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**WYSTAN HUGH AUDEN'S SELECTED POEMS IN ESTONIAN
TRANSLATION: ASPECTS OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY
MA thesis**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis concentrates on the ways gender and sexuality related references are translated from English into Estonian, focusing specifically on the poems by Wystan Hugh Auden and their translation by Märt Väljataga published in a poetry collection „39 luuletust ja 5 esseed” in 2012. The main hypothesis of this thesis is that the translations into Estonian are more gender-neutral and several allusions to sexuality have been lost due to grammatical and sociocultural differences and the challenges that translating denotations and connotations pose.

The thesis consists of an introduction, a theoretical chapter, an empirical chapter, and a conclusion. The introduction gives an overview of Auden, his works, and how his sexuality has affected them, as well as why Auden was chosen as the subject of this research. The theoretical chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section is concerned with the translation of gender related markers and the second section is concerned with the translation of sexuality. The empirical chapter presents a comparative English-Estonian analysis of the selected poems by Auden and analyses how different aspects related to gender and sexuality are translated. The conclusion summarizes the main findings of the thesis and suggests further research that could be conducted on related topics.

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INTRODUCTION

You shall love your crooked neighbour / with your crooked heart and sa armasta kõverat naabrit, / Oma kõvera südame seest are the same lines of one poem. Those lines were written by Wystan Hugh Auden (1907–1973), with one being the source text and the other the Estonian translation from 2012 by Märt Väljataga of the same lines of the poem titled ‘As I walked out one evening’ (Auden 1937) and „Kord Bristolis tänavat mööda” (Väljataga 2012). Translations are an essential part of people’s everyday life, but it is not without reason that the idiom “lost in translation” exists. From the grammatical differences to sociocultural ones, it can be challenging or nearly impossible for the translation to have the exact same meaning and connotations as its source text, especially concerning aspects that are affected by the grammatical means of the languages as well as closely tied to cultural norms and expectations.

Wystan Hugh Auden (hereinafter referred to as Auden) was born in 1907 in York, England. His parents were both educated in the medical field and had a total of three children, with Wystan Hugh Auden being the youngest of three brothers (Osborne 1980: 2) and the only one of the three who became a writer. Due to his father’s profession, the family moved to Birmingham soon after Auden’s birth; Auden himself has described his childhood as being a happy one with loving parents (*ibid.*), and he grew up in a rather religious household which affected his views on his sexuality for the rest of his life.

For Auden, his education was an important part of his career as a writer for several reasons. One reason was that he met fellow writers whom he would end up becoming friends with and who would become members of the Auden Group, a group of writers who were active during the 1930s and were educated at Oxford or Cambridge. One such writer was Christopher Isherwood, who Auden met already in 1915 at St. Edmund’s School in

Surrey when he was only eight years old (Berg and Freeman 2013: 316). They did not know each other well during their time at St. Edmund's but met again later when Auden was at Oxford and Isherwood at Cambridge (*ibid.*: 317). They were both notable writers who also collaborated and were in a physical relationship (*ibid.*: 317). Auden's education at St. Edmund's School was followed by Gresham's public school in Norfolk. He described it as resembling a fascist state with its honour system that banned all swearing, smoking, and indecency and relied on other students enforcing the restrictions themselves, should their classmates indulge in such activities (Bozorth 2001: 114). Gresham's honour system also compelled students to tell the instructors about any sexual feelings or behaviour and Auden described the English boarding schools in 'Letter to Lord Byron' (Auden 1937) as "a coercive institution that "straightens out" sexually deviant subjects" (Spitzer 2019: 32), referring to homosexuality. In 1925, Auden went to Christ Church, a constituent college of the University of Oxford. In the beginning, he studied natural sciences but switched to politics and philosophy instead, eventually studying English (Davenport-Hines 2006: 16).

Despite his homosexuality, Auden married a fellow writer Erika Mann in 1935. Their marriage, however, was one of convenience to provide Mann with British citizenship since she had to escape Nazi Germany due to her Jewish heritage and political views (Davenport-Hines 2006: 20). Their marriage also benefitted Auden, as it provided a cover for him to hide his homosexuality. They did not live together and were not in a romantic relationship; their marriage remained unconsummated (Davenport-Hines 2006: 20). Nevertheless, they did remain on good terms until her death in 1969 and Auden went as far as to dedicate a book to her (Mendelson 2017: 181).

Religion played an essential role in Auden's life from a young age and was frequently an important topic in his works. He grew up in a religious environment, as both his grandfathers were Anglican clergymen (Mendelson 2017: 10) and so were four of his

uncles (Kirsch 2005: 1). His parents were Anglo-Catholics (*ibid.*), and he considered his early exposure to religion to be the reason why he became interested in literature and verse in particular. This was due to his mother's deep religiousness, which led him to become familiar with hymns, theology, and religious literature (Davenport-Hines 2006: 16). However, during his time as a student at Gresham he grew apart from institutional religion. This lasted for nearly two decades until 1940 when he returned to the religion of his childhood, though religion was still an important topic in his works, even during the time he was not actively practicing it (Kirsch 2005: xiii) and it played an important role in his relationship with his sexuality and his struggles with it.

His religion and the societal norms of the time, considering that sexual relationships between men were illegal in the United Kingdom until the Sexual Offences Act of 1967, led to a rather complicated and negatively fueled relationship with his sexuality. It made him feel isolated and some people who knew him have stated that he felt lonely and standing apart from other people (Osborne 1980: 5–6). Loneliness and isolation have also been referenced in one of his well-known poems titled 'Lullaby' (Auden 1937), specifically through the use of religious imagery with the mention of a *hermit's carnal ecstasy*. As a result, Auden has hidden his homosexuality in his poetry; a number of negative references to homosexuality in his writings can be found, such as the use of derogatory terms and recurring references to homosexuality being a sin, a weakness or something 'crooked' and wrong, a deviation from heterosexuality (Woods 2013: 94–95).

His frequent use of "stigma-inflected terms" to refer to homosexuality, such as 'crook' or even 'bugger' showcase his own views of his sexuality, which he considered to be a sin (Spitzer 2019: 21). In the journals that he wrote during his time in Berlin, he considers homosexuality to be "a regressive stage of sexual development and a larger symptom of cultural degeneration", sometimes using the phrase "backwards love" to

describe homosexual desires (*ibid.*: 22–23). He even went as far as to work with a psychoanalyst to try and treat his homosexuality on his way to Berlin, but despite that engaged with the gay subculture in Berlin, which offered him sexual freedom away from England (*ibid.*: 24–25). Osborne (1980: 141), however, states that in his later years, despite still struggling with the opposition of his religion and his sexuality, he became more accepting of himself and, while still religious, became interested in the concept of forgiveness.

Despite struggling with his sexuality, Auden is considered to be an influential writer in English whose writings showcased his struggles with his sexuality. Bozorth (2001: 4) adds that “Auden's homosexuality has historically had a peculiar status: obvious to some, invisible to others, and with some notable exceptions, consciously or unconsciously treated by critics as a matter of little or no importance”. Despite that, most of Auden's poems do not have clear indications of his sexuality and are quite ambiguous, often only alluding to more sexual or queer undertones through connotations, cultural references, and religious imagery. Spitzer (2019: 21–22, 35) states that Auden contributed to queer literature not through necessarily directly writing about his sexuality to celebrate it since he himself was at odds with it. Instead, he contributed to it through his writings showing how being gay in a society that condemned it while also being deeply religious shaped his life and his own feelings towards his sexuality as his poems mostly depict the suffering of queer people and his personal struggles with it (*ibid.*).

Auden's love poems often do not have any indications of gender. Instead, he uses the second-person singular *you* to avoid gendered pronouns *he* or *she* (Woods 1987: 168). Bozorth (2001: 218) comments that “[f]rom a sexual-political point of view, *I* and *You* in Auden's love poems hide a sexual truth, but they imagine a realm in which the sexual truth is unspoken because between lovers it is self-evident”. However, some poems, mostly those

which were not meant to be published, have clear homosexual references or even explicit physical homosexual acts described in them. One such poem is titled ‘The Platonic Blow’ (Auden 1948), which describes an act of oral sex and was published without Auden’s permission (Woods 1987: 168).

Auden’s poems have received much critical attention and a significant amount of research has been done about his works from many different perspectives in the academic context, such as his relationship with religion and his sexuality (see Bozorth 2001; Gwiazda 2007; Jacobs 2013; Mendelson 2017; Osborne 1980; Woods 2013; Davenport-Hines 2006). However, much less attention has been paid to the translation of his poems which are rich in allusions to his sexuality through metaphors and analogies, often to do with religion. The translation of gender and sexuality from English into Estonian has received little attention in general, therefore the topic of this MA thesis aids in filling a research gap. Auden was chosen as the focus of the research because of his sexuality and the different ways scholars have proposed it affected his writings.

The poems analysed in this thesis come from a poetry collection titled *Collected Poems* (2004), edited by Edward Mendelson. The poems analysed are translated by Märt Väljataga (1965), an Estonian critic, translator, and literary scholar, and the translations come from a poetry collection published in 2012 titled „39 luuletust ja 5 esseed” (‘39 poems and 5 essays’). The collection also has an introduction to Auden as well as translator’s comments about each poem and essay included in the collection.

The theoretical chapter of this thesis gives an overview of the problematics of translation of gender and sexuality, focusing on the translation of aspects of gender and sexuality and the different ways of how translators can overcome translation difficulties are discussed. The empirical chapter of this thesis comprises a comparative English-Estonian analysis of the translations of Auden. First, the methodology is explained to demonstrate

how the source texts and the translations were analysed and which aspects were focused on. This is followed by an analysis of the three different aspects of translating gender and sexuality: translating the grammatical aspects gender, translating denotations and connotations, and translating the sociocultural aspects of gender and sexuality. The main hypothesis of this thesis is that the translations in Estonian are more gender-neutral and several allusions to sexuality have been lost due to grammatical and sociocultural differences and the difficulty of translating denotations and connotations.

1. TRANSLATING GENDER AND SEXUALITY

This chapter is concerned with translating the markers of gender and sexuality. More specifically, since a comparative English-Estonian analysis of the translations forms a part of the thesis, gender and sexuality are discussed in the context of interlingual translation. The first section of this chapter gives an overview of translating issues concerning gender: discussing the translation of grammatical as well as the cultural and social aspects of gender, followed by different ways that have been proposed to overcome these challenges. This is followed by a section discussing the translation of (queer) sexuality, first defining the core terms of the section and then addressing the difficulties that translating poses from both the grammatical as well as the sociocultural perspectives.

1.1. Translating gender

The way in which the grammatical category of gender is present in different languages can vary. Some languages have nouns which are marked for gender in addition to having gendered pronouns while in others, such as English, nouns do not take gender markers, and only the third person singular pronouns have a gender. Some, like Estonian do not have gendered pronouns either. This can lead to issues such as the inability to convey the gender of a person or character in a gender-neutral language but also to the inability of concealing the gender of a character in a language that expresses gender through grammar, such as through pronouns or inflection. This means that in instances where the gender of the characters plays an important role in understanding the poem, such as the gender of a lover being significant in Auden's poems, for example, translators are faced with having to make a choice as to how to approach it. This thesis looks at gender from the perspective of translation studies, meaning how gender and its translation might be affected by the

grammatical category of gender as well as the gender and sexuality of the author. Since Auden's works have references to his sexuality, the translation of grammatical gender can pose a problem if the gender of a character, especially a lover, is ambiguous in translation or in contrast, if the gender of a lover is intentionally ambiguous in the source text but the ambiguity does not come through in translation.

