

Routledge Advances in Translation and Interpreting Studies

For a full list of titles in this series, please visit www.routledge.com

18 Queer in Translation

Edited by B.J. Epstein and Robert Gillett

19 Critical Translation Studies

Douglas Robinson

20 Feminist Translation Studies

Local and Transnational Perspectives

Edited by Olga Castro and Emek Ergun

21 Studying Scientific Metaphor in Translation

An Inquiry into Cross-Lingual Translation Practices

Mark Shuttleworth

22 Translating Frantz Fanon Across Continents and Languages

Edited by Kathryn Batchelor and Sue-Ann Harding

23 Translation and Public Policy

Interdisciplinary Perspectives and Case Studies

Edited by Gabriel González Núñez and Reine Meylaerts

24 Translationality

Essays in the Translational-Medical Humanities

Douglas Robinson

25 The Changing Role of the Interpreter

Contextualising Norms, Ethics and Quality Standards

Edited by Marta Biagini, Michael S. Boyd and Claudia Monacelli

26 Translation in Russian Contexts

Culture, Politics, Identity

Edited by Brian James Baer and Susanna Witt

Translation in Russian Contexts

Culture, Politics, Identity

**Edited by Brian James Baer
and Susanna Witt**

First published 2018
by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

and by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2018 Taylor & Francis

The right of the editors to be identified as the authors of the editorial material, and of the authors for their individual chapters, has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Baer, Brian James, editor. | Witt, Susanna, editor.

Title: Translation in Russian contexts : culture, politics, identity / edited by Brian James Baer and Susanna Witt.

Other titles: Routledge advances in translation studies.

Description: New York ; London : Routledge, 2017. | Series:

Routledge advances in translation and interpreting studies |

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2017009380 | ISBN 9781138235120

(hardback : alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Literature, Modern—Translations into Russian—

History and criticism. | Translating and interpreting—Russia—

History. | Translating and interpreting—Soviet Union—History. |

Translating and interpreting—Russia (Federation)—History. |

Russian literature—Translations—History and criticism.

Classification: LCC P306.8.R8 T73 2017 | DDC 418/.040947—dc23

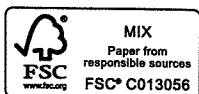
LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2017009380>

ISBN: 978-1-138-23512-0 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-315-30535-6 (ebk)

Typeset in Sabon

by Apex CoVantage, LLC



Printed and bound in Great Britain by
TJ International Ltd, Padstow, Cornwall

Contents

Acknowledgments viii

Introduction: The Double Context of Translation 1
BRIAN JAMES BAER AND SUSANNA WITT

PART I
Pre-Soviet Contexts 17

**1 Translation Strategies in Medieval Hagiography:
Observations on the Slavic Reception of the Byzantine
Vita of Saint Onuphrius** 19

KARINE ÅKERMANN SARKISIAN

**2 Metatext Verbalization in Early and Modern Russian
Translations** 37

TATIANA PENTKOVSKAYA AND ANASTASIA URZHA

**3 “The Mother of All the Sciences and Arts”: Academic
Philosophy in Eighteenth-Century Russia as Cultural Transfer** 51

KÅRE JOHAN MJØR

**4 Translation as Appropriation: The Russian Operatic
Repertoire in the Eighteenth Century** 66

ANNA GIUST

**5 Eighteenth-Century Russian Women Translators in the
History of Russian Women’s Writing** 85

OLGA DEMIDOVA

6	Expressing the Other, Translating the Self: Ivan Kozlov's Translation Genres	95
	YULIA TIKHOMIROVA	
7	Charles Dickens in Nineteenth-Century Russia: Literary Reputation and Transformations of Style	110
	MARINA KOSTIONOVA	
8	Translation as Experiment: Ivan Aksenov's <i>Pan Tadeusz</i> (1916)	125
	LARS KLEBERG	
PART II		
	Soviet Contexts	137
9	Translation and Transnationalism: Non-European Writers and Soviet Power in the 1920s and 1930s	139
	KATERINA CLARK	
10	Hemingway's Transformations in Soviet Russia: On the Translation of <i>For Whom the Bell Tolls</i> by Natalia Volzhina and Evgenia Kalashnikova	159
	EKATERINA KUZNETSOVA	
11	Soviet Folklore as Translation Project: The Case of <i>Tvorchestvo Narodov SSSR</i> , 1937	174
	ELENA ZEMSKOVA	
12	Western Monsters—Soviet Pets?: Translation and Transculturalism in Soviet Children's Literature	188
	VALERII VIUGIN	
13	"The Good Are Always the Merry": British Children's Literature in Soviet Russia	205
	ALEXANDRA BORISENKO	
14	"The Tenth Muse": Reconceptualizing Poetry Translation in the Soviet Era	220
	MARIA KHOTIMSKY	
15	Translating the Other, Confronting the Self: Soviet Poet Boris Slutskii's Translations of Bertolt Brecht	240
	KATHARINE HODGSON	

PART III		
	Late-Soviet and Post-Soviet Contexts	255
16	(Re)Translation, Ideology, and Business: The Fate of Translated Adventure Fiction in Russia, Before and After 1991	257
	PIET VAN POUCKE	
17	"Adieu, Remember Me": The <i>Hamlet</i> Canon in Post-Soviet Russia	276
	ALEKSEI SEMENENKO	
18	Poetic Translation and the Canon: The Case of the Russian Auden	292
	ELENA OSTROVSKAYA	
19	Literary Translation, Queer Discourses, and Cultural Transformation: Mogutin Translating/Translating Mogutin	306
	VITALY CHERNETSKY	
20	Battling around the Exception: A Stateless "Russian" Writer and His Translation in Today's Estonia	321
	DANIELE MONTICELLI AND ENEKEN LAANES	
	Notes on Contributors	337
	Index	344

