rendering of the Bhagavad-Gita and also, it is to be hoped, the work of the translators following in their footsteps.

References


Case Studies from Far and Wide
Études de cas
Why talk about 16th century Ottoman poetry and translation in the 21st century in Tallinn? The reason may well lie in the fascination that world translation history holds for those of us who care to reach out beyond the customary borders of cultural interest to provoke comparative thinking, an inclination that seems to be gaining ground, especially among comparative scholars.

Twenty-five years ago, Ottoman translation history was considered a novelty, perhaps somewhat exotic too, when introduced in the predominantly European context of the International Comparative Literature Association Congress held in Paris (1985). I discussed the first translations of European literature into Ottoman Turkish in the second half of the 19th century (Paker 1986), which I analysed in a 'polysystemic' framework (Even-Zohar 1978; 1979). Read in the light of the polysystem theory, the interrelationship between indigenous developments in Ottoman literature and translations from overtly 'foreign' works of more or less the same century (which began to shape a modern poetics that served as the foundation of the later west-oriented Turkish literature) became clearer than ever when approached from a systemic perspective. In the process, Turkish secondary sources, such as literary histories written in the early republican times, grew in importance, for me, as critical loci which needed to be explored and challenged. Since then, I have continued, albeit sporadically, to study Ottoman translation history from the same perspective but moving back to the 14th century: a different and more revealing point of departure. There was an important reason for this. When asked, in the early 1990s, to write an article on the 'Turkish tradition' for the Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies (1998), I discovered an enigmatic approach in the secondary sources concerning translation practice: an evasion of the issue of literary transfer from Perso-Arabic in terms of 'translation', a veiling, almost a concealment, of the practice that had governed literary production for more than four hundred years. The present paper is an attempt to draw attention to 16th century Ottoman poetic practice by addressing issues raised in important secondary sources that support the arguments I have been pursuing thus far.
Introduction

In this paper, I shall (a) describe Ottoman Divan poetics as one of ‘resemblance’ (Foucault 1977: 17); (b) explain how translation as terceme (repetition), the fundamental means of literary production in the order of resemblance, is disrupted by creative interventions, thus ensuring the survival of the Ottoman poetics of resemblance for at least four hundred years, from the 15th to 19th centuries; and (c) suggest that telif, an equivocal term used in modern Turkish scholarship to describe the literary status of a work elevated above that of terceme, does not signify ‘originality’ but creative mediation, an inventive form of translation. I had initially intended to propose also a polysystemic approach for a comprehensive historiographical study of connections and interactions between what may be hypothesised as a central system (the ‘intercultural’ system of the Divan tradition) and sub-systems in various historical periods; this would be aiming for a fuller picture of the dynamics of Ottoman literature, instead of static, compartmentalised and disconnected accounts of different historical genres and literary practices. For Ottoman literature did not only consist of Divan poetry at a presumed centre: its peripheries extended into the popular-mystical, the popular-heroic, popular romances, the oral tradition, etc., all of which need to be investigated in a general theoretical framework. However, given the limits of time and space, that discussion will have to be taken up later.

The Ottoman poetics that I will discuss here pertains to the Divan (Court) tradition that developed from Persian, following varieties of the metric verse, aruz, based on the Arabic tradition. It reflects the literary practices of Ottoman ‘poet-translators’ in a hypothesised ‘central intercultural system’ (taking shape from the middle of the 15th century), in which both so-called source and target coexisted (Paker 2002a), as I shall explain below. Boundaries were not clear; source and target overlapped in both language and literary tradition.

1. What Fuzûlî Said, What Foucault Echoed

In a recent book on Divan poetry as “a lost paradigm in a world transformed”, Kemal Kahramanoğlu (2006: 1) draws attention to some statements by Fuzûlî (1480?–1556), considered to be “the greatest of classical Ottoman poets” (Köprülü 1989 [1947]: 554–80). Born in Karbala, near Baghdad, Fuzûlî spent his whole life in the same region, without a single visit to the Ottoman capital and at a remove from the patronage of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent. His work survived in three separate collections (called Divan) which he himself put together in (Azeri) Turkish, Persian and Arabic, each of which were considered in his time to be the ‘distinguished languages’ of the Ottoman intercultural domain. In the preface to his Persian Divan, Fuzûlî states that he seems to fail no matter how
hard he tries as a poet to compose a *mazmun* (conceit) that is considered satisfactory. “This is a strange situation,” he says. “It is not acceptable to write something that has been said before, because it has *already* found expression; nor is it acceptable to write something that has *not* been said before, because it *hasn’t* already found voice in the poetry of others” (Fuzûlî in Tarlan, quoted by Kahramanoğlu, 2006: 1).

In Kahramanoğlu’s view, Fuzûlî was the only Ottoman poet who articulated clearly the poetics of his time: the tradition’s critical straightjacket which forced poets into an almost impossible position, representing the dilemma that appeared to block the way for poetic inventiveness (2006: 2). This issue seems remarkably relevant to the conclusions I have been able to draw from my own research in the Ottoman translation tradition. Would such statements as those by Fuzûlî provide some justification for E. J. W. Gibb (1857–1901), the renowned Orientalist, to argue (2002 [1901]: 12–14) that the Ottomans were “a singularly uninventive people” and that their literary works first imitated Persian poetry and later, French literature?

Despite his pejorative opinion of Ottoman poetry, Gibb nevertheless found it worthwhile to translate it into English in no fewer than six volumes (1900–1909). His views exerted great influence both on European and Turkish scholars. Mehmed Fuad Köprülü (1989 [1913]: 22), the founder of modern literary-historical scholarship in Ottoman, was both challenged by and critical of Gibb’s work and set out to uncover and even “create” (as Walter Andrews argued in 2002) an authentic canon of Turkish poetry that was uncontaminated by Persian and Arabic and that reflected the true Turkish literary spirit. As I attempted to show in a previous essay (Paker 2007), Köprülü’s students and followers of his research paradigm were driven by an ideal to remove the stigma of absolute imitativeness which attached itself to Ottoman poetry. In this paper, I would like to focus on some fresh approaches, like Kahramanoğlu’s, to Ottoman poetry and poetics and see how they tie in with my own research in literary translation history. Therefore, I would like to examine a few more observations made by Kahramanoğlu, whose book illuminates the epistemic roots of the Ottoman *Divan* poetic system. This book complements the arguments proposed by Walter Andrews, in which the existence of a “Perso-Ottoman epistemic domain” is hypothesised and elaborated: “an epistemic domain, the domain of a certain regime of knowledge (or, in Foucault’s sense, of certain conditions of knowledge), which creates itself in a poetic idiom that does not imply a territorial boundary between Turkic and Persian” (2002: 18).

Returning to Kahramanoğlu, we find that there are striking similarities that he has noted between the epistemic particularities of the Renaissance as articulated by Foucault in his *Order of Things* (1977) and those pertaining to the order of Ottoman *Divan* poetry. This indicates a paralellism that is much too important to overlook; for the Ottoman 16th century, like the European Renaissance, seems to
have been governed by an episteme of resemblance (Kahramanoğlu 2006: 27). Kahramanoğlu also notes that the Ottoman resemblance episteme lasted longer than the European one by two hundred years; it dissolved in the second half of the 19th century with the Tanzimat which marks the beginnings of Ottoman ‘enlightenment’, reflecting the emergence of what Foucault described as the ‘classical’ episteme (ibid. 33 ff.; Foucault 1977: 44 ff.). Kahramanoğlu points out that it was the intellectuals of the Tanzimat who first expressed their criticism of Divan poetry as they attacked obscure figures of thought that derived from resemblance as irrational.

Foucault’s categories: convenientia, aemulatio, analogy and sympathies – the four central similitudes governing the episteme of resemblance in the European Renaissance (Foucault 1977: 17–25) – have led Kahramanoğlu to find meaningful correspondences in Divan poetry, which is the most explicit manifestation of the Ottoman renaissance.

Before continuing with Kahramanoğlu’s arguments, I would like to point out that the notion of an Ottoman renaissance is granted much wider scope in The Age of Beloveds: Love and the Beloved in Early-Modern Ottoman and European Culture and Society (2005) by Walter Andrews and Mehmet Kalpakli. This is a groundbreaking study in which the scholars focus on the 16th-century love poetry of the Ottomans and the Europeans in an unparalleled comparative analysis that transcends the conventional boundaries set between pre-modern Eastern and Western aesthetics.

At the beginning of their chapter on “Renaissance, Renaissance, and the Age of Beloveds,” Andrews and Kalpakli write:

Historically, the discussion of Ottoman literary culture has focused on obvious continuities with Arab and Persian literature, on the esteem with which Persian predecessors were regarded, and on the apparent reluctance of the Ottomans to depart from traditional literary norms. What has been missing is even the slightest suggestion that the Ottoman experience may have been a renaissance – comparable to the European Renaissance – of Middle Eastern, Islamic culture, a revitalization of traditional forms and themes and not just the last gasp of a moribund tradition. After all, the dominant literary culture of the late Renaissance in Europe could, on the basis of ample evidence, be described as a sterile imitation of classical Greek and Roman models as mediated through the unique genius of Petrarch, an unimaginative succession of idealized beloveds, of ancient gods and goddesses, of amorous shepherds and shepherdesses, all given the barest semblance of life by the literary genius of Italian poets, authors, and playwrights severely limited by Bemboist vernacular neoclassicism. This is, in fact, how Ottoman literary culture has been described – just replace the Greek and Roman models with Arabic and Persian models, Petrarch with Hafez, the classical gods, goddesses, and shepherds with the Leylas and Mejnuns, the Husrevs and Shirins, of the Islamic tradition (2005: 329, my emphasis in italics).
These words cannot but remind us of E. J. W. Gibbs’ verdict on Ottoman poetry. They constitute one more reason to look at Ottoman poetics in the light of Foucault’s theory of resemblance, based on the European Renaissance.

And now, to quote Foucault:

Up to the end of the 16th century, resemblance played a constructive role in the knowledge of Western culture. It was resemblance that largely guided exegesis and the interpretation of texts; it was resemblance that organised the play of symbols, made possible knowledge of things visible and invisible, and controlled the art of representing them. The universe was folded in upon itself: the earth echoing the sky, faces seeing themselves reflected in the stars, and plants holding within their stems the secrets that were of use to man. Painting imitated space. And representation – whether in the service of pleasure or of knowledge – was posited as a form of repetition: the theatre of life or the mirror of nature, that was the claim made by all language, its manner of declaring its existence and of formulating its right of speech (Foucault 1977: 17, my emphasis).

‘Repetition’ is a key term here that is to be associated with translation as terceme, ‘saying again’. The Kur’an, for instance, although deemed ‘untranslatable’ because of its absolute, divine wording, was transmitted in countless exegeses and commentaries. So were verse and prose rewritings and reinterpretations of mystical or profane love stories as well as books of advice for rulers, i.e. ‘mirrors for princes’. In the 16th century alone, no fewer than sixteen retellings of the pre-islamic love story of Leyla and Mecnun were composed (Toska 2007a: 33), the most famous of which is by Fuzûlî. There was also an abundance of versions in Persian and Arabic (Kalilah wa Dimnah) of fables involving two jackals and other beasts, which can be traced back to Sanskrit and which were made popular in the form of mirrors for princes also in Turkish (Paker, Toska 1997). To insert a telling remark about the transmission of the latter: a 16th century Ottoman version of the book of fables, Hümayunname, dedicated to Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent himself and composed in the exalted tradition of Divan poetry in which meanings lay hidden in conceits, brought honour and wealth to Ali Çelebi, the poet-translator. However, its 19th century version, Hülasa-i Hümayunname, which was commissioned by Sultan Abdüllhamid II to Ahmed Midhat Efendi, the most prolific writer of the period, in order that the renowned book of fables and advice for rulers would be read and understood more clearly in prose, turned out to reveal criticism of despotic sovereigns when rewritten in plain discourse (with personal interventions by Ahmed Midhat Efendi); this displeased the Sultan who had it burnt and banned from publication (Toska 2007b). This serves as an excellent example of the implications of the shift from the discourse of resemblance to that of criticism, the dominant feature of ‘classical’ episteme (Foucault 1977: 79–80).

To return to Foucault’s propositions as quoted above, Kahramanoğlu provides us with plenty of illustrations of correspondence with elements of Ottoman Divan poetry: the constant ‘play of symbols’ exhibited in the gazel (lyric love poem),
such as rosebud for lips, sun or moon for the face, rose or tulip for the cheek, stars for the eyes, pearls for teeth and tears (Kahramanoğlu 2006: 27). Such symbols also appear in emulative and analogical relationships: the tulip or the rose appears less radiant compared with the beloved’s cheek, the darkness of night appears pale beside the beloved’s hair, the stars fail to match the brightness of his/her eyes, the pearl is worthless compared to the beloved’s teeth (ibid. 29). From the perspective of the present paper, the most significant correspondence involves mazmun [conceit] (ibid. 101–109): resemblance that “made possible knowledge of things visible and invisible and controlled the art of representing them”. As noted above, the elaborate, polysemic, multi-layered rhetorical art of composing mazmun was the poet Fuzûlî’s chief concern. Mazmun was the art of concealing meaning and concept in couplets of implicit significations, that is, of translating the implied invisible into the explicitly visible. According to İskender Pala (2007: 403–408), a leading authority on the subject, mazmun signified the highest form of poetry, an art in itself, beyond that of the rhetorical use of simile and metaphor. It was meant to create an extensive web of associations in the mind of perceptive readers, to puzzle, excite and delight those who could decipher the symbols or clues offered by the poet, to lead them to explore and discover hidden meanings. Pala observes that the classical Ottoman tradition was far more involved in the use of mazmun than Persian poetry and that by the 16th century it had become the highest ideal of poets (like Fuzûlî) to construct the bikr-i mazmun [virgin conceit], which Pala translates (into modern Turkish) as özgünlük [originality] (Pala 2007: 407). I elaborate below on the terms signifying originality and invention.

2. Disrupting Terceme/Repetition: Means of Literary Survival in the Order of Resemblance

At the beginning of his article on translation and transmission in Ottoman poetry (2002), Andrews states that composing nazire, a genre of parallel or emulative poems, is the only form of translating in the “Perso-Ottoman-Urdu” context that is of interest to him because it rests on a “creative” (not “substitutive”) act and that such poems “are translated and translate in an attitude of universalizing similarity” (Andrews 2002: 36). It seems important also to note that in the very attempt to be creative, in the composition of his mazmuns, for instance, the nazire poet was trying to break the cycle of clichéd repetition.

