

EDITING IN THE CONDITIONS OF STATE CONTROL IN ESTONIA: THE CASE OF LOOMINGU RAAMATUKOGU IN 1957–1972

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When we look at the theoretical reflection on and/or the empirical description of the cultural practices within the Soviet Union at any period of its existence [e. g. Raud: 151–171; Yurchak], we are frequently informed of ambiguities which indicate that although structures of political power had been established in the Soviet Union that should have created structures of feeling to support the Soviet social order, the epistemological conflict within many citizens who were to invest into building a new Soviet culture by destroying the historical one was more relevant for them than the promised benefits of the Communist future. People's life-experiences prevented them from believing in the possibility of a fundamentally new social era, and thus the rupture and the break with their past that was officially preached just did not take place.

This is also the premise for the present article that draws on the published and archived records left by *Loomingu Raamatukogu* that was (and still is) the literary supplement of *Looming*, the monthly magazine of the Estonian Writers' Union issuing mostly (but not only) translations. The name of the monthly, *Looming*, can be translated as 'creation', and *Raamatukogu* is the Estonian word for library. The title, thus, literally means *The Library of Creation*.

The literary supplement that succeeded in replacing the didactic and schematic utopias that prevailed in the then text production with more nuanced approaches to fiction is legendary in Estonian culture, as both oral and written history [Olesk] testify. For the present paper it is important to stress that the general appeal of the series was largely due to the socio-political context it grew out of. In her memoirs about editing *The Library* in the 1960s, Lembe Hiedel, one of the key editors of its initial years, has recalled an episode

from her work that is emblematic of the practises of the Soviet period, both in Hiedel's narration as well as what may have happened in May 1968. The memoirs go as follows¹:

I don't think I can easily and adequately describe the oscillations of mood like those <...> in a morning of May in 1968 when Yuri Lotman and Igor Chernov, on their way to the railway station, popped in the editorial office where I was alone (the editor-in-chief was in the hospital, sharing his ward with the head of the Glavlit). Using the occasion, I wordlessly shoved across my table two recently stamped signal copies which meant that the print-runs of the typeset translations could be launched. These were Václav Havel's *The Memorandum*, and Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Fatal Eggs*, both actually proposed by Yuri Lotman. (A few months ago he had, thinking of our *Library*, taken with him from Prague a typewritten copy of the Havel play, and I, who got it from the Chair of Russian literature, had given it to our Czech translator whom I happened to meet on my way. He probably had the text already but hadn't either had the time or the courage to recommend it for us.) Lotman's reaction to my wordless gesture was an analogous mute rise of his eyebrows, his moustache bristling with horror, after which my amused guests departed. This gorgeous dumb scene by way of a salute was my reward for the past anxious days, and for those that would come in autumn [Hiedel: 177].

The Context of the Publication

The episode recorded above comes from the last period of the first staff of the editorial board of *The Library* from the time when the local branch of the all-Union Glavlit² in its annual reports to the Moscow headquarters³ was showing increasing discontent with the political loyalty of the mouthpiece of the Writers' Union and its literary supplement to the ideology of the Communist Party. Indeed, from its very beginning *The Library* had been a calculated attempt to widen the horizons of the reading public so that these would not coincide with the state borders of the USSR, to paraphrase Lembe Hiedel [Ibid.: 159].

¹ All translations from Estonian into English by the present autor.

² Glavlit (ГЛАВЛИТ) is the abbreviation for the Moscow censorship agency established in 1922; its subordinate body in Estonia was established in 1940.

³ See the records of the local Glavlit office under its then name *Eesti NSV Ministrite Nõukogu Juures Asuv Trükistes Riiklike Saladuste Kaitse Peavalitus* (The Main Administration of the Preservation of State Secrets in Print under the Soviet of Ministers of the Estonian SSR) that are preserved in *Eesti Rahvusarhiiv* (Estonian National Archives), especially [ERA.R-17.3.69] (report for 1967), [ERA.R-17.3.72] (report for 1968), and [ERA.R-17.3.84] (report for 1971).

The gradual introduction of post-Stalinist liberalization in Soviet Estonia followed the trends across the whole of the Soviet Union. Texts on the changing cultural policy were translated into Estonian within a very short time span, and these encouraged Estonian authors to use the changing climate: in November 1953, the literary monthly of the Writers' Union had published the translation of "On the Work of the Writer" by Ilya Ehrenburg who had defended the artists' right to create according to their conscience. Ehrenburg had argued that a writer could not be accused of not having written a novel about the Volga-Don Channel or textile industry while she/he could be blamed if it had been done without any personal involvement. The translation came out simultaneously with the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Estonian Communist Party that also discussed the tasks of Soviet Estonian literature. The chairman of the Writers' Union questioned there literature written purely following the party line, denounced "parading and hollow" poetry as "cheap bread", and criticized literary critics and administrators of culture for having "scared off" poets from writing non-declamatory poetry [Schmuul: 1435].