- a young man]. In . . . *U nas byla velikaia epokha*, edited by Eduard Limonov, 158–187. Moscow: Nezavisimyi al'manakh "Konets veka," knizhnoe prilozhenie.
- Mogutin, Yaroslav. 1995. "Invitation to a Beheading." *Harvard Gay & Lesbian Review* 2 (4): 31–36.
- Mogutin, Yaroslav. 1997. *Uprazhneniia dlia iazyka* [Exercises for the tongue]. New York: s.n.
- Mogutin, Yaroslav. 2001. *30 interv'iu* [30 interviews]. St. Petersburg: Limbus Press.
- Mogutin, Yaroslav. 2004. *Deklaratsiia nezavisimosti* [A declaration of independence]. Tver': Kolonna.
- Moss, Kevin (ed.). 1997. *Out of the Blue: Russia's Hidden Gay Literature*. San Francisco: Gay Sunshine Press.
- Ryan-Hayes, Karen. 1993. "Limonov's 'It's Me, Eddie' and the Autobiographical Mode." *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies* 1004 (March): 1–37.
- Scherr, Barry P. 2009. "Čukovskij's Whitmans." *Russian Literature* 56 (1): 65–98.
- Spurlin, William J. 2014. "The Gender and Queer Politics of Translation: New Approaches." *Comparative Literature Studies* 51 (2): 201–214.
- Vitkovskii, Mikhal [Witkowski, Michał]. 2007. *Liubievo*. Translated by Iurii Chainikov. Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie.
- Vitkovs'kyi, Mikhal [Witkowski, Michał]. 2006. *Khtyvnia*. Translated by Andrii Bondar. Kyiv: Nora-Druk.
- Whitman, Walt. 1954. *Leaves of Grass*. New York: Signet Classic/New American Library.
- Witkowski, Michał. 2005. *Lubiewo*. Cracow: Ha!art.
- Witkowski, Michał. 2011. *Lovetown*. Translated by William Martin. London: Portobello Books.

20 Battling around the Exception

A Stateless "Russian" Writer and His Translation in Today's Estonia

Daniele Monticelli and Eneken Laanes

The Russian context we are going to consider in what follows is that of the Russian diaspora in the former Soviet republics. More precisely, we will focus on the case of contemporary Estonia where the Russian-speaking minority makes up a quarter of the population and has been a challenging and divisive national issue ever since the country recovered its independence in 1991.¹ The dominant attitudes of the Estonian political elites and the Russian community itself toward national relations are often characterized by clear-cut understandings of linguistic and cultural identity, which have taken a dramatically trivializing turn in recent years: from the Bronze Soldier conflict² through the Russo-Georgian war of 2008 to the ongoing Ukrainian crisis, the Estonian Russian-speaking community is increasingly squeezed between the mistrustful attitudes of Estonian right-wing politicians, who view the community as the potential fifth column of Putin's neo-imperialist ambitions, and the powerful machine of Russian propaganda, which represents it as the victim of local nationalism.

These reductive images are far removed from the fluid situation on the ground. The hypothesis we would like to develop and explore in what follows is that the translation into Estonian and the reception of contemporary Estonian authors writing in Russian is a privileged place for contesting the stereotypical self-descriptions and hetero-descriptions of the Russian-speaking community, exposing and deconstructing the shortcomings of identity politics on both sides. Our case study is built around the figure of the novelist Andrei Ivanov, and this is done for various reasons. First of all, Ivanov has a pre-eminent position among contemporary Estonian authors writing in Russian and has earned an international reputation. Second, his emergence in recent years has coincided with the period noted earlier, with his first short story appearing in 2007, immediately after the Bronze Soldier riots in Tallinn. Finally and most importantly, his work and persona have generated a broad and distinctly symptomatic debate on identitarian categories among scholars, literary critics, and the Estonian public.

Andrei Ivanov was born in Tallinn in 1971 into a family of post-WWII Russian immigrants. After the country recovered its independence, he ended up with an “alien’s passport” (commonly known as the “gray passport” in Estonia) along with one-third of all Estonian population officially described as “stateless individuals.”³ Ivanov studied Russian philology at Tallinn Pedagogical University and worked in Tallinn as a stoker and a security guard. In the second half of the 1990s, he immigrated to Denmark and lived for seven years in various Scandinavian countries. Since 2004, he has lived as a full-time writer in Tallinn.

His biography provides important raw material for his fiction, which focuses on existential and social alienation, estrangement, and foreignness (Jüristo 2014), mainly played out in two different contexts. The first of these is late-Soviet and post-Soviet Estonia, of which Ivanov draws a pitiless picture, exposing the hidden solidarity between the rebirth of Estonian identity politics and neoliberal capitalism. At the same time, he ridicules the attempts of the local Russian community to make sense of its new strangeness in Estonia by holding on to an anachronistic spatio-temporal belonging.⁴ Here is a passage from his novel *Peotäis põrmu* [A handful of dust]:

It’s easier to be a Muslim than a Russian Estonian! You have to do so much! Have to believe so many things! And give up so many things!

If you’re Russian you have to go to the Russian Drama Theatre.

You have to admire Russian culture.

You have to celebrate the New Year at the right time. Eleven o’clock!⁵ Together with Russia! Are you a Russian or not, damn it?! You have to follow what is happening in Russia, watch the Olympics and count the medals won.

You have to read Pelevin, Prokhanov, Prilepin, and another one from behind the baseboard. . .

In football tournaments you should cheer for Russia and against Estonia. You must scream “Ros-si-ia-a-a!” through a megaphone.

You must lay flowers on the monument to the fallen.

....

You have to curse Estonian laws.

You must drink and throw up with the others!