The 16th century saw the appearance of tezkire writers, literary biographers of past and contemporary poets like themselves; they evaluated some of their works and commented on them, often critically. Harun Tolasa, a specialist in the field, has remarked that in their assessment of a poet’s work the biographers took the practice of terceme (translation) as their principal point of reference, particularly in narrative poetry (Tolasa 1983: 322). In other words, they acted on the assump-
tion of resemblance, repetition (cf. ‘assumed translation’ Toury 1995) in order to locate, identify and judge what was not or “should not be regarded as terceme” (Paker 2009). Such evaluative notes by the biographers may be considered a form of ‘authenticating’ (Hermans 2007: 22, 23–25) the claim made by poets in their prefatory statements (in the case of romance narratives called mesnevi) regarding the extent to which they followed their sources and what differences they introduced. If, as a result of biographers’ investigation, the work turned out to have been composed contrary to what was expected or what the poets had stated in their prefaces, they were accused of theft, exposed and condemned (Tolasa 1983).

Tolasa states that the first three principal biographers (of the 16th century) who were the object of his study “did not object to terceme” (ibid.). However, as poets themselves, they were obviously keen to determine whether a certain poet’s claims to (let me provisionally say) ‘originality’ were justified and to evaluate his work accordingly. For poets did claim to make inventions of their own. And, upon recognition of their inventiveness, creative ability (icad, ibda, ihtira in Tolasa 1983: 216) and sometimes even their genius, they were applauded. To secure recognition, patronage or financial reward and to ensure the survival of his work and signature in the vast literary ‘repertoire’ (cf. Even-Zohar 2002) of repetition, a poet of the 16th century, for example, might opt to rewrite or reinterpret a classical Persian romance of the 10th century. In his preface, the poet would name the Persian source, sometimes referring to more than one, bearing in mind the multiple renditions, reinterpretations of the source by his predecessors and even by his contemporaries. He might substitute mystical love for physical love and introduce aspects of his own time and social mores, and his own aesthetic preferences in terms of structure and poetic composition. The plot and the sequence of episodes might be reorganised or remain the same or similar, but the poetry would bear the mark of his individual inventions. Such a poet would ideally be expected to excel in composing mazmuns but not to create a work of art that was entirely new or that did not resemble any previous work.

Yet, we understand from Fuzuli’s dilemma that to achieve poetic inventiveness or innovation was extremely difficult or nigh impossible. As I have argued above, the reasons are to be found in the epistemic foundations of the system of resemblance, within which repeating or reinterpreting appear to have been generically representative of literary production, and only a limited degree of variation and innovation seems to have been possible.

From the angle of the arguments presented in this paper, what seems telling about the biographers’ critical concern is that ‘equivalence’ to the source text(s) (indicated by the poet in his preface) was not a necessity. In fact, good poets were not expected to maintain strict equivalence to their sources.

Given the order of resemblance and repetition, the biographers would assume poet X’s source text to have existed not as ST1 but as STn, since such a text (STn) could only be expected to stand for a previous interpretation or reinterpretation
(TTn) of an earlier (or even of a contemporaneous) poetic text (ST1). The expected relationship of STn with poet X’s text in question (TT2) seems to have been the biographers’ starting point in assuming that there had to be some similarity or resemblance relationship between the two texts and in comparing them, as guided by their own concept(s) of similarity and difference.

This process would be a remarkable reflection of Gideon Toury’s three relationship postulates for equivalence, which lie at the root of his concept of ‘assumed translation’ (Toury 1995: 32–33). They are not only valid but also extremely useful to remember in relation to the critical activity of the Ottoman literary biographers, who not only assumed (naturally, within the given order of resemblance) that there had to be a source for the derived text, but also sought to examine the scope and extent of the transfer and textual similarity-difference relationships, comparing at least the two texts, if not more. This represents a significant historical example of the time- and culture-bound nature of what appear to be norms that led critics to determine the extent and nature of ‘equivalence’. But it must also be said that herein lies a paradox from Toury’s perspective: the context for all this activity was not established by two distinct source and target systems, but by a central ‘intercultural system’ (Paker 2002) (‘a universe folded in upon itself’, see above), where source and target coexisted. Even in the late 19th century, the transitional period between the pre-modern and the modern, as the Perso-Ottoman intercultural system began to dissolve and separate source systems gradually emerged as a result of translating explicitly foreign sources, the order of resemblance, and terceme (repetition) as its main feature, continued to a certain extent to dominate. This is best observed in the translation of prose works, in the multiple designations writer-translators chose to identify the products of their transfer practices (e.g. iktibas = borrowing, hūlasa = summary), which implied an Ottomanising intervention with their source texts (Demircioğlu 2009). Closer diachronic comparative studies of how European works were translated in the second half of the 19th century and later would, no doubt, help clarify how translating the ‘foreign’, with its representation of difference, served not to perpetuate the episteme of resemblance but to disrupt it and usher in the discourse of criticism.

3. Terceme and Telif: Friends or Foes?

In a recent paper, I claimed that the term and concept of telif, signifying a practice (to be explained below) which is closely connected to the practice of nakl (transfer) in the Ottoman literary context, should be considered among the variety of transfer activities correlated to the broader concept of terceme (Paker 2009). Telif is an Ottoman term that still exists (not as a verb but a noun and an adjective) in modern Turkish and means ‘original’ in opposition to ‘translation’. In two pre-
vious studies (Paker in print and 2009), I attempted to draw attention to the strong probability that telif was not taken to signify ‘original’ (in binary opposition to ‘translation’) in the earlier Ottoman context. My argument was that in Ottoman usage this term was closer to its etymological root in Arabic (Turkicised as ülfet) meaning a harmonising or reconciling of differences, and that it did not signify the practice of creating an ‘original’ in the sense in which we use it nowadays. My supporting argument was that the meaning of telif must have shifted towards ‘original’ when Ottomans, as of the 19th century, became familiar with this concept of European Romanticism. This is what can be traced in the transitional discourse (from the traditional to the modern) of Köprülü, arguably the leading authority in Ottoman literary scholarship in the 20th century, who used the term to describe and judge a creatively mediated version of a Persian source text (Paker 2007). It was Köprülü’s (and his followers’) use of telif to elevate a text above what he regarded as a mere repetition or imitation that did not bear the mark of the poet’s creativity that must have been instrumental (at least in Ottoman literary scholarship) in establishing the apparent opposition between telif as original and terceme as translation. In fact, Köprülü followed the earlier literary biographers in seeking and praising inventiveness or originality, but he introduced an artificial divide or opposition between practices that were not oppositionally different to each other.

In view of additional and supporting hypothetical evidence derived from Foucault’s theory regarding pre-modern resemblance episteme, my previous arguments seem to have gained a surer footing. For in the order of resemblance the existence of only one hypothetical ‘primary Text’ may be assumed (Foucault 1977: 79): a Source Text which may have been repeatedly reinterpreted for hundreds of years as an act of terceme. Even the Kur’an, the only Islamic text considered original, and unrepeatable except in its words and syntax of Arabic origin that represent the words of Allah as revealed to his prophet Muhammed, was the object of continuous exegetical interpretation (cf. Fatani 2006).

4. Conclusions

In this paper, I have attempted to reach some conclusions with regard to a synthesis of certain arguments that I have been pursuing in my research in Ottoman translation history for the last ten years. The impetus or inspiration for my present endeavour came from Kahramanoğlu’s research and the connections he established between Foucault’s theory of resemblance and Ottoman poetics. What was missing in his analysis was any reference to the practice of terceme, the fundamental means of perpetuating resemblance – what Foucault seems to have meant by ‘representation … was posited as a form of repetition’. This gap could be filled with arguments from my research on terceme as an Ottoman interculture-bound practice and concept (2002), based on my reading of Toury’s concept of
‘interculture’ (1995: 28) and of Anthony Pym’s (1998: 177; 2000: 5): the latter having developed from a challenging criticism of the former (Pym 1998: 180). Pym’s notion of ‘interculture’ appeared to be highly applicable to Andrews’ mapping of a ‘Perso-Ottoman epistemic domain’ in his seminal analysis of the practice of nazire as creative translation (Andrews 2002: 19; Paker 2002: 136). From a systemic analytical perceptive (suggested as an improbability by Toury), it was possible for me to argue that the notion of ‘Ottoman interculture’ could be theorised as a ‘central intercultural system’ of a hybrid Perso-Arabic and Turkish composition (Paker 2002: 139). Parallel to such arguments ran my research on perceptions of such terms as terceme, taklid and telif in the Turkish secondary sources of modern literary historical discourse. At the end of the 19th century, there was a shift of focus particularly in perceptions of terceme as writers and critics struggled with how to think about translations of distinctly foreign (European) provenance, which were not from the familiar epistemic domain which they had stopped thinking of as ‘foreign’ (Paker 2006). Taklid (imitation) was terceme’s natural companion, and together they became a central concern in ‘influence’ studies which were taken up pervasively by Köprülü and the followers of his research paradigm (Paker 2007). Surprisingly, the notion of telif never, to my knowledge, became an issue; it was taken for granted as an attribution of originality and superiority, as opposed to terceme, again following Köprülü. What is even more significant is that in scholarship it helped to conceal or veil the fact of terceme inherent in compositions that also bore the mark of the superior artist (Paker 2007: 272). What may be regarded as a conclusive argument is that if, in literary historical scholarship, we assume that the order of resemblance prevailed for over four hundred years, then we must also assume that the practice that kept literary production alive was the constant struggle or conflict between repetition and creative intervention. It is this kind of conflict that is voiced by the poet Fuzûlî on the difficulty of composing laudable mazmuns. In fact, Fuzûlî’s statements encapsulate the fundamental dynamics underlying what I would now call the Ottoman poetics of resemblance. Terceme (repetition) was the fundamental practice that ensured its survival for so many hundreds of years; call them taklid, nazire or telif, related channels of poetic transmission intervened in the flow, releasing creative energy that challenged or broke (as institutionally approved, cf. Hermans 2007: 24) ‘equivalence’ relationships to what was regarded as clichéd sources. It was the dynamics of intervention as inventive, innovative ‘options’ (Even-Zohar 2000: 47; 2002: 169) that fed and expanded the literary ‘repertoire’ of the hypothesised central Ottoman intercultural system and gave birth to “its best works [as] part of a canon of ‘great literature’ in a polyglot empire of poetry” (Andrews 2002: 37).
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The history of science … is bound to be critically produced by each generation of investigators, and not only because our store of knowledge of the past has changed or some new documents have been found, or some new methods of reinterpreting the past have been worked out. No! It is necessary to approach the history of science anew, to immerse oneself in the past time and again, considering that due to the development of contemporary knowledge one thing in the past has become important and something else has lost its importance. Each generation of researchers seeks and finds in the history of their science the reflections of recent scientific trends. By making progress science does more than merely create something new; it also inevitably reappraises its past, its previous experience (Vernadsky 1912: 126–127).

1. Introduction

Why should one study the history of translation thought? Or, what are the aims of the historiography of translation thought (or more precisely, of translation studies)? Surprisingly, we have found no answer in the literature related to this field, so we would like to present our own ideas on the matter. Materials on the historiographies of linguistics, sociology and mathematics proved to be of particular assistance in addressing the issue.

1) The most obvious use of the history of translation thought is to introduce the novice to the subject of translation studies proper, to the various models of thinking about what the discipline regards as its object of investigation and the methods and concepts that make up its essential toolkit. This is so because translation theory is one and the same subject as the history of translation studies, but it is cleansed of manifestations of subjective agents and systemised on objective foundations, whereas the history of translation studies is a personified and dramatised translation theory where every scholarly conception has a label with the names, dates, and specific circumstances of its emergence. It must be emphasised that there is a possibility, even a need, for several varieties of translation history with regard to their target audience. On the one hand, we need works that cater for the general reader and the university student (manuals and reference books, popular science publications) which are based on sound conservatism, preserving the advances of previous generations. On the other hand, we require
monographic histories of translation, translators and translation thought which focus on the scholar and in which originality of approach and subjectivity is demanded (such as those by Levy, Venuti, Steiner, Berman and Finkel’). “Yet there has been little discussion of how to introduce the findings of historical research to students of translation,” claims J. Woodsworth (1996: 9), and with good reason.

2) Historical knowledge of the subject is expected to be a part of a scholar’s education. The history of translation thought provides the practising scholar with the material for acquiring knowledge of the development of his or her field, and it is this informed awareness that makes the essential difference between the scholar and the non-scholar. The scholar has to know the origin of the methods applied and their limits, “because grounding in the past is essential for a comprehensive understanding of the discipline” (Woodsworth 1996: 12). Good historical knowledge can save time and effort.

3) The history of translation studies furnishes the scholar with the perspective and distance that permit him or her to differentiate between substantial progress within the discipline and poorly supported ‘theories’ and unsubstantiated claims. This historical knowledge may prevent him or her from dogmatism in translation theory and lead to circumspection with regard to seemingly new ideas proposed and possibly the acceptance of a diversity of views. So, historical knowledge serves as a means of evaluating new hypotheses.

4) Historical knowledge may contribute to unity within a complex subject like translation studies (TS). In this case, TS history itself is operable as a unifying agent with respect to the increasing specialisation of translation research. At a time of ever-increasing specialisation of translation/interpretation research into diverse subfields, the history of TS may well serve as an overarching agent.

5) Translation theory may have to accept the general validity of Goethe’s frequently cited dictum: “All intelligent thoughts have already been thought; what is necessary is only to think them again”. The history of translation thought may well support this fundamental truth. In other words, the main facts about the nature of translation have long been recognised by many of our predecessors; the great task that remains is to rediscover them in the light of our own understanding of things and our present-day challenges and commitments. In this way, the history of TS and translation thought may well serve as a safeguard against exaggerated claims in terms of novelty, originality, breakthrough and revolution in our (re)discoveries and thus lead to a less polemic discourse or, to paraphrase Paul Garvin’s words suggested many years ago in relation to linguistics, a “moderation in translation theory” (Koerner 2004: 11).

To give an example of how the words of a writer from a different culture and an earlier time can support a new hypothesis, let us consider the following case. Translation scholars have long been interested in the phenomenon of ‘lacuna’ (a lexical gap or semantic void), which is usually understood as the absence in the
target language of an equivalent of some word or expression in the source language. But the phenomenon which seems to be the opposite of a lacuna (i.e. the absence not in the target language but in the source language, and the ‘gap’ as formal rather than semantic) and which has been called a unique item, has only recently attracted the attention of TS scholars.

In 2002, in the context of research on common tendencies or recurring patterns in translation, Sonja Tirkkonen-Condit proposed a ‘unique items hypothesis’, according to which translations tend to contain fewer ‘unique items’ than comparable non-translated texts (Tirkkonen-Condit 2002). A unique item is one that is in some sense specific to the target language and presumably not so easily triggered by a source-language item that is formally different; it thus tends to be under-represented in translations.