The polemics initiated by Vladimir Pomerantsev's article on the sincerity of literature that was published in *Новый мир*⁴ 1953/12 was also influential in Estonia. Alexey Surkov's critical response to him in *Правда* of May 25, 1954 was translated for the Estonian cultural weekly *Sirp ja Vasar* (Sickle and Hammer) by May 28, 1954. The translation led to a local discussion about the expectations of people for literature in which some critics proclaimed, others denounced the vulgar Socialist approach. In the lively literary polemics of 1954 there emerged a generation of literary scholars and critics who were competent in the Estonian cultural heritage but also eloquent in defending it in terms of the ideological keywords of the period, and as the emphases of the party changed, the rhetoric of the spokesmen of Estonian literature was also modified. Olaf Kuuli [Kuuli: 48–9] has pointed out that when Aleksandr Tvardovsky, the editor-in-chief of *Новый мир*, had been replaced by Konstantin Simonov, the then partorg⁵ of the Estonian Writers' Union, Lembit Remmelgas, made a speech (published in *Sirp ja Vasar* on June 4, 1954) where he expressed his solidarity with accusations against *Новый мир* and Vladimir Pomerantsev; but a few months later, in December, in his presentation at the

⁴ *Новый мир* (New World) was the highly influential official organ of the Writers' Union of the USSR published monthly. Its pages carried the work of the leading Soviet writers, and many of them expressed impermissible political views.

⁵ Partorg (party organizer) was a person appointed by the Central Committee of the Communist Party whose official duty was to supervise the execution of the Party guidelines.

Second All-Union Writers' Congress in Moscow (translated and published in *Sirp ja Vasar* on December 31, 1954), he spoke already about "national nihilism" as an extremist position that had done much damage to contemporary Soviet Estonian literature. This is not an exceptional but a typical case: while reading the periodicals of the early and mid-1950s, we are confronting conflicting and confusing statements that try to find a middle way between the political/administrative jargon of the day and the intellectual interests of the reading audience.

Throughout the years Otto Samma, the first editor-in-chief and one of the initiators of the series, in his regular accounts to the Administration of Book Trade (*Raamatukaubanduse valitsus*) at the Ministry of Culture of the Estonian SSR and to the Department of Ideology of the Central Committee of the Estonian Communist Party, repeats that the primary aim of the supplement is "to introduce mostly contemporary literature on as wide a scope as possible both geographically and thematically" [KM EKLA f. 283:846, p. 293]⁶. Given the censorial regulations and the obligatory quota that dictated the proportions of translations from Russian and other languages⁷, it was possible because, as a supplement to a magazine, *The Library* was treated as a magazine, and so it did not have to obtain preventive authorization of its yearly and 5-year plans from Moscow as was the case with the only state publishing house (*Eesti Riiklik Kirjastus*/Estonian State Press) that remained in Estonia at that time. Thus, in the 1960s *The Library* could publish translations that had been banned a decade ago, or would be banned later, in the 1970s. (The routine all-Union Glavlit procedures before and after typesetting⁸ on spot, of course, remained in place and a signal copy had to be sent to a clerk in the Glavlit headquarters in Moscow who was responsible for Estonian literature⁹.) In the official

⁶ The correspondence of the editorial board and manuscripts of their publications — unlike the archives of the next staff that have not been preserved — are in *Eesti Kirjandusmuuseum* (Estonian Literary Museum) in Tartu.

⁷ Here the statistics of book publication are revealing indeed and clearly show the dependence of cultural endeavors on the general party policy: in 1945–55, translations constituted 59% of all published fiction, 49% of which was translated from Russian and other Soviet literatures, and 10% from all other languages. In the 1960s, the proportion was 59.9%, that is 28.9% for Soviet and 31% for all other literature; in the 1970s, the figure was 51%, divided into 29% and 22%; and in the 1980s, 45.4%, split into 25% and 20.4%, respectively [Möldre: 100, 180].

⁸ A good survey of these procedures can be found in [Sherry]. There was still an important difference in Estonia: the officials of Glavlit in a republic of roughly one million population were not totally anonymous as they could be in Moscow [Hiedel: 181].

⁹ He could ban the marketing of the print-run and in 1957–73 he tried to do it twice — in the case of the translations of Elizaveta Drabkina's *Winter Pass* (1970, 10/12) and Arthur Miller's *After the Fall* (1971, 5/7) — but his decisions reached Tallinn too late when the print-runs had been sold

statistics of the day, thus, William Golding's *The Lord of the Flies* or Kafka's *The Trial* that were published in *The Library* (in 1964 and 1966, respectively) were not books' but 'magazine issues' until in the early 1970s the authorities, recognizing the undermining potential of the fictional texts, subjected the publication plans to authorization in Moscow. Here, however, we focus on the work of only the first staff of the supplement until its editor-in-chief had to resign.

When looking at the format of *The Library* in its first year, one can say that the pattern had been borrowed from the Russian *Библиотека "Огонька"* (The Library of Ogoniok), one of the oldest weekly magazines in Russia. The next year the form was changed so that it conformed to the height and length of other books published in Estonia and the issues "could be placed on the shelf next to them", as a reader in her letter [KM EKLA f. 283:845, p. 171] to the editor-in-chief had wished. Pocket-books, of course, cannot be reduced to *Библиотека "Огонька"* only, as both the editors and the readers knew well. In pre-war Estonia an analogous series was the *Universaalbiblioteek* of the publishing-house *Loodus* that since 1927 had issued 52 numbers per year — like *The Library* since 1959. (Initially there were 24 numbers, two each month, but as the profits of the supplement were considerable, and the huge print-runs — these oscillated between fifteen and twenty thousand copies [KM EKLA f. 283:848, p. 283] — were always sold out, in 1958 the number was increased to 36, i. e. three, and next year already to 52, i. e. four numbers per month.) In 1959 Harald Rajamets (1924–2007), the future prolific translator of poetry from Ukrainian, Polish, Russian, German, English, Danish, Swedish, Lithuanian, and Italian, including Dante and Shakespeare, wrote his first letter to Otto Samma saying: "[t]he idea of "the library" or a series is so right and good, and so simple that one has just to wonder why it wasn't put into practice earlier <...> Every issue is like a birthday present: you know it will come but cannot guess what exactly it will be" [KM EKLA f. 283:845, p. 90]. As the incoming letters in the archives testify, the readers welcomed *The Library* for its "versatile selection of texts of high artistic value" [Ibid., p. 197], regretting only that it was difficult to obtain a copy, especially outside the capital city.

