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**Baltic German Women between Two Cultures:
Translators of Latvian Literature
at the End of the 19th Century and in the 20th Century**

**Baltijas vācietes starp divām kultūrām:
latviešu literatūras tulkotājas
19. gadsimta beigās un 20. gadsimtā**

Keywords:

Hanny Brentano,
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Atslēgvārdi:

Hanija Brentano,
Elizabete Gerke,
Elfrīde Ekarte-Skalberga,
Marta fon Dēna-Grube,
Baltijas vācu literatūra,
tulkojums,
atdzejojums

Summary

The article presents an insight into the life, literary activities and translations of Latvian literature by four Baltic German women: Hanny Brentano (née Johanna Legai, 1872–1940); Elisabeth Goercke (married surname Braunz, 1888–1966); Elfriede Skalberg (married surname Eckardt, 1884–1964); and Martha Grubbe (married surname von Dehn, 1894–1971), and evaluates their contribution to the integration and popularisation of Latvian literature among German-speakers. The article compares different approaches to the translation of rhythmical texts – songs and poetry, drawing attention also to the cultural context of Latvia and of Europe, offering explanations, wherever possible, of what it was that compelled each of the four translators to turn to the transfer of Latvian texts into a German-speaking social environment, and assessing the reception that their translated texts met.

Kopsavilkums

Raksts sniedz ieskatu četru Baltijas vāciešu – Haniņas Brentano (*Hanny Brentano*, dzim. *Johanna Legai*, 1872–1940), Elizabetes Gerkes (*Elisabeth Goercke*, prec. *Braunz*, 1888–1966), Elfrīdes Ekartes-Skalbergas (*Elfriede Skalberg*, prec. *Eckardt*, 1884–1964) un Martas fon Dēnas-Grubes (*Martha Grubbe*, prec. *von Dehn*, 1894–1971) dzīvē, literārajā darbībā un viņu latviešu literatūras tulkojumos, novērtējot galvenokārt viņu devumu latviešu literatūras integrācijā un popularizēšanā vācvalodīgajā vidē. Rakstā ir salīdzinātas atšķirīgas pieejas ritmizēta teksta – dziesmas un dzejoļa tulkojumam, kā arī pievērsta uzmanība latviešu un Eiropas kultūras kontekstam, pēc iespējas skaidrojot iemeslus, kas katrai no četrām tulkotājām lika pievērsties latviešu tekstu pārnesei vācvalodīgajā vidē un novērtējot viņu tulkoto tekstu recepciju.

Introduction

Central to the article are four Baltic German women who, some for longer, others for shorter periods of their lives, served as carriers of Latvian culture – more precisely, literature – into the German-speaking environment: Hanny Brentano (née Johanna Legai, 1872–1940); Elisabeth Goercke (married surname Braunz, 1888–1966); Elfriede Skalberg (married surname Eckardt, 1884–1964); and Martha Grubbe (married surname von Dehn, 1894–1971). The researcher of feminism and translation studies, Luise von Flotow, has pointed out: “Translators live between two cultures, and women translators live between at least three, patriarchy (public life) being the omnipresent third” (Flotow 1997: 36). Even though in the translations of the above-mentioned Baltic Germans the imprints of the omnipresent third culture or patriarchy are not immediately obvious, it can still be assumed that they were present: all four translators, firstly, had grown up in the traditional patriarchal Baltic German milieu, secondly, they all had families, hence domestic cares and duties with which they had to share the time available for translating. Today we can only conjecture what their contribution would have been if not for the pressures of family life. The aim of this article, therefore, could be – pursuing further the idea of Luise von Flotow – the “rewriting” of the activities of these four women, assigning to the awareness of their gender the power of both censorship and praise (Flotow 1997: 34). The records of their lives and work that have been preserved are not complete enough, however, to obtain a conclusion based on reliable sources. For this reason, the issue of their gender and its impact on the texts they translated will not be analysed, the chief attention in the article being devoted to the contribution, of varying nature, each translator made to the popularisation of Latvian literature among a German-speaking environment, as well as – as far as possible – the way this literature was received, taking into account the role of Latvian literature as a small (peripheral) literature in relation to German (central) literature, by this meaning the number of speakers and the historically deep roots of the literary tradition.

Unfortunately – as opposed to Estonian literature (Hasselblatt 2011) – as yet there is no unified body of research about translations of Latvian literature into the German language, neither has information been compiled about translators and the works translated. During the period I have selected, from a historical perspective the entire territory of present-day Latvia formed part of the Russian Empire, and afterwards for just over twenty years it existed as an independent country. The time span in question closes with the emigration of Baltic Germans and the outbreak of World

War II. The feature in common for the entire period is the presence of German culture in the Baltic cultural space. The links between Germans and Latvians in the history of culture have always been close, albeit complicated. Germans were the elaborators of the Latvian written language, they established the foundations for Latvian literature and were the translators into the German language of literature Latvians themselves had created. All of these processes, although sparked by historic events, have nonetheless taken place in consequence of personal initiative. In this context the translations by Victor von Andrejanoff (1857–1895) and Oskar Grosberg (1862–1941) should be mentioned. Female translators up until now have received practically no attention whatsoever. Unfortunately, up until now there has not been any extensive research on the four women translators who are the subject of this article either, their biographical data is incomplete, the reaction to their life and work is most often limited to reviews after the publication of their collective works, individual articles marking anniversaries, and obituaries. This then may be regarded as the first more comprehensive survey of the life and creative activities of the four translators.

Johanna Brentano: subjective deformations of Latvian short prose

Johanna Brentano, also known as Hanny Brentano, was born in Moscow; her mother Olga (nee Birkenberg) was of Swedish origin, and her father Eduard Legai was a manorial estate manager.¹ Hanny's parents had met in Kurzeme (Courland) but for reasons of her father's work had moved to central Russia, and after that to Moscow. At 11 years of age, having spent a number of years in Russia, Hanny together with her family – parents and two brothers – returned to the Baltic. The years of her childhood were passed in Liepāja and Grīva near Daugavpils, and she completed her education at a girls' school. At the age of almost 17, Hanny passed her teacher's examination and earned the qualifications to teach German literature, French, and Russian as well as religious studies at advanced girls' schools. She later worked in Liepāja as a teacher. An enthusiastic collector of postcards, she acquired a pen friend in Austria whose father, Matthäus Max Brentano (1846–1905), she married on 12 February, 1900, in Vienna. For the years that followed, until her death, Hanny Brentano lived in Austria. After her husband passed away she converted to Catholicism, became involved with the Catholic women's movement, took the veil

1 There is an absence of more precise biographical details about Hanny Brentano; the information in this article is based mainly on her autobiography (Brentano 1926).



Fig. 1. Johanna Brentano, c.1910 in Vienna.
Charles Scolik (ÖNB), ÖNB/Bildarchiv,
Pk 5396, 45, 5 POR MAG.
From: <https://fraueninbewegung.onb.ac.at/node/2309>
[Accessed 07.03.2022].

as a Benedictine nun (1919) and spent the rest of her life in the Nonnberg Abbey in Salzburg, where she died in 1940.

