

# The Shifting Position of German Literature in Estonia: From Adapted Literature to Translated Literature

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**Abstract** When speaking about the role of German literature in Estonia we have to take into account the special status of this literature for Estonian culture: for centuries, the German language was the language of power, education and culture as well as of communication in Estonia. Estonian literature was born in the lap of German-language culture, based on the model of German-language literature and, at the beginning; it was even created by the originally German-speaking authors. The leading position of German literature was overrun only by the Soviet regime that politically pushed Russian literature into the forefront to replace German literature. It was basically starting from the Soviet period when German literature became a “translated” literature.

The topic of this article is the shifting position of German literature in Estonia. Translation history of German literature in Estonia is a story of the disappearance of a single cultural dominant. This is a post-colonialist story. In my article, I discuss four episodes of this story: first, I shall outline the historical importance of German literature in Estonia and focus on the adaptation of German classical literature (Goethe and Schiller); second, I am going to emphasise the role of rethinking German cultural heritage in the early 20th century (the period of the “Young Estonia” movement); next, I shall explain the changed conditions for translated literature in Soviet Estonia and finally, I shall examine the new literature curriculum of Estonian schools and analyse the share of German literature in it.

**Key words** reception history; translation history; Estonian-German literary contacts; German literature in Estonia; history of Estonian literature

**German as a Colonial Culture in Estonia**

“The old [critics] should take some trouble to analyse more thoroughly this effect that has in Estonia already become so close that it cannot even be well seen because of its closeness, I mean the German influence. Much of it has already been taken over as our own. It is not without reason that the Germans think of themselves as the bringers of culture; in education, they have truly given us much, although our chauvinist pride does not allow us to acknowledge it” (Oks 291-292).

German literature has had a special role in Estonian literary history — for centuries, the German language was the language of power, education and culture as well as of communication in Estonia. Estonian literature was born in the lap of German-language culture, based on the model of German-language literature and, at the beginning, it was even created by the originally German-speaking authors — the Baltic-Germans.

Baltic-Germans arrived in the Baltic countries in the course of Christianising colonisation, starting from the 13th century. They became the local nobility, obtained lands and manors, held special privileges and formed the cultural and social upper classes up to 1918, when the Estonian Republic was created. Up to that time, the German language had held its position as the leading language of administration and education no matter how often the rulers changed. In the 18th century, when the territories of the present-day Estonia and Latvia politically became provinces of Tsarist Russia, these Baltic provinces, however, represented a culturally and linguistically distinct region that intellectually belonged much more together with Germany than with Russia. The Baltic-German community persisted in the Baltic countries up to their resettlement to occupied Polish areas by Germans in 1939.

Baltic-German literature covers a special chapter in the history of Estonian-German literary relations. It is not easy to specify the boundaries between these two literatures. Up to the second half of the 19th century, Estonian literature can be treated as an “extension” of Baltic-German literature in the Estonian language. Texts written in this area in Estonian belonged together and were the different-style branches of one and the same literature, depending on the addressee (irrespective of their origin) the bilingual authors had in mind.

Together with the rising national self-consciousness of intellectuals of Estonian origin, the Estonian-language literary field was also taking a more distinct shape. It came into being within the Baltic-German literary field, first drawing from its support and later, contrasting with it. Although the newly independent Estonian literary field largely reevaluated its “genteel” colonial heritage, Baltic-German literature was still read and translated even during this period of emancipation. Theodor Hermann Patenius’s (1843-1915) novels about the history of the Baltic countries and Manfred

Kyber's (1880-1933) stories about animals were widely read by the Estonians as well. A collection of short stories by Eduard von Keyserling (1855-1918), a well-known Baltic-German writer, was named the best translated work in 1912 and Keyserling had a wide and positive reception in Estonian newspapers.

Baltic-German literature disappeared from the Estonian literary field during the Soviet period and appeared again in re-independent Estonia, when numerous memoirs once again opened the "heavy gates of Baltic manors" and brought their life to the focus of Estonian readers.