out already. Lembe Hiedel [Hiedel: 184–185] has guessed that with Drabkina the reason could have been her references to Lenin's syphilis in his final years, and with Miller his mention of the venality the US Communist Party that had worked for the interests of the Soviet Union.

The Content of the Publication

The geographical scope of *The Library* was indeed wide: the share of Russian literature in 1957–72 is about 20%, including 97 titles (from among the 526 titles representing 59 different literatures). In statistics Russian literature, grouped under the umbrella of Soviet literatures, was complemented by 73 Estonian titles — throughout the 15 years there were annually a few Estonian originals — as well as by examples of Latvian (10), Ukrainian (6), Lithuanian (4), Belorussian (1), Armenian (1 title, translated from Russian), Georgian (1), Moldavian (1), and Uzbek (1 title via Russian) literatures. Much of what could be presented as “Soviet literature” is still difficult to label as such: the second issue of the 1958 *Library* reprinted the short stories of Anton Hansen Tammsaare (1878–1940), the major Estonian prose author of the first half of the 20th century, that in 1958 were available only in pre-war periodicals kept in special departments of libraries that were inaccessible to the general public. Otto Samma, in his letter to Erik Teder, the compiler of the Tammsaare collection, advised the latter “not to look for the social bases” [KM EKLA f. 283:846, p. 231] of these stories in his introduction but limit himself to the bibliographical data (where the stories had been published first); he also suggested the inclusion of a 1934 short story entitled “Christmas Tree” [Ibid., p. 224] which was a feat in itself in the context that denied the presence of Christmas and tolerated the celebration of New Year’s Eve only.

The only representative of Uzbek literature in the series of the period is another good example of what made the supplement a performative site that managed to downplay the concept of Soviet literature as having any monolithic content at all: on the occasion of the Uzbekistan Decade¹⁰ in Estonia in 1968 the poems of Ali-Shir Nava’i (1441–1501), a Central Asian poet, politician, linguist, mystic, and painter, the greatest author of Chagatai literature, were translated. So what could be and was presented as Soviet literature in the reports need not necessarily represent it in its expected sense.

While radio broadcasts celebrated the special difference of the Soviet people and its arts from that of the rest of the world, that sentiment does not come across while reading *The Library*. Even stronger than the historical instance of Ali-Shir Nava’i is perhaps the case of the 1967 issue that celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution. It was a collecti-

¹⁰ In the Soviet Union a decade was understood as lasting ten days, not ten years; these decades for every republic in every republic were a regular thing.

on *How the Kurgans¹¹ Are Born*, described in the subtitle as “short stories from early Soviet literature”. The collection includes texts written immediately after the October Revolution and during the following Civil War, and most of them are set on the backdrop of the atrocities of these years. The title-story, the *Kurgan* one by Vsevolod Ivanov, written in 1923, is about how a remote Siberian village tries to get rid of the corpses of the soldiers of the Kolchak army after they melt in spring when the villagers heap them into an open-pit mine and cover them with soil. Before that there is a long discussion on whose task it is to bury the enemies of the revolution, if at all. Reading the collection now it is easy not to realize that the issue (№ 44) came out in November but at the time of its publication it was impossible to forget the anniversary of the revolution, and imagining a person walking in streets decorated with red banners and portraits of Lenin, going to a kiosk, and buying a copy of *Loomingu Raamatukogu* helps us see how the established meaning of the Soviet symbols is complicated by this issue.

The manuscript of the scandalous collection initially had 50 more pages. Glavlit banned the inclusion of seven stories by Alexander Arosev (1890–1938) because his work was still banned in the Soviet Union. Otto Samma wrote to Anti Kidron, the translator of the short stories, that although Valeri Bezzubov, the compiler of the collection, had had a book published in the German Democratic Republic, the censors found Arosev still in the list of banned authors within the Soviet Union. So his stories had to be removed from the collection (and the translator was paid only fifty per cent of his royalties) [KM EKLA f. 283:852, p. 103]. The logic for excluding only Arosev is difficult to guess¹² as he was not the only author in the selection who had been executed in the years of the Great Purge of the Stalinist regime: the publication of Isaac Babel and Boris Pilnyak was authorized. Samma informed Arosev’s translator that steps had been made to remove Arosev from the list of *personae non grata* and his translations would be published later. It never happened, however.

A translation that brought many letters to the editor-in-chief was *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn that came out in

¹¹ Kurgan — a circular burial mound constructed over a pit grave and often containing grave vessels, weapons, and the bodies of horses as well as a single human body; originally in use in the Russian steppes but later spreading into eastern, central, and northern Europe in the 3rd millennium B. C.

¹² Lembe Hiedel in her memoirs evocatively describes the sporadic and inconsistent character of the censorial practices: everything depended on individual persons and interpersonal relations, ideological zeal was a rare phenomenon and most of the censors were just administrators earning their daily bread in as decent a way as possible.