However, Mykola Lukash (1919–1988), a well-known name in Ukrainian translation, seems to have been one of the first to describe this phenomenon in detail, in his speech Prohresyvna zahidnoyevropeis’ka literatura v perekladakh na ukrayins’ku movu [Progressive Western European Literature in Ukrainian Translations] delivered at the Ukrainian translators conference in Kyiv on 16 February 1956 (this, incidentally, was a week before Khrushchev’s ‘Secret Speech’ vilifying Stalin, on 25 February 1956). Lukash did more than merely attract attention to ‘unique items’. Having analysed about a hundred translations into Ukrainian, he produced a list of preferred expressions which are characteristic of the Ukrainian language but rarely, if ever, used in Ukrainian translations, ‘due to language asymmetry’. In his opinion, translation cant is characterised, first of all, by its voids and items that are absent rather than by those items that are present in it. "Translation cant does not have a number of words, expressions and structures that are specific to the Ukrainian language," he concludes (Lukash 2009 [1956]: 572).

Lukash maintains that in translation you never come across a word such as ажє (an intensifying particle) or a structure such as поперескакували, порозсідалися. In his opinion, translators shy away from the diminutives so natural to Ukrainian speech in order to avoid lisping; there are no such expressions as страшніший, брудніший (superlatives) (instead, you will notice невимовно страшний (absolutely frightful), диявольськи брудний); ellipsis, which is characteristic of Ukrainian speech, is under-represented in translations, as are specific Ukrainian possessive adjectives such as (батьків, материн etc.); ‘double verbs’ (like музика тужить-грає) are never used in translations; you never notice на обличчі у нього [‘on the face of his’], only на його обличчі [‘on his face’]; and words like догрався, дожартувався are rare. And, in rendering an affirmative answer to an interlocutor, a translator uses only так [yes], but is it not better to use Ти ходив у театр? – Ходив? Nevertheless, you seldom encounter this colloquial repetition of the verb in translation (Lukash 2009 [1956]: 582–583). In short, translations lack synonymy, and translators use only what is on the surface,
yet they are expected to exploit the wealth and breadth of the nation’s language, relying upon the national tradition.

Unfortunately, certain translation traditions in Europe, such as those of Portuguese, Serbian or Ukrainian, remain relatively unknown to the wider world or even to the European community. For instance, they are not included in Part II of the Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies (Baker, Saldanha 2008) in spite of their millenial history, their significance for the wider area, and their fairly specific traits.

2. The Ukrainian Tradition

The Ukrainian translation tradition is today more than one thousand years old, having begun soon after the adoption of Christianity in the 10th century (988). It started in earnest at state level when, according to Nestor the Chronicler [Nestor litopysets’], the apparent author of the Primary Chronicle [Povist' vrem'anykh lit], the earliest East Slavic chronicle, Yaroslav the Wise, the Kyivan Rus’ Great Prince, “assembled” in 1037 in the Cathedral of St. Sophia in Kyiv “many scribes, who translated [from Greek] into the [Old] Slavic language” [Yaroslav sobra pistsi mnophi i perekladashhe na slovinskojye pis’mo], the language of ecclesiastical works understood in all Slavic countries (see e.g. Korunets’ 2000; Moskalenko 1995). During its evolution the literary Ukrainian language has passed through three distinct stages: Old Ukrainian (10th–14th centuries), Middle Ukrainian (14th–18th centuries), and Modern Ukrainian (end of the 18th century to the present) (Sheveliov 1954–1989).

It is conventional in Ukraine to divide Ukrainian literature into three periods as proposed by Serhiy Yefremov. Claiming that the aesthetic principle was completely inappropriate for a history of Ukrainian literature, Yefremov outlined three governing ideas in its development: (1) the element of personal freedom – a continuous emancipatory current; (2) the idea of national liberation; (3) the progressive populist current in content and form. Consequently, Ukrainian literature is divided into three epochs:

1) the epoch of independence until unification with Lithuania and Poland (the end of the 14th century);
2) the epoch of dependence (the end of the 14th century to the end of the 18th century);
3) the epoch of national awakening (Yefremov 1995 [1911]).

The periodisation of the Ukrainian translation tradition roughly coincides with the stages of literature and literary language histories.

Hryhoriy Kochur (1908–1994), a Ukrainian translator and cultural studies scholar, one of the best Ukrainian translators and who translated from 33 literatures, stated in 1965:
we know little of our translational ‘household’ and make no particular effort to get to know it better. But the high level of the art of translation marked by the names of M. Ryl’s’kyi, M. Bazhan and M. Lukash is the outcome of not only their work … it is the sequel to the work of several generations. This is only the peak of the development of the translation business in Ukrainian literature. Every translator – and not only translators – ought to be aware of our translation tradition and of the history of the development of Ukrainian translation (Kochur 1965: 132).

To systematise data from the history of Ukrainian translation and to analyse them in accordance with substantial considerations, Kochur has proposed the periodisation of the development of the Ukrainian art of translation (Kochur 1968: 92–97). Dealing with the so-called pre-October modern Ukrainian translation, Kochur finds it necessary to distinguish three periods:

1) the initial period when “an insignificant level of development of the then literary language and the profound influence of the style of Ivan Kotliarevs’kyi drove the translators of the time towards travesty” (Kochur 1968: 92) (e.g. Yevhen Hrebinka, Petro Hulak-Artemovs’kyi);

2) the period of translation based on folk song foundations, the period of the rehashing of Ukrainianised translation (Kochur 1968: 92) (e.g. Stepan Rudans’kyi);

3) the third period that “placed Ukrainian translation on the all-European level” (Kochur, 1968: 93) (represented by P. Kulish, P. Nischyns’kyi, M. Staryts’kyi, I. Franko, B. Hrinchenko, Lesia Ukrayinka and others of her circle).

What makes the case of the Ukrainian translation of the 1800s different from that of its neighbours (Russians, Poles or Hungarians)?

Firstly, it is the long-standing policy of bans and restrictions against the use of the Ukrainian language promulgated by Russian imperial authorities, which resulted in the Russification of Ukrainian towns and in reducing Ukraine to a peasant nation. Incidentally, the status of the Ukrainian language in the Austrian

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1 Ivan Kotliarevs’kyi (1769–1838), popularly known as the ‘father’ of modern Ukrainian literature, published in 1798 his travesty of Virgil’s Aeneid, the burlesque Eneyida, which ushered in a new Ukrainian literature in the vernacular.

2 In 1627, Moscow Church authorities prohibited Ukrainian books; in 1672, the secular arm ordered the burning of Ukrainian books; in 1720, the Russian tsar Peter I issued an edict banning the printing of books in the local idiom in Ukraine, the declared intention being the Russification of the people there, and as a result, throughout the 1700s, no Ukrainian book was published on the territory of the Russian Empire; during the 1700s, schools in Ukraine were transferred to Russian-language instruction, and an absolute veto on teaching in Ukrainian was exercised in 1782; a circular of 1863 by P. Valuev, Russia’s minister of internal affairs, to the censorship committees once again imposed restrictions on Ukrainian-language publications in the Russian Empire: the Censorship Administration could license for publication in this language only such books as belonged to the realm of fine literature; at the same time, the authorisation of books in Little Russian that were either spiritual in content or inten-
Empire, and after the Compromise of 1867 in the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, was also precarious.

Secondly, the readers of translations in Ukrainian comprised the narrow strata of the national intelligentsia, mostly multilingual. Thus, the function of this kind of translation was not merely for information, but primarily for nation building (Strikha 2006).

Thirdly, the sphere of translation was practically confined to belles-lettres and literary translation, which played a pivotal role in shaping Ukrainian national identity. To overcome censorship translators often had to rehash or adapt and hide the names of the translated authors. For example, Hrinchenko turned Leo Tolstoi’s story *The Prisoner in the Caucasus* into *The Black Sea Men in Captivity* (Raliv 1929: 24). Ukrainian literary translation was a conscious project of resistance, and it can be traced from the beginning of the 19th century until the Soviet era (Strikha 2006).

Fourthly, it is the artistic translations that formed the Ukrainian lexicon in many fields where this vocabulary could not otherwise come into being because of the lack of Ukrainian-speaking upper classes, army, administration, science, clergy, etc. (Strikha 2006).

In post-October times, H. Kochur distinguishes three stages:

1) the first 15 post-revolutionary years (i.e. up to 1933) saw “great enthusiasm and a surge in translation activities” (Kochur 1968: 95) (with the noteworthy translation activities of Mykola Zerov, Maksym Ryl’s’kyi, Pavlo Fylypovych, Mykhailo Drai-Khmara, Osval’d Burghardt, Valerian Pidmohyl’nyi, Dmytro Zahul, Ivan Kulyk, Volodymyr Samylenko, Mykhailo Kalynovych, Mykola Bazhan, Pavlo Ritter), the publication of multi-volume collected works of translated authors (Anatole France, Guy de Maupassant, Jack London, Émile Zola, and others) and an increase “in the development of translation theory” (Mykola Zerov, Serhiy Rodzeyvych, Pavlo Fylypovych);

2) the 7–8 years before the war and the first post-war years (i.e. 1933–1953) was a period of decline in translation activity, with translations often being made via an intermediary language (usually Russian) in spite of some advances (Yuriy Korets’kyi’s translations of Byron and Shakespeare and an anthology of foreign literature compiled by Oleksandr Bilets’kyi and Mykola Plevako);
3) a period of stimulation of translation activity and “the emergence of translations which are models for original writers (Boccaccio’s *The Decameron* translated by Mykola Lukash and the *The Odyssey* by Borys Ten), and an upsurge of critical thought around translation issues” (e.g. Oleksiy Kundzich) (Kochur 1968: 96).

Taras Shmiher, who proposes a periodisation of the history of Ukrainian translation thought of the 1900s, divides it into four periods:

1) the critical and theoretical period (early 20th century up to World War I), characterised by a search for the foundations of translation theory, its terminology and methods of analysis within the general framework of literary studies;

2) the period of the establishment of *Perekladoznavstvo* (literally ‘Translation Studies’) as a scholarly and academic discipline in Ukraine (from the end of World War I to the end of World War II), with the systematisation and theorisation of scholarship performed under the influence of higher educational and research institutions, when the National Revival of the 1920s inspired the study of historical and sociological aspects of translation;

3) the period of the development of Ukrainian translation thought within the context of the Soviet Union (late 1940s – early 1970s), when Ukrainian scholarly discourse, a part of the Soviet school of translation studies, focused on literalism and general methodological prerequisites;

4) the period of the transformation of translation studies into an interdisciplinary field of scholarship (mid-1970s up to the present time), distinguished by the expansion of the methods and topics of translation analysis due to the application of developments in psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, ethnolinguistics, cultural studies, etc. (Shmiher 2009).

Within the Ukrainian translation tradition, as outlined above, the 1920s (1917–1932) witnessed a great development and zeal in translation activity and in the advance of translation theory. Important social and political events of the time (the national awakening and the independent Ukrainian governments of 1917–1920, the Civil war, Ukrainisation – the indigenisation policy of 1923–1927 and its gradual phasing out, Stalin’s repression and the Holodomor, or Ukrainian Holocaust) and outstanding events of a scientific nature (the formation of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences in 1918, the introduction of the Ukrainian language and Ukrainian studies in schools) affected the fate of Ukrainian translation studies. The establishment of the Ukrainian state and the Ukrainisation policy encouraged the spread of Ukrainian literary language to all spheres of life and to all genres. The abrupt termination of the policy of Ukrainisation in late 1932 and early 1933, and the utter rout of cultural life, brought numerous attempts on the part of the Bolshevik government to restrict the use of the Ukrainian language (for example, excluding it from military and technical spheres) and to purify it from...
European elements unknown in the Russian language. This was accompanied by massive oppression and discrimination against Ukrainophones, with major repression starting as early as 1929–1930, when a large group of Ukrainian intelligentsia was arrested and most of them executed.

In the 1920s, along with the appearance of new names in Ukrainian literature, new approaches to the assimilation of the resources of world literature emerged through Ukrainian translations of the best examples. Naturally, translation criticism emerged in the wake of new translations. For example, when in 1920 Mykola Zerov published an anthology of his translations from Horace, Virgil, Ovid, Martial, Catullus and Propertius Antolohiia ryms'koï poezii [An Anthology of Roman Poetry, 1920], Hryhoriy Ivanytsia published a review in which the reviewer underlined the change of strategy in the translation of ancient poetry: “instead of the recent slavish attitude to the source text” (Ivanytsia 1921: 210), a focus on the modern reader appears.

The national revival of the 1920s inspired the study of historical and sociological aspects of translation, in particular such issues as the reception of translations by the reader (Tykhovs'kyi 1924; Fylypovych 1930a), the readers of translations themselves (Zerov 1924; Aizenshtok 1928: 46–59; Fylypovych 1930b), the importance of translated literature in the target culture, the role of the translator in the literary process, etc. We would like to mention some ideas from the forgotten materials of a number of Ukrainian translation theorists (banned for half a century) of the so-called ‘Executed Renaissance’ period [rozstriliane vidrozhennia] (Zerov, Rodzevych, Fylypovych, Derzhavyn, Kulyk, Maifet, Raliv, Finkel’, Starynkevych, and others). Topics of interest for contemporary researchers in TS include Mykola Zerov’s examination of translations as an integral part of the national literature and their function in nation formation (Zerov 1924); Volodymyr Derzhavyn’s articles on language jobs and translation types (Derzhavyn 1927) and the requirements for translation reviews (Derzhavyn 1928); the first investigations into self-translation (Finkel’ 2006 [1929b]) and into newspaper translation by Oleksandr Finkel’ (Finkel’1929a); translation and power in prefaces by Ivan Kulyk (Kulyk 1928), etc. However, for the purposes of this paper, we limit our consideration purely to some works of the 1920s that deal with the history of Ukrainian translation.

This era brought about the revision of the Ukrainian literary heritage and the rewriting of the history of literature. Of vital significance for the emergence of the theory of translation were the works on the history of literature that viewed translation as an important and formative part of the literary system. The perception of translation as a factor in nation formation in the works of Mykoly Saharda (1870–1942?) (Saharda 1919a, b) – former professor of St. Petersburg ecclesiological academy, well-known specialist in patristics and translator – on Ukrainian Bible translations marked the advent of translation history as a new branch in translation research in Ukraine. An important finding for Ukrainian translation
history was made by Andriy Nikovs’kyi (1913), who noticed some stages in the
reception of topics and plots taken from other literatures: first came parodies, then
they were supplanted by translations (Homer, the Bible, Shakespeare’s tragedies,
Goethe, Schiller, Sophocles), and when translations became commonplace the
time was ripe for the reinterpretation and elaboration of these plots (e.g. Lesia
Ukrayinka’s dramatic poems Kassandra (1907), U katakombakh [In the Cata-
combs, 1905], Rufin i Pristsilla [Rufinus and Priscilla, 1908], or Kaminnyi
hospodar [The Stone Host, 1912], in which, for example, she employs the Don
Juan theme in an original presentation of the conflict between social conformity
and personal freedom and responsibility).

In his study of the history of the Ukrainian translations of Adam Mickiewicz,
Pavlo Tykhovs’kyi (1866–1938) distinguishes two periods: ‘old’ translators (P.
Kulish, O. Navrots’kyi) would rehash and Ukrainianise, while ‘new’ translators
(M. Staryts’kyi, I. Franko) try to render the poet’s poetics (Tykhovs’kyi 1924).

