

THE TRANSLATION SCENE IN INDEPENDENT LATVIA BETWEEN THE WARS (1918–1940)

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Latvia's brief period of independence (1918/20–1940) saw book publishing on a massive scale. The range of source languages was growing, with English slightly ahead of German in the pre-war years (German was the main intermediary language), followed by French and Russian. The literature translated was extremely varied in kind and quality: the choice of works to be translated was very much in the hands of translators and publishers. With the advent of cheap books, print runs grew longer and high-quality literature became accessible to a wider public. The share of translations among books fluctuated, although there were consistently more translated novels than domestically produced fiction.

A large number of translators were also well-known writers in their native Latvian. Members of other professions frequently produced specialised translations and some individuals became professional translators from favourite source languages. Translator visibility grew with the status of the works translated. Translation criticism remained limited, mainly focusing on the quality of the Latvian, and lambasting pulp-literature translation in general.

INTRODUCTION

The translation scene during the independence period (1918/20–1940) has been largely neglected in Translation Studies, although the literary connections with Baltic, Swedish and German sources have been explored (Latvieši 2008, Stepiņš 1983, Kalnačs 2005). There are some general studies of the literary scene in Latvia during this period, mostly statistical and focusing on original literature and publishers (Grāmata 1999). The translation-related issues of this period were generally ignored during the Soviet era. Karulis's serious and comprehensive study of Latvian publishing paid little attention to translation processes (Karulis 1967).

Secular vernacular translation has often helped to create 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 the Latvian language and culture (Levits 2012, 73–74). As nation-building began late, various elements deemed necessary for nationhood had to be imported, adapted and modified. This was usually done through the translation and dissemination of new ideas. Thus two elements worked in combination: the *defective* stance against the alien (absorbing everything that is missing) and the *defensive* attitude (defending and absorbing through transformation) (Robyns 1994). Translation was used as a way of influencing the target culture and furthering literary, political and personal interests. The various people involved in this process can be viewed as *agents of translation* (Milton, Bandia 2009). Among them were Latvian writers and poets, most of whom were prolific translators in addition to writing their own works. Generally, they started with translations, where they looked for new ideas and trends to be adapted to the Latvian scene. Thus, Latvian identity and language formation have translations at their very core (Veisbergs 2012).

PUBLISHING IN GENERAL

Before World War I, publishing in Latvia had rapidly developed, reaching 869 titles and a sizeable average print run of 3,300 in 1913 (Karulis 1967, 140). Publishing went into a sharp decline when war broke out, aggravated by censorship, the evacuation of printing houses and a shortage of paper. The number of books fell below 300 in 1914 and 100 in 1915 (mostly small propaganda brochures). In 1916 most new books consisted of political propaganda, calendars and religious literature (some translated). In 1917 and 1918, around 200 titles were published per year. In 1919 there was a brief period of Soviet rule, during which publishers were nationalised and most publications were propaganda.

Once *de facto* independence was established, publishing picked up. 1920 saw around 750 books, 93% in Latvian, among them 194 calendars! (Karulis 1991, 90). Censorship was largely abolished, although the authoritarian regime reinstated it for a short period from 1934. What censorship there was, mostly focused on moral questions, for example the banning of D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Extremist literature was also banned but was still imported by Soviet or Nazi bootleggers.

In 1921, 719 titles were published and by 1924 the number had doubled to 1,536. Works by Shakespeare, Tagore, Wilde, Kipling, Conan Doyle, Wells, Heine, Kleist, Goethe, Maupassant and others were published. The early 1920s are to a large extent the heyday of pulp literature, both translated and local. The *Old Wawerli* (Old

1923–1925) dime novels about an American trapper (110 in total) were extremely popular, with quotes and expressions from them still in the language even though hardly anyone has read them today. Other popular series at the time include numerous volumes of pirate stories (Sem 1924), Frank Allan's detective stories (Franks 1923–1924), the German *Harry Piel* detective stories (Harijs 1923), and the Robert Kraft *Detektiv Nobody* adventure stories (Krafts 1923–24) with the translator named as Pastarīts (a pseudonym for Kārlis Dzelsskalns/Dzelzkalns/Dzelzkalējs). Pastarīts later translated eight volumes of Sherlock Holmes stories (Šerloka 1923). Domestic pulp literature developed in parallel with culture transfer.

State involvement increased after the authoritarian regime was established in 1934. Though state support mainly went to original Latvian writing and reference literature, some serious translations were also beneficiaries, such as *La Divina Commedia* (Dante 1921a), the Estonian epic *Kalevipoegs* (1929) and works by Thucydides (Tūcidids 1930).

A total of 1,918 titles were published in 1925 and this figure held steady until the global economic crisis severely hit publishing. In 1925, translations constituted around 15% of published titles, among them serious works by Poe, Shaw, Tammsaare, Hamsun, Plato, Wilde, Scott (*Ivanhoe*), Swift (*Gulliver's Travels*), but also adaptations of foreign works, such as a popular introduction to the Theory of Relativity by Liberts “reproduced according to Schmidt” (Relativitates 1925). The popular original German version, *Das Weltbild der Relativitätstheorie: Allgemeinverständliche Einführung in die Einsteinsche Lehre von Raum und Zeit*, was published in 1922 by Harry Schmidt.

