

## “AND RUSSIA SEEMED TO HIM...”: DAVID SAMOILOV’S BALLAD AND ITS TRANSLATION BY JAAN KROSS\*

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“The Ballad of the German Censor” is not one of the David Samoilov’s most famous texts. One reason is that it is not entirely certain even which genre it belongs to, despite the clear title. “Ballad” is considered either a part of a poem, or a “small poem”. While it has been included as part of the poem “Nearby Countries”, it was not so in the first edition in 1958. After its separate publication in 1961 in the journal “Novyi mir”, “Ballad” was published as a part of “Nearby Countries” (which was first included in the 1971 book “Equinox: Verses and Poems”).

The mercurial genre status of “Ballad” is a sign of fluctuations in meaning. Y. Yevtushenko pointed to this in his short characterization of the poem: “The small poem ‘The Ballad of the German Censor’ was, essentially, a mockery of our own Soviet censorship” [Строфы: 471]. Yevtushenko considered the German residence of the censor a convention. Even if the allusion did not occur to the author, Yevtushenko’s comment gives a sense of readers’ reception, which highlights this particular component in the text. Possibly, this allusion in “The Ballad of the German Censor” could have been the very thing that drew the Estonian translator, Jaan Kross, to the text.

Kross’s translation was printed in the collection “Bottomless Moments” («Бездонные мгновенья / Põhjatud silmapilgud»). It is interesting to note that the theme of war, so meaningful in Samoilov’s works, is represented in the collection by just two poems, “Ballad” and “Muse”. The second poem, which reflects Samoilov’s own experiences in war, was published in the selected “Verses from the Front” in the journal “Yunost” (1979, № 10), and then in the

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collection “The Gulf” (1981), dated 1944. “The Ballad of the German Censor”, stylized and, as will be demonstrated below, filled with literary subtexts, contrasts with “Muse”, and this might be an indirect confirmation of Yevgeny Yevtushenko’s interpretation of the ballad as allusive and, in fact, anti-Soviet.

As noted above, “Ballad” never became the subject of close literary analysis. Therefore, before turning to the Estonian translation, several observations about the original text must be noted, which will be critical to the interpretation of the translation.

There are two sections of “Nearby Countries” whose titles include the name of a genre: in addition to the ballad about the censor, there is also “The Ballad of Hitler’s End”. Neither text appeared in the first edition. While the exclusion from the 1958 edition of the poems “An Engagement in Leipzig” and “I spend tonight in a demolished house...”, as well as several key lines from “On the Far Shore”, dedicated to the Warsaw Uprising<sup>1</sup>, have logical explanations — ideology and censorship — the reason for the absence of the ballads is not so clear. The most obvious explanation is that these verses were written later than the other texts of “Nearby Countries”. “The Ballad of a German Censor” was first published in 1961, while “The Ballad of Hitler’s End” was not published until 1971; that is, before the appearance of the full text of “Nearby Countries” in the collection “Equinox”. Thus, it can be presumed that it was written later than the rest of the poem’s constituent parts. It is also possible that before publication of the poem in its entirety, the author gave the press only the most essential parts (in terms of the whole).

There are additional possible explanations. A. S. Nemzer in a lecture once made note of the balladic subtext of the poem “An Engagement in Leipzig” (the march of the Potsdam groom to his bride, his travels reminiscent of the ride of the groom in Zhukovsky’s “Ludmila”; see this comparison in the afterword of [Немзер: 383]). The most central plot line of “Nearby Countries”, the end of the war and the hero’s return home, parallels “Ludmila”. If the cuckolded groom of “Fräulein Inge” is the hero’s foil (they both sit near Inge), then a parallel can be drawn between our hero’s way home from war and the path of the groom of Ludmila/Lenora. In addition to the farcical love story (of Inge, who did not remain faithful to her faraway fiancé, and the “young bookseller from Potsdam” coming to her through Germany), the poem contains a tragic story — the heroes Leshka Bykov and Yadviga are killed like lovers in a ballad.