When speaking about the importance of German literature in Estonia we have to take into account the former special status of this literature for Estonian literature and the mediating role of Baltic-German culture in this literary transfer.

The Estonian-German literary relations can be described as colonial relations. Epp Annus, an Estonian literary scholar, claims that the "German culture was not a phenomenon that stood aside or apart from Estonian culture; on the contrary, the German tradition formed the core of Estonian national literature. Characteristic German features entered into and found a place in characteristic Estonian features; positions had gradually shifted during several centuries, German features had got absorbed into Estonian characteristics. A common paradox had again been born — re-establishment of the independence of a colonised land had been supported by the colonisers' culture" (Annus 14).

That is why up to the end of the 19th century, the Estonian-language translated literature was often an adaptation, not a translation at all, and as such, it was an inseparable part of Estonian literature. The fact that the texts adopted by Estonian culture were actually translations was even not noticed at that time. The Estonian literary language was influenced by the syntax, vocabulary and grammar of the German language and the general import of German culture was even more extensive so that we have a reason for speaking about the "deep impact of German spirit" on Estonian culture (Undusk 710).

German literature prevailed in Estonian translations even in the early 20th century, although the cultural elite of the day was then already rebelling against such cultural colonialism and became interested in the cultural heritage of other European countries. But the knowledge of the German language, German culture and German literature was self-evident even in the new Estonian Republic of the early 20th century, and for some time, the German language maintained its position as one of the official languages. The leading position of German literature was broken only by the Soviet regime that politically pushed Russian literature into the forefront to replace German literature. It was only during the Soviet period when German literature became a "translated" literature. Before that, there was no need to translate German

high literature into Estonian because intellectuals read it in the German language.

### **German Classics in Estonia and in the Estonian Translation**

At first, the translated literature in Estonia started with mass production — it was meant for common people, not for the cultural elite. It was not so much translated but adapted literature, and as such, it was an inseparable part of Estonian literature.

Excluding the Bible and the Hymnal, we can say that Estonian translated literature originated from the pietistic and sentimentalist spirit. The clergymen started translating pietistic literature into Estonian in larger numbers. The first works that belong to the Estonian canon of world literature are, besides the Holy Script and hymns, Johann Arndt's *Vier Bücher vom wahren Christenthum* and John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, translated in 1740-1750.

The first secular Estonian canon of world literature can be found in the first Estonian-language collection of stories — Friedrich Wilhelm Willmann's (1746-1819) *Juttud ja Teggud (Stories and Acts)* (1782). The sources for these stories were mostly German authors C. F. Gellert, M. G. Lichtwer, M. Luther, but there were adaptations from other classics of European literature, starting with classical literature, e.g. *Widow of Ephesus* by Petronius, Voltaire, Bernard de Trevier's chivalric novel about beautiful Magelone, Richard Steele's *Inkle and Yarico* up to *Decameron* and *1001 Nights*. After that, for about a century, Estonian readers were in love with the stories about pious Genevieve (Chris of v. Schmid, G. O. Marbach) and Robinsonades (Chris of v. Schmid, J. H. Campe), based on German examples. In 60 years, eleven different editions of the stories about pious Genevieve were published in the total of 18 prints.

The first canon of world poetry can be found in the Estonian-language poetry anthologies of the late 18th and early 19th centuries — *Monned laulud (Some Songs)* (1796) and Heinrich Johann Rosenplänter's (1782-1846) anthology *Lillikessed (Flowers)* (1814). These books were based on the works of the authors of German Enlightenment, such as Chr. F. Gellert, and more sentimental poets of the group "Heinbund" (L. H. Chr. Hölty, M. Claudius, G. A. Bürger, Chr. Fr. D. Schubart and others).