The one-lats book was introduced in 1926 (in fact a similar idea can be seen in Ansis Gulbis' *Universālā bibliotēka* launched in 1911) by the enterprising young Helmārs Rudzītis, whose company Grāmatu Draugs sold both classic and contemporary fiction for one lats. The scheme turned out to be very successful: the first year saw a total of 24 titles and sold 18,000 copies, including Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Balzac, Strindberg, Maupassant, Zola and Kellerman. Latvia fell into a reading frenzy. Initially, most of the books were translations: of the first 24 books only four were Latvian originals. Latvia had not signed up to the Berne Convention, so there were no royalty costs until 1938. The necessity to quickly produce new books meant translators had to work fast; sometimes a single title was split between several translators to speed things up. For example, a book on Nordic exploration had three translators (Andrē 1921), as did *Buddenbrooks* (see below). Rudzītis also published collected works by Nordic writers, encyclopaedias on accessible subjects (health, art history, geography and travel, a youth encyclopaedia, practical tips) and other reference literature. Other publishers

(such as Gulbis) soon appeared. They were less successful, but competition served to drive quality up. From 1926–1928, 34 publishers produced 444 cheap titles, of which Grāmatu Draugs produced 101 and Gulbis 62 (Galdiņš 1928, 386). These one-lats books helped fill the gap between pulp literature and elitist, classic literature.

The Great Depression hit publishing hard; the number of titles fell to 1,513 in 1930, and to 797 in 1932. After the crisis, the situation stabilised and print runs grew to 2,500–3,000. Apart from quality literature, popular literature translations were also abundant (56 Edgar Wallace crime novels translated from English, and 106 titles by Hedwig Courths-Mahler translated from German in the interwar period (Karulis 1997, 10)), frequently annotated as ‘free reproductions’.

In the late 1930s, Latvia ranked second in Europe after Denmark for titles published per 100,000 inhabitants (Denmark: 86, Latvia: 82). Altogether 27,000 titles were published during the period of independence, and the average print run was 2,500–2,800 (Zanders 2013, 337). The largest print runs were for schoolbooks, calendars and translated fiction. A total of 83% of titles were in Latvian, and print runs and book sizes were growing (Skujenieks 1938).

The publishing industry in the 1920s and 1930s is characterised by several large companies: *Valters un Rapa*, *Grāmatu Draugs*, *Ansis Gulbis*, *Jānis Roze*, *Jessens* and *Orients*, each of which had different agendas (political, artistic, volume, quality) as well as a multitude of small publishers. There were 479 publishers in 1939, among them some 200 occasional publishers (Ķiploks 1942, 145; Karulis 1967, 183).

Literary journals and magazines such as *Latvju Grāmata* (1922–1931), *Sējējs*, *Burtnieks*, *Daugava*, *Ritums*, *Domas*, *Trauksme*, *Grāmatnieks* and *Ilustrēts žurnāls* discussed literary issues, problems and quality, but the focus was mainly on native literature and news from abroad (see under Translation Criticism).

TRANSLATIONS

Translations accounted for between 10 and 20% of all publications. Though translations never outnumbered domestic titles, the figures show a different picture when subtypes of works are considered. A rough estimate in a study of the early 1930s shows translations accounting for about 40% of belles-lettres over a five-year period but, when print runs and volumes are taken into account, the figures turn in favour of translations. In novels, the proportion is 60 to 40 in favour of imported works. However, in poetry the ratio is in favour of Latvian by 90 to 10. The statistical study then becomes more biased and subdivides novel translations into classics (13), modern

classics (around 60) and around 200 “modern kiosk belles-lettres boulevard novels”. Translations were often the work of unqualified or even unskilled people (Literāriskais 1931, 481–483). Regrettably, the study does not subdivide native works, implying that they are all considered high-quality. A more detailed review in the late 1930s, entitled “163 novels”, informs us that the yearly output of novels consisted of 61 translated novels published as books, 38 novels translated in instalments in newspapers, and 35 in collections. The figures for Latvian novels are 24 in book form and 39 as instalments or collections. The author laments that Latvian writers do not produce adventure novels (Erss 1939). R. Egle has calculated that between 1918 and 1938, there were 1,999 original books and 1,907 translations (Egle 1989).

Latvia signed up to the Berne Convention in May 1938 (Likums 1936). Until then translation had been open to anyone, without permission or royalties or even the need to point out that a text was a translation. This certainly made translation a more commercially attractive line of business.

The range of source languages was gradually growing. While German was the main source and intermediate language after the First World War, two decades later English was slightly ahead of German with Russian, French and the Scandinavian languages following. This was a change from the total dominance of German at the end of the 19th century (and even after the National Awakening in the mid-19th century, whose ideology was to a large extent anti-German). The 1920s saw an expansion beyond the traditional source languages of German, Russian, English and French. Interest turned to the neighbouring literatures of Lithuania, Estonia and Scandinavia. Baltic cooperation, partly state supported, led to a large quantity of translations. This was exemplified by the translation of the Estonian classic, Anton Tammsaare’s monumental ‘*Tõde ja õigus*’ (Truth and Justice) by the Latvian writer and translator Zālīte. The book was a bestseller: it ran to 5,000 copies in 1936, with a further 5,000 in 1937 (total sales exceeded those in Estonia).

