LITERARY AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE: TRANSLATION TRENDS IN THE NORDIC AND BALTIC COUNTRIES

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Abstract:

Translation practices in countries where the national language makes up a small percentage of the total languages in the world reveal an interesting literary-cultural relation between the source and target language communities. Increasingly, English has become the world language of translation, often used as both the main source and target language. Within the Nordic and Baltic countries, we find a literary field that provides a fitting environment for translations between the national languages. This paper aims to investigate the translation practices occurring between Estonia and the Nordic and Baltic countries and its correlation to the sharing of cultural solidarity. Translation practices between Estonian and the other Baltic and Nordic languages will be the primary focus of this paper, with a secondary focus on the use of English as a major language of translation. This paper presents the translation trends from 2006-2008 based on the data collected from UNESCO's Index Translationum. Overall, this paper aims to investigate what these translation trends reveal about the current socio-cultural relations between the source and target culture.

Rezumat:

Exercițiile de traducere din statele în care limba națională constituie un procent mic din totalitatea limbilor din lume relevă o relație cultural-literară interesantă între comunitățile lingvistice sursă și țintă. Engleza a devenit tot mai mult o limbă de traducere internațională, adesea utilizată atât ca limbă sursă principală, cât și ca limbă țintă. În cadrul statelor nordice și baltice găsim un areal literar care oferă un mediu propice pentru traduceri între limbile vernaculare. Acest articol își propune să cerceteze exercițiile de traducere care apar între Estonia și țările nordice și baltice și legăturile acestora cu solidaritatea culturală. Acestea vor constitui punctul central al articolului, în timp ce în plan secundar se va afla utilizarea limbii engleze ca limbă principală de traducere. Se prezintă, de asemenea, direcțiile de traducere din anii 2006-2008, bazate pe datele colectate din Index Translationum al UNESCO. Per ansamblu, articolul își propune să cerceteze ceea

ce dezoăluie aceste direcții de traducere cu privire la relațiile socio-culturale actuale între cultura sursă și cultura țintă.

Keywords: Nordic and Baltic countries, literary translation, cultural exchange, literary recognition, socio-cultural relations

Introduction

In the last two decades, Translation Studies has experienced what is called a 'cultural shift'¹. No longer do researchers focus their attention simply on matters of equivalence, but rather acknowledge the very important cultural and socio-political impact of translation. Literary translation serves many purposes, not limited to building awareness for the language and literature of another country. In a similar vein, this paper seeks to address the importance of literary translation in sustaining cultural relations by investigating the translation trends in the Nordic and Baltic countries. Translations occurring between Estonian and the other Baltic and Nordic languages will be the primary focus of this paper, with a secondary focus on the use of English as a major language for translation.

This paper aims to investigate what these trends reveal about the socio-cultural solidarity and interrelatedness between the source and target culture and to bring renewed attention to translation's role in constructing a nation's unique cultural identity. Main questions to answer are: Which languages are most frequently translated into Estonian and which languages is Estonian literature translated into the most? Is English the primary language of translation for Estonian literature, or are translations more common into another Baltic or Nordic language?

The translation data for this paper was collected from UNESCO's *Index Translationum* (IT), which stores all data of translations from 1979 onwards. For the purpose of this research, filters were applied in order to focus on the timeframe of 2006 and 2008 and the genre of Literature. The year span of 2006-2008 was chosen to follow the report by The Budapest Observatory, 'Publishing Trends in Europe: 1990-2005'.² According to this report, the year 1990 was chosen as the date of the modern European set up and 2005 as the last completed year, when the data was collected in late 2009. As of 2014, the last year of complete records for the languages of interest in this paper is 2008. Therefore, the period of 2006-2008 will serve as the timeframe to be explored. Further studies may examine the translation trends from 2009 onwards once the data is made available.

Three literary translation patterns were taken into consideration:

1. Translations from Estonian

¹ Susan Bassnett, *Translation Studies* (London: Methuen, 1980).

² The Budapest Observatory, 'Publishing Translations in Europe: Trends 1990-2005', *Making Literature Travel Series* (2010).

