

# The patterns of the Estonian sonnet: periodization, incidence, meter and rhyme

Rebekka Lotman\*

**Abstract:** The first sonnets in Estonian language were published almost 650 years after this verse form was invented by Federico da Lentini in Sicily, in the late of 19th century. Sonnet form became instantly very popular in Estonia and has since remained the most important fixed form in Estonian poetry. Despite its widespread presence over time the last comprehensive research on Estonian sonnet was written in 1938.

This article has a twofold aim. First, it will give an overview of the incidence of Estonian sonnets from its emergence in 1881 until 2015. The data will be studied from the diachronic perspective; in calculating the popularity of the sonnet form in Estonian poetry through the years, the number of the sonnets published each year has been considered in relation to the amount of published poetry books. The second aim is to outline through the statistical analyses Estonian sonnets formal patterns: rhyme schemes and meter. The sonnet's original meter, hendecasyllable, is traditionally translated into Estonian as iambic pentameter. However, over the time various meters from various verse systems (accentual, syllabic, syllabic-accentual, free verse) have been used. The data of various meters used in Estonian sonnets will also be examined on the diachronic axis. I have divided the history of Estonian sonnets into eight parts: the division is not based only on time, but also space: post Second World War Estonian sonnet (as the whole culture) was divided into two, Estonian sonnet abroad, i. e. in the free world, and sonnet in Soviet Estonia.

The material for this study includes all the published sonnets in Estonian language, i.e. almost 4400 texts.

Keywords: Estonian sonnet; Estonian poetry; history of sonnet; fixed verse

## Introduction

The first sonnets in the Estonian language were published at the end of 19th century, in 1881. Since then this form of poetry has been the most popular fixed verse form in Estonian poetry – it is easier to count the great Estonian poets over time who have not written any sonnets than those who have written

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\* Author's address: Rebekka Lotman, Institute of Cultural Research, University of Tartu, Ülikooli 16, 51003, Tartu, Estonia, email: rebekka.lotman@tlu.ee.

at least one poem in this prescribed poetry form. Despite this, the last comprehensive research on Estonian sonnets, written by Bernard Kangro, was published almost 80 years ago, in 1938 (Kangro 1938)<sup>1</sup>.

This article has a twofold aim. First, it will give an overview of the incidence of Estonian sonnets from their emergence in 1881 until 2015. The data will be studied from the diachronic perspective; in calculating the popularity of the sonnet form in Estonian poetry through the years, the number of the sonnets published each year has been considered in relation to the number of published poetry books. The second aim is to outline the formal patterns of Estonian sonnets through statistical analyses: rhyme schemes and meter. The sonnet's original meter, hendecasyllable, is traditionally translated into Estonian as iambic pentameter. However, over time, various meters from various verse systems (accentual, syllabic, syllabic-accentual, free verse) have been used. The data of various meters used in Estonian sonnets will also be examined on the diachronic axis. I have divided the history of Estonian sonnets into eight parts: the division is not based only on time, but also space: the post-Second World War Estonian sonnet (as a whole culture) was divided into two: Estonian sonnet abroad, i.e. in the free world, and the sonnet in Soviet Estonia. The article tries to envisage the changes of the Estonian sonnet's formal patterns over different phases in its history.

## Sources

As Estonian poetry is relatively young and its language quite small, there is a great opportunity to study not only the highlights of this form of poetry but to analyze almost all the Estonian sonnets ever published. Therefore, the aim of this article is to give an overview of the formal patterns of this genre of poetry in Estonian literature as a whole. In order to collect all the sonnets ever written and published in Estonian, I have tried to look through all the Estonian books of poetry published up until and including 2015; altogether around 6700 books. These books are identified using the online catalogue ESTER.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, as in the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, a lot of poems were only published in periodicals; I have looked through most of the newspapers (*Postimees*, *Eesti Postimees*, *Virulane*, *Valgus*, *Virmaline*, *Sakala*,

<sup>1</sup> For the short resume of this monograph in English see Kleesman 1946.

<sup>2</sup> It is important to mention that this number includes all the reprints, e-books, etc., so the actual number of original poetry books in the Estonian language is smaller.

Saarlane, Linda, Olevik, Uus aeg, Tallinna Kaja, etc.), literary magazines and anthologies (*Uudismaa*, “*Moment: Esimene*”, albums and magazines by Siuru and by the Young Estonians etc) from the period. I have also supplemented the database with Bernard Kangro’s bibliography of Estonian sonnets, an unpublished manuscript from 1934.

From all these publications I have discovered 4393 original sonnets in the Estonian language and created a database of them. The database includes information about each sonnet’s publication date, meter, and rhyme scheme. Each sonnet is included into the database only once, by the date of its first print.<sup>3</sup> Also, in the case of Märt Väljataga’s book *Sada tuhat miljardit milleniimisonetti* (One hundred thousand billion millennium sonnets, Väljataga 2000), written in the spirit of Raymond Queneau (Queneau 1961), I have included only 10 of the so-called initial sonnets into the database; the rest of the sonnets, which are formed by the reader by cutting the lines and combining the verses, are not in this database.

I certainly cannot claim that every single Estonian sonnet ever published is included in this database – surely I may have missed something, there may be mistakes in the online catalogue, etc.; nevertheless, these 4393 sonnets definitely form the vast majority of Estonian sonnets.

## Boundaries of the sonnet

The problem that arises with every cataloguing is the problem of boundaries: where do the borders of the sonnet genre lie? In which case are we dealing with sonnet modification and when is the poem not a sonnet anymore? I have tried to define the sonnet in a broad sense relying upon the cognitive approach – the sonnet is a sonnet insofar as a reader perceives it to be a sonnet. Hence it is very likely that some other reader (researcher) would have ended up with a slightly different number of sonnets analyzing the same data. However, the number of those border case sonnets is quite marginal (less than 1%).

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<sup>3</sup> Often the sonnets are written much earlier than published, for example after Estonia regained its independence in 1991 and censorship was abolished, a great deal of the sonnets from the previous periods were published for the first time (sonnets written in exile in Siberia, Uku Masing’s religious sonnets, as well as sonnets with no artistic value, etc.). Yet in this study the date of the sonnet is thoroughly marked after its first print.

A sonnet has three main formal characteristics: 1) number of verses, 2) meter, and 3) rhyme scheme.<sup>4</sup> But all of them are conditional – there are many sonnet forms that have already become traditional subgenres, having more or less than 14 verses (*sonetto caudato*, *sonetto rinterzato*, *sonetto doppio*, etc.). In the context of the Estonian sonnet, the „small sonnets“ by Jakob Liiv (Liiv 1933: 48–52) should be mentioned: these poems contain 9 verses with the strophe scheme 4+3+2, synthesizing both the English and Italian sonnet forms.<sup>5</sup> The second characteristic, meter, is even more uncertain – the original sonnet’s hendecasyllable is translated into different languages differently – alexandrine in French, iambic pentameter in English as in Estonian, etc. Moreover, in all poetry cultures different kind of meters from different verse systems have been used in the sonnet form: there are even many poems written in free verse which are undoubtedly sonnets. And the third condition, rhyme scheme, is the most uncertain. There were many combinations already allowed in the original Italian sonnet but during its long history of more than seven centuries all kind of combinations were used in sonnets (including sonnets in one rhyme, and, on the contrary, blank sonnets, etc.).

Thus, the number of verses is the most important characteristic – but every poem with 14 lines is not necessarily a sonnet; its sonnetness must be reinforced by the strophic scheme (4+4+4+2 or 12+2 or 4+4+3+3 or 8+6, etc.) and/or rhyme scheme and/or meter. If there are less or more than 14 verses, the meter and rhyme scheme are decisive. Furthermore, the title of the poem can help, as in the case of the aforementioned “Small sonnets” by Jakob Liiv. But I have not included poems in my database that only reference sonnetness in their titles – hence I have excluded “Sonetid” by Jürgen Rooste (Sonnets; Rooste 1999), as well as these poems from the compendium *Marie Underi sonetid* (Marie Under’s sonnets; Krull, Pihelgas 2015) which do not have any formal characteristics of the sonnet. But also, vice versa – despite the fact that Kalju Kruusa has footnoted one of his poems with the remark that this is not a sonnet (Kruusa 1999: 35) I have included it in the database; though this poem is written in free verse, its strophe and rhyme scheme (abba / cddc / effe / gg), as well as semantical structure (with the *volta* or turn in the final couplet) is characteristic of the sonnet.