As Brentano has stated in her autobiography, she gained a fuller awareness of the relations between Latvians and Germans during the couple of years (1889–1891) she spent with the family of Baron Hermann Alexander Leberecht von Roenne (1811–1896), the Lord of Püre Manor. At the time, while working as governess for the von Roenne family, she was welcomed as a member of the family. Hanne's time in Püre helped her to understand the aspirations of the younger generation of Latvians and the causes that led to the Revolution of 1905; it also consolidated her knowledge of the Latvian language and gave rise to an interest in Latvian culture (Brentano 1926: 75–76). After moving to Austria, Hanny Brentano, encouraged by her friend, writer and librarian Franz Schnürer (1859–1942), began to put to use her knowledge of Latvian. In Western Europe at the time there was a lively interest about the indigenous nations of the Baltic and their national movements, also because of the revolution in 1905. There was an absence of materials for learning the Latvian language. As part of a series popular in Germany at the time, *Die Kunst der Polyglottie. Bibliothek der Sprachkunde* (1876–1943), intended for short-term but focussed self-study of foreign languages and oriented to the learning of simple conversational and written language, Brentano created a textbook for learning Latvian: *Lehrbuch der lettischen Sprache für den Selbstunterricht* (1907). In line with the standard format of the series, the book

not only gave a concise insight into grammar, but also offered a range of exercises, cultural historical interpolations and also a small anthology of texts. A second edition came out in 1910. During World War I, this learning aid for self-study was used by German soldiers who had wound up in Kurzeme (Courland) (Ehrig-Eggert 2015), but during the interwar period it was also used by jobseekers (Brentano 1926: 121). Although Johanna Brentano had, for example, in 1916 reaffirmed her sympathies for the incorporation of the German-dominated Baltic provinces to become an integral part of Germany (Brentano 1916: 59)², there are no indications, however, that the textbook would have been produced as a weapon for the implementation of German rule. In 1906, Brentano's first translation appeared in the Baltic German-language press of Latvia, it was a short story by Andrievs Niedra (1871–1942) titled *Dūmu Pēteris* (Needra 1906). Not long afterwards it was followed by something completely new: *Aus dem Baltenlande. Erzählungen und Skizzen. Nach lettischen Motiven* (1910), the first ever anthology of Latvian short prose translated into German. The collection comprised 12 short stories: three by Andrievs Niedra, four by Jānis Poruks (1871–1911), four by Augusts Saulietis (birth surname Plikauskis, 1869–1933) and one text by a certain K. Liepiņš. The first three writers – contemporaries of Brentano's – overall were a good representation of the scene as regards Latvian prose at the turn of the century. From the point of view of contents, the stories presented a many-sided view of Latvian society. The space for the action encompassed both the countryside and the city, and even turned to a portrayal of the life of Latvian colonisers in Siberia (Niedra 1903; Brentano 1910: 255–308). Among the personages there were rural and urban entrepreneurs, teachers, doctors, wealthy farmers, the so-called *jaunsaimnieki* (literally 'new farmers' – former tenants, manor servants etc. who had finally become landowners), country tradesmen, labourers and also – the dregs of society. The plotlines generally wove around family issues, with a great deal of attention paid to the relationship between generations and also to the world of a child's soul. From the aspect of style and narrative, the stories were a convincing representation of Latvian modern prose, with elements of Symbolism, Naturalism and Neo-romanticism, and did not lack irony, sarcasm, light humour and poeticism. As regards narrative, they did not lag behind turn of the century Western European literature. As Hanny Brentano herself wrote in the introduction: "Today one can already speak of the new Latvian literature which covers all genres, and alongside the stereotypical offers a unique, deeply felt and true story. The 'modern' [Latvian] writers for the most part are nothing other than adherents of Western European Modernism"

2 Cf. Brentano 1916, S. 59.

(Brentano 1910: VII)³. At the same time, she also pointed out the close connection that Latvians have with their own nation and a passionate wish to discover its soul. It is this last element that Brentano used as an excuse for the occasional instances in the translation where she had veered away quite far from the original (Brentano 1910: VII)⁴. The redirecting of the translation to the addressee in the anthology at first encounter seems to chime with the contemporary explanation of the relationship between source text (ST) and target text (TT). As the translation theorist Clive Scott states: "translation activates ST, brings it into the community of languages, releases its contribution to that community (...) while the TT may transform the ST, it does so in the direction of enlarging its ability to signify, or rather, its ability to act, to become signifyingly" (Scott 2018: 28). On the other hand, it must be admitted that in the original versions of the pieces that Hanny Brentano selected there is almost nothing that a German reader, or any other reader of the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, would have failed to understand. The Latvian writers focussed their attention mostly on the universal, hence one cannot avoid feeling that Brentano's introduction is to be perceived as a justification of a careless rendering of Latvian prose. In some places the text has been abridged, in others the German translation has been supplemented with phrases that do not exist in the original text, in several short stories the plotline wanders off in a different direction, considerably far from the original. Some characters, especially those of the older generation, are attributed a piety that was not mentioned in the original. In Brentano's translation of the short story *Bābu vaina* [The Trouble with Bloody Women] by Andrievs Niedra, given the title *Mein Freund Berger* in German, Brentano has omitted to translate a single episode where there is any discussion of Latvian society, and Latvian women's emancipation in particular. In the source text the upbringing, education and eventual teacher's profession of the foster daughter Baļķīte (in German *Berger*) play an important role. These kinds of young women, moreover timid ones, were a rarity in late 19th century Latvian society. Brentano did not translate anything of what would reflect the aspirations that characterised the Latvian national awakening. Nationality no longer plays any role. The foster daughter Baļķīte (or Berger, as she is named in the translation) becomes one of the many young women in Riga of marriageable age. In order to render

3 ... heute kann man bereits von einer neuen lettischen Literatur sprechen, die alle Literaturgattungen umfaßt und neben viel Schablonenhaftem manch Eigenartiges, tief und wahr Empfundenes darbietet. Die "modernen" Schriftsteller sind zumeist nichts als Nachahmer der westeuropäischen Moderne.

4 ... manches dem Ausländer Unverständliche ausscheiden oder erklären, manche weitläufige Reflexionen übergehen. Nicht wörtliche Übertragungen sind es daher, die ich hier biete, sondern teilweise Umgestaltungen, bei denen jedoch die Eigenart des Originals nach Möglichkeit gewahrt ist.

her even more "Germanic", closer to the patrician society of Riga in which there was any number of these moderately educated young women, Brentano, contrary to Niedra's original, characterises her as an avid frequenter of dance evenings, bringing to the foreground the girl's sexuality. Thus, for example, in the Latvian original Niedra writes: "Our Riga Latvians have so few educated [young ladies], that is, young ladies with diplomas, compared with young gentlemen who have studied, that the rare ones already from a distance stand out a mile among the guests at a ball. Miss Baļķīte, too, was soon known to all intelligent Latvian cavaliers, though it could not be said that she often attended balls" (Niedra 1898: 90). This same episode Brentano has rendered like this: "Šarlote was dearly loved among her circle of girlfriends, was often invited and soon came to know her circle's world of cavaliers. At balls and the dance groups which she attended now and then, not without the friendly wing of her party-going godmother, she never failed to be among the dancers" (Brentano: 1910: 160).⁵

