Translating Poetry to Resist Soviet Coloniality: Tracing the Legacy of Uldis Bērziņš

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Introduction

The death of polyglot poet and translator Uldis Bērziņš (1944–2021) can be perceived as a loss for the Latvian language. It was the end of Bērziņš's active creative work both as a writer and interpreter, work which included a plethora of texts that reshaped and continue to influence Latvian poetry, enriched the Baltic tongue, and introduced masterpieces of world literature — both secular and religious — into the local discourse. It also has marked the beginning of a new stage in scholarship. Each poem by Bērziņš, Guntis Berelis writes, "must be seen as a uniform piece of fabric, which in turn is a small fragment of a gigantic fabric of text, one which is continuously written by the author, adding a piece with each new poem" (Berelis 1999: 257). We can speak similarly about Bērziņš's translations. Since we can now deal with a corpus of material that is no longer receiving additions, we can more easily adjust our interpretative gaze and sift through the vast body of verse. After describing the poet's activities regarding poetry translation in a concrete historical and scholarly context, this article focuses on selected translations written and published by Bērziņš in the Soviet period, emphasizing individual poems as case studies. I argue that certain aspects of Bērziņš's work as a translator of poetry can be read as a form of resisting Soviet coloniality. To substantiate my claim, I will turn to postcolonial studies and make use of concepts from translation theory, attempting to synthesize the two perspectives in an interdisciplinary approach.

The burgeoning field of Soviet postcolonial studies has been widely discussed amongst academics in recent years. While there is no consensus on exactly how to adopt the postcolonial vocabulary in a post-Soviet or Soviet context, and much of the field is contradictory and without generally accepted terms, norms, or methods, it has nevertheless proven fruitful for knowledge production and provided pluriperspectival opinions on our understanding of history. Attention has oftentimes been granted to literary processes — after all, in the territory in question, "[t]he prevalence of imaginative literature as a major institution of transformation, culture, and anti-imperial protest expanded throughout the nineteenth century and then into the Soviet period" (Etkind 2011: 253). However, rarely does research on Soviet coloniality encompass an inspection of the processes of translation (with rare exceptions (see, for example, Peiker 2006)). This is a significant lack, because "[c]olonialism and imperialism were and are made possible not just by military might or economic advantage but by knowledge as well," and translation has always been part and parcel of producing, representing, construing,

and misconstruing knowledge (Tymoczko and Gentzler 2002: xxi). Bērziņš's story, there-fore, is a crucial example of the ways power relations were negotiated in an oppressive system: His debut book was refused publication for about a decade, during which time he turned to translation. Furthermore, though his biography and poetry have been examined in-depth by Marians Rižijs, in his monograph on the author, the scholar admits that one of the aspects that was "left aside" was Bērziņš's contribution as a translator (Rižijs 2011: 10). In an attempt to lay the groundwork for filling these gaps, this article begins by mapping the locus of Baltic studies in postcolonial thinking; it then turns to describing some important facets of literary translation in the Soviet regime; finally, it offers an analysis of certain translations written by Bērziņš in the Soviet period.

1. Adapting a Post-colonial View to the Culture of Soviet Latvia

While writings on the intersection between Soviet studies and ideas concerning coloniality proliferate, considerations about Baltic postcoloniality are still in a relatively early phase — though there is a firm basis on which to develop a grasp of the problematic. Ever since the publication of David Chioni Moore's 2001 article, "Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique," scholars have been motivated to seek connections between the colonial experience as described by the likes of Edward Said or Homi Bhabha and the experience of the peoples who lived through Soviet treatment. Moore stated clearly that the term "postcolonial" is "a useful designation" for the geographical zone that includes the "post-Soviet sphere" (Moore 2006: 15). His suggestion to apply concepts that were well-established when speaking of empires to the conditions of the Soviet Union and countries under its influence gained resonance. 2006 saw the publication of "Baltic Postcolonialim," a collective monograph edited by Violeta Kelertas that re-published Moore's article along with several pieces delving into the topic from various angles. More recently, the colonial experience in the Baltics and its link to and manifestations in drama has been described by Benedikts Kalnačs (Kalnačs 2016). And perhaps the most compelling contribution to date is Epp Annus's monograph, "Soviet Postcolonial Studies: A View from the Western Borderlands" (Annus 2018b), which focuses on what the scholar calls "Western Borderlands." What these works have in common is a sensibility towards the complexity of historical fact and an awareness of the dangers of simplifying multi-dimensional political and cultural dynamics. One takeaway from Kalnačs's and his colleagues' efforts is that it is more useful to concentrate on specific phenomenon in specific circumstances rather than attempt to make generalizations about larger continuums. Details that apply to, say, the Latvian context in the 1980s will not apply to the Balkan context today, and so on.