It is customary to assume that the first scholar to draw attention to the role of
translation in the history of literature was Edmond Cary, who claimed that, as a
rule, translation came before original literature and “had been the great midwife of
literatures” (Cary 1956: 126), and that only recently had translation and literature
scholars recognised the significance of studying translation as a part of the history
of literature. Moreover, it is research on translation in its relation to literature
which reveals the true history of contacts and influences, which is essentially a
history of literature. But, as early as the 1920s, in his manual Nove Ukrayins’ke
pis’mentstvo (New Ukrainian Writings, vol. 1, 1924), Mykola Zerov (1890–1937)
– a prominent Ukrainian poet, translator of numerous works from Latin and
French, and literary historian – regarded translation as a valid component of the
national literature (Zerov 1924) and approached the history of Ukrainian literature
of the 1800s as an integrated process, “viewing the development of high poetic
style on the basis of original and translated genres” (Shmiher 2005: 97).

“The historical nature of translation is first apparent in the succession of
varying methods that define it within a single culture,” writes Lawrence Venuti
(2005: 801). In the Westöstlicher Diwan (1819), or to be precise, in his comments
on it, Goethe distinguished between three methods of translating poetry practiced
by German translators in three different periods.

Goethe clearly based his historical distinctions on the adequacy of the translation to
the foreign text. And since none of the translators he cited would have considered their
work less than accurate, his account suggests that changing translation methods reflect
changing standards of accuracy. Indeed, what constitutes an accurate translation in one
period may later come to be regarded not as a translation at all, but as an adaptation or
even as a wholesale revision of the foreign text (Venuti 2005: 801–802).
In the evolution of the Ukrainian poetic style in the literature of the 1800s, M. Zerov recognises the following three periods: (1) travesty, (2) translation-travesty (sometimes called rehash), (3) translation (possibly under the influence of the scheme suggested by Nikovs’kyi). Using Ivan Kotliarevs’ky’s travesty of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, the burlesque *Eneyida*, as an example, Zerov recognises the marks of a travesty: (a) the absence of any specific national element of the source text (in the case of *Eneyida*, the absence of anything Roman), (b) low colloquial tone, which is opposed to the elevated manner of the original heroic poem and correspondingly selected rustic language devices (vulgarisms, colloquialisms), (c) ethnographic realism of Ukrainian everyday life (Zerov 1924: 28–35; Shmiher 2005: 290).

In his voluminous preface to the anthology of Ukrainian translations of Pushkin [*A. Pushkin Vybrani tvory*], Pavlo Fylypovych (1891–1937) – a professor of Kyiv University (1917–1935), poet and literary critic belonging to the nucleus of the group of Neoclassicists consisting of Mykola Zerov, Maksym Ryl’s’ky, Pavlo Fylypovych, Mykhailo Drai-Khmara, and Osvald Burghardt (Yurii Klen) – also explains the varying methods and approaches to translation through the example of the numerous Ukrainian translations of Pushkin. For example, in Fylypovych’s opinion, Yevhen Hrebinka’s Ukrainian translation of Pushkin’s poem *Poltava* is interesting for us as spectacular proof of the fact that a translator can recreate or render a source text only within the confines of the contemporary development of the literary language and of the stylistic traditions of the preceding literary schools (Fylypovych, 1930a). Hrebinka’s *Poltava*, as is evident from Mykola Zerov’s investigation (Zerov 1924), continues the burlesque tradition of *Eneyida* with its rustic style, vulgarisms, pretended naivety, etc. Hrebinka follows the *Eneyida* tradition involuntarily because no other style had been conceived in the Ukrainian literature of the time. Apparently, neither the translator himself nor his contemporaries considered the translation a failure. But the next generation did not consider it a translation in the true sense of the word, inasmuch as Hrebinka had failed to convey the stylistic and ideological features of the source text. Having lowered the style, Hrebinka inevitably lowered the ideology of the original poem, as content and form could not be separated in an art work. In his *Poltava*, Pushkin, a man of aristocratic descent, was inspired by the idea of statehood and public service, as opposed to the desires and passions of private individuals. For this reason, all the characters in the poem (except for the tsar) are impassioned. Pushkin did not cringe before the tsar; he welcomed the development of the state. The message could not be grasped by the provincial philistine who had come to Petersburg to earn a living by his pen. So Hrebinka substitutes the idea of severe and creative statehood for the servile panegyric of the tsar’s invented bounties (Fylypovych 1930a: x).

The dominance of the rudiments of folk song in Shevchenko’s imitators could not but influence their translational endeavours. This is evidenced by the translations of Stepan Rudans’kyi, in which nothing is left of Pushkin. Rudans’kyi’s
efforts proved that it was impossible to render Pushkin by using folk song stereotypes (Fylypovych 1930a). So the next generation of translators (starting with Mykhailo Staryts’kyi) had to liberate the Ukrainian text from the stock phrases of folk song by finding abstract means of expression.

The translation theory and practice of the Neoclassicists and other translators may have been changing the habitus of the literary translator in Ukraine. Significantly, Mykola Zerov taught translation theory at the Ukrainian Institute of Linguistic Education (1930–1933). Creating a university course under the title “Translation Methodology” for the academic year 1932/33, Mykhailo Kalynovych and Mykola Zerov divided translation studies into a theoretical aspect (methodology of translation, history of translation, and history of translation thought) and a practical aspect (general theory of translation, special theories of translation from a foreign language into the mother tongue and from the mother tongue into a foreign language, and the study of cliché and stereotypes of official speech) (Shmiher 2009: 15–16). They were the first to introduce the history of translation studies in Ukraine. In 1929 in Kharkiv, Oleksandr Finkel’ published a book on translation theory entitled Theory and Practice of Translation (Finkel’ 1929a), the first such book on the territory of the former Soviet Union. But then everything came to an abrupt end: it was forbidden to mention most of the names, their owners were exiled or executed, and their works were banned and withdrawn from libraries. Translations from the Russian language as the intermediary language became the norm, even obligatory in the field of social sciences.

Conclusion

In the 1920s, translation scholars in Ukraine were conceptualising translation in terms very similar to those taken up more recently by Western translation scholars. If mainstream (and often English-language) translation studies were more familiar with other translation traditions, they would be more moderate and balanced in their claims, and could have saved time and effort in a common enterprise of trying to define translation.

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This paper sets out to analyse the phenomenon of retranslation (multiple translations of the same text into the same language), taking the English translations of Niccolò Machiavelli’s *The Prince* as a case study. Although typically associated with literary texts, retranslation is also encountered in non-fiction (Freud, Marx, Darwin, etc.), and Machiavelli’s political writings are an ideal example. The reason most often cited for the presence of multiple translations is the periodic need to update the language. There appears to be some kind of consensus that translations age while the language of the original text, somehow, always remains fresh – unless we are dealing with what Berman terms the *grandes traductions*, such as the King James Bible, Amyot’s Plutarch, Baudelaire’s Poe or Schlegel’s Shakespeare. These works become part of the target-culture canon and are read as texts ‘in their own right’ rather than as translations.

But the need to update the language is not reason enough to explain the many different translations of *The Prince* into English. Rather than analysing the texts of the translations themselves, I will rely mostly on paratextual elements such as prefaces, translators’ notes, introductions, book covers, etc., which often contain useful information on the genesis and circumstances in which the translations were produced.

Machiavelli wrote *De Principatibus* (*About Principalities*) in 1513 to be presented in manuscript form with an introductory dedication to Lorenzo de’ Medici, but the first publication does not appear until almost 20 years later, in 1532 in Rome, five years after Machiavelli’s death. It was subsequently reprinted in numerous editions by a number of different publishers, and these Italian copies circulated throughout Europe. Translations began to appear in manuscript form (e.g. the first French manuscript in 1546), and there is strong evidence that *The Prince* was widely read in Tudor England, either in the original Italian or in Latin, French or English translation. There are numerous references to the author’s works (most famously Shakespeare’s “murderous Machiavel”). Petrina details the history of the six extant English-language manuscripts, including Fowler’s Scottish manuscript estimated to have been carried out during the 1590s.

Reconstructing the dissemination of *The Prince* in this period is no easy task. As Raab points out, “manuscripts are like snakes: for every one you see there are a hundred others hidden in the undergrowth” (Raab 1964: 53). Inglese calculates that there were at least 19 Italian manuscripts of *Il principe*, some predating
Machiavelli’s death (Inglese 1995: liii), and there is the added difficulty afforded by the inclusion of Machiavelli’s entire corpus in the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* by Pope Paul IV in 1557. This meant that the texts circulated in a semi-clandestine way for some time, initially in manuscript form as the copying process remained private, without attracting the vigilance and censorship associated with the more public nature of printing.

The first published translation of *The Prince* in English does not appear until 1640, almost 130 years after the original. The figure of Machiavelli is nothing if not controversial and from the very beginning of his English journey (in print), his translator appears to set some distance between himself and the text. Edward Dacres, in his *Epistle Dedicatory*, is at pains to stress that while “this book carryes its poyson and malice in it”, he is sure that the “judicious peruser may honestly make use of it in the actions of his life, with advantage”. He flatters his patron: “your judgement shal easily direct you in finding out the good uses of him” and in his epistle to the reader he continues by arguing that moral men will be discerning in their reading: “From the same flower the bee sucks hony from whence the spider hath his poyson” (Dacres 1905 [1640]: 253).

The role of the translator here is what might be termed intrusive. The title page reads: “As translated out of Italian into English by E. D. with some animadversions noting and taxing his errours”. Indeed, at the end of several of the later chapters, Dacres adds commentaries in italics — but still within the text — indicating where he thinks Machiavelli is misguided.

While this first translation is followed by numerous reprints, London, Basel and Geneva become the three main European cities where Machiavelli’s works are translated and printed in order to be sent illicitly to Italy and other Catholic countries affected by the papal veto.

The next English translation, by Henry Neville in 1675, 24 years after the end of the English Civil War, sets out its Republican agenda. Already in the title, Neville describes Machiavelli as “citizen and secretary of Florence” and includes a letter of his own invention, allegedly by the author (despite being dated 1537 – albeit April 1st, April Fool’s Day – ten years after Machiavelli’s death) clearing himself of attacks on his writing while upholding democracies and attacking the Church of Rome and the Jesuits in particular:

The publisher or translator of Nicholas Machiavels whole works out of Italian, faithfully into English, concerning the following letter of Nicholas Machiavels, wherein he clears himself of the aspersions allедg’d by some on his writings: also, his judgment as to government, whether monarchie or democracie be the best: and lastly, (tho’ a papist) shews their wicked and base errours, both of popes, Jesuits, priests, &c. and that they shall be brought to ruine / written by the author, April 1st, 1537 (Neville 1675: 535).
The 18th century sees only one new translation, by Farneworth, and a number of reprints of both Dacres and Neville, but once we move to the 19th century there are four new translations, followed by 21 in the 20th century and seven in the first nine years of the new millennium. This brings us to a total of 35 different translations into English, all published in either the UK (16) or the US (19). It should be pointed out that these numbers may be slight underestimates – it is extremely difficult to trace the corpus with precision as there is a never-ending overlapping of editions, reprints and versions; the title also varies (*The Prince*, *The Ruler*, *Selected Works*, *Collected Works*, *The Portable Machiavelli*, etc.). Another statistic perhaps worth noting – although its significance is beyond the scope of this paper – is that all these translations are by men.

As already mentioned, Machiavelli is a controversial figure and reactions range from the character Anglo describes as “the impious monster who stalked the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage” to “the patriotic hero celebrated with fervour by the Risorgimento” or again “the super-intellect and universal genius lauded by so much modern scholarship” (Anglo 2005: 9). His name has been used to defend often diametrically opposed ideological positions, and this is reflected in the various translations.

One such case is the 1810 Byerley translation published during the Napoleonic Wars, with Britain under threat from France. He adds “an Introduction shewing the close analogy between the principles of Machiavelli and the actions of Buonaparte”. And so we have translation as an act of forewarned-is-forearmed patriotism, helping readers understand Napoleon’s mindset and thereby knowing how best to outmanoeuvre him. In his introduction, Byerley assures his readers that

[...] the translator conceived it would be an acceptable service to his country to translate *The Prince* as a model of policy for future ministers in the government of his country and to give a commentary pointing out the secret spring which had regulated the actions of our great enemy (Byerley 1810: ix).

Another parallel between the fictitious Prince and a real-life leader is that with Mussolini, who planned on accepting his *laurea honoris causa* from the University of Bologna with a study of Machiavelli’s work, identifying with the ruler and leader of men. As it turned out, the academics were not all in agreement and so the degree was never awarded, but Mussolini’s *Preludio al Principe* did appear in the Fascist review *Gerarchia* and is reprinted in English in the prestigious 1970 Folio Society edition of *The Prince*. It might be argued that the juxtaposition of the two works (Mussolini’s article and Machiavelli’s text) creates intertextual associations, supporting T.S. Eliot’s paradox whereby the “past is altered by the present” (Eliot 1932: 15).

A further example of this is Peter Rodd’s 1954 translation, *The Ruler*. In his introduction, Walter Elliot draws the parallel between Machiavelli’s text and
Italy’s struggle towards Unification in 1860, using the term *Resistance* which would obviously have been especially poignant in post-World War II Britain/Europe:

All this book should be read in parallel columns with the history of the Risorgimento. For the Risorgimento achieved what Machiavelli yearned for, but never saw, the liberation of his country. Cavour, Mazzini, Garibaldi, these, under the unlikely mask of Victor Emmanuel the King of Savoy, were the Prince incarnate that he had sought to create (Elliot 1954: 10).

A far more recent example is the translation published in 2000 as part of the volume edited by Alistair McAlpine: *The Ruthless Leader – Three classics of strategy and power*. Again the juxtaposition of the text (here alongside Sun Tzu’s *Art of War* and McAlpine’s own *The Servant*) appears to confer a specific interpretation to the Renaissance work. McAlpine’s contribution is dedicated to Margaret Thatcher, cast in the role of modern-day Prince, in the aftermath of “puerile attempts” by the then cabinet to overthrow her: “After the incidents of 1980, the stage was set for a fight in the Machiavellian tradition: treachery following treachery for the next ten years” (McAlpine 2000: 14).

Similarly, Adolph Caso prefaces Goodwin’s 2003 translation with a piece entitled *Machiavelli: What he means to me* where he outlines a series of atrocities committed throughout the world, making the point that often leaders have to go against public opinion. He manages to draw a parallel between Machiavelli’s Prince and George W. Bush in his fight against Saddam Hussein and his “weapons of mass destruction […] obviously stored for use against other human beings” (Caso 2003: 11).

One of the more apparently clear-cut reasons for retranslations of now distant texts is the publication of a new authoritative version of the original. One instance of this is Vincent’s 1935 revision of Ricci’s 1903 translation in the light of a new Italian text, Mazzoni and Casella’s *Tutte le opere*. Vincent writes that the collation of ten manuscripts has produced an original that “varies in important respects from that originally used by Ricci” (Vincent 1935: v) and therefore warrants an updated translation.