April 1963 after its publication in *Новый мир* in November 1962. Readers expressed their gratitude [KM EKLA f. 283:849, p. 244] and trusted to Samma their own experiences in forced labour camps. The initial translation was by Lennart Meri (the future president of Estonia after it regained its independence). Samma must have had doubts about the quality of the translation as he wrote a letter to Enn Sarv (1921–2008), his schoolmate in the Tallinn Jakob Westholm Secondary School in the 1930s who in 1947–53 had served his sentence in Vorkuta for having been a member of the National Committee of the Republic of Estonia that in 1944 had made desperate attempts to avoid Estonia's occupation. Eight years older than Meri (who had also been deported with his parents), Sarv's feel of the jargon of the labour camps was assumed to be better than that of his younger colleague who, before Solzhenitsyn, had translated John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1959), Graham Greene's *Our Man in Havana* (1961), and Marcel Aymé's *La tête des autres* (1962) for *The Library*. (Sarv had translated Paul Guimard's *Rue du Havre*, 1959, and Pierre Gamarra's short stories, 1961 for *The Library*). For some reason Samma calls Lennart Meri "an unknown translator" [KM EKLA f. 283:848, p. 3] and asks Sarv to review his work. The edited and commented manuscript of the translation [KM EKLA f. 283:858] is an informative document about the high literary standards of the editorial board: Sarv has not only suggested alternative translational solutions but also added twenty pages of his comments, his major concern being that the register differences of the characters and the colloquial lexicon of the narrator (not a part of the active vocabulary of Solzhenitsyn but a representation of what he had observed and heard in the labour camp) were not reflected in the Estonian version. Sarv suggests that a few Russisms (calques like *davai* but also less familiar and specifically Gulag ones like *santšast* — from *санчасть* — that was explained in the footnotes) could be left in the translation; he also thought that the Estonian swear word *kurat* (devil/damn) has to be introduced in the text even if it is absent in the original because "the nickname of Estonians in the camps was *кураты*" [Ibid., p. 306]; and he advises the use of a dialect version of Estonian to differentiate the Ukrainians of the eastern and western part of the country that has been highlighted in the story. On Sarv's request the publication of *Ivan Denisovich* was postponed in order to achieve an oral quality that would conform with the wish expressed in Solzhenitsyn's letter [KM EKLA f. 283:849, p. 273] to Samma that "the translation has to convey first and foremost the rhythm of the text". When *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* was published in numbers 11/12 of 1963, there were two translators on the title page — Lennart Meri and Enn Sarv —

and from the correspondence between Samma and Sarv it can be deduced that a third person identified as M. K. from Tõravere (in southern Estonia where language use considerably deviates from the literary standard) had edited the semi-dialectal parts of the dialogue.

As it has been stated above, the first staff of *The Library* published 526 titles, 101 of them from Russian (direct and indirect translations). The next most frequent source language was English with 85 titles representing American (40), English (33), Irish (4), Australian (2), Indian (2), Canadian (1), Scottish (1), Jamaican (1), and Welsh (1) literatures. English is followed by translations from German (51), French (37), Finnish (25), Czech (18), Swedish (16), Polish (15), Hungarian (12), Norwegian (11), Spanish (8), Italian (7), Danish (6), Icelandic (5), Slovak (4), Serbo-Croatian (4), Dutch (3), Rumanian (2), Hindi (2), Indonesian (2), and Turkish (2) languages; Japanese, Persian, Yiddish, New Greek, and even Esperanto are represented once.

The plurality of languages and cultures was the initial guideline in the work of *The Library*. As a regular reader of literary magazines from the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic (*Orientalische Literaturzeitung*)¹³, Samma was familiar with the available titles and as soon as the series had been launched, he contacted people who were competent in languages rare in Estonia. He wrote to Uku Masing (1909–85), a theologian and poet, who had distanced himself from any active participation in the public life, and asked him to translate from Arabic; he contacted Ülo Sirk (1935–2011), a geologist and later a researcher at the Institute of Oriental Studies in Moscow for a possible translation from the Indonesian language; he wrote to Leo Leesment (1902–86), a former Professor of Law at the University of Tartu, working now in the university library, who had some knowledge of Chinese; and he looked for translators for the Persian and the Hindi languages. These appeals to well-known polyglots were not welcomed enthusiastically as many of Samma's letters remained unanswered. Thus Lembe Hiedel was sent on a business trip to Tartu where most of them lived: Masing turned out to mistrust the newly launched official publication, Leesment confessed that he could translate from Chinese only with the help of a translation into Russian, and polyglots in general found themselves unqualified for literary translation [Hiedel: 164]. The formal principle of “covering the world geographically” was thus

¹³ In early 1968, realizing the opportunities of the Khrushchevian Thaw, Ivo Ilste, an Estonian expatriate living in Finland, also gets *The Library* a subscription for *The Times Literary Supplement*, *La Quinzaine littéraire*, *The New York Review of Books*, and *Die Welt der Literatur* [KM EKLA f. 283:851, p. 45].

abandoned in favour of texts that would be meaningful in terms of content. It was *The Library* that first translated François Mauriac¹⁴ (*Le Nœud de vipères*, 1959), Bertolt Brecht (*Kalendergeschichten*, 1959), William Faulkner (a selection of short stories, 1965), Albert Camus (*La Peste*, 1963; *L'Étranger*, 1966; *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*, 1972), and other writers widely discussed in international literary periodicals but unavailable at the time in Estonian. In addition *The Library* took to publishing translations like those of Mahatma Gandhi's *The World Is Tired of Hate* (1969), James D. Watson's *The Double Helix* (1970), Laurence J. Peter's and Raymond Hull's *The Peter Principle* (1972), or Hans Jürgen Eysenck's *Know Your Own I. Q.* (1972), i. e. non-fiction that served as a means of general education.