In a 2018 article on a related subject, wherein he provides an overview of how postcolonial theory has been integrated into Soviet and post-Soviet studies and contextualizes the Baltic experience in a longer historical context, pointing towards German and other influences

which existed alongside the Soviet occupation, Kalnačs urges scholars to identify "shared colonial difference" (Kalnačs 2018: 25) rather than look for "sameness" between ex-colonies and ex-Soviet states. Similarly, Neil Lazarus warns against totalizing thinking, stating that it

> once again conflates the history of "Europe" with that of "the west", and once again homogenizes each and both of these concepts, [...] thereby making it necessary for us to have to start calling for the unthinking of Eurocentrism all over again. The danger here is of a merging of "post-Soviet" criticism with the kind of "post-Orientalist" literary comparativism currently espoused by some western European scholars, who seek to restate the value and vitality of the "western" literary canon and the tradition that it inscribes and memorializes after the disciplinary critique of Eurocentrism. (Lazarus 2012: 126)

This seems to be a crosscutting thread in Baltic postcolonial studies as well — the notion that we risk falling back into essentialism while trying to critique it. Therefore, each study must clearly define its object in its intersectional position, remembering that history is not one-directional or even the same for everyone but is instead a multifarious stream of overlapping narratives. So, for example, in his essay on the history of the Latvian SSR from a postcolonial perspective, historian Gatis Krūmiņš first admits that if we look at the definition of *colonialism*, "we may find much in common with what occurred in Latvia and the entire Baltic territory during the USSR occupation" (Krūmiņš 2019: 586). But then, most of the essay is devoted to processes unique to the USSR: sovietization, collectivization, Russification, et cetera. In other words, historical specificity is paramount when dealing with violent, grand-scale conglomerations such as the USSR.

Speaking about the contemporary situation, Madina Tlostanova notes that "[p]ostsocialist, postcolonial and postimperial overtones constantly intersect and communicate in the complex imaginary of the ex-Soviet space," which should also caution us to stay alert when analyzing the Soviet past. Her words should also caution us about the present — for it, too, was an intersection of (socialist, colonial, imperial) "overtones" (Tlostanova 2012: 141). The study of Soviet history is further complicated by Alexander Etkind, who notes: "Not only is the post-Soviet era postcolonial (though still imperial), the Soviet era was postcolonial too. The Russian Empire was a great colonial system both at its distant frontiers and in its dark heartlands" (Etkind 2011: 26). This is another aspect we must remember as we look for de-colonial movements in Soviet literature — resistance to authority can be placed within the tradition of imperial power relations.