It should be noted that the vast majority of translations were fiction, biography and history; the rest were religious books, popular science and practical advice books. The technical sector was covered by original Latvian books, many of which were covert translations and adaptations. It is worth remembering that professionals and most educated people could read German and Russian in the original. Encyclopaedic works naturally involved much borrowing and translating on the part of the authors as well (see below). A 4-volume encyclopaedia of world literature included numerous translations of literary samples (Egle 1930–1934). Apart from book format, there were many translations in newspapers and magazines. For example, the most popular

Latvian tabloid, *Jaunākās Ziņas*, often published instalments of translated novels, mostly entertaining or romantic pulp literature by now forgotten authors. Another popular tabloid, *Brīvā zeme*, though giving preference to serialisations of Latvian literature, also published instalments of foreign novels. The newspapers did not mention the translators. Some of these translations were also published in book form, and occasionally the author's name was Latvianised inconsistently: *Max du Venzīt* is *Vezī* in the newspaper but *Wēsi* in the book (1936).

A new translation of the New Testament was published in 1937. Eleven translators translated it from the original Greek. It was printed in the new orthography, the print run was 25,000 copies and it sold out within a year and a half. Another 25,000 copies followed in 1939. The New Testament thus became Latvia's bestselling book.

CHOICE OF TRANSLATION

The choice of what to translate was in the hands of the publishers. While some were investing in classics and serious books, others went for profit and published pulp paperbacks, and others tried to occupy the middle ground. Translators were often better informed about literary trends than publishers, and Germany often served as a model: what was translated there was soon translated into Latvian. Rudzītis started his new venture with a single translator, Kārklīšs, and at first they decided what to translate for themselves. Later, other translators brought new ideas and manuscripts. As there was no editing or proofreading at first, standards were sometimes poor. Thus a novel by Sudermann (Zudermans 1927) is subtitled "translation edited by Pāvils Rozītis" (Rozītis was a writer himself and did some occasional translations). Most likely the translator had totally failed and an editor was needed to save the book in time for the deadline. We do not know who the translator was. The system was later improved and a sound team of expert translators and editors selected. When the publishers felt there was sufficient interest, they published a major series of translations, for example of Nordic authors (Hamsun 15 vol., Lagerlöf 15 vol., Undset 16 vol.) and Dostoyevsky (16 vol.).

TRANSLATION SOURCE LANGUAGES

The proportion of translations from various languages changed over the two decades under consideration.

German literature translations totalled around 700 (including Austrian and Swiss authors) and retained their lead during the two decades of Latvian independence. They

were, however, surpassed by English in the second half of the 1930s. In addition, much translation from lesser-known languages was done via German. Classics such as Goethe and the Grimms' fairy tales were staples, and Kleist, Heine, Schnitzler, Heinrich and Thomas Mann were popular. Later attention shifted to more contemporary German literature (Kalnačs 2005, 627). The late 1920s saw translations of the collected works of Kellermann and Sudermann. Kästner was popular in the 1930s, and Remarque attracted much interest. Top of the German list, however, was Hedwig Courths-Mahler with 106 titles in the mid-thirties (Karulis 1997, 10), peaking at 34 titles published in 1934 alone. These translations were frequently annotated as 'free reproductions' and constituted about a fifth of German translations. There were also serious translations, such as Nietzsche's *Thus spoke Zarathustra*, translated by the outstanding Latvian poet Plūdons (Nīcše 1939). It is interesting that Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* was translated by a team of translators: Lizete Skalbe, (writer turned translator) Štrāls, Zelma Kroder (Manns 1930) with Štrāls harmonising their styles (Rudzītis 1997, 91).

English (around 650 translations) was a rare source language in the early days: in 1915 there was a translation of Conan Doyle stories, and in 1919 a translation of H.G. Wells. In the late 1920s we see around ten translations per year, including works by Shakespeare, Kipling and numerous translations of Oscar Wilde (it is worth pointing out the first English-Latvian dictionary was published in 1924). Later the number of English translations overtakes that of German, and works by Maugham, Cronin, Milne, Lofting, Walpole, Twain (collected works), Poe, Dreiser, London (two editions of collected works in 14 and 30 volumes), Mayne Reid (10 volumes), and Galsworthy (7 titles) were popular. Some Shakespeare plays were published and an academic edition of his complete works was started, but only the first volume (5 plays) was published before the Soviet occupation (Viljama 1938).

Russian translations (around 350) picked up in the mid-1920s and focused on Russian classics. There are many translations of Chekhov, Turgenev (collected works), Tolstoy (collected works), children's tales and Dostoyevsky in the second half of the 1920s. After that, Russian translations decline in number and apart from some classics (Dostoyevsky's collected works in 16 volumes) focus mostly on Russian adventure, crime and occult stories involving émigrés, such as nine novels by Olga Bebutova and the nearly 20 novels by Vera Krizhanovskaya (Крыжановская, Вера Ивановна, pseudonym Rochester) that were published in the 1930s (Krischanowska 1932). Russian was also the second most common intermediary language for translations from less known languages. Some schoolbooks and medical texts were translated from Russian in the early 1920s.

French translations saw a steep increase and then declined: translations per year averaged above 15 in the 1920s but below 10 in the 1930s. In all over 240 titles were translated over the two decades, giving a good coverage of both classic and modern French literature. Maupassant was the most widely translated author, clocking up 38 books by 1933 (he was also the first to have his collected works translated). A record of sorts was set when 12 volumes of Allain's and Souvestre's *Fantômas* were published in a single year (1933). The most frequent translators were Kroders, Ezeriņš, Upīts and Virza (the last three being notable writers in their own right). Of these, Virza produced the most congenial translations since he mostly translated poets and writers close to his own stylistic taste. Translation from French includes around 10 Belgian titles, among them Simenon, and Charles de Coster's *Légende d'Ulenspiegel* translated by Jaunsudrabiņš (Kostērs 1927). Interestingly, the same work was translated in an abridged version by another Latvian writer residing in the USSR, Sudraba Edžus (Kostērs 1936).