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<sup>4</sup> In the case of the original Italian sonnet, the number of the syllables (154) is also defining characteristic; yet, even in the most traditional Estonian sonnets the number of the syllables in the verse can vary (10–11) – the feminine and masculine clauses are not regulated in the Estonian sonnet.

<sup>5</sup> Cf Lotman 2012: 410.

## Number and importance of Estonian sonnets (1881–2015)

The chart below gives an overview of how the publishing of all Estonian sonnets, *id est* 4393 sonnets, spreads across the diachronic axis:

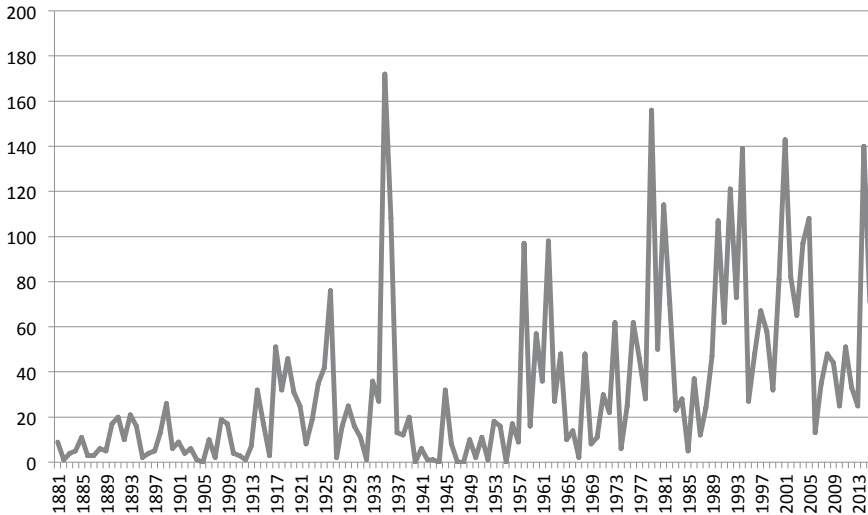


Chart 1. Number of Estonian sonnets across time

As you can see, the overall tendency is that the quantity of published sonnets is constantly increasing. We can see two beginnings here: the first beginning is the birth of the sonnet in Estonian, 1881, and the number of sonnets grows until reaching its peak in the middle of the 1930s. Then there is a gap caused by the Second World War, after which the number of sonnets gradually increases again. Dividing all of the  $\approx 4000$  sonnets roughly into four quarters: the first 1000 sonnets were published in 60 years, the next 1000 in 40 years, the next 1000 over 20 years and the last 1000 over 16 years. One might think that the sonnet becomes more and more important in Estonian poetry, however, this is not true.

In order to analyze the sonnet's actual significance I have calculated the ratio of published poetry books<sup>6</sup> and published sonnets for each year, showed on the following chart.

<sup>6</sup> Once again, in the case of counting poetry books I have relied upon the ESTER catalogue and it is important to note that here again this number includes reprints and e-books, although in the case of sonnets I have counted each sonnet only once.

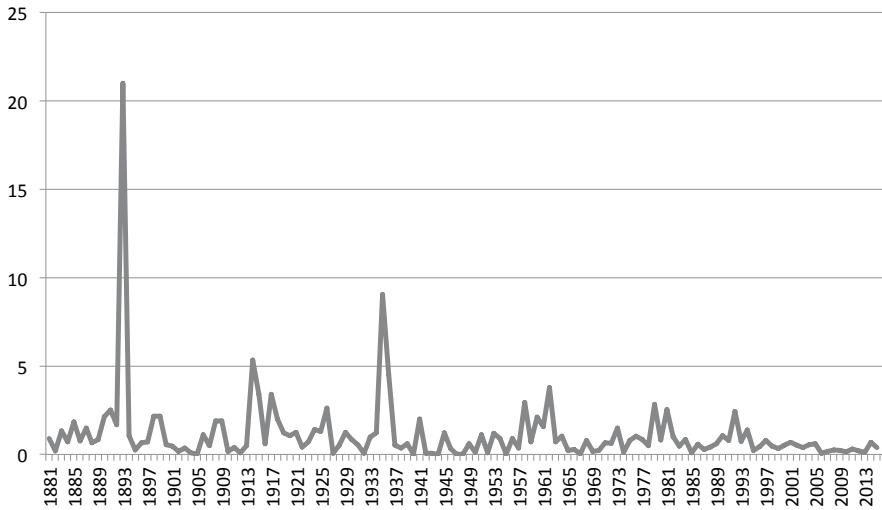


Chart 2. The importance of Estonian sonnet across time

The chart shows that the sonnet's importance amongst the whole of poetry has gradually and proportionally decreased, resembling a fading heartbeat. There are six peaks, the first and highest peak in the end of the 19th century, and every next peak with one exception (in the middle of 1930s) is lower than the previous. The last rise of the sonnet is in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and in the 21st century – in the period when the largest number of sonnets were published – the line of the graph stays almost horizontal. These 1000 sonnets form only a drop in the ocean of all the published poems during the period.

## Authors

According to my database of 4393 Estonian sonnets, in its 136 years history, 373 authors have written and published sonnets in the Estonian language.<sup>7</sup> In comparison, Estonian Wikipedia lists less names in the category 'Estonian poets' (302<sup>8</sup>) so the number of the sonneteers is in the context of Estonian poetry quite impressive. It makes 11,8 sonnets per author. But more than one third of the authors (138) have written 2–9 sonnets and almost exactly the

<sup>7</sup> This is the minimum number of Estonian sonneteers – in the case of 20th and 21st century the periodicals are only partly included; also, I might have missed somebody.

<sup>8</sup> Date of access 23.09.2017.

same number of poets (139) have created only one sonnet. The next table lists those 96 Estonian authors who have published 10 or more sonnets:

Table 1. Estonian authors with 10 or more published sonnets

Kangur, Kalju	265	Raud, Mart	21
Jürissaar, Ottniell	262	Suuman, Aleksander	21
Pihlak, August	220	Roos, Heinrich	20
Poska, Helve	154	Vetemaa, Enn	19
Liiv, Jakob	131	Rannaleet, Ain	19
Under, Marie	106	Barbarus, Johannes	18
Karlson, Ferdinand	104	Imelik, Märt-Olaf	18
Grünthal, Ivar	94	Jürisson, Helvi	18
Kangro, Bernard	92	Semper, Johannes	18
Sinimäe, Juhan	88	Adams, Valmar	18
Hiir, Erni	83	Jaik, Juhan	17
Kesamaa, Manivald	75	Rosenstrauch, Voldemar	17
Tinnuri, Urve	74	Visnapuu, Henrik	17
Hainsalu, Lehte	73	Alle, August	16
Sõelsepp, Venda	69	Krull, Hasso	16
Kaalep, Ain	61	Särg, Ilmar	16
Sepp, Vello	59	Tagel, Paul	16
Palo, Wilhelm	58	Verev, Velli	16
Reiman, Rudolf	51	Väljataga, Märt	16
Traat, Mats	49	Hirv, Indrek	15
Süvalep, Kulno	47	Mäggi, Janek	15
Särel, Olga	44	Nurme, Minni	15
Baturin, Nikolai	40	Sinijärv, Karl-Martin	15
kivisildnik	40	Asi, Harri	14
Raidaru, Voldemar	40	Lango, Meida	14
Lõhmus, Aivo	37	Lipp, Martin	14
Tarand, Helmut	37	Mäeoja, Vaike	14
Merca	36	Osila, Virve	14
Tungal, Leelo	36	Suits, Gustav	14
Masing, Uku	35	Tammik, Katrin	14

Kauber, Helgi	33	Haavaoks, Paul	13
Luuse, Luule	32	Kaplinski, Jaan	13
Oja, Heinrich	32	Ahven, Kalju	12
Sütiste, Juhan	31	Piir, Enno	12
Kook, Eduard Eeda	30	Primägi, Linnar	12
Alliksaar, Artur	28	Kaidla, Juta	11
Bengtsson, Samuel	28	Liiv, Toomas	11
Ehin, Andres	28	Raus, Mauri	11
Ott, Antu	27	Viiding, Paul	11
Pungas, Vaida	27	Alver, Betti	10
Tamm, Jakob	27	Contra	10
Merilai, Arne	26	Ilmet, Peep	10
Kruusa, Kalju	24	Kärbo, Mehis	10
Kärner, Jaan	24	Kübarsepp, Sulev	10
Enno, Ernst	24	Liscinski, Ille R.	10
Peterson, Margit	23	Meinhard, Aleksa	10
Reinop, Harald	23	Mickelin, Silvi-Astrid	10
Ridala, Villem	23	Norak, Andrus	10

