

THE NATION BORN IN TRANSLATION (LATVIAN TRANSLATION SCENE)

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Abstract. Latvian national identity (language-centred), the literary polysystem and even the written language itself are the result of translation. Translations have always constituted the majority of literary and other texts. Translation played an exceptionally important, even pivotal, role in the beginnings of written Latvian in the 16th-18th centuries. Translators (native German speakers) formed, codified and modified written Latvian. Religious translations applied a rigorous fidelity approach. Secular translations were localizations of easy reading, sentimental German stories. Parallel to the rise of native literature in the 19th century, there occurred a gradual transition from adaptation /domestication to foreignization and fidelity as the main approach. More ambitious translations of Western classics started, usually done by distinguished Latvian writers. Next to the traditional faithfulness, some translations were freely shortened and otherwise modified. After acquiring independence at the beginning of the 20th century the volume of translation grew and included also literature from more exotic sources. The Soviet period brought a re-orientation: most translations were done from Russian, fiction was translated from the original languages or via Russian as well. Regaining of independence brought about an enormous growth in the translated information amount; within 5 years English became the dominant source language. Translation again (like in the early stage of Latvian) became the main vehicle of language development. In a somewhat paradoxical way translators have formed, altered and inspired a strong language-bound national identity. Their voice, though not always heard and recognized, has been central in the Latvian narrative polyphony.

Key words: Latvian, identity, translation, adaptation, German, Russian, English, polyphony, norms

INTRODUCTION

Secular, vernacular translation has often helped to initiate national literary traditions and even nation-building (Chernetsky, 2011: 34; Kumar 2013). The Latvian nation emerged late in the 19th century and did so as a cultural nation, the aim of national liberation was to develop its language and culture (Levits, 2012: 73-74). Its national identity is therefore very language-centred. This has been emphasized by other researchers: ‘Latvian is the basic element of national identity’ (Bušmane, 2009: 160), ‘the Latvian language is undeniably an element of the national identity, not the only one, but the most significant one’ (Druviete, 2012: 97). The role of translation in forming national identities has been

lyrical genius of Latvians is testified also by better absorption of poetic texts by Latvians: the Church Song book has always been more popular than the Bible, poetry seems to be a strength of Latvian verbal culture in general.

Latvian fairy tales tend to be very general as regards time and place (*once upon a time...*) describing miracles, but mostly staying in the peasant's world. Already Mancelius wove together the old tales and Biblical stories in his sermons. Stender considered fairy tales mostly pagan and superstitious and introduced didactic elements as well as translated Aesop's, Phaedrus' and La Fontain's fables as 'proper' samples. In the 19th century the story corpus was already mixed, with Grimm's and Andersen's stories translated by Zvaigznīte becoming part of the standard stock. 'One Thousand and One Night' tales appeared in Latvian in 1866, followed by other selections and were quickly incorporated as well. Brīvzemnieks collected 1230 tales (148 were translated into Russian in 1887), Lerhis Puškaitis collected about 6000 tales and legends, Šmits had almost 8000. Blending of fairy tale elements and ideological rewrites is a well-known phenomenon, e.g. modern 'Snowwhite' is fairly different from the first variant recorded by brothers Grimm, who themselves started their 'improvement'.

Legends (*teikas*) generally tend to be tales attributed to people, places, events; accordingly they reflect reality and their language and contents is more up to date – sinking castles, lakes, rivers, governors, churches, princes. There are also riddles (*mīklas*), magic incantations (*buramvārdi*) and beliefs (*ticējumi*), many bearing traces of non-Latvian elements.

FIRST ATTEMPTS – FAITHFUL TRANSLATION OF THE WORD OF GOD

Latvian writing and translations began in the 16th century. Latvians at this time were a peasant people and the official cultural sphere was fully in the hands of non-Latvian governors, German clergy and landowners. This had lasted for about 400 years since the territory came under the German crusaders and bishops in the 12th century. The dominant powers had changed (and would continue to change) from time to time – Danes, Poles, Swedes, Russians came and went hardly affecting the status of the peasants and their language situation, as their sole interest was the territory, the possessions and the power of the nobility. The German nobility retained its positions until the end of the 19th century. The regular change of rulers, rivalry between churches, conflicts between neighbours, ideological clashes and other 'winds of change' ensured Latvian sustainability, without these changes the small nation and its language would have been assimilated long ago by the larger players in the region (Tāgepera, 2010). Because of regular invasions and foreign rule Latvian identity has been very language-centred, as language was the sole heritage that could be securely passed to other generations. The variety of outside influences also created a multifaceted, rich

and extremely adaptive culture, as well as similarly affected the language that absorbed numerous borrowings.