Norwegian, amazingly, was the fourth most frequent source language with around 90 translations, chiefly Hamsun (collected works), Undset (collected works) and Ibsen. The main translators were Lizete Skalbe, Krolls, Kliene and Akuraters. Similar literary tastes and mentalities may account for this, or perhaps the fact that some literary Latvians had emigrated to Norway after the unsuccessful 1905 revolution.

Swedish followed with around 60 translations, many in the early 1920s, followed by another wave in the 1930s. The most popular writers were Lagerlöf, with 36 books (including her collected works in 15 volumes). Other popular authors were Strindberg, the Swedish-speaking Finnish writer Salminen and Axel Munthe, whose *Story of San Michele* (Munte 1935/6) reached three editions. Most of the translations from Swedish were done by Kliene.

Polish is represented by over 40 titles, including the collected works of Sienkiewicz in 24 volumes.

Italian translations numbered over 30. It is noteworthy that Italian translations started early, perhaps due to the fact that Italy was the first major power to recognise the new Latvian state. Apart from Dante, there are quite a few small translations and plays. *La Divina Commedia* was published by the Ministry of Education in 1921 (Dante 1921a), followed by a work dedicated to the 600th anniversary of Dante's death (Dante 1921b) which was republished in a revised version in 1936 and 1937 (Dante 1936, 1937). Some translations were done from German, some were free adaptations (Deledda 1937, Kollodi 1924). The main translators from Italian were Kroders, Grēviņš, Krolls, Kārklīņš, Māsēns, Diženajo and Lessiņa.

Estonian translations exceeded 30. Small booklets of stories by Tuglas were popular in the early 1920s. Later came larger works by Tammsaare translated by Zālīte: she also translated the Estonian epic *Kalevipoeg* (1929) as well as many Finnish works. **Finnish** accounts for over 30 translations. The Finnish epic *Kalevala* was done by Laicens (Kalevala 1924). Salminen (a Finn writing in Swedish) and Sillanpää were also popular.

There are around 30 books translated from **Danish**, with Andersen's fairy tales predominating: regular issues of 14 titles and his collected works were translated by Apsīšu Jēkabs with the translator's comments. Most were older translations, presumably from German.

Czech translations amount to under 20, of which Hašek and Čapek were the most popular. Translations were usually done through an intermediary language and are not of high quality (see further). Belkovskis translated three works directly from Czech.

Lithuanian, although a related language and Latvia's neighbour, was less translated, with a total of 16 titles. A bulky Lithuanian prose anthology was published in 1935 (Lietava 1935), containing short works by 73 authors, with three introductions, including one by the translator (Emīlija Prūsa). However, the choice of authors was somewhat subjective and some stories were shortened. The translator's introduction apologised for these shortcomings, blaming haste and bad planning. Numerous short stories and poems appeared in newspapers and journals.

Spanish is represented by about 15 titles, including several editions of Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. The first was an abridged version translated from Russian by Birznieks-Upīts (Servantes 1924). Another abridged translation followed in 1937 (Servantess 1937), followed soon after by a full translation from Spanish (Servantess 1937–1938) by Konstantīns Raudive, who also published some other notable works by Unamuno, Blasco and Ortega.

Hungarian accounts for around 15 translations, most of which were translated using an intermediary language, usually German (Kermendijs 1938), or even French (Feldes 1937).

Dutch saw only 4 titles translated, of which Herman de Man's *The Rising Waters*, translated by Jonase, received acclaim (de Mans 1939)

Classical **Latin** translations always attracted much effort and attention. Many were translated with commentary for teaching purposes, such as the works of Livy, Phaedrus, Cicero, Virgil and Caesar. Others were meant for general interest: Plautus (Ģiezens), Caesar, Horace (Straubergs), Ovid, Virgil and Apuleius. The translators were usually noted philologists.

More than 10 classical **Greek** authors were translated, mostly by Ģiezens, Straubergs and Garais: Aeschylus, Aristotle, Sophocles, Longus, Homer (*Iliad* and *Odyssey*), Xenophon, Plato, Socrates and Thucydides. These were generally translations from the original, except in a couple of cases when the translation gave the name of the translator and also stated that Straubergs had edited or compared it to the original Greek (Sofokla 1920, Longa 1927).

The 1920s also saw translations of Eastern classics, introducing Chinese, Arabic, Persian and Japanese literature to Latvia. Some translations were done by experts such as P. Šmits, who had studied in China and translated **Chinese** tales (Ķīniešu 1936). Other translations were done using an intermediary language – usually German. For example, *The One Thousand and One Nights* was translated by Kroders (Tūkstots 1938) with an introduction by Enno Littmann (Littmann had published a German translation in six volumes in 1921–28).

There are several translations of **Japanese** literature. An early translation of Japanese poetry was published by Švābe, who had just returned from the Far East. Several books of Japanese fairy tales were published later. Japanese texts were also translated via German: the play *Das Kirschblütenfest* by Klabund (Klabunds 1929) was translated from the German by Kroders as *Ķiršu ziedu svētki*, Klabund being a pseudonym of Alfred Henschke, who had freely recreated Takeda Izumo's work.

