

Estonia above All: The Notion and Definition of Estonia in 19th Century Lyrics

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In the literature of small nations created by authors whose fate, like that of the whole of the nation, has always been dependent on militant and self-interested neighbours or the ambitions of great powers, the relations between the writer, his people and country should be of special significance. Even taking a cursory glance at Estonian poetry, one notices the frequent use of the words 'Estonia', 'Estonian people', 'the Estonian language' and 'an Estonian'. In different periods and under different conditions these have been understood, expressed and treated differently. The semantics of the fatherland and its usage is central in the ideology of national movements, and therefore it is of interest to observe its occurrence during the period of the national awakening and the formative years preceding it.

How was the notion and definition of Estonia shaped in Estonian poetry? Being first and foremost associated with the concept of fatherland, separating 'Estonia' from the fatherland is quite a violent enterprise. But still, 'Estonia' carries a heavier semantic accent, while 'fatherland' functions rather as a romantic myth and a symbol. In addition, Ea Jansen makes a third distinction and brings in 'home(land)' by saying 'fatherland is "the home of a nation"' (Jansen 2004: 5).¹ Thus, 'fatherland' has a special emotional content for a nation. 'Estonia' as a concept is more neutral and definite. As a rule the following discussion is based on the poetic use of the word 'Estonia', without breaking, if need be, the association with its twin notion in the coherent (patriotic) unit.

While trying to understand and define 'Estonia', a set of definite substrata have established themselves, serving as the basis for Estonian poetry. These underlying layers reveal the way the poet understands the place he lives in and the attitudes he has towards it in his poetic process. Every period is characterised by its peculiar range of awareness and manner of depiction, by what is valued in the

¹ All translations by the author of the article.

particular 'Estonia'/'fatherland' or what derives from the social standards of the moment. Every substratum has its own ideology and its definite effect on the national self-consciousness.

1. Christian-religious and rational-pragmatic substrata

In 1797 the *New Book of Catechism* (*Uus Katekismusse Ramat*), compiled by Anton Heinrich Lücke, was published in Tallinn. The former minister from Ambla, later a dean and consistory assessor (who died in 1799), was a German, born in Hildesheim and educated at Göttingen University. The academic history of Estonian literature states that the texts of the religious books by Lücke contain moralising and profane verse. The bulky *New Book of Catechism* includes, among these, the poem 'I Mean to stay in my Father-Land' ('Issa-mal ma tahhan jäda'), which is called a moralising and rational poem by several literary scholars (Gustav Suits, Mart Lepik and Aarne Vinkel). Aarne Vinkel recognised the poem as one of the first patriotic poems in the Estonian tradition (Vinkel 1985: 18).

On closer inspection, it turns out that 'I Mean to stay in my Father-Land', in spite of its considerable pragmatic bearing, is tightly embedded in its immediate context, where the author (the originality of Lücke's poetry is not known) makes us view the poem from a broader perspective. Namely, the catechism passages preceding and following the poem are deeply religious and emphasise, quoting the Bible, man's duty to his land that forbids him ever to change it. Lücke poses questions such as 'Should we love our fatherland where we have been born and brought up?' or 'Isn't it then indecent to leave one's fatherland in haste?' or 'What must the rich people do for their fatherland?' Lücke frequently quotes the Old Testament, entwining his ideas with it: Therefore the Word of God commands: 'Dwell in this land and live by your faith.' (Lücke 1797: 111.) All these nuances play their part in understanding the poem, pointing to the fact that along with the rational, moral and pragmatic aspects, the text has its religious elements. Being himself of another nationality and a person of a high social position, the author, in his catechism, teaches universal Christian truths, finding that an Estonian has to be content with his land and life because God has arranged it in this way. So the treatment of one's land in Estonian poetry is double from its very beginning – pragmatic as well as religious.