In situations where both the source and the target language have a grammatical gender, it is often the case that they are not featured in the same way in those languages. On the example of French and English, Von Flotow (1997: 22) discusses how an author might make conscious language choices that stand out in French to work around the gendered nouns, adjectives, and participles or restrictive syntax in order to achieve gender ambiguity. However, this might not translate well into English (or other languages) where the implications that the author of the source text made are less noticeable or lost entirely since grammatical gender is present in different places than in the source text. This can create a situation in which the translation naturally uses a gender-neutral language that the author of the source text had to achieve by working around the grammatical gender of the source language, meaning that the implication of the importance of gender neutrality is therefore lost in the target language. This can also happen in English-Estonian translation if the author of the source text has made an obvious effort to not use gendered pronouns in English while the target language is naturally gender-neutral due to the lack of gendered pronouns.

Sometimes it is also important to imply the grammatical gender in a different way than it was used in the source text so that the implications would not be lost. For example, because the suffix *-elle* in French "reinforces the feminine context of the text" in Nicole Brossard's *Sous la langue* (1987), the translator has taken into consideration its meaning and replicated the same idea by using the gendered pronoun *she* almost as often as *-elle* was

used in the source text (Von Flotow 1997: 23). This strategy, however, would not work in languages that do not have gendered personal pronouns, such as Estonian, meaning that the translator might need to find another way to emphasise the gender if they consider it important, for example by using nouns that refer to the character's gender in some way, or accept that the character's gender will not be evident in the target language. Väljataga has used a similar strategy in his translations as well, in which he was faced with conveying the gender expressed through the repetition of the feminine pronoun *she* in the source text and chose to translate it into a noun *nümf* (nymph) in Estonian, therefore replacing the feminine pronoun with a noun that conveys the gender of the character and in doing so avoiding the loss of repetition of a feminine character.

Gender inflection is another issue that arises in translation. When writing about French, for example, McConnell-Ginet (2003: 88) discusses the difficulty of remaining gender-neutral when talking about oneself. She brings an example about the English sentence *I am happy* which can be translated into French in a feminine *je suis heureuse* or a masculine *je suis heureux* form (*ibid.*: 89). This can be challenging for the translator if, for example, the source text has used the gender inflection as a way to differentiate between people of different gender having a conversation. In such situations, other ways need to be used to emphasise a person's gender, such as using gendered pronouns *he* and *she* in English or clearly stating that it was the *man* or the *woman* who spoke, if the target language does not have gendered pronouns, such as Estonian. This can also cause issues when gender is conveyed through the use of suffixes, some of which are gendered in English while having no equivalent in Estonian, such as the word *giantess* used by Auden, which is a feminine form of the word *giant*, conveyed through the use of a feminine suffix *-ess*. No such equivalent exists for that word in Estonian. Therefore, the translator made the choice

to translate it into a compound noun *hiidnaine* ('giant woman') instead to retain the reference to the character's gender.

Job titles can also be gendered in some languages and therefore be challenging to translate. Leonardi (2017: 24) gives an example of job titles in Italian where the way a particular position is translated also reflects the translator's and society's bias, which functions as an example of both the issues of translating grammatical gender as well as how the cultural and societal stereotypes play a role in this process, since certain positions have historically been more common among a specific gender. The example she gives is the translation of *nurse* which does not reflect a gender in English but is translated into *infermiera*, a feminine form of the job title, in the Medical Italian Corpus (*ibid.*). This shows how, despite the masculine form of the word existing in Italian (*infermiere*), the stereotype of nurses mostly being women affects translations. This is also relevant in English-Estonian translation, where the translation of the word *nurse* is *õde*, which carries a gender due to its other meaning being *sister*.

Here, the question clearly arises about the extent of the grammatical gender affecting translation and where the line between grammatical and ideological or cultural translations is. Both Federici (2017: 150) and Lepschy (1991: 118) agree that the challenges with translating gender are not limited to grammar. Rather, Lepschy (*ibid.*: 118–119) argues that sexism in language is more influenced by discourse, or culture and society, and not the linguistic devices. However, he (*ibid.*: 121) argues against the notion of the linguistic use of gender being fully irrelevant, as to him language and language use are completely different notions. While language itself might not be relevant in the context of sexism, the way language is used is affected by both the language itself as well as the people using it (Lepschy 1991: 121). Cameron and Kulick (2003: 30) discuss a similar topic and state that often sexism is not about grammar itself but rather "about the way grammatical possibilities

are actually deployed in discourse”. When discussing Estonian-English translation, Märka (2003: 151) also agrees that even if the language itself is not sexist, the people using it can be and use it as such. Language is thus still an important part of conveying sexism and biases even if it cannot be considered the sole perpetrator. It is the people that use the language that can do so in a sexist manner and the people are affected by the culture and society by which they are surrounded.

Language does not exist in isolation and the way it is used is greatly affected by the culture and the society that surrounds it. This can mean the lack of vocabulary to describe certain concepts, a bias in choosing a term to use in the target language, or simply the personal preference of the translator (or the publisher) as they as a person are also affected by the culture they grew up in or are surrounded by. In languages where some topics have not been a matter of interest for long, there can be an issue of lack of vocabulary to describe certain concepts or situations. As Andone (2002: 140) says, “the vocabulary of every language develops partly according to the priorities of its culture”. This can lead to a situation where the terminology in some areas is much less developed in one language than in others. In occupational terminology, for example, there can be issues with some occupations being perceived as being either for men or women and the terminology reflecting that (Kremer 1997: 120). Auden’s poems have such an example, where the word *nurse* is translated into *amm* in Estonian, which translates specifically into *wetnurse*, or a person who breastfeeds a child that is not their own. Though the source text does not necessarily specify the *nurse* to be a *wetnurse*, the translator has made the choice to translate it into *amm* instead of *õde*. However, *õde* is also inherently gendered in Estonian, as it means both *nurse* and *sister*.

There can also be bias in choosing from the existing pool of terminology. Simon (1996: 118) talks specifically about the controversy around translating the Bible, where a

shift towards using non-sexist and inclusive language is debated. The translations of the Bible lean towards masculine nouns in places where gender is not specified, such as *father* instead of *parent* and *brother* instead of *brother or sisters* (*ibid.*). Another example of a shift towards a non-sexist translation is Emily Wilson's 2017 translation of *The Odyssey* where she opposed the previous translations where a line describing a woman is translated into "shameless whore that I was" by Robert Fagles and "bitch that I was" by Stephen Mitchell (Higgins 2017). Instead, since the word in question refers to someone *dog-faced* or *dog-eyed* and, according to Wilson, is not referring to female sexuality, she translated it into "they made my face the cause that hounded them" (*ibid.*). This exemplifies a shift towards less-sexist language with the gender of the translator also perhaps playing a role, as Wilson was the first woman to translate *The Odyssey* into English, exemplifying how the translator's background greatly affects how the source text is translated.

Simon (1996) gives a slightly different example where such bias towards masculine vocabulary in the source text can sometimes produce a translation where the bias is retained in translation, but the readers prefer not to see it. Namely, the translation of *bene-ha-adam* in the Babel story, which is translated into *sons of men* retains its bias that is already there in the source text (Simon 1996: 118–119). It was argued that it should rather be translated into expressions such as *mankind* or *the human race* to encompass all people (*ibid.*). However, in doing so, it would paint an incorrect picture of the source text, as the sexism present in it would simply be erased by using a more inclusive language. Such choices can also be a matter of the personal preference of the translator.

The aforementioned lack of vocabulary and biases present in languages and cultures can often affect the translation negatively, while connotations can also simply lead to a slightly different understanding of the text. For example, Allen (1993) discusses the word *mother* in English and *madre* in Italian. In her discussion about transcultural translations,

she comes to the conclusion that even a word as ordinary as *madre* in Italian or *mother* in English (she specified English used in New York, for example) can still carry a plethora of different connotations in their respective cultures (*ibid.*: 14–15). Andone (2002: 140) agrees, stating that “[e]ven when two words mean the same thing in two different languages, the semantic load of these words differs”. Therefore, a translation of some word in either direction will always carry a slightly different meaning than the source text, even for commonly used words that seemingly mean exactly the same thing.

1.1.1. Strategies for translating gender

Despite the aforementioned aspects affecting the translation process and often complicating the work of the translators, there are also several ways to overcome or work around them. Different strategies to do so have been proposed by scholars, depending on the languages in question, the specific aspect that are being translated, and the aim of the translation itself. Von Flotow (1991: 74) discusses the three main strategies for translating social gender in the context of feminist translations that can be applied to other translations as well, as they are not exclusive to feminist translations and could be applied to a general discussion of the translation of gender and sexuality. Namely, Von Flotow names supplementing, prefacing and footnoting, and hijacking as the strategies, all of which will be explained and discussed in this section.

The first strategy, supplementing, might be considered the most challenging of the three, as it entails the translator acting as the writer of the source text rather than a translator. Namely, they are expected to “go beyond translation to supplement their work, /.../ by employing wordplay, grammatical dislocations and syntactic subversion” (Von Flotow 1997: 22). In doing that, the translator needs to have the necessary skills to create

convincing equals to the source text that would convey its meaning and connotations while also facing challenges by the possible shortcomings of the target language, such as differences in grammar that complicate the translation or even lexical issues. For example, some languages might not have the necessary words to describe something, and therefore the translator needs to create the vocabulary themselves (*ibid.*). In some cases, artificially created words can become widely used in everyday language.

Baumgarten (2005: 58) discusses a similar process between German and English. More specifically, she says that there might be instances where the translation in the target language has to be “grammatically and semantically quite different, but pragmatically equivalent” (*ibid.*) due to the differences in the languages themselves. This means that to produce a translation acceptable by the target culture, the translator needs to change the text to reflect the ideas of the source text while also adapting it to the target language and the way it works both grammatically and semantically. This might be vastly different from the source language.

In the context of religion, some translators, such as Camille Adams Helminski, have even gone as far as to argue that deities should not be tied to the human ideas of sexuality and gender as they stand above it (Hassen 2017: 29). Von Flotow (1997: 54) gives an example of Joann Haugerud’s translation of the Bible where the translator has opted for the use of plural and neutral pronouns to avoid the masculine bias of the translations, and, whenever possible, repeated the name of a character instead of using the gendered pronoun *he*. Another solution to that has been the creation of a pronoun *Hu* specifically for that translation to refer to God as a way of avoiding the use of either masculine or feminine pronouns (Hassen 2017: 28–29). This solves the gender bias in cases when no gender is used in the source text and gender-neutral pronouns do not exist in the target language.