TRANSLATORS

Original writers as translators

Most educated people in the 1920s had good knowledge of Russian or German having used them to study at school and university. It was therefore natural to use them as sources of translation and inspiration. Moreover, many notable Latvian writers (Valdemārs, Blaumanis, Rainis, etc.) actually started out writing in a foreign tongue. The most notable trendsetter was the greatest Latvian poet and playwright, Rainis, who started his literary career in the late 1880s with translations of Pushkin, Ibsen, Ovid and Burns. Later he translated several major works by Goethe, Schiller, Byron, Shakespeare, Maupassant, Dostoyevsky, Chekhov, Sudermann and others. His translation of 'Faust' was hailed as a remarkable example of modern Latvian. Rainis confessed that translations were a way of earning money, but he also clearly stated that translation was an exercise in language use and development: "Originals never exercise the deft use of language that translations do" (Rainis 1986, 436) 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” (Literārais 1957, 42). 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. In the last decade of his life Rainis translated Calderon and Byron’s *Cain*.

Many prominent Latvian writers practised translation to hone their literary skills, to borrow ideas and, of course, to earn extra money. Around the turn of the 20th century, the Latvian literary scene had converged with contemporary European literature. Translations were a major source of new ideas and trends, and few notable Latvian authors were not prolific translators; Akuraters translated Ibsen, Twain, Hebbel and Wilde; Valdess/Bērziņš translated Estonian literature; Valdis translated Gorky, Chekhov and Mérimée; Plūdons did German and Russian poetry and Nietzsche; Mauriņa translated Rolland, Undset, Dostoyevsky, Hardy and Camus; Ezeriņš translated Wilde, Stendahl and others; Rozītis did Russian literature as well as Wilde; Sudermann translated Longus’s *Daphnis and Chloe*. The Latvian realist-naturalist novelist Upīts was prolific in translating Gogol, Krilov, Tolstoy, Flaubert, France, Heine, Wilde, H. Mann and Giovagnoli; Jaunsudrabiņš translated Hamsun, Maupassant and De Coster; V. Eglītis translated Bryusov; Virza translated Hugo, Flaubert and French poetry; Laicens translated the Finnish *Kalevala*, Arab tales and tales from Africa, Australia and the Pacific; Ādamsons did Wilde and Byron; Grots translated Sinclair, Wells, Hašek, Žeromski, Yesenin and Blok. Austriņš did Merezhkovsky, Tolstoy and Turgenev. Zālīte translated Tammsaare, Kivi and other Finnish authors. Veselis translated Plutarch, Reymont, Zola, Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky. The poet Krūza translated Pushkin and Polish poetry. Mihelsons translated Dumas, Busch and Wolf, as well as some nonfiction by Casson and Marden. The poet and literarian Kārlis Eliass did some translations from French and English. It is noteworthy that the greatest Latvian fairy-tale writer, Kārlis Skalbe, started with Wilde’s tales and Ezeriņš, the greatest Latvian novella writer, began with translations of Boccaccio’s novellas. As writers they were freer in their translations and less respectful of the source text. Another reason why many outstanding native writers and poets turned to translation (which seems to be a general tendency of that period) was the Latvians’ voracious appetite for translated poetry. The nuanced novella writer Ezeriņš says of his translation of Stendahl’s *The Red and the Black*: “It had to be done in such haste that I am ashamed to put my full name to it.” The prominent critic Veselis was pretty damning in his view of Ezeriņš’s work. Because he did not translate from the original languages, his renderings include many mistakes, superficialities and incongruities with the source texts. Furthermore, there are several omissions in his translation of Wilde (Veselis 1925, 84).

Professional and semi-professional translators

Apart from Latvian writers and occasional translators, a number of professional translators gradually emerged, usually combining translation with some other literary work as critics, publishers or smaller-scale writers. These were accompanied by learned professionals such as academic philologists, historians and philosophers who frequently translated classical literature and philosophical works. Even the two founding fathers of Latvian linguistics tried their hand at translation: Mühlenbach translated Homer's *Odyssey* before the war and Endzelīns translated Tacitus's *Germania* (Tacita 1938), demonstrating their understanding of proper translation and the proper use of Latvian.

A typical semi-professional translator was someone like Melnalksnis, who had studied law in France, worked in the Tariff Department of Riga City Council and translated Hugo, Dekobra, Goncourt and some plays from Russian.

Similarly, Mežsēts, an occasional writer and publisher, translated many works by Maupassant, Dostoyevsky, Dreiser, Zola, Turgenev, Maurois, Locke, Byron, Hugo, and Bebetova. He also produced a rather poor translation of D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (Lorenss 1934), identifying himself by the initials A.M. This translation merits additional attention for a number of reasons. Firstly, it may have been done from Russian (the original was published in 1928, the Russian translation in 1932, the German in 1930). Secondly, it applied an inconsistent approach to the four-letter words that Lawrence frequently uses. They were usually omitted or softened, but were occasionally translated intact, especially in the sex scenes. As a result the sex scenes feel coarser than the original, while other passages are more diluted. Thirdly, there are many relevant omissions, such as nature descriptions, socio-political matters, and foreign names, all of which exemplifies a defensive attitude (Robyns 1994). Needless to say, the banning of the book was a clear act of defensiveness against alien influences.