In later poetry, the pragmatic approach is more wide-spread, while the Christian-religious substratum is seldom encountered; the only exception is the poetry

of Lydia Koidula, where the Creator has a significant role. Koidula depicts Estonia in her poetry as a divine gift, a holy, even a mystic place, on the basis of which we are equal to others. Koidula's early poetry is characterised by references to the Most High and manifold assertions to the right of existence – further guaranteeing that the freedom granted to her people was her safe guarantee. Ado Reinvald, relying on Koidula's idea, asked, as did Johann Voldemar Jannsen: 'Where is my dear fatherland?' (Reinvald 1904: 11) and one of his answers is, 'Great God has given you this land / Where our people live' (Reinvald 1904: 10). The insistent assertion of not only the political but also of the divine right is a repeated motif in post-World War II exile poetry, for example in the verse of Marie Under.

2. Geopolitical substratum

2.1. Songs of praise to the tsar

The tradition of tsar-songs begins early in the 19th century and is directly influenced by the 1804 Peasant Law. The tsar-songs of the first half of the century were typical songs of praise, of European origin, with their roots going back to the ancient tradition. The first author is a minister from Põlva, Gustav Adolph Oldekop ('To the Tsar' – *Keisrille*; 'Over the Tsar' 1815' – *Keisri pääl' 1815*, and probably also 'Song to the Praise of the Tsar' – *Laul Keisri kittuseks*). Although most of his poems remained unpublished during his lifetime, the influence of Oldekop's ideas and of his mentality on the Estonian written word can still be traced (see Vinkel 1985). Oldekop was the first one to write (and translate) Estonian songs of praise to the tsar that fixed Estonia as a part of Russia.

The first heyday of these praise-songs is in the second half of the 19th century, during the period of National Awakening, and the decades following it. Then every major or minor poet was writing about the tsar. On the one hand, these poems expressed a great patriotic love but, on the other, it was just a profitable business to idolise the ruler. The last stanza of Koidula's famous poem 'My fatherland, they had buried' (*Mo isamaa, nad olid matnud*) could serve here as an example: 'One word echoed throughout the world, / And millions rejoiced in bliss: / "I want my people to be free –" / And all the yokes to break!! / Free on its land again / Is now the Estonian nest / And blooming, you, Estonia, shout, / "Glorify to Alexander!"' (Koidula 1969: 107.) Such a double self-expression was predicted and determined by ideology. Social complacency was preached, bearing

in mind the pragmatic benefits, and tsar-songs, together with lyrics of freedom, were practiced in the Estonian poetry quite naturally until the establishment of the Republic of Estonia.

The songs of praise to the tsar have their offspring – the Stalinist praise-songs of the 1940s and early 1950s. In both cases the impetus for the emergence of the genre and its prominence was newly gained liberation and the wish to establish the role of the nation's saviour. Liberation is the substantial category for both the Estonian tsar-song and the Stalinist song of praise. The lyrics of the writers living in the Estonian SSR, however, possess a series of additional, so-called political-ideological, attachments. These develop quickly into an obligatory 'poetic' norm, without which a 'true' poem cannot be born. The verse lines are rich in ideological vocabulary. The most characteristic epithet is 'Soviet/Socialist/Communist', added to every possible or impossible context. Ideological additions are accompanied by a series of principal replacements, the most important of them being 'Estonia', which could have been sung about with enthusiasm still during the war but was replaced now by the 'Soviet Union'; 'fatherland' was renamed 'the big homeland', and feelings for 'Estonia' or 'hearth' were replaced by 'international friendship' and the 'Soviet land'. During the tsarist times the text was not subjected to supreme norms: 'Estonia' and 'fatherland' could live their normal poetic lives and replacements were unnecessary. Poetic liberty can also be seen in the fact that, in the second half of the 19th century, the candidates for our national flag-song (by Jaan Bergmann, Friedrich Wilhelm Ederberg, Martin Lipp and Karl August Hermann), as well as the future anthem, were written and also published in repeated editions. The era of the absolute monarchy did not prescribe an absolutely unanimous glorification of the absolute monarch. In the 19th century patriotic songs were just a fashion, while during the Stalin era it was a strict must (for a more thorough survey on the songs of praise to the tsar, see Kepp 1994).