But where are Goethe and Schiller? It was "the age of Schiller" in the Baltic provinces at that time! Schiller was the favourite poet of Russian rulers of the time — Alexander I and Alexander II — and the idol of Baltic-German public! Schiller had had contacts with Baltic-Germans (e.g. a Baltic-German poet Carl Grass (1767-1814) whose poems Schiller had published in his *Thalia*), but he became even more known there via the students' song books. The students idolised Schiller! For one student from Tallinn this love even proved to be fatal: the young man had to spend several years in Siberia because he had used in his own writing the last strophe of Schiller's

*Ode to Joy (An die Freude)*. Schiller was also the author whose works were most often staged in the theatres of the Baltic provinces. The first professional theatre of the Baltics, the Riga City Theatre, opened its doors in 1782 with Lessing's play *Emilia Galotti*, but Schiller found his way into its permanent repertoire very soon: in 1785, the Riga theatre staged *Kabale und Liebe*, in 1786 *Die Räuber*, and soon after, *Maria Stuart*, *Wilhelm Tell* and others. The world première of *Don Carlos*<sup>1</sup> took place in Riga in 1787, even before the play appeared in print.

In part due to Baltic-German enthusiasm for Schiller, Estonia was the first country in the world to commemorate him: the first monument to Schiller was erected in the year of his death, 1805, in the Helme manor park, followed by a monument on Puhtulaid in 1813. In 1813, the same year when the Puhtulaid monument was erected, Schiller was first translated into Estonian. As expected, the first work to be translated was *Ode to Joy* which was published even in two different translations: by Otto Reinhold von Holtz (1757-1828) and Jakob Wilhelm Reinhold Everth (1775-1837) and in two different editions. *Ode to Joy* has all the time been Schiller's most famous poem in the Baltics and since 1891, it has often been included in the repertoire of song festivals.

After that, there was an almost 50-year break in the translation of Schiller's poetry into Estonian.

When Schiller's 100th anniversary was celebrated in Germany and in the Baltics in 1859, the celebrations, undoubtedly participated also by the Estonian intellectual elite of the time, brought the translation of Schiller's poetry again into the limelight. A new version of *Ode to Joy*, revised by J. W. Jannsen (1819-1890), was published in 1860 (remarkably, without the last lines about escaping the chains of tyranny). Schiller became the cult writer for Estonian national Romanticism. Fr. R. Kreutzwald (1803-1882), the creator of the Estonian national epic *Kalevipoeg*, admired Schiller much and had avidly read his poetry and even translated it into Estonian during his school years.

Among the Baltic-Germans, the cult of Schiller reached its peak in 1905, when the 100th anniversary of Schiller's death that was celebrated in all Baltic countries. Theatres performed all Schiller's plays in their chronological order, and all kinds of meetings were held and presentations were given. For the Baltic-Germans, during this critical time for their existence, Schiller was a model German national poet and the upholder of patriotism.

For the Estonian intellectual elite Schiller was not as much "a national poet" but "a poet of freedom", "the holder of the immortal ideal of freedom and justice", as Gustav Suits stressed in 1905 (Suits 37).

During the years of the first Estonian Republic, Schiller's plays were staged quite

often. Estonian translations of Schiller's works (a collection of ballads, a collection of poetry and all more important plays) were published during Soviet time. During the period of new independence, Schiller's plays have been staged only very seldom.

What about Goethe?

Goethe has fared somewhat better in the newest stage of the Estonian reception of his work, despite the fact that his early reception was much slower, in comparison with Schiller's works. He had little to offer to the growing literature of popular enlightenment besides Reineke Fuchs, the first of his texts to find its way into the Estonian language by Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald. In the work of Lydia Koidula (1843-1886), Estonia's "Poet of the Dawn", translations and borrowings from German literature have an important place, but translations of Goethe's poetry are missing altogether, although she did mention him in her correspondence.