2. Translations into Estonian

3. Translations into English

The Role of Translation

In order to understand the complexities of literary translation between languages, the role of translation as a communicative device, as well as a tool in nation-building must be addressed. One way translation serves in nation-building is through the selection of texts which will serve a particular function in the target culture, usually an ideological one. This occurs frequently when translations are commissioned by governments or cultural institutions. For example, in the establishment of the free Turkish Republic in the early 20th century, translation played a role in ‘creating a modern, enlightened and developed nation’³ by importing works that would influence and promote the dominant state ideology, which aimed at becoming a Western nation. The Translation Bureau in Turkey achieved this by commissioning translations that belonged to Western humanist works and assimilating them into the Turkish language and culture.⁴ In another instance, Venuti describes the building of a national Chinese culture through the translation of evolutionary theory by the Chinese translator, Yan Fu⁵. These translations served to promote a social Darwinism concept of aggression and ‘survival of the fittest’ in the Chinese identity, in order to offset Western colonial projects at the turn of the 20th century. Furthermore, a study conducted by Abramitzky and Sin used translation to measure idea flows across countries after the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe.⁶ Overall, the study revealed that after the fall of Communism, former Communist countries increased their import of Western titles, such as religious and philosophical works, which were previously banned, and decreased translations from former Communist states.

On the whole, the use of literature is often at the core of creating a cultural identity. For instance, during the Czech Revival in the 19th century, Czech intellectuals claimed to have found lost literary manuscripts. This motivated modern Czech writers to build upon their great, yet illusory, literary history and to use the Czech language, which was previously suppressed, as a vehicle for national literary creation.⁷ Furthermore, there are notorious cases where unconventional actions are taken with literature in translation, in order to have an intended influence on the target culture. One such example are pseudo-

³ NuzhetBerrinAksoy, ‘The Relation Between Translation and Ideology as an Instrument for the Establishment of a National Literature’, *Meta: Journal des traducteurs* 55, no 3 (2010): 438-455.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

⁶ Ran Abramitzky and Isabelle Sin, ‘Book translations as information flows: The effects of the collapse of communism on the diffusion of knowledge’, *Stanford University Working Papers* (2011).

⁷ Susan Bassnett, *Reflections on Identity* (Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2011).

translations (fictitious translations), which are texts that are presented as a translation in the target culture, having no source language or source culture. The motives behind why an original text is presented as a translation can vary, but predominantly the reception of new ideas or changes in the literary *status quo* are received more favorably when presented as a translation rather than as an original and therefore expected to adhere to local language and literary customs.⁸

Bassnett argues that the more a nation is suppressed the more it relies on translation to assert a unique identity and that 'the true text of a language is to show that it can take the foreign, the different and the other and transform it into something familiar.'⁹ Furthermore, Bassnett states: "The importance of translation at crucial moments in time is clear: the emergence of literatures in the evolving vernacular languages of early medieval Europe is marked by translation, the road to the Reformation is filled with translations of sacred texts, the Renaissance is a time of intense translation activity and the age of revolutions in Europe and the Americas is similarly an age of translations."¹⁰

Likewise, Ülken¹¹ argues that all great awakening periods in history started with translations. He provides the following examples: the awakening in Ancient Greece occurred through translations from Anatolia, Phoenicia and Egypt. The Turk-Uighur awakening was influenced by Indian, Persian and Nestorian translations, and the Islamic awakening was influenced by Greek and Indian translation. Lastly, Ülken argues that the European Renaissance occurred due to translations from Islamic, Jewish and Greek translations. These examples demonstrate that literary translation and politics are mutually inclusive.

World Literature and Translation

By nature of transferring literature from one country to another, an international literary field has emerged known as World Literature. First mentioned by Goethe¹², *Weltliteratur* or World Literature, which Casanova¹³ and Moretti¹⁴ elaborate, is literature that is circulated outside national borders of origin, translated into multiple languages, and influences the current definition of

⁸Gideon Toury, "Enhancing Cultural Changes by Means of Fictitious Translations," in *Translation and Cultural Change: Studies in History, Norms and Image-Projection*, ed. Eva Hung (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2005), 3-17.