2.2. War-songs

War-songs, also expressing pro-Russian patriotic feelings, were introduced early in the 19th century, in parallel with the tsar-songs. The impetus for the 1807 *War-Songs of the Estonian Land Force (Eesti-ma Ma-wäe sõa-laulud)* by Reinhold Johann Winkler, one of the first secular collections of poetry, was the anti-Napoleon campaign of the years 1805–1807. The book has five parts, expressing the realities of a soldier's life. It was of importance to relate the tsar to God – they

both had given their blessing to the action, and their will had to be obeyed. A few places, however, telling us about the people and the fatherland, also provoke other thoughts: 'Around us stands in multitudes / A nation dear to us, / And with the bond of blood we have / Been tied to it by God; / Now we must part,' (Winkler 1807: 5). However, God helps and the tsar has to be protected: 'Oh, brothers, men, let's fight / Thinking about our fatherland!' (Winkler 1807: 7) or 'What praise and glory come to those / Who stand for their fatherland' (Winkler 1807: 13). The fatherland can, of course, be identified with tsarist Russia, but the 'nation dear to us', tied together by 'the bond of blood', must be Estonians, the people of one's home place. Moreover, at the end of the book, Winkler emphasises 'the kindred peoples' whose successful war 'prepares for a new happiness'. The motif of 'blood bonds' is underlined in the 20th century lyrics of the post-WWII period of stagnation (Hando Runnel and Viivi Luik), but Winkler was the first to describe the separation of Estonians, 'the kindred people', from the vast state of Russia.

The tradition of war-songs stands out again with the outbreak of the next war tsarist Russia took part in. The Crimean War of 1853–1856 is reflected in the runo verse poem 'The War' (*Sõda*, 1854) by Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald, but also in the 'Song to the Men of Estonia' (*Laul Eestima-meestele*, 1854) by Johann Daniel Petenberg, and the 'War-Song to the Maidens of Estonia' (*Sõalaul Eestima tüttarlastele*, 1854) by Friedrich Nikolai Russow. The latter two, stressing the word 'Estonia', mean to highlight and value their native region and its people within the Russian territory. The tradition lasted up to World War I, during which several war-poems were written, the most telling among these was the 'War-Song' by Hella Wuolijoki (*Sõja laul*, 1915). Ruth Mirov, in her comments on the second edition of the poem, calls it an anthology, referring to the author's remark that her 'War-Song' is a result of putting together and adapting runo songs (Mirov 1986: 58). It is amazing how little the ancient folk song has to say about the war. It concentrates rather on home, parents and siblings (the most wide-spread song-type is 'Brother's War-Story'). The stress is on the home place, on the local. The emotional range recalls that of a dirge, a lament, different in principle from the elevated spirits of artistic poetry and the encouragement of patriotic feelings. The subtypes of war-songs and recruit- and soldier-songs, with their rather short history, are first and foremost farewell songs and in this way sorrowful like folk songs.

3. Ethno-graphical substratum

Until the period of National Awakening, Estonia, as a rule, was treated as a province of tsarist Russia. The war-songs mentioned the northern part of the Estonian territory. Most of the authors either came from or worked in northern Estonia (Winkler, Russow and Petenberg). Estonia was initially defined as encompassing the region of northern Estonia. The genesis of the ethno-geographical substratum began in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, being a part of the notion of 'Estonia'.

'The Song of an Estonian Farmer' (*Eestimaa tallomehe laul*) by Joachim Gottlieb Schwabe, born in Kose and serving as a minister in various places in the Estonian province, remained unpublished during the author's lifetime and was printed only in the monthly *Keel ja Kirjandus* in its first 1959 issue. The poem was probably written in parallel with the editing of *The Estonian Folk Almanac* (*Eesti-Ma-Rahwa Kalender*, 1796–1798 and 1800), when Schwabe published his poems. With its critical social analysis, the poem differs from the traditional depiction of peasant life in the still scanty Estonian fiction. Although life in the Baltic provinces was the same everywhere, Schwabe stressed the local quality of his own surroundings, the living conditions of the peasants in Estonia. So here we meet the conscious delimitation of the home place and its treatment as a value in itself.