You must never fail to note that Russians are oppressed. You are obliged to notice it. If you do not, then you are no longer a Russian, since Russians are oppressed, and if you no longer feel that you are oppressed, you have gradually ceased to be a Russian.

(2011b, 153)⁶

The second line of Ivanov’s fiction concentrates on the precarious existence of migrants in contemporary Europe. Representing life in Danish asylum camps and hippie communes, Ivanov turns the topos into

“nowhere” (Grigoreva 2011) and gives a picture of humanity divested of any identitarian security, a polymorphic life, whose anti-hero is Hanuman, the Indian trickster and demigod protagonist of his novel *Puteshestvie Hanumana na Lolland* [Hanuman’s journey to Lolland].⁷

Partaking of the Sensible: The (Non)Place of Ivanov and His Translation in Estonian Literature

Before approaching the translation of Ivanov’s work into Estonian and its local reception by critics and the public, it is important to draw a full picture of the transnational character of Ivanov’s work as reflected first in its publishing history. The different editions of his books reveal an unusually multifarious publishing history, which includes Russian-language publishers in Estonia, Russian publishers, Estonian publishers, Estonian and Russian literary journals, and literary journals of the Russian diaspora in the US. Most of his novels were first published in Russian in Tallinn, and some of them were later republished in Moscow. His first texts were published in a Russian émigré journal in New York in 2007 and 2008. His first novel *Puteshestvie Hanumana na Lolland* [Hanuman’s journey to Lolland] came off a Russian press in Tallinn in 2009 only to land on the shortlist of the Russian Booker prize, before being republished in Moscow. In the same year, the first Estonian translation of his work was published. However, there is also a text that was originally published in Estonian, directly translated from the Russian manuscript.⁸ This publishing history diverges strongly from that of the other Russian-Estonian authors who had earlier been visible in the Estonian cultural field as public figures but whose work had been available only in Russian. This clear language divide is also the reason why the notion of migrant literature was practically absent from Estonian literary criticism before Ivanov.⁹ Ivanov’s fiction, which is originally written in Russian but addresses the most urgent questions of Estonia’s multi-ethnic society with a talent that is impossible to ignore, thus precipitated a movement toward a more crosscultural, transnational, and translanguistic understanding of local literature.¹⁰

Initially, this variety of publishing patterns and the lack of analytical tools generated a taxonomic puzzle (Jüristo 2014) for Estonian literary critics trying to position Ivanov inside or outside the boundaries of what we could define as, following Jacques Rancière (2004), “the partition of the sensible” [*partage du sensible*] in the Estonian literary field, meaning the consensual, silently, and unquestioningly accepted establishment of its boundaries (what is and what is not “Estonian literature”) and the legitimate distribution of parts and positions within them (who is who in “Estonian literature”). Ivanov has thus been variously described in reviews as an “Estonian writer” (*eesti kirjanik*, e.g., Afanasjev 2012), a “Russian writer” (*vene kirjanik*, e.g., Kulli 2014) or even a “domesticated

Russian" ("kodustatud" *venelane*, Martson 2010), a "Russian-Estonian writer" (*eestivene kirjanik*, e.g., Lotman 2012), an "Estonian Russian-language writer" (*Eesti venekeelne kirjanik*, e.g., Kotjuh 2013), a "Russian writer of Estonia" (*Eesti vene kirjanik*, e.g., Tigasson 2012; Laasik 2012), a "Russian-Baltic writer" (*baltivene kirjanik*, Laukkonen 2012) and a "world literature author" (*maailmakirjanduse autor*—e.g., Sibrits 2013).

Particularly interesting from this point of view is the heated debate around Ivanov's novel *Peotäis põrmu* [A handful of dust], which focuses on the issue of translation. The novel was published in 2011 in Estonian and was translated directly from the Russian manuscript, but was not published in Russian until 2014.¹¹ The title page of the Estonian book presents it as a "translation from Russian" but does not even report the "original" Russian title. A debate among critics, literary scholars, and the public burst out in Estonian newspapers and magazines when the novel was not nominated for the most important literary prize in Estonia, awarded by the Cultural Endowment of Estonia, because it could not possibly be included in any of its categories. It did not fit into the category of original fiction because it was a translation, nor into the category of Estonian literature written in Russian¹² because the Russian original was unpublished, nor into literary translations because the original was "missing." In Rancière's terms, we can say that the institutionalization of the consensual partition of the sensible in the Estonian literary field makes Ivanov's work invisible, as evidenced by its exclusion from the competition for the literary awards (Laanes 2012).¹³

While the discussion thus clearly shows that the Estonian version of Ivanov's novel seems to escape the binaries of original/translation and Estonian/Russian that could warrant unquestionable consensus regarding its inclusion/exclusion, its "invisibility" in terms of these categories remains so obtrusive that it cannot go unnoticed. The notion of "exception" as elaborated by Giorgio Agamben (1998, 2004, 2005) offers us the theoretical instruments needed to understand this paradoxical situation. Agamben uses the term exception [*eccezione*] to characterize, both from a political and a philosophical point of view, a state of undecidability about the inclusion or exclusion of something in or from a given political, social, cultural, or literary space. Grounded as it is in the logic of the neither/nor or, equivalently, the both/and, as opposed to the clear-cut binary alternatives of either/or, the exception coincides with a paradoxical threshold of inclusive exclusion between the inside and outside of any existing category (Agamben 2005, 290). Ivanov's novel is in this respect not simply something that translation scholars would call a "pseudotranslation" or a "pseudo-original," but rather it marks the very impossibility of distinguishing between original and translation, mirroring the undecidable position of its author in the Estonian literary field

and, more generally, cultural and social space. As Agamben observes in set-theoretical terms, the exception is simultaneously "what *cannot be a member of the whole* in which it is always already *included*" and "what cannot be *included in the whole of which it is a member*" (Agamben 1998, 25). It is not just a matter of separation that would sanction once and for all the exclusion of a completely foreign and irrelevant outside. On the contrary, the status and destiny of the exception is inextricably related to that of the internal political, social, cultural, or literary space that is constituted through its exclusion: securing its grip on the liminal space of indeterminacy and undecidability becomes for the latter a vital but problematic task whose results never cease to be questionable and open to revision.