Translations of Goethe's poetry, most often his ballads, started to appear in the early 1860s and by the turn of the century, their quality had improved. The first extensive Estonian translation was *Härman ja Doora* (*Hermann and Dorothea*) by A. Kurrikoff in 1880. The first translation of *Faust* was published in 1897 — it was an unpretentious adaptation made for musical performance. The influential Danish literary critic Georg Brandes has said that the translation of *Faust* was the right criterion for measuring a culture's maturity<sup>2</sup>. In view of this, we should admit that Estonian culture acquired maturity much later than Latvian culture, as Janis Rainis's (1865-1929) exemplary translation of *Faust* into Latvian was published already in 1898. Estonian literary culture gradually matured indeed in the 1920s but one certainly cannot take as a sign of maturity Anton Jürgenstein's translation of *Faust's* First Part (1920).

*Faust's* slow and late coming into the Estonian language was fully compensated after World War II by two different masterful translations — one was made by Ants Oras (1900-1982) and published in Sweden in 1955/1962 (reprint in Tartu in 2007), the other one was made by August Sang (1914-1969) and published in Soviet Estonia in 1946/1967. The latter translation is still used in Estonian schools.

Among other German classic writers, Heinrich Heine rose next to Goethe and Schiller like a shining star. Many renowned Estonian poets, starting from Kreutzwald and Koidula, have tried their hand in translating his works. This "plebeian son of the new century" (as he was called by one of his translators August Sang) was spiritually closer to Estonian culture that was rising from its peasant cradle than the elitist geniuses of Weimar classicism. Baltic-German critics, however, did not acknowledge him.<sup>3</sup> Heine predominated among the poets whose translations were published in Estonian magazines and almanacs in the early 20th century. The first collection of Heine's poetry, translated by Jaan Kärner, was published only in 1934, but even the critics of the time did not think that the translation met "the present development

level of our poetic language” (Oras, 89). Next year, well-known critic and translator Ants Oras published his translation of Heine’s poem *Germany. A Winter’s Tale: A satirical poem* (1935). Heine’s democratic attitude (“I am the people!”), criticism of religion and his fighting mentality made him an acceptable classic even during the Soviet period, when several collections of his poetry (1947, 1956, and 1979) and a voluminous collection of prose (1967) were published. Such gathering of works of many translators between the covers of one and the same book was not simply a filling of a cultural “gap”. Writer Eeva Park has described the significance of these collections for the young authors of that time: “In the literary circles of the time, Heine’s poems were like snowballs that people shower each other with in the first snowball fight of winter, ... and he had an extremely deep effect on our creative work ...” (Park 198). Heine-like tonality really existed in Estonian poetry!

### **German Modernism and Estonian Literature at the Beginning of the 20th Century**

German literature prevailed in Estonian translations even in the early 20th century.<sup>4</sup> In poetry, after Heine, the post-Romantic poets, such as Emanuel Geibel, Ludwig Uhland, Friedrich Rückert, Eduard Mörike and others form the literary taste of Estonian culture. After that came the turn of authors of the Naturalist school (Cäsar Flaischlen, Otto Ernst). The list of prose translations into Estonian between 1901 and 1917 reveals a touch of the “easy Muse” of German family magazines, with some additions of social trivial novels or social dramas that were drawn from the Naturalist school. This was followed by the great favourite of the era of Historicism — the historical novel, also by both the feminine and masculine trend literature (e.g. Nataly Eschstruth, Margarete Böhme), and by a large share of Heimatkunst (Peter Rosegger, Ludwig Ganghofer, Gustav Frenssen, Lulu von Strauss und Torney and others). The generation of Realist prose authors is represented by some works of Paul Heyse, Friedrich Spielhagen and Theodor Fontane. Even in the early 20th century, Estonian theatre remained true to the spirit of its founder August von Kotzebue and the audience loved Austrian and German popular plays (Nestroy, Schönthal, Kadelburg, Blumenthal, Schönherr etc.).

In the early 20th century, the emancipating Estonian literature saw its main task in shedding the “Baltic mindset”, which was thought to be reactionary, in order to “benefit even more from foreign, and especially, from German education” (Luiga 1).