Sixteenth-century translation and writing in Latvian is the result of the Reformation which, like in other parts of Europe was an 'engine' of translation (Albrecht, 1998: 127). In the Baltic region it was competing with Counter-Reformation/Catholic religion. It must be mentioned that the scarce sources of the 16th century (foreign travellers) confirm Latvian as a distinct language from Lithuanian (Spekke, 1935: 124, 132). Reformation spread the idea that the Word of God should be preached in a language that is understandable or communication with God could proceed individually via the written word and naturally in a language closer to the humans. Counter-reformation and Catholic backlash also seem to have helped, as a situation of competition between the churches via the texts in the native language contributed to more translation and writing. Serious religious literature calls for a broader choice of vocabulary, abstract notions, certain curtailment of dialects and varieties, standardization of the language – all these are precursors of literary language. This contributed to the development of writing in the Baltic languages, formation of grammars and dictionaries.

The first (surviving) books to be published were *Catholic Catechism*, published in Catholic Vilnius in 1585 and Luther's *Small Catechism* published in Lutheran Koenigsberg in 1587 (Vanags, 2000). A century later followed the *New Testament* in 1685 and the *Old Testament* published in Riga in 1689. The first translations into Latvian were very literal/word-for-word translations of German, Latin or Polish texts, retaining numerous parallels to the source language constructions. This seems partly because of the amateur character of the translators, partly because of the genre (God's words were to be transferred literally) and tradition (Ritter 2005), partly because of poor target language linguistic resources. To do serious translations the first dictionary (Mancelius, 1638) and the first grammar were needed (Rehehusen, 1644). Thus translation needs generated and induced linguistic studies of Latvian. Mapping a new linguistic territory, extracting the local language and shaping it for the religious texts was a hard task for the German clergymen who attempted it. One can see elements of missionary language field work in the early linguistic work and translations, its agents incorporating the features of Christian missionaries and 'gentlemen-scholars' (Chelliah, 2011: 33). It is worth noting that already from the 16th-17th century these scholars not only pragmatically standardized the language but also tried to perfect and refine it (Druviete, 2012: 98).

Since Latvian translation started with religious texts the appropriate method was a close, literal, formal transposition of God's Word. This meant equivalence was sought and maintained. According to the governing trends/norms the pragmatic functions of neither the source text (Naude, 2010: 288) nor the target text were taken very seriously. The tradition of faithful rendition (Nida's (Nida, 1964) formal equivalence) survived for centuries and was the main strategy in 'serious (i.e. religious) translations' as distinct from localizations.

The quality of Latvian used by the German clergy in the beginning was not high – the author of the first dictionary Mancelius (1631) tells a story that after a sermon a Latvian had commented ‘Who knows what that German cat is saying’ (a wordplay on *kaķis* (cat) and *katķisms* (catechism)). One should take into account that perhaps the greatest problems were not so much faulty grammar or Germanic structures, but the abundance of new terms and confusing notions unknown to the locals.

All texts are translations by non-native speakers, who simultaneously form the norms of written language. There were about 60 books published in the second half of the 17th century (Plakans, 1995: 57), all of them translations. Readers now could learn the mechanism of reproducing and transforming reality, information structuring characteristic of the written text, use of the literary language (Apinis, 1991: 71).

The translation of the Bible (Ta, 1689) done by Glück (with one assistant) is considered remarkable today, bearing in mind the shortage of notions and words, the variety of dialects and patois, the scarcity of previous translation samples and the fact that Glück’s knowledge of non-standardized Latvian (as a foreign language) would have been far from perfect. However, if one can say that Luther’s translation of the Bible gave rise to the German language (Brisset, 2003: 344), the Latvian Bible translation to some extent ‘created’ Latvian, and certainly created written Latvian which broadly remained unchanged until the mid-19th century (Endzelins, 1930: 52). Suffice it to say that a totally new translation followed only in the 21st century (Bībele, 2012). This also underscores the importance of translators as individuals (Pym, 1998), as agents of change (see also further: Stender, Girgensohn, Leitāns, Rainis).

CHANGE OF PATTERN – FREE TRANSLATION/ ADAPTATIONS/LOCALIZATIONS OF SECULAR TEXTS

Religious books constituted about 90% of all books in the first half of the 18th century, but their percentage fell below 50% in the 1780s (Apinis, 1977: 92). Once other texts appeared, a different approach was practiced by the translators: the texts were freely adapted to suit the peasants’ level of education and understanding. These were translations of moralizing stories and plays, secular information concerning agriculture, gardening, medicine, cooking and more important, semi-encyclopaedic information. Most of these were translations-adaptations, localizations, domestications, compilations, rewrites. Adaptation is, perhaps, the most suitable term for these works, as they combine localization and domestication but also elements of foreignization. Thus they do not conform to the simplified dichotomy of Venuti’s (1995) domestication versus foreignization. Moreover, no ‘ethnocentric reduction’ is taking place. Domestication in the early case of Latvian was a logical approach in a situation when the target audience was semi-illiterate and had little idea of many abstract and novel phenomena.

The usual means of domestication: change of names of characters, geographical names, settings, a touch of simplified explanation and moralizing were often practiced. We can, however, observe elements of foreignization in introducing unknown notions, flora, fauna, etc. Finally, maybe paradoxically, traits of foreignization can be seen in the language used (because of the subjects and the narrators), as it differed considerably from the spoken parlance and folklore. Translation was considered a serious occupation, it was the main subject in the short span of *Academia Petrina* in Jelgava in 1776 (German Stylistics and Translation from classical languages) (Stradiņš, 1975: 67).