All four of Poruks' works in German translation have been transformed into free retellings, moreover instead of a tragic finale Brentano offers a new, optimistic ending. These translations of Poruks' prose even present a misleading impression of his ideas and mastery. In the original version of the plot of the short story *Jūtas* (Feelings, in German translation: *Die Konkurrenten*), the messianic principle – in the typical spirit of Poruks – emerges victorious: the preparedness of a young, idealistic person to sacrifice themselves for the benefit of another, while being in full cognizance of the tragic consequences of their action. In the new era of capitalism, the sensitive individual remains misunderstood. He is condemned to loneliness and extinction. In the closing episode, against the magnificently orchestrated thudding of the horses' hooves together with the inexorable forward motion of time towards sombre hopelessness, the phrase "the poor person has feelings" expresses a bitter irony. As pointed out by the Latvian scholar of literature Viesturs Vecgrāvis, "Poruks was the first Latvian writer to consciously blur and confront the artistic principles of classical Romanticism and classical Realism, [and] sometimes even Naturalism, [he] blurred and confronted emotionality with a purely spiritual life, with a direct and analytically uncompromising revelation of the conflicts of reality" (Vecgrāvis 1998: 228). Searching for these aspects in Brentano's translation is a lost cause. She does not delve into the protagonist's inner contradictions: in the translation, everything is simple. In place of an existential situation there is a melodramatic and optimistic ending. In Brentano's translation Latvian literature is, in the words of Itmar Even-Zohar: "com-

5 *Charlotte war bei ihren Freundinnen beliebt, wurde oft eingeladen und lernte bald auch die Herrenwelt ihres Kreises zu kennen. Auf den Bällen und Tanzkränzchen, die sie unter den Fittichen einer befreundeten Ballmama hier und da besuchte, fehlte es ihr nie an Tänzern.*

pletely detached from its home contexts and consequently neutralized from the point of view of center-periphery [here: German–Latvian] struggles” (Even-Zohar 192).

When revisiting the divergences from the original, it is difficult to see the interconnections that would allow to discern the translator’s imagined audience; perhaps it was the average German reader, for whom the problems of the Baltic were completely alien? Latvian critics praised the translator for having the idea of tackling Latvian literature at all, tolerantly without lapsing into a more detailed appraisal of the quality of the German text. A rigorous and damning review, however, appeared in the Baltic German-language press immediately after the book was released. The woman of letters and translator Elfriede Eckardt-Skalberg wrote: “...she [Brentano] wraps up a beautiful and magnificently elaborated scene into flattened and cloying Heimbürg German [narrow-minded] slime, and is now convinced that she has thus preserved the singular features of the original [...] Miss Brentano has deemed the simple and moving words of Poruks as being incomprehensible to a foreigner” (Skalberg, 1910)⁶. Skalberg wonders, with good reason, whether in this way Latvian literature has been done more harm than good. The review evidently hit its mark: from that time onwards Hanny Brentano no longer translated Latvian literature.

Elisabeth Goercke: an improved text of Latvian Modernism

The Baltic German writer Elisabeth Goercke’s⁷ interest in Latvian literature was also short-lived (1923–1926) and directly linked with the newspaper *Kurzemes Vārds* and its editor at the time, man of letters and journalist Haralds Eldgasts (birth name Jānis Miķelsons, 1882–1926). In the history of Latvian literature, Eldgasts’ personal attractiveness is often underlined as the determining factor in his dealings with young women. There is no information to suggest that this would have played any part in the relations between Eldgasts and Goercke. When they met, Goercke was already married and had published several poetry collections and plays. At the time, she was working in Talsi as a pianist and piano teacher. Eldgasts had been in charge of the newspaper *Kurzemes Vārds*

6 ... sie wickelt ein schönes und wohl gelungenes Bild in den glatten und süßlichen Schleim eines Heimbürg-Deutsch und ist nun überzeugt, die Eigenart des Originals gewahrt zu haben [...]. Die rührenden und schlichten Worte, mit denen Poruks dieses erzählt, fand Frä. Brentano unverständlich für den Ausländer.

7 For more detailed information about Goercke’s life and literary legacy, see: Gottzmann, Hörner 2007, 477–478. She also published a memoir about her early life in the Baltic (Goercke 1959), however, this does not touch upon her own literary activities.



Fig. 2. Elisabeth Goercke.
E. Goercke. *Nach den Sternen. Gedichte*.
Riga, 1930.
The University of Latvia Academic Library,
Misiņš Library.

since the beginning of 1923. The issue dated 14 February of that year featured his programmatic article *Mēs un vietējie vācieši* (We and the Local Germans) in which he emphasised: "... the wish of a nationally-minded Latvian is, precisely, that the local Germans would become loyal citizens and patriots of Latvia so that their wealth of knowledge and education, culture and energy could be utilised and put to work in both state and economic activity for the flourishing, development and consolidation of our republic" (Eldgasts 1923a). Already in the next issue of the newspaper there followed a brief description of Goercke's life and works, and a translation of her short short story *Schwarze Dahlie* (*Melnā dālija*) in the literary supplement (Goercke 1923). In the lines accompanying her miniature, Goercke was described as "one of the most notable German poets in Latvia"; her poetic style was likened to the manner of depiction, especially as regards colour, ornamentation and muted halftones, of Herman Bang (1857–1912) (Eldgasts? 1923b). This was the first ever translation of one of Goercke's works into the Latvian language (Goercke 1923). In autumn of that same year, the German-language newspaper based in Kurzeme, *Libausche Zeitung*, published Eldgasts's elegy *Rudens* (*Herbst*) in a translation by Goercke (Eldgast 1923). The lyrical composition, suffused with melancholy, revealed the slow descent of a sunny autumn day into darkness, encompassing the notion of the transitoriness of all living things. This was soon followed by possibly the most popular of the writer's poems, *Himna jūrai* (Hymn to the Sea) being published in German in the supplement *Dichtung und*

Welt of the Prague daily newspaper *Prager Presse* (Eldgasts 1925a: 11), presumably the only one of Goercke's translations of Latvian literature to be published outside the Baltic region. In the poem *Himna jūrai* Eldgasts drew a parallel between the surging sea and the menacing force of a human being ready for the fight: *Ceļ bangas mūs kalnos, gāž verdošās dzīlēs / Dārd klinšainās radzēs negaisu zvīles [...] Mēs neprotam žēlot un taupīt / Mēs nākam kaut un laupīt! / Šķind šķēpi, dzied tērauds nāves dziesmu, / kur drošājo krūtīs uzvaras liesmu, / redz mākoņos asiņu dziesnu...* (Waves lift us up mountains, to simmering depths they fling / Among rocky clifftops storm peals thundering [...] Mercy we know not, nor [life] how to spare / We are coming to kill and to plunder! / Spears clash, iron sings the song of death, / where the breasts of the bold see victory's flame, / the sunset glow of blood in the clouds...) (Eldgasts 1908: 39–40). Goercke, too, in her early youth had deployed a similar motif in her poetry cycle *Meeressymphonie* (Sea Symphony) (Goercke 1912: 62–66). In her version, however, the ode to the sea did not extend beyond the destruction of the forest in the bacchanalia of agitated waters churned up by the storm: the young poetess stops still in amazement when faced with the mighty power of nature. When, more than ten years later, Goercke translated Eldgasts's *Himna jūrai*, both she and the wider world had changed – with World War I and her studies in Munich and Berlin, an encounter with the school of German Modernism, and the publication of another two collections of poetry behind her. Goercke's skill in maintaining, as far as possible, the concentrated form, play of sounds and capaciousness of content of the Latvian original while at the same time respecting German grammar, was admirable. If Eldgasts heightened his allegory with a lavish use of vowels or assonances, then Goercke, by choosing nouns with repeated consonants and creating alliteration, achieved an effect similar to the pounding of the sea:

.. nekas nav līdzīgs tev, tu krāšņā, zilā jūra,
kad baltās putās krākdama bango
un ūdeņu šaltiem mākoņus vango!