The arrival of German modernism at the Estonian literary field lagged behind and sped up only with the emergence of the new “Young Estonian” generation in Estonian literature. The “Young Estonia” movement initiated an unprecedented polemics about aesthetics in the Estonian literary field and attempted at creating a new literary taste, free from the too close German influence. They wanted to enrich Estonian cultural

scene with impulses from other European cultures, primarily from French, Finnish and Scandinavian literatures and to establish new relations with German literature. Critics from “Young Estonia” found fault in the Estonians’ “unchanging acceptance of the already historical and outdated trends from German literature with all their weaknesses. Concerning the thoughts and trends that rule the present of this nation [the Germans] — we have always been far behind, at least 20 years behind.” (Linde 429) Although the literary “consumer goods” from Germany could still for a long time be found in Estonian newspapers and they shaped the Estonian (petty) bourgeois taste, the influence of “Young Estonia” in the first two decades of the 20th century introduced new directions and names from the German-language literary space to Estonian public: Gerhart Hauptmann, Max Halbe, Dichard Demel, Friedrich Nietzsche (the first translation of *Zarathustra* was published in 1901), Frank Wedekind, Eduard von Keyserling, Thomas Mann and others. The year 1910 marks the breakthrough of Vienna Modernism in Estonian literature: Artur Schnitzler’s collections of short stories were published; several publications contained Peter Altenberg’s miniatures and introduced works of Rainer Maria Rilke, Stefan George and Hugo von Hoffmannsthal. The collection *Valik saksa uuemast lüürikast* (*A Selection of German Newer Lyrics*), translated by Marie Under in 1920, and Under’s own works of this period testify about the extraordinary influence of German Expressionism on Estonian poetry. Such congeniality between German and Estonian literatures was never equalled later, except perhaps Kafka’s unique impact on Estonian literature in the Soviet period.

### **German-Language Literature as a Translated Literature in Soviet Estonia**

The Soviet regime that was established in Estonia in 1940 attempted to disrupt cultural continuity and erase cultural memory and it started to shape ideologically controlled Soviet people. A large number of books were destroyed or put into closed archives. Publishing was submitted to censorship. The first blows were aimed at “hostile” translated literature — first, “fascist” literature, later also “bourgeois-capitalist” literature. In 1944-1955, literary fiction formed only 14% of Soviet Estonian book production, where the share of western literatures was extremely small. The Soviet “policy of quotas” prescribed that of the bulk of translated literature, Russian literature had to fill 45%, literatures of other Soviet republics 15%, and literatures of Socialist countries 13%.

The already narrowing “translation space” was used to the fullest. For many poets whose works were held in contempt for ideological reasons at that time (e.g. August Sang, Betti Alver), translating was the only means of support. This is why the translation of great works of German literary classics (as ideologically less dangerous) was started right after the end of WWII, and Goethe’s *Faust*, his tragedies and a



collection of poetry, Schiller's plays and poetry collections, Heine's poetry, and works of many other authors reached Estonian readers.

The position of German-language literature was somewhat more fortunate, as it had its socialist counterpart — literature of the German Democratic Republic, where a part of older history of German literature had already been selected and accepted. In this way, such antifascist and anti-war authors as Erich Maria Remarque, Anna Seghers, Lion Feuchtwanger, Leonhard Frank, Willi Bredel, Arnold Zweig, Johannes Becher and others were introduced to Estonian readers. Contacts with the literature of East Germany, which had had more breathing space compared with Estonian literature that was under Stalinist totalitarian pressure, had a great effect in Estonia. Works of East German authors introduced free verse to Estonian poetry, which was also officially held in contempt as it had no analogues in Russian poetry. Bertold Brecht holds a special place in Estonian theatre history — his plays were repeatedly translated and staged during the Soviet period (Brecht's book of theatre theory was published in 1972). Brecht's influence initiated the Estonian theatre innovation in the 1960s, or as the main innovator of Estonian theatre. Brecht seemed to be an alternative to the overwhelming Russian influence and Stanislavski's "pathetic and sentimental style of Russian theatre" (Kaalep 104). Translator and poet Ain Kaalep, an enthusiastic promoter of Brecht's theatre in the 1960s, wrote, "I felt that by engaging Brecht's smart (or maybe even sincere) Marxist arguments we can do something for defending the good old European culture in the country that has fallen under an alien power, but whose cultural tradition originates from Europe, and is, anyway, much nearer to the ideas of Brecht's theatre than Stanislavski's theatre" (106).