Again, Bondanella produces a new translation of *The Prince* in 2005, following the publication of Inglese’s 1995 Italian edition of the original. Interestingly, he does not simply revise his earlier 1979 translation written in collaboration with Musa. The new version of the original is used to bestow added authority on the translation. As Bondanella writes of Inglese’s critical edition, it is

recognized by most Machiavelli scholars as the best text we have available today […]. Thus, this new Oxford World’s Classics edition can fairly claim to have been based upon a more authoritative text than previously published translations (Bondanella 2005: xl).
There is, of course, an implicit claim that a superior original version will produce an equally superior translation.

Not only new critical editions of the original text give birth to retranslations, but so too do new readings or interpretations of the work. This is the reason given by de Alvarez for his 1980 translation:

A new understanding of Machiavelli requires a new translation. That new understanding has been provided by Leo Strauss’s *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1958), which work can be said to have rediscovered Machiavelli (de Alvarez 1980: xxiv).

New translations often publicise themselves as appealing to specific audiences and this is the case with scholarly editions such as Atkinson’s 1976 version. He writes a 90-page introduction and accompanies the text with quotes and notes on “history, political theory, sources and language” which appear on the left-hand pages, facing the translation itself on the right. The critical apparatus, therefore, far exceeds Machiavelli’s text. The following year, 1977, sees the publication of the Norton critical edition of *The Prince* with a translation by Adams (later “thoroughly revised” for the second edition in 1992) – again there is an extensive critical apparatus. In this context, a common occurrence is the highlighting of the academic affiliations of the various contributors. Bondanella and Musa (1979), for example, sign themselves with their affiliation to the “Center for Italian Studies, Indiana University”.

There is also much mention of correcting the errors or misinterpretations of previous translations. As a historian with expertise in Renaissance Florence, Connell sees himself as ideally placed to avoid the pitfalls faced by his predecessors. He describes these earlier translators as “literary scholars and political theorists who have had little familiarity with the circumstances and the writing practices of the Florentine chancery where Machiavelli worked” and clearly states that “one of the principle aims of this new English edition is to correct that problem by enabling first-time readers to understand how Machiavelli’s *Prince* profoundly disturbed people in the past” (Connell 2005: v).

This also raises the issue of translation’s multidisciplinary approach. Vilches and Seaman rightly point out that “no single discipline in the academy can claim Machiavelli exclusively: political science and government, history, literature, language, theatre, philosophy” (Vilches, Seaman 2007: ix). And so we find that as each field reads the text differently, so they appear to be moved to produce a new translation.

Rodd states, “I am not offering the reader a fragment of *belles-lettres*, or a crib, but an important political tract”. He goes as far as to alter the structure of the text by moving the dedication and the final chapter (the *Envoi* or exhortation) to the appendix because they no longer fit the function that he envisages for the text:
I have taken this liberty because both passages tend to tie the author and his work to a specific environment and a definite period in history, and so detract from the timeless and objective nature of the conclusions, many of which are still topical today (Rodd 1954: 18).

Goodwin, on the other hand, wishes to move away from the scholarly editions of the past and from the sectarian interpretations of his predecessors. There would appear to be more than a hint of inverted intellectual snobbery in his words:

In this edition, *The Prince* is the first English translation for a general *everyman* public. […] The many historical editions and translations were published mainly for statesmen, princes, nobles, churchmen and kings; subsequent editions were for scholars and special audiences. This edition is the first general, journalistic, readable translation. […] This text does not advance footnotes, glossary, biography, historical references, bibliography, or other academic apparatus. All this can be readily attained from the encyclopedias and in the numerous tortuous educated and scholarly translations available from Harvard, Oxford, Cambridge and elsewhere (Goodwin 2003: 137).

If we move on to analyse the declared translation strategies adopted, it becomes very problematic to trace an evolution of the various approaches. As the translations proliferate, in particular from the second half of the 20th century on, the commonly held notion that each new translation updates the original text to the language, style and expectations of the era, is revealed to be totally inadequate. There is no linear progression from one style to another, but rather a multitude of approaches that does not appear to adhere to any specific timescale.

The most recent translation is that by Parks, who in his preface addresses the necessity of updating the language of translations:

Translations have a way of gathering dust. This isn’t true of an original text. […] to attempt a new translation of Machiavelli is not to dismiss previous translations as poor. We are just acknowledging that these older versions now draw attention to themselves as moments of the English language (Parks 2009: xxxi).

I would argue, however, that this is somewhat disingenuous as it implies that there have only been a few, now historically distant, translations of Machiavelli. Parks fails to mention that his is the seventh English translation since 2000. Indeed, he moves on to compare two earlier translations (Marriott 1908 and Bull 1961) to illustrate how dated and contrived they now appear, implicitly leading the reader to believe that there are no more recent versions. Again, when discussing the difficulty of rendering Machiavelli’s text, and the vocabulary in particular, he seems keen to perpetuate a singularly limited point of view:
What is a prince for Machiavelli? Well, a duke is a prince. The pope is a prince. A Roman emperor is a prince. The King of France is a prince. The Lord of Imola is a prince. This won’t work in modern English. The English have Prince Charles. And the thing about Prince Charles is that he is not King Charles and probably never will be. [...] The only other idea we have of ‘the prince’, in English, is Prince Charming. This concept is a long way from the ageing Prince Charles and even further from the kind of prince Machiavelli was talking about (ibid: xxxii).

Other translators make a point of stressing their faithfulness to the original, preferring to present the text in what is often referred to as a ‘literal’ translation. I believe it useful to compare a number of different statements, all apparently informed by similar motivations while often claiming to be different:

In translating The Prince my aim has been to achieve at all costs an exact literal rendering of the original, rather than a fluent paraphrase adapted to the modern notions of style and expression. [...] To an Englishman of Shakespeare’s time the translation of such treatise was in some ways a comparatively easy task, for in those times the genius of English more nearly resembled that of the Italian language; to the Englishman of today it is no so simple (Marriott 2008 [1908]: xxix).

The language of the Prince is not as modern as many of its sentiments, and I have not tried to modernize it unduly. For example, I have preferred to translate principe, in the title and the text, literally as prince, rather than lose the associations the word has acquired over the centuries, although for the sake of variation I have used another word, such as ruler, here or there (Bull 1961: 21).

In making this translation, accuracy has been the primary objective, but I have also sought to preserve Machiavelli’s mode of expression insofar as the demands of fidelity and clarity allowed (Donno 1966: 11).

The difference between this translation and those of others will readily be noticed. The principal difference is that this translation attempts to be literal, in order to preserve the remarkable precision of Machiavelli’s speech. [...] Machiavelli intends that the reader be caught up in the web of his discourse, and he does this by fascinating his reader with difficulties (de Alvarez 1980: iii–iv).

Traduttore traditore: Translator, traitor. So goes an old Italian saying. Machiavelli offers the translator more than the normal incentives to translingual treason. [...] The present translation of The Prince allows scholars and students who do not know Italian to work with a text in which the translator has not resolved the problems of interpretation posed by Machiavelli. To this end I have tried, sometimes at the cost of readability, to translate every word in the same way throughout, while indicating the variant meanings in the endnotes. I have also tried to duplicate Machiavelli’s syntax in English with as few changes as possible (Codevilla 1997: xix–xx).
The present translation aspires to a more precise rendering of Machiavelli’s idiomatic language than has been available hitherto (Connell 2005: xiii).

This new version of *The Prince* aims at accuracy but also at a more pleasing and readable English prose style than is possible if a translation respects Machiavelli’s word order too closely (Bondanella 2005: xl).

The translators are eloquent on the style they have each chosen to adopt. There is almost a feeling that as the number of translations increases, each successive translator must somehow justify the presence of yet another version. In all these paratexts, the conventional terminology usually associated with translation theory is generally avoided. And so the debate between domesticating and foreignising strategies is addressed, although these words are never actually used. Rodd, for example, argues both sides of the debate:

Italians of the Renaissance waved their arms about in their writing at least as exuberantly as most of their descendants do today in their conversation. Machiavelli, though more restrained in this habit than many of his contemporaries and successors, shared the foible. These flourishes are sometimes funny in English, more often tedious. He has, besides, a tendency to repeat a significant or happily turned phrase in a succession of less apt analogisms until the crisp statement loses all its impact and becomes dull jelly. In such cases I have applied an astringent (Rodd 1954: 19).

He goes on, however, to support a more foreignising strategy, quoting Schleiermacher (without acknowledgment) almost word-for-word:

History has its own sound and is betrayed by putting it in too modern a dress. It needs the authentic ring of its own context and surroundings, its own oxygen, to be true to itself. If that makes it sound quaint, so be it. After all, history is about antiquated times – times when things were different, not just the same as now. […] so the reader also comes closer to Machiavelli rather than trying to bring Machiavelli closer to us (ibid. 19).

The parallel between Machiavelli’s style and the stereotypical image of Italians as expansive and demonstrative, brought up by Rodd, is also mentioned by Price: “Italian writers tend to overstate their case rather than understate it, and Machiavelli’s no exception. Like some other translators, I have occasionally toned down his over-emphatic statements” (Price 1988: xxxi).

Alongside the translators’ notes, prefaces and introductions, there is also a vast array of further paratextual elements, all contributing to the reception of each retranslation. Beginning with the most basic of elements, the mention of the translator’s name, we can observe widely different editorial etiquette. Some recent publications (e.g. that by the publishing company Dover in 1992 or the aforementioned McAlpine 2000 volume) reprint earlier translations now out of copyright.
without mentioning the translator, while some editions foreground the translator’s identity on the cover. The latter is the case with the 2009 Penguin edition that advertises “a gripping modern translation by Tim Parks” on the front cover – this is probably motivated by Parks’s reputation as a prolific author ‘in his own right’.

Another edition that mentions the translator on the front cover is the 2008 Modern Library version: “Constantine elegantly captures in English the pith of Machiavelli’s brilliant Italian prose”. This, however, is followed by the source of the quote “Edward Muir, Clarence L. Ver Steeg Professor in the Arts and Sciences, Northwestern University”; Muir is revealed as the prestigious element here, not Constantine.

The alleged quality of the translation is clearly being used as a selling point by publishing companies keen for potential readers to choose their version over all those available. The back cover of Connell’s version has no blurb about Machiavelli’s text but does have three very positive reviews of the translation, all signed by prestigious academics. On closer inspection, all three reviewers feature in the acknowledgments as readers for the Press.

Perhaps the most blatant (ab)use of prestige-by-proxy is that operated by the Dante University Press, which prints three quotations in the opening pages of its edition, presumably chosen to add authority to Goodwin’s translation:

This is a very interesting project and I hope it will be a great success – Dr Henry Kissinger, former Secretary of State.

President Clinton greatly appreciates your interest in The Prince and sends his best wishes – office of William Jefferson Clinton.

The Prince must be a very rewarding project to translate and quite a good deal of fun – Professor David Calleo, Dean Acheson Chair of History at John [sic] Hopkins University, Admiral Paul H. Nitze School of Advance [sic] International Study, and author of the book The Future of Europe 2001 (Caso 2003: 25).

One would hope that no reader would ever be hoodwinked by such naive and nonchalant exploitation of political and academic reputations to give legitimacy to the text.

Other paratexts that might be investigated are the cover artwork and illustrations in general that accompany some of the translations. Also of interest are the reviews received by each version and in particular the online reviews and comments to the more recent editions. Whereas, in the past, reviews only ever appeared on publication of the text, were usually written by experts in the field and were often confined to specialist journals, today reviews are available at the click of a Google search, long after the book has been published and, even when written by experts, regularly appear alongside comments by the general public.
All these elements are frequently instrumental in orienting a reader’s choice and are, therefore, increasingly monitored by publishing companies.

In conclusion, the corpus I have outlined is obviously vast and this paper is only a scratch on the surface. Trying to categorise the various features of retranslation is a complex task with many overlapping elements. It would also be interesting to carry out a comparative study across a number of different languages and cultures, as well as a close examination of the translations themselves to see just how different they actually are and if they fulfil the promises outlined by the various paratexts, whether it be a new interpretation of the original, a specific translation strategy, or an appeal to a fresh audience. In many cases, I suspect we might be disappointed.

The publishing industry on the one hand and academia on the other, aided and abetted by copyright laws, appear to be the driving forces behind this glut of translations. The situation, however, does serve to highlight the role of translation and the translator in the reputation and success of a given text.

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Sarah VENTIMIGLIA

Traduction, invention poétique, autolégitimation :
le cas d’Amelia Rosselli

Dans cet article, j’analyserai le cas de la poétesse Amelia Rosselli (1930-1996) qui, étrangère dans le panorama poétique italien en raison d’une formation excentrique, s’appliqua à traduire l’Américaine Sylvia Plath, avec qui elle partage de nombreuses affinités biographiques et un parcours poétique similaire. L’enjeu de cette entreprise de traduction était double : d’une part s’autolégitimer dans l’espace littéraire italien, en revendiquant la reconnaissance de sa filiation poétique, d’autre part montrer l’originalité de sa propre voix en introduisant dans ses traductions les inventions langagières de sa parole poétique dépaysée et dépaysante.


Je ne suis pas apatride. Mon père était italien et si je suis née à Paris c’est tout simplement parce que mon père avait échappé à la rélegation à Lipari [...]. Ma mère l’aida à se réfugier à Paris, où elle l’aurait ensuite retrouvé. Puis mon père a été tué avec son frère. [...] La Seconde Guerre mondiale a obligé ma famille à quitter la France. Le fait d’avoir appris l’anglais, aussi bien que le français, c’est donc une conséquence de la guerre. L’appellation de « cosmopolite » remonte à un essai de Pasolini qui accompagnait ma première publication dans Il Menabò (1963), mais moi, je refuse cette appellation : nous sommes des enfants de la Seconde Guerre mondiale. [...] Nous n’étions pas des cosmopolites ; nous étions des réfugiés (Rosselli 1999: 76).

Ainsi écrit Rosselli en 1990, en réponse à la célèbre définition de Pasolini qui la caractérisait comme une « sorte d’apatride issue d’une grande famille aux traditions cosmopolites ». Par cette définition, Pasolini faisait allusion au choix libre et intellectuel d’ouverture et de dénationalisation qui caractérisait « la grande culture libérale européenne », en oubliant ainsi l’impossibilité tragique et subie d’appartenir à une terre, voire à une langue d’origine. Rosselli et sa poésie « entre les langues » – comme c’est le cas pour d’autres poètes tels que Celan ou Mandelstamm – sont, à la lettre, des « enfants de la Seconde Guerre mondiale » ; elles
sont chargées du poids de l'Histoire ; elles revendiquent la recherche désespérée d’une langue-refuge au sein de leur exil.