Soviet postcolonial thinkers are not arguing that the Soviet Union was a colonial empire in traditional terms; instead, the shared revelation is that the theoretical frameworks developed by postcolonial thinkers is useful and productive when discussing the Soviet condition. Therefore, along with the attention to contextual specificity, what the scholarship on Soviet postcolonialism shares is an engrossment in taking up, re-defining, re-applying, and/or supplementing the lexicon of postcolonial studies. This attempt to show how we may find parallels between the experiences of peoples in ex-colonies of empires and peoples

from previous Soviet republics proves the flexibility of expressions and abstractions. As in the case of discussions pertaining to regions in India or South America, so too does the Soviet sphere provide examples of its own hybridization, double-consciousness, mimicry, bodies, identities, and cultures in and as translation (as Bhabha would have it). For instance, Michał Buchowski writes about the process of contemporary "othering" in Poland, transforming, re-evaluating, and widening Said's proposed apprehension of orientalization: "[T]he spatially exotic other has been resurrected as the socially stigmatized brother" (Buchowski 2006: 476). For Buchowski, in the post-socialist condition, othering has acquired new depth and form, no longer pertaining to geopolitical location but to social and economic background.

Social division, of which Buchowski speaks, points to another feature of Soviet and Baltic postcolonial studies that will become relevant for the current article — the problematic position of nationalism within societal relations in the Soviet era. One is tempted to find nationalistic inclinations in both covert and overt acts of protest against the rules imposed by the Soviet regime. However, we must be careful not to inscribe nationalism too hastily, as this exposes us to the chance of reverting back to essentialist categories of "us" and "them" — the very kind of categories these protests tend to criticize. The place of nationalism in thinking about the postcolonial perspective on Baltic studies is complicated; when scholars speak of decolonial options or a counter-discourse to the colonial one, we often see a reference to the "national" past — and sometimes to pagan roots (in other words, a form of nationalist essentialism). This is untangled by Epp Annus, who, referencing Gayatri Spivak, analyzes "strategic national essentialism in the Baltics as a cultural phenomenon of these (post)colonial societies" (Annus 2018b: 2). This position assumes that the Latvian nationalism in the Soviet period came about as a necessary reaction to occupation, the inevitable necessity of standing in solidarity with the people in a colonial situation.

This article borrows Annus's idea of finding and describing "strategic national essentialism" (in Latvian cultural phenomenon) as the objective of this study and invokes selected terminology from postcolonial studies; it also strives to avoid generalizations by centering on particular contexts. In terms of vocabulary, Annus provides a distinction between "colonialism" and "coloniality." She writes: "The Baltic states were not precisely 'colonized' by the Soviet Union [...]. Yet [...] the Soviet period in the Baltic states can be characterized as a colonial situation, wherein colonial strategies were deployed" (Annus 2018a: 2). For her, "coloniality" refers to a "conceptual and ideological "matrix of power" [...]: Soviet colonialism as a complex of strategies brought with it Soviet coloniality as a general state of affairs or cultural logic" (Annus 2018a: 4). It is precisely this "general state of affairs or cultural logic," i.e., this Soviet coloniality, that will be shown to be resisted through Bērziņš's poetry translations. Here it is also useful to note one of the ways Annus describes the Soviet Union as a colonial empire. An "imperial situation," the scholar says, "creates a distinction between 'us' and 'them,' a cultural construction of 'our' identity as opposed to 'their' flawed social structures and 'their' disturbing presence in 'our' land" (Annus 2018b: 52). This construction — the familiar "us" and the dangerous others, "them" — will become relevant when analyzing certain translations.

Finally, I also sympathize with Annus when she speaks about the location of knowledge in Soviet postcolonial studies — that is, the role of subjective dispositions and family histories in theoretical reflection. She points to the plurality of perspectives in the growing field of postcolonial scholarship in light of the affective turn and argues that academic otherness "is the precondition for consolidating Soviet postcolonial studies as a subfield" (Annus 2018b: 75). Our views are always already positioned and derived from individual genealogies; therefore, it only makes our thinking more rigorous if we identify our proximity to the object of our studies. I, too, have a personal, emotional investment when it comes to dissecting the workings of the Soviet machine. Though I did not live through the historical period, I have inherited memories and worldviews from parents and grandparents who stood on both sides of the mechanism of power, which is why this article is also my personal attempt to develop a way of thinking about the controversial legacy of the Soviet occupation.