Of importance in shaping the national identity is the role played by Oldekop in the early 19th century. His longer poem, 'Loving Fatherland' (*Essa=maa armastamine*), which remained long unpublished, expresses patriotic feelings towards the whole of Estonia. 'An important novelty is his patriotic dialogue between a man of his own country and a stranger. The first loves his place of birth [the place of birth is still a larger unit = fatherland – *Õ. K.*] even though the stranger finds it miserable here "under the cold skies"' (Vinkel 1985: 18), compared to other countries. It is important to include God's role in the description of the place, because 'Our bread comes from God too' (Oldekop 1985: 55). How very romantic are the final verses: 'Oh my dear land of birth, / Where I grew strong in strength, / And played in my childhood [,] / Let my grave be also here.' (Oldekop 1985: 56.)

3.1. Region-songs – regional principle

The years of the National Awakening, the 1860s and 1870s, witnessed the emergence of strong fellow-feelings for Estonia, in both society and poetry. The prin-

principle of us versus them was underlined in various spheres: our land, our people, our language and our singers, but also our freedom and our government. This 'our', encompassing the word 'Estonia', keeps Estonia always capitalised (deviating from the rules of Estonian orthography).

The beginnings of this 'our-consciousness' go back to Estonia's definite separation from all other territories. Jannsen asks, in his *Estonian Song-Book* (*Esti laulik*, cycle 'Patriotic Songs', 1860): 'Where is my dear fatherland? / Is it Estonia*? Is it Latvia? / Is it the narrow shores of the Baltic? / Is it the Narva River? Lake Peipus?' (Jannsen 1865: 9), etc. The word 'Estonia' has been marked with an asterisk, and is commented on in his footnote: 'The word "Estonia", met so often in those songs, means not only the Province of Tallinn but the whole of the Estonian fatherland, where Estonians are living in obedience, having their daily bread they have earned' (Jannsen 1865: 9). Koidula, in her poem 'Coming Home from Afar' (*Kaugelt koju tulles*, 1866), speaks of the definite borders that encircle Estonia: 'Estonia, Estonia – / I did see your border again!' (Koidula 1969: 26), or, 'The border of Estonia, you are my only safe protection' (Koidula 1969: 25). This border was not compared with other regions, as Jannsen had done, but both poets define Estonia in terms of its people: it is the territory settled by Estonians. Although Jannsen added later, 'But the whole of the Russian state and land / Is my dear fatherland!', Estonia as a separate unit was first fixed in Estonian poetry at this point.

It is worth mentioning that a part of 'us' is also Finland, never in contrast or in opposition to Estonia: the Finnish bridge connects Estonia with the fraternity of kindred nations and takes regional feelings into a wider circle of the Nordic countries: Lydia Koidula; 'Better Times' (*Parem aeg*) by Ado Reinvald; 'My Northland' (*Mu põhjamaa*) and 'At the Gulf of Finland' (*Soome lahe ääres*) by Friedrich Kuhlbars; 'My Dear Northern Land' (*Mu kallid Põhjale*) by Martin Lipp; and Juhan Kunder.

During the period of National Awakening it was important to value Estonia as a whole. In the later years of the Awakening, in the 1880s and 1890s, the depiction of Estonian counties developed a tradition of its own. Along with the county of Viljandi, still at the centre of attention (Ado Reinvald), other counties were included, first and foremost that of Pärnu. It was characteristic to equate one administrative unit to the whole of Estonia. The counties of Harju, Järva, Viru and Lääne, and the islands of Saaremaa and Hiiumaa are mentioned less

frequently than Viljandi or Pärnu. A thoroughly Russian mentality is expressed by Adam Peterson, who even coined a new name for Estonia – *Eestia* [and not *Eesti*, which is the standard Estonian form] – (and once also using *Liivvia* for Livonia): ‘Holy, beautiful Eestia, / Live, gentle mother, / With the old zither ringing, / Freely under the shade of Russia.’ (Peterson 1896: 69.)