⁹ Susan Bassnett, 2011.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹Hilmi Ziya Ülken, *Uyanış Devirlerinde Tercümenin Rolü* (İstanbul: ÜlkenYayınları, 1935/1997), quoted in Aksoy, 2010.

¹² Johann Peter Eckermann, *Gespräch mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens*, trans. John Oxenford as J. W. von Goethe, *Conversations with Eckermann* (New York: North Point Press, 1994).

¹³Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, translated by M. B. Debevoise (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999-2005).

¹⁴ Franco Moretti, *Graph, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History* (London: Verso, 2005).

contemporary literature upon reception. Originally understood as an exchange between European works, the concept of World Literature has expanded to include literatures arising from far reaching locations and underlines the interplay between politics, society and culture.

A modern understanding of world literature is discussed in Casanova's *World Republic of Letters*,¹⁵ which draws upon Bourdieu's sociological theory of cultural capital.¹⁶ Casanova describes literature as existing in a world free of national boundaries where languages struggle to gain prestige through the exchanging of literary capital via translation. In this world, languages are classified as either dominated or dominating. In other words, languages maintain a position either on the periphery or center of the international literary field. Translation is an attempt to traverse the imaginary line between dominated and dominating and to move towards the center of acclaimed literary prestige. The benefit of doing so is that languages gain literary historicity and authors advance their reputation from a national author to an international one. Furthermore, literature in translation that is well-received internationally will serve to strengthen cultural and national identity for the source language and culture.

However, there is an uneven interchange between literatures due to the dominance of particular languages used in translation over other languages. Casanova explains that "translation must be understood...as an 'unequal exchange' that takes place in a strongly hierarchized universe."¹⁷ This is evident in David Bellos's study, which provides a review of the translations trends between 2000-2009 and reveals that during this period nearly 80% of all translation activity between Swedish, Chinese, Hindi, Arabic, French, German, English, were translations from English.¹⁸ The dominance of English has caused some scholars, like Shields¹⁹ to argue that the concept of world literature is fading, nation-state ideologies are dwindling and the use of English as a lingua franca and language of translation has monopolized the diversity in translations. These changes all run contrary to Goethe's original notion of *Weltliteratur* as a continual exchange and consumption of the other.

¹⁵ Casanova, 1999-2005.

¹⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, ed. by Randal Johnson (London: Polity, 1993).

¹⁷ Pascale Casanova, "Consecration and Accumulation of Literary Capital: Translation as Unequal Exchange," trans. by Siobhan Brownlie, in *Critical Readings in Translation Studies*, ed. Mona Baker (London & New York: Routledge, 2010): 285-303.

¹⁸ David Bellos, *Is That a Fish in Your Ear: Translation and the Meaning of Everything* (London: Particular Books, 2011).

¹⁹ Kathleen Shields, 'Challenges and Possibilities for World Literature, Global Literature, and Translation', *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 15, no 7 (2013).

According to David Crystal, non-native speakers outnumber native speakers at a ratio of 3:1²⁰. This wide-spread usage of English means that novels can be translated and read in English, even if they have not yet been translated into other languages. However, this has implications on overall translation practices. By relying on English as the main source and target language of translation, other translations are not commissioned. Statistics repeatedly reveal that English is one of the most widely used source languages for literary translation. This can either be interpreted as a threat to local and national languages, based on the view that it is a product of cultural and political hegemony and 'linguistic imperialism'²¹ or, can be understood as an efficient means to communicate ideas when local languages are not understood by all parties involved.

Language of Communication vs. Language of Identity

According to House,²² language use is placed into two categories: 'language of communication' or 'language of identity'. A language of communication is defined as one that is used primarily to be understood in international encounters. Considering the current purpose of English as a lingua franca to facilitate international communication and the exchanging of ideas, it therefore falls under the category of language of communication. A language of identity is one which is commonly a local language or a persons' L1, which means 'holding a stake in the collective linguistic-cultural capital that define[s] the L1 group and its members.'²³ Since English as a lingua franca is not connected with a nation-state and lacks cultural capital, it cannot be considered a language for identification.