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<sup>1</sup> The hero stands “on the far shore” and watches the desperate resistance of the rebels: “I see them! I see them perfectly! / But I am silent. But I cannot help... // We stood on the far shore”.

The ballad genre is embodied in the very theme of the poem. The action of “Nearby Countries” takes place in the “alien” lands of Germany and Poland. The hallmark feature of a ballad, besides its plot dynamics, is exoticism — the action takes place in an exotic and alien environment (geographically or historically). In this way the balladic associations, strengthened by the introduction of two ballads with genre titles into the structure of the poem, become thematic in nature. The hero goes to war in Germany (or on “German” territory in Warsaw) and finds himself in an alien and frightening world; thus, the appearance of the “frightening German ballad” is logical.

It appears that direct textual references to Zhukovsky’s ballads (the most famous of which he translated from German, from Goethe and Bürger) or to other German ballads, whether in translation or in the original, are not to be found in Samoilov’s “Nearby Countries”, and one must not assume that these ballads are subtexts. Rather, important here is the overall impression of the genre, and not specific texts (although initial examples of the Russian Romantic ballad are still, perhaps, significant).

It is obvious that in “Nearby Countries” Samoilov takes advantage of a strange characteristic of the ballad: the comedic-farcical potential of a tragic plot. Thus, “The Ballad of Hitler’s End” alludes to Zhukovsky’s and Lermontov’s poems about the dead emperor (“The Midnight Review” and “The Flying Ship”), though the allusion is complicated by the “fantastical” association of the title character with the folkloric antagonist Koschei the Deathless. Still alive, but sitting in an underground bunker, the ruler calls up his army, which no longer exists — the soldiers are dead, and the microphones he yells into have been long turned off<sup>2</sup>. These deactivated microphones give the second ballad in “Nearby Countries” a farcical nuance. It can be presumed that this fable-like episode might have arisen under the influence of Soviet caricature of the war era, or satirical poetry of those same years. Compare, for example, to S. Y. Marshak’s poetic feuilleton “The Corporal’s Farewell to the General’s Uniform” (1944): “Goodbye my uniform, my faithful servant / The moment of separation approaches. / Goodbye forever!.. No more will march my leg / in my General’s trousers!”<sup>3</sup>

“The Ballad of the German Censor” [БМ: 24–33], also alludes to another circle of texts: the classic Russian tales about “little people”. The key to this association is found in the very first line of Samoilov’s ballad: “Once there lived

<sup>2</sup> There are other parallels between Samoilov’s ballad and two Russian transcriptions by Zedlitz: the circular composition of the text itself, and the circular movement of the protagonist (the corpse rises from the grave and later returns to it); the adjutants do the same in “The Midnight Review”.

<sup>3</sup> Thanks to A. S. Nemzer for this example.

in Germany a *little censor*". Later, this defining characteristic of this protagonist develops further: "he was born a pedant", and "a puny little man, small as switchgrass!" It's possible that later commentators will complete the picture, but this paper will discuss only those precedents that are reflected in Samoilov's ballad at the thematic-lexical level: "The Overcoat", "The Bronze Horseman", and, obviously, "A Weak Heart". Moreover, as with the ballad, it is better justified to discuss the thematic, fable-like parallels of these texts, rather than subtexts. Examples of these parallels follow.

For the "little" German censor, work is the only thing of value; only in his work does he see a purpose to life (italics within quotes from here on are mine):

Он вымарывал, чиркал и резал	He edited, struck, and sharply cut
И не ведал иного призванья.	And knew no other calling.

<...>

...

А работа? Работы до черта:	But work? He had work up to his ears:
Надо резать, и чиркать, и мазать.	He must cut, and strike, and smear.
Перед ним были писем завалы,	Before him lay piles of epistles,
Буквы, строчки — прямые, кривые.	Letters, lines — straight, curved.