A new era started with the launching of a book series *Loomingu Raamatukogu* in 1957. It was specially created for publishing translated literature. The official status of a magazine of this series helped it to evade the strictly controlled planned economy. The censorship was somewhat eased in the years of ideological thaw in the 1960s and Estonian readers had finally access to the works of German literature, the translation of which could not have been possible earlier (e.g. by Heinrich Böll, Robert Musil, Werner Bergengruen, Martin Walser, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Friedrich Dürrenmatt, Max Frisch, Peter Handke, Elias Canetti, Heimito von Doderer). However, the greatest impressions on Estonian literature have been left by Hermann Hesse (translations of *Steppenwolf* in 1973, *Glasperlenspiel* in 1976, *Siddhartha* in 1986) and Franz Kafka (translations of *Ein Bericht für eine Akademie* in 1962, *Der Prozess* in 1966, *Amerika. Der Prozess. Das Schloss* in 1987).

Hesse's works arrived in Estonia in the aftermath of the hippie movement, when the thaw period of the 1960s had aroused hope for personal freedom and intellectual and moral independence. The reception of Hesse in Estonia was undoubtedly

helped by his indirect Estonian (Baltic-German) origin. Kafka's text-creation and understanding mechanisms had an important effect on Estonian literature and its readers in the 1970s and 1980s. The "kafkaesque" traits like dreamlikeness, irrationality, allegorization, metaphoricity became poetic means of expression behind the frontlines of the official and obligatory socialist realism.

Fortunately, the Estonian-German cultural exchange could to a certain extent be continued by Estonian exiles in the free world and through private secret channels information reached also the Estonians behind the Iron Curtain. (Close contacts between a writer and translator Ain Kaalep (b.1926) in Estonia and an exile-Estonian writer, translator and interpreter of German literature Ivar Ivask (1927-1992), who lived in the USA, were especially fruitful.)

### **The Share of German-Language Literature in Translated Literature in Estonia**

A breakthrough in the translation of German literature occurred in 1987, when the control of censorship was loosened and many new publishing houses were created. The share of translated literature among book production rose sharply. Publishers tried to compensate for all that had been prohibited during the Soviet period. During that time, mainly Russian books had been translated, but having regained independence, Estonian society turned to Anglo-American culture and the number of books translated from English many times exceeds translations from other languages.<sup>5</sup>

The German language that had been the predominant foreign language in Estonia up to World War II lost more of its importance when compared to even the Soviet period. However, due to cultural closeness, translations from German still occupy the second place after English in the bulk of all translated literature, replacing Russian. The percentage of translations from German (9% in 1992-1998) in all translated literature is still higher than the percentage of translations from Finnish, French or Russian.<sup>6</sup>

During the Soviet period, it was mostly possible to translate literary classics and the modern literature of "capitalist countries" was held contempt. After regaining independence, publishers attempted to fill this gap, as well as to compensate for the biased selection of works of German literary classics. Already in 1987, in the very end of the Soviet regime, appeared such masterworks of German literature as Kafka's novels and Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus*, followed by a long list of masterpieces from classics (Günther Grass' novels one by one, Robert Musil, Heimito von Doderer, Heinrich Mann, Elias Canetti, Hermann Broch, George Saiko, Franz Kafka, Rainer Maria Rilke, Georg Trakl, Max Frisch, Joseph Roth, Ingeborg Bachmann, Friedrich Hölderlin, Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, Stefan Zweig and others), as well as from modern authors (Christa Wolf, Elfriede Jelinek, W. G. Sebald, Karsten Dümmel,