## Periodization

Based on the material of this study and the history of Estonian poetry I have categorized the Estonian sonnet into six periods of which two are spatially further divided into two phases. Therefore, the history of the Estonian sonnet consists of eight chapters<sup>9</sup>:

**1) The post-awakening sonnet (1881–1908).** Estonian literary poetry formed mainly in the middle of the 19th century during the era of National Awakening. During this period no sonnets were written in Estonian; the first

<sup>9</sup> The prologue of Estonian sonnets is formed by German sonnets written in Estonia. The first known sonnets were written in Estonia by German poet Reiner Brockmann (1609–1647) who has written seven sonnets in the German language (Brockmann 2000: 81–91); the first Estonian sonneteer was Kristjan Jaak Peterson (1801–1822), who has also written one sonnet in the German language (Peterson 1823). As this article is focused on sonnets written in the Estonian language, this period is left out of the periodization here.



sonnets in the Estonian language occurred only in the late period of this era, in the so-called Post-Awakening era in the last two decades of the 19th century. This was the time when the amount of poems in the Estonian language rose sharply, it is also often considered to be the first decline of Estonian poetry, the period of an epigones in poetry (see, e.g., Annus et al. 2001: 109). The earliest dating of the Estonian sonnet dates back to 1878<sup>10</sup>, in print the first sonnets appear in 1881 and, in the same year, seven sonnets from three poets: firstly in summer by Mattias Johann Eisen (Eisen 1881), soon after five sonnets by Jaan Bergmann (Bergmann 1881a; Bergmann 1881b) and one sonnet at the end of the year by one of the greatest Estonian literary figures, the most important poet of the Awakening era Lydia Koidula (Koidula 1881). However, sonnets remain in quite a marginal position in her poetry – she created only four poems in this fixed verse form. The core of the sonneteers of the Post-Awakening era is formed by a small group of poets from Väike-Maarja known as “Parnassus of Väike-Maarja”, first and foremost by the leader of this poetry group Jakob Liiv but also by his fellow poets Jakob Tamm, Peeter Jakobson and Kaarel Krimm. At the same time in the other parts of Estonia the sonnet starts to emerge as well, in Southern Estonia through Georg Eduard Luiga and Martin Lipp, etc.

Post-awakening sonnets formed a narrow and quite determined poetical tradition. There were two main themes: occasional sonnets, written for the weddings, birthdays, funerals, sometimes to friends or relatives, but more often to Estonian cultural heroes. The other big group of sonnets is formed by sonnets dedicated to the fatherland, Estonia, and mother tongue, the Estonian language. Most of the sonnets from this era follow a strict rhetorical code – the poetical persona’s self-abasement – the poetic self is not worth its sonnet’s addressee, it does not deserve its homeland and language, all that it has is its poetry and even this is small and worthless (see Lotman 2013a).

The major source of influence for creating sonnets in the Estonian language came from German romanticist poets – a lot of poems by Heinrich Heine, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Ludwig Uhland, Joseph von Eichendorff, etc., were read and translated; it is also known that Austrian romanticist poet Nikolaus Lenau’s sonnets inspired Parnassus of Väike-Maarja to create sonnets in the Estonian language (Kangro 1938: 53; Kampmann 1933: 215). The other source of influence came from Russian romanticist poets, Mikhail Lermontov and Aleksandr Pushkin. It is worth mentioning that, at first, the original sonnets in the Estonian language appeared, and only after that, almost a decade

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<sup>10</sup> “Isale” by Jakob Liiv, see Lotman 2012.

later, there came translations of the sonnets from other languages<sup>11</sup>; also, in this period there was no sonnet theory or even a description of the prescribed verse form available in Estonian.

**2) The Modernist sonnet (1909–1939).** But the direction was the opposite in the case of modernist sonnets – both translations and their accompanying essays played a decisive role in forming Estonian modernist sonnet. In 1905 one of the leaders of the literary movement called the Young Estonians, Johannes Aavik, published translations of poems by Charles Baudelaire in their album, which included two sonnets from “Les Fleurs du mal”, and a short article about the French decadent movement (Aavik 1905). The next milestone can be seen in the „French bouquet“, published in the third album of the Young Estonians, which contains translations of the sonnets by French symbolists Albert Samain (Samain 1909: 78) and Paul Verlaine (Verlaine 1909: 80)<sup>12</sup>. And the first original Estonian modernist sonnets are published in the same compendium, written by Johannes Aavik and Leena Mudi. Nevertheless, these sonnets appear to be artificially constructed, and the birth of the true modern self and consciousness in sonnet form<sup>13</sup> can be seen in Ernst Enno’s sonnets from the same year (Enno 1909). During the next thirty years, sonnets became vastly popular and the sonnet space expanded in many directions in Estonian language. In this period, the self-conscious sonnet persona emerges, the thematic and the vocabulary widens, the rhymes become richer, etc. Tiit Hennoste has subdivided the modernist manifestations of Estonian literature in the early 20th century into two: 1) neo-romanticism which corresponds to the 19th-century literary movements in Europe (particularly symbolism and impressionism), 2) Avant-Garde – primarily expressionism and futurism (Hennoste 2016). The same tendencies can be seen in the development of Estonian modernist sonnet. At first, symbolism<sup>14</sup> (Enno, Suits, Alle, Sööt,

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<sup>11</sup> During the first decades of the Estonian sonnet in the 19th century, approximately 200 original sonnets and only around 10 sonnet translations (from Heinrich Heine, Theodor Körner, Gottfried August Bürger, Betty Paoli, Carmen Sylva, Mikhail Lermontov, Aleksandr Pushkin, etc.) were published (see also Lotman 2013a: 204–205).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Aavik 1910/1911.

<sup>13</sup> It has been suggested that the very invention of the sonnet marked the birth of the modern mind: “Modern thought and literature begin with the invention of the sonnet. Created in the early duecento by Giacomo da Lentino, a notaro, or important court official and probably lawyer at the emperor Frederick II, it is the first lyric form since the fall of the Roman Empire intended not for music or performance but for silent reading. As such, it is the first lyric of self-consciousness, or the self in conflict.” (Oppenheimer 1989: 3)

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Semper 1910/1911.

Reiman, etc.) and impressionism (Ridala, Under, Visnapuu) became the prevalent literary movement in the sonnet. The most important, also probably the most scandalous poetry book ever published in Estonian, was also a book of sonnets: Marie Under's *Sonnets* (1917) which included 50 impressionist and – in the context of that time – highly erotic sonnets with a female subject. Moreover, Under's sensual sonnets written in her Siuru period were innovative not only in Estonian poetry, but in the context of the whole tradition of Petrarchism.<sup>15</sup> The next shift of Estonian sonnet took place during the 1920s and 1930s; in contrast with previous symbolism and erotic impressionism, now the focus was turned to social issues. A strong tradition of expressionist (Reiman, Hiir) and working class, often clearly communist (Nukk, Rannaleet, Lukin, Kärner) sonnets, as well as a lot of futurist (Hiir) and realist/naturalist (Reiman, Semper, Sinimäe) sonnets appear. The literary movement *Arbujad* (Alver, Merilaas) enriches Estonian sonnets with neoclassicist poems in this traditional poetry genre. In this period the first satirical sonnets, pastiches, are also written (Hindrey, Kitzberg), as well as the first sonnets in the dialects of the Estonian language (Adamson, Meinhard, Adson).

**3) The Estonian sonnet (1940–1961).** After Estonia was annexed, the Estonian sonnet – as the whole of literature – is divided into two: Soviet Estonian sonnets and Estonian sonnets in the free world by exile poets. In his monograph written in the mid-1930s, Bernard Kangro saw the history of the Estonian sonnet as a linear story in which continuous progress takes place and he was hopeful that soon the true Estonian sonnet would be born. “Yet the development of the Estonian sonnet has not reached its peak; not everything has been used yet that the sonnet could offer to Estonian poetry.” (Kangro 1938: 115–116). But the development of a genre of poetry depends on historical events as well. During the previous chapter – the modernist period – sonnet space became multidimensional, various literary movements and different styles and dialects found their expression in the Estonian sonnet. But now, suddenly, this diversity was cut off by the new political regime. The sonnet narrowed down to a one-dimensional space again.