Nevertheless, the use of English as a dominate language for literary translation merges the distinction between language of identity and language of communication. Clearly, translating foreign works into English to reach a *seemingly* larger audience, and hence communicate with others, is serving a communicative function, but literature is strongly associated with identity and often reflects ethnic, national, gender and linguistic associations. International authors often choose to write in a language of identity, such as their vernacular language, rather than in English or another majority language, despite linguistic competence in the latter. The choice of an author to write in his or her native language, with the intention for the work to be translated, is a difficult choice that, undoubtedly, will influence the reception of the text.

²⁰ David Crystal, *English as a Global Language*, 2nd ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

²¹ Robert Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism Continued* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

²² Juliane House, 'English as a lingua franca: A threat to multilingualism?', *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 7, no 4 (2003): 556-579.

²³ *Ibid*, 560.

Another difficulty that international authors encounter is the notorious bias from publishing companies in the English speaking world against publishing works in translation. The well-quoted statistic from Bowker's 2005 report shows that approximately only 3% of novels published in the English speaking world are from translations. On the surface, the use of English as a literary lingua franca may seem a positive choice, since English is a widely spoken language. However, considering the small percentage of English publications being translations, a smaller portion of readers will be accessing a foreign text in the English form. These unequal translation practices have economic and cultural ramifications on smaller domestic literary industries. To publish literature from lesser known languages requires greater promotion and marketing, which for the many countries is often too financial challenging and therefore limits exposure to the larger market.

Like any business, publishing companies select books that they predict will do well, based on their understanding of the market place they are serving. In the case of books in translations, publishers who wish to avoid risks may choose popular books from a similar culture and marketplace, since presumably the positive reception of a book in that culture may transfer to the new one. For example, the shared cultural and historical similarities between Finland and Estonia can presumably make for a similar literary marketplace. However, this paper will discuss how a country's interest in another nation's literature is not based solely on cultural or historical similarities, but is also influenced by the ideological path the country aims to follow.

Historical Considerations in Translation: The Baltics

The important role translation has in nation building and as a tool for furthering ideological purposes, contrasted with the ever increasing use of English as the main language of translation, we find a situation that struggles to meet the demands of both literary and communicative needs. In order to understand the complexities of this situation and how it has developed, the historical relations between the Baltic and Nordic countries and the translation trends involved will be mentioned in brief.

The first translation of a Latvian book into Estonian was in the 18th century, which marks the beginning of the literary relations between the Baltic countries. From then, translations between Estonia and Latvia have continually outnumbered translations from Lithuanian literature. Notably, the first Lithuanian novel was not translated until much later in 1954.²⁴ During the times

²⁴Aile Möldre, 'The Baltic Book Contacts: Translations of Latvian and Lithuanian Literature in the Estonian Book Production', *Knygotyra* 54, no 1 (2010): 301-319.

of revolution, between 1901 and 1917, publishing of Latvian texts increased. The majority of these texts were translated directly from Latvian rather than through Russian or German, as had been common practice earlier.²⁵ During this period, the rate of translations from Latvian into Estonian was relatively equal to the share of translations arriving from the Scandinavian languages. Nevertheless, German translations had the largest share followed by Russian. However, Russia had the strongest influence over the entire empire, which spurred a literary movement during the early 20th century called Noor Eesti (Young Estonia), which aimed at molding Estonian culture on European principles and decreasing the influence of German and Russian culture. This was accomplished by translating works from French and English into Estonian.