Christoph Hein, Herta Müller, Christoph Ransmayr, Bernhard Schlink, Daniel Kehlmann and others). All these were possible thanks to enthusiastic translators among whom we should mention Ain Kaalep, Rita Tasa and Mati Sirkel. The Estonian state is also supporting the promotion of German culture: Goethe-Institut is working in Estonia, special reading rooms of Austrian and Swiss literature have been established at the Estonian National Library with the support of the embassies of these countries, etc. Estonian publishers participate in the Frankfurt Book Fair.

Still another important indicator of “adopting” the culture and literature of other countries is the school curriculum. In addition to Estonian literature, Estonian school curricula contain a large number of important works from world literature. This demonstrates that in small cultures like Estonian culture, translated literature plays an important role and small cultures cannot afford to forget the existence of other cultures.

It is interesting to examine the share of German literature in the Estonian curricula.<sup>7</sup> We have to admit that German classics have disappeared from the school curricula: Schiller’s name is even not mentioned and Goethe is known only as the author of the first part of *Faust*. The number of German authors included in the curriculum is rather small — only Kafka’s *Die Verwandlung* has a firm place there, together with some optional short stories by Thomas Mann. As a remnant of the preferences from the Soviet period, Erich Maria Remarque has maintained his position in the curriculum — he is the most translated German author in the Estonian language. All Estonians have read his novels *Im Westen nichts* and *Arc de Triomphe*. The inclusion of Hermann Hesse in the canon can be explained by his great influence on Estonian literature. The curriculum does not include any other authors of Baltic-German origin. Modern German literature is not represented by a winner of the Nobel Literature Prize Herta Müller, whose subjects could be close and understandable for Estonian readers, but Daniel Kehlmann’s easily readable and humorous *Die Vermessung der Welt*, which has even twice been mentioned in the curriculum.

In conclusion we have to say that German literature has lost its previous leading role in the Estonian canon of world literature. Although German literature is quite often translated into Estonian, these books only rarely reach the lists of bestsellers, which are ruled by Estonian and Anglo-American popular authors. In Estonia, German translations are made by specialists for readers who are truly interested in them. This is elitist literature — excellently translated and annotated and meant for knowledgeable readers. If we think about it, this is not a bad position at all.

## Notes

1. There are two versions of this play — a prose version and a jambic version. The Riga City Theatre

bought the prose version.

2. For more information, see Georg Brandes, *Goethe* (Berlin: Erich Reiss, 1922).

3. See Jeannot Emil von Grotthuss, Heinrich Heine als Lyriker. Stuttgart, 1894.

4. For the period 1901-1917, Estonian national bibliography lists the total of 417 works of fiction translated from German (incl. Austrian, Swiss and Baltic-German literatures). In comparison: during the same period, there were published, in book format, 559 Estonian original works, and 168 translations from Russian, 88 from English and American, 68 from French and Belgian and 25 from Finnish literatures. If we consider the texts of fiction published in newspapers, the share of German literature would be even larger.

5. About translations from the German language after the regaining of independence in Estonia see Triin Pappel, *Saksakeelse tõlkekirjanduse vahendamise ja vastuvõtt Eestis aastatel 1990-2000*. (manuscript, M.A.-thesis). Tallinn, 2007.

6. For more information, see Aile Möldre, *Kirjastustegevus ja raamatulevi Eestis aastail 1940-2000* (Tallinn: TLÜ Kirjastus, 2005).

7. For more information, see [https://www.riigiteataja.ee/aktiisa/1140/1201/1002/VV2\\_lisa1.pdf](https://www.riigiteataja.ee/aktiisa/1140/1201/1002/VV2_lisa1.pdf)

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