The Estonian reception of *Peotäis põrmu* [A handful of dust] thus turned into a literary and political battle around the exception, where the attempt to univocally determine the degree of originality or derivativeness of the Estonian version of the novel became a means of reaffirming or contesting the distribution of the sensible in the Estonian literary field and, more generally, the hegemonic understandings of linguistic and cultural identity. The contesting critics generally tried to affirm the originality of the Estonian version of the novel as a way of extending the definitional scope of Estonian literature. For instance Mari Peegel, a cultural critic at the important daily *Eesti Päevaleht*,¹⁴ argued that "[t]he language of the manuscript shows this to be a translation, but as it has never previously been published in Russian, the edition by Varrak [the Estonian Publisher] is the first edition, making it an original Estonian work." (Peegel 2012).

Peegel interestingly suggests that one way to achieve the solution she is advocating may be to recognize the translator as a "coauthor" of the Estonian version of the novel, concluding that "Estonian literature could be defined as 'literature written in Estonia'" (Peegel 2012). Replacing the cultural and linguistic boundary with a geographical one means the indeterminacy of Ivanov's and his novel's position is eventually eliminated and the exception is recuperated into the internal space—the Estonian literary field, where, according to Peegel's proposal, "Estonian literature written in Russian" becomes a fully acknowledged part of "Estonian literature."

Some critics, however, insisted on the need to keep to existing definitions and separations. Among them was Rebekka Lotman, chair of the jury for the literary prizes of the Estonian Cultural Endowment. She justified the decision of the jury to exclude *Peotäis põrmu* [A handful of dust] by saying that "originals and translations are fundamentally different text types." The Estonian version of Ivanov's novel is thus univocally labeled as a "translation," with the immediate consequence that "it cannot possibly be taken into consideration in the category of originals" (Lotman

2012). This eventually brings Lotman to rule out Ivanov's exception by reaffirming the dominant taxonomic criteria of inclusion and exclusion:

Defining Estonian literature by language is not something that could be seen as discriminatory against any ethnic group. Literature written in Estonia can in general be divided into Estonian literature and Estonian-Russian literature, where the first is written in Estonian and the second in Russian. For the first the Cultural Endowment of Estonia has the prizes for Estonian literature, for the second the prize for Russian-language authors. [...]

(Lotman 2012)

These brief examples are particularly straightforward illustrations of the fundamental terms of the debate that developed in the dozens of articles in newspaper and cultural journals that contributed to the battle around Ivanov's and his novel's exception. What the different positions in the debate seem to share is a certain uneasiness, even anxiety, toward that area of indeterminacy that Ivanov and his novel open between originality and derivativeness (the issue of translation), which has a problematizing impact on the notion of "Estonian literature" and, more generally, on linguistic, cultural, and social identities.

A Right to the Exception

It is at this point interesting to turn to Ivanov and his own attitude toward the position of himself and his work in Estonian society and literature. This is a question journalists almost never fail to raise in interviews with Ivanov in the Estonian press—another sign of the identitarian uncertainties and anxiety described earlier. Ivanov generally refuses to satisfy the wishes of the Estonian public to get from him a clear statement of self-positioning and belonging. For instance, in an interview for the daily *Postimees*, he simply answers the journalist who asks him whether he is an Estonian author or not: "I do not know. Really" (Sibrits 2013). In another interview with the major Estonian weekly *Eesti Ekspress*, while discussing the relevance of a writer's name and origins for his success in a given cultural and linguistic setting, Ivanov himself asks the journalist, "What does it matter what your name is and where you are from?" (Afnasjev 2012). Elsewhere, he claims that he feels himself in Estonia, "just like everywhere else in the world, as a simple mortal being" (Kulli 2014).

Instead of making a choice between the available alternatives and assuming a position, Ivanov seems to conceptualize himself and, possibly, the Russian-Estonian community as a whole in the anti-identitarian terms of a universal existential condition that he describes as "dwelling in a refugee transit camp" and "living in emigration in respect of one's own past" (Laasik 2012). In contrast to what we described earlier as a

battle around the exception aimed at getting rid of the indeterminacy of Ivanov's position and that of his work in Estonian society and literature, the writer himself affirms his wish to preserve the exception from being erased by any existing criteria for the assignment and denial of identifying categories. While this is usually understood by critics as a refusal of civil engagement in favor of existential desolation,¹⁵ a reference to Agamben helps us, once again, to cast a different light on Ivanov's position: "[o]nly in a world," claims the philosopher, "in which the citizen has been able to recognise the refugee that he or she is—only in such a world is the political survival of humankind today thinkable" (Agamben 2000, 26). Agamben raises here the question of a possible politics to come, rethinking community outside those identitarian categories—paradigmatically illustrated by the "citizen" of the quoted passage—which unavoidably (re)generate again and again new exclusions and marginalizations.

Similarly, Ivanov turns his exceptional stateless condition into a sign of his own vision of states and social systems. In his first short novel *Zola* [Ash], the gray passport is still described as a symbol of alienation and is compared to a disease people get infected with from biting, like in the classic scenario of zombie movies. However, the protagonist already accepts this new status with a challenging attitude and forges his existence as a "Russian Balt" in the terms of an impossible identity:

That was the time when the idea of a Russian Balt was born in my mind. A person who is proud of what he lacks. Of what he does not even want to possess. Of what he has chosen not to possess. Who has chosen that he is not. Who is proud of the fact that in this new wondrous world he is nobody. [...] I decided to become this new Russian Balt who is willing to give up everything. I decided to become a person who, instead of "all," chooses "nothing." To become a person who does not want, can not, does not, does not bend, cannot be molded—and is proud of it. I was proud of my status as a foreigner. I was against. I was a "negative nein."