However, this would likely require an explanation in the preface or footnotes about the use of such pronouns, as it is not part of the grammatical categories used in the language.

The second strategy, prefacing and footnoting, is perhaps the best-known and most widely used strategy when it comes to translation issues wherein the translator can acknowledge and explain the challenges they faced while translating in peritext, in prefaces and footnotes, to be more precise. Genette (1997: 10–11) says that the main function of prefaces is to let the audiences know what the intention or the interpretation of the author (or the publisher) was when writing the text. However, the translators can also use prefaces to acknowledge their own reading of the text and the aims of their translation in a similar manner to how the author talks about their original work. Prefaces and footnotes can be, according to Wolf (2005: 23), still a point of conflict, as publishing houses often expect a perfect translation wherein the translations “pretend to be originals” and the translator is invisible.

Von Flotow (1997: 35) even goes as far as to argue that it is “easier for a translator to proclaim political action in prefaces and other materials than to actually take action in the translation”. This type of strategy can perhaps best acknowledge and explain the translation issues in a way that the reader can understand, as the readers are outright told by the translator which way the text is supposed to be read and what the main issues might have been. The use of translator’s notes can be useful especially if it is something that is difficult or impossible to convey in the translation itself, such as the use of gendered pronouns, for example. However, as Genette (1997: 4) points out, readers are not required to read the prefaces (or, by extension, the footnotes) and many do not, meaning that any information that the translator gives in them is often lost. Våljataga has included a thorough translator’s note at the end of the translated collection, discussing each poem and essay in

the book, including a discussion on the translation of pronouns, which a reader who does not read the translator's note would miss.

In footnotes, the translator can address specific translation issues as they appear in the text, not just at the beginning (or the end). They can be used to refer to a specific instance in a text, such as explaining the reference used in the source text (Von Flotow 1991: 76–77). Benstock (1983: 204) explains the concept of footnotes by saying that footnotes are used for “clarifying hidden assumptions, pointing out referential pre-texts” as well as a way for the author to answer questions that the readers might have about the text. Additionally, in fictional texts, footnotes can be used to explain the fictional world of the text (*ibid.*). In translation, footnotes can have a similar role, such as explaining the cultural phenomena that the readers of the translation are not familiar with, especially if the phenomenon is inherently tied to the culture of the source text. Additionally, an explanation of a term and, if relevant, its multiple connotations can be provided.

The third strategy, hijacking, has more negative connotations than the two previously discussed strategies. As opposed to a strategy to overcome the challenges that translating gender can pose, hijacking seeks to change the translation in a way that would convey the meaning that the translator wants, rather than the original meaning of the source text (Von Flotow 1997: 82–83). Von Flotow (2005: 46) defines hijacking as the “deliberate intervention in a text in order to incorporate contemporary feminist politics, where there are none, or nothing very visible, in the source text”. She does emphasise, however, that this translation strategy can be controversial and requires both a publishing house that would approve such a translation as well as the support of the readers (*ibid.*). This strategy can specifically be used to suit the needs of the translator and the target culture rather than the needs of a specific text that is being translated.

The idea of hijacking, as described by Von Flotow, could also be applied in other situations. For example, a situation where the source text has elements that the translator or the target culture do not approve of or wish to alter. In a situation like this, hijacking could be used, and the translator could use the source text as a base for their translation but alter it to suit their preferred reading or to better fit the target culture by making subtle changes to the text or changing it completely.

1.2. Translating sexuality

Similarly to translating gender from the source language into the target language, translating sexuality may also pose many challenges to the translator, these challenges often overlapping with the ones that translating gender might pose, as gender and sexuality are closely linked. Translating sexuality is deeply rooted in the sociocultural norms, personal prejudices of the translator, and the aims of the translation.

In this thesis, the word *sexuality* is most often used to specifically describe queer sexualities, as the author that this thesis examines was gay. Another important term in this section and the rest of the thesis as well is therefore *queer*. Auden himself used the word *queer* as a synonym for gay or homosexual, though at the time, this word had a negative connotation (Spitzer 2019: 21), a contrast to “normal”. However, in the recent years, the word *queer* has been through the process of reclamation by the queer community and is often used as an umbrella term for sexualities and gender identities other than heterosexuality and cisgender people. Hence, queer sexualities as discussed in this thesis are sexual orientations other than heterosexuality, such as bisexuality, asexuality and, especially in the context of this thesis due to Auden’s own sexuality, homosexuality.

Similarly, queer identities in this thesis refers to identities other than heterosexual and cisgender people.

Cultural and social norms can greatly affect the translation process. Sexuality, as well as gender norms discussed in the previous section, are deeply rooted in cultural and social norms. This is due to sexualities other than heterosexuality often being considered not “normal” or “natural”, especially by people and cultures that fight for traditional family values, namely the idea of a perfect family consisting of a father, a mother, and their two children. Personal views, as well as the cultural views one acquires growing up, can, however, greatly affect the way language is used in relation to queer sexualities and people. In his book concerning cultural translations, Bery (2007: 7) states that “[i]n translation theory, it is now widely accepted that questions of difference and equivalence cannot simply be confined narrowly to language, but that they are inseparable from, and embedded in, wider issues of cultural difference”. This means that the process of translation and whether or not a specific term or phrase has a target language equivalent is not only a matter of language but also the culture of the target language and how certain terms or concepts are viewed there. Santaemilia (2018: 12), in his article regarding the link between sexuality and translations, supports that view in the context of the translation of sexuality, noting that “[t]ranslating /.../ is not a neutral affair but a political act, with important rhetorical and ideological implications.” From this statement, it can be seen that Santaemilia (2018) believes that topics related to sex, and therefore sexuality and by extension queer identities, are by definition not a neutral topic, as there are opposing forces concerning whether or not queerness is acceptable.

The norms people adopt can be heavily influenced by the environment a person is brought up in. Baer (2018: 40) states that language is possibly one of the most influential connection that people have to the culture of their childhood. What makes the cultural

controversies more complicated is that to this day, there are arguments concerning what causes or influences a person's sexuality, and whether it is caused by nature or nurture or even a combination of both. In an article concerned with a genetic study of same-sex attraction, researchers concluded that there "is no single dimension from opposite-sex to same-sex preference" (23Andme Research Team 2019: 6), meaning that same-sex attraction cannot be singled down to a specific genetic difference. However, an exhaustive answer to the nature vs. nurture debate has not been found.

This gap in knowledge can make sexual minorities face more backlash since if the society believes that sexual orientation is a choice, people can say that some people choose to be something other than heterosexual and therefore it "opens the door to the criticisms that [their] life is a sin of [their] choosing" (Wilkerson 2007: 3). Therefore, the translation of sexualities other than heterosexuality can be greatly influenced by the translator's background, personal opinions, as well as the social norms of the culture and country they grew up in. This is also mentioned by Spurlin (2017: 177), who notes that translation is more than just a linguistic process, it is "one that addresses also the vast system of codes, symbols and signifying practices we understand as culture". Therefore, cultural conventions of both the source culture and the target culture also play a role in the process of translation, including what is considered appropriate, which can greatly differ from culture to culture even if the said cultures are considered to be similar in other aspects. The distinction between what is and what is not considered appropriate in a specific culture is at times unclear and same restrictions do not apply to every translation at all times. Júnior (2004: 72) states that in some instances, translation is context-dependent, influenced by various aspects, *i.a.* religion.

Two broad types of censoring can be discussed when talking about translations: external and internal. The first type, external, is not the choice of the translator. In the case

of an external censorship, the translator(s) might be pressured by others to do so. In some instances, publishers might pressure the translator(s) to omit references to queer relationships and people (Epstein 2017a: 121). Therefore, it is not the background and personal views of the translator that affect the translation but rather the societal norms. Depending on the country, or even a region in a country, queer people and relationships can be thought of and treated very differently.

The second type of censorship is internal, called self-censorship. Santaemilia (2018: 16) states that self-censorship is an internal struggle that the translator has with the society, meaning that usually, the aim of the translator is to produce a translation that is acceptable and would therefore have a higher chance of success. By aiming for a successful translation, the translators produce a translation that is acceptable both from a personal as well as social perspective but the production of such a translation might include the erasure of topics that are not acceptable in the eyes of the society and the translator alike (*ibid.*: 16). Bery (2007: 12) describes domesticating strategies as “ideological tools which deny or suppress difference, feeding the prejudices which a reader might bring to a text and reinforcing the hegemony of the translating culture”. Both the external and internal censorships of queer identities that were previously discussed could be considered a type of domesticating translation. By trying to produce a translation that is acceptable and conforms to the society of the target culture, the translator might erase queer relationships and people from their translation, which is, in its core, domestication that keeps up the cycle of queer erasure and non-existence in translated texts.

Translating queer characters and their relationships, however, does not always mean omitting or changing them. It is also possible to do the exact opposite in translations. In a process that Epstein (2017a: 121) calls *acqueering*, the translator might emphasize and, in some instances, increase queerness by adding queer sexualities or gender identities, or by

contrast, removing homophobic language. This could be done, for example, if the translator wishes to increase the queerness of a text for personal reasons or if they are not comfortable with translating homophobic language. Sometimes it can also be accidental. Démont (2018: 157–163) identifies three categories or methods of translating texts that have queer characters: misrecognizing translations, minoritizing translations, and queer translations. The last one on that list, queer translations, specifically aims to recreate the queerness, such as the existence of queer characters or relationships of the source text in the target language (*ibid.*: 163). Specifically, according to Démont (*ibid.*), there are two ways in which to achieve the translation of queer texts without erasing their queerness: by critiquing previous translations, or by developing techniques to achieve the retention of the queerness of a text in translation. Démont (*ibid.*: 166–167) argues that if the aim of the translator is to produce queering translations, then the focus of the translator should be on the potential queer meanings within the text in question, meaning that in the translation process, the translator should aim to retain any and all potentially queer terminology and connotations and if that is not possible, the translator's notes can be used to explain the possible connotations of specific words or phrases.

The ways how (queer) sexuality and translation can be associated have been considered from different viewpoints. Epstein (2017b) draws a comparison that translators and queer people have something in common, namely that the general public would like both to stay hidden, as people do not want to see the translator's personality or personal translation preferences in the translated works, just as they do not want to see queer people or queer texts (Epstein 2017b). She further explains that just as feminist translators have specific translation strategies to emphasize feminist views and struggles, new translation strategies need to be implemented for the translation of queer texts (*ibid.*). Epstein is not the only one to have made a connection between queer sexualities and translation.

Santaemilia (2018: 11) agrees that over the last few years, the interface between sexuality and translation has been examined more closely.

As opposed to Epstein (2017b), however, Santaemilia (2018) approaches the connection between sexuality and translation from a different angle. He argues that there are two ways in which they are connected: the translation of sexuality, and the “sexualisation of translation”, with the former being the more common one wherein “translation projects itself onto sexuality” while the latter is its opposite, with sexuality projecting itself onto translation (*ibid.*: 12). This distinction is important as it highlights the two very different ways the source text can be approached by a translator. More precisely, the approach adopted depends on whether the translator aims from the very beginning to translate the source text in a way that would make the translation of queer identities its priority or not.