Among the translators, G. F. Stender stands out as a paramount representative of the new trends. Stender was a rationalist, enlightener and educator as well as the greatest authority of the time on issues of the Latvian language. Stender was the author of the first Latvian ABC, Latvian grammars, the most advanced dictionary (1789) which was used for 100 years, numerous translations, localizations and original writings. Thus, he translated German poetry, religious stories, fairytales and stories, songs. He also localized Aesop's, Phaedrus' and La Fontain's fables, German enlightener's Gellert's writings many of which actually entered Latvian folklore. Stender wrote/localized a huge and impressive popular 'peasants' encyclopedia' *Augstas gudrības grāmata* [Book of High Wisdom] (Stender 1774; (also 1776 and second edition 1796)), which was a creative localization of J. K. Gottsched's *Erste Gruende der gesammten Weltsweisheit...* (1734). Another localization of Stender (1774) *Svētās gudrības grāmatiņa* [Sacred Knowledge Booklet] was done on the basis of the Swiss theologist J. K. Lavater's *Aussichten in der Ewigkeit* (1768). For many works establishing of the authorship is difficult, generally Stender's translations/works are ascribed to him (Stradiņš, 2012: 228-229). Thus, his activities can be viewed as symbiotic: translating enlightening information in a rationalist and didactic ideology and in parallel expanding the Latvian lexis. Being an authority (language, science, translations) Stender can also be seen as a major trend and norm-setter, his habitus (Simeoni, 1998) was never repeated, only replicated on a smaller scale. The variety of nature of Stender's work can be viewed as an early example of the fluidity and the gradual blur of the categories of the translation and the original (Hermans, 1996: 43), as well as an example of the cline between the 'translation language' and the 'real', authentic language (Veisbergs, 2009). Moreover, the author/translator was to some extent the creator not only of the concrete translation text, but also of the Latvian language as such. He expanded written Latvian beyond the *Song Book*. Stender was very much aware of the duality of Latvian – he was so amazed by the abundant lexis of Latvian in the spheres of natural phenomena, flora and fauna, that his dictionary had special appendices enumerating this huge variety. At the same time he had to introduce hundreds of necessary science and philosophy terms and words. His translation method is theoretically interesting as it is really free and emancipated (he chose what to translate and how to translate), it is target oriented, adapted to the knowledge level of Latvians. Of course, there were no copyright infringement issues to be considered. It is almost impossible to state

whether many of these works are translations, localizations or original texts (see Chesterman, 1996, 1997) on the boundaries of the notion of translation). Stender's approach corresponds to a subsequent Goethe's understanding of translation as an organic change of form, beneficial growth, metamorphoses, enlightenment. These translations were not merely reproductive, but most productive, especially for the language, demonstrating an early emancipation of their agents. This issue deserves a broader study within the framework of agency and causality (Koskinen, 2010), of whether these translators were products of the age and exemplified universal laws, or they were the creators of these norms.

In the early 19th century the pattern continued. Translators were still native German speakers. Practically all texts had German sources, even when the original came from a different language. In many localizations the author's name is missing, but translator's is present. The 1830s saw the first regular newspapers and magazines. In the 19th century Latvia newspapers and magazines played an important role in the development of the native literature, there were frequent discussions of linguistic issues and practical advice for translation or composition of texts (Scholz, 1990). More sophisticated literature, mostly poetry, appeared: Schiller's 'Ode to Joy' (1804), 'The Robbers' (1818) were followed by translations of Heine, Goethe, Lessing, Sudermann (who was exceptionally popular in the 19th century (Vācu, 2005: 732), and Krilov's fables (1847). As choral singing spread, many song texts were adapted from German.

Most of the literary works belonged to the literary canon of the day, something that can be seen in comparison with the neighbouring Estonia, where the same Genoveva and Robinson books ruled the scene in the same years. Thus, 1824 saw the publication of 'Robinsons Krūziņš' (1824), a translation by Girgensohn of the extremely popular German adaptation of Defoe's 'Robinson Crusoe' (1719) by Joachim Campe 'Robinson der Jüngere' (1779). The translation was actually done earlier, as Girgensohn died in 1814. Girgensohn's translation is a landmark: this is the first novel to be translated into Latvian and the translation is faithful. The translator was advised to localize the heroes and the venues, but refused. Instead foreignizing tendencies can be observed: Girgensohn meticulously explains unknown words and proper names to the Latvian reader in footnotes, introduces loans and coins neologisms. This continues the increasing tradition of using translations to develop the language. The translation itself was later (in 1871, 1885, 1886, 1894, 1886) republished in a modified form (getting shorter and shorter) and consumed by several generations, serving as a perfect case of rewriting (Lefevere's term) and construction of the image of Robinson. The genuine Defoe's hero appeared in Latvian only in the 20th century. Incidentally in Campe's Robinson, translated at the same time in neighbouring Lithuanian, place names and proper names were Lithuanianized, the protagonist obtained Lithuanian ethnicity, and proclaimed nationalistic anti-Russian sentiments, as the Russian government had banned the use of Lithuanian. This is a similar story in many European languages (Monteiro, 2006; Dimitriu, 2006). Robinsons tended to acquire whatever traits were welcome at the moment.