<...>

...

Он читал чуть не круглые сутки,	He read near round the clock,
Забывая поесть и побриться	Forgetting to eat and shave.

[БМ: 24–28].

This, of course, is reminiscent of that toiler with pen and ink, Bashmachkin<sup>4</sup>. The censor's diligent execution of his duties find a parallel, as with the story of Gogol's hero, also with Vasya Shumkov, protagonist of "A Weak Heart" (Vasya "accelerated his pen" for the sake of fulfilling his superior's orders, and then, al-

<sup>4</sup> Compare: "Hardly anywhere could one find a man who so *lived in his work*. Suffice it not to say that he worked fervently, no, he *worked with love*. There, in transcription, his own varied and pleasant world appeared to him. Pleasure wrote itself on his face; some of the letters were his favorites, if he arrived at them he was not himself: he giggled and winked, and worked his lips, so that it seemed one could read on his face every letter that swam before him. *Had they awarded him commensurate to his zeal*, he, to his own amazement, perhaps, might even have become a state councilor; but as those wags, his comrades, expressed, *he curried favor with a buckle in his buttonhole, and had amassed piles in his backside*. However it cannot be said that no attention was given to him at all. One director, being a good man and desiring to reward him for his long service, ordered that he be given something more important than common correspondence; precisely from the cases already finished he was ordered to work on a memo to another public office; the whole affair consisted only in changing the main title and converting some verbs from first person to third. This caused him such an effort that he broke out in a total sweat, wiped his brow, and at last said "No, better to let me copy something". Since then they left him forever to transcribe. *Beyond transcription, it seemed, nothing existed*" [ГОГОЛЬ: 144–145].

ready in a confused state of mind, informed on himself<sup>5</sup>). To the motifs arising from Gogol's "The Overcoat" must be added the cold and the hero's lack of warm clothing:

Было холодно ехать без шубы	It was <i>cold</i> to ride <i>without a coat</i>
<...>	<...>
То, что он называл «ностальгия»,	That which he called "nostalgia"
Было, в сущности, страхом и стужей	Was, in fact, fear and <i>severe cold</i>
<...>	<...>
Он проснулся от страха и стужи ...	He awoke from fear and severe cold ... <sup>6</sup>

The daily poverty of the censor and the closed nature of his life also point to the relationship of the hero to other poor clerks from classic tales about "small people": "Three walls, and the fourth a window, / Table and chair, and an iron bed".

Like the hero of "A Weak Heart", the censor goes mad due to an overly zealous attitude toward his work:

И в его утомленном рассудке	And in his confused state of mind
Что-то странное стало твориться.	Something strange began to happen.
<...>	<...>
Мысли длинные, словно обозы,	Long thoughts, like convoys,
Заезжали в углы мозговые,	Rode into the corners of his mind,
И извилины слабого мозга	And the convolutions of a <i>weak brain</i>
Сотрясались, как мостовые.	Shook like a bridge.

The censor is overwhelmed by nightmares, visions in which reality undergoes a startling metamorphosis:

То, что днем он вымарывал, чиркал,	That which by day he edited and struck,
Приходило и мучило ночью	<i>Came and tortured him by night</i>
И каким-то невиданным цирком	And in an <i>unprecedented circus</i>
Перед ним представало воочью.	Personally appeared before him <sup>7</sup> .

<sup>5</sup> It is worth noting here that for Soviet readers, self-incrimination and "disarmament before the party" might have been more reminiscent of recent history than of Dostoevsky's story.

<sup>6</sup> The action of "A Weak Heart" also takes place in winter; compare, for example, the description in the finale: "Night lay over the city, and the wide plain of the Neva, swollen with *frozen* snow, was shining in the last gleams of the sun with myriads of sparks of gleaming hoar frost. There was a *frost* of twenty degrees. A cloud of *frozen* steam hung about the overdriven horses and the hurrying people. The condensed atmosphere quivered at the slightest sound, and from all the roofs on both sides of the river, columns of smoke rose up and floated across the *cold* sky..." [Достоевский: 48].