[.. nothing resembles you, you rich blue sea,
when foamed up white you crash breakers
roaring
and capture the clouds with spray!]

(Eldgasts 1908: 39)

.. nichts gleicht dir, blaues Meer, **du** far**ben**d
pragend **Wunder**,
wenn **deine** **Wogen** schäumend **wallen**
und **Wasserstrahlen** zu **Wolken** sich **ballen**.

[.. nothing resembles you, you rich blue sea, /
the color-bearing wonder, / when your
foaming waves roar and the ice of water flies
in the clouds.]

(Eldgasts 1925a: 11)

The longest of Goercke's translations was *Uz Venus altāra* (On the Altar of Venus, 1908), the dramatic study in five episodes with epilogue by Haralds Eldgasts (Eldgasts 1926); Goercke used the second augmented edition (1924) of the work. Eldgasts's composition chimed unexpectedly directly with the course of events in Western European culture at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, hence a small digression. This period was characterised by a wave of decadence and libertinism, in which the music by Richard Wagner had a significant role (Koppen 1973). Immediately after the first performance of Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, Charles Baudelaire, for example, wrote about the interweaving of the diabolical (of the flesh) and the godly (of art), drawing particular attention to its exposition in the overture and the bacchanalia on the Mount of Venus (Koppen 1973: 126). Some decades later Edward Frederic Benson (1867–1940) wrote about it as well in his novel *The Rubicon* (1894): "... the war between the lower, the bestial side of man, and something which mankind itself has declared to the higher – the pure steadfast soul" (Benson 1894: 191). Young heroes of poetry, prose and drama enthused about Wagner, discussed his operas, appreciated the power of his music and the imprints it left on the soul. A decadently aestheticised sexuality seeped into works by Oscar Wilde, Gabriele D'Annunzio, Charles Baudelaire, Joris-Karl Huysmans, Hermann Bahr and others. Passionate dialogues, ornate in both words and action, took place among artists. At heart of the storyline of the composition *Uz Venus altāra* by Eldgasts, too, there was the collision between two passions: art and human nature, with the first claiming victory, even the influences of Friedrich Nietzsche are possible. The first version of the work, published in the collection *Vižņi* (Frazil Ice), was considerably shorter, with a compact cast of characters (Eldgasts 1908: 111–129). In it, alongside art, Eldgasts highlighted and aestheticised also the beauty of a person's inner world. In a programmatic manner this was hinted at in the introduction of the book: "Restless, unquieted soul – you, purplish depths illuminated by white lightning – in your frazil ice sparkles the immortality of humanity, its enduring, eternal beauty of youth" (Eldgasts 1908: 5). The second edition of *Uz Venus altāra* published more than ten years later was far more diffuse in terms of content, with a heightened contrast between natural passion and art, the former revealed matter-of-factly to the point of disgust, the latter likened to godliness as the promise of freedom and immortality. The first variant had been written in prose, but in the new edition the protagonists spoke partly in verse. Ideationally Eldgasts's work echoed Wagner's *Tannhäuser* motif: passion for art and passion for a woman. Its central character, the opera singer Irmgarde, may have possibly been envisaged as a female Tannhäuser. An equal importance was assigned to The Stranger or the child of nature, who during the course of the plot turned into a hunter, subjugated by Irmgarde and crushed to death. Goercke's translation was

almost precise and melodious. She sensitively condensed the text of the original, allowing the poetic idea to move forwards dynamically. Eldgasts was more than pleased with her translation. In the spring of 1925, he wrote to Goercke: "It is a real masterpiece, especially the rhythmic passages which personally I like much better in the German language than in the original. Sometimes your verses seem to me to be something completely new, and my greatest astonishment is aroused by the fact that they fully correspond to the original. I read the translation in Riga together with my wife, and we both were in indescribable raptures about it. I am thoroughly convinced – that will also be the opinion of all readers and spectators, whomsoever has any kind of artistic judgement at all of literature. A big thank you, dear friend! Your faithful and grateful Haralds Eldgasts." (Eldgasts 1925b)⁸. Unfortunately, the Eldgasts work translated by Goercke elicited hardly any resonance. It was only briefly reviewed by the German-language newspaper *Libausche Zeitung* in Liepāja. Although the critic Hans Hochapfel (1871–1930) saw one or two contradictions in Eldgasts's work, the book on the whole had been for him compelling, individual episodes – even not unlike the plot developments of Frank Wedekind. Goercke's translation, with a few inaccuracies pointed out, at the close of the review was criticised unfavourably (Hochapfel 1926). In the Latvian press it remained scarcely noticed (Egle 1926). A year later Eldgasts suddenly died. In memory of her friend Goercke published a heartfelt poem dedicated to him (Goercke 1926) – Eldgasts's demise had affected her unexpectedly painfully. Thereafter Goercke did not return to the translation of Eldgasts's texts. In 1939 she left Latvia, however, she did not cut all ties with Latvian society: recently discovered correspondence of the Latvian essayist Zenta Mauriņa (1897–1978) contained also a couple of letters written by Goercke during World War II. Possibly they both, as admirers of Eldgasts's talent, knew each other before the war (Mauriņa 1926). The correspondence reveals that Goercke had received an offer to translate Mauriņa's autobiographical novel *Dzīves vilcienā* (In the Train of Life) (Straume 2017). Unfortunately, in the German translation of the novel *Im Zuge des Lebens* (*Dzīves vilcienā*, 1956, 2nd edition 1971) the translator has not been named, neither in the first edition nor the second. Elisabeth Goercke spent the final years of her life in Germany, where she passed away in 1966.

8 *Sie ist ein Meisterwerk, besonders die rhythmische Stellen, die mir persönlich in deutscher Sprache viel besser gefallen als mein Original. Manchmal klingen mir Ihre Verse als etwas ganz neues, und was meine grösste Bewunderung hervorruft, ist der Umstand, dass es doch ganz und gar mit dem Original übereinstimmt. Ich habe die Übersetzung zusammen mit meiner Frau in Riga gelesen und wir beide waren von ihr unaussprechlich entzückt. Ich bin fest überzeugt – es wird auch die Meinung aller derjenigen Leser und Zuschauer sein, die in der Literatur überhaupt eine künstlerische Urteilsfähigkeit besitzen. Tausendmal herzlichsten Dank, liebe Freundin! Ihr ergebener und dankbarer Haralds Eldgasts.*

Elfriede Eckardt-Skalberg: translating Latvian songs and poetry into German her whole life long

Antonie Elfriede Hildegarde

Skalberg was born in the Riga neighbourhood of Ķengarags⁹. Her father, teacher Jozefs Skalbergs (born Jahsep Skalberg, 1842–1927) was of Latvian peasant stock from Lode Manor in Vidzeme, but in the family German was spoken and it became Elfriede Skalberg's mother tongue as well. She learnt Latvian when she started school, acquiring an education together with her Latvian schoolmates. Skalberg completed her secondary education in Riga and after that she spent some time living with relatives in Moscow, where she also improved her knowledge of Russian. Her Latvian origins she neither confirmed nor denied.