Exilée avec sa mère et ses frères en Angleterre et en Amérique, Rosselli reçoit sa formation dans un milieu que l’on pourrait définir comme anglophone : d’abord en Angleterre, où elle est parfaitement intégrée dans le système scolaire, au point que l’anglais devient un véritable point de repère personnel et culturel, ensuite aux États-Unis, où elle assimile notamment l’expérience moderniste et ses procédés stylistiques et formels, tels que l’hybridation de Pound, la fragmentation des textes, des sujets et des voix, le décloisonnement des genres, caractérisant notamment The Waste Land de Eliot, le rapport conflictuel aux structures fermées de la poésie classique chez Plath.

Or, cette formation américaine – résultat d’une vie de déplacements liés à une page tragique de l’histoire aussi bien collective qu’individuelle –, c’est ce qui pourrait finalement expliquer, me semble-t-il, l’étrangeté de Rosselli face aux expériences poétiques italiennes, voire sa difficulté à être considérée comme un modèle poétique capable de remettre en question ceux qui sont à l’œuvre dans le champ poétique italien dans les années 1960, lorsqu’elle y fait son entrée, en débutant avec vingt-quatre poèmes publiés sous le titre Variazioni belliche (1963). Autrement dit, Rosselli est perçue en tant que poète étrangère, c’est-à-dire formée en dehors de l’Italie, avec une langue, des modèles littéraires et des canons de référence qui, à cette époque, soit ne sont pas reconnus comme légitimes par les écrivains italiens, soit font l’objet d’une réception parsemée de méconnaissances.

Sa poétique, aboutissement d’un parcours entre plusieurs pays, langues et littératures échappe donc aux schémas de perception et de classification de ses commentateurs, qui, à la suite de Pasolini, ne voient souvent dans ses jeux linguistiques délibérés que des lapsus, dus à une connaissance imparfaite de l’italien.

Bien au contraire, loin d’être une faute inconsciente – encore que formellement significative et fêconde –, résultat d’une maîtrise « imparfaite » de la langue, le lapsus témoigne ici de l’enjeu tout à fait transgressif du langage poétique de Rosselli, visant à « affranchir en quelque sorte [la parole] de la norme traditionnelle, à travers une aliénation positive afin de la ramener à son caractère autonome d’invention » (Giudici 1981 : 13). Le lapsus serait donc la façon, propre à Rosselli, de se distinguer dans et par la « langue » – l’italien normé et institutionnalisé –, à travers la revendication de la légitimité et de l’originalité de cet écart, voire de cette erreur (ce qui renvoie étymologiquement à la fois à la transgression de la loi grammaticale, qui caractérise tout acte poétique, et à la condition d’exilé dont témoigne le parcours de Rosselli) : « Le risque qui attend le poète […] est l’erreur. Erreur signifie le fait d’errer, de ne pouvoir demeurer parce que, là où l’on est, manquent les conditions d’un ici décisif » (Blanchot 1994 : 319).

À la lumière de cette impossibilité de demeurer, on peut appréhender le lapsus chez Rosselli comme la possibilité (potentialité) de se placer au cœur de son pluri-linguisme d’origine et, par le biais d’un processus d’(auto)-traduction, d’inventer
sa propre parole poétique dépayssée et dépayssante. Toute sa production poétique pourrait donc se lire aussi – me semble-t-il – en tant que tentative de traduction, ne serait-ce que par le fait d’être obligée de passer toujours d’une langue à l’autre, dans sa vie aussi bien que dans ses vers :

Les textes de Rosselli anticipent, déjà à l’intérieur de la langue où il sont nés, des phénomènes de « traduction » : idiomates et codes culturels différents fusionnent dans le texte, dans une poétique prismatique, pourvue de la capacité presque joycienne de percevoir toujours la parole avec les nuances qu’elle a dans d’autres systèmes linguistiques. (Prammer 2007: 105)

Le domaine de la traduction, qu’il faut toujours avoir à l’esprit lorsqu’on aborde l’écriture de Rosselli – toute sa production étant envisageable à la lumière d’une langue qui, en elle-même, « anticipe des phénomènes de traduction » –, fera donc l’objet de notre contribution. Celle-ci portera notamment sur un aspect qui n’a pas encore reçu toute l’attention qu’il mérite, à savoir les enjeux et les stratégies poétiques adoptées dans sa traduction de la poétesse américaine Sylvia Plath.

Le fait de faire connaître cette poétesse, avec laquelle Rosselli ressent une certaine affinité de parcours aussi bien qu’une familiarité langagière, est alors une stratégie – encore que souvent spontanée – d’autolégitimation, une façon de revendiquer indirectement la reconnaissance de sa poétique, comme c’est souvent le cas pour les écrivains traduisant des auteurs qu’ils considèrent comme significatifs :

Les importations hérétiques sont souvent le fait de marginaux dans le champ, qui importent un message, une position qui a de la force dans un autre champ, avec pour effet de renforcer leur position de dominés dans le champ (Bourdieu 2002: 5).

Ces rencontres, qui ne sont jamais réductibles à de simples « influences » ou « dettes », demeurent plutôt chez Rosselli la marque incontournable de sa production poétique toute entière, « soutenue du magma bouillonnant d’une insatiable mémoire textuelle […] »), au point que sa traduction ne saurait être finalement que la traduction d’une traduction » (Prammer 2007: 107).

La traduction de Plath est particulièrement significative dans ce contexte. Ce choix dénote en effet un rapport d’identification, fondé sur des nombreuses affinités qui relient l’auteur et le traducteur, aussi bien en ce qui concerne la trajectoire que les propriétés de l’œuvre.

Elles ont à peu près le même âge : Plath est née à Boston en 1932. Amelia est d’origine juive ; Plath, fille d’un Allemand émigré aux Etats-Unis se déclare juive par solidarité pour les victimes du nazisme. Toutes deux ont été privées de l’attention maternelle et confiées aux soins et aux méthodes éducatives des grands-parents. Toutes deux ont vécu, encore enfants, le traumatisme causé par la mort...

Aux incontestables affinités des trajectoire correspondent bien évidemment de nombreuses analogies dans les choix spéifiquement poétiques :

Je m’intéresse davantage à sa musicalité, aux procédés techniques tels que les inversions syntaxiques […]. Je me reconnais aussi dans son choix des couleurs, dans une religiosité tantôt retenue, tantôt impétueuse, dans son ampleur de langage certainement pas académique. (Rosselli 2003: 40)

Or, cet usage fréquent d’images empruntées à l’iconographie chrétienne et au vocabulaire des mystiques représente moins la tentative d’atteindre une catharsis purificatrice qu’une véritable stratégie d’expérimentation linguistique fondée sur un anti-académisme programmatique et vouée à forcer les mots – comme c’est le cas pour les mystiques – afin de les pousser jusqu’au seuil de l’indicible, voire du silence.

Ce caractère visionnaire, commun aux deux poètes, est alors nourri d’une « symbolique de l’impuissance », qui fait du langage même un lieu de privation et de punition. Les noyaux thématiques qui expriment cette vision jamais vivifiante sont précisément ceux de la mort et du divin. L’espace du divin paraît jaillir de la fissure qui sépare le langage du monde : le Dieu dont elles nous parlent demeure tout entier dans le geste de déchirure, de soustraction, presque d’échec et de trahison amoureuse.

Le motif du divin est donc intimement lié à l’impuissance de la langue poétique face à la représentation de tout ce qui n’est pas visible et se concrétise à la fois en tant que recherche d’un dialogue avec un interlocuteur divin et transcendant – caractérisé néanmoins par des traits très humains, liés au domaine du corps –, et en tant qu’image de la douleur individuelle du sujet, transfigurée en destin surnaturel avec des implications mystiques.

La réaction à cette impasse du langage, résultat d’une véritable crise du sujet, consiste pour Plath et Rosselli, paradoxalement, à ne s’en remettre qu’aux mots et aux instruments propres à la poésie, dans une insistance exacerbée sur la forme.

D’un côté, c’est alors le corps qui devient l’objet privilégié de la représentation, un corps poussé vers une rencontre problématique avec l’Autre ; de l’autre côté, c’est la langue même qui se fait corps, une langue qui se montre dans son aspect matériel, où la matérialité du signifiant l’emporte sur l’abstraction du signifié.

Amelia Rosselli, en lisant Sylvia Plath, retrouve justement cette matérialité dans sa préoccupation constante pour la valeur musicale des mots dont elle devient l’un des interprètes les plus fidèles et attentifs :
Ses traductions se réalisent dans la fidélité absolue au registre stylistique, en ce qui concerne aussi bien la lettre que le son, le secco e musicale linguaggio de Plath, voire le rythme et la concision des métaphores, comme si la langue inusuale (inusité) qu’elle s’opère à traduire n’était pas au fond une langue autre, étrangère – ce qui en effet n’est pas faux –, mais plutôt une langue au sein de laquelle rechercher une véritable fraternité avec la langue d’accueil (Lorenzini 1997: 30).

La mise en valeur de l’inusualità de la poétesse américaine est le véritable enjeu de son activité de traduction puisque, en contribuant à établir la nouveauté de ce modèle, en réalité elle fortifie sa position. Traduire Plath est aussi une façon de mettre en valeur ses stratégies poétiques inhabituelles et la reconnaissance tardive de la critique en tant que preuves de son originalité et de sa valeur.

Or, à travers l’analyse de la traduction du poème de Plath The Moon and the Yew Tree, par Amelia Rosselli (La luna e il tasso) on va tenter d’expliciter la démarche tout à fait particulière de Rosselli : l’extrême fidélité à la lectio de Plath – dont Amelia cherche à s’approprier l’écriture anti-conventionnelle – associée à une certaine « introduction » de sa propre langue « abnorme » et de ses lapsus finement maîtrisés, se révèle être le signe incontestable d’une véritable soif de filiation poétique.

Une telle recherche d’appropriation, par le biais de la traduction, est donc amenée par Rosselli dans la tentative explicite de s’autolégitimer en tant que poétesse qui, formée hors des confins nationaux et notamment, comme Plath, aux Etats-Unis, est perçue, voire reçue en Italie comme une voix poétique « étrange », sinon « étrangère ». Il lui faut donc un véritable travail de replacement – auquel l’expérience de la traduction de Plath participe de façon explicite – au sein du champ d’accueil, à savoir le panorama, provincial, de la poésie italienne des années 1960-1980.

Les poèmes de Sylvia Plath traduits par Amelia Rosselli et publiés en 1985 dans Le muse inquietanti (Plath 1985) sont au nombre de treize : trois parurent en 1960, alors que Plath était encore en vie, dans le recueil The Colossus, les autres font partie d’un recueil paru en 1965, après la mort de Plath, Ariel (Plath 1965). En dehors de Le muse inquietanti, sous la direction de Gabriella Morisco, la revue Poesia publie en 1991 les dernières traductions de Plath signées par Rosselli, April 18 (18 aprile), Whitness I Remember (Bianchezza che ricordo), Leaving Early (Partendo presto), The Rival (La rivale) et Kindness (Bontà). Il s’agit des poèmes de Plath qui, d’après Rosselli, « ne sont pas parmi les plus “intimes” et privés, mais au contraire parmi ceux qui ont des titres neutres, voire ambigus ; ceux où Plath apparaît mystique et en même temps concrète dans les métaphores, digne héritière de Shelley et Keats, de Blake et Dickinson » (Rosselli 2003: 42).

Pour donner une idée de la singularité du travail effectué par Rosselli dans ses traductions de Plath, de sa fidélité au texte mais aussi de l’ingérence de sa propre parole poétique, j’ai choisi de comparer sa traduction d’un poème faisant partie du

Il est dans ce cas plus intéressant de faire appel à une analyse comparée qui a le mérite de rendre immédiatement visible les stratégies traductives de Rosselli face à celles de Giudici : si Giudici cherche à nous familiariser avec l’écriture de Plath en la rapportant à des procédés stylistiques et formels modelés sur les attentes du lecteur italien, Rosselli reste très proche de la *lectio* de Plath, dans le but explicite de présenter au public italien – par le biais justement d’une traduction très littérale – la poétesse américaine dans son étrangeté radicale vis-à-vis des modèles poétiques qui dominent l’Italie dans ces années-là.

En ce qui concerne le thème du poème de Plath, on remarquera d’abord qu’il s’accorde bien à la sensibilité de Rosselli : il est question d’une vision mystique, c’est-à-dire d’une vision qui s’affronte aux limites du langage poétique face à la représentation d’un paysage surréel – voire tout à fait mental – avec un if muet éclairé par une lune « tondue et sauvage ».

L’if est l’arbre de la mort qui, comme Plath avait dû le lire dans le long poème de Robert Graves *The White Goddess*, symbolise à la fois la voie de communication entre les morts et les vivants et ce qui ferme la bouche aux morts, en empêchant tout dialogue et donc toute possibilité de perpétuer la mémoire collective. C’est justement cette impossibilité de la parole poétique, incapable d’entrer en relation avec le monde, voire le fait que « l’homme est dans le lieu du langage sans avoir une voix » (Agamben 1991: 102), qui est portée au jour par Plath et Rosselli pour lesquelles le message de l’if ne peut être que celui désolant du *blackness – blackness and silence*, de la *nerezza – nerezza e del silenzio* (« noirceur et silence » ou « ténèbres et silence »).

Cet arbre arrogant, figure du silence et de la mort, marque dès le début la différence entre les deux traductions : Giudici semble préférer à l’if (littéralement, *the yew tree*) un cyprès, l’arbre des cimetières par excellence en Méditerranée. Cela correspond donc chez Giudici à la volonté de proposer l’« équivalence » du poème afin de rendre plus familier le contenu même du poème par rapport au contexte anglophone d’origine.

Au vers 1, Giudici choisit de traduire *mind par memoria* (« mémoire »), ce qui introduit un ton lyrique et symbolique, presque *crepuscolare*, qui est absent du texte de Plath : comme si, dans ce paysage, l’esprit-mémoire revenait sur un événement appartenant à un passé lointain et perdu à jamais. Rosselli, au contraire, préfère *mente* (« esprit ») et introduit le paysage mental en traduisant *this is* par l’*abrupto* eidétique *V’è* (« Il y a »), qui objective l’image à partir d’une perspective à la fois intérieure et extérieure à la représentation. Il s’agit d’une image mentale ayant les caractéristiques d’une dittologie inhabituelle : elle est *fredda e planetaria* (« froide et planétaire »).

Au vers 2, au lieu de l’absolue littéralité de Rosselli, Giudici propose la fusion des deux syntagmes – dans la version originale, séparés par un point – en une
seule phrase, plutôt longue, avec l’introduction d’une inversion syntaxique, véritable topos de la poésie italienne, de Pétrarque à Saba : Neri sono gli alberi della memoria, azzurra la luce (« Noirs sont les arbres de la mémoire, bleue la lumière ») dit quelque chose de profondément différent de Gli alberi della mente sono neri. La luce è blu. (« Les arbres de l’esprit sont noirs. La lumière est bleue. »), qui, dans sa sécheresse foudroyante ne fait aucune concession crépusculaire-sentimentale, mais au contraire se situe dans une diction moderniste tout à fait dépouillée.