In 1918, all three countries gained their independence and during this time the cultural and political ties between Latvia and Estonia grew. In 1934, the three Baltic countries signed the trilateral Treaty on Concord and Cooperation, referred to as the Baltic Entente, which promoted cultural exchange and economic cooperation. Despite the increase in cooperation, Möldre explains that “the most productive period in translating Latvian and Lithuanian literature was the Soviet period when the Baltic unity reached its peak.”²⁶ The shared political situation between the Baltic countries from 1944 to 1991 reinforced solidarity between the countries and therefore a mutual interest in one another’s literature. Other reasons behind the increase of translations could be attributed to restrictions and censorship of outside Western literature and promotion of internal exchange by the Soviet Union. Consequently, we cannot look at literature as simply words on a page but also as a representation of a cultural and political narrative that is shared through translation.

After 1991 when all three countries regained their independence, the perception of a shared Baltic identity diminished alongside decreasing numbers of translations published from Latvian and Lithuanian. During this time, English became the prominent language of translation, similar to the period of 1918-1940, when the Baltic countries first gained their independence and British culture influenced Europe, increasing the sales of English publications to 43%.²⁷ This was further increased by the lack of Latvian and Lithuanian translators, which is to this day intensified by the lack of opportunities to learn the Latvian and Lithuanian languages.

Modern Translations Trends in the Baltics

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Idem.*

²⁷ Möldre, 2010.

Upon review of the recent translation practices in the Baltic countries, the UNESCO's *Index Translatium* shows that from 2006-2008 the literature translated into Estonia totaled 2546 translations with 41 languages. The greatest numbers of texts were from English, totaling 1564 translations. French novels were translated 203 times. Russian novels were translated 196 times and German 149 times. The following figure shows the top 10 languages of translations into Estonian. See Appendix 1 for a full list of all languages translated into Estonian from 2006-2008.

Figure 1. Top 10 Languages Translated into Estonian, 2006-2008

Source: UNESCO *Index Translatium*

Overall, between 2006 and 2008 there is not a particularly strong trend for translations from the Nordic and other Baltic languages into Estonian, rather English, Russian and French are the dominant source languages. Based on the data, Estonian readers are exposed to more English, French, Russian, and German texts than they are to Finnish or Swedish literature. Furthermore, Latvian was translated 6 times and Lithuanian was only translated twice between 2006 and 2008 (See Appendix 1).

In Estonia, a Russian minority of approximately 350,000 people exists, which means one fourth of the Estonian population is ethnically Russian.²⁸ However, Estonian is the official language and the use of Russian is not pervasive, partially

²⁸ The Budapest Observatory, 'Publishing Translations in Europe: Trends 1990-2005', *Making Literature Travel Series*, (2010).

due to an aversion towards it after strict 'Russification' during Soviet times. Therefore, translation of the neighboring Russian literature into Estonian is necessary, which may partially explain the large number of Russian translations. As already mentioned, English is a dominate language of translation, but historically the French language has occupied this role as well. In Casanova's *World Republic of Letters*, French is the language at the center of the international literary field, boasting the ability to allow periphery languages closer to the center via translations into French. The status of the French language as a literary one is well accepted and hence can explain for the large numbers of translation from French into Estonian.

In addition, the large number of western literature in Estonian translation followed by low numbers of Latvian and Lithuanian literature may be explained by Krebber's research which showed that out of the three nations Estonia related most to a *European Identity*, as well as having the strongest national identity.²⁹ This inclination towards other western European nations and the forming of a unique cultural identity would influence the selection of translations imported into Estonia. Another explanation is based on Casanova's conclusion that nations prefer to translate literature from languages in the center of the literary field rather than on the periphery, therefore excluding Latvian and Lithuanian texts for Nordic and Western European ones.

Moreover, despite certain historical similarities from the 20th century onwards, there are many differences between Estonia, Latvia and Lithuanian, which is limited by the use of a single geopolitical term of 'Baltic State'. Even the term has come under scrutiny by those who believe it is a mere fiction only existing in foreign politicians' minds³⁰. Nevertheless, the existence of the term implies a certain common connection, which can be seen in modern endeavors at cooperation, such as the Baltic Assembly founded in 1990 and the Baltic Council of Ministers founded in 1994 and more recently the EU's Baltic Sea Strategy in 2009, which includes cooperation of multiple nations that share an interest in the Baltic Sea region.