(Ivanov 2008)

That this position of non-belonging does not have anything to do with the metropolitan cosmopolitanism and its privileges is exemplified by a reference to Rushdie:

I read Rushdie the way some punks read Bakunin. It seemed to me, I wanted to believe it that this word [non-belonger] somehow brought me closer to another word—cosmopolitan. To that luxury attainable only to holders of a British passport. Not to those who had a "grey passport"—there was only one step down from them: wanted criminals.

(Ivanov 2008)

He plays with the English formula “a man inbetween” only in the form of an intellectually fashionable attempt at self-poetization, utterly unhelpful in his impossible position.

Rather than in terms of the Western cosmopolitan discourse of hybridity, the impossible position of Ivanov’s protagonists could be understood with the help of Edward Said’s notion of secular criticism, read by Aamir Mufti as, above all, anti-nationalist—an ethical possibility afforded by a minority position (Mufti 1998, 107). For Said the secular as an ethical position of critique means always looking at the nationalist ideologies of hearth and home from the position of what these ideologies exclude and replacing the biological ties of filiation with affiliative social bonds. However, Said is also careful to point out that affiliative communities have a tendency to restore authority and start to function hegemonically in the same way that filiative ones do, so that a further step is required in order to remain attentive to the ways affiliation reproduces filiation (Said 1983, 19–20). Ivanov’s protagonists do precisely that. They have broken the filiative ties both to Russia and to the Russian-Estonian community in post-Soviet Estonia because of the ways the minority tries to mimic the majority. However, to form an affiliative relationship to the newly defined Estonian state, to become a naturalized Estonian is also out of the question for them. Seen from the minority position, the ethnic-nationalist roots of the post-Soviet Estonian nation-building project are too transparent in their hegemonic filiative nature to become a viable option. Thus, after local and international recognition of his literary work, Ivanov rather decided to turn necessity into a virtue, as he stated in a 2012 interview:

I am perfectly happy with the grey passport if that is what the deal is. [...] I’ve lived enough in hippie communes to have my own vision of countries and social structures. The grey passport is a non-citizen’s passport. Citizenship—unidentified. Where else could you get such a wonderful document? It corresponds perfectly to my state of mind.

(Afanasjev 2012)

Translation as a Space of Indetermination

What does this brief analysis of the discussion on the Estonian version of *Peotäis põrmu* [A handful of dust] and, more generally, Ivanov’s exception to the criteria for identification within the Estonian literary, cultural, and social space tell us about translation and our way of understanding and studying it within contemporary translation studies? Our investigation clearly confirms the fundamental assumptions of the “cultural turn” (Bassnett and Lefevere 2001, xi), which focuses on the cultural, social, and political embeddedness of translation (see for instance Venuti

2008 and Tymoczko 2000). As it demonstrates, the very same definition and determination of what is to be considered as a translation cannot be separated from its cultural and political context, not simply because a translation is nothing other than “what is regarded within the target culture, on whatever grounds” as a translation (Toury 1985, 20), but more importantly because such “being regarded” implies a kind of consensus that is always the unstable and precarious result of a hegemonic formation emerging from conflicts and negotiations, and grounded in some fundamental exclusion.¹⁶

What the case study seems to call into question are rather the strategies that committed approaches within translation studies have, often too univocally and exclusively, identified with resistance to cultural hegemony and political relevance in translation practices. This is, for instance, the case with Lawrence Venuti’s fundamental, but somewhat abused notion of “foreignization” (Venuti 1998a, 2010). Venuti’s understandable and commendable commitment to foreignizing translation strategies as an ethical attitude toward translation (Venuti 2008, 19) seems to have been turned over the last 15 years into a huge battle around the exception, by which scores of translation scholars try to come to terms with the cultural and linguistic indeterminacy of the space of translation (neither/nor, both/and) through a detailed measurement of the opposing forces of domestication and foreignization. The outcomes of this measurement are then reductively imagined as univocally determining the fidelity of the translation to *either* the domestic *or* the foreign and, consequently, its conformist confirmation or rebellious subversion of hegemonic linguistic, cultural, and socio-political patterns.

Maria Tymoczko (2000) and Mona Baker (2010) have taken issue with the shortcomings of Venuti’s dichotomous categories in the analysis and understanding of translation and translation strategies.¹⁷ They draw attention to the contextualization of translation practices, which allow for different, even opposite strategies of resistance within different linguistic, cultural, and social settings. Thus, in the case of the Estonian version of Ivanov’s *Peotäis põrmu* [A handful of dust], the “scandal of translation” is not triggered by the betrayal of the domestic and a conscious foreignizing strategy employed by the translator. It is rather translation in itself—as an exceptional space of indetermination of the domestic and the foreign, the proper, and the improper—that becomes a scandal and an object of contention. Particularly remarkable in this case is that the very Estonian and Russian languages that are supposed to be criteria of identification for literatures, cultures, and communities become instruments of indetermination: we have thus both the impossible Estonian original of an author writing in Russian and the impossible Estonian translation of a missing Russian original.

Borrowing the terminology of committed translation studies, we could equivalently claim that “minoritization” as “deterritorialization of language” (see Venuti 1998b, 136) manifests itself in our case study as an indetermination of the positions of the majority and the minority. Let us consider Venuti’s definition of minority:

I understand ‘minority’ to mean a cultural or political position that is subordinate, whether the social context that defines it is local, national or global. This position is occupied by languages and literatures that lack prestige or authority, the non-standard and the non-canonical, what is not spoken or read much by a hegemonic culture. Yet minorities also include the nation and social groups that are affiliated with these languages and literatures, the politically weak or under-represented.