<sup>7</sup> Compare to Bashmachkin's dying delirium: "Visions incessantly appeared to him, each stranger than the other. Now he saw Petrovitch, and ordered him to make a cloak, with some traps for robbers, who seemed to him to be always under the bed; and cried every moment to the landlady to pull one of them from under his coverlet. Then he inquired why his old mantle hung before him

The German censor is likened to the hero of "The Bronze Horseman" through insanity and a revolt against the array of things that drove him mad, as well as his posthumous anonymity and unmarked tomb:

Он стал груб, нелюдим и печален И с приятелями неприятен.	He became rude, unsociable and melancholy And unpleasant to his friends <sup>8</sup> .
Он был несколько дней гениален, А потом надорвался и спятил.	He was brilliant for several days, But then overexerted himself and went mad.
Он проснулся от страха и стужи С диким чувством, подобным удушью.	He awoke from fear and severe cold With a wild feeling, like suffocation.
< ... >	< ... >
И в душе его черная правда Утвердилась над белой ложью.	And in his soul the black truth Affirmed itself over the white lie.

The censor's protest, like Evgeny's revolt in "The Bronze Horseman", is brief and doomed:

А наутро он взялся ретиво За свое... нет, скорей — за иное: Он подчеркивал все, что правдиво, И вычеркивал все остальное.	Toward morning he zealously undertook For himself... no, rather for another: He underlined everything truthful, And crossed out all the rest.
Бедный цензор, лишенный рассудка! Человечиска мелкий, как просо! На себя он донес <i>через сутки</i> И был взят в результате доноса...	Poor censor, deprived of reason! Puny little man, small as switchgrass! He informed on himself <i>a day later</i> And was arrested due to the denunciation...

The final stanza of the ballad, which includes a partial repetition of the opening lines, summarizes the story of the "small man" whose life and death left no trace:

Жил-был маленький цензор в Германии Невысокого чина и звания.	Once there lived in Germany a little censor Of low rank and title.
Он погиб, и его закопали, А могилу его запахали.	He died, and they buried him, But his grave they plowed.

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when he had a new cloak. Next he fancied that he was standing before the prominent person, listening to a thorough dressing-down, and saying, "Forgive me, your excellency!" but at last he began to curse, uttering the most horrible words, so that his aged landlady crossed herself, never in her life having heard anything of the kind from him, the more so as those words followed directly after the words "your excellency". Later on he talked utter nonsense, of which nothing could be made: all that was evident being, that his incoherent words and thoughts hovered ever about one thing, his cloak" [Гоголь: 168].

<sup>8</sup> Compare to the state of Arkady Ivanovich Nefedevich after Vasya's illness: "He has become boring and gloomy, and lost all his joviality" [Достоевский: 48].

The formula of the fairy-tale invocation, it seems, adds a Russian note to the ballad (and the “naiveté” and simplicity of the story is accented by paired verb rhymes).

Of course, these observations regarding the poetics of Samoilov’s “Ballad of the German Censor” are fragmentary and oriented to the task of comparing the ballad to its translation. Nonetheless, it is worthwhile to draw a transitional conclusion regarding the author’s overall concept: in “Nearby Countries” the German theme is clothed in the uniform of a genre with a clear German halo, yet also with a strong Russian tradition, while the ballad’s thematic complexes, as parsed above, were built on Russian prose sources<sup>9</sup>.

We turn now to the treatment of this text by translator Jaan Kross, renowned poet and author of historical novels (including those on Russian history). Kross completed his translation of “Ballad” in the early 1960s, at the beginning of his friendship with Samoilov. The translation appeared in print three times before “Bottomless Moments” was published, in 1962, 1965, and 1976<sup>10</sup>, and so was well-known to Estonian readers.