Mid-19th century ‘bestsellers’ were translations by Ansis Leitāns who was also the first Latvian editor of the newspaper ‘Mājas Viesis’. He translated about 50 works, some were exceptionally popular: ‘Grāfa lielmāte Genoveva’ (1845) [‘Genovefa’ by Christoph von Schmid 1810], ‘Kara lielskungs Eistakius’ (1846), ‘Priežukalna Roze’ (1847) and were frequently republished (Genoveva was published twelve times, again with a tendency for abbreviation). His language is fluent and natural, much closer to the spoken Latvian than in the previous translations, with few German loans even from the viewpoint of today. These translations reveal a change from religious topics to love, romance and sentimentalism. The books were read and enjoyed by numerous would be Latvian writers: M. Kaudzīte, A. Upīts, J. Jaunsudrabiņš (Kiršentāle, 1979: 10). While ‘Genovefa’ was a fairly faithful translation with a few additions and omissions, some of his translations had unknown sources and were not referred to as translations, e.g. in ‘Uzticamā brūte Anniņa’ (1856) the action proceeds in Kurzeme/Courland during the Napoleonic wars, the peasant characters are Latvian, but details suggest it is composed on the basis of other sources. Books without reference to the originals, but mentioning the translators were frequent.

Other canonical identity items had even more tortuous histories. Magnus von Wolffeldt, an assessor of the Vidzeme court, published a short summary of a legend (on the basis of a document found, which, however, has not survived) in 1844. The story inspired the Baltic German poet Adelbert Cammerer (1786-1848) to compose a historical poem in the spirit of German Romanticism ‘Die Jungfrau von Treiden’ in 1848. This was translated/localized by Juris Dauge as ‘Turaidas Jumprava’ in 1857 modifying the tenor, making it more Latvian and sentimental. It became exceptionally popular and had 4 editions by 1877 (as such it was translated into Estonian). Afterwards it had several other versions (e.g. Dinsbergs. Maijas Roze in 1890), was also transferred in verse as well as an easy play produced by Teodors Hāns in 1892 and staged for 20 years running. Later the story was reworked by Rainis (1926) into the play ‘Mīla stiprāka par nāvi’ and became a symbol of Latvian identity and culture (a film and a national ballet were based on the story). The heroine Maija was gradually turned from a noble and proud German Jungfrau into a singing Latvian maid similar to the orphan-girl of folklore. Rainis when writing his famous play ‘Love is Stronger than Death’ (1927) in the postscript mentioned that ‘any Baltic nation would have liked to join this girl to theirs, however she stays a Baltic maiden/virgin, as her nationality is not known’ (Rainis, 1983: 610).

Parallel to linguistic and literary processes another national identity icon was created: national song festivals, which take their root in Germany and Switzerland in the 1840s. In 1857 a Baltic German song festival was held in Tallinn (Reval), in 1861 in Riga, in 1866 in Tallinn again. Local Estonian singing festivals start in Anseküla (1863), Jöhvi (1865), Uulu (1867) and Latvians hold them in Dikļi (1864), Dobele (1870). These are followed by national festivals: Estonian in Tartu (1869) (the programme had only 3 Estonian songs (one turned into the national anthem), others were mainly German. The first Latvian national song festival was

held in 1873 and included a mix of songs, the would-be national anthem was next to fragments of Tannheuser. Thus, within a decade a new national icon was born, with German song festivals receding and Latvian ones fast expanding in scope and ethnic ideology.

Translators often found that there was no word in the target language (Latvian) for a concept expressed in the source language – the linguistic lacunae (Schroeder, 1995: 10) had to be filled in with either a borrowed or new native lexis. In religious texts this mainly concerned specific religious items or, occasionally, alien cultural items (*lion, olive, camel*), however, as the scope and depth of translation increased, so did the amount of lexis created or borrowed. In adaptations, these could be excised or localized, in faithful translations equivalents were to be created. Thus, translation was the main source of language enrichment and growth. Nevertheless, gradually the expansion of printed texts on the one hand and the spoken language of the peasants on the other hand led to two variants of Latvian: Old Written Latvian and the spoken folk language. The translations reflected predominantly the first; they were also central in the Latvian literary polysystem (Even-Zohar, 1990), which had virtually no other written medium.