Nevertheless, issues in publishing Baltic literature prevail, as seen by the difficulties in translating the works that have won the Baltic Assembly prize for literature, despite translations in all three languages being a statute of the prize.³¹ Conversely, noted attempts to increase literary cooperation, such as the opportunity for translators and publishers to apply for financial support from the

²⁹ Victoria Krebber, "Identity Questions in the Baltic States: An analysis of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania regarding their Attitudes towards a European Identity" (Bachelor Thesis, University of Twente, 2012).

³⁰ Grazina Miniotaite, 'Convergent Geography and Divergent Identities: A decade of transformation in the Baltic states', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 16, no 2 (2003): 209-222.

³¹ Möldre, 2010: 314

Fund for Fostering Culture have encouraged translations between the Baltic languages. Additionally, the Latvian-Estonian and Estonian-Latvian prize for translation was created in 2009 to promote cultural exchange and professional development for Baltic translators.

Estonian Literature into the Nordic Languages

Aside from Estonian translation into Finnish, the number of translations from Estonian literature into the other Nordic languages has been overall minimal. Historically, translations from Estonian into Swedish were scarce before and during the two world wars³² (Göranson and Illiste 2002). The lack of Estonian translations into Swedish continued between the 1940s and 1980s. Interestingly, the author Valev Uibopuu was the only Estonian writer whose several works were translated into Swedish, but they were translated from the Finnish versions, which were published in Finland.³³

To this day, Finland publishes a large amount of translation from Estonia and these translations increase awareness for Estonian literature in the Nordic countries. As noted in an interview with Ilvi Liive, she states that the majority of contemporary translators of the Estonian language started off studying the “kindred language” Finnish and found their way to Estonian from there.³⁴ But similar to translations into Swedish, the periphery position of the Nordic countries limits the exposure of the Baltic countries’ literary expression. Even more so, the Nordic countries, as well as many other nations, are influenced by the mainstream expectations arising from the dominance of English literature. Overall, there is a cultural imbalance between the numbers of books translated from the Nordic languages into the Baltics, than from the Baltic languages into the Nordic ones. Vallikivi’s statistics from 1994 show that there are 23 times more Danish books translated into Lithuanian than vice versa. The number for Swedish to Lithuanian literature was 14 times more, for Norwegian-Estonian literature it was 9, while for Finnish-Estonian the imbalance was slightly less, with a figure of 1.5.³⁵

At a time when global communication appears at its peak, it is hard to fathom any lack of resources for the literary translator. However, Göranson and Illiste

³² Birgitta Göranson and Ivo Illiste, ‘Estonian Voices in Swedish Literature’, *Estonian Literary Magazine* 14 (2002), <http://elm.estinst.ee/issue/14/estonian-voices-swedish-language/>, accessed at Aug 01.2014.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Eesti Rahvusringhääling, “Exporting Estonian Literature: An Interview With Ilvi Liive”, <http://news.err.ee/v/Culture/773ea32c-e131-4020-9f86-734d622592db>, accessed at Aug 01. 2014.

³⁵ Arvo Vallikivi, ‘Nordic-Baltic literary translation – a cul de sac?’, in *Cultural Exchanges Between the Nordic Countries and the Baltic States-Status and future perspectives*, ed. by Ove Caspersen and Guðrún Garðarsdóttir (Copenhagen: The Nordic Council of Ministers, 1994), 20-21.

argue that there are still no thorough Swedish-Estonian dictionaries.³⁶ The lack of resources extends to the lack of translators for many language pairs. Conferences have been formed in order to gather people to the Baltic countries in hopes to create new translators who might bring the words from the Baltics out into the world, such as the translation conference in Visby in 2009 which focused on inspiring Estonian to German translators.³⁷ Plath explains that the decline in translations from Estonian to German can be linked back to the lack of interest at German universities for the study of the Estonian language and culture. Furthermore, the education system, which decides which works of literature will be read, perpetuates the dominance of certain literatures over others.