In late 1902, Skalberg's first poems were published in the German-language press of the Baltic. In May 1915, she married a Baltic German, Guido Hermann Eckardt (1873–1951), author of the first homosexual novel in the Baltic, who was also a poet, pianist and commentator on musical life. Eckardt had studied music in Munich, Geneva and Berlin, and had furthered his studies in Paris. In Munich he belonged to a Bohemian circle that included Max Halbe, Thomas Mann, Frank Wedekind, Count Eduard von Keyserling (1855–1918) and other writers and artists. Eckardt's works were published in the Modernist magazine *Simplicissimus* (Eckardt 1897/98a; Eckardt 1897/98b). In 1908 he moved to Riga to live and, just like Elfriede Eckardt-Skalberg, started working at the recently established newspaper *Rigasche Neueste Nachrichten* (1907–1911). In 1907 Eckardt-Skalberg made her debut as translator from Russian to German (Skitalez 1907); in the same year her debut collection *Über drei Stufen* was released. It was reviewed by all the major Baltic press publications, noting the poet's opposition to the traditional, and her quest in search of her own path. Two years later Eckardt-Skalberg was finally noticed by the Latvian press and an extensive article was published about her (Līgotņu Jēkabs 1909). During the interwar period Eckardt-Skalberg worked at the newspaper *Rigasche Rundschau* and also at the German Embassy in Riga, but in 1941 she emigrated together with her family, and later settled permanently in Germany at Überlingen on Lake Constance (Bodensee). After World War II she maintained friendly relations both with other Baltic German emigres as well as Latvians in exile. It was due to Eckardt-Skalberg that translations of Latvian poetry were published in Germany, moreover, whenever she had been invited to give public readings of her works, everywhere and always, Germans would hear her translations of Latvian poetry as well.

Eckardt-Skalberg started translating Latvian literature at some time around 1908, while working at the liberal newspaper *Rigasche Neueste Nachrichten* (Eckardt-Skalberg 1959). The newspaper had set as its goal the promotion of harmony between

9 For more on Skalberg, see: Gottzmann, Hörner 2007, 386–387, Grudule 2020, 16–36.

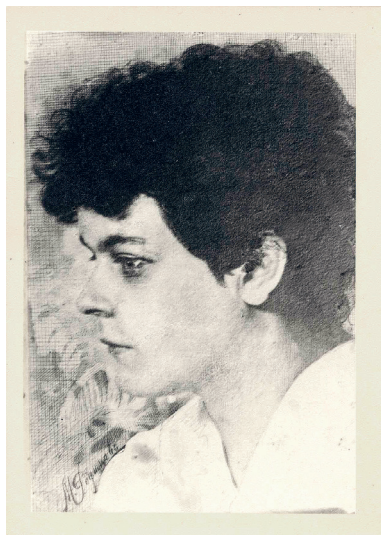


Fig. 2. Elfriede Eckardt-Skalberg.
Latvian State Archive,
LVA 2176-1v-243-47001

Baltic Germans, Latvians and Russians, striving to present an as well-rounded as possible reflection of the state of culture locally and abroad. From January 1908 onwards, a literary supplement *Literarische Wochenbeilage der Rigaschen Neuesten Nachrichten* was published once a week. However, the aims of the paper appeared to be unacceptable for the greater majority of the local German public. The number of readers declined rapidly, the last literary supplement appeared in June, 1910, and the newspaper was closed down one year later. Despite its short existence, the literary supplement of the newspaper may be regarded as a shining beacon of excellence in the local cultural space. Offering an overview of poetry, short stories, one-act plays and information about European and local events – most often Russian, German, English and Scandinavian artistic manifestations, exhibitions and concerts, book reviews, articles about literary issues, publications of letters and memoirs, its aim was to provide a multifaceted reflection of current cultural developments in the world. An insight into Latvian literature was presented by nine supplements, six of these were wholly dedicated to Latvian literature. Over a period of three years the German-speaking reader was able to read, in Eckardt-Skalberg's translation, the poetry of Fricis Bārda (1880–1919), Kārlis Skalbe (1879–1945) and Jānis Jaunsudrabiņš (1877–1962); the prose works of Augusts Saulietis (1869–1933), Antons Birkerts (1876–1971), Kārlis Skalbe, Fricis Bārda, Jānis Poruks, Jānis Jaunsudrabiņš, Jānis Akuraters (1876–1937), Augusts Baltpurviņš (1871–1930), Linards Laicens (1883–1938) and Andrejs Upītis (1877–1970), and in addition Kārlis Skalbe's travel notes about a visit to Finland. Only drama was missing. As sources of works for her translations Eckardt-Skalberg used

mainly the Latvian modernist journals *Zalktis* (1906–1910) and *Stari* (1906–1914). The issues devoted to Latvian literature alternated with overviews of contemporary developments in the arts and literary culture of other European nations, thus situating the Latvian works in the context of global modern culture.

In about 1908 Eckardt-Skalberg began her collaboration with Latvian composers. Up until World War II she had translated almost two hundred Latvian solo songs, mostly working together with Alfrēds Kalniņš (1879–1951), Jāzeps Vītols (1863–1948) and Lūcija Garūta (1902–1977). In 1920, when the complicated relations between Latvians and Baltic Germans were at a low ebb, at Eckardt-Skalberg's initiative the first anthology of Latvian poetry in German was published in Berlin: this was the thematically diverse collection *Moderne Lettische Lyrik* (Modern Latvian Lyric Poetry) comprising 26 translated poems. Latvian critics of literature remarked on Skalberg's "literary understanding, combined with the finest nuances of language" (Akuraters 1920). Some years later, the Ansis Gulbis publishing house offered German-speaking readers a selection of lyric verse by 28 Latvian poets, contemporaries of Eckardt-Skalberg, in the 368 pages thick *Lettische Lyrik: eine Anthologie* (Latvian Poetry: an Anthology, 1924). Many years later, when recalling the period when the anthology was being compiled, Eckardt-Skalberg wrote: "Several times I consulted with Rainis [birth name Jānis Pliekšāns, 1865–1929], whom I visited at his home in Torņkalns. I also met with Aspazija, she was very kind. She herself had translated many more poems than the ones I had intended to include in the anthology, yet she rejected several of her own translations, expressing the opinion that mine were much better. This flattered me, though I have always known that when translating to another language, however well you should know it, one can never translate as well as to one's own native language. I later visited Aspazija again in Dubulti. I was good friends with Elza Stērste, also Akuraters, and in particular with Skalbe, who I rated very highly. Jēkabsons, as he called himself at the time, pressed me to translate his chivalry novel, but I declined. Viktors Eglītis came to see me and wanted me to help him understand Stefan George, but I couldn't, he [George] is difficult to understand, even more so if knowledge of the German language required is inadequate. I came to know other poets too, in passing, too many to enumerate" (Eckardt-Skalberg 1959).¹⁰ The collection was reviewed by the German