NATIONAL AWAKENING – SPREAD OF TRANSLATIONS, BIRTH OF NATIVE WRITING

The situation changed in the mid-19th century when the Latvian National Awakening started, led by neo-Latvians (nationally aware Latvians who refused to be Germanized, as former well-to-do and educated people had tended to do). Nation-building meant work in several directions – boosting of national pride (there was no national pride, if any it was the ethnically neutral stratum pride (Daija, 2010: 20-21)). It also meant turning the vernacular language into the referential language (to use Gobard's terminology (1976: 34) in an act of reclaiming identity, imbuing language with symbolic power. This aspect was even more important as Latvians had to contend with ruthless Germanization and Russification and a refusal to recognize the national liberation surge, e.g. Pastor Georg Brasche commented on Latvians: 'It is a stillborn nation. The Latvians have no national past and no history, they cannot have a future. The only character traits which distinguish them are their totally backward and crippled language... and their blinding hatred for the Germans' (Trapāns, 1989: 21) while the German Baltic researcher Kohl supposed that 'Latvians and Estonians are becoming more and more German. It is too late to turn the Latvian and Estonian dialects into civilized languages' (Kohl, 1842: 367).

The First Awakening is usually dated from 1856, when Alunāns published his 'Dziesmiņas' – a collection of quality poetry translation, including Horatio, Goethe, Schiller, Pushkin, Lermontov, Heine, a. o. with parallel original texts. The aim of the book was to prove that even the highest quality literature could

be rendered in Latvian: this was explained in the introduction and in a special chapter. This Latvian was not a kitchen language but the language of culture. Incidentally the 'unofficial Latvian anthem' 'Nevis slinkojot un pūstot' stems from this work: it was a translation of a Czech poem by František Čelakovský.

Economic issues were not very high on the agenda, though Valdemārs stated that Latvians should go to sea and get rich and laid some groundwork for this. The emphasis on the language was stronger: Alunāns proclaimed that, if Latvians held their language in respect they would have a good time on Earth.

Neo-Latvians glorified the national past as embodied in folklore. They began collecting Latvian folksongs, a life-time job for Kr. Barons, which yielded a quarter of a million dainas published around the turn of the century. Incidentally, Barons started his literary activities by translating Fellman's Estonian myths (*Paliekamdziesma*, 1987: 177). Through this accomplishment 'people recovered their lost past, restored their dignity, and strengthened their sense of collective identity' (Viķis-Freiberga, 1989: 4). Delving in their own past sparked an interest also in other nation's folklore, thus Russian, German, Estonian folktales were translated. Inspired by Macpherson's 'Ossian's songs' (a forged ancient Scottish epic) and simultaneously by the Estonian epic 'Kalevipoeg', Pumpurs took Latvian folksongs and myths as a basis for a Latvian epic, 'Lāčplēsis' (Bear-slayer). Lautenbachs-Jūsniņš surpassed it in size and form by his 'Niedrīšu Vidvuds' which, however, was less topical and popular.

It should be pointed out that neo-Latvians were in no way parochial, narrow nationalists. Many of them wrote in German and Russian, many started their literary career by writing in those languages (Valdemārs, later also Blaumanis, Poruks, Rainis). Kronvalds published his nation-building programme in German (in response to a German newspaper claims that an educated Latvian is an impossibility ('etwas Unmoegliches')) in 1872 (Kronwald, 1872), partial Latvian translation followed only in 1887. Ādolfs Alunāns wrote his history of Latvian theatre in German (Alunāns, 1910), it was translated into Latvian later (1924). Neo-Latvians also borrowed ideas of Romanticism and translated Romantic and classical works, e.g. fragments of 'Niebelungenlied' (1888), 'Odyssey' in the 1890s. Juris Alunāns, who started a certain purism against excessive German elements in the language, already in 1862 stated that in fact 'it does not matter who provides the missing words for Latvian, what matters is how', 'language changes every day but there is no doubt that it is still good Latvian' and 'no cultural language has been able to do without influence of foreign idiom' (Alunāns, 1956: 221-222).

The other trend focused on the future of the nation and the language that should service it: much scientific and educative literature had to be created. As Toury points out, the starting point is always one of a certain deficiency in the target language, 'something is missing in the target culture which should have been there and which luckily already exists elsewhere' (Toury, 1995: 27). A huge expansion in translation started, the new writers-cum-translators turned to serious literature, in order to prove that anything could be expressed in Latvian.

Thus, language became both the aim and the means of national emancipation, similar to Finnish, Estonian, Czech, Slovak and other 'new' languages and nations (Paloposki, 1998: 376) it assumed a new representative function (Prunč, 2007: 46).

While 75 Latvian books were published in 1867 (Apinis, 1977: 240), in 1884 the number had grown to 181, and by 1904 the yearly output reached 822 (Plakans, 1995: 101). As national literature proliferated the share of translations dropped somewhat, from 93% in the early 1860s to about 80% in the 80s (Apinis, 1977: 313), but it was still predominant. Sentimental literature was still popular into the late decades of the century. Even in the second half of the 19th century many translations still had changes titles and were ascribed to translators, not their authors.