Translations of queer texts as well as translating in an acqueering manner can have several benefits. For example, it can greatly affect the target language as well as the target culture and enrich it with new vocabulary and norms even if neither omitting queerness nor acqueering is present. Baer (2018: 42–43) discusses the vocabulary related to sex and sexuality in his article where he talks about the translation of homosexuality in Post-Soviet Russia. He describes the Post-Soviet Russia as a place where the disappearance of censorship made way for the translation of texts that talk about homosexuality, mostly from Western European countries. What was discovered, however, was that Russian lacked the necessary vocabulary to even discuss those topics, and the borrowing of the vocabulary from other languages simply made the topic of homosexuality even more “alien, un-Russian”, bringing forth a stronger influence of politics on translations as the topic of queerness was unfavourable (*ibid.*: 43).

In a way, even the discussion of sexuality automatically often means that the identities that are being discussed are queer, since it is queerness that is considered a social identity more often than heterosexuality (Cameron and Kulick 2003: 7); instead, heterosexuality is considered “normal” and therefore not worth mentioning or being discussed when social identities come up. Baer (2018: 54) ends his article with a sentence that emphasizes the complexity of translation and especially the translation of queer texts: “the translation of foreign gay/queer texts appears not as a simple act of borrowing or appropriation from a dominating language by a dominated one but rather as a complex act of cultural negotiation, resistance, and world-making”. Translating queer characters and relationships is, therefore, a struggle against prejudices that the culture of the target language might have.

When discussing the vocabulary necessary to describe queer relationships and identities, it is important to remember that the topics which are considered controversial might have a number of problematic terms and phrases attached to them which can have negative connotations. Cameron and Kulick (2003: 26–29) stress that not only the individual words and phrases that are used to describe queer relationships and people can be problematic or perpetuate certain views, but also the discourse around those words. They present an example in the English-speaking context with the words *homosexual* and *gay*, where the former is a more clinical term and is sometimes used by people not belonging to the queer community while the latter is not a clinical term but was rather adopted by the community itself to describe the specific members of the community (*ibid.*: 26, 29). They also discuss the controversy around a term that is frequently used throughout this thesis: *queer*. Namely, they bring the word *queer* as an example of a term that sexual and gender minorities have reclaimed even though it has, in the past, been used as an insult (Cameron and Kulick 2003: 27). This can raise an issue when analysing texts written by or including

queer people, as it is important to know when a certain term was considered offensive and used as an insult and if or when that term has been reclaimed by the community or been given a more positive connotation.

Denotations and connotations also play an important role in relation to translating more covert aspects of sexuality. Auden himself conveyed his sexuality through (negative) connotations which complicates the translation process. Discussing the queering mode of translation, Démont (2018: 168) states that the web of connotations surrounding the word are what make it ambiguous and offer a possible queer reading. In translation, that ambiguity is often lost.

There is another speciality that can have a great impact on the culture and how its vocabulary and perhaps even the perception of queer identities can shift, namely lexicographers. In her article titled “Queering Lexicography”, Nossem (2018: 173) analyses the “power and authority in lexicographical decision making, which influence not only the processes of dictionary making but are also produced by the dictionaries themselves, and /.../ seek to contribute to critical heteronormativity research within the field of theoretical lexicography and to practical dictionary making”. To be precise, she discusses the seemingly polar opposition of lexicography and queerness, as the former relies on norms and the latter is essentially in opposition with norms (*ibid.*).

When discussing the process of compiling a dictionary, Nossem (2018: 174) points out two forces that might affect the lexicographer – *heteroregulations* (external regulations) and *autoregulations* (regulations the lexicographer has imposed on themselves). This demonstrates how, as was discussed above on the example of the Russian language, the creation and existence of vocabulary needed to describe certain acts and/or people can affect the culture and people’s perception of queer relationships and identities. The previous lack of that vocabulary can, in a vicious cycle, perpetuate the viewing of queerness as

abnormal and prevent the necessary vocabulary from being created or accepted enough to become official in a dictionary in the first place.

Here, an idea proposed by Bery (2007: 9) should be considered, namely that already at the stage of choosing a text to be translated, the translator either knowingly or subconsciously chooses a text they deem worthy of being translated. This could mean the exclusion of queer texts in the first place, especially if the target culture is not tolerant of queer people or if there is a lack of necessary vocabulary, meaning that the translator would be at a disadvantage. Nossem (2018: 176) additionally says that the process of compiling dictionaries can also be considered flawed when accepting and adding entries that are concerned with intimacy and sexuality. She says that in dictionary writing, people rely on previous dictionary editions which, of course, helps with the continuity and coherence between different editions, but it also means that the creators of a dictionary might repeat the same attitudes as the creators of the previous editions. Therefore, there is a danger of being influenced by the values of the creators of the previous editions and it might “create an infinite repetition of the values and norms underlying the older works, but [they] reproduce and strengthen those values and norms at the risk of excluding new developments” (*ibid.*).

In relation to the lack of necessary terminology to describe certain acts or identities and the negative connotations that frequently accompany them, another issue can be mentioned, namely that sexual and gender minorities can, in some scenarios, be thought of as a separate subculture with its own rules, norms, and, most importantly in the context of this thesis, its own vocabulary. This issue is discussed by Cameron and Kulick (2003: 10) in the section where the topic of a “specialized language /.../ used in sexual subcultures” is discussed. While they also mention the phonetic characteristics of people belonging to sexual subcultures, they focus more on the terminology and patterns of discourse choices

that are used by sexual minorities; in their case, homosexual men in particular and homosexual women to a lesser extent (*ibid.*: 10–11). Harvey (1998: 295) discusses a similar topic in relation to *camp talk*, which he defines as verbal speech patterns associated with homosexual men in French and Anglo-American fiction. He states that the terminology and speech patterns of camp talk are challenging for translators since it often relies on wordplay or references to texts that might not be well-known in the target language (*ibid.*) or even to the translator.

In queer texts, silence can also be significant. Cameron and Kulick (2003: 12–13) show that phrases such as “the love that dare not speak its name” are a common formula used for homosexuality since most cultures and societies to this day, and especially in the past, have viewed same-sex relationships as wrong and taboo and classified them quite often as criminal offences, meaning that the relationships had to be hidden and not talked about. Santaemilia (2005: 118) adds that sexual experiences can be seen “through the whole discourse but also through metaphors, euphemisms, synonyms, syntactic structures, ellisions, or even punctuation”. This means that while perhaps not evident to every reader, the queerness of a text can still be found by those who look for it and are more familiar with the ways queerness might be hidden in it.

It can be argued, however, that in many texts, the presence of queer relationships or characters in the first place can be a matter of perspective. In his article discussing the translations of Grand Duke Konstantin Romanov, Tyulenev (2018: 218) notes that in some instances, it can be argued that the queerness of a text is only recognisable owing to the biographical references that justify the reading of a text as being queer, stating that sometimes, a “poem can be read as homoerotic based purely on the biographical, rather than textual evidence”. This is something that researchers have to take into consideration since it might be a point of controversy whether using biographical sources to analyse the

text can still be considered objective or if the researcher is already biased because of their use of biographical sources. In this thesis, biographical sources are used to support the findings from the poems.

2. TRANSLATING GENDER AND SEXUALITY FROM ENGLISH INTO ESTONIAN IN AUDEN'S SELECTED POEMS

In this chapter, a selection of Auden's poems and their translation into Estonian will be analysed in the context of gender and sexuality to map the issues that the translation of those two categories raises. Additionally, the translation of different aspects of gender and sexuality will be examined to show how the translator has addressed them. First, the methodology of the analysis will be introduced followed by the analysis of Auden's poems and their translations with each section focusing on a different aspect of translating gender and sexuality: translating grammatical gender, translating words and phrases with multiple connotations regarding gender and sexuality, and translating sociocultural aspects of gender and sexuality.

2.1. Methodology

The primary research method of this thesis is a comparative English-Estonian analysis of the translations of Auden, applying a combination of Harvey's (1998, 2000) descriptive framework's surface features for analysing *verbal camp talk*, and Nossem's (2018) work on queer lexicographical analysis to analyse how gender and references to sexuality have been translated from English into Estonian. The analysis is divided into three sections, each focusing on a different aspect of translating gender and sexuality.

The first section focuses on translating the grammatical aspects of gender and sexuality. This includes gendered nouns and grammatical gender markers (Harvey 2000: 243), with Nossem (2018: 183) placing special emphasis on the difficulty of translating grammatical gender in cases where one of the languages does not have a grammatical category of gender. The second section focuses on wordplay and the connotations of words

relevant to gender and sexuality. Harvey's (2000) idea of *ludicrism* is used, where he describes its features being motivating naming practices, wordplay and double-entendre. In the context of translation, Nossem (2018: 182, 184) describes the loss of meaning through the selection to use the denotation of a word, therefore eliminating any other possible connotative readings in translation that were present in the source text. The third section focuses on the sociocultural aspects of translating gender and sexuality, such as intertextual references to culturally relevant materials (Harvey 2000: 243) and social conventions, including, among others, heteronormativity (Nossem 2018: 184). When analysing the translations, Von Flotow's (1991, 1997, 2005) discussion about the three translation strategies (supplementing, prefacing or footnoting, and hijacking) will be considered when addressing changes made in the translation of Auden's poems into Estonian.

Harvey's (2000: 243) descriptive framework for describing verbal camp was used only partly since only a limited number of features described by him were relevant in the context of this thesis. Therefore, many surface features that Harvey analysed in his descriptive framework for verbal camp were excluded and his framework was used in combination with that of Nossem (2018) to provide a combination of features to be analysed in the context of queer studies and how they affect the translation of Auden's poems into Estonian.

2.2. Translating the grammatical aspects of gender into Estonian

When considering the issues that translating can pose in the context of gender, one of the perhaps most commonly occurring ones is the difference in grammatical gender between languages in interlingual translation. Since Auden's poems often express sexuality through the grammatical aspects of gender, such as gendered pronouns, the challenges that the translator faces when translating gender can also affect the translation of sexuality as

the reference to gender is lost in cases where gendered pronouns are translated into genderless ones. Following Nossem (2018) and Harvey (2000), this section will discuss the translation of grammatical gender and how the Estonian translations of Auden's poems exemplify why translation equivalence is difficult to achieve in the context of grammatical gender, especially between languages of which one has the grammatical category of gender while the other does not. In English-Estonian translation, specifically the lack of gendered pronouns in Estonian and their existence in English can make translating more challenging. In cases where gendered pronouns are used in the English source text, the translator has to choose whether to use the Estonian pronoun *tema* ('he'/'she') in the nominative and genitive case), its shortened version *ta*, or the partitive *teda* ('him'/'her') which are not marked for gender, omit the pronoun entirely, or try and convey the gender of a person in some other way, including the use of suffixes, proper nouns, or common nouns.