3.2. The Estonian anthem

Estonia as a whole is the subject of Jannsen’s song of praise ‘My Fatherland’ (*Mo issama, mo ön ja rööm*), which was published prior to the first song festival in 1869, in the collection *The Songs for the 50th Anniversary of the Estonian People* (*Eestirahwa 50-aastase Jubelipiddo-Laulud*), and later became the national anthem of the Republic of Estonia. The tune is by Fredrik Pacius (1848), a Finnish composer of German origin, but the words are mostly original. Unlike *Maamme*, the text of the Finnish anthem by Johan Ludvig Runeberg, Jannsen’s lyrics also possess a religious aspect: our land needs God’s blessing. In the anthem of tsarist Russia, God is with the tsar protecting him. While neighbouring Finland (*Suomi*) and Latvia (*Latvija*) refer to their countries in their future national anthems by name, Jannsen remains more abstract, writing about his fatherland. Bearing in mind Jannsen’s dual conception of fatherland, we could speculate on what the fatherland he was writing about was. Was it little Estonia or big Russia? Considering Jannsen’s understanding of the national situation, and knowing the difficulties he had in organising the song festival, the choice of Russia as the ‘fatherland’ would be tactically expected; leaving a certain ambiguity was a pragmatic decision. The text of the Estonian national anthem is apolitical and conservative and stands in contrast to, say, the combative French *La Marseillaise* or the grand German *Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles*.

3.3. Emigration poetry

Already in the 1840s, Kreutzwald was writing about conversion and emigration spreading among Estonians. His fable ‘The Eagle, the Cat and the Sow’ (*Kotkas, kas ja emis*), published in the 1847 *Beneficial Almanac for the People of the Land* (*Marahwa Kassuline Kalender*), warned his readers against undue credulity. Supposedly in the same decade he wrote two poems on the subject of emigration: ‘To Those Leaving Their Country’ (*Omalt maalt väljarändajatele*) and ‘A Song from

the Land of Gold' (*Üks laul kullamaalt*) (Nirk 1968: 191). These were published only in 1861. In these poems the author was worried about the fate of the Estonian people and their decision to leave their fatherland in search of a better life. Your own land is the best because 'Oh Estonia! / Oh Estonia, there is bread and Water' (Kreutzwald 1865: 38).

Juhan Weitzenberg says, in his 'Tõnis Laks or the Fatherland of an Estonian' (*Tõnis Laks ehk Eestlase issama*, 1862), his longer poem of tragic undertones, that a poor Estonian's fatherland is nowhere but next to God: 'But in Heaven we have our blessed / True Fatherland!' (Weitzenberg 1862: 328.) It is not in Russia, not in Samara, and not in your own land anymore, once you have lost everything. Weitzenberg's protagonist is a real person, who, after having been tormented and cheated, appeals to the highest protection – as Kristjan Jaak Peterson had addressed 'the high fatherland' earlier. In spite of its realistic treatment of the subject, the last stanza of the poem opposes Estonia to the heavenly Land of God, giving up patriotic feelings and earthly life.

The significance of emigration poetry increased in the 1880s and 1890s, when the pervasive element of patriotic feelings was the opposition fatherland/other places. The poems are often limited to the description of miserable fates and/or homesickness. Estonia is the home in a more general sense, not the actual place of birth as in the preliminary stages of the period of National Awakening or the cult county of Viljandi in numerous poems written in the 1860s and 1870s (Kuhlbars and Reinald).

The principal posture of emigration poetry is, as a rule, deprecatory, didactic and explanatory. It is the immense homesickness and memories of the fatherland that are the most intense feelings. The same could be said of the tone of numerous exile authors writing at the end of World War II, refugees who had left Estonia under different conditions (Kalju Lepik, Bernard Kangro et al.). The image of a lost Estonia in both 19th and 20th century Estonian poetry is elegiac and tragic, exalting Estonia as a paradise. Estonia was turned into an ideal object of yearning, like Jerusalem for Jews.

The ethno-geographic substratum presents Estonia as a geographically determined place with definite boundaries. In this understanding, Estonia is opposed to other countries, its neighbours, and alien regions and cultures. Estonian borders encompass its counties, especially those of Southern Estonia, and this shows the importance administrative divisions played in the whole picture. It is

also significant that Estonia is perceived as an undivided whole, without making a distinction between the two Russian provinces. An area and a region have become a territory.