In his translation, Kross preserves the original rhyming structure (cross-rhyme, with the exception of the last stanza, which has paired rhymes), despite the fact that his own poetry is usually free of rhyme (that is, Kross strives to preserve the features of the translated verses; David Samoilov also translates Kross’s poems in this way — in free verse, like the original). In the last pair of lines, he even preserves the lexical content of the rhyme (paired verbs).

The ballad becomes shorter (18 quatrains instead of 21). Generally, any Russian text becomes somewhat shorter when translated into Estonian. But Kross translates “Ballad of the German Censor” with several omissions and substitutions which shift the plot and change the meaning.

Russia, whence the “little censor” is sent, looks different in translation. Samoilov’s censor peered from the train window “at snow, at fields, at church-

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<sup>9</sup> In “Nearby Countries” as a whole, it is interesting to note the consistent connection of the German theme with literature: “years of wandering and years of study” for the hero specifically pass at war; the Potsdam bridegroom of “Fräulein Inge” is a bookseller; Inge shows her suitors her albums of records; in “Ballad of a German Censor” the protagonist is fully occupied with the letters he reads in the course of his work, in the end, goes crazy from “text” (“Text composed itself in black mosaic...”), and before death writes everything down in “a small notebook” “with talent”; that is, he becomes a writer.

<sup>10</sup> *Samoilov, D.* Kahekümnenda sajandi puud; Ballaad saksa tsensorist // *Looming*. 1962. Nr 10. Lk 1504-1506; *Samoilov, D.* Kahekümnenda sajandi puud; Ballaad saksa tsensorist; *Iivani surm* // *Vene nõukogude luule antoloogia*. Tallinn, 1965. Lk 460-464; *Samoilov, D.* Ballaad saksa tsensorist // *Pärnu Kommunist*. 1976. 7 okt.

yards"<sup>11</sup>. In Kross: "silmitses vaguni aknast / maju, haudu ja teeviidaposte" ("he examined from the train window / houses, tombstones, and sign posts"). Of the three components, the translator preserves one, and that via metonymy (*tombstones* in place of *churchyards*). The alteration, was possibly due to the necessity of preserving the barbarism of "nach Osten", found at a strong point in the second line and semantically accented. Thus the *churchyards* are replaced with the word *teeviidaposte*, which, though totally unrelated semantically, rhymes with "nach Osten".

In the source text, the censor travels "past villages with neither houses nor people"<sup>12</sup>. In translation this all disappears, and the translator focuses on the hero himself: "Rebis endasse pakane öö ta. / Nagu jäätava tuule käes kõrbes" ("The frosty night sucked him from himself. / As if he was burning on an icy wind"). At the same time, the "overcoat" disappears from the stanza, without which it "was cold" for Samoilov's censor. In the original, the "little" hero (fitting the motif), cold and freezing without warm clothing, has been sent after several key literary texts (here it is not so important that the texts are "Petersburgian", but rather that they narrate of "the small man"). In the translation, the literary reference to Gogol's "The Overcoat" (via the censor's missing overcoat) disappears.

Kross emphasizes darkness in his version of the ballad: while in Samoilov, the censor was sent to Russia "on a winter day in '43"<sup>13</sup>; the translator removes the day, leaving "the third winter of the war". Then, the undefined time of day becomes "a freezing night". In the source text, that day gave way to night is not a realistic detail, but rather a fully symbolic plot move: the change of day to night is connected to the theme of color; the lie in the ballad is "white", while the truth is "black", and specifically at night "the black truth affirmed itself over the white lie"<sup>14</sup> in the hero's soul. Kross, having generalized the time of day at the beginning of the action, has changed the plot and highlighted just one of the opposing elements, night. Finally, Kross adds a line that has no equivalent in the original: "ei siin soendanud ainuski tuli" ("not a singled flame glimmered there").