10 *Mehrere Beratungen habe ich mit Rainis gehabt, dem ich in seinem Thorensbergen Haus aufsuchte. Auch mit Aspasia, die sehr liebenswürdig war. Sie hatte mehr Gedichte, als die in die Anthologie aufgenommen selbst übersetzt, aber sie verzichtete auf eine ganze Reihe ihrer eigenen Uebersetzungen, weil sie meinte, meine seien sehr viel besser. Das hat mir geschmeichelt, aber ich habe immer gewusst, dass man nicht so gut in eine andere Sprache als die wirklich eigene übersetzen kann, wie gut man sie auch beherrsche. Ich habe Aspasia auch noch später in Dubbeln besucht. Mit Elsa Sterste war ich recht befreundet, auch mit Akuraters u. besonders mit Skalbe, dem ich so sehr schätzte. Jakobson, wie er sich damals noch nannte, bedrängte mich um Uebersetzung seines Ritterromans, aber ich sagte? ihm ab. Viktors Eglitis besuchte mich und wollte,*

press, both in the Baltic and abroad. A lengthy evaluation and high praise was lavished on the anthology by the Estonian German Edmund Hunius (1881–1941) (Hunius 1924). The Stuttgart periodical *Die Literatur* stated that in Eckardt-Skalberg's translations the individual voice of each author had been retained – Max Nußberger (1879–1943) briefly but concisely characterised the strikingly different poetic style of several of the Latvian poets, as well as its connection with Western European modern poetry (Nußberger 1925). Eckardt-Skalberg had succeeded in achieving the absolute essential in a translator's task: "to rethink the source text's cultural affordances, and opportunities for reformulating cultural possibility" (Scott 2018: 48). She respected the form and euphony of the original, but when aspiring to convey the feeling and basic ideas, she did not shy from the rearrangement of lines and new poetic figures. Skalberg's translations should be assessed as a whole, without trying to follow word-for-word the Latvian text. The considerable number of translated song lyrics leads one to think that these may have formed the core of the anthology, however, that was not the case. Skalberg was convinced that when translating musicalia, the priority of form should be taken into account and precisely because of this she was of the opinion that song lyrics had no place in collections of verse. Present-day theoreticians have also pointed to the different approach (translation strategy) that needs to be adopted when translating song lyrics or poems. The Norwegian researcher Annjo K. Greenall mentions the concept of rhythmic equivalence which consists of both the textual and performative dimension or the correspondence of syllables and stress patterns, as well as the correlation between stresses in the original text and in the translation with the musical beats, as being crucial (Greenall 2015: 314–315). Johan Franzon avers that for a text to be singable, a good fit between the prosody, the poetically rhetorical and the semantic is vital (Franzon 2015: 333). The German musicologist Walter Dürr proposes seven conditions for the concordance between the original and the translation in a musical text – the ones already previously mentioned, as well as respect for the length of the vowels which must be of a suitable kind, and a precise recasting of key words and metaphors, if these are supported or illustrated by the music (Dürr 2004: 1046).

The rendering of the poem *Dzīvīte* (Life) by Fricis Bārda, for example, conforms to almost all of these criteria:

dass ich ihm zum Verständnis Stefan Georges ver helfe, aber das konnte ich nicht, er ist zu schwer zu verstehen, schon gar nicht bei mangelnder Kenntnis der deutschen Sprache. Flüchtig habe ich auch andere Dichter kennen gelernt, kann sie nicht aufzählen.

Dzīvīte, dzīvīte,
 šūpojos tevī,
 vējā kā žubīte
 liepzariņā.
 Daudz tu man solīji,
 maz tomēr devi.
 Vai nav vienalga ar!
 Raidaidaidā.

Leben, o Leben du,
 schaukeln des Schweben,
 gleich wie die Meise
 im Linden gezweig.
 Viel hast versprochen du,
 wenig gegeben,
 ist mir auch einerlei!
 Rai-dai-dai-da.

[(Dear little) life, life, / I teeter within you, /
 (swaying) in the wind like a chaffinch /
 on a tiny linden branch. / Much you promised, /
 though little you gave. / What do I care then! /
 Raidaidaidā.]

[Life, oh life, / you levitating swing /
 like a finch / in a branched linden tree. /
 You promised a lot / gave little, /
 I don't care either! /
 Raidaidaidā.]

(Mediņš 1940)

The rhythmic correlation – number of syllables and accents – is precise, the only divergence is the first syllable of the fourth line of the translation (*im Linden gezweig*) forming the ending of the musical phrase, cleaving to the previous line and allowing a new phrase to begin – as in the original, so in the translation – with a musical accent. Eckardt-Skalberg has carefully avoided the use of diminutives, the word 'dzīvīte' ('dear little life') is substituted with 'life, oh life, you', and the 'liepzariņā' ('on a tiny linden branch') is recast as '*im Linden gezweig*' translating literally as 'branched linden'. In the translation, unlike in the original, there is an increased use of the consonant 'sh': 'šūpojos tevī' → 'schaukeln des Schweben' or 'hovering swaying', it would be difficult to translate this more precisely. In general, an avoidance of diminutives is typical of Eckardt-Skalberg's translations. This can be easily detected when comparing her translation of Anna Brigadere's (1861–1933) fairy tale play *Sprīdītis* (1903) with the original. She leaves the name of the eponymous hero unchanged, and when mentioning it for the first time explains its semantics (Brigadere 1922: [3]), but in that same play the name of the princess Zeltīte, also a diminutive, is rendered as *Prinzessin Goldhaar* or Princess Goldenhair (Brigadere 1922). In the play *Pūt, vējiņi!* (1909) by Rainis as well, the personage Barba, in the original called 'sedzacīte' ('cover-your-eyes'), in the translation of Eckardt-Skalberg becomes *scheues Mädchen* or 'shy girl' or even 'the shy one'. As opposed to the play *Sprīdītis*, in the translation of Rainis' text the diminutives are more prevalent. This may have something to do with the quotations from Latvian folk songs, where the presence of diminutives is a given. Nonetheless even in these cases we may find four-line verses where, from the original four diminutives, none remain in translation. For example, Rainis' lines: "Skalojosi, velējosi / Daugaviņas maliņā. / Attek zaļa līdaciņa, / Norauj manu vainadziņu"

(Rainis 1980: 315) in translation become: "*Als ich mich am Dünaufer / hingebeugt zum Flusse wusch, / kam ein grüner Hecht geschwommen, / riss das Kränzel mir vom Haupte*" [Literal translation: When on the banks of the Daugava / bending down I washed by the river / a green pike came swimming up / tore the wreath off my head] (Rainis 1927: 7). In another place, on the other hand, when recasting the collocations typical of folk songs, for instance, the diminutive has been kept: "*māmiņ, zeltsirdīt*" has been turned into "*O, du, goldnes Mutterherzchen*" (Rainis 1927: 11) or 'Oh, you, dear mother's golden little heart'.