4. Natural substratum

All the poets of the period of National Awakening tightly related the notion of Estonia with its nature. Martin Kõrber focused on Estonian nature in the 1860s. His collection *The Sõrvema Lark or 30 Agreeable Songs (Sõrvema lõoke ehk 30 mõnnusat laulo, 1862)* brings out the relationship between the fatherland and the local nature (the 'Songs of the Fatherland' cycle – *Issama laulud*). Estonia/fatherland is first and foremost the home place: Sõrve- and Saaremaa. As the local was fixed, he moved closer to a wider region, apprehending the synthesis of the local colour and the national character. The nature poems by Kõrber are impassioned and glorifying, often idyllic, and pay homage to the home place as the little fatherland ('Our Dear Saremaa' – *Meie kallis Sarema*; 'Our Jolly Sõrvema' – *Meie lõbbus Sõrvema*). Asking 'Where is my dear fatherland?' the poet finds it is in Sõrve, that is Sõrvemaa, and the fatherland, of course, is above all other places, like Sakalamaa for Reinald or the whole of Estonia for Jannsen.

The natural substratum is widely evident in works by Koidula, Kuhlbars, Reinald and Mihkel Veske. National/geographic delineation is especially typical of the poetry of Mihkel Veske ('Greeting the Northland' – *Põhjamaa teretamine*; 'Homeland' – *Kodumaa*; 'You are Beautiful, My Fatherland' – *Ilus oled, isamaa*), and full of immediate and euphoric nature scenes. With all their mountains, valleys and forests these are typically romantic: 'Go high up the hills, / under the tender air of the winds! / Look down into the bottom of the valleys / over the splendour of the flowers!' (Veske 1996: 14.) Characteristic of Veske is his exact mapping of Estonia, using place names: 'Do you know the land that reaches from the coasts of Lake Peipus / To the coast of the Baltic Sea / And from the forests and fields of Egg Hill / To the Gulf of Finland?' (Veske 1996: 12.)

Along with the mapping of Estonia, one cannot ignore the emphasised progress of its people, with primary stress on their economic prosperity. This is so with Jannsen, Kõrber and other poets of the National Awakening and the years following. Max Weber has observed about the development of capitalism that the spirit of work / spirit of capitalism and their result, progress, are usually characteristic of Protestantism (Weber 1993: 1787), and hard-working Protestants

usually possess certain traits necessary to assert themselves (Weber 1997: 151). This enthusiastic and hard-working quality also characterised the (early) capitalist Estonia. 'From Lake Peipus to the coast of Pärnu, / From Koiva to the Gulf of Finland / The green lands of Estonia are in bloom' (Lipp 1897: 10). The geographical scenes are rich in landscapes accompanied by the image of the *blooming land*. Blooming Estonia is often utilitarian. The landscapes are very idyllic and slightly exalted. The result is an imaginary national landscape with a definite face and peculiar expression (Sepänmaa 2000: 11).

5. (Pseudo) mythological substratum

The mythological substratum was widely evident in the lyrics of the second half of the 19th century. In poetry, the general notion of Estonia developing its national identity is less important than the historical moment and its accompanying pseudo-beliefs. 'History, as distinct from personal memory, is knowledge of the past based on the mediation of publicly available sources.' (Rigney 2001: 121.) The historical consciousness of Estonians themselves was limited – there were no necessary sources. So history was interpreted through mythological images, propagated by numerous ideologists of the national movement. In lyric poetry, pseudo-mythological conceptions were created by Kuhlbars, followed by a series of other authors. Koidula often spoke of a uniform higher force, be it the Christian God or his mythological counterpart, The Old Man/Taara: 'Have you heard of the God of Song? / He is singing with his zither – / The Sun is his light, and the sky his tent, / His house is Estonia. / For the Old Man gave him the house / On the border of the wealthy Estonia,' (Koidula 1969: 162). The concept of state is here definite, although the state is a mythological territory. In several of Koidula's poems, the mythological aspect is accompanied by an historical one ('The Holy Estonian River' – *Sa püha Eesti jõgi*; 'Mõtted Toom-mäel' – *Thoughts on the Dome-Hill* etc.).