A broader spectrum of source languages reduced the share of German as a source language to about 70 per cent, with Russian and English scoring about 7 per cent each. German often functioned as an intermediate language. The scope of the translations widened and the quality improved, so that in the last two decades of the 19th century adequate translations of long prose texts were widespread. The moment the translations were viewed as serious (and now done by native Latvians) faithfulness was observed. Domestication, still dominant in pulp literature, gradually terminated. Foreignization became a stable trait of Latvian translations as the source cultures were generally prestigious.

Other literary genres were created as well. Ādolfs Alunāns, the founder of Latvian theatre, after establishing the first theatre in 1868 discovered that there were only four texts of plays in Latvian (among them 'Žūpu Bērtulis' (produced in 1790). He specialized in localizing German *posses* (farce dramas) and started a translation process of Schiller's 'The Robbers', 'Kabale und Liebe', 'The Parasite', Byron's 'Manfred', then started producing similar easy Latvian plays thus laying grounds for highly developed Latvian theatre tradition: professional theatre appeared in 1886. By the end of the century Shakespeare's plays were a regular feature in Latvian theatres.

The first two Latvian novels appeared in 1879. One was Kaudzītes' 'Mērnīeku laiki' (The Time of the Land Surveyors): an epic novel of the Latvian countryside at the time of land privatization/allotting – literature experts say Gogol's 'Dead Souls' has influenced it (Kiršentāle, 1979: 27), also Cervantes' 'Don Quixote' that the authors were fond of. In the same year Māteru Juris 'Sadzīves vilņi' (under the pseudonym Teodors Rolands) appeared. It was a longer but more traditional, sentimental story of sufferings and tears. This bore a strong influence of German popular novels and stories which usually portrayed evil versus good characters, angels versus devils.

At the turn of the century the spectrum of both translated and native novels was already full, there were criminal novels, adventure novels, country novels, historical novels. All these developments exemplify the reverse vector of spreading universal culture: as there was no 'high' culture that could be

disseminated in Latvian, the educative process had to be done from the bottom up, starting with easy, adapted, localized forms and going upwards. This was achieved within half a century (Apinis, 1991: 189).

Another Latvian literary icon 'Dullais Dauka' (written in 1900) by Sudraba Edžus is in fact an unacknowledged localization of the less known story 'Antek' by a leading Polish writer Boleslaw Prus. The Polish story itself was translated in 1903 by A. Skroders but the close correspondence was missed by the general public. The Latvian story is shorter, more compact, there are some significant changes, but it does contain virtually identical passages and the tenor and inner rhythm are identical. It is noteworthy that Sudraba Edžus knew Polish and translated from it. What is notable is that the story was written in 1900 when the translator-cum-author pattern had changed and it might thus suggest a certain degree of plagiarism (Augstkalns, 1931).

FROM LITERALNESS TO FREER TRANSLATIONS

Around the turn of the 20th century Latvian literary scene had reached the level of the contemporary European literature, it now followed Western trends and was part of them. Individual authors now aligned with various imported literary trends. Translations were naturally the source of these ideas and leanings, and a way of honing their skills. There are few Latvian authors that have not been prolific translators; Akuraters translated Ibsen and Wilde, Apsīšu Jēkabs translated Andersen, Valdess/Bērziņš – Estonian literature and Conrad, Valdis translated Gorky, Chekhov and Merimee, Plūdons did German and Russian poetry and Nietzsche, Mauriņa translated Roland, Undset, Dostoyevski, Hardy, Camus; Ezeriņš translated Wilde, Skalbe – Hamsun, Rozītis – Russian literature, Wilde, 'Daphnis and Chloe'. The prolific Latvian realist/naturalist novelist A. Upits was as prolific in translating realists and naturalists Gogol, Krilov, Tolstoy, Flaubert, France, Heine, Wilde, H. Mann; Aspazija translated Sienkewicz's 'Quo Vadis?'; Jaunsudrabiņš translated Hamsun, De Coster, Janševskis translated Heine, V. Eglītis translated Bryusov; Virza translated Hugo and French poetry, Laicens translated Finnish 'Kalevala'. It is noteworthy that the greatest Latvian tale writer K. Skalbe started with Wilde's tales, Ezeriņš, the greatest Latvian novella writer, began with translations of Boccaccio's novellas.

Now that there were national writers on their own account (also practicing translation) they were freer in their translations, using Latvian better and respecting the source text less. Another reason why many outstanding native writers turned to translation (which seems to be a general tendency at the period (Albrecht, 1998: 279)) was the relatively high proportion of poetry texts on the Latvian translation menu. Here the greatest Latvian poet and playwright Rainis is a centrepiece. He started his literary career in late 1880s with translations of Pushkin, Ibsen, Ovid, Burns. Later he translated several big and important works of Goethe: a congenial translation of 'Faustus' (1897/8), 'Prometheus',