2. Literary Translation in Soviet Times

If we are to conceptualize the Soviet Union as a kind of colonial empire, then it becomes all the more relevant to study the practice of translation within it. "[T]ranslation has always been an indispensable channel of imperial conquest and occupation," writes Douglas Robinson. "Not only must the imperial conquerors find some effective way of communicating with their new subjects; they must develop new ways of subjecting them, converting them into docile or 'cooperative' subjects" (Robinson 2014: 10). Ever since the "cultural turn," translation studies has shown time and again that "translation was an effective instrument of colonialism, part of the technological apparatus that ensured the establishment of complex political, social, aesthetic, and pedagogical systems in the colonized territories" (Bassnett 2014: 44). In the case of the Soviet Union, we may speak of certain translation policies that were part of the official agenda to assimilate and/or subjugate the population of occupied territories. As the ideological brainwashing unfolded in the post-war years, great effort was put into controlling what could and couldn't be translated (though, of course, there were occasions when some books "slipped through the cracks" (see, for example, Veisbergs 2019: 70–72)). While some were censored, many Russian writers became prioritized as part of the Russification program; if Western authors were translated, it became important to frame these foreigners a certain way — either as capitalist or imperialist deviants or critics of their own societies. The second strand of translation that was politically motivated and allowed was the exchange of cultural material between occupied republics. "The widely propagated friendship of nations [...], was expected to manifest itself in different spheres of social life, including publishing" (Kamovnikova 2019: 151). This meant that publishers had to produce large amounts of literature translated from the languages of the Soviet Union as well as the languages of the allies in the name of staging and demonstrating supposed unity and familiarity.

However, translation is as much about finding the same in each culture as it is about differences, and choosing what differences to showcase in translation depends on the translators — living beings with personal histories, cultural and epistemic baggage, ideological stances, and everything else that comprises a person. If we realize that translation "stands as one of the most significant means by which one culture represents another," and if we assume that, as Maria Tymoczko contends in reference to Benedict Anderson, "nations are 'imagined communities,'" then "inevitably representations of nations will shift as they are constructed through translation by different groups with their own senses of identity" (Tymoczko 1999b: 17). The fact censors often failed to realize is that what translators "represent" is not only some foreign aesthetic, but also the translator's ideals, knowledge, biases, prejudices, etc. Identities, which we hope to unveil through translation, "depend on a perception of difference for their articulation, difference often established by translations" (Tymoczko 1999b: 18). That is to say that translations, especially of such a complex and multi-layered entity as poetry, are never "innocent" — they involve making choices and, as such, are always mingled with the perceptions of the translator. This inevitable transformation leads to the possibility that translation can (and has on multiple occasions throughout history (see, for example, Tymoczko 2010)) turn from a tool of manipulation into an instrument of resistance. "Because translation is at times one locus in a literary system where formal experimentation is more easily tolerated," Maria Tymoczko writes, "translation can even become an 'alibi' for challenges to the dominant poetics" (Tymoczko 1999a: 33). What happens in such cases is that the direction of the controlling pressure of translation gets turned back against the oppressor.

This is the case for several Soviet translators for whom the act of translating became a kind of refuge and, potentially, nonconformity. Jean Delisle and Judith Woodsworth quote Russian translator Efim Etkind, who states that, when Russian poets were "[n]o longer in a position to express themselves fully in their own works," they expressed themselves by translating classics through the voices of other authors (Woodsworth and Delisle 2012: 141). This statement can be applied to the translators who worked within the Latvian language as well. Working at a time after the latest wave of Russification; at a time when repressions stretched beyond the social sphere influencing literature and the translation thereof; when every citizen was expected to adhere to communist ideology, learn Marxist-Leninist philosophy and be wary of what they say in private, many poets and writers turned to translation as a means to sharpen their own literary craftsmanship. This was possible because, as Latvian historians have noted, while literature as a whole was defective, "translated literature was considerably luckier" (Zauberga 2016: 37) in that the original writings of local authors were under more suspicion than the translations made by them. Lauren Leighton has observed that the "same political leaders who consider translation a key to their national policy [...] have been indifferent to and at times even oblivious to works in translation that would have enraged them had they been written by a Soviet author" (qtd. in Baer 2010: 152). To a certain degree, this was exploited by translators in order to bypass censorship.