TRANSLATION APPROACHES AND STRATEGIES

Translation approaches generally depended on the status of the book. Pulp fiction was very freely translated, with frequent omissions, cuts and changes. A note under the title often states that it was a rewrite, reproduction or free adaptation.

Quality books were usually translated carefully in keeping with the German fidelity principle. Older classical texts were usually translated by knowledgeable experts and translators, frequently with introductions by translators or experts.

The quality and strategies for medium-range popular literature depended on the translator; some were well done, others were sloppy.

Popular reference and encyclopaedic works were translated freely, with adaptations, cuts and additions. One work on modern man (Bekers 1928) has a note on the title page reading “translated from a German edition of 1927 and adapted to Latvian conditions”. No translator is mentioned. Sometimes a translation could be inferred from references, as in the encyclopaedia *The Art of Life* (Dzīves 1932), edited by Kārklīņš, and which provided advice on tact, looks, beauty care, parties, speech, sex, sports, law, etc. The first page of each volume has a short list of foreign sources, revealing that it is in fact a creative compilation of translations. On the other hand there are some localized elements: some prices (i.e. of a fridge) are given in lats; there is also a chapter on Latvian furniture, etc. As such this hybrid work blurs the strict borderline between translation and original writing. The same hybridity can be seen in many universal and specialised encyclopaedias.

TRANSLATOR VISIBILITY

Translators gradually become more visible (Venuti 1995) over the twenty years of Latvian independence. The more obvious elements of the translator’s visibility or voice are the paratexts, the translators’ footprints, or the translator’s hand (Mainberger 2001). We can distinguish between textual, paratextual and extratextual visibility (Koskinen 2000, 99). Paratextual visibility comprises all paratexts and additions, and extratextual or social visibility can be found outside the translation, for example in press releases, criticism or interviews about the translation or translator.

A typical example of translation paratexts is the translator’s name: whether it is present and prominent, and where it is displayed. Some translations feature prefaces or introductions by the translator. Footnotes are more widely used in translations, although they are occasionally viewed as a sign of a translator’s failure, as shameful as a “black sheep” (Grafton 1999, 25). Endnotes are similar to footnotes. Side notes and marginal notes (marginalia) are usually used for specific purposes: cross-references or enumeration, or explanations of specific items. Glossaries, indexes and appendixes are rare.

The paratextual visibility of translators varied in the period under discussion. Some translations contain several types of paratext, others omit even the translator’s name. There are translations not identified as such (usually adaptations), and translations posing as original works. The interwar period of Latvian independence saw a degree of stabilisation and the establishment of a certain hierarchy regarding the basic paratexts (Veisbergs 2014): serious translations give the translator’s name, and usually mention the language of the original. If the work was deemed very serious,

notes and an introduction by the translator could be expected. Nietzsche's *Thus spoke Zarathustra*, translated by the outstanding Latvian poet Plūdons (Nīčše 1939), carries a prominent statement "Introduction and translation by V. Plūdons" on the title page. The introduction discusses Nietzsche and the translator delves into various issues of language and translation. Reviews note that the "translation is immaculately good and euphonious and testifies to the translator's richness of language and deep understanding of the author's work" (K.U. 1939, 21).

The classic novel *Truth and Justice* by Tammsaare was translated by the Latvian writer Zālīte (Tamsāre 1937). Immediately beneath the title *Land and Love* come paratexts: "An Estonian novel (in the original "Truth and Justice"), translated with the author's permission by Elīna Zālīte". The permission related to the change of title and shows a translator taking responsibility by suggesting a change of title to the author.

The first volume of the complete works of Shakespeare, the only volume of the set ever actually published, has an extensive foreword by the publisher and compiler, dwelling also on translation issues and passing judgement on translations in other languages (Viljama 1938).

Sometimes only the translator's initials were used. This was usually the case with pulp and easy-reading literature. S. Fowler Wright's 1934 novel *Prelude in Prague: The War of 1938* was translated in 1939 (Faulers 1939) with the translator Kārlis Eliass identified as K. El. The same approach was used for works of dubious moral content (by the standards of the time): D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (Lorenss 1934) is identified as translated from the English by A.M. The book was banned on moral grounds, and the use of initials might have served to protect the translator. Incidentally, Lawrence's initials are given as D.G., suggesting that Russian was the intermediary language. Judging by Ezeriņš (see above), we might assume some translators used their initials when they were unhappy about the quality of the source text or their translation.

Pulp literature translations, the quality of which was often beyond remedy, were frequently entitled "free reproductions", for instance many of Hedwig Courths-Mahler's popular novels (Kurths-Mahler 1934a, 1934b; Courths-Mahler 1935). Amazingly, although her work was widely translated, the spelling of the author's name varied and even her sex was unclear. In the lower quality range, the above-mentioned "Old Wawerli" (Old 1923) dime novels name neither author nor translator.

Occasionally we are informed the book is "translated from the [language]", and in such cases the translator is never mentioned. The most usual term accompanying the translator's name is "translated" or "translation". Sometimes other terms are used: "Latvianised" (Milna 1938), "compiled in Latvian" (Bokatschio 1925) or "reproduced" (Kurths-Mahlers 1934b, Kollodi 1924).