In the initial years *The Library* translated many texts about the Second World War, the trauma all its readers shared, ensuring that the selected translations did not only reflect the Soviet perspective. In 1958 Valeria Villandi translated twelve profoundly bitter short stories of Heinrich Böll from his collection *Wanderer, kommst du nach Spa...* the material of which stems from Böll's wartime experience in the German army and takes the readers to Eastern Europe with his protagonists. The 1966 volume included *The Manila Rope*, a novel by the Finnish author Veijo Meri (translated by Harald Lepik) that is set in the Winter War between Finland and the Soviet Union. Meri's *Rope* is basically a dark comedy à la Jaroslav Hašek's *The Good Soldier Švejk* that heaps absurd episodes that highlight the pointlessness of military service for the recruits. In Estonia, however, recalling the possibility of resistance to the Soviets was a strong statement. Indeed, the local Glavlit office had initially suspended the publication on the pretext that the 20th anniversary of the end of the Second World War cannot be recalled with a text that looks at the war from the opposite side (the edited translation had been ready for publication in 1965 already). The editorial board was asked to convene its panel to evaluate the decision. The panel met on April 9, 1965 finding no fault in the political orientation of the novel that ridicules the follies of military service irrespective of the side. Some members of the panel, though, raised questions about the artistic quality of Meri's novel [KM EKLA f. 283:850, p. 76]. From Lembe Hiedel's memoirs we learn that Samma had negotiated the issue in Moscow [Hiedel: 194] and as the Russian translation had been scheduled there, he returned

¹⁴ Mauriac was recommended to the Administration of Book Trade (*Raamatukaubanduse valitsus*) as "one of the greatest critical realists of contemporary literature who unmasks the avariciousness of the bourgeoisie" [KM EKLA f. 283:846, p. 103].

with an oral message that made the local Glavlit wardens of ideology withdraw their initial verdict.

The correspondences of the period as well as the minutes of the meetings of the editorial board are often much more outspoken than the published paratexts of translations. A typical example comes from 1964. In August Jaan Kaplinski (born in 1941), a poet and a translator, sent Otto Samma a letter, recommending Andrzej Szczypiorski's novel *Czas przeszły* (The Past, 1961) that he had read. The action there takes place in Poland and in Western Germany of 1944 and 1959. Having described the basics of the plot and characterized the style, Kaplinski concludes:

The idea one is left with is that you have to get rid of your past and live in the present. Both the winners and the losers are equally unhappy and dissatisfied. They can be atoned only by forgetting their past, by giving up the idea of one's heroic history. The whole of Europe is guilty, and the whole of Europe is suffering and waiting for redemption. There is a slight Christian (Catholic) undercurrent there. At least for me. Anyhow, the book is definitely good, meaningful for Estonians and perhaps also necessary because we cannot discuss our history like that and write about it freely [KM EKLA f. 283:849, p. 115].

The introduction to the translation published as numbers 19/21 in 1965 is somewhat different: it is short, less than a dozen lines, and specifies Andrzej Szczypiorski's subject matter as "Nazi crimes during the previous war and the beautiful life of the criminals in contemporary Western Germany where the public opinion more or less openly tries to whitewash Gestapo and dreams of an "iron hand" that could be "even wooden as long as it is strong". On the one hand, the introduction is liturgical and bolstered by the official Soviet verbiage, on the other hand, it seems that more is meant than has been stated explicitly (like in the episode in Lembe Hiedel's memoirs). Kaplinski's letter does make a point, while the metaphor of an iron hand that is actually wooden is an example of the veiled hints that was so characteristic of the Soviet public discourse.

The prefaces to both originals and translations were dominantly laconic and minimal. In his letter to Leo Metsar (1924–2010), a novelist and translator of Czech and Slovak literatures who had written a longer introduction to the collection of the legendary Estonian poet Artur Alliksaar (1923–66), Samma says:

The manuscript is now in Glavlit but without any preface — or rather the preface was replaced by dry biographical facts. We liked your preface as a text and we had no objections to your ideas but — these ideas and your elation would not have fa-

voured the publication of the collection, on the contrary. Our counsellors (members of the panel) also advised us to leave it out [KM EKLA f. 283:852, p. 74].

When reading the issues as they were published one can easily develop the impression that censorship was functioning perfectly as the writers had nothing to say apart from what they were authorized to say, to paraphrase Pierre Bourdieu [Bourdieu: 38]. But when reading the correspondence in the archives, it is evident that the censorial practices had not been internalized as a part of the identity of the writers. In many cases the writer of a preface has asked his editor directly about the possible options: in October 1971 Jaak Rähesoo (born 1941) was writing the afterword to his translation of William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, relying on the books received from Hellar Grabbi (an Estonian journalist, literary critic, and publisher born in 1929 in Tallinn, living in the United States) and Vootele Vaska (an Estonian expatriate born in 1930 in Tallinn, teaching philosophy at Waynesburg University, Pennsylvania), and he would have wanted to acknowledge their contribution. "I owe my Faulkner library to Hellar Grabbi and Vootele Vaska," he wrote to Edvin Hiedel, his editor, "but my tiny civil courage has been squinting for some time worrying that perhaps it would be resented. If you find my doubts exaggerated (you know more about these things), please add the sentence" [KM EKLA f. 283:538, p. 536]. On the margin of the letter Otto Samma has advised Edvin Hiedel: "Better not". Analogous questions/answers are numerous in the archived correspondence, and they must have been much more numerous in oral communications.