'Iphigenia', Schiller's 'Maria Stuart', 'Wilhelm Tell', 'Robbers', Byron's 'Cain', Shakespeare's 'King Lear', 'Anthony and Cleopatra', Maupassant's, Dostoyevski's, Chekhov's, Sudermann's and others. His translation of 'Faustus' was hailed as a remarkable example of Modern Latvian overcoming the ancient divide between its two language varieties. Nevertheless, it was criticized by the leading Latvian linguist Muehlenbach as too free and imaginative in its use of Latvian; this was the first serious translation criticism to emerge. Around this period there dawns an understanding of the importance of the translations and translators as movers and fixers of the development of the language and certain deliberate (and controversial) attempts to regulate this process, e.g. Muehlenbach's and Rainis' dispute. Similar processes can be observed in other 'new languages', e.g. Finnish (Pantermoeller, 2011). It is only natural that Rainis imbibed classical Greek and Roman writings, Shakespeare, and especially Goethe, motives from Dante (woman), Unamuno (immortality). Rainis clearly stated that translation is an exercise in language use and development and 'original literature then will make use of the new ideas provided by translations, adapt them to the local conditions and appropriate (*piesavināt*) them for the nation' [1887] (Literārais, 1957: 42).

Another Latvian writer and poet, Poruks proclaimed Goethe to be the cultural canon of the renaissance of European literature (Poruks, 1897: 4), whose ideas should be adopted un 'imported' into Latvian culture (Vecgrāvis, 2002: 213). It is noteworthy that Poruks' writings abound in internationalisms and loans, many of which even today look bizarre. It is worth noting that even both native founding fathers of Latvian linguistics tried their hand in translation: Muehlenbach translated Homer's 'Odyssey' and Endzelīns translated Tacitus's 'Germania', demonstrating their perception of proper translation and proper use of Latvian. Translation criticism appeared as a genre, it was almost solely focussed on the quality of Latvian: a trait that has been more permanent than any others.

The early 20th century saw translations from French, and French influence in the original literature. This also affected the pattern of translation: it liberated itself from the Germanic literalness. Thus, when Rainis translated Alexandre Duma's 'The Count of Monte Cristo' he dealt with it in a very liberal way, cutting out the less interesting passages, according to the French tradition. This could be viewed as another watershed from fidelity and literalness to a freer and more dynamic use of language (unless one views the early localizations as such). Rainis also grew interested in Eastern thought and ancient poetry (Mongolian, Persian, Armenian, Indian, Chinese, etc.). These poems were translated using German as an intermediary language. He was particularly fond of the ancient Chinese poet Li Tai-pe, using German translation (Li Tai-pe, 1915) as the source for his translations.

The 1920s (when Latvia was independent) saw a huge expansion of national writing, and also an enormous parallel growth in translations, as well as an expansion beyond the traditional big quartet of source languages (German,

Russian, English and French). Interest turned to the neighbouring literatures of Lithuania, Estonia and Scandinavia. Baltic cooperation, partly supported by governments, created a large turnover of these translations. These new trends can be exemplified by the translation of the Estonian classic Anton Tammsaare's monumental 'Tõde ja õigus' (Truth and Justice) as 'Zeme un mīlestība' (Land and Love) by the Latvian writer and translator Elīna Zālīte. She asked the author's permission for a change of title. The book was a bestseller: it ran to 5000 copies with a second impression of 5000 (more than in Estonian) and was also republished in America in late 1950s. The twenties also saw translations from the Eastern languages – Chinese, Arabic, Persian, Japanese, extending the scope of strategies. Translations were done by experts of the languages, e.g. P. Šmits, who had studied in China, translated Chinese tales. Many masters of native Latvian literature still practiced translation, to hone the literary skills, to borrow ideas and, of course, to earn extra money. One could also see certain professionalization of the translators. Apart from quality literature, numerous pulp and popular literature translations were also done, e.g. 106 titles of Hedwig Courths-Mahler were translated in the interwar period (Karulis, 1997: 10), frequently annotated as 'free reproductions'. At the lower end, the *Old Vāverlī* dime novels about an American trapper were popular (some quotes and expressions have folklorised in the language, though hardly anyone has read these novels today). These had no connection with the novels of Walter Scott or Cooper but came from the German series (Heftroman) *Der neue Lederstrumpf*, published by Dresdner Roman Verlag in 1912-25. No author and no translator was ever mentioned.

SOVIET PERIOD – REIGN OF STANDARDS AND NORMS

The Soviet period, especially after Stalin's death, saw many quality translations of various classics, as well as extensive translations from many hitherto less known languages, however, Russian was frequently used as an intermediate language. Growing Russification also meant that technical and administrative texts would be increasingly accessible in Russian only, translators mostly dealt with fiction texts. Translation scene was Moscow controlled (Silis, 2009: 183), and most of translations were of Soviet literature and classics. Modern Western literature was considered suspicious and ideologically dangerous. Fidelity approach was paramount, accuracy and norms were a hallmark of proper translation; standard use of Latvian was demanded (Blumberga, 2008: 48). Sometimes omissions were practiced for ideological/manipulative reasons (Zauberga, 2003; Lange, 2012), sometimes editorial footnotes explained ambiguous places. Though politics determined what could be translated and how, the resulting product despite the censorship sometimes undermined the communist's goals. A fine-tuned system of ambiguous subtexts and undercurrents developed behind the monolithic official façade. A considerable number of retranslations were done, mostly of classics, making them more