Some of these issues were explored by the lawyer Mežaraupa in an article in 1937. She argued that when an author's name is transcribed into Latvian (which occasionally led to other transcriptions), their original name should appear on the title page, as well as the original title, which should be precisely translated. If translators want to express their thoughts about the work or title, they should do so in a translator's introduction. The language from which the work is translated should be mentioned and any textual changes should also be pointed out. The translator's name should be on the title page to signal the quality of the translation. An introduction with information about when and where the original was published, any intermediate translations, some information on the author and the reasons behind omissions or changes to the text should also be provided (Mežaraupa 1937). This is clearly in preparation for the Berne Convention in 1938. Thus a relatively stable correlation between the seriousness of translation and the degree of translator visibility was established.

TRANSLATION CRITICISM

Literary criticism in general was quite extensive and elaborate during the interwar period, with a host of specialised periodicals providing commentary on literary topics and new publications. However, traditional criticism of Latvian translations usually followed a simple pattern: some information on the author, a brief description of the plot, the writer's style, and a short sentence on translation quality, i.e. saying if it was good or bad. In the latter case, some examples of literal translation or mistakes are provided. Broader issues such as textual similarity and equivalence are normally overlooked.

The translation of the Estonian epic *Kalevipoeg* received many extensive reviews. In most, the translator appears beneath the title (Baumanis 1929, Ligoņņu 1930), while one provides a comment ("excellent translation") (Zālītis 1931). One review by the writer Upīts allots two sentences: "As far as I can judge, without comparing it with the original, Elīna Zālīte's translation is to be recognised as careful and poetically euphonious. No doubt the dessicated language pedants will crawl forth to point out instances of insufficiently literal translation (Upīts 1930, 147)".

Occasionally there is a hint of more than mere mistake-hunting. In a review of a translation of *Tristan* by Thomas Mann, Mauriņa, a prolific essayist, writer and translator, notes that it is "a thoroughly musical novella, but there is little musicality left in the translation [...] It is not important if a phrase or two gets left out, but you should enter into the mood of the original and reproduce everything as an indivisible

unity, poetically with your own words. In that way, the translation will read less like a translation” (Mauriņa 1924, 53).

An interesting insight is provided in a long article (Mauriņa 1928, 349–354) in which Mauriņa argues “most of our translations have no value. They are false, they do not correspond to the original, they are not aesthetic. The style both internal and external, the language and even the choice of authors are beneath criticism. And they are not ethical, as it is immoral to provide the great authors in a mutilated form” (349). She mentions the cheap publishers where translators go unacknowledged, book covers are abominable and fiction is sold in huge print runs (6,000 copies) because of advertising. An additional problem is the lack of translators specializing in specific authors. Great translators normally focus on one or several masters but in Latvia translation is fragmented. Tolstoy is translated by Rucelis, Austriņš, Āriņa, K. Egle and Veselis; likewise for Rolland: Freinbergs, Kroders, Kārkliņš and Vīlps. As a result, argues Mauriņa, the ingenious simplicity of Tolstoy remained unknown to Latvians. She goes on to address omissions and provides examples from a translation of Claude Farrère, stating that not a single erotic or saucy word is omitted, but the “boring” descriptions of countryside are. As a result it would be fairer to say Krodere had not translated but adapted or rewritten it.

Genuine analysis of a translation is extremely rare, and normally only happens when the translation is egregious. Hašek’s *The Good Soldier Švejk* was serialised in *Sociāldemokrāts* and then published in a translation by Grots (Hašeks 1927–1929). The analysis by Grimma is devastating. She praises the decision to translate the work, but immediately notes that it was done from Russian, and provides a host of Russicisms, Russian constructions and colloquialisms (some of these might have been deliberate, as most Latvians had served in the Russian army and military jargon would have been mostly Russian-based A.V.). The translator has been careless, slapdash and arrogant. Mistakes are exemplified by comparing the Czech original to the translation. She also points out that the Russian source is in fact a translation from German, and that the Latvian translation bears precious little similarity to the original as a result. Hašek’s particular style of humor is totally lost and Grots has essentially failed (Grimma 1928, 766–768).

Aside from literary criticism, there was extensive discussion of legal translations, as new Latvian legislation was often formulated on the basis of older Russian or German laws. Accordingly, legal jargon was of practical and immediate concern. In a discussion of old laws in translation (mainly of historical interest), the eminent historian, lawyer, philologist and translator Professor Švābe wrote a detailed and devastating critique: “Three things must be demanded from every translator: 1. he should have a full command of the language of the original; 2. he should have a specialised education in the domain of

the work to be translated, as otherwise he will never fully understand it; and 3. he should have a general literary education, or at least a practical command of his mother tongue, as otherwise the translation will have no literary value. Judging by his work, Mr Lauva [the translator] does not possess these qualities” (Švābe 1933, 276).

Translation criticism generally fails to overcome a limited focus on linguistic mistakes. This trait was condemned by an eminent Latvian émigré linguist: “It seems ridiculous to me that, when describing some newly published book, the critic’s short review says not a word about the author’s stylistic features, but insists on emphasising language mistakes (accusations which often turn out to be totally misguided anyway)” (Rūķe-Draviņa 1976).

MICRO TRANSLATION AND LINGUISTIC ISSUES

The source language has to be taken into account when judging the quality of a translation and its loyalty to the original. With intermediary languages, as noted by some critics (see above), the differences were sometimes substantial and much was lost at each stage of translation. *Švejk*, for example, was translated into Latvian from a Russian translation of a German translation of the original. On the other hand, it was only to be expected that a new nation would lack knowledge of rarer and more remote languages. In such cases, a quality translation from Russian or German was a logical second choice, as can be seen from some remarkably good translations, such as *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Generally, the combination of a sound command of the original language and a talented translator (usually a writer) provided good or excellent results.