In the translation, Russia does not "seem to be a steppe, Asia"<sup>15</sup>, it is "Scythian" and "harborless" ("*Oli Venemaa kõle ja sküütlik*", literally "Russia was dank / harborless / a desert and Scythian"). Harborlessness, as a characteriza-

<sup>11</sup> «на снега, на поля, на погосты».

<sup>12</sup> «мимо сел, где ни дома, ни люда».

<sup>13</sup> «в зимний день 43-го года».

<sup>14</sup> «черная правда утвердилась над белой ложью».

<sup>15</sup> «показалась степью, Азией».



tion of Russia, appears again in the direct speech of the censor (which, in Samoilov's version, is written as indirect speech):

Ах, в России не знают комфорта	Oh, in Russia they know not comfort
И пришлось по сугробам полазать.	And one has to climb through snowdrifts.
А работа? Работы до черта:	But work? He had work up to his ears:
Надо резать и чиркать, и мазать.	He must cut, and strike, and smear.

Compare to the translation:

“Oh kõledust!” ohkas ta valju,  
 “roni hangedes... mõelda ei vääri!  
 Ja tööd on nii kuradi palju...”  
 Muudkui lõika ja kraabi ja määri.

In particular, one notices the section comprised of two stanzas that describes the censorship of letters from the front — in translation, they are shortened and result in one stanza:

Перед ним были писем завалы,	Before him lay piles of epistles
Буквы, строчки — прямые, кривые.	Letters, lines — straight, curved.
И писали друзьям генералы,	Generals wrote to their friends,
И писали домой рядовые.	And the rank and file wrote home.
Были письма, посланья, записки	There were letters, messages, notes
От живых, от смешавшихся	From the living, from those now mixed
с прахом.	with ashes.
То, что он называл «неарийским»,	That which he called “un-Aryan”,
Было, в сущности, стужей	Was, in fact, severe cold and fear.
и страхом.	

Compare to the translation:

Kirjad, kirjad... et silm nendest	Letters, letters... in them brightly
kirju —	in the eyes —
Loe ja hoia end hooletu vea eest —	Read and beware careless mistakes —
Saatsid kindralid koju siit kirju	Generals sent letters home from here
Ja kirju siit kirjutas reamees.	And letters from here wrote the ranks.

Most noticeable is the disappearance of the closing sentence of the second stanza. The omission is quite meaningful; Samoilov uses this construction twice: “That, which he called “nostalgia” / Was, in fact, fear and severe cold” and “that, which he called “un-Aryan”, / Was, in fact, severe cold and fear”<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> «То, что он называл “ностальгия” / Было, в сущности, страхом и стужей» и «То, что он называл “неарийским”, / Было, в сущности, стужей и страхом».

Upon this repetition are built the impressions of the censor and the country that became his final refuge. The Russia of Samoilov's ballad is enveloped in cold, frost, and fear; this is all that a small person is capable of feeling, one for whom the simplest of phenomena and elementary sensations are hidden behind complex words (that is, the complex word "lie"). In the translation, not only is the repetition deleted — and, as a result, the entire semantic construction — but the whole formula changes "authorship:" what is written in the original as "that which he <the censor> called nostalgia"<sup>17</sup> is translated as "mida kodus nostaalgiaks hüüti" — "that, which *at home they called* nostalgia". The personal construction is exchanged for an impersonal one, and thus the intent itself is changed (in the original, nostalgia overtook the censor outside the "domestic space", while in the translation nostalgia is understood specifically "at home").