**3a) The Soviet Estonian sonnet (1940–1961).** It has been discussed: was the literature of this period in Soviet Estonia a literature at all, as it was quite a straightforward transposition of Soviet discourse into the Estonian language (Olesk 2002: 18, 27). A state printing and publishing board was established to ensure censorship, the officially sanctioned method of literary composition

<sup>15</sup> See Lotman 2015, cf. Distiller 2008, Moore 2000. A comprehensive monograph on Marie Under's life and poetry is written by Sirje Kiin (Kiin 2009).

was now socialist realism. On both theoretical and practical levels, the paraphrastic content of the poetry became primary, formal systems were regarded as the subsystems of it<sup>16</sup>.

Yet the first event in the sonnet of the period does not belong to the discourse of socialist realism: it was a sequence of 30 sonnets entitled “Arm” (Grace) by Juhan Sütiste (1945). During the 1950s the productive sonnet-eers Manivald Kesamaa and Kalju Kangur, as well as Paul Haavaoks started to create sonnets; in the beginning of the 1960s, several female sonneteers emerge (Juta Kaidla 1960, Helvi Jürisson, Milvi Seping and Velli Verel 1961). Sütiste’s long sequence “Grace” became, on a constructive level, characteristic of the whole next period – firstly, now the long, mostly descriptive or narrative sequences start to prevail; secondly, for the first time the Shakespearean sonnet emerges – in the earlier sonnet there were only some exceptional sonnets which consisted of three quatrains and an ending couplet, now they form the vast majority of all the sonnets. Nevertheless, Sütiste’s “Grace” is separated from the upcoming sonnet of Soviet Estonia by its deep and rich imagery, intimate poetic persona, and existentialist experience (the sequence is partly written in imprisonment during German occupation). But soon after, during the next decades, a language becomes univalent, the imagery clear and without ambivalence (for example “sickle moon”, “whispering birches”). The poetry of socialist realism had to express the beauty of the communist world. Now the long, mostly descriptive sonnet sequences take the central place, the main theme of most of the sequences is nature and travelling through the beautiful rural Soviet Estonia/Union (Kesamaa, Kangur, Jürisson, Haavaoks). Unlike in the modernist sonnets of nature, now the nature does not reflect the persona’s feelings and emotions – now it becomes an objective, descriptive discourse.

**3b) The Estonian exile sonnet (1940–1961).** In the free world, the Estonian sonnet started to gain strength at the end of the 1940s and three main strands of the Estonian sonnet abroad can be distinguished. Firstly, in the central place, the same authors who formed the heart of the modernist sonnet start to create a different kind of sonnets now: traditional, even conservative sonnets which express yearning towards the homeland, towards lost time and space, for example narrative sequences “Vana Võrumaa” (“Old Võrumaa”, Kangro 1949) and “Veebruar” (“February”, Kangro 1951) by Kangro, and later period sonnets by Under. At the same time as on the other side of iron curtain, the verbal message

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<sup>16</sup> Yet it did not mean that the constructive level of the poetry was seen as unimportant: “The strong ideology and the progressiveness of the content can be transmitted best in a strong, blameless and flawless form. The need for the high level artistic skillness was emphasized by the Party’s 21st, extraordinary congress with clarity.” (Maantee 1959: 460)

(though certainly very different) can be seen as a dominant of the sonnets here as well. Secondly, a new generation of poets (Laaban, Asi, Grünthal) continue modernist experiments with sonnets, but these remain quite marginal in quantity. And thirdly, the most productive Estonian sonneteer of all time, August Pihlak, starts to publish his sonnets. Although his sonnets are often innovative at the formal level his poetry is poor in imagery and language; in addition, he is clearly a graphomaniac author whose main medium becomes a sonnet.<sup>17</sup> (Later, after Estonia regains its independence and the publishing market is opens up, a lot of similar amateur sonneteers emerge; see below).

#### 4) 1962–1986: The sonnet and the Thaw

**4a) The homeland sonnet (1962–1986).** The beginning of the sixties was revolutionary for Estonian poetry, and for Estonian sonnets as well. The Soviet power slightly liberalized, the esthetical taboos started to fall away, and Soviet literature now became Soviet Estonian literature (Olesk 2002: 27–28). The birth of the new discourse in the Estonian sonnet was marked by the emergence of the new generation of young intellectual poets, first by Ain Kaalep's debut in poetry, then by the so-called cassette generation poets (as their poetry compilations were publishes as cassettes). From the point of view of Estonian sonnet, the most important poets were Vetemaa, Traat, Kaplinski, Tungal, Ehin, Baturin, Suuman. The expansion of the sonnet space took place both through the innovation, and also through returning to traditions. Shifts can be noticed on many levels: in language, imagery and verbal semantics, at the formal-constructive level of the sonnet. The sonnets became more ambivalent and playful, also often intertextual (Kaalep, Rummo, Kaplinski, later Talvet), different poetic discourses again found their way to the sonnet, for example Knittelvers–Sonnet by Vetemaa, and the language enriched – by using both archaisms and neologisms (e.g. Traat). There is a significant shift in the tropology: from metaphor, metonym, comparison (which prevailed in the previous phase of the Soviet Estonian sonnet) to allegory, i.e. extended metaphor, irony and self-irony, intertextuality, ellipsis. Once again, the lyrical sonnets emerge: as one functionary Soviet critic writes, it is not forbidden to write lyric poetry with an intimate persona anymore, otherwise it would be impossible to depict a harmonious Soviet human being in the way Engels has described them. (Parve 1966: 482). However, the lyric sonnet of the period was not sensual like in the time of Siuru but rather reflected over feelings (Luik, Lõhmus). The first – though very few – Estonian sonnets in free verses were written (Traat, Ehin, Toomas Liiv), once again, the sonnets in dialect emerged (Baturin), the first surrealist sonnet appeared (Ehin).

<sup>17</sup> See also Lotman 2016.

Nevertheless, the two most prominent sonneteers from this period were without doubt Alliksaar and Masing – underground poets whose poetry spread among the students, writers and other intellectuals in manuscript form, retyped with the typewriter or manually rewritten<sup>18</sup>. Both were excellent poets who wrote influential poems in sonnet form as well. Their sonnets were remarkable on the one hand by their existentialism and intellectuality; Masing's sonnets were also deeply religious, and often compared with prayers. And on the other hand, by their fresh language and rich imagery. A part of Alliksaar's philosophical sonnet sequence "Janud" (Thirsts) was published posthumously at the end of the decade (Alliksaar 1968), later his second sonnet sequence "Kohtumised" (Encounters), as well as some other sonnets (Alliksaar 1976).

At the same time, many sonneteers continue to create descriptive nature and travelling sonnets which were characteristic of the previous era (Kangur, Kesamaa, Sõelsepp, Haavaoks). In the 1970s, a woman's everyday life and the important events of her lifespan (meeting a future husband, marrying, having kids, etc.) and is reflected in long sonnet sequences by Lehte Hainsalu.

**4b) The Estonian sonnet abroad (1962–1986).** Although the most important events of the Estonian sonnet of this period undoubtedly took place in the homeland, something noteworthy is published in Sweden as well: Ivar Grünthal's novel *Peetri kiriku kellad* (St Peter Church Bells, Grünthal 1962) the narrative of which is carried, amongst other poems, by 40 well-turned sonnets. The sonnets semantical structure – every poem forms a whole with its development and *volta* at the same time it is only a part of the bigger story –, also its inevitable intertextuality creates extra dimensions both to the story and to the sonnet itself<sup>19</sup>. The other sonneteers of the period are Under, Ivask, Viirlaid, Vihalemm, but contrary to them, August Pihlak continues to produce plenty of poems in this demanding poetic form.

**5) The postmodernist sonnet (1987–1999).** In the late eighties, after Perestroika, the postmodernist sonnet emerged, created by the new generation of poets who form the core of Estonian poetry up-to-date. At first, there occurred Hirv's Dionysian, erotic sonnets in strict, flawless and very traditional sonnet form; also combines high, even sublime style with vulgarity – many obscene words find their way to the Estonian sonnet for the first time. His sonnets are also highly intertextual, partly a male answer to Under's

<sup>18</sup> The first collection of Artur Alliksaar's – one of greatest Estonian poets of all time – was published only posthumously in 1968, and this was also a very small selection of his remarkable poetry.