According to the (pseudo)mythological substratum, Estonia is a mythological place, the ancient Kungla, or the land granted to the people by Taara. With its mythic basis from ancient times, this is essential in understanding Estonia historically. Poetry, recalling ancient freedom, also attempted to give the Estonian people back their history. Written history directly affected the formation of national identity. Next to, or within, history, the mythological foundation is closely interwoven with nature, especially in giving places their mythic dimension.

6. Ethno-linguistic substratum

The beginnings of Estonian poetry on language date back to Kristjan Jaak Peterson in the early 19th century. We know it, however, after a hundred years delay, because the works by Peterson remained unpublished in his lifetime. His ode 'The Moon' (*Kuu*) is recognised as the first text expressing national feelings and glorifying the Estonian language and the Estonian mind. But at the same time, Oldekop wrote his poem 'Loving Fatherland' (*Essa=maa armastamine*), also calling attention to the Estonian language and pointing out its value. In answer to a stranger's mocking comments about the unintelligible speech of the people, the local man says, 'Oh, the language I learned in my mother's bosom / With delight, / I cherish you, and God, you / Understand my language also.' (Oldekop 1985: 55.) These isolated verses, dedicated to the Estonian language, gave birth, in the 1860s, to a longer period of language poetry, with poems by Freutzwald, Koidula, Reinald and Veske. Jannsen encircled Estonia with the help of the language: 'Wherever the Estonian language is singing' and 'What is it ringing, people, hark! – / From Sõrve-maa to the Mouth of the Narva River?' (Jannsen 1865: 23.) The 'state' of Estonia was first and foremost the state of the Estonian language. The territory is unique to the Estonian people and was perceived as a homogeneous language area without differentiating the dialects so widespread at that time.

Summing up

Local Estonia is home and home place prevailing in the notion of fatherland. Its origins were established by the war-songs and they spread as rich nature scenes were added to patriotic poetry. Along with the northern, Swedish-Finnish (Kristjan Jaak Peterson) and still wide-spread German (Mihkel Veske) landscape, the nature of the home place helps to clarify the fatherland (Martin Körber, Lydia Koidula et al.). Home and nature became Estonian and specific (counties in poetry).

Pragmatic Estonia is the cult of a higher power, deriving from mythology. It is directly related to practical benefits. Aspirations for personal/patriotic welfare are expressed in addresses to the Old Man/Taara, God and the tsar – prayers to (pseudo) mythological, Christian and earthly rulers. Along with their blessing, the creative work done by Estonians themselves is also acknowledged. In this way poetry creates the ideal environment for Estonian life.

Narrative Estonia is defined on the basis of past images, centred round a topographical place or monument (Dome Hill, the Emajõgi River, the oaks of Taara and the 'poetry of ruins'). The narrative is entwined with imaginary dreams about a happy future.

Aesthetic Estonia cherishes the fatherland as a romantic ideal. Estonia, as a whole, is beautiful and sublime, the highest goal of every aspiration. Perfection in the notion of Estonia is characteristic of all writers since Koidula.

Coherent Estonia: in the poetry of the period of national awakening the substrata of the fatherland are interrelated and functionally equivalent. There is no hierarchy. Coherence can be explained by the feeling of identity (sameness and uniqueness) becoming more and more fixed. Historical genesis can be compared to a river originating from a minute trickle (Anton Heinrich Lücke) and joined by other streams (Reinhold Johann Winkler, Gustav Adolph Oldekop and Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald), which, together with their feeders (Mihkel Veske, Ado Reinvald and Friedrich Kuhlbars) establish, in the 1860s, the mainstream of the notion 'fatherland' (Johann Voldemar Jannsen and Lydia Koidula). In the last decades of the 19th century, the river turns into a wide river of the plains, with numerous tributaries (poets of the post-Awakening era).

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