

The Translation Agents' Imagological Power: Images in translated Estonian literature

Terje Loogus

University of Tartu

Luc van Doorslaer

University of Tartu, KU Leuven, Stellenbosch University

This presentation integrates the concept of translation policy (Meylaerts 2011, González Núñez 2016, van Doorslaer 2018) in the imagological research dealing with the export of national and cultural images through translation (van Doorslaer, Flynn & Leersssen 2016). Translation policy is, implicitly or explicitly, adopted by authorities and other institutions for managing the use of translation. The export of literature through translation is part of a cultural policy disseminating images of the source culture and/or source nation and co-determines “the way in which clichés about a certain population are created” (Gentile 2018). Particularly Literature or Translation Funds act as state agents developing an explicit or implicit translation policy. McMartin (2016) mentions cultural-protectionist ends, counteracting the effect of a globalist book market and canonizing the national literary patrimony as main motives. This presentation applies this framework to the case of Estonian literature in translation: the translation policy of the Estonian Literature Centre, its criteria for the translation grants and for the selection of marketing booklets from an explicitly imagological perspective. It particularly concentrates on the German language area, as German is one of the most productive Western European language areas for translations from Estonian. While the impact of the (Baltic) German literature on the Estonian culture and the image of Estonians in the Baltic German literature in the 18th and 19th century has been studied by several authors (e.g. Lukas 2000, Undusk & Lukas 2011), hardly any attention has been paid to the role of Estonian literature on the building of Estonian cultural images in other cultures. It is explored how the decisions of the translator as a cultural mediator impact on the images of cultures and nations, accepting that there can be no neutral standpoint for the comparison of cultures. The role of the translated Estonian literature in the construction of Estonian national and cultural images and stereotypes in the German language area is illustrated with the results of a case study focusing on the translation of selected Estonian novels into German.

References

- Gentile, P. (2018). Where Fiction Meets Reality. The Changing Image of the Low Countries in the Italian Translation of Dutch-language literature. Abstract for the ALCS Conference 'The Low Countries. Picturing Reality', Sheffield.
- González Núñez, G. (2016). On translation policy. *Target* 28 (1), 87–109.
- Lukas, L. (2000). Der estnische National-Imagotyp in der deutschbaltischen Literatur. Y. Varpio, M. Zadencka (eds.). *Literatur und nationale Identität III. Zur Literatur und Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts im Ostseeraum: Finnland, Estland, Lettland, Litauen und Polen*. Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 207–230.
- McMartin, J. (2016). Transnational Pole Coherence and Dutch-to-German Literary Transfer: A Study of Book Translations Published in the Lead-Up to the Guest of Honourship at the 2016 Frankfurt Book Fair. *Journal of Dutch Literature*, 7:2, 50-72.
- Meylaerts, R. (2011). Translation Policy. In: *Handbook of Translation Studies*, vol. 2, ed. by Y. Gambier & L. van Doorslaer. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 163–168.

- Undusk, J. & Lukas, L. (eds.) (2011). *Baltisaksa kirjakultuur* [Baltic German literary culture]. *Keel ja Kirjandus* 2011, Vol. 8–9.
- van Doorslaer, L. (2018). Turning Minorities and Majorities Upside Down. In *Translation and Global Spaces of Power*, ed. by J. Cornella & S. Baumgarten. Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 39-58.
- van Doorslaer, L., Flynn, P. & Leerssen, J. (eds.) (2016). *Interconnecting Translation Studies and Imagology*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.