There were various ways in which translators exercised resistance — for example, by selecting and translating the work of authors that politically (even if covertly) oppose the authorities. However, as Brian James Baer asserts, the Soviet-era intelligentsia "often viewed opposition

to the regime in terms of non-participation rather than open dissent" (Baer 2010: 163). The resistance was not necessarily "anti-Soviet" so much as it was "non-Soviet." Latvian translators attempted to reject the dogmas of socialist realism by "distancing themselves from the language of power and its ideological practice" (Rižijs 2011: 119). One of the most talented and productive Latvian translators of the last century, Knuts Skujenieks, reaffirms this by saying that for his generation translating was simply a "tendency to widen our poetic sense and, therefore, worldview" (Skujenieks 2004: 68). Since translation was "safer" than original writing (and also moderately easier to publish), it served as an opportunity to look beyond the stale, sterile reality of the USSR and delve into "unheard-of linguistic and cultural cosmoses" (Rižijs 2011: 158). In a reality where deviation from norms — a conversation about independence, for example — meant punishment, translation offered a window to an alternative existence. Skujenieks, who spent seven years in the Gulag (1962–1969), went on to publish, among many other titles, translations of Federico Garcia Lorca's poetry and the folksongs of different European peoples; when Maija Silmale (1924–1973) returned home after spending five years in a prison camp (1951–1956), she worked on a comprehensive anthology of modern French poetry and the novels of Albert Camus.

Of course, censorship in the Soviet Union was not only an institution enacted by a single, external organ of power, but rather "a heterogeneous, dispersed set of practices that varied historically and geographically and were carried out by different 'censorial agents'" (Sherry 2015: 6). That is to say, while censorship did occur as a process of prohibition, erasure, twisting, and falsification of fact and fiction supervised by Glavlit — the Main Directorate for Literary and Publishing Affairs (Uldis Bērziņš has also suffered in this respect, see Balode 2009) — it nevertheless involved other, independent "censorial" factors as well. The intensity of censorship was different on Russian soil than it was elsewhere in the Union, and it changed over the course of the occupation (with Glavlit's standards relaxing in 1988 as part of Mikhail Gorbachev's policies), but the effects of the censors were nonetheless felt all across the spectrum of Latvian life — social, political, and artistic — including when Bērziņš was actively translating.

Referencing Michael Holquist, Karl E. Jirgens notes that censorship can be viewed "as a complex phenomenon that results in a dynamic and multi-directional relationship between the censor and the censored" (Jirgens 2006: 68). The scholar explains that in any attempt to establish a "discursive hegemony," the dominant structure is "nonetheless locked into a 'negotiation' with those it attempts to suppress," which demands "answers from the colonized, and by necessity, gives them voice" (68). This results in both self-censorship and windows of opportunity that allow for subverting the colonizers' suppression. While Jirgens talks about original literary production, similar observations can be made regarding translations, as I will elaborate in the next and final section of the article.

Finally, one key difference between the translation practices in Soviet Russia and Soviet Latvia was the tradition of translating by way of interlinear trots — "word-for-word prosaic translations of original poetry, which function as intermediate links between original texts and poet-translators, who are unfamiliar with the source language" (Kamovnikova 2019: 151). Trots were widely used in Soviet Russia both by beginners and experienced poets. According

to Kamovnikova, "[a] literary translator in the Soviet Union was permitted to remain monolingual, however contradictory to the professional requirements this may sound" (Kamovnikova 2019: 154). Conversely, since the late 1960s, the Latvian tradition has been to learn foreign languages in order to achieve maximal closeness to the original. Ingmāra Balode has observed that this was one of the main characteristics of the so-called Latvian school of poetry translation: "[I]ts members write poetry themselves and study foreign languages" (Balode 2013: 168). This means that Latvian translators were, in a sense, more engaged with texts they were translating than their Russian counterparts. This was due in part to Knuts Skujenieks, who passionately encouraged contemporaries to translate poetry directly from the source language, arguing that this way Latvian poetry is enriched by the models of world literature. As a result, the 1970s and 1980s saw a "boom" of high-quality translations in Latvian that were written by a generation of multilingual poets-translators. Uldis Bērziņš is a key figure within this generation and his translations constitute a lasting contribution to representing foreign literature in Latvian.