2.2.1. Translating pronouns

An aspect that can make it easier for the translator to decide on the way how to translate the grammatical gender in Auden's poems is that Auden himself often used gender-neutral pronouns. Hence, no gendered pronouns are present in many of his poems that would reveal anything about the gender of the characters. He often used second-person pronouns that hide the gender of the character. In 'As I walked out one evening' (Auden 1973), the lovers are exclusively referred to by gender-neutral pronouns *I* and *you*, thus lifting the romantic feeling to a more universal level. In the Estonian translation titled „Kord Bristolis tänavat mööda” (Väljataga 2012), the gender of the lovers is not specified either, as the pronouns *ma* (first person singular), *sind* (second person singular), and *te* (second person plural) are used, all gender-neutral. The only gendered pronouns in this poem refer

to Jill, whose gender is evident from her name, and Time, which is referred to by masculine pronouns. In the Estonian translation there are no pronouns referring to time, as the line *And Time will have his fancy* is translated into *jääb Aja tahtmine peale* ('the will of the Time will prevail'). 'First things first' (Auden 1957) and its Estonian translation (hereinafter, two subsequent titles in English and Estonian refer to a poem and its translation) „Esimesed asjad esikohale” (Väljataga 2012), uses first- and second-person pronouns similarly to 'As I walked out one evening', concealing the gender of the lovers while 'Their lonely betters' (Auden 1950) and „Kõrgem üksiklaste tõug” (Väljataga 2012) only uses first-person pronouns (other than the third-person *it* to refer to a robin), which are not marked for gender either. This means that the source texts are just as ambiguous about gender as the translation.

Many of his poems, however, use third-person singular pronouns that convey the gender of the characters and, in many instances, the gender of the lover. For example, in 'Are you there?' (Auden 1941), the lover is referred to by masculine pronouns throughout the poem. The corpus compiled for this thesis includes samples of both instances. However, many of Auden's works that convey his sexuality more clearly have not been translated into Estonian and therefore there are only few poems analysed in this thesis that show how Auden often referred to lovers by masculine pronouns. In the translations of Auden's poems, a frequent way in which the gendered pronouns (both feminine and masculine) in the source text are translated is the aforementioned gender-neutral pronoun *tema*, since no gendered equivalent exists in Estonian. This use of a gender-neutral pronoun can lead to omitting the reference where Auden specifically describes a male lover. Features being discussed when giving examples have been underlined. For example, in 'This lunar beauty' (Auden 1930), a male character is described as beautiful:

But this was never / A ghost's endeavor / Nor finished this, / Was ghost at ease, / And till it pass / Love shall not near / The sweetness here / Nor sorrow take / His endless look

The Estonian translation titled „See kuulik ilu” (Väljataga 2012) uses the pronoun *teda* to try and convey the same sentiment:

See ilu aga / on nendest vaba / ja need ei talu / ta värsket nägu. / Kui püsib ta / siis arm ei saa / veel läheneda / ja kurbus ka / ei puutu teda.

In ‘Funeral blues’ (Auden 1936) or „Matusebluus” (Väljataga 2012), the following well-known lines describe the importance of a lover: *He was my North, my South, my East and West*, while the Estonian translation of the same line is *Ta oli mulle põhi, lõuna, lääts ja ida*. The translation does convey the same sentiment in describing how important the lover was to the speaker, but it lacks the gender of the lover, which is not made apparent in any other parts of the poem either, despite being very clearly visible in the source text. Two other lines of the same poem once again reference the gender of the speaker’s lover: *Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead / Scribbling on the sky the message ‘He is Dead’*, where the Estonian translation is *Las tiirlev lennuk sünge pliiatsina / veab “Ta on surnud” üle taevasina*. This means that the importance of Auden frequently describing a lover as a man cannot be seen in the translations, hence the allusions to his sexuality being lost.

In the poem titled 'No, Plato, no' (Auden 1973) and „Ei, Platon, ei” (Väljataga 2012), the lack of gendered pronouns in Estonian has caused the loss of the intended gendered opposition of body and spirit. In the source text, the human body (Flesh) is described as being feminine while the Spirit is masculine:

it well could be that my Flesh / is playing for Him to die, / so setting Her free to become / irresponsible Matter.

Him refers to the human spirit and *Her* to the human body. In translation, however, the same lines are

võib-olla tõesti mu ihu / igatseb “isanda” surma, / et viimaks vabanedes saada / kohusteta mateeriaks.

There, the feminine pronoun is omitted entirely and *Him* is translated into *isanda* (‘master’), a reference to another line of the same poem where the human spirit is described as *Me, their Master and Mind, oma isandat*. Therefore, a masculine noun has been used to convey the gender instead of the pronoun. The first stanza of the poem clearly states that people have two genders in *Man is male or female* and *inimsool on kaks sugu* (‘the mankind has two genders’). Auden then goes on to state, however, that he himself is different and he embodies both feminine and masculine aspects. This opposition, struggle, and difference from other people can be considered a reference to his sexuality, the allusion therefore not being manifested in the translated poem. This means that Auden’s struggle cannot be seen by those who only read the translation. However, the translator has brought the readers’ attention to this in translator’s notes, where he states that the soul which serves the master (the body) is female, pointing to the use of feminine pronoun *her* in the source text, hence one of the three strategies discussed by Von Flotow (1991: 74), namely prefacing and footnoting (in this instance the peritext in question occurs at the end of the translated poetry collection), has been used. The translator has acknowledged the constraints of the target language and considered the opposition important enough to be mentioned in the translator’s notes to make readers aware of it.

There are also instances where the gender of a character does not play a role in the context of translating sexuality, but the translation of a character’s gender is nonetheless

different from the source text. In ‘August 1968’ (Auden 1968) and the Estonian translation of the same name, the source text has the following lines:

But one prize is beyond his reach /.../ While drivels gushes from his lips.

The Estonian translation (Väljataga 2012) of the same lines, however, loses gender reference thus making the translation more gender-neutral:

kuid ühte ka ei suuda tema /.../ ja ila tema huulilt.

Similarly, in ‘Watershed’ (Auden 1927) and „Veelahe” (Väljataga 2012), the pronoun *him* marks the character as being a man:

Below him sees dismantled washing-floors /.../ Through long abandoned levels nosed his way / And in his final valley went to ground,

The Estonian translation of the same lines is:

näeb allpool lammutatud uhtmisplatsi /.../ teed kobas mööda mahajäetud käike / kuni sai viimses orus mulla alla.

In the translated version, pronouns are omitted entirely in those lines, erasing the character’s gender and making the translations more gender-neutral.

2.2.2. Conveying gender through suffixes

In some instances, Estonian translations also make use of supplementation with loanwords that convey the gender of a character better in the target language. In ‘The composer’ (Auden 1938) and „Helilooja” (Väljataga 2012), the poet mentioned in the poem is described as being a man:

Rummaging into his living, the poet fetches / The images out that hurt and connect. / From Life to Art by painstaking adaption / Relying on us to cover the rift

The Estonian translation of the same lines is as follows:

poeet eluvoost oma kujundeid traalib / meid haavab-haarab see, mis ta võrku jäi. / Nad kunstnikuks mugandades elupöörast / on vahed meile täita usaldanud.

The lack of gendered pronouns in Estonian is solved by using the loanword *poeet* (instead of a native non-gendered word *luuletaja*), which has a female equivalent *poetess*, with the suffix *-ess* marking the word as feminine. However, the choice could also have been made due to the difference in the number of syllables in each word. Since the text in question is a poem where the number of syllables plays a role in rhythm, the translator might have chosen *poeet* instead of *luuletaja* due to the former consisting of only one syllable while the latter consists of four.

2.2.3. Conveying gender through common nouns

Common nouns can be used in translation if the gender of a character is important but the gendered pronouns which convey their gender in the source text cannot be used in translation. In ‘The shield of Achilles’ (Auden 1952) and „Achilleuse kilp” (Väljataga 2012), Auden uses the pronoun *she* to refer to Thetis, the mother of Achilles. Thetis, however, is not mentioned until the last stanza of the poem and even so, her name is not feminine in a way that a person without knowledge about Greek mythology would recognise it as such. Throughout the poem, she is referred to by feminine pronouns, however. Here, the translator has opted to supplement the pronoun *she* for the word *nümf* (‘nymph’) in several places. For example, *She looked over his shoulder / for athletes at*

their games is translated into *Nümf*lootis ta kätetöölt näha / *atleete võistlushoos* and *She looked over his shoulder / for vines and olive trees* is translated into *Nümf*lootis ta kätetöölt leida / oliivi- ja viinapuid.

In the absence of gendered pronouns, gender can be conveyed in the target language by clearly stating whether the character is a man or a woman, either as a result of it being mentioned in the source text or as a choice of the translator. Conveying gender through nouns is important in ‘Adolescence’ (Auden 1931) and „Nooruk” (Väljataga 2012). The final line of the last stanza is *The giantess shuffles nearer, cries ‘Deceiver’*. As opposed to the *poeet/poetess* discussed in the previous section, there is no feminine version of the word *giant* in Estonian that would make use of a feminine suffix. Therefore, the translator has opted to use the compound noun *hiidnaine* instead, literally meaning ‘giant woman’, to avoid the gender of the giantess being lost. Hence, supplementing (Von Flotow 1997: 22) has been used and the gendered suffix *-ess* has been replaced with a compound noun instead.

Common nouns can also be used to do the opposite and to achieve a gender-neutral translation instead. An example of this is ‘Musée des Beaux Arts’ (Auden 1938) and the Estonian translation of the same name from 2012, where a ploughman is talked about:

the ploughman may / Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry, / But for him it was not an important failure.

The Estonian translation of those lines is:

appihõik / ja plärtsatus võisid ju ulatuda põlluharijani, / kuid tema jaoks see ei tähendanud tähtsat hukkumist.

Here, it is possible that the translator has consciously chosen the gender-neutral term *põlluharija* instead of *põllumees* (compound consisting of ‘field’+‘man’). However, neither actually reflect the exact meaning of *ploughman* (*künni+mees*). This neutrality might have been used to achieve a translation that speaks to a wider audience than the source text. The source text speaks of the suffering of humankind but through the use of gendered pronouns and nouns restricts it to only men. By omitting references to gender, the suffering described in the poem covers all of humankind, not only men.

The existence of common nouns that convey gender in the source text can make the translation process easier for the translator if they wish to use a similar approach in the target language and clearly state the gender of the characters by using common nouns. In ‘The Wanderer’ (Auden 1930), the gender of the characters is conveyed, in addition to pronouns, through common nouns:

Upon what man it fall / In spring, day-wishing flowers appearing /.../ No cloud-soft hand can hold him, restraint by women / But ever that man goes.

The Estonian translation „Rändaja” (Väljataga 2012) also makes use of nouns that clearly convey the gender of the characters with *naiste* referring to ‘women’ and *mees* meaning ‘man’ in the following lines:

Mees, kelle osaks langeb / kevadel, päeva ihkavate õite paistel /.../ ei peata pilvpehme käsi, naiste palved /.../ vaid üha rühib see mees.

Sometimes, even if the gender of a character is made apparent by some of the aforementioned means, the lack of gendered pronouns can make it appear much later in the poem. In ‘Adolescence’ (Auden 1931), or, more precisely its translation „Nooruk” (Väljataga 2012), the masculine pronouns are translated to gender-neutral *ta*. It is not until

the third stanza that the line ‘*Dear boy, be brave as these roots’ he heard them saying* conveys the gender: “*Ole, kallis poiss, nagu need juured, mehine!”* (‘be, dear boy, like these roots, manly’). Though even then, the lines in question are not fully directed at the character and are therefore not a sure way to identify their gender in Estonian.