With technical and LSP language, translators faced real problems. Latvian terminology was often non-existent or patchy and many new terms had to be coined. These usually took the form of loans or loan translations, which were occasionally successful but often sounded alien. Interference was rife in lower-end translations, and the reader can often conclude after reading a page or two that the book is not translated from French, Italian, etc. as stated on the title page, but from Russian or German, since the text bears all the hallmarks of those languages.

Occasionally translators were linguistically bold, experimental or indoctrinated. Thus the young philologist Celmiņa’s translation of Agnes Sapper’s *Die Familie Pfäffling*, which was extremely popular in Germany, localised it as the linguists demanded, making heavy use of the Mühlenbach-Endzelins dictionary, in addition to words and expressions from Latvian fairy tales. The result is somewhat strange but the translation was generally lauded by the critics.

Some translations involved serious questions of terminology, an example being the 19th-century German zoologist Alfred Brehm's *Tierleben* (Brēms 1927–28, 1935–36). Translating *Tierleben* was an enormous task, (it was 6,000 pages long, slightly abridged for translation) with a lot of new translation challenges, involving zoological terminology that was often unknown to the Latvian reader.

Finally, individual translators had their own idiosyncrasies. The publisher Rudzītis noted that that Lejaskrūmiņš used a lot of compounds but would not allow them to be removed: *gadunasta, mūžavakars, maldutaka, cīņaslauks* (Rudzītis 1997, 113).

CONCLUSIONS

Latvia's brief period of independence (1918/20–1940) saw book publishing on a massive scale. Latvia ranked second in Europe in terms of book publications per capita and boasted a developed translation industry. The range of source languages was growing, with English slightly ahead of German in the pre-war years, and French and Russian following. German and Russian occasionally functioned as intermediary languages. This was a change from the total dominance of German as the source and intermediary language until the end of the 19th century. The literature translated was also extremely varied in kind and quality. Print runs were not very long: 2,793 in 1938 and 1,601 titles produced. The share of translations seems to have fluctuated widely. It stood at 17.8% in 1938. Translated fiction consistently outnumbered Latvian fiction.

A large number of translators were also notable writers in their native Latvian but members of other professions frequently produced specialised translations as well. Some individuals gradually became professional translators from their favourite source languages. The choice of works to be translated was very much in the hands of translators and publishers often motivated by commercial interests. With the advent of one-lats books, print runs grew longer and high-quality literature became accessible to a wider public. Generally the quality of both source texts and translation improved; pulp literature gradually disappeared, to be replaced by semi-sensational and glamorous books. With the new authoritarian regime in 1934, the media and public opinion shifted towards classical values. Translator visibility grew over time in tandem with the status of the work translated. This visibility was high for high-quality texts and lower for the more low-end (usually zero for pulp literature). Translation criticism remained limited and mainly focused on the quality of the Latvian, while lambasting pulp-literature translation in general.

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VERTIMAS NEPRIKLAUSOMOJE LATVIJOJE TARPUKARIU (1918–1940)

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S a n t r a u k a

Šī vertimo istorijas straipsnyje aptariama verstinēs knygu leidybos situacija Latvijos nepriklausomybės laikotarpiu tarp dviejų pasaulinių karų (1918–1920 ir 1940 m.). Šis laikotarpis išsiskiria aktyvumu leidžiant naujas knygas, ypač verstines. Knygų tiražai ir kalbų, iš kurių buvo verčiama, įvairovė kasmet didėjo. Pažymėtina, kad Latvijoje leidžiamų knygų skaičius buvo vienas iš didžiausių Europoje (antroje vietoje po Danijos). Nors daugiausia buvo verčiama iš anglų kalbos, nedaug atsiliko vertimai iš vokiečių kalbos; po jų eina prancūzų ir rusų kalbomis parašytos knygos. Verčiamos literatūros žanrai ir vertimo kokybė labai įvairi. Verstinų leidinių pasirinkimas buvo vertėjų ir leidėjų rankose, jie labiausiai rėmėsi komerciniais interesais. Knygų leidybai labai atpigus, plačiau tapo prieinama ir aukštoji literatūra. Nuo 1934 m. autoritarinė sistema pamažu formavo reikšmingesnių, ypač klasikinės literatūros kūrinių spausdinimą ir taip skatino klasikinių vertybių ugdymą. Vertimų dalis leidyklų veikloje labai svyravo, bet leidžiant romanus kiekybinė vertimų dalis buvo gerokai didesnė negu originalių kūrinių.

Didelė dalis vertėjų kartu buvo gerai žinomi rašytojai, rašę gimtąją latvių kalbą, o specializuotą literatūrą dažnai vertė ir kitų profesijų atstovai. Kai kurie iš jų ilgainiui tapo profesionaliais vertėjais. Didėjo ir vertėjų žinomumas. Jis dažnai priklausė nuo verčiama kūrinio statuso: garsiausių autorių kūriniai turėjo paklausą, tad ir juos išvertė vertėjai tapdavo žinomi; jei kūrinys nebuvo populiarus, jo priėmimas Latvijoje taip pat būdavo menkas. Vertimo kritikos beveik nebuvo, vertinant daugiausia būdavo atsižvelgiama į latvių kalbos kokybę, bet ne į turinio perteikimo tikslumą.