In 1927, the 25th anniversary of Eckardt-Skalberg's working life was fittingly celebrated, highlighting in particular her services to rapprochement in the relations between Latvians and Germans. By this time both of the previously mentioned plays she had translated had already come out, in addition to a collection of short prose by Jānis Poruks (Poruck 1922). Over the years that followed, Eckardt-Skalberg's German translations of Latvian literature appeared in print increasingly rarely, in the latter half of the 1930s – due to the political climate, one should imagine – only on days of national celebration in May and November (Poruks 1933; Bahrda 1936; Aspasia 1936; Wirsa 1936; Wirsa 1937; Erss 1937; Brigadere 1937; Akuraters 1937). Eckardt-Skalberg's written correspondence with the publisher Jānis Rapa confirms that the proposal to translate the trilogy *Dievs. Daba. Darbs* (God. Nature. Work) by Anna Brigadere into German remained at the level of intent (Ekarte-Skalberga 1938). Her work as a translator of poetry did not stop after World War II had ended, however. An edition of selected verse by Andrejs Eglītis in German translation was published (Eglītis: 1964), and also a new, considerably expanded – now also with works by poets in diaspora – anthology of Latvian lyrical poetry (Eckardt-Skalberg 1960). Up until 1983, the collections of Latvian poetry in German translation by Eckardt-Skalberg were the only source of reference for German-speakers seeking to gain a more comprehensive insight into Latvian poetry (Zuzena-Metuzala 1983). They can still be regarded as the chief source of Latvian verse in the German language right up to the mid-20th century. In 1954 Eckardt-Skalberg was awarded the *Kultūras fonda balva* (Cultural Foundation Prize, established after the war by the Latvian community in exile), nevertheless in her poetic testament at the end of her life she was full of sad resignation – although she had hoped to reap fertile grain, it turned out to be merely chaff, useless for daily sustenance (–s 1964). Regardless of her significant, and of high quality, moreover, contribution to the popularisation of Latvian literature in the German-speaking space, during her lifetime Eckardt-Skalberg did not receive the recognition she merited, and these days she has been almost completely forgotten.

Martha von Dehn-Grubbe: translating Latvian literature to earn a living

The Baltic Ger-

man poet and translator Martha von Dehn-Grubbe was born in Riga, in the family of the Estonian Anete (née Konks) and her husband, a miller named Karl Friedrich Grubbe. In her youth she affirmed her belonging to the Estonians (Grube 1922). Up until World War II, Martha Grubbe worked as a translator at the newspaper *Rigasche Rundschau*, where she met her future husband, the musically trained Baltic German Oskar Bodo von Dehn (1894–1971), a contributing journalist writing about chess and concert life. In 1928 her first poetry collection *Andante cantabile. Lieder und Gedichte* came out in Riga. Before World War II, Martha von Dehn-Grubbe's lyric poems had also been included in a couple of anthologies of Baltic German literature (Dehn-Grubbe 1934; Dehn-Grubbe 1935). In the autumn of 1939, von Dehn-Grubbe together with her family emigrated to Germany, and after the war lived in Kiel. She continued to write poetry and in 1951 joined a group of editors and distributors associated with the magazine *Omnibus*, which had been founded in Lübeck by a Baltic German, Udo von Freytag-Löringhoff (1892–1984). This publication also featured von Dehn-Grubbe's translations of poetry from the Latvian and Estonian languages. In the post-war years, two more collections of her poetry were published (Dehn-Grubbe 1956; Dehn-Grubbe 1965). Martha von Dehn-Grubbe passed away in Kiel on 26 February, 1967.

Starting from at least 1922 onwards Dehn-Grubbe collaborated with the composer Alfrēds Kalniņš (Kalniņš 1922), and over the coming years she translated the texts of around a hundred songs and folk song arrangements by Kalniņš and other Latvian composers. In Grubbe's first collection of verse *Andante cantabile. Lieder und Gedichte*, a separate section was allocated to the lyrics of 15 Latvian songs translated into German, poems by Aspazija, Kārlis Krūza (1884–1960), Fricis Bārda, Plūdons (birth name Lejnieks, 1874–1940), Rainis, Antons Austrīņš (1884–1934), Eduards Vulfs (1886–1919), Kārlis Štrāls (1880–1970) and Jānis Grotis (1901–1968). In terms of volume, they took up more than one third of the small book. While conferring Grubbe's contribution to Baltic German poetry a positive assessment, her fellow translator, the previously mentioned Skalberg in line with her own convictions nonetheless reminded that: "translations of song [lyrics] can be useful only to singers who do not know the language of the original – as poems, they are of little value, however precisely the text were to correspond, the stresses, the rhythm and the intonation. These song lyrics have their place in song collections." (Eckardt-Skalberg 1928).¹¹

11 *Die Übersetzungen aus dem Lettischen gehören nicht eigentlich in einen Gedichtband. Denn Liedübersetzungen können nur ein Behelf sein für Sänger, die der Originalsprache nicht mächtig sind- als Gedichte haben sie kaum ein Wert, wie genau auch Text, Takt, Rhythmus und Betonung übereinstimmen mögen. Diese Lieder haben ihrer Platz in den Notenheften.*



Fig. 4. Martha von Dehn-Grubbe.
Latvian National Archive,
Latvian State Historical Archive,
LNA LVVA 2996-4-5556-G1927.

That was a very courteous, though clear hint that Grubbe's translations were not fully up to the mark. Skalberg was right – in this publication Grubbe's basic principle of translation was revealed – a principle that remained unchanged throughout her life: she translated freely, as she herself admitted, "with a light hand", that is, taking liberties (Dehn-Grubbe 1961). If the imprecisions did not hamper the enjoyment of the musical composition, then for someone with knowledge of the original the imprecise translations of the song texts, not infrequently even with the poet's intention changed, did not pass by unnoticed. In contrast to Skalberg, who translated poetry very slowly, consistently missed deadlines and thus adversely affected relations with her employers (Skalberg 1913), Dehn-Grubbe was as punctual as a clock, she willingly accepted all offers regardless of genre and contents, and, it seems, regarded translation from the Latvian language to German as her daily bread. In connection with the 10th anniversary of the independent state of Latvia in 1928, a lavish edition of the Latvian national anthem in Latvian, German and English was produced. The free translation into German was provided by Martha Grubbe. Adapting to the addressee, she transferred the emphasis from "Latvian daughters and sons" to an all Latvian citizen – including national minorities – embracing society: "our sons" and "our daughters."

Dievs, svētī Latviju,
Mūs' dārgo tēviju,
Svētī jel Latviju,
Ak, svētī jel to!
Kur latvju meitas zied,
Kur latvju dēli dzied,
Laid mums tur laimē diet
Mūs' Latvijā!

Segne dich, Gottes Hand,
Teueres Vaterland,
Lettland, Du Heimatland,
erblüh und gedeih!
Dir unsre Söhne glühn,
Dir unsre Töchter blühn,
Du unsres Glückes Pfand,
lieb Heimatland!

[God bless Latvia / Our precious Fatherland, /
Do bless Latvia, / Oh do bless it! / Where
Latvian daughters bloom, / Where Latvian
sons sing, / There let us live in happiness /
In our Latvia!]

[Bless. Hand of God / Our precious fatherland /
Latvia, land of our fathers / may you flourish
and bloom! / For you our sons glow /
For you our daughters blossom /
You, our pledge of happiness / dear Fatherland.]