(Venuti 1998b, 135)

Present-day Estonia is a good example of the fundamental relativity and ambiguity of the notions of minority and majority that are dependent on the topological (local, national or regional) and historical (present, past or future) scope of the evaluation. This is why discourses of national victimization and chauvinistic empowerment may alternatively or even contemporaneously surface in both the Estonian and the Russian community. Ivanov’s anti-identitarian stance and the protagonists of his work make these discourses inoperative, putting a majority (Soviet-time Russians) in the position of a minority (Estonians in the former Soviet Union), while the Estonian version of *Peotäis põrmu* [A handful of dust] equivalently pushes Estonian critics and the public to reconsider a minority (the post-Soviet-Russian community of Estonia and its “Russian-language writers”) from the position of a majority (post-Soviet Estonians and their “Estonian writers”). Not to mention the fact that Russian as a minority language in Estonian literature is of course a majority language with its majority literature on the regional and global scale. All this triggers a temporal, existential, and political short-circuit with disrupting effects on hegemonic separations and partitions.¹⁸

Should we consider the Estonian version of *Peotäis põrmu* [A handful of dust] as a “resistant translation?” If yes, only in the sense that it is resistant to any criterion of dichotomous analysis and classification. What matters here is neither the origin/source, nor the result/target, but the movement of indetermination in which they get involved. A movement that is the very essence of both translation and human life, as Ivanov suggests in the epiphanic end of his otherwise hopeless short story *Zola* [Ash]. “I am glad to be alive,” he writes there. “It appears that life is no more than movement from one room to another, from one train to another, from one country to another. It is an everyday phenomenon: on

Notes

- 1 Based on the 2011 census out of the 1.3 million Estonian inhabitants, 326,000 were of Russian origin, 175 000 of them having Estonian citizenship.
- 2 In April 2007, the Estonian government removed the Soviet War Memorial commonly known as the “Bronze Soldier” from the center of Tallinn to a military cemetery. The decision provoked riots among members of the Russian-speaking community and developed into an international dispute between Estonia, Russia and the European Union.
- 3 Since the Estonian Republic was restored in 1991 on the principle of legal continuity from the inter-war republic, only those who had been citizens prior to the Soviet takeover in 1940 and their descendants were recognized as citizens according to the *jus sanguinis* principle. The members of the Russian minority were left to choose between Estonian citizenship through naturalization, which required a language exam that was difficult for many native speakers of Russian to pass, Russian citizenship, and a “gray passport” for those who neither wished to take Russian citizenship nor wished to become Estonian citizens or were unable to do so. As of 2016, more than 6% of the population (eighty thousand people) is still stateless in Estonia.
- 4 See the short novel *Zola* [Ash] (2008, Aldanov Literary Prize) and the novel *Peotäis põrmu* [A handful of dust] (2011b, Gorst prakha 2014c).
- 5 Because of the different time zones, eleven o’clock in Tallinn is midnight in Moscow.
- 6 If not otherwise indicated, all translations in this chapter are ours.
- 7 See the short story *Moi datskii diadiushka* [My Danish uncle] (2007), the novel *Puteshestvie Hanumana na Lolland* [Hanuman’s journey to Lolland] (2009, Russian Booker finalist, 2010; Award for the Russian-language author of the Cultural Endowment of Estonia, 2010) and the collection of short stories *Kopengaga* [Copenhagen] (2011, Award of the Russian-language author of the Cultural Endowment of Estonia, 2012).
- 8 *Moi datskii diadiushka* [My Danish uncle]. *Novyi zhurnal* (2007), No. 248, Est. transl. *Minu Taani onuke*. Tallinn: Loomingu Raamatukogu, 2010a; *Zola* [Ash]. *Novyi zhurnal* 2008, No. 253, Est. transl. *Tuhk*. Tallinn: Loomingu Raamatukogu, 2010; *Puteshestvie Hanumana na Lolland* [Hanuman’s journey to Lolland]. Tallinn: Avenarius, 2009; Moscow: AST, 2010b, Est. transl. *Hanumani teekond Lollandile*. Tallinn: Varrak, 2012a, Ger. transl. *Hanuman’s Reise nach Lolland*. München: Antje Kunstmann, 2012b, Fr. transl. *Le voyage de Hanumân*. Paris: Le Tripode (2016c); *Kopengaga* [Copenhagen]. Tallinn: KPD, 2011a; *Peotäis põrmu* [A handful of dust]. Tallinn: Varrak, 2011b, *Gors’t prakha*, Moscow: AST, 2014c; *Harbinskie motylki* [Harbin moths]. Tallinn: Avenarius, 2013a; Moscow: AST, 2014d, Est. transl. *Harbini ööliblikad*. Tallinn: Varrak, 2013b; *Bizar* [Bizarre]. Moscow: Ripol Classic, 2014a, Est. transl. *Bizarre*. Tallinn: Varrak, 2014b; *Ispoved’ lunatika* [Confession of a lunatic]. Tallinn: Avenarius, 2015a, Est. transl. *Kuutõbise pihtimus*. Tallinn: Varrak, 2015b; *Rasmus Hanseni kirjutuskera* [Rasmus Hansen writing ball]. Tallinn: Kultuurileht, 2015c; *Argonaut*. [Argonaut]. Tallinn: Avenarius, 2016a, Est. transl. *Argonaut*, Tallinn: Varrak, 2016b.
- 9 For instance, Andrei Hvostov, a writer who identifies as Russian Estonian but writes exclusively in Estonian, has from his debut in 1999 been unproblematically identified by literary criticism as an Estonian author.
- 10 The Russian reception of Ivanov’s work remains beyond the scope of this article. In this respect see Taisija Laukkonen who argues that the interest of the Russian literary metropolis in Russian-Baltic authors is explained by the need “to comprehend the intercultural European “nowhere” from the perspective