A similarly vague approach to conveying gender is used in 'The novelist' (Auden 1938) and „Romaanikirjanik” (Väljataga 2012) where a character is referred to by masculine pronouns in several places throughout the poem which is not apparent in the Estonian translation. The character’s gender is partially conveyed in the translation of the line *Must struggle out of his boyish gift and learn*, where the word *boyish* is translated into *poisilik*, conveying the same sentiment. However, here one could argue that *boyish* is not an adjective only used for boys and men; it could also be used to refer to characteristics of others, as this word can be used to refer to someone being innocent or childish as well, or to refer to a girl that in some respect resembles a boy.

2.2.4. Conveying gender through proper nouns

In many instances, the omission of gender using a gender-neutral *tema/ta* in Estonian does not affect the translation, as the gender of a character is either obvious from the context or conveyed in some other way. A frequent way in which the gender of a person mentioned in a poem is obvious from the context is simply the use of proper nouns. For example, the names of famous people can help the readers determine their gender and therefore the translator does not have to find ways to convey it. In the poem 'In memory of Sigmund Freud' (Auden 1939) and „Sigmund Freudi mälestuseks” (Väljataga 2012), the pronouns *him/his* are naturally used throughout the poem, translated into Estonian as *ta*.

Similarly, in 'A Thanksgiving' and „Tänuga” (Väljataga 2012), pronouns used to refer to Goethe are made apparent in the source text:

Goethe, devoted to stones, / who guessed that - he never could prove it -/ Newton led science astray.

Meanwhile, the Estonian translation omits the pronouns entirely, as the lines are:

Goethe, kes kividest eal / ei tüdinud ja aimas, et Newton / teaduse eksi on viind.

Here, pronouns are not required as the word *aimas* is already marked for person and no pronoun is necessarily needed to specify it. If readers are familiar with the people that the translated poem talks about, no reference to their gender is needed to make it clear.

Names can also help determine the characters' gender if they are clearly feminine or masculine, as many proper names are gendered (Harvey 2000: 245). There is a character in 'As I walked out one evening' (Auden 1937) and „Kord Bristolis tänavat mööda” (Väljataga 2012) whose gender is indicated by her first name. In the source text *her* is used to refer to *Jill* from the *Jack and Jill* nursery rhyme (evident from the mention of Jack two lines prior as well as a mention in the translator's notes). Her gender as referred to by feminine pronouns gets lost in translation, considering that a gender-neutral reflexive pronoun is used to refer to Jill, the line in which Jill appears being translated as *ja Jill viskab selili end* ('And Jill flops down on her back'). This, however, is resolved by the previously mentioned aspect of translation where the gender of a character is evident from their name. This can cause issues, though, if poems are translated into languages where the names are not well-known or could even be used for genders other than the one they are used for in the source text, making it a grammatical as well as a sociocultural issue of translation.

2.3. Translating denotations and connotations into Estonian

Denotations and connotations are a way for authors to include multiple layers to their writing while possibly complicating the work of translators. *Denotation*, or the “term employed to denote or describe a thing” (*The Oxford English Dictionary* 2021) is the primary meaning of a word, something that one would find among the first definitions in a dictionary. *Connotation*, however, is the extra layer of meaning that words can have, the “inclusion of something in the meaning of a word besides what it primarily denotes; implication” (*The Oxford English Dictionary* 2021). The choice to translate the denotation or a connotation can be a personal choice of the translator or be affected by the language and culture constraints they have to work around. In interlingual translation, connotations and them being considered formal or vulgar can determine the frequency of its usage (Nossem 2018: 178) and therefore the likelihood of that particular connotative meaning being used in translation. What is more, connotative meanings can be used in word-play to create allusions to things that only people with background knowledge of a particular topic would understand (Harvey 2000: 248–250). Hence, translators would need to be aware of an abundance of connotative meanings in order to understand the allusions in the first place, but they would still be faced with the task of deciding how to translate them, as connotations rarely work in a similar manner in the source and the target language.

In the 14th stanza of ‘As I walked out one evening’ (Auden 1937) and its Estonian translation „Kord Bristolis tänavat mööda” (Väljataga 2012) the following lines can be found:

You shall love your crooked neighbour / with your crooked heart.

The Oxford English Dictionary (2021) defines the noun *crook* as “one whose conduct is crooked; a dishonest person, swindler, sharper, /.../ a professional criminal or an associate

of criminals”. The adjective *crooked* also has many negative connotations, with one definition being “the reverse of ‘straight’ in figurative senses (esp. with reference to moral character and conduct) dishonest, wrong, perverse; perverted, out of order, awry” (*The Oxford English Dictionary* 2021). Auden has a very complicated relationship with this word.

According to several scholars (Bozorth 2001: 42, 145, 223; Jacobs 2013: 174; Mendelson 2017: 209; Woods 2013: 94–95), Auden used *crooked* frequently to refer to homosexuality in his other works as well. Auden was known, especially in his early years, to have negative associations with his sexuality, often using derogatory terms to refer to it, making it less of a surprise that he used the word *crooked* with its negative connotations as a reference to a wrong or a perverse aspect he considered his sexuality to be. Especially to a contemporary reader, the word *crooked* acts as an antonym to straight, a word which is now frequently used to refer to heterosexual people (*The Oxford English Dictionary* 2021). In Estonian, no such contrast exists and no comparison between *crooked* and *straight* can thus be made. In the Estonian translation of the poem, the two lines are translated as *Sa armasta oma kõverat naabrit / oma kõvera südamet seest*. (‘Love your crooked neighbour / from your crooked heart’) The word *kõver* has the denotative meaning of crooked in Estonian and has no connotations to homosexuality, as there is no equivalent to *straight*, which would make the comparison and the two acting as antonyms possible. Instead, *kõver* most often refers to a physical appearance of an item, or even a person, gaining the possible reading of the neighbour in question being an old man or a woman whose back, perhaps, has become bent and hunched with age. Alternatively, *kõver* can refer to something bad or wrong, but still no comparison can be made with *straight*. Therefore, the connotative meaning of the word *crooked* being used to refer to homosexuality is not present. Instead, the denotative meaning of *crooked* has been used in the Estonian translation. This can be

attributed to the connotative meaning of *crooked* as it is used in this poem being marked as less common, which affects the frequency at which a specific connotation is used in translation (Nossem 2018: 179). Such difference means that since both readings of the poem in English rely on connotative meanings (*crooked* meaning shady/criminal and *crooked* as a reference to homosexuality), the translation of *crooked* with a focus on its denotative meaning might seem out of context in Estonian.

Connotations are also important in 'Lullaby' (Auden 1937) and „Unelaul” (Väljataga 2012) where a topic that is referenced several times is religion, especially in the context of love. The speaker refers to himself as *faithless*, with one reason possibly being either a result of them being a non-believer or considering themselves as faithless due to the acts they commit, which in this context means either an extramarital or same-sex physical relationship. Having grown up religious and living at a time when homosexuality was still very much condemned in the society, Auden had a complicated relationship with religion and his sexuality as “Auden professed the traditional belief that homosexuality was sinful” (Bozorth 2001: 14), which also influenced Auden's treatment of his own sexuality in his work. The poem is mostly unrhymed apart from the third and seventh line of each stanza, but patterns of shared consonance or assonance can be detected that result in a ABCBADCEED pattern with the phrase “bad seed” possibly acting as a hidden message, a reference to forbidden or sinful love, establishing Auden's belief of his sexuality being wrong through the rhyme scheme as well.

The poem lacks explicit references to homosexuality, but it has multiple references to the imperfection of people and the speaker in particular. This is especially relevant if one considers Auden's complicated relationship with his sexuality and considering it an imperfection, a deviation from heterosexuality. The speaker is also described as *faithless* and *human*, and lover is described as *guilty* and the speaker hopes they would *find the*

mortal world enough. That last example, in particular, might be a reference to the church considering homosexuality a sin, meaning that the so-called “sinners” in their eyes would not go to heaven and they would have to find their pleasures in the mortal world, as the afterlife would not be welcoming. This is also present in the Estonian translation in *Küllaldaseks, piisavaks / arva surelik maailm* (‘sufficient, enough / consider the mortal world’), which also states that the lover should find the mortal world enough, meaning that the hint to the lack of a peaceful afterlife is also present in the translation. Additionally, the lover in the translation is called *süüdi* (‘guilty’), meaning that the reference to the lover being guilty is still there. The imperfection of humans is apparent in the translation as well, as the word *human* is translated into *inimlikult*. However, as the adverb *inimlikult* is the premodifier of the adjective phrase *inimlikult ebatruu* (‘humanly unfaithful’), the imperfection of humans is amplified through its use as a premodifier of an adjective describing a negative personality trait. What is more, the last three lines of the second stanza are a possible reference to the isolation and loneliness of queer people of the time owing to their persecution by the church as well as the society:

While an abstract insight wakes / Among the glaciers and the rocks / The hermit's carnal ecstasy.

This reference to a secluded life of queer people is also present in the Estonian translation:

Sellal kui abstraktne aim / erakule kõnnumaal / meelelist ekstaasi toob.

While also conveying the religious aspect of loneliness, the Estonian word *erak* is also used more generally to describe people living in seclusion. This can lead to the reference to the loneliness of queer people due to religious persecution less apparent in the Estonian translation.

However, the translation does feature some changes. The speaker considers himself *faithless*, which has two possible meanings: either the speaker is faithless and condemned by the church in the context of religion, or he is faithless in the context of relationships. The English version of the poem, especially with other references to religion, can give the impression of the lover being a non-believer or a sinner, while in the Estonian translation, *faithless* has been translated into *ebatruu*, which means unfaithful in the context of relationships, not religion. Therefore, the religious connotation has not been dominant in translation.

Faithless, however, can also be looked at from another angle. According to Bozorth (2001: 191–192), “Auden’s emphasis on faithlessness follows from his psychological and ethical concerns with narcissism and deceit in homosexual love, /.../ he seems to have been unable to imagine homosexual love except as given to infidelity and some measure of loss”. If one considers the possibility of Auden believing the inevitability of infidelity and uncertainty in queer relationships, the Estonian translation might be thought of as emphasising the queerness of the text in some ways. As the ambiguity of *faithless* is lost and therefore faithlessness in the context of relationships is emphasised, Auden's ideas about infidelity in queer relationships are more visible in the Estonian translation than in the source text.

Another change in translation comes from the second stanza that references the Roman goddess of love Venus in the following lines:

Soul and body have no bounds / To lovers as they lie upon / Her tolerant enchanted slope / In their ordinary swoon / Grave the vision Venus sends / Of supernatural sympathy / Universal love and hope.