No less significantly, the concept of "un-Aryan" — yet another marker of the military, German theme — vanishes from the translation. Of course, the barbarism of "nach Osten" is powerful enough to specify unequivocally the time and place of the action, but the elimination of thematic markers (particularly such ideologically loaded ones) exposes the translator's intentions. Kross, clearly, strives to widen the associative field so that the Estonian reader will see in the text not only German, but also Soviet censorship. In the above excerpt, the translation omits the juxtaposition of the living and dead authors of the letters (further weakening the theme of war), and inserts the phrase about the careless mistake. Kross opts not to include any lists (Samoilov's "letters, messages, notes", and "piles of epistles, / Letters, lines — straight, curved"); that is, he chooses not to emphasize the theme of letters and graphics, motifs which for a Russian reader would evoke associations with the censor's literary predecessors.

Yet another omission in the translation is found in the scene depicting the protagonist's nightmares. Jaan Kross again contaminates two stanzas, combining them into one that lacks "the East", song and balladic repetitions, and the imitation of direct speech:

Черной тушью убитые строки	With black ink lines were murdered
Постепенно слагались в тирады:	Were gradually composed in a tirade:
«На Востоке, Востоке, Востоке	“In the East, East, East
Нам не будет, не будет	We will not, we will not
пошады...»	be spared...”
Текст слагался из черных мозаик,	Text was composed of black mosaic,
Слово цепко хваталось за слово.	Word tightly seized upon word.

<sup>17</sup> «то, что он <цензор> называл “ностальгия”».

Никакой гениальный прозаик  
 Не сумел бы придумать такого.

The most genius of prosists  
 Could not have dreamed it up.

Compare to the translation:

Mustiks mustriteks liitusid read ja  
 Rida hõljudes libises reale.  
 Geniaalseimgi sõnadeseadja  
 Poleks eal tulnud taolise peale!

Lines were connected by black designs and  
 Line, hesitant, ran into line.  
 To the most genius of writers  
 It would never have come to mind!

Here it is important to note the translation's exclusion of all the "tirades", yet another marker of the time and place (here, "the East" is the translation of the significant word mentioned above, "*nach Osten*"; and therefore acts an equivalent of that marker). The adjective *murdered* as a description of "lines" furthers the mainstay theme of war (in the ballad and the poem as a whole); by skipping it, the translator rejects the plot parallels between the murdered soldiers and the murdered lines of their letters, overall weakening the theme of war. Instead, to compensate for the omitted lines, he sharply strengthens the phonetic tension within the stanza, filling it with repetition (*mustiks mustriteks, liitusid + libises, read + reale + peale + eal*, etc).

The translation includes a play on words that does not appear in the original: *mustiks mustriteks* (black designs). It is worth taking a look at Kross's play on color in his translation of this poem. While for Samoilov, cold (frost) is the defining feature of Russia, the translator emphasizes darkness and blackness specifically, and these are accented by the play on words. In this way Kross strengthens and reinforces the culminating scene of the ballad:

Он проснулся от страха и стужи  
 С диким чувством, подобным  
   удушью.  
 Тьма была непрогляднее туши,  
 Окна были заляпаны тушью.  
 Он вдруг понял, что жизнь не бравада  
 И что существование ничтожно.  
 И в душе его черная правда  
 Утвердилась над белой ложью.

He awoke from fear and *severe cold*  
 With a wild feeling, like  
   suffocation.  
 The darkness was *impenetrable ink*,  
 The windows were spattered with *ink*.  
 He understood suddenly, that life is  
   not bravado  
 And that that existence is insignificant.  
 And in his soul the *black truth*  
 Affirmed itself over the *white lie*.

Compare to the translation:

Õösel ärkas ta, liikmetes lõdin:  
 oli, justkui ta uppuma hakkaks.  
 Õö, must nagu nõgine jõgi,  
 oli tušiga määrinud akna.

Ja ta korraga mõistis, kui nõder  
 ta on, ja ta elu kui hale.  
 Ja ta südames öötume tõde  
 surus kõrvale *valeva vale*.

Again the *severe cold* is excluded, but the theme of darkness is strengthened by the insertion of the image of *night, black like a sooty river* (note the phonetic play of “*nagu nõgine jõgi*”). This deviation from the original (though Kross nevertheless strives for preciseness), it seems, is necessitated by the translator's poetic discovery.