3. The Translations of Uldis Bērziņš

It may be argued that, at least numerically, translations are the most noteworthy component of Uldis Bērziņš's oeuvre. During his life he published around 10 books of original poetry (depending on whether we count selected works and co-authored books, the number differs) and translated more than 30. A fascination with foreign languages accompanied Bērziņš throughout his career. In his monograph on the life and work of the poet Marians Rižijs, he writes that one of his first attempts to translate poetry occurred in the 10th or 11th grade when he read Karel Šiktanc: the young Bērziņš "subscribed to a Czech literary newspaper that had published a poem about a mathematician," which he started to translate right after reading it (Rižijs 2011: 17). Bērziņš believes that he most likely did not finish the translation. His first serious effort to translate poetry was in the late 1960s during his university years in Leningrad; Bērziņš sent home his translated versions of the work of authors such as Orhan Veli, Oktay Rifat, and Fazıl Hüsnü Dağlarca. His first published translations appear to be four pieces by Wisława Szymborska printed in the magazine "Liesma" in 1969. The first book containing Bērziņš's translations of poems was the 1970 novel "Altāra skorpions" ("The Scorpion of the Altar") by Abdulla Qodiriy — the prose text was translated by Marija Šūmane while Bērziņš worked with the Uzbek verse. Beginning in the early 1970s Bērziņš worked on translation projects with great determination, publishing his translation work in periodicals, the annual almanac "Dzejas diena" ("Poetry day"), and elsewhere. A brief scan of the Soviet period reveals a life devoted to translating in order to both bring life to classics and introduce contemporary movements into the Latvian language.

In 1972, the first collection poetry entirely translated by Bērziņš was published: "Krāsas" ("Colors") by Azerbaijani writer Rasul Rza. Two years later "Liesma" published Dağlarca's "Kad zāle pie zvaigznes duras" ("When Grass Touches a Star") translated from the Turkish. 1977 saw the publication of an anthology of Azerbaijani poetry, "Mēs esam uguns daļa"

("We Are Part of Fire"), a book Bērziņš had worked on for several years and, at the time, one of the few cases when a book of translated poetry caused resonance in Latvian criticism (Gusāre 1978). Two noteworthy books saw the light of day in 1980 — the anthology of American poetry "Visiem, visiem jums Amerikas vārdā" ("To All, All in the Name of America"), where Bērziņš was among a collective of translators, and a children's book by Dağlarca, "Putni mūs mīl" ("Birds Love Us"). The 1980s were especially fruitful; five books translated by Bērziņš were published, both monuments of world literature and examples of modern poetry. Amongst those books: the long-awaited collection of poems by Polish Nobel laureate Wisława Szymborska, "Apsveiksim skudras" ("Let's Congratulate the Ants," 1980); Saadi's "Rožudārzs" ("The Rose Garden," 1983), translated from the Persian; Russian futurist's Velimir Khlebnikov's "Dziesmu karapulks" ("Army of Songs," 1985, together with Māris Čaklais); Mahtımguli's "Cik dziļas dzīles pasaulei" ("How Deep the Depths of the World," 1983, together with Nora Kalna, Māris Čaklais, and Jānis Rokpelnis), translated from the Turkmen language; and the 1988 collection of six Turkish poets, "Baložu pilni pagalmi" ("Pigeon-filled Courtyards," together with Pēters Brūveris), which introduced Latvian readers to the burgeoning trends of 20th century Turkish poetry.