C’est la claustrophobie des images ou des voix mentales – et non la mémoire – que l’artiste craint et cherche à fuir en s’échappant. Ce qu’on désire est donc l’apparition d’une voie de sortie, une porte, comme l’explicité le vers placé en ouverture de la deuxième strophe. Pourtant, la luna non è certo una porta (is no a door, et non pas is not a door) « la lune n’est surtout pas une porte », mais plutôt un visage, une face.

L’objet-lune fait son apparition. La lune est une image récurrente dans le paysage de Plath – comme dans celui de Rosselli. Ici, accompagnée des marées qu’elle souleve comme un buio delitto, « sombre délit » (Giudici) ou un oscuro crimine, « crime obscur » (Rosselli, avec une belle consonance), la lune représente le principe féminin maternel, tel que le racontent les mythes des ori
gines. D’après la traduction de Rosselli, la luna è quieta / Con lo spalancato ‘O’ della completa disperazione (« elle est calme / Avec l’ô du désespoir total »). Giudici, au contraire, ajoute une bocca « bouche » et remplace avec l’adjectif tranquilla (« tranquille ») le léopardien quieta de Rosselli, plus proche phonétiquement du quiet de l’original.

Finalement, à partir de la troisième strophe, l’if fait son apparition : il tasso punta in su « l’if pointe vers le ciel ». Il s’agit d’une figuration, d’une forme gothique. L’if symbolise ce qui est haut, et le regard – celui du poète, présent dans un coin en bas de la toile, et le nôtre, de lecteurs voyeurs –, en le suivant, revient à la lune. Elle est, comme on l’a vu, le maternel, voire mia madre « ma mère ». Il s’agit de la mère réelle, mais aussi, au niveau symbolique, de la Vierge. Pourtant, cette Vierge n’est pas douce comme Marie. Dalle sue vesti blu si liberano pipistrelli e gufi « De ses robes bleues s’échappent des chauves-souris et des hiboux » : on est en présence d’une iconographie mariale hagarde, d’une Vierge aux azzurre vesti qui sprigionano [...] civette « s’échappent des chouettes » (Giudici).

L’image qui surgit du poème est donc celle du visage de la Vierge, peint dans le tableau et adouci par la lumière des bougies, qui pose son regard sur le Moi lyrique. Le visage de la Vierge est en réalité une face, La facCia dell’effiGle, addolCita « la face de l’effigie, adoucie », tel que traduit Rosselli, tout en gardant l’allitération de Plath, The face of the effigy, gentled. Giudici, à l’inverse, introduit au cœur du poème une distinction entre la faccia « la face » de la lune et il viso « le visage » de la Vierge, dissolvant le jeu de superposition plathien entre la lune-mère et la Mère.
I have fallen a long way. Cette chute placée en ouverture de la quatrième strophe définit l’endroit où le poète-sujet s’est finalement installé : bien bas, molto in giù « dans son abîme », traduit Godi dans la langue de Baudelaire (la lunga « longue » chute de Giudici me paraît également convaincante, par rapport à la durée du long way de Plath).

Dans The Moon and the Yew Tree, le thème de la chute se concrétise par l’adoption d’un nouveau point de vue par le sujet : c’est la perspective d’en-bas, de quelqu’un qui, allongé au sol, voit le ciel étoilé et i nuvoli (« les nuages »), déclinés au masculin au lieu qu’au féminin, ce qui montre la posture, propre à Rosselli, d’irrévérence envers la sclérose des genres.

Le moi lyrique, dans sa nouvelle perspective d’en-bas, est en train de s’imaginer l’intérieur de l’église d’où découle une vision de sèvre apaisement qui l’exclut : Nella chiesa, i santi saranno tutti vestiti di blu, / Galleggiando sui loro piedi delicati sopra i freddi banchi di chiesa, « Dans l’église, les saints seront tout bleus, / Flottant sur leurs pieds délicats au-dessus des bancs froids », traduit Rosselli, se souciant peu de la métrique pour porter son attention sur la longueur du vers, en introduisant l’heureux gérondif galleggiare di santi « floter, presque nager de saints » (floating) ; Giudici, au contraire, traduit avec deux alexandrins qui riment de façon imparfaite, en choisissant une relative, che sfiorano « qui frôlent », au détriment du gérondif.

Le choix fait par Rosselli de conserver le mode indéterminé (mode de l’attente, de la durée et du dépassement du moi) – sans doute d’ailleurs beaucoup plus familier à la langue anglaise qu’à la langue italienne – n’est que l’une des stratégies adoptées pour frapper d’indétermination les figures qui peuplent l’univers poétique plaithien.

Si l’on revient maintenant au poème en question et notamment au regard de l’observateur allongé sur le sol, on remarquera que son regard est extérieur à l’église, opposé et dirait-on presque symétrique par rapport à celui, toujours extérieur, de la lune : La luna non vede nulla di tutto ciò « La lune ne voit rien de tout cela » (Rosselli), Giudici préfère encore l’inversion : Niente di ciò vede la luna « Rien de tout cela ne voit la lune ».

Il est question ici d’un jeu de regards croisés structurant la géométrie qui compose la scène représentée : « l’if pointe vers le ciel » aussi bien que l’observateur, placé à l’intérieur de la scène, dont les jeux cherchent la lune, en même temps que l’effigie « pose sur lui son regard bienveillant ». On retrouve là le thème, cher à Rosselli, du regard obliquo « oblique », clairvoyant puisqu’il est en mesure de voir au-delà des apparences du fait qu’il n’est pas obscurci par l’aveuglante réalité visible : c’est le cas du regard authentique de la statue mariale, un regard compatissant qui soutient, par le biais de sa douceur, le sujet face à sa chute (sono caduta molto in giù « j’ai sombré dans son abîme »), à l’inverse de l’indifférente cécité d’une lune léopardienne qui « ne voit rien de tout cela ».
Le poème se termine finalement sur ce message d’obscurité et de silence annoncé par l’if, un message sans contenu ou dont le contenu est l’absence même, la négation complète : bald – wild – black – silence ; nerezza-nerezza e silenzio « noirceur/ ténèbres et silence », où la néoformation nerezza-nerezza est utilisée dans un but anti-rhétorique, mais aussi dans l’intention de créer une musicalité qui devrait avoir une valeur métrique, les deux z représentant le correspondant littéral mais aussi phonétique de l’anglais blackness.

Or, il résulte clairement que, si Giudici s’est lancé dans le projet explicite d’une transposition de Plath visant à réduire son étrangeté par rapport à la poésie italienne, Rosselli a consciemment mis en valeur cet écart caractérisant d’ailleurs sa propre position. Rosselli – qui, comme on l’a vu, partage avec la poétesse américaine de nombreuses affinités biographiques et un parcours poétique semblable, s’approprie l’enseignement et le capital symbolique de Plath, par le biais d’une véritable fidélité aux choix linguistiques de l’original, stratégie traductive pleinement maîtrisée.

En même temps, une telle fidélité à Plath s’accompagne d’une deuxième fidélité, celle à sa propre langue poétique « batailleuse et transgressive », dont elle parsème ses traductions. C’est ce qu’on a appelé « stratégie de désappropriation » de la langue officielle par le biais d’un véritable processus d’invention. Quelques exemples à ce propos : dans Ariel, le choix de traduire l’adjectif anglais suicidal (normalisé par Giudici en suicida « suicide ») avec le néologisme suicidale, adjectif qui est d’ailleurs intégré dans son propre idiolecte – comme dans sa vie – avec le sens de tendente al suicidio « qui tend au suicide ».

Un autre exemple très éloquent de désappropriation transgressive de l’italien on le retrouve dans Thalidomide. Il s’agit d’un très beau cas de « lapsus » chez Rosselli qui traduit Knuckles at shoulder-blades par Nocche alle spatole « Phalanges aux spatules » : The indelible buds, // Knuckles at shoulder-blades, the / Faces that // Shove into being (Gli indelebili boccoli, // Nocche alle spatole, le / Facece che // Urgono alla vita « Les boutons indélébiles, // Phalanges aux spatules, les / Visages qui // appellent avec urgence à la vie »). Dans ce passage, spatole « spatules » prend la place de scapole « omoplates » (d’après Giudici, Giunture delle scapole « les joints des omoplates »), comme si l’occlusive c de scapole était absorbée par nocche (phonétiquement proche du Knuckles de Plath) et la consonne dentale t – qui transforme une partie du corps de l’enfant qui va naître, scapole, en un outil inanimé, spatole, par ailleurs étymologiquement proche de spalla « épaule » (spalla vient du latin spatula) – anticipait paradoxalement le vita au vers 14.

En conclusion, les traductions de Plath par Rosselli témoignent, me semble-t-il, d’une double fidélité : d’une part à la poétesse américaine, dont elle a intérêt à montrer l’étrangeté par rapport aux modèles italiens, de l’autre à sa propre langue poétique, qui – bien qu’exprimée en italien – reste également étrangère au sein du
panorama national. Le cas de Rosselli illustre donc celui des auteurs qui, n’appartenant pas au champ national pour cause d’une formation excentrique, sont considérés comme de véritables étrangers. Ils ne peuvent qu’être reçus alors au prix d’un processus de re-placement, de trans-position, de traduction de leurs propres positions dans le champ d’accueil. Ce processus, comme on l’a vu, est finalement ce que Rosselli met en œuvre lorsqu’elle traduit ses modèles de références (notamment Plath), stratégie d’autolégitimation visant justement à faire reconnaître sa langue poétique qui se moque des conventions linguistiques en dévalorisant toute tradition littéraire institutionnelle et tout canon de référence définissant les principes de classification et de consécration.

Pourtant, la recherche d’une langue « autre » pour laquelle elle songe à une reconnaissance – par le biais de la traduction en tant que stratégie se désapproprient la langue de la Loi pour mieux s’approprier une langue poussée jusqu’aux confins ultimes de la mort et du silence – se trouve finalement et tragiquement confrontée à la limite extrême de la Nuit, dont son parcours humain et poétique porte les traces.

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Rethinking Postcolonial Theories:
Two Western Plays in Hong Kong Translation

1. Introduction

Mainstream postcolonial theories maintain that Western colonisers always exploit, brainwash and denigrate their colonies and that the task of postcolonial translation is to deconstruct colonialism. The objective of this article is to find out whether mainstream postcolonial theories adequately apply to the case of Hong Kong (HK), in particular to Western drama in HK Cantonese' translation, or whether they should be balanced or complemented by alternative postcolonial theories. The hypothesis is that postcolonial HK drama translation often manifests nostalgia for, or reluctance to part with, British colonial rule and a need to negotiate with the new coloniser, Peking. (According to Lo (2004: 97), in the mid- and late 1980s, as ‘1997’ became clearer and clearer, Mainland China was actually the target to ‘negotiate with’ in HK drama.)

According to Anne McClintock (see Childs and Williams 1997: 227), colonisation is the “appropriation and exploitation of another geopolitical territory, together with an organized interference in its rule and culture”. Based on this definition, HK was an overseas colony of Britain from 1841 to 1997. This article adopts the temporal concept of Gilbert and Tompkins’ (1996) definition of postcolonialism as “engagement with and contestation of colonialism’s discourses, power structures, and social hierarchies”. For the purposes of this research, postcolonial HK translated plays are defined as plays rendered since 1982, when Peking first mentioned to London that HK must be returned by the UK to China by 1997. According to Lo Wai Luk (2004) and Lin (2007), this event triggered a search for identity among HK citizens and, in my view, the postcolonial period of HK drama, in which the main target of query is China as its second coloniser. According to Sonny Lo (2007: 222), recolonisation is a process in which “a powerful metropole is exerting influence on its colonial enclave politically, economically, socially and culturally”, and recolonisation takes place in Hong Kong in the form of mainlandisation, or policies on the part of the HK...
government to render HK more and more reliant on the Chinese Mainland (Lo 2007: 179).

In order to familiarise readers with the background to HK drama translation, a brief history of HK and a review of the literature will be given first. Then, mainstream and alternative postcolonial (translation) theories will be summarised. Two plays are selected based on their responsiveness to major socio-political events in HK history, e.g. the Tiananmen Square Massacre (1989), the handover of HK to Peking (1997), and the crisis of governance between 2002 and 2003. The plays are Wong Yuen Ling and Jacob Wong’s (1989) direction and Wong Yuen Ling’s translation of Büchner’s (1835/1988) Danton’s Death as Revolution Again – Selected Parts from Danton’s Death, and Szeto Wai-kin’s (2003) translation and Sin Chun-tung’s (2003) direction of Neil Simon’s God’s Favourite as My Father is Ash of the Party. They will be examined in the light of postcolonial theories, and the manipulation of the original will be categorised as that of the translator and the director. A sociological explanation will be offered for HK’s attitudes towards its two colonisers as inferred from the plays. Finally, a conclusion will be drawn.

2. Background

2.1. HK History

HK Island was formally ceded to Britain by the Qing Dynasty authorities at the end of the Opium War in 1841. Kowloon, the second part of HK, was ceded to Britain in 1860. The third part, the New Territories, was leased to Britain in 1898 for 99 years. In 1967, as a ramification of the Cultural Revolution in China, a riot broke out in HK, but it did not receive much support from the local people and was soon quelled. In 1982, the governments of the UK and China began to discuss the issue of HK’s sovereignty. In 1984, the two countries signed the Sino-British Joint Declaration by which HK would be returned to China in 1997. As agreed between the UK and China, HK would be governed as a special administrative region, retaining the British Common Law and a high degree of autonomy for at least 50 years after the transfer.

On 28 May 1989, 1.5 million HK citizens paraded through HK Island in support of the Mainland students in Tiananmen Square who were demonstrating against governmental corruption and for democracy. The crackdown on 4 June severely affected HK’s perceptions of the mainland. The 1995, the HK Legislative Council election was conducted according to the formula of Chris Patten, the last Governor of HK, who fully used the grey areas in the Basic Law (mini-constitution) of HK to maximise the degree of democracy. (All councillors thus elected were replaced in 1997 by a provisional legislature handpicked by Peking.) Many
surveys have revealed that in HK in 1995 it was widely believed that things would deteriorate after 1997 (Wong Siu-lun 1995: 387).

Between 2002 and 2003, the fiscal deficit was around 6 billion euro, and the rate of unemployment was around 8 percent (compared with 2.2 percent in 1997). Meanwhile the HK Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa, handpicked by Beijing, began to tighten his grip by introducing unpopular measures such as an anti-subversion law and new taxes. The popularity of Tung and his regime hence fell to a record low (CNN.com/World 2009).

2.2. Literature Review and Theories

Drama in the modern sense was not imported into China and HK until the late 19th century, and translated plays occupy an important place in Chinese drama. According to J. Yeung’s survey (2007), 922 Western plays were performed in HK in Cantonese between 1962 and 2005.