(Baumaņu Kārlis 1928).

As attested by reviews in the newspapers, nationally inclined Latvians took exception to this kind of translation (Schiemann 1930). All the same, the anthem did not get re-translated into German, nor were any corrections made to Grubbe's translation – at least there is no information that this may have happened. It is also not known whether the conflict was the reason for the non-payment of the fee; as late as 1955, Dehn-Grubbe's correspondence with the Latvian writer Jānis Jaunsudrabiņš revealed that she had not forgotten the incident: "The fee from Alfrēds Kalniņš was 10 lats per piece – regardless whether the poem was short or long, but, for example, for my translation of the Latvian anthem I still have not received a honorarium, even though the translation was on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the state, published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a very beautiful presentation" (Dehn-Grubbe 1955).

In the 1920s and 1930s, Dehn-Grubbe continued working on the translations of Latvian solo song lyrics. In addition, in the latter half of 1930s the *Kultūras fonds* financed, as Alfrēds Kalniņš wrote in his autobiography, "for the purposes of propaganda" (Kalniņš 1950: 107) translations of Latvian folk songs into German, French and English, as well as an excerpt of a piano-accompanied version of his opera *Baņuta* in German and French. The German text was rendered by Martha von Dehn-Grubbe. As opposed to Eckardt-Skalberg, Dehn-Grubbe had no objections to re-arrangements of the form and the number of syllables in the translation did not always correspond with the original. Nonetheless, if according to the German translation there was a greater number of syllables, and even words, to be sung, it almost always coincided with the musical pattern – the long notes. This gave the singer the opportunity, with deft movement of the tongue, to disclose also the contents of the opera. The translation of the opera *Baņuta* ensured that the name of the Baltic German von Dehn-Grubbe was present also in Soviet music – a rare exception. In 1968, a new edition of *Baņuta. Opera 4 cēlienos* (*Baņuta. An opera in 4 acts*) was released in Latvian, Russian, French and German.

Already in 1940, following a Soviet functionary directive, the composer Alfrēds Kalniņš when preparing a production of the opera as part of the ten days of Latvian culture in Moscow, had altered its conclusion. The new finale, without tampering with

the rest of the text, was translated into German by Abgara Skujeniece (1892–1977). Prior to World War II, von Dehn-Grubbe had also translated into German the opera *Hamlets* (1938) by Jānis Kalniņš (Kalniņš 194?). There is no information whether there were any performances of the operas *Baņuta* or *Hamlets* in the German language.

After leaving Latvia, Martha von Dehn-Grubbe continued to translate; she placed advertisements, actively seeking contact with potential clients (Dehn-Grubbe 1951), collaborated with newspaper and magazine editorial offices, translated journalism (Irbe 1959/60) and responded to offers of work from scholars (Biezais 1961–1964). Martha von Dehn-Grubbe translated prose by Latvian writers in exile: Alfrēds Dziļums (1907–1976), Irma Grebзде (1912–2000), Knuts Lešiņš (1909–2000) and Teodors Zeltiņš (1914–1991). In the German and Latvian emigre press, the highest accolades were awarded to the short story collection by Grebзде: *Sērmūkšļu pagasta ļaudis* (The People of Sērmūkšļu Parish, 1947), with its German version titled *So lebte man in Sermuksch: heitere Dorfgeschichten* (1955). The translator developed a long-term working relationship with Jānis Jaunsudrabiņš. At the invitation of the writer, in the first half of 1955 Dehn-Grubbe worked on the translation of his novel *Nauda* (Money, 1942), but in 1960/61 she finished the translation of the novel *Jaunsaimnieks un velns* (The New Farmer and the Devil, 1933) which had been started by Jaunsudrabiņš's son-in-law, Willi Stöppler (1906–1985). Neither of the manuscripts was ever published. Although the blame was assigned to the quality of the translation, correspondence with potential publishers indicates that the chief problem was the content of Jaunsudrabiņš's works – for German readers an alien prose space environment and elaborate descriptions of Latvian rural life without the expected anticipatory tension and dynamism.

Martha von Dehn-Grubbe translated poetry also from the Estonian language. After the war, Baltic German periodicals published translated poetry by Erik Laidsaar (1906–1962), Valev Uibopuu (1913–1997), and also Bernard Kangro (1910–1994). In 1962, a collection of Estonian lyric poetry compiled by von Dehn-Grubbe and titled *Wir kehren heim: estnische Lyrik und Prosa* (We Return Home: Estonian Poetry and Prose) was published in Karlsruhe. It contained works by poets of different generations and who had suffered different fates – from Kristian Jaak Peterson (1801–1822), Lydia Koidula (1843–1886) and Anna Haava (1864–1957) to the Soviet Estonian writer August Alle (1890–1952) and his contemporaries Bernard Kangro, Kalju Lepik (1920–1999) and Salme Raatma (1915–2008). As the literary historian Cornelius Hasselblatt pointed out: "... she was not guided by political considerations, but obviously with it [this collection] wished to present her personal selection [...] von Dehn-Grubbe's collection was a laudable attempt to bring some Estonian poetry to Germany. [...] the author cared about poetry in itself, about what was important to herself personally,

rather than it being representative or having some kind of sense of mission”¹². Similarly as for Elfriede Eckhardt-Skalberg translating from the Latvian language was a matter close to her heart, for Martha von Dehn-Grubbe, most likely, translating poetry from the Estonian language was the real labour of love.

Conclusions

When evaluating translations of Estonian literature into the German language as an opportunity of integrating it into the wider landscape of world literature, the German literary scholar Cornelius Hasselblatt draws attention to the location of book publishers (in Estonia or abroad), the size of print runs and reviews in terms of number, the place of publication and language, and uses the term ‘pseudo-reception’ (*Pseudorezeption*) (Hasselblatt 2011: 88). The same could be applied to translations of Latvian literature into German, including the achievement in the context of German culture of all four translators mentioned. It is not large, moreover the translations were published mainly in the Baltic, in small print runs and (with a few exceptions) reviewed in the local press. And yet – the collection of Latvian prose translated by Hanny Brentano alongside the language learning aid for self-study that she devised brings visibility to Latvian prose and broadens the perspective on Latvian culture in the German-speaking world, the Haralds Edgasts works translated by Elisabeth Goercke reveal the development of the artistic system of Modernism in the Baltic, meanwhile the translations of the works of Latvian poets by Elfriede Eckhardt-Skalberg and Martha von Dehn-Grubbe offer an insight not only into the state of Latvian 20th century poetry, but also open the way for Latvian vocal music to the European (German-speaking) stage. The smaller (numerically) a nation, the less likely its role in world culture will be noticed. That is why translations, by making the literature of a small community visible in other language environments, are always endeavours to be applauded.

12 ... sie sich nicht durch politische Überlegungen leiten ließ, sondern hier ganz offenkundig ihre persönliche Auswahl vorstellen wollte [...] Trotzdem war v. Dehn-Grubbes Sammlung ein willkommener Versuch, etwas von der estnischen Lyrik nach Deutschland zu transportieren. [...] es der Autorin um die Dichtung an sich ging, um das, was ihr persönlich wichtig war, nicht um Repräsentativität oder eine wie auch immer geartete Mission.

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