- 11 The publication rights of the novel were bought together with those of *Hanuman* by the Moscow publisher AST, but the novel was not published until 2014 in the same volume with and under the title of *Kharbinskie motylki* [Harbin moths].
- 12 The category of Russian-language author was established in 2001. Russian Estonian authors have manifested different attitudes toward the separate category for "Russian authors" (Kotjuh 2012).
- 13 In Rancière's view, the partition of the sensible always coincides with a division or separation between "the visible and the invisible" (Rancière 2004, 13).
- 14 Peegel's opinion was not published in the cultural section, but as the editorial of *Eesti Päevaleht*. This gives us a hint as to the wide national scope of the public debate around *Peotäis põrmu* [A handful of dust] that decisively transcended the narrow limits of literary criticism.
- 15 For instance, writer and critic Vahur Afanasjev writes of Ivanov's troubles as the "pains of an orphan of the Empire" (Afanasjev 2010).
- 16 This was described earlier with a reference to Rancière's notion of the partition of the sensible.
- 17 Tymoczko describes these dichotomies as "a kind of absolute or universal standard of evaluation, with a sort of on/off quality rather than a sliding scale" (Tymoczko 2000, 38). For a discussion of Venuti's domestication/foreignization dichotomy and its critique, see Myskja 2013.
- 18 Thus, though Venuti claims that "the terms 'majority' and 'minority' are relative [. . .] and always dependent on a historically existing, even if changing situation" (Venuti 1998b, 135), we can say that Ivanov's short-circuit overlaps different historical situations (Soviet and post-Soviet) and different politico-geographical realities (the national and the global). They deterritorialize one another, opening a topological and temporal space of exception, which Ivanov characterizes as "dwelling in a refugee camp" and "living in emigration in respect of one's own past" (Laasik 2012, online).

References

- Afanasjev, Vahur. 2010. "Impeeriumi vaeslapse kannatused" [The suffering of an orphan of the empire]. *Looming* 6: 887–888.
- Afanasjev, Vahur. 2012. "Rahvusvahelise kirjanduse kodanik Andrei Ivanov" [The citizen of international literature]. *Eesti Ekspress* (1 December). Available online: <http://ekspress.delfi.ee/areen/rahvusvahelise-kirjanduse-kodanik-andrei-ivanov?id=65333836> (Accessed 15 March 2017).
- Agamben, Giorgio. 1998. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Agamben, Giorgio. 2000. *Means without End: Notes on Politics*. Translated by Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Agamben, Giorgio. 2004. *The Open: Man and Animal*. Translated by Kevin Attell. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Agamben, Giorgio. 2005. *State of Exception*. Translated by Kevin Attell. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Baker, Mona. 2010. "Reframing Conflict in Translation." In *Critical Readings in Translation Studies*, edited by Mona Baker, 113–129. London and New York: Routledge.
- Bassnett, Susan and André Lefevere (eds.). [1998] 2001. *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Grigoreva, Tatiana. 2011. "Andrei Ivanov: Puteshestvie Hanumana na Lolland" [Andrei Ivanov: Hanuman's journey to Lolland]. *OpenSpace.ru*. Available online: <http://os.colta.ru/literature/events/details/19940/> (Accessed 29 March 2015).
- Ivanov, Andrei. 2007. "Moi datskii diadiushka" [My Danish uncle]. *Novyi zhurnal* 248. Available online: <http://magazines.russ.ru/nj/2007/248/iv2.html> (Accessed 29 March 2015).
- Ivanov, Andrei. 2008. "Zola" [Ash]. *Novyi zhurnal* 253. Available online: <http://magazines.russ.ru/nj/2008/253/iv1.html> (Accessed 29 March 2015).
- Ivanov, Andrei. 2009. *Puteshestvie Hanumana na Lolland* [Hanuman's journey to Lolland]. Tallinn: Avenarius.
- Ivanov, Andrei. 2010a. *Minu taani onuke. Tuhk* [My Danish uncle. Ash]. Tallinn: Loomingu Raamatukogu.
- Ivanov, Andrei. 2010b. *Puteshestvie Hanumana na Lolland* [Hanuman's journey to Lolland]. Moscow: AST.
- Ivanov, Andrei. 2011a. *Kopengaga* [Copenhagen]. Tallinn: KPD.
- Ivanov, Andrei. 2011b. *Peotäis põrmu* [A handful of dust]. Tallinn: Varrak.
- Ivanov, Andrei. 2012a. *Hanumani teekond Lollandile* [Hanuman's journey to Lolland]. Tallinn: Varrak.
- Ivanov, Andrei. 2012b. *Hanuman's Reise nach Lolland* [Hanuman's journey to Lolland]. München: Antje Kunstmann.
- Ivanov, Andrei. 2013a. *Harbinskie motylki* [Harbin moths]. Tallinn: Avenarius.
- Ivanov, Andrei. 2013b. *Harbini ööliblikad* [Harbin moths]. Tallinn: Varrak.
- Ivanov, Andrei. 2014a. *Bizar* [Bizarre]. Moscow: Ripol Classic.
- Ivanov, Andrei. 2014b. *Bizarre*. Tallinn: Varrak.
- Ivanov, Andrei. 2014c. *Gors't prakha* [A handful of dust]. Moscow: AST.
- Ivanov, Andrei. 2014d. *Harbinskie motylki* [Harbin moths]. Moscow: AST.
- Ivanov, Andrei. 2015a. *Ispoved' lunatika* [Confession of a lunatic]. Tallinn: Avenarius.
- Ivanov, Andrei. 2015b. *Kuutõbise pihtimus* [Confession of a lunatic]. Tallinn: Varrak.
- Ivanov, Andrei. 2015c. *Rasmus Hanseni kirjutuskera* [Rasmus hansen writing ball]. Tallinn: Loomingu Raamatukogu.
- Ivanov, Andrei. 2016a. *Argonaut* [Argonaut]. Tallinn: Avenarius.
- Ivanov, Andrei. 2016b. *Argonaut*. Tallinn: Varrak.
- Ivanov, Andrei. 2016c. *Le voyage de Hanumân* [Hanuman's journey to Lolland]. Paris: Le Tripode.
- Jüristo, Tarmo. 2014. "Andrei Ivanov and the Anti-Hero of Our Time." *Estonian Literary Magazine* 38: 27–31.
- Kotjuh, Igor. 2012. "Eesti venekeelne kirjandus: Kas osa eesti või vene kirjandusest?" [Estonian literature in Russian: Part of Estonian or Russian literature?]. *Keel ja Kirjandus* 2: 134–139.
- Kotjuh, Igor. 2013. "Eesti venekeelse kirjanduse nullindate põlvkond: vastuvõtt ja tõrked omaks tunnistamisel" [The millennial generation of Estonian literature in Russian: Reception and obstacles of inclusion]. *Methis* 11: 64–83.