The first line in particular emphasises how love can be universal and, possibly, not attached to a particular gender. Venus is also described as sending the lovers love and hope, but the

vision that is sent is described as *grave*, making the love seem dangerous and perhaps even fatal (if one considers the other meaning of the word *grave*, which is closely related to death) if the love that the lovers have is considered a sin by the society. In the Estonian translation, however, the lines are:

*Hingel, kehal puudub piir / Veenus armastajaile / kes lahkel völlumäel / teadvuseta lamavad /
saadab tähtsa unenäo / üldisest sümpaatiast / armastusest, lootusest.*

Here, *grave* is translated into *tähtsa*, meaning important, hence the allusions to the danger and fatality of (homosexual) love are not there. Additionally, the third line of the stanza references Venus's *tolerant enchanted slope* which can be considered a reference to Venus considering all love equal, not judging the lovers, with the usage of the word *tolerant*. However, in the Estonian translation, the enchanted slope is *lahke* instead, meaning 'kind' rather than tolerant, which therefore means that any reference to a love that might not be tolerated is not present there.

Many of Auden's poems also have sexual undertones that are only there because of connotations. One such poem is 'Our hunting fathers' (Auden 1934), translated as „Kütt-eesiisad teadsid vesta” (Väljataga 2012). The stanza in question has several allusions to Auden's sexuality, one of which is sexual in nature:

*Who, nurtured in that fine tradition / Predicted the result, / Guessed Love by nature suited to
/ The intricate ways of guilt, / That human ligaments could so / His southern gestures modify /
And make it his mature ambition / To think no thought but ours, / To hunger, work illegally, /
And be anonymous?*

Scholars have attributed different meanings to the phrase *southern gestures* in the sixth line. Mendelson (2017: 201) explains it through its denotation, stating that “love gives up its “southern” (sunny, open, unthinking, Mediterranean) behaviour for the evolutionarily

“mature” human will”. Here, *southern* refers to the purity and happiness of love before humans and their ideas of maturity change it. Bozorth (2001: 172), meanwhile, focuses on a connotative meaning of the word *southern* and its sexual implications. Namely, he states that *southern gestures* is a “witty trope for genital sexuality” (*ibid.*). Paired with a reference to illegal and anonymous love: *To hunger, work illegally, / And be anonymous?*, the suggestive connotation of *southern gestures* is of importance when it comes to translation. According to Bozorth (*ibid.*), it is a clear reference to “life in the sexual underground” owing to Auden’s homosexuality. The Estonian translation of the same stanza is as follows:

*Kes selles uhkes traditsioonis / võis vilju aimata: / et armastus on sobilik / süüi salateedega; /
et inimseoste niidistik / ta kuumi žeste muundab nii, / et saavad kord ta ambitsiooniks / vaid
kollektiiv-ideed, / nälg, anonüümne kompanii / ja illegaalsed tööd?*

Here, *southern gestures* is translated into *kuumi žeste* (‘hot gestures’) which carries a similar connotation in Estonian. This is because of the word *kuum* often being used to describe the attractiveness of people but also passion. However, owing to Auden’s frequent use of Ancient Greek elements in his poems, *southern gestures* can also be a reference to Greek love, an idea associated with homosexual love since antiquity (Blanshard 2010: 91). This connotation of the word is not apparent in Estonian and therefore a reference to that has been lost. The reference to illegal, underground love is also present in the translation, perhaps even more so than in the source text. While the source text references being alone and anonymous in *And be anonymous?*, the translation more clearly hints at being anonymous, illegally, with someone else in *anonüümne kompanii* (‘anonymous company’), referencing the need for queer people to love in secret due to its illegality. This could be an example of acqueering, since the queerness of a text, whether intentionally or not, has been increased in translation.

Another example of sexual connotations comes from 'In praise of limestone' (Auden 1948) and „Lubjakivi kiituseks” (Väljataga 2012).

*To conceive a god whose temper-tantrums are moral / And not to be pacified by a clever line
/ Or a good lay.*

The phrase *good lay* has multiple ways of interpreting it. One denotation of the word *lay* according to *The Oxford English Dictionary* (2021) is that it is “a short lyric or narrative poem intended to be sung”. This is the meaning that the translator has chosen in the Estonian translation:

*suutmata kujutleda / jumalaid, kelle kapriisid oleks moraalset laadi, / nii et neid ei lepitaks
nutikas sentents või / hea luuletus.*

Here, *good lay* has been translated into *hea luuletus* (‘good poem’). The word *lay*, however, has sexual connotations as well. Bozorth (2001: 247) emphasizes the sexual undertones of those lines and *The Oxford English Dictionary* (2021) also has one of the possible connotations of *lay* as “a woman who is readily available for sexual intercourse; an act of sexual intercourse”. This is an example of a situation where translators are forced to make a choice. Since the word used in the source text has multiple connotations and is a very widely used noun, the chances of finding a perfect equivalent to that in the target language are low. Therefore, the translation of *good lay* into *hea luuletus* is a personal choice of the translator, affected by how they read the text.

2.4. Translating the sociocultural aspects of gender and sexuality into Estonian

The culture that the author of the source text is surrounded by as well as the culture of the target language affect the translation process. Among others, it can mean a lack of

terminology to describe certain words or concepts in the target language, a difficulty of choosing a word from an existing pool of terminology, or a cultural or religious reference that is not apparent in translation.

In translation, the translators often have to choose one word from an existing pool of terminology that they deem the closest equivalence and, in some cases, that choice might be biased. For example, a bias towards masculine nouns or in contrast towards a more gender-neutral translation if a gendered noun is translated into a gender-neutral one. An example of the latter would be the words *ogre*, a hideous humanoid monster described to eat humans in different mythologies and *hiid* ('giant'), a giant but usually benevolent humanoid in 'August 1968' (Auden 1968) and its translation (Väljataga 2012) of the same name.

The Ogre does what ogres can / deeds quite impossible for Man / But one prize is beyond his reach: / the Ogre cannot master Speech. / About a subjugated plain / Among the desperate and slain, / the Ogre stalks with hands on hips, / while drivel gushes from his lips.

The word *ogre* is masculine, as a feminine word *ogress* exists. The Estonian translation of the same poem is the following:

On Hiiul oma teod ja tavad, / mis inimvõimeid ületavad, / kuid ühte ka ei suuda tema: / Hiid pole õppind kõnelema. / Ja üle orjastatud ala, / kesk tapetuid ja leinahala / käed puusas, Hiiu kogu kõrgub / ja ila tema huulilt nõrgub.

Hiid is a more generic word to describe any humanoid that is significantly larger than humans and in Estonian has more positive connotations than *ogre* in English. However, as opposed to the English word *ogre* that has a feminine equivalent, no such equivalent exists to *hiid* in Estonian. Hence, the translation is more gender-neutral than the source text. Though it would be possible to create a compound *hiidnaine* ('giant woman') in Estonian,

the word *hiid* is still neutral and does not convey the gender in a similar manner that *ogre* does in English.

‘The Wanderer’ (Auden 1930) and „Rändaja” (Väljataga 2012) serve as an example of a possible bias erasing an allusion to queerness. Jones (2006: 9) describes ‘The Wanderer’ as a “a coming-out narrative”. He states that “‘Doom is dark’ [¹] is, in part, a poem about crossing the threshold of the closet” (*ibid.*: 91). While referring to a female lover in several places (*wife*, *women*) there are also instances where a lover is referred to in a more neutral way in the source text. Namely, in the second stanza of the poem:

*There head falls forward, fatigued at evening, / And dreams of home, / Waving from window,
spread of welcome, / Kissing of wife under single sheet; / But waking sees / Bird-flocks
nameless to him, through doorway voices / Of new men making another love.*

While referring to dreaming about a wife back home in the fourth line, the last line of the stanza speaks of love in reference to men. The Estonian translation of the same stanza is as follows:

*Pea langeb õhtul rammetult rippu, / näeb kodust und: / vibe aknast, kaetud laud, / suudelda
naist ainsa lina all; / kuid ärgates näeb / talle nimeta linnuparvi, ükselt kuuleb / uusi mehi
armastamas teisi naisi.*

While similarly to the source text, a wife (*naist*) is referenced to in the fourth stanza, women are also referenced to in the last line. The last line, *uusi mehi armastamas teisi naisi* (‘of new men loving/making love to other women’) has the addition of the word *naisi*, which makes it inherently heterosexual despite the possible juxtaposition of dreamland vs. reality and heterosexual vs. homosexual love in the source text. The choice to add the word *naisi*

¹ ‘Doom is dark’ is a title previously used for ‘The Wanderer’ owing to the beginning of the first line of the poem.

in Estonian could have also been made due to the need to retain a rhythm despite losing some of the ambiguity.

The gender of the characters has also been made more apparent in ‘Autumn Song’ (Auden 1936) and „Sügislaul” (Väljataga 2012). The first stanza of the poems speaks of nurses:

*Now the leaves are falling fast, / Nurse's flowers will not last, / Nurses to their graves are gone,
/ But the prams go rolling on.*

While generally childcare is considered a job done by women, it is not an inherently gendered noun, as it refers to “a person who or thing which nurtures or cares for others” (*The Oxford English Dictionary* 2021) and it being considered as being applied mostly to women is a cultural rather than a grammatical norm. The Estonian translation of the same stanza is as follows:

*Kiiresti nüüd langeb lehti, / pikalt amme õis ei kehti; / amm kaob mulda pärast õit, /
lapsevankreil jätkub sõit.*

The word *amm*, however, refers specifically to women who breastfeed children other than their own, meaning that the profession is only done by women. In translation, the characters have therefore been assigned a gender more clearly than in the source text.

In ‘O What is That Sound’ (Auden 1932) and „Mis ähvardav müdin” (Väljataga 2012) there is an erasure of a romantic relationship in translation. The poem consists of nine quatrains in both English and Estonian. The third line of each stanza but the last ends with the speaker addressing their loved one. In English, the first stanza, for example, sounds as follows:

O what is that sound which so thrills the ear / Down in the valley drumming, drumming? / Only the scarlet soldiers, dear, / The soldiers coming.

This is consistent throughout the poem. Similarly, the Estonian translation also addresses a loved one at the end of the third line of each stanza but the last. The translation of the first stanza, however, is as follows:

Mis ähvardav müdin see üle mäe / siiani kostab valju, nii valju? / vaid purpurkuub-sõdurid, sõbrake hää, / ja neid on palju.

While conveying the sentiment of the addressee being someone that the speaker cares about, *sõbrake hää* refers to a ‘good friend’, rather than a possible lover or a spouse that the word *dear* is used for. The source text has no indications to the gender of the addressee and therefore retains the possibility of a romantic same-sex relationship. The translation, however, has opted to use a word referring to a platonic relationship rather than a romantic one. Therefore, the possible reference to a same-sex relationship is not present in translation. To an extent, Andone’s (2002: 140) idea of vocabulary being dependent on the culture that it develops in could apply, as the Estonian culture could be considered more closed in terms of emotions, and therefore translating *dear* into *kallis* (a word closer to meaning ‘dear’) might have seemed out of place in the Estonian translation as even the seemingly equivalent words (*dear* and *kallis*) are still used in a different way in English and Estonian.