<sup>19</sup> Every sonnet is very explicitly intertextually linked with previous sonnets – the whole significance of a sonnet can be seen only in the context of other sonnets. See Lotman 2013b: 321ff.

sensual sonnets' female persona, at the same time also clearly influenced by the Arbujad-movement, French symbolist sonneteers, and others (Hirv 1987). The other debutant of the same year, Rein Raud, experiments with the constructive level of poetry writing thirteen poems which share the same title ("Kuukellamäng") with different lengths, meters, rhymed and unrhymed, etc., including one untraditional sonnet (Raud 1987: 74); later Raud writes a sonnet cycle which is clearly inspired by Dante *Vita Nova's* prosimetrum – seven sonnets have a long and descriptive title which extends the length and broadens the rhythm of these sonnets, making prose an integral part of this fixed form. In some cases, the title is even longer than the first quatrain. (Raud 1990). Dadaist and etnofuturist sonnets are created by Sinijärv (e.g. 1991), Heinz Valk and Priit Aimla bring political satire and Perestroika to the sonnet form (1990), also punk sonnet is born, etc. Beside playfulness, ambiguity and intertextuality in many levels of the sonnet, the deconstruction of the sonnet emerges. If the modernist sonnet aimed to construct the sonnet space in every possible way – more extensive, more multidimensional – then the core of the postmodernist sonnet is focused on deconstructing the sonnet form itself and its traditions. Väljataga's sonnets use the sonnet space to ironize over sonnets and productive sonneteers like Kangur and Kaalep (Väljataga 1989). Hasso Krull's sonnets in free verses are based on clear phrasal stress (Krull 1988); radical experiments with free verse in sonnets created by Toomas Liiv appear later – his free verse looks often typographically like a strict metrical unit, verse lines form even strophes but on the metrical level the text is absolutely arrhythmic and prose-like, verses are cut off sharply to make the strophes visually appear homogenous (Liiv 2000)<sup>20</sup>. Estonian female punk poet Merca writes the first homosexual sonnets, sonnet crown dedicated to Laura, which in contrast to Petrarchan sonnets depict very physical, mundane and drunk love (Merca 1998), hence deconstructing the tradition of Petrarchism with its Platonic love. (:):kivisildnik combines a sonnet crown from Estonian folklore – the only principle of selecting lines from the Estonian runic verses is phonetical, the verses must rhyme the way sonnets are rhymed (kivisildnik 1996). Merilai brings orthography, popular in this era among young poets, to the sonnets (ku=q, ü=y, ks=x, ts=z etc., Merilai 1998). Etc.

At the same time, due to the opening of the publishing market and loss of censorship, everybody can suddenly print a book. Therefore, a huge increase of published poetry books, and also sonnets, takes place. So-called amateur sonneteers (Vello Sepp, Luule Luuse, Ottniel Jürissaar, Wilhelm Palo, Helve

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<sup>20</sup> See also Põldmäe 1978: 174.

Poska, etc.) now produce more sonnets than all the acknowledged poets mentioned above; although nobody has yet reached the amount of sonnets August Pihlak has published.

**6) The post-postmodernist sonnet (2000–2015).** The new millennium opens up for the Estonian sonnet with a sonnet machine, created by Märt Väljataga in the spirit of Raimond Quineau. At first it was exhibited in the art gallery (Tallinna Linnagalerii) where visitors could light up the lines and create one hundred thousand billion different combinations of sonnet by these verses, later the book version is published (see above). This, at the same time, brings the sonnet into focus<sup>21</sup>, but on the other hand it can be seen as a sonnet forms ultimate self-denunciation – emptying the sonnet from any meaning.

During this century, only a few interesting events have taken place in the Estonian sonnet. Kalju Kruusa continues to write his own idiosyncratic sonnets in free verse – short lines and minimalist expressions (1999, 2004, 2010), also Krull creates more free verse sonnets (2001). Linnar Priimägi experiments with the boundaries of sonnets, for example by adding a quite a long quote from Dostoyevsky's book "The Idiot" in the middle of a sonnet (2005). Popular satirical sonnets are published by Contra. In 2015, a compendium of current Estonian poets is written as homage to Marie Under's debut book, "Sonnets" (1917), one of the most powerful books in the history of Estonian poetry – yet these contemporary sonnets or poems inspired by sonnets lack the power and freshness of the original book.

However – broadly, after the sonnet machine was invented, the 21<sup>st</sup> century Estonian sonnet's room is mostly filled with amateur sonnets without much artistic value or innovative power. One quarter of all the Estonian sonnets is created during this century but their significance is smaller than ever.

## Meters

**The synchronic view (1881–2015).** Most of the sonnets' meters belong to the accentual-syllabic versification system (89%); an almost equal amount of sonnets is written in the accentual versification system together with Estonian quantitative runic verse (5%) and free verse (5%); 1% of all sonnets are formed by syllabic and combined (for example quatrains in iambic, tercets in free verse, etc.) versification systems. Nevertheless, considering the fact that the

<sup>21</sup> Suddenly, even the biggest Estonian tabloid *Õhtuleht* writes – possibly for the first time – an article about poetry, moreover, about sonnets (Klein 2000).



sonnet is a fixed form of which one characteristic is a certain meter, the metrical pattern of the Estonian sonnet is relatively diverse.

The table below gives an overview of how the sonnets are divided into different meters; this table does not differentiate meters by length, for example, under the notion 'Iamb' all the different iambs (iambic pentameters, heterometric iambs, iambic hexameters, etc.) are counted together. The number marks the number of sonnets (not verse lines) in this meter.

Table 2. The meters in Estonian sonnet

Iamb	3597
Free verse	192
Dolnik	186
Trochee	179
Meters with three syllable feet (dactyl, amphibrach, anapest)	118
Two syllable meters with alternated anacrusis (Iamb/Trochee)	47
Runic verse	40
Combined meter	26
Syllabic meter	7

As expected, the prevailing meter is iambic pentameter (2522 sonnets from 4393), which is the traditional equivalent of the original sonnet's hendecasyllable in Estonian poetry. Yet the increase/decrease of this most traditional sonnet meter in different periods indicates that the sonnet of this time was oriented on a traditional or innovative approach to sonnets. The second most popular meter is probably a uniquely Estonian sonnet meter: it is a heterometric iamb which consists mostly of iambic pentameters but there are some – usually 1–3 – longer verses, lines in iambic hexameter (426 sonnets). In third place is the iambic hexameter (310 sonnets). As for the margins: the shortest sonnet is in iambic dimeter; the longest iambs consist of 9 metrical feet. The most frequently used accentual meter is dolnik tetrameter (64 sonnets), also quantitative runic meter (see Lotman 2000: 690, 697ff) is used quite a lot (40 sonnets). There are surprisingly few trochees in Estonian sonnets, the most popular of them is pentameter (61 sonnets); the shortest trochee consists of 3, the longest of 7 metrical feet. Among meters with three syllable feet the most dominant meter is surprisingly anapest (52 sonnets, of which 50 in anapestic trimeter); dactyls are used in 34 sonnets of which the most frequent is tetrameter (20 sonnets) and amphibrachs in 32 sonnets, most frequently tetrameters (16 sonnets). The longest verses are also in amphibrach and consist of heterometric amphibrachic hexameters and septameters.

## Meters and rhymes (1881–1908; 238 sonnets)

During the first period of the Estonian sonnet, the Post-Awakening era, the metrical variability is relatively small. Almost all the sonnets are written in two-syllable accentual-syllabic meter. 65% of sonnets are in iambic pentameter, 13% iambic pentameters mixed with several iambic hexameters and 5% iambic pentameters mixed with several shorter lines, iambic tetrameters; 3% of sonnets are in other iambic meters. In this period the trochees form 12% of sonnets' meters (5% trochaic pentameter, 4% trochaic pentameter/hexameter, 3% other trochees). In addition, there are only a few amphibrachs and some mixed meters, both form less than 1%. The data are presented on Chart 3.