accurate and using more modern language. Literary translation gradually became a profession, while Latvian writers gradually moved out. The abundance of quality Latvian poetry was to a large extent tied up with translation: 'Flourishing of poetry always goes hand in hand with poetry translation, beginning with Auseklis and Rainis. The same in our youth. Everybody translated poetry – Ojārs Vācietis, Vizma Belševica, Imants Ziedonis' (Auziņš, 2012: 163). Translation criticism remained within the boundaries of the target language (Latvian) quality. Some high quality translations were done abroad by émigrés in the Latvian diaspora, e.g. the Bible translation (1965), Joyce's 'Ulysses' (1960, 1993, 2012), Hesse's 'Narcissus und Goldmund' by Dzintars Sodums, Orwell's '1984' and other works translated by Voldemārs Kārklīņš, translations by Zenta Mauriņa, Veronika Strēlerte a.o.

POSTMODERN, POST-SOVIET PERIOD – CHANGE OF NORMS AND CONVENTIONS

When Latvia regained its independence in 1991, Latvian was re-established as the sole official language of the state. This led to an enormous growth in the volume of translated information (Veisbergs, 1995) and a major proportional shift from expressive (fiction) texts to appellative and informative ones.

Most translations are not in a literary or even book form. The tradition of adaptation has found a new creative outlet in advertising as well as in software localization. The collapse of the Soviet Union led to a fast linguistic reorientation, since most information now comes from the West and via English. Within 10 years the source language pattern changed radically: if in 1985 the proportion of books translated from Russian and English was 15 : 1, in 1994 the proportion was 1 : 6 (Nitiņa and Veisbergs, 2008: 268). It has stayed the same since then.

Foreign language teaching distribution was altered. Translation language/translationese phenomena spilled over into general use of Latvian, changing many Latvian norms and conventions (Veisbergs, 2007). While in the past this was a gradual and extended process, as in many languages, e.g. German (Koller, 2000: 113), it was now fast and noticeable even to laymen. Most modern texts (and translations) are characterized by hybridity (Wolf, 2000) which extends the global village not only into translations and translated texts but even into most original texts. We live in a translated world where international culture competes and interacts with local forms. Discursive similarities appear, irrespective of the language in which a text has been created and 'transnational' and 'translational' concepts have become synonyms (Zauberga, 1999: 265). While stressing the hybrid character of modern media and intercourse we by no means want to suggest this is something new: borrowing of linguistic elements and ideas and memes has a long history, the intensity, however, is greater today.

Finally a change of the cultural paradigm (from traditional to postmodern) has occurred. Translation has become a huge industry and profession in its own right, though of a varying status. Translation criticism has gradually overcome its traditional linguistic limitations. Latvia and other post-soviet states have sometimes been considered under postcolonial studies (Moore, 2001). This can, in theory, be applied to three periods of the Latvian translation and literary polysystem: the early German-dominated period, the 19th century under tsarist Russia, and finally the soviet period. In all of them elements of colonial hegemony, suppression and cultural imposition can be discerned. This being said, the German period anchored Latvian culture in the European mainstream, something the Russian imperialism could not erase. The usual opposition of a civilized metropolis versus primitive periphery does not apply in to Latvia in the soviet period (Račevskis, 2006: 166); indeed, the opposite is more likely. But, since the 'colonial process itself begins in language' (Ashcroft, 1995: 283) the Latvian preoccupation with their language and their language-centred identity, suggest that elements of colonialism and post-colonialism can be discerned.

It has been estimated that about 70 % of everything that the average Latvian reads today is translation. This, perhaps, reflects the traditional divide between the large and small languages when it comes to the percentage of translations among published books, e.g. Britain 3%, Germany 14%, France 18%, Sweden 60% (Albrecht, 1998: 337). There has been an enormous growth in the volume of translated information and a major shift from expressive (fiction) texts to appellative and informative ones. Translation has again become the main vehicle of language development, just as it did in Latvian's early stages.

CONCLUSIONS

Translations have played an exceptionally important role in constructing Latvian identity, language, culture and nation. They have been central and most influential in Latvian literary polysystem. Translations have most often constituted the majority of texts produced and available in Latvian. The Latvian translation scene has grown in scope, depth and width, starting from an almost exclusively German and religious menu, spreading to other big languages (Russian, English, French), then addressing neighbouring literatures and finally turning to more exotic and far-away cultures. Translations have been deliberately used to enhance and spread the language. Nonfiction translation has always been governed by the main contact language at any given time, consecutively German, Russian and English, These have also been the major influences on the Latvian language *per se*. the Latvian translation scene also demonstrates rapidly shifting canons depending on the extralinguistic situation, movements, vogue, target audiences and personalities of translators. Translation criticism, which has almost always focussed on the quality of the Latvian used also testifies to the language-centred approach.

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