Possible references to same-sex relationships are sometimes erased through the omission of words in translation. In ‘Et in Arcadia Ego’ (Auden 1964) and its translation of the same name (Väljataga 2012) a word describing heroic and courageous women has not been translated. The poem speaks of Mother Nature (or *Earth Mother*) and the inability to tame her. The second stanza of the poems is as follows:

Can imagine the screeching / Virago, the Amazon / Earth Mother was?

Here, Earth Mother is described as being an Amazon, a warrior woman known from Greek mythology. However, she is also described as Virago. This also refers to a heroic woman, but more specifically to women who have men-like qualities. The Estonian translation of the same stanza is:

Kes võiks küll arvata, / milline kriiskav amatsoon / oli kord Emake Maa.

With one of the words, Virago, describing Nature's traits missing in translation, the reference to masculine women is not present since Amazon refers specifically to the female warriors in the Greek mythology while Virago refers to a wider spectrum of masculine characteristics that a woman might have. Additionally, Virago has sometimes been used to describe women who have romantic or sexual relationships with other women (Brooten 1996: 135), meaning that a reference to same-sex relationships is not there in the Estonian translation.

Religion is another sociocultural aspect that affects translation. Since Auden himself was religious, his poems have frequent references to religion and sins, owing to his complicated relationship with religion and his sexuality which was considered a sin in the eye of the church and the society. Several references to religion, however, are less apparent in translation. For example, in 'Refugee Blues' (Auden 1939), the sixth stanza references The Lord's Prayer:

Came to a public meeting; the speaker got up and said: / 'If we let them in, they will steal our daily bread'; / He was talking of you and me, my dear, he was talking of you and me.

Though this poem speaks specifically about Jewish refugees, connections have been made between Auden's treatment of Jewish and queer people in his writings and the similarities

between them as, similarly to Jewish people, queer people were geographically mobile and regarded as lesser in the eyes of the society with one example being the persecution of both Jewish people and homosexual men under the Nazi regime (Roberts 2005: 89–90). The third line of the stanza refers to the persecution of lovers specifically:

He was talking of you and me, my dear, he was talking of you and me.

The Estonian translation of this stanza does not have a clear reference to The Lord's Prayer:

*Läksin miitingule, kus kuulsin kõnemeest: / "Kui lasta sisse, leiva siis and näppavad me eest!"
/ ta pidas silmas meid, mu arm, ta pidas silmas meid.*

While *bread* is still referenced to (*leiva*), the reference to The Lord's Prayer is not as clear as in the source text. The source text mentions *our daily bread*, a clear reference to the prayer, while the translation only says *leiva* instead of *meie igapäevast leiba* as it is in the Estonian translation of the The Lord's Prayer. Therefore, the reference to religion is not as apparent in translation and although *my dear* has been translated to *mu arm* ('my dear/love'), the persecution of lovers in the eyes of the church or religion in general is not as clear. The missing references to the religious aspects of Auden's writing could be explained by the differences between religion in Auden's lifetime and the countries that he lived in and the time and place where the poems were translated. The United Kingdom and the United States were, and are to this day, countries where religion plays a more important role in people's everyday life, especially in the United States where Auden had just moved to when he wrote 'Refugee Blues'. Estonia, however, is less religious than both the United Kingdom and the United States. Therefore, the references to religion might be less clear to the Estonian readers and they can even seem out of place if they had been included. Instead,

the translator chose to simply use the word *leiva*, which is perhaps even more significant in Estonian, as bread has historically been significant in Estonian culture and traditions.

CONCLUSION

This thesis is an attempt to map and analyse aspects of the translation of gender and sexuality in Wystan Hugh Auden's selected poems from English into Estonian. Only a limited number of Auden's poems have been translated into Estonian. The poems analysed in this thesis have all been translated by Märt Väljataga and published in a 2012 poetry collection titled „39 luuletust ja 5 esseed”. The aim of this thesis was to analyse how the aspects of gender and sexuality affect the translation and to explore the different strategies that can be implemented for the translation of those aspects. The main hypothesis of this thesis was that the Estonian translations of Auden's poems are more gender-neutral and several allusions to sexuality have been lost due to grammatical and sociocultural differences and the complications that translating denotations and connotations poses.

The introduction of this thesis gave an overview of Auden and why gender and, more specifically, sexuality play an important role in his writings. Having grown up in a religious household, Auden's religion played an important role in how he viewed his homosexuality. He considered his sexuality to be a sin and something to be hidden away. His complicated relationship with his sexuality was one of the reasons his works were chosen to be analysed in this thesis. Due to his own view of his sexuality as well as that of the society he lived in, his sexuality was often hidden in his works, only alluding to his homosexuality and more often than not referring to it through words with negative connotations, such as *crooked*.

The theoretical chapter of this thesis focused on two wider topics: translating gender and translating sexuality. The first section of the theoretical chapter gave an overview of the translation of grammatical as well as the cultural and social aspects of gender. The translation of gendered pronouns in particular was discussed to emphasise the obstacles

that translators have to overcome, especially in cases where the gender of a character or in contrast its ambiguity are important in the source text. As pronouns are an essential part of everyday language, translators usually have to find ways to convey (or hide) gender in other ways if pronouns are not enough. Some of those different ways were discussed in the theoretical chapter, such as the use of gendered suffixes or the creation of compound words that literally have the word *woman* or *naine* in it to convey the gender if no feminine pronouns are present in the target language. The theoretical chapter also introduced three different strategies that have been used to overcome or work around the issues with translating gender (and by extension, sexuality) proposed by Von Flotow: supplementing, prefacing and footnoting, and hijacking.

The second section of the theoretical chapter focused on translating sexuality and how both the source and the target culture affect it, in addition to the personal bias that the translator might have. As gender norms and the way queer sexualities are treated are deeply rooted in cultural and social norms, the translation of those can clash with the traditions and norms of the target culture, leading to a possible erasure of queer sexualities. This can be either due to the internal censorship that the translator might have due to their own biases or the external censorship, meaning that the culture of the target language requires them to hide away the queer aspects of a text. Since queer relationships have been condemned for a long time, they might already be conveyed in the source text through allusions and connotations, complicating the translation process. It is often the ambiguity of connotations that offers a possibility of a queer reading of a text. This, however, is often lost in translation since words rarely, if ever, have the exact same denotation and connotations in the source language and the target language. In cases like this, the translators have to choose which meaning they want to convey in the target language, therefore inflicting their own reading of the text to the readers of the translation.

The empirical part of this thesis was divided into three main sections: translating the grammatical aspects of gender, translating denotations and connotations, and translating the sociocultural aspects of gender and sexuality. The primary research method was a comparative English-Estonian analysis of Auden's poems and their Estonian translations by Väljataga. To analyse the poems, a combination of Harvey's descriptive framework for analysing the surface features of *verbal camp talk* and Nossem's (2018) work on queer lexicographical analysis were used, as they complemented each other in the context of this thesis.

Auden's poems and their translations were rich in the use of pronouns. In many instances, the translation of pronouns was not an issue since Auden himself frequently used second-person pronouns, which are gender-neutral in both English and Estonian; therefore, no loss of meaning occurred. However, there were many instances where the lack of gendered pronouns affected the translation. Since English has gendered third-person singular pronouns *he* and *she*, the gender of the characters is often clear in the source text. That was not the case in translations, however, since Estonian does not have gendered pronouns. Instead, the gender-neutral *tema* was used, leading to a loss of the gender of the character in the poem. This was especially significant in the context of sexuality in poems that dealt with the topic of love. For example, in 'Funeral Blues' (Auden 1936) where a lover's death is described and masculine pronouns are used to describe him. In Estonian, the gender-neutral *tema* is used instead and the gender of the lover is not made apparent by any other means either, leading to the gender of the lover being lost in translation despite being significant in the source text. Sometimes, however, Väljataga has used supplementing to make up for the lack of gendered pronouns, substituting the gendered pronouns with nouns instead. For example, in 'The Shield of Achilles' (Auden 1952), a woman is referred to through the use of the feminine pronoun *she* repeatedly throughout the poem. Väljataga

in his 2012 translation titled „Achilleuse kilp” used the noun *nümf* (‘nymph’) instead, therefore conveying the gender of the character without having a need for gendered pronouns.

Denotations and connotations were particularly relevant in Auden’s poems, as he had a tendency to describe his sexuality with words that had negative connotations since he considered it a sin. An example of this came from Auden’s 1937 poem ‘As I walked out one evening’ where he used the word *crooked* to describe a love towards a character’s *crooked neighbour*. Auden has used *crooked* frequently to refer to his sexuality due to the negative associations with that word. Particularly *crooked* being something bent or wrong, the opposition of *straight*. In translation, that word was translated into *kõver*, which has no similar connotations regarding sexuality in Estonian, leading to a loss of allusion to Auden’s sexuality and his complicated relationship with it.

In some instances, the Estonian translation actually emphasised the queerness of a text. For example, in ‘Lullaby’ (Auden 1937) and „Unelaul” (Väljataga 2012) the Estonian translation of the word *faithless* emphasised faithlessness in the context of relationships (*ebatruu* meaning ‘unfaithful’) instead of the ambiguousness of *faithless* which could also be related to religion. Another such instance was in ‘Our hunting fathers’ (Auden 1934), translated as „Kütt-esiisad teadsid vesta” (Väljataga 2012), where *anonymous* was translated into *anonüümne kompanii* (‘anonymous company’), therefore emphasising being anonymous together with someone else, referencing the need for queer people to love in secret since homosexuality was still illegal at the time.

Sociocultural aspects also played an important role in the translation of Auden’s poems in relation to the aspects of gender and sexuality. For example, the loss of a juxtaposition of dreamland vs. reality and homosexual vs. heterosexual love which was present in the source text but not in the translation in ‘The Wanderer’ (Auden 1930) and

„Rändaja” (Väljataga 2012). Additionally, a romantic relationship was erased altogether from ‘O What is That Sound’ (Auden 1932) and „Mis ähvardav müdin” (Väljataga 2012), owing to the translation of *dear* into *sõbrake hää* (‘good friend’). There were also many instances where references to religion were either missing or less apparent in the Estonian translation. This was especially significant since Auden’s religion played an important role in his life and his relationship with his sexuality. In one instance, a reference to The Lord’s Prayer in the source text was not translated in a manner which would clearly reference it in Estonian.

The analysis of Auden’s poems and their Estonian translations confirmed the main hypothesis of this thesis. It showed that the Estonian translations were more gender-neutral, mostly due to the lack of gendered pronouns and that allusions to Auden’s sexuality were lost due to the difficulty of translating connotations and the sociocultural aspects of gender and sexuality. Little research has been done on similar topics, especially regarding English-Estonian translations and this thesis focused on only one author and the translation of his works. For a better understanding of how gender and sexuality can be translated in English-Estonian translations, more research would need to be done, focusing on a wider variety of works and their translations.

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RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL
ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

Evelin Jõemaa

Wystan Hugh Auden's Selected Poems in Estonian Translation: Aspects of Gender and Sexuality

Wystan Hugh Audeni valitud luuletused eestikeelses tõlkes: sugu ja seksuaalsus

(magistritöö)

2021

Lehekülgede arv: 71

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