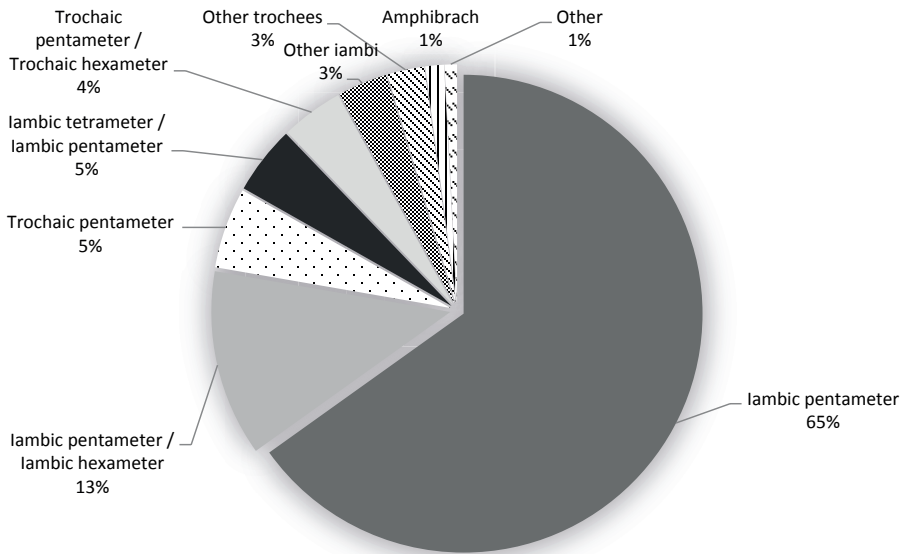


Chart 3. The meters in Estonian sonnet (1881–1908)

The patterns of the rhyme schemes of the period are also relatively uniform. No English sonnet has been written yet: all the sonnets consist of two quatrains and two tercets. Most of the quatrains (80%) are based on enclosed rhyme (mostly ABBA / ABBA; in few cases ABBA / CDDC, ABBA / ACCA or ABBA / BAAB); alternate rhyme (ABAB) is used in the rest of the sonnets' quatrains.

Even as much as 36% of sonnets share the same scheme, ABBA / ABBA / CDE / CDE<sup>22</sup>, one of the most traditional rhyme scheme in traditional Italian sonnet and also used often by Goethe, whom Estonian post-awakening poets read and translated into Estonian (though not sonnets) a lot. The second most popular scheme is ABBA / ABBA / CDC / EDE (18%), and third ABBA / ABBA / CCD / EED (4%).

The rhymes of the period tend to be often inflectional, not full rhymes, often only the last syllable or even last phoneme matches. But this is compensated by alternation of the feminine and masculine rhymes, usually the first and the fourth verse is feminine, second and third masculine. This alternation of verses with different lengths helps to perceive the often very weak rhyme as a rhyme as they belong to the equisyllabic verses, for example: *Kui enne Taara puiestikus kõndsin / Siis tuikas seal üks ööbik kenaste / Ta laulu kõla kostis kaugele; / Ma palju rõemu tema laulust tundsin. // Ja kui ma hiljem Taara mäele jõudsin, / Siin oli waikend tema laulmine, / Ta oli lendand ära kaugele, / Ma kurwalt ööpikulle järel' hüidsin: /.../ (Jakobson 1885: 35).*

## Meters and rhymes (1909–1939; 908 sonnets)

The modernist sonnet's diversity is mirrored in the formal patterns of Estonian sonnet as well. Although the change can be considered a rather small in percentage, it is still significant. Now the traditional sonnet's meter, iambic pentameter, forms only 56% of the percentage of sonnets but at the same time the use of iambic pentameter combined with iambic hexameter has grown (19%) along with the use of isometric iambic hexameter (8%); other iambs (heterometric iambs, also shorter and longer iambs than pentameters and hexameters) form 9%. In only 3% of sonnets the trochee has been used; there is a slight rise of accentual-syllabic three syllable meters (mainly dactyl and amphibrach) and also, the first sonnets in the accentual versification system are written. Thus the variety of different meters has grown but the percentage of all the iambic meters is even bigger than in the previous period. It is also noteworthy that no sonnets in free verse have been written yet.

<sup>22</sup> Here and elsewhere the gender of the rhyme is not differentiated in the marking of rhyme scheme and statistics – there can be neither a feminine nor masculine clause in the statistic of rhyme patterns.

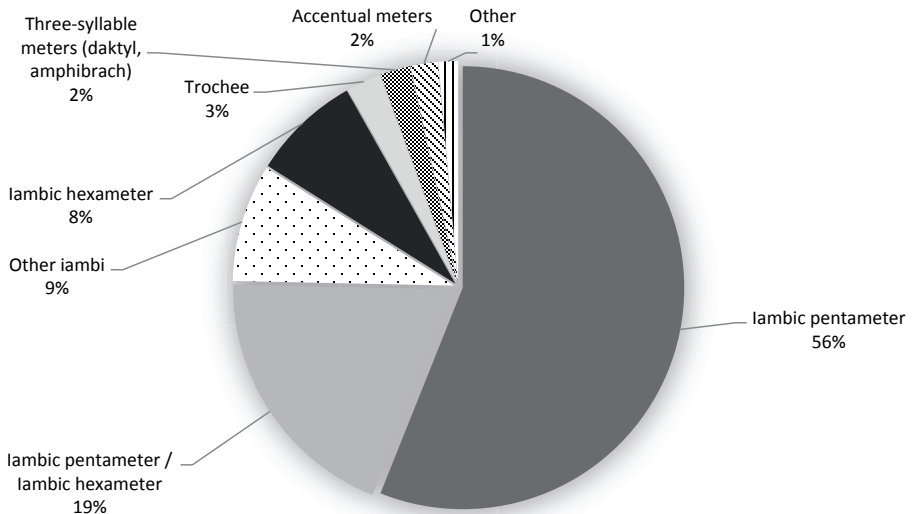


Chart 4. The meters in Estonian sonnet (1909–1939)

Remarkably greater diversity can be seen in rhyme schemes. Still most of the quatrains have enclosed rhymes (80%), but now alternate rhymes form only 15%. The rest of the sonnets have many kind of experimental schemes which are not used in traditional sonnets (monorhyme AAAA / AAAA, also for example schemes like ABBA / ABBA, AAB / CCDD, etc.).

As for the entire rhyme scheme, now the most common scheme – and again typical scheme of Petrarch's sonnet – has alternate rhymes in the tercets, ABBA / ABBA / CDC / DCD (11%), the prevalent rhyme scheme of the previous period, ABBA / ABBA / CDE / CDE, is now the second most used (9%) and almost equally used is the rhyme scheme ABBA / ABBA / CDC / DEE (9%); the next most common rhyme scheme is the French sonnet scheme ABBA / ABBA / CCD / EED (7%), and again the typical Italian sonnet scheme ABBA / ABBA / CDC / EDE (7%). So, no rhyme scheme prevails as strongly as in the previous period – and the overall variety has increased remarkably.

Now, the tendency to alternate rhyme genders is weakening. Simultaneously, the rhymes become stronger and richer; a greater deal of rhymes are now formed by full rhymes. But at the same time the new tradition of modern assonance and consonance rhymes emerges as Valmar Adams declares full rhymes to be outdated (Adams 1924: s. p, cf. Adams 1925), which further enriches the rhyming patterns of the sonnet in modernist era. Yet, this abundant era of the sonnet is ended sharply by the Second World War.

## Meter and Rhymes 1940–1961 in Soviet Estonia (124 sonnets)

After the Second World War, with the loss of independence and freedom of speech and expression, not only the thematic, style and scale of the verbal message became unitary but also the diverse patterns of meter and especially rhyme also faded. Once again, just like in the Post-Awakening era, 66% of all the sonnets are written in iambic pentameter. Furthermore, among the rest of the sonnets there is even less variability than at the dawn of the Estonian sonnet – 16% iambic pentameter/iambic hexameters, 8% other iambs, 9% trochees and 1% accentual meters. The statistics are shown on Chart 5.