The skills of the editors in manipulating the censorial regulations improved over years¹⁵ as the bibliography of *The Library* reveals. In 1958, the second year of its history, eight of the 36 issues were translated from Russian (two collections of recent short stories, Aleksei Tolstoi, Ilf and Petrov, Anatoli Kuznetsov in two volumes, Mihhail Koltsov, and a translation of the Bulgarian author Svetoslav Minkov from Russian), four were Estonian originals, four were translations from German (Leonhard Frank, Gottfried Keller, Bernhard Seeger, Heinrich Böll), three from English (Graham Greene, John Galsworthy, G. K. Chesterton), two from French (Jean Bruller/Vercors, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry), two from Czech (Jaroslav Hašek and Pavel Kohout), and one from

¹⁵ Lembe Hiedel [Hiedel: 198–199] lists several tactical manoeuvres used to get the Glavlit permission. One of them was to submit most risky texts in summer when most of the officials were on vacation and those working were not so keen to be there; another was to hand in problematic manuscripts in bunches so that the censors who had underlined undesirable places in the first manuscript and found even stronger deviations in the next text returned to the first one and rubbed out their initial deletions as relatively mild; the periodical had to be regular and several numbers could not be banned at the same time.

Spanish (Vicente Blasco Ibáñez), Italian (Domenico Rea), Indonesian (a collection of short-stories), Latvian (Miervald Birze), Swedish (Artur Lundkvist), Hungarian (Zsigmond Móricz), Norwegian (Øivind Bolstad), Danish (Martin Andersen Nexø), Finnish (Heikki Lounaja), and Polish (Jerzy Andrzejewski) literatures. Ten years later, in 1968, there were four translations from Russian (Arkady and Boris Strugatsky, Mikhail Bulgakov, Nikolai Evdokimov, and Ali-Shir Nava'i), six Estonian authors, many of them problematic from the perspective of their ideological loyalty: Arvo Valton (born 1935, had been deported with his parents and returned Estonian in 1954), Artur Alliksaar (spent several years in Siberian prison camps and remained blacklisted for the rest of his life), Marie Under (an Estonian poet living in Sweden who celebrated her 85th birthday in 1968), Karl August Hindrey (1875–1947; an author notorious for his anti-Soviet mentality), etc. Four texts were translated from English (Saul Bellow, Truman Capote, Agatha Christie, and Bel Kaufman), three from French (Jean Anouilh, Georges Perec, and Maurice Druon), three from Swedish (Elmer Diktonius, Willy Kyrklund, and Pär Lagerkvist), two from German (Friedrich Dürrenmatt, Hans Erich Nossack), and one from Finnish (Volter Kilpi), Czech (Václav Havel), Hungarian (Sándor Somogyi Tóth), Latvian (Jānis Ezeriņš), Slovak (Jaroslava Blažková), Esperanto (Jean Ribillard), and Turkish (Aziz Nesin) literatures. In a letter to Agatha Christie it has been said that “we did not publish detective stories here from 1940 to 1967. But we took the first step in 1967 and published an Estonian translation of Rex Stout’s *The Doorbell Rang*” [KM EKLA f. 283:852, p. 35]; however, we find Gilbert Keith Chesterton’s Father Brown stories in the 1958 selection already, presented then to the Administration of Book Trade as “short stories that ridicule the practices of British aristocracy and bourgeoisie” [KM EKLA f. 283:864, p. 133].

The Agents of the Publication

Who was the editor-in-chief who was by and large responsible for the content of the library? Otto Samma (1912–78) had studied law at the University of Tartu in 1931–37 and worked after that as a solicitor in a law office in Tallinn. After the Soviet coup in 1940 he was invited to work for the Foreign Ministry of the Estonian SSR by Nigol Andresen (1899–1985), the newly appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs, who had been Samma’s teacher of literature in the Jakob Westholm Secondary School and remembered his brilliant pupil who had shared his Socialist ideals. In July 1940 Samma joined the Communist

Party. He was, however, expelled from it in November of the same year by the Moscow headquarters because in his application he had not mentioned his Socialist history, had not stated that in his university years he had been a member of the voluntary Estonian Defence League, dismissed in June 1940, and a member of the Estonian Students' Society, dismissed likewise¹⁶. As the war broke out, Samma was mobilized into the Red Army and his service there also included translating and editing for the Estonian Radio in Moscow. After the war he worked as a translator for the Estonian News Agency, then as an editor of the Estonian cultural weekly *Sirp ja Vasar*, until the Writers' Union appointed him the editor-in-chief of *The Library* in 1957.

So, he had impressive ideological capital in various social fields, including personal acquaintance with Johannes Käbin, the then and long-term first Secretary of the Estonian CP who had been Samma's colleague in Moscow broadcasting Estonian radio programmes. Samma, with his large and sophisticated network of relations and contacts, was in a position to deliver everything needed for publication, including signatures on applications and manuscripts, and so he could manipulate the publicly endorsed procedures and institutions.