Postcolonial studies, however, have seldom paid attention to East Asian drama, much less to HK drama translation. Y.T. Luk (2007) traces the development of Western drama in HK translation as performed by the HK Repertory Theatre in the social context of HK. Applying Rey Chow’s modified postcolonial theory (see below), Gilbert Fong (2007) argues that through its postcolonial drama, HK carves its own flexible hybrid identity between its two colonisers. Chapman Chen (2006) demonstrates with five translated plays performed between 2002 and 2003 that HK misses Britain and queries China.

Mainstream postcolonial theories almost unconditionally negate Western colonialism, while alternative postcolonial theories note the merits of Western culture and its possible benefits for the colonised. For instance, whereas Fanon (1967) condemns the Western colonisers for their enslaving and brutal exploitation of the colonised, D’Souza (2003) and N. Ferguson (2003) point out the benefits of the British legacy, e.g. rule of law, reason, education, and human rights. Fanon (1967) also puts forward a three-stage model for the cultural evolvement of the colonised – assimilation, return to cultural nationalism, and revolution. But the third stage has never occurred in HK (cf. Fong 2007: 6). On the contrary, rule of law, human rights, liberty, democracy and professionalism in the European or British sense have become core values of HK (cf. W.K. Chan 2007).

Homi Bhabha (1994: 115) argues that hybridity is a kind of peculiar ‘replication’ which interrogates the colonial culture through mimicry and emerges through opening up ‘a third space’ where the negotiation of incommensurable differences between global and national cultures takes place. Contrastively, Rey Chow (1998) shows HK to be carving a third hybrid space between its two aggressors (London and Peking). Similarly, Kwok-kan Tam (2005) argues that postcolonial HK literature, including drama, tries to construct a HK identity that is neither British nor Mainland Chinese nor Taiwanese. Bhabha (1994: 85–92) also
asserts that in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse, mimicry also disrupts its authority. In contrast, Fong (2007) points out that as a ‘strategic alliance’ existed between HK and the UK, the ‘mimicry’ in Western drama in HK translation is unlikely to be anti-British.

Memmi (1991) maintains that the coloniser brings to the colonised inevitable economic collapse and insidious psychological destruction. In contrast, the HK scholar, Perry Lam (2007:11, 20) argues that the colonial realities of HK prove that the imperialist is not necessarily just an aggressor and conqueror; he could also be a benefactor bringing to the colonised law, effective governance, science, civilisation and prosperity. As colonial subjects, HK people have placed their colonial master in eternal nostalgia (Lam 2007: 10).

Similarly to most postcolonial theories, most postcolonial drama/translation theories, e.g. Bassnett and Trivedi (1999), Tymoczko (1999), Niranjana (1992) and Bandia (2008), focus on how postcolonial plays/translations deconstruct colonialism but seldom consider the following: the possible benefits of European colonialism for the colonised subject as may be cherished in postcolonial translations, the hybridity of one colonised subject caught between two colonisers, translations from the Western coloniser’s language to that of the natives, and postcolonial drama translation per se. Gilbert and Tompkins (1996) develop performative and theoretical frameworks for dismantling imperialism regarding articulation of history, language, music, etc. in postcolonial drama. These frameworks are useful for analysing how postcolonial HK drama translation interrogates Chinese (rather than British) imperialism.

Having looked at relevant postcolonial theories, we will now examine Wong and Wong’s Revolution Again and Szeto’s My Father is Ash of the Party in their light.

3. Revolution in the Square

Wong and Wong’s (1989) version of Revolution Again was performed in August, immediately after the Tiananmen Square Massacre and as a direct response to it. The original is Büchner’s (1988) great portrait of the French Revolution, in particular how Danton comes to be executed by his former comrade Robespierre when the former, who has himself created the Terror, is now sick of bloodshed and turns against his creation.

3.1. The Translator’s Manipulation

The translator takes lines from Danton’s Death and assigns them to different characters in the group of French revolutionaries headed by Danton in the translated play, characters whose ghosts are carried by the ‘deluge of revolution’ from
18th century France to Tiananmen Square, Peking in 1989. The French group then dialogue with Chinese characters in the Square, including students from Peking, other provinces and HK, and their parents. The pro-democracy lines of the French group are endorsed by the people in the Square, and those of Robespierre and his accomplices are rebutted. For instance, Hercult’s line in the original, “Every individual must be free to exert his nature … but not at others’ expense” (Büchner 1988: 7), translated into Cantonese, is echoed by Chinese characters in the Square, one of whom, for example, says, “The Chinese have knelt for too long” (Act 2). By way of contrast, Robespierre’s line in the original, “The revolutionary government is the despotism of freedom against tyranny” (Büchner 1988: 14), is retorted by a character in the Square who says, “Those who on the surface have contributed much to freedom are in fact the greatest threat to freedom” (Act 4). Moreover, the critic Fan Kuk (1989: 279) notes that the line, “They wouldn’t mind adding a couple of noughts to Marat’s proscription figures either”, translated into Cantonese in Act 4, alludes to President Yang Shangkun’s determination to exterminate all counter-revolutionary rioters in 1989.

3.2. The Director’s Manipulation

The stage is covered with white cloth and divided into three regions. In the centre are the fasting students and their parents in the Square; the French group stand on a one-foot-high platform; on the other side are a few common people holding paintbrushes and complaining that the writing of the word revolution can never be finished. The director has the French characters dressed in elegant 18th century French costumes, in contrast with the plain white shirts and blue trousers of the Chinese characters. At the beginning, Danton’s character, singing the song “Remember Me” in English, leads his group in walking down a ladder to the centre of the stage. The French revolutionaries are probably intended as an antithesis to the CCP’s revolution, for as noted by Tsao (2009), though Russia and certain agricultural Asian countries claim to be ‘inspired’ by the French Revolution and have practised mob despotism a hundred times more cruel than it, they can never come close to the sublimity of Robespierre and Danton, due to the limitations of their DNA. According to Gilbert and Tompkins (1996: 194), “if postcolonial theatre provides … for a vocal expression of solidarity, resistance, or even presence, song can intensify the reactions of both the actors and the audience”. Besides “Remember Me”, many songs regularly sung in annual HK candle-lit vigils commemorating the Tiananmen Square Massacre are sung in the performance, e.g. “Bloodstained Glory” (Mandarin) and “The Sunlight of May” (Cantonese).

The director also uses a slide show to convey their political orientation, e.g. a slide with the slogan “The road of democracy is long; please persist” in Chinese at the end of the play.
According to one of the actors, Lee Mak (2009), when the performance ended the audience and the actors hugged each other and wept copiously. This shows that the anti-Communist sentiment of the play was deeply shared by the Hong Kong audience.

4. Aren’t Hong Kong Citizens Ash of the Party?


4.1. The Translator’s Manipulation (also explored in Chen 2005 and Chen 2006)

The Cantonese rendition is a modern Hong Kong political version of Neil Simon’s God’s Favorite and, in turn, of the Biblical Job. The transformation process is as follows. The prosperous Job of the Bible is transformed by Neil Simon into Joe Benjamin of Long Island, a wealthy manufacturer, but nonetheless a devout and simple man, grateful for his success, his rags-to-riches story. In turn, Joe is transformed by Szeto into Kwok Chung-sun, a rich Hong Kong businessman devoted to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1995. God is transformed into President Jiang Zemin of the CCP and Satan into Chris Patten, whom Peking used to call the ‘culprit of Hong Kong history’. As a result of a bet between President Jiang and Governor Patten, Jiang sets out to test Kwok’s loyalty to the CCP by closing down his factories on Mainland China, ruining his house, torturing him physically, and exiling his beloved son in 1995. Still, Kwok does not renounce the CCP.

The perspectives of various kinds of Hongkongers in 1995 concerning the 1997 handover are powerfully represented by the characters in My Father is Ash of the Party. By turning the religious theme of the original into a political one, the translator makes the hero of the play look pathetic, because he unconditionally worships President Jiang in the same way that Job and Joe worship God. As confirmed by the translator Szeto (2004) and the director Sin (2010), Kwok represents certain Peking royalists in HK. Just as he waits patiently for his rebellious eldest son to understand him, he waits most patiently and lovingly for the Party and for the nation to get better, despite the fact that the Party has caused the death of tens of millions of Chinese, including the death of Kwok’s own siblings, as well as his own aforementioned misfortunes. The satire against pro-communist elements in HK and the CCP is borne out by the audience’s response. Bidding farewell to his father before being exiled, Kwok’s son says,
Didn’t you say just now that your father was even more tragic in that six out of his seven children were sacrificed for the Party? Now you have three children and only one has been sacrificed for the Party. This already shows that the Party is already improved and more civilised! (My translation)

This immediately triggered laughter on the part of the audience.

Kwok’s wife, second son, daughter, and even the messenger of President Jiang represent ordinary HK citizens who fear and despise Communist China. For example, when the Kwoks suspect that an illegal Chinese immigrant is breaking into their luxury home, Kwok’s wife yells, “I don’t want the communists… I only want us to remain what we are now – under British rule – and live here very safely.” On the other hand, the counterpart in Neil Simon’s version is simply, “I want to know that we’ll be safe in our beds tonight and that some lunatic isn’t going to break into the house and cut our throats and steal our jewels.” And Kwok’s daughter is concerned that her limbs will be cut off by some mainlander and that she will be forced to beg for them in the streets of Shenzhen, while the counterpart in Neil Simon’s version is just Sarah yelling, “I keep picturing some horrid man rubbing his clammy hands all over me.”

In Neil Simon’s version, the messenger of God, when laid off by his boss, complains: “The poor carry their burdens and the rich have them delivered … God! … The Devil cares more … At least he entertains them… The Exorcist grossed over 130 million dollars – domestic!” (Simon 1971: 81). Szeto translates:

Mainland China regard us Hongkongers as illegitimate children, bastards… it is the British who have treated us better… At least before their departure they organised a direct election for us, built a luxurious airport, and left hundreds of billions of HK dollars to us. Mainland China? … They have cursed us … and disallowed us from electing our Chief Executive (My translation)

Kwok’s eldest son represents the pro-democracy HK people. Towards the end of the play, he tells his father frankly that he first began to loathe him and indulge in dissipation in 1989, upon witnessing his father continuing to do business with Communist China after the Massacre. The same young man is also deeply concerned that “Hong Kong is going to be unlike before … people living here are going to be very insecure, very hopeless!” No equivalent of such lines is to be found anywhere in Neil Simon’s version.

4.2. The Director’s Manipulation

In the translator’s script, the son of the hero is eventually returned to him, which corresponds to the happy endings of Neil Simon’s version and the Biblical Job. The director changes the ending so that the son is deported by the guards of the CCP rather than returned to his father. This makes the CCP much more villainous
than God in either Neil Simon’s version or the Old Testament, implying that the CCP has no credibility. Equally importantly, it may reflect many Hong Kong people’s fear that the ordeal they were going through in 2003 might be endless like the sufferings of Kwok. Then the stage blacks out with Kwok ruefully sitting down. Meanwhile, the revolutionary song of the CCP (“No CCP, No New China”) is broadcast. At the curtain call, an old HK song, “The Pearl of the East”, that was very popular in the 1980s, as sung by Jenny Tseng in Cantonese, is broadcast. The song basically tells people to band together to preserve the glory of Hong Kong in the face of ‘new persecutions, new temptations’, which could be suggestive to the post-1997 audience of the postcolonial oppression by China.

5. An Account of the Emotional Attachment to the UK and the Need to Negotiate with Communist China as Manifested in Postcolonial HK Drama Translation

The relationship between HK and its former coloniser Britain was not the classic slave-master colonial model but a ‘strategic alliance’, as mentioned above and thus expressed by Fong (2007: 6). The UK practised an active non-interference policy in relation to HK and never seriously suppressed its local culture or language. At the beginning of colonial rule, HK was an insignificant fishing port with a GDP approaching zero. By the end of colonial rule, HK had gained not only a reserve of 67 billion euro but also rule of law, freedom, human rights, a non-corrupt governmental system, universal education, a sophisticated financial system, etc. (cf. DeGolyer 2006). Then HK was handed over to another coloniser instead of becoming independent. The second coloniser appears to lag significantly behind both the former coloniser and the colony in terms of freedom of the press, environmental sustainability, human well-being, human rights, anti-corruption, integrity, etc. For example, Freedom House (2009) ranks the UK as having the 27th freest media, HK the 75th and China the 181st out of the 195 countries assessed. In the 2005 Environmental Sustainability Index prepared by the Yale Center for Environmental Law (2003), the UK ranks 65th, while China ranks 133rd. Prescott-Allen’s (2001) Well-being Index (a combination of Human Well-being and Ecosystem Well-being Indices) surveys 180 countries, ranking the UK 33rd and China 160th. In the Corruption Perceptions Index 2007, prepared by Transparency International, HK ranks 12th, the UK 16th, while China comes 72nd.

Equally important, according to Cheng (2007), which contains 24 essays written by a team of distinguished HK experts in different domains, HK declined in political development, economy, social welfare, freedom of the press and speech, education, transport, health care, income equality, urban planning, environmental protection, etc. during the first decade after the handover.
6. Conclusion

Postcolonial (translation) theorists, e.g. Tymoczko (1999) and Niranjana (1992), see translation as a site for challenging European colonialism. But the HK version of *Danton’s Death* supports the student democratic movement against the CCP with lines from the French revolutionaries. The translator of *God’s Favourite* puts in the mouth of the hero’s family and President Jiang’s messenger strong words against the despotism and uncouthness of Communist China and gratitude for the British legacy of security, freedom and democracy (confirming Lam’s (2007) argument for HK’s eternal nostalgia for its former colonial master); and the director changes the translator’s and the original author’s ending to satirise the hero’s loyalty to the CCP.

Bhabha (1994) talks about the subversion of European colonial authority by hybridity, mimicry and the third space. But elegant 18th century French costumes are mixed with modern Chinese clothes in the HK version of *Danton’s Death* in order to set off the sublimity of the French Revolution. At the end of *My Father is Ash of the Party*, the HK Cantonese song “Pearl of the East” is played to subvert the preceding Mandarin song of the CCP. By mimicking the French Revolution and an American version of the Biblical Job, postcolonial HK drama interrogates not Western imperialism, but Communist China totalitarianism. In both plays, the hero/heroine has to carve a Rey Chovian hybrid third space – in the case of *Revolution Again*, between European political history and Chinese dictatorship; and in the case of *My Father is Ash of the Party*, between Governor Patten and President Jiang.

Therefore, when a postcolonial community is caught between two colonisers, and provided that one is more compliant with international standards of civilisation, e.g. the Corruption Perception Index, than the other, the colonised people – in its drama translation – may manifest a preference for the more compliant coloniser and a need to query the other one. By mimicking the culture of the more enlightened coloniser, the colonised may resist not the coloniser being mimicked, but the less enlightened one. In other words, mainstream postcolonial (translation) theories apply more to HK-Peking than to HK-London relations. And, they need to be modified with the aid of alternative theories like those of Ferguson (2003), Chow (1998), Fong (2007) and Lam (2007).

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280


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