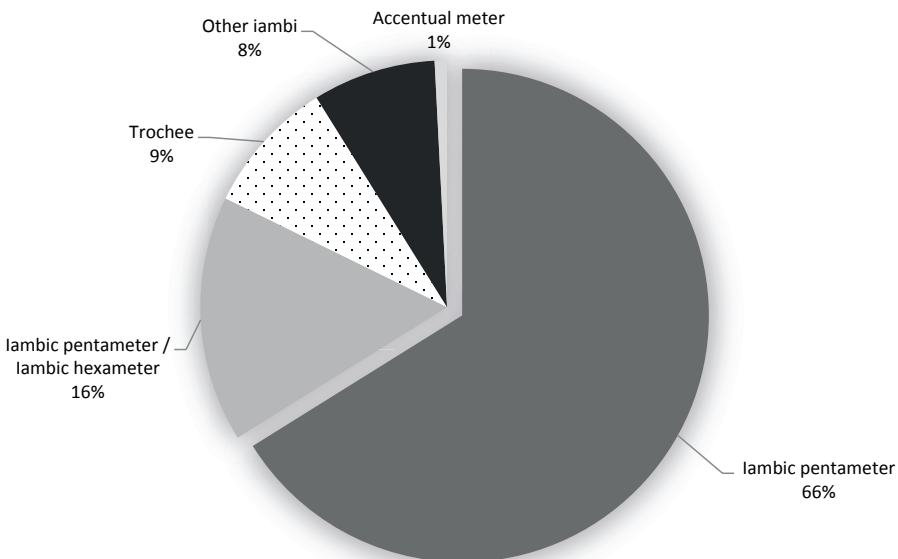


Chart 5. The meters in Soviet Estonian sonnet (1940–1961)

There is a huge change concerning the rhymes – there were only a few English sonnets among the modernist sonnet (and none in the 19<sup>th</sup> century) but now the English sonnets start to prevail. Now even as much as 45% of sonnets share the Shakespearean sonnet's rhyme scheme (ABAB / CDCD / EFEF / GG); moreover, the next two common rhyme schemes of the period in Soviet Estonia also end with couplet: ABBA / CDDC / EFFE / GG (7%) and ABBA / CDDC / EFE / FGG (5%). The variety of rhyme words also narrows down as officially full rhymes are strongly preferred.

## Meter and rhymes 1940–1961 in Estonian exile sonnets (213 sonnets)

The most remarkable fact is that, at the same time, the formal patterns of sonnets in the free world become even more conservative and unified. As much as 85% of sonnets abroad are written in iambic pentameter, 7% iambic pentameter/iambic hexameter, 5% iambic hexameter, 2% other meters (combined meters) and 1% in trochee. The data are shown on Chart 6.

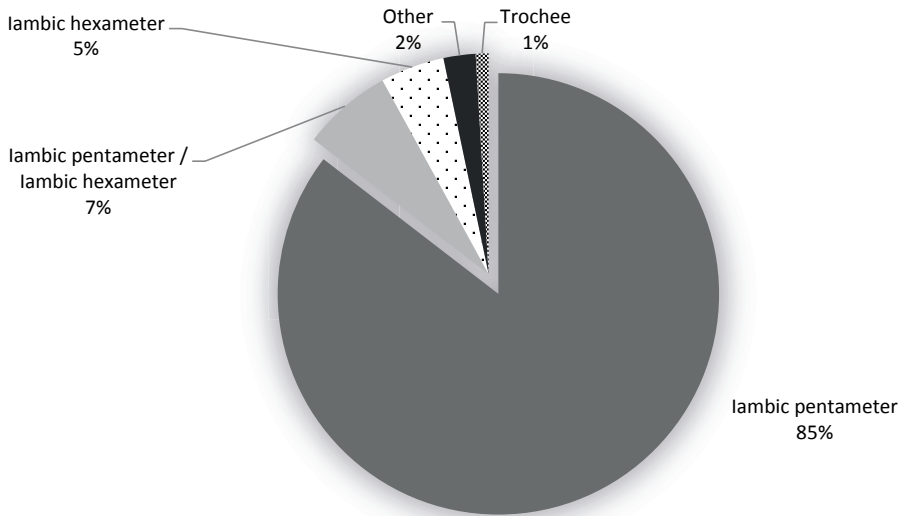


Chart 6. The meters in Estonian exile sonnet (1940–1961)

Here also the Shakespearean rhyme scheme is most used but it is not so prevailing than in the other side of the iron curtain, only 11%, followed by ABAB / ABAB / CDC / CDC (8%), ABAB / ABAB / CDE / CDE (7%) and ABBA / ABBA / CDC / EDE (7%). Thus the main change compared to previous phases of the Estonian sonnet occurs in the quatrains, which have typically alternate rhymes. Since the modernist experimental phase has been abruptly ended, now the most common type of rhyme is full rhyme.

## The Soviet Estonian sonnet (1962–1986; 805 sonnets)

With the poetic innovation that took place in Estonian poetry during the 1960s, the picture of meter in sonnets also turns as versatile as it has not yet been in its short history. The metric perspectives are now widened by different versification systems: for the first time sonnets in free verse are written, though they form only 1%, accentual meter can be found in 4% of sonnets which is quite a remarkable number in the context of sonnets, trochees form 3%. There is a huge increase in the percentage of accentual-syllabic three-syllable meters, especially anapest, which form 4% and dactyl (1%). The percentage of iambic pentameter has decreased to 69, iambic pentameter combined with iambic hexameter 10% and other iambs 4%. See Chart 7 for details.

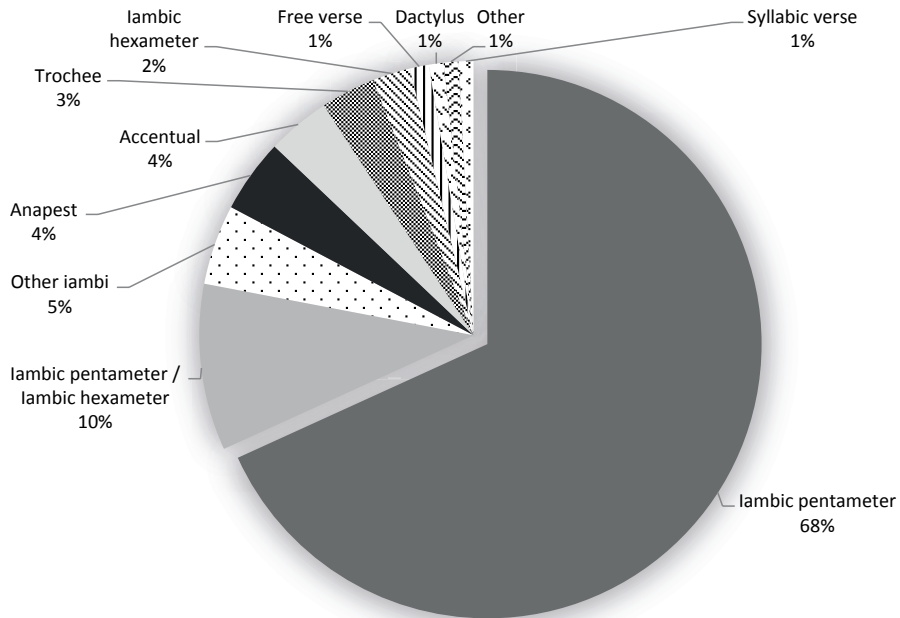


Chart 7. The meters in Estonian sonnet in the homeland (1962–1986)

As for the rhymes, 12% are Shakespearean sonnets; and the next to most common rhyme schemes belong to Italian sonnets: ABBA / ABBA / CDC / DCD (10%) and ABBA / ABBA / CDC / EDE (7%). Thus, as the percentages of the most common schemes are relatively low, the general picture of the rhyme schemes is as variable as ever. Also, for the first time – in accordance with the emergence of sonnets in free verse – unrhymed sonnets appear.

## Meter and rhyme in the Estonian exile sonnet (1962–1986; 225 sonnets)

As you can see, in the Estonian sonnet in the free world the picture is significantly less diverse, 96% of all the sonnets are divided between three meters: 76% iambic pentameter and 10% other iambs. Surprisingly, the number of accentual verse has grown to 10% and this is the greatest percentage of accentual verse in sonnets over time. The data are shown on Chart 8.

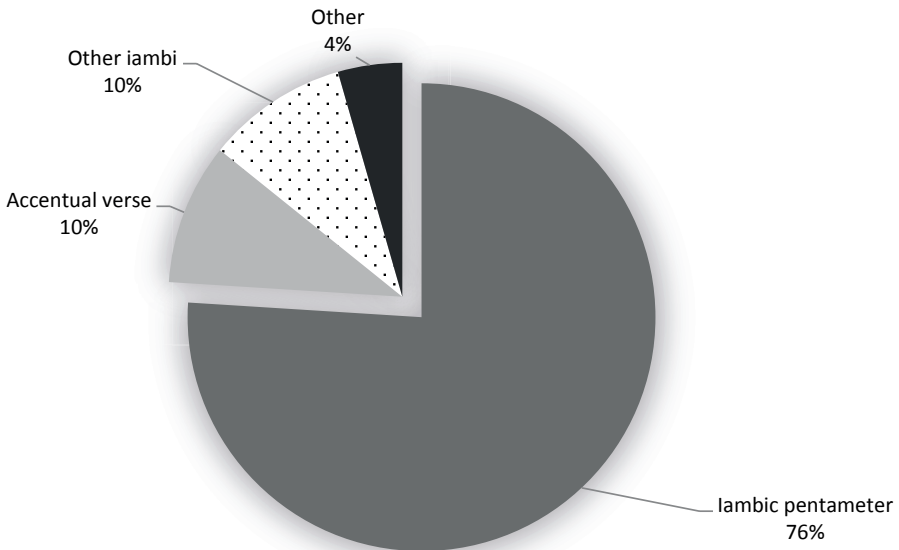


Chart 8. The meters in Estonian sonnet abroad (1962–1986)

Yet the rhyme schemes of the period in exile sonnets are quite versatile, the most common schemes form only 6% (ABAB / ABAB / CDC / DCD), 5% (ABAB / ABAB / CDE / CDE) and 5% (ABBA / ABBA / CCD / DEE). 8% of sonnets are unrhymed. Altogether, among 225 sonnets there are 109 different combinations of rhymes, which means most of them are used only once or twice.