A key concept in the then administration was 'responsibility' that Lembe Hiedel [Hiedel: 178] has described as meaning the opposite of its traditional sense: all the editors and censorial officers were first and foremost answerable to someone higher in the power hierarchy but not responsible for the quality of their work and the independence of their judgements. Instead of accountability, the procedures of publication were irresponsible. This does not seem to be the case with Samma and Lembe and Edvin Hiedel, his two major editors, who primarily paid lip service to the ritual newspeak of the Glavlit recommendations. Hiedel in her memoirs [Ibid.: 160] has suggested that Samma was partly burdened by a sense of guilt characteristic to some left-wing intellectuals who had initially welcomed the Sovietization of Estonia. Whatever his motives, it is evident that *The Library* avoided publishing hollow literature, and therefore the series was perceived as a means of intellectual independence under any political circumstances. Hiedel [Ibid.: 168] has compared their work in *The Library* with a scene from Bulat Okudzhava's *The Diletantte's Progress*

¹⁶ Initially, in 1940, there were people in Estonia who thought that the political turn that promised to cultivate a culture that is socialist in content and national in form was not a bad thing at all. Leo Metsar, the classmate of Artur Alliksaar, who in 1968 wrote the above-mentioned unpublished introduction to Alliksaar's posthumous collection of poetry has said there "Calls to create a culture socialist in content and national in form impressed us as reasonable" [KM EKLA f. 390:30:23, p. 7]. It was only after the mass deportations of 1941 that the Estonian left-wing intellectuals started to abhor the situation.

she had translated: it was like a hectic fleeing over a wasteland towards a wider horizon, spurred by a vague goal somewhere, and by the clear awareness that somewhere in the red dust cloud, keeping its reasonable distance, was a sharp eye following them, sure of its aims, handcuffs in hand, but for some reason keeping its distance, delaying their detention. “Wasn’t it because their progress after their prey was also a progress towards a wider horizon that can never leave anyone unaffected,” she asks, answering “I want to hope so”.

Samma had been expelled from the Communist Party and he never joined it again. Neither were Lembe and Edvin Hiedel party members. Lembe Hiedel (1926–2004) had joined the editorial board in May 1958 [KM EKLA f. 283:846, p. 175]. The daughter of Julius Oengo, the poet and editor of a children’s magazine in the 1920s–1930s who had been arrested by the Soviets in August 1941 and probably murdered a few days later, she had studied Estonian language and literature at the University of Tartu in 1946–49, was expelled for political reasons, and continued her studies a few years later, graduating in 1953. Before *The Library* she had worked as a teacher of Estonian and as a librarian. Edvin Hiedel (1930–2012), her husband, who had also studied Estonian philology at Tartu and was a translator from the Hungarian language, was working as an editor in the only publishing house of fiction in Estonia when invited to join the editorial board in April 1964 [KM EKLA f. 283:850, p. 218]. The personal engagement of these people in matters different from those of the ruling ideology is self-evident like their determination to keep open wider horizons for their readers deprived of the possibility to travel abroad or read literature published outside the Soviet Union.

The Partiality of Records

So far the narration has basically been a heroic history, the perspective prevalent in both oral and written records. This also misled me for days from the solid facts of the past. As I was entering the bibliography of *The Library* into Excel to get the statistics of the publication profile, I stopped at the name of the translator of Alexander Grin’s *Red Sails* (Алые паруса), a fairy tale from 1922, published in *The Library* in 1959/22. The translator has been identified as O. Mamers. By now one recognizes O. Mamers as the pen-name of Oskar Öpik (1895–1974), an Estonian diplomat and ambassador to various countries during the Republic of Estonia who, however, has not been known as a translator. Fluent in several languages, he could have translated, in principle: Öpik was educated in early 20th-century Tallinn in the years of imperial Russification

when the only possible language of instruction was Russian; also, he had attended the Alexander Military Law Academy in Moscow, so Russian must have been available to him at an advanced level. He came from a family with literary interests: his brother had run a publishing house, *Varrak*, in the 1920s and his sister, Anna Öpik, was the translator of *The Odyssey* from Greek into Estonian in 1938. Could it be that Oskar Öpik had translated Grin, it was not published, Samma got hold of the manuscript, and decided to use it? But Oskar Öpik/O. Mammers, the last Estonian ambassador to France in 1940, had returned to Estonia in 1942, and was the Minister of Justice under the German occupation. He definitely was a person whose services were unwelcome in the Soviet Union. How did Samma dare to use his name? Was it another case of “baiting the system”, taking a conscious risk to test “the loopholes” of Glavlit that — if it passed — would provide its own peculiar satisfaction as Enn Soosaar (1937–2010), a translator from those years, has described the motives of the endeavours then [Soosaar: 155]? How could I possibly know? There was no correspondence about the translation in the archives. Of course not. But neither has Oskar Öpik referred to his translation(s) in his memoirs published under the pseudonym of O(skar) Mammers¹⁷.

In 1983 *Red Sails*, the same translation in a slightly edited form was reissued by *Eesti Raamat* (Estonian Book), as the Estonian State Press had been renamed by then, and this time the translation was attributed to Kyra Sipyaghina. According to the national bibliography, she is the author of 40 translations from Russian, many of them romantic fairy-tales like that of Grin (Konstantin Ushinsky, Fyodor Knorre, Samuil Marshak, Nikolay Dubov, Sergey Aksakov), but also a translator of bulky volumes of essays by Vissarion Belinsky and Maxim Gorky in cooperation with Otto Samma in 1948–63. Yet, Kyra Sipyaghina is unknown among the writers or public figures in Estonia. Why? And why such a provocative a pen-name if she was the translator?