Modern Translation Trends Between Estonia and the Nordic Countries

Based on the results from the 2006-2008 *Index Translatium* data collection, Estonian literature was translated into Russian a total of 33 times, into English 30 times and into Finnish 16 times. Estonian works were translated into Swedish 21 times, Latvian 4 times, Lithuanian 5 times and Norwegian once.

Comparing Figure 1 and Figure 2, we see that Estonia is importing more Nordic work (albeit little compared to its import of other European languages) than the Nordic countries are importing Estonian work. The data also reveals that Russia is publishing more Estonian literature than any other countries, including Finland. Based on the results from Figure 1 and 2, it could be argued that in the Russian and English speaking world there is a higher demand for Estonian literature than in Finland or the other Nordic countries. However, despite the low numbers of translations from Estonian into the Nordic Languages, we cannot say that there is not a demand for Baltic literature in the Nordic countries, since presumably if Estonian literature is being translated into English there is some degree of demand on the international literary market.

³⁶ Göranson and Illiste, 2002.

³⁷ Ulrike Plath, 'Searching for Translators', *Estonian Literary Magazine* 29 (2009) <http://elm.estinst.ee/issue/29/searching-translators>, accessed at Aug 8 2014.

Figure 2. Estonian Literature in Translation, 2006-2008

Source: UNESCO *Index Translatium*

Based on the reports from the Cultural Conference of the Nordic Council in Goteborg in May 1998, there is much agreed upon continuing need for cultural and literary exchange between the Nordic and Baltic countries.³⁸ Richard Baerug, previous director of the Nordic Information Office in Riga, suggested that the books nominated for the separate Baltic and Nordic literary prizes be translated into one another's languages. Currently, the Estonian Cultural Endowment provides support for translations from Estonian into other languages. In addition, the Nordic Literature and Library Committee (Nordbok) provides translation grants for translating the Nordic languages into the Baltic languages, and has recently begun funding translation projects from Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian into the Nordic languages. These cooperation endeavors are an attempt at creating a more balanced exchange between cultures.

Translations into English

Recently, there has been a global increase of interest in *Nordic Noir*, the crime novels written in the Nordic countries. Well-known authors such as Henning Mankell and SteigLarrsson have achieved international acclaim for their novels

³⁸ Pauls Putnins, 'A New Time, Of Great Uncertainty', in *Cultural Exchanges Between the Nordic Countries and the Baltic States*, ed. by Ove Caspersen and Guðrún Garðarsdóttir (Copenhagen: The Nordic Council of Ministers, 1994), 24-27.

and have successfully brought attention to Nordic literature in general. This scenario of Nordic literatures achieving international acclaim would have seemed highly unlikely a few decades ago. Currently, half the books translated from the Nordic countries are in the genre of *Nordic Noir*³⁹. Therefore, what is perceived as contemporary in the international literary field is shifting and the hierarchy of literary languages may be changing. One can only assume that the growing interest for Nordic crime novels may create a subsequent interest in the neighboring Baltic literature as well. However, a country's support for promoting the literature is essential. In Norway, the state buys 1,000 copies of every print run, which helps publishing companies take risks with publishing foreign literature.⁴⁰ Funding opportunities and scholarships for translators and publishers is part of an essential cultural policy to promote a nations' literature abroad.

Considering the role of English as a lingua franca and as a major language of translation, in order to provide a clearer picture of the translation trends, especially the imbalance of import and export, it is essential to record the translations from Nordic and Baltic literature into English. According to the *Index Translationum*, from 2006 to 2008, 1394 titles were translated and published in English. Of the Nordic and Baltic languages, Swedish was the language most often translated, followed by Danish and Norwegian. Figure 3 shows the numbers of Nordic and Baltic literature in English translation.

Figure 3. Nordic and Baltic Literature in English Translation, 2006-2008

Source: UNESCO *Index Translationum*

³⁹ Sweden.se, "Modern Swedish Literature", <https://sweden.se/culture/modern-swedish-literature/>, accessed at Aug. 1, 2014.