## Meters and rhymes (1987–1999; 817 sonnets).

During the era of the Estonian postmodernist sonnet the percentage of iambic pentameters is smallest over time, only 41%. Iambic hexameter takes 18% and the third most common meter now becomes free verse – as much as 9% of all the sonnets are written without consistent meter. Also, the emergence of the runic verse is remarkable (6%), the accentual verse is also used relatively often (again 6%). The percentage of iambic pentameters combined with iambic hexameters, which was for a long time the second most popular verse meter in Estonian sonnets, is now also used in 6% of sonnets. We can find less trochee (4%) and three-syllable meters (amphibrach, anapest, dactyl – 2%). The variety of different verse meters in Estonian sonnets has now reached its peak, see Chart 9 for details.

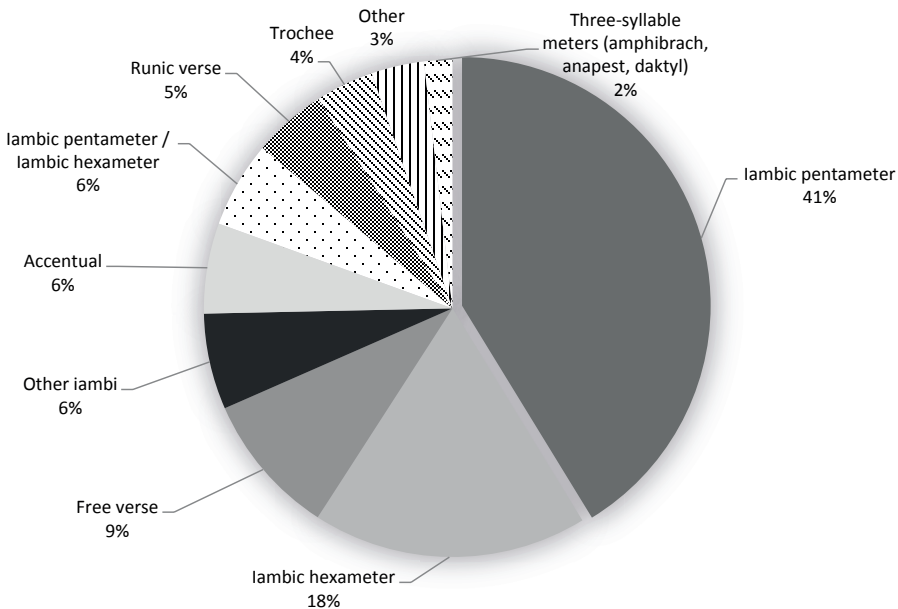


Chart 9. The meters in Estonian sonnet (1987–1999)

Again, the rhyme schemes are so variable that the most common one is used in only 12% of sonnets (ABBA / ABBA / CCD / DEE), the second most common, ABBA / ABBA / CDC / DCD forms 7% of all the sonnets and the third one, ABAB / CDCD / EFEF / GG, 6%.

## Meters and rhymes (2000–2015; 1063 sonnets)

During this century, the meter has become slightly more homogeneous compared to the postmodernist sonnet. The percentage of the most traditional meter, iambic pentameter, has grown to 50%, iambic hexameter as well as iambic pentameter combined with hexameter take both 6%, and other iambs 12%. As in the previous period, 9% of sonnets are in free verse and the percentage of accentual verses has also remained the same (6%). Different trochees are used in 5% of sonnets, three-syllable meters in 3%. The data are shown on Chart 10.

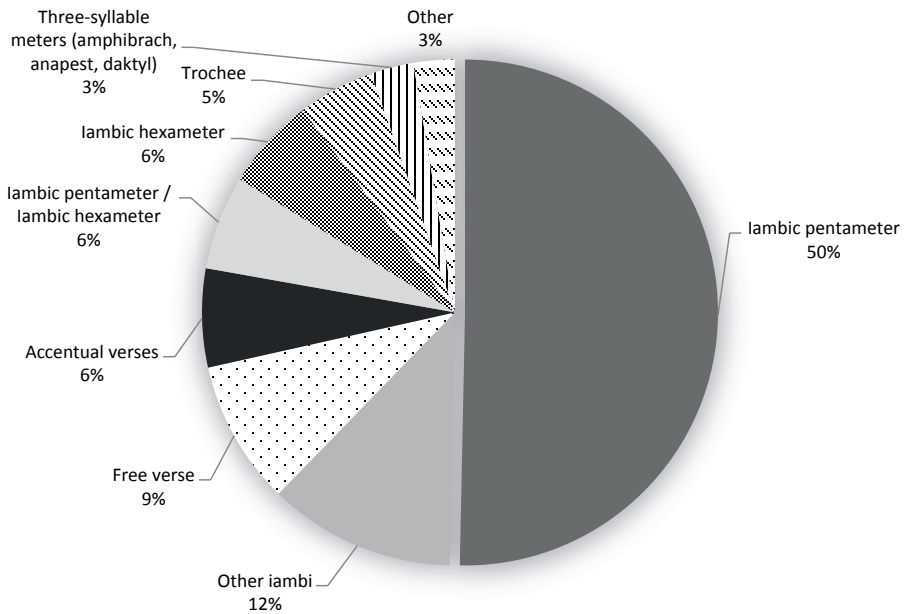


Chart 10. The meters in Estonian sonnet (2000–2015)

Now once again the Shakespearean sonnet (ABAB / CDCD / EFEF / GG) becomes more common (11%), the classical French sonnet (ABBA / ABBA / CCD / EED) takes 7% and a quite untraditional combination AABB / AAB / CCD / DEE takes the third place in frequency (5%). There are altogether 1063 sonnets published in this period with 323 different rhyming combinations.

## Conclusion

From the first published sonnets until 2015 at least 4393 sonnets have been published. If we look at the sonnet's significance amongst Estonian poetry as a whole through time, six primes of sonnet can be distinguished: 1) the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, soon after the sonnet was born in the Estonian language 2) there are two peaks in the period of the modernist sonnet, first around 1917–1919 when Marie Under published her significant sonnet-book that created the flourishing of this verse form, 3) and second in the middle of 1930s, when different modernist movements are founding their expression increasingly in sonnet form, 4) the beginning of 1960s, the Neo-Avant-Garde period of the Estonian sonnet, 5) the end of the 1970s, and 6) the last peak of the sonnet in Estonia took place in the middle of 1990s, in the era of post-modernist poetry.

Each period of the rise of sonnet's importance does not necessarily mean that something significant has happened in poetry – the fifth peak, in 1970s, is not born out of remarkable events in the history of Estonian poetry but from the productivity of several quite mediocre poets. However, it is clearly seen that with each shift in the poetical discourse there's a rise of the sonnet writing – the new discourse also tries to establish itself in the most popular fixed verse form in Estonian poetry, the sonnet. The shift is also mirrored in the sonnets' formal patterns which undergo a change in each period. During the last peak, the postmodernist sonnet, the form itself has been deconstructed. It is also noteworthy that after that, in the 21st century, there is no rise of the sonnets' importance. Each peak – the only exception is the third one, during the 1930s – is lower than the previous. Although the number of published sonnets is increasing, its position in the poetry – its importance – is decreasing as the number of published poetry books has also sharply increased. Yet, simultaneously poetry's significance in Estonia is also decreasing.

It is easy to conclude that the sonnet is becoming just a part of history. And yet, the future of the sonnet is unpredictable – in 1938 Bernard Kangro forecasted the formation of the true Estonian sonnet in the near future, but, on the contrary, the political regime drastically changed the direction of the development of this verse form, and it became one medium of socialist realism.

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