Samoilov's fairly untraditional use of color adjectives has a plot motivation. The black ink of the censor strikes out the “truth” in letters, thus it is the truth that is *black*, rather than the lie, which would have been the more typical literary usage (compare to A. S. Khomyakov in “Russia”: “The courts are besmirched with black lies”, or A. N. Plescheev's “It was time: his sons...”: “With evil and darkness, with black untruth She calls now to battle...”). Kross uses the adjective, *valev*, which is phonetically closest to the Estonian word for lie, *vale*. The adjective means “white, light, sparkling or brilliantly white” (like snow). In order to emphasize the aural similarity, the translator makes “the truth” not only “black”, but “dark as night” (literal translation: “night, black, as if covered with soot / a sooty river”). Thus, the image that for Samoilov is the semantic climax is further strengthened in translation by phonetic emphases, in preparation for which other segments of text have also undergone alterations. At the same time, the translator rejects the associations that arise for the Russian reader, because those literary allusions are less effective for an Estonian reader (in this way the reader's experience and cultural context become less significant, since they are not as critical to understanding the translation). Earlier, the weakening of the motif of cold and the “disappearing overcoat” in translation was mentioned. In exchange, new accents emerge which are comprehensible outside a “Russian” cultural context; more specifically, they are comprehensible in *another* context (to readers not immersed in Russian culture, but familiar with Soviet realities).

One final observation: although Kross does not translate the sections including lists (epistles, lines, letters), thereby stripping out all associations of the protagonist's work with Gogol or Dostoevsky, he does at the end incorporate a picturesque image that implies, first and foremost, the theme of letters as fate. In Samoilov's original, the censor dies, and the conclusion of his path is presented with emphatically naïve simplicity:

Жил-был маленький цензор в Германии	Once there lived in Germany a little censor
Невысокого чина и звания.	Of low rank and title.
Он погиб, и его закопали,	He died, and they buried him,
А могилу его запахали.	But his grave they plowed.

The translation's censor is also weak and understated:

Elas väikene tsensor kord Saksas,	There lived a little censor once in Germany
Väike tsensor, kes tegi, mis jaksas.	A little censor, who did what he could.
Ja ta hukkus ja hauda ta aeti.	And he died, and they buried him.
Pärast haud künnivagudest kaeti...	Then his grave they plowed.

The grave of the censor here is not simply “plowed”, but literally “covered with plow furrows”, with black, tilled soil in furrows and lines. That is, the protagonist has repeated the fate of those lines from the letters that he covered with black ink. This parallel is not found in Samoilov's original.

Samoilov's ballad did not become part of the composition of “Nearby Countries” right away. It appears to have been added a result of the inscribing of the war plot in the literary tradition. The protagonist's return from war actualized the genre of the poem, which, in the Russian cultural consciousness of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, traced back mainly to the “frightening German ballad” adapted for Russian readers by Zhukovsky. However, by this time these roots of the genre were only weakly perceived. The story of the little censor in the ballad dedicated to him is built on a foundation of themes from classical Russian literature, making the “German” heritage of the main character one of his secondary and optional features. This allows Samoilov's contemporaries to read his verses as an allusion with a satirical subtext directed against not German, but Soviet censorship.

The ballad's translator, Jaan Kross, clearly takes advantage of the potential of such an interpretation. By extracting the ballad from the poetic whole (the poem “Nearby Countries”), he is able to ignore certain literary associations, which are likely irreproducible in translation anyway (even if they were reproducible, they would not “work”, as they would not be perceived by the reader as relevant). Nonetheless, Kross “finishes writing” the ballad itself, developing the potential of themes contained in the original, and thereby compensating for other losses of meaning. “The Ballad of the German Censor” in translation obtains a narrower allusory tint, which, by all appearances, is consistent with the intentions of David Samoilov.

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