- Kulli, Jaanus. 2014. "Eestis sündinud kirjanik Andrei Ivanov: 'Minu sümbolne kodumaa on ikkagi Venemaa'" [Andrei Ivanov, a writer born in Estonia: My symbolic homeland is still Russia]. *Õhtuleht* (22 March). Available online: <http://www.ohutuleht.ee/569080/eestis-sundinud-kirjanik-andrei-ivanov-minu-sumbolne-kodumaa-on-ikkagi-venemaa-> (Accessed 15 March 2017).
- Laanes, Eneken. 2012. "Andrei Ivanov ja rahvusülene (eestivene) kirjandus" [Andrei Ivanov and transnational Russian Estonian literature]. *Sirp* (8 March). Available online: <http://www.sirp.ee/s1-artiklid/c7-kirjandus/andrei-ivanov-ja-rahvusuelene-eestivene-kirjandus/> (Accessed 15 March 2017).
- Laasik, Andres. 2012. "Andrei Ivanov: olen emigratsioonis oma mineviku suhtes" [Andrei Ivanov: I am in emigration from my past]. *Eesti Päevaleht* (7 January). Available online: <http://epl.delfi.ee/news/arvamus/andrei-ivanov-olen-emigratsioonis-oma-mineviku-suhtes?id=63743568> (Accessed 15 March 2017).
- Laukkonen, Taisija. 2012. "Baltic-Russian Literature: Writing from Nowhere?" *Baltic Worlds* 2: 24–26.
- Lotman, Rebekka. 2012. "Milleks õhutada vaenu tühja koha pealt?" [Why incite hatred out of nothing]. *Sirp* (2 March). Available online: <http://www.sirp.ee/s1-artiklid/c9-sotsiaalia/milleks-ohutada-vaenu-tuehja-koha-pealt/> (Accessed 15 March 2017).
- Martson, Ilona. 2010. "Kolm eestivene kirjanikku" [Three Russian Estonian authors]. *Epifanio* (13 April). Available online: <http://www.epifanio.eu/nr13/est/eestivene.html> (Accessed 15 March 2017).
- Mufti, Aamir R. 1998. "Auerbach in Istanbul: Edward Said, Secular Criticism, and the Question of Minority Culture." *Critical Inquiry* 25 (1): 95–125.
- Myskja, Kjetil. 2013. "Foreignisation and Resistance: Lawrence Venuti and His Critics." *Nordic Journal of English Studies* 12 (2): 1–23.
- Peegel, Mari. 2012. "Eesti proosa vene keeles: Miks mitte?" [Estonian fiction in Russian: Why not?]. *Eesti Päevaleht* (9 February). Available online: <http://epl.delfi.ee/news/arvamus/juhtkiri-eesti-proosa-vene-keeles-miks-mitte?id=63893641> (Accessed 15 March 2017).
- Rancière, Jacques. 2004. *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*. Translated by Gabriel Rockhill. London and New York: Continuum.
- Said, Edward. 1983. *The World, the Text, and the Critic*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Sibrits, Heili. 2013. "Sisepaguluses sünnivad hitid" [Internal exile gives birth to hits]. *Postimees* (19 December). Available online: <http://kultuur.postimees.ee/2636610/sisepaguluses-sunnivad-hitid> (Accessed 15 March 2017).
- Tigasson, Külli-Riin. 2012. "Maa, kus iial imesid ei sünni" [Country with no miracle]. *Eesti Päevaleht* (4 February). Available online: <http://epl.delfi.ee/news/kultuur/maa-kus-iial-imesid-ei-sunni?id=63872464> (Accessed 15 March 2017).
- Toury, Gideon. 1985. "A Rationale for Descriptive Translation Studies." In *The Manipulation of Literature: Studies in Literary Translation*, edited by Theo Hermans, 16–41. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Benjamins.
- Tymoczko, Maria. 2000. "Translation and Political Engagement: Activism, Social Change and the Role of Translation in Geopolitical Shifts." *The Translator* 6 (1): 23–47.
- Venuti, Lawrence. 1998a. *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Venuti, Lawrence. 1998b. "Introduction to the Special Issue 'Translation and Minority.'" *The Translator* 4 (2): 135–144.
- Venuti, Lawrence. 2008. *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Venuti, Lawrence. 2010. "Translation as Cultural Politics: Régimes of Domestication in English." In *Critical Readings in Translation Studies*, edited by Mona Baker, 65–79. London and New York: Routledge.