Rein Pöder, the editor of the 1983 edition, had no doubts that Kyra Sipyaghina had been the translator of *Red Sails* because he had worked with her while reissuing the book. O. Mammers, he said, never existed, it was just a pen-name for Sipyaghina; for him it had no associations with Oskar Öpik.

I took out the type of records I seldom use from the archives of the Literary Museum, namely the clean copy sent to the printing house. There, on its final page, was the name and the address of the translator who got the royalties:

¹⁷ Two volumes were published in Stockholm — *Kahe sõja vahel* (Between the Two Wars) 1957 and *Häda võidetuule* (Distress to the Beaten) 1958 — and the third one posthumously in Estonia — *Teekond, mis algas Kundas* (The Progress that Began in Kunda) 1997.

Otto Alexandrovich¹⁸ Mamers, born in 1929, living in Tehnika Street 14–10, Tallinn.

At the genealogical website Geni I found that indeed such a person has existed and contacted his son Tarmo Mamers. He had never heard of his deceased father's translation activities, but knew that he had lived in Tehnika Street and worked for some time in the printing house that *The Library* used.

I returned to Geni to have a look at the family tree of Otto Samma and contacted his grandson from his first marriage who knew that Kyra Sipyaghina had been Samma's second wife (in Geni her identity has been classified as private and Samma's public biographies relate him only to (his third wife) Olga Samma (1912–85), a translator from Russian into Estonian, who Samma had married in 1970). Kyra Sipyaghina, the long-term director of the Estonian Telegraph Agency (a branch of the all-Union TASS) where Samma worked in 1944–52, has not been included in any primary reference book of Estonian cultural history.

The name of O. Mamers must have been without any awareness of its pen-name counterpart. This time Samma was definitely not attempting to include persons from the Estonian diaspora among his translators (as he had done on other occasions). These were just my expectations that made me, for a few days, to consider the option of a bragging feat from Samma who has been portrayed as a man enjoying his reputation as a smart counterforce to the Glavlit restrictions [Hiedel: 176, 199] not only in Tallinn but also in Moscow. Why he needed a pseudonym for the translation of Kyra Sipyaghina cannot be guessed: her previous translations had come out in 1958/1 where she had been one of the translators of recent Soviet short stories, and in 1958/17, 1958/18 where she was the sole translator of Anatoly Kuznetsov's *Sequel to a Legend* (her next translations were published in 1963 (Fyodor Knorre) and 1974 (Vladimir Lidin; and that is all she translated for the series). There seems to have been no need to hide paying royalties to a narrow circle of friends of the editor-in-chief because there was almost a year between Sipyaghina's previous translation and that of *Red Sails*. Sirje Olesk [Olesk: 15] — without thematizing the identity of O. Mamers — has explained the publication of *Red Sails* (that was not in the initial plan of the year that Samma regularly sent to the Administration of Book Trade) by the fact that Uku Masing did not present the translation of a selection of short-stories by Mahmud Teimur that had been commissioned from him and so the editorial board had to find a replacement outside the initial titles.

¹⁸ The Soviet administration introduced the Russian habit of including patronymic names in legal and identity documents in Estonia.

This blundering research episode recalls what Gideon Toury [Toury: 65] has reminded us of the empirical research in the history of translation: extra-textual sources are “partial and biased, and should therefore be treated with every possible circumspection; all the more so since — emanating as they do from interested parties — they are likely to lean toward propaganda and persuasion”.

Conclusion

Personal relations as a part of a wider social capital are a vital source of making sense of history. Rein Raud in his *Meaning in Action* distinguishes between “ideological and symbolic capitals that the artists and art officials needed, and, of course, money”, and “the relational capital”, “which may sometimes have been of the most decisive importance” [Raud: 153]. He writes:

Each successful Eastern-bloc citizen had to be involved in a large and sophisticated net of relations, acquaintances, schoolmates, neighbours, etc., who were in a position to deliver to each other everything needed in life, from signatures on applications or theatre tickets to scarce consumer good or introductions to competent dentists. One could also acquire relational capital by marital ties and sexual relations. It differs from ‘social capital’, defined by Robert Putnam as ‘features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated action’ in that relational capital substitutes and bypasses publicly endorsed procedures and institutions and produces corruption, or at least what would count as corruption in a democratic society [Ibid.:154].

The borderline between the ‘social’ and the ‘relational’ is fuzzy, and not only in the historical Eastern bloc but in the practices of any society. The reasons and motives for bypassing the administrative standards are numerous, and while reading the archival material, or published translations, one cannot always reach them easily. In order to produce a chapter in the history of translation one does not have to work in the Register Office to find out the family histories of all agents of translation. Depending on the circumstances, this could almost be interpreted as an indiscretion. I have recorded my confusion only because it also made me realize that when we attempt to integrate archived documents into a chain of cause and effect, there is a danger that the result can be a larger-than-life myth that leaves us with the impression that everything that is too extensive, complicated, or vague for research can be comfortably synthesized into a coherent discourse. However, not all values present in a culture are

thematized in its discursive regimes; archives are seldom transparent; they are full of mute gestures that are difficult to comprehend in retrospect.

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