⁴⁰ Eesti Rahvusringhääling, 2014.

In all the translation directions for 2006-2008, English was not used as a relay language for the Baltic or Nordic texts into one another. The results reveal that English was only used as a relay between a text whose source language was Ancient Greek, Japanese, Bengali, Udmurt, and Czech.

Conclusions

What this paper aims to reveal is that there is an obvious imbalance of translations between the Baltic and Nordic countries. Furthermore, Estonian literature is not frequently translated into the Nordic languages and Nordic literature is not the main source for translations into Estonian. Rather, Estonia imports large quantities of English and Russian Literature. When the Estonian novels are translated they are most frequently translated into Russian and English rather than any other language, including Finnish. However, Nordic languages are more frequently translated into English than are the Baltic languages. Overall, Estonian literature is still very much on the periphery of the international literary field. However, the general increase of interest in Nordic literature may help promote a similar interest in Baltic literature and draw the Baltic languages closer to the center of the international literary field.

Although this paper examines and presents the overall numbers of translations between 2006 and 2008, the details of why the literature was translated is not thoroughly reviewed. Further research should examine which texts were translated in that time frame, why they were chosen and by whom, and what effect they had on the target culture. This would define the cultural relations between the countries on a more detailed level and also reveal which literature is of interest to that nation's readers. In addition, it would be useful to further investigate the current state of affairs between Russia, the Baltic States and the Nordic countries and how this corresponds with the flow of ideas as revealed by the translation trends.

If translation practices are a reflection of the social and cultural ties between the countries involved, then perhaps translation can also be a force to influence and strengthen the ties between multiple nations. Without literary translation there is by extension a silencing of voices and a censorship of another culture. Measures to increase cultural and linguistic affinity, such as promoting language instruction in higher education and encouraging translation practices should be promoted. Likewise, increased funding opportunities for translations and for promoting a nation's literature abroad will increase the breadth of literary exchange. Although the dominance of English has taken over many accepts of literary translation, there is still a growing need for translation of many of the great creative works around the world. The bridging of this literary gap is

important to bridging the cultural and political gap between nations, particularly the ones which hope to foster friendly relations. If more literature is circulated between nations, one can hope that the culture that is presented in those literatures is also circulated and better understood, as in the words of Sochi Noma, “books are silent ambassadors”.⁴¹

Appendix 1. All Translations into Estonian from 2008-2009

	2006	2007	2008	Total
English	492	560	512	1564
French	83	57	63	203
Russian	100	58	38	196
German	50	61	38	149
Swedish	36	15	24	75
Finnish	19	23	28	70
Italian	14	22	16	52
Spanish	17	10	18	45
Polish	6	8	11	25
Czech	8	11	6	25
Norwegian	7	3	11	21
Danish	2	7	7	16
Udmurt	6	3	3	12
Hungarian	7	3	2	12
Dutch	5	1	2	8
Portuguese	4	3	1	8
Komi-Zyrian	3	2	2	7
Latvian	0	6	0	6
Ancient Greek	4	1	1	6
Japanese	3	0	2	5
Hebrew	0	2	2	4
Greek	1	2	1	4
Mari	1	1	2	4
Icelandic	1	0	2	3
Chinese	0	2	1	3
Erzya	1	0	2	3
Bengali	0	0	3	3
Catalan	0	1	1	2
Latin	1	1	0	2

⁴¹ Toyo Yoshizaki, 'Books are Silent Ambassadors: The Noma award for the translation of Japanese literature', *Publishing Research Quarterly* 19, no 4 (2004): 31-36.

Arabic	0	2	0	2
Lithuanian	1	0	1	1
Serbian	0	0	1	1
Turkish	0	1	0	1
Azerbaijani	0	0	1	1
Esperanto	0	0	1	1
Syriac	1	0	0	1
Saami (Kildin)	1	0	0	1
Welsh	0	1	0	1
Hindi	0	1	0	1
Sanskrit	0	1	0	1
Moksha	0	1	0	1

Source: UNESCO's *Index Translationum*

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