Bērziņš has written about translation and foreign literature both in essays and various kinds of paratext (see Bērziņš 1982; Bērziņš 2001; Bērziņš 2011; Bērziņš 2015). And while I am aware of his philosophy (he shares Skujenieks' credo of approaching the original with care, respect, and attention in order widen his mother tongue by introducing it to the riches of a cultural "other"), I am not necessarily interested entirely in his personal professional *intentions* as a translator. Every translation speaks in cooperation with the reader, as does all literature, and its meanings therefore can clash with those intended by the author-translator. What I am interested in is this plurality of possible readings of Bērziņš's translations — the chance to perform an original interpretation, one of many which, in this case, would cast his work in opposition to the dominant ideology of the time. The fact is that Bērziņš himself never openly describes his translations as a form of protest. This is for obvious reasons: the regime created the need for implicit, concealed expression, Aesopian language that hinted at the possible truth while never explicitly stating it. Bērziņš would speak about the humanist qualities of the author of the original, the universal value of the text, and yet there always seems to be a political dimension to his comments. For example, the publication of Szymborska's poems in Bērziņš's translation is accompanied by a brief note that states that the translator does not know if the poet could be labeled "conservative," but what he does know is that "she is a smart and good human" (Bērziņš 1969b). "Smart" and "good" receive no further elucidation, which creates a situation where the reader can infer that the poet is opposed to the "dumb" and "evil" system of oppression, on the backdrop of which she is writing.

When reading Bērziņš's translations, we can observe a tension between the linguistic artistry of the translator, the effervescent language of his translations, and the stale triviality of many other Soviet products, the kinds we commonly associate with propaganda and socialist realism. My argument rests on the presumption that Uldis Bērziņš purposefully enriched the Latvian language and culture in a time when cultural specificity suffered under authoritarianism. His work overcomes limitations imposed on form, content, ideology, and

creativity, and therefore I believe his translations can be understood not only as culturally but also as nationally and politically significant. In what follows, I suggest the ways in which Bērziņš's translations can be viewed as a means to resist the restriction inflicted by Soviet cultural politics. Although some forms of local culture were supported by the state, generally speaking – part of the colonial matrix of power in Soviet Latvia was to suppress national specificity, be it linguistic, cultural, or artistic. As excerpts from the poet's translations will show, Bērziņš furthered the development of Latvian culture and language in the Soviet period by using creative and innovative techniques of translating that introduced novel forms and vocabulary into the local discourse; certain translations of his express themes and narratives that are not only uncharacteristic of Soviet socialist realism or other dominant literary poetics, but also forge a critique of the inhumane system of oppression. Furthermore, on some occasions, choosing a text for translation can also be read as defending equality amongst peoples and as a re-evaluation of the colonial us-them division. In the final subchapters of this article, I identify two opposing yet merging directions in the translational activity of Bērziņš: 1) the strategic national essentialism in developing linguistic specificity in translation and 2) a creative and therefore non-essentialist approach to writing translations which refutes, among other things, the notion of *owning* one's language. For Bērziņš, no one can be an "owner" of linguistic matter — the word, the sentence, the text — as these are elements which for him exist above the human condition. We do not subdue language; rather, we are its creative but responsible servants.

3.1. National Growth and Bridging Gaps

One of Bērziņš motivations in specializing in Persian and Turkic languages was based on an understanding of cultural relations. "During the army," Marians Rižijs explains, "Bērziņš decided to study Turkish because he believed that Turkey is in the middle, between Europe and Asia, and that there we may find the synthesis of East and West" (Rižijs 2011: 19). This means that, from the outset, Bērziņš has been keen to cultivate a global outlook that could subsequently be injected into Latvian culture through translations. For him, translation seems to function here not only as a type of bridge between Latvian readers and Turkish writers, but as a gateway to a panoramic overview of Eastern and Western confluence. Bērziņš's Turkish studies reached its pinnacle with the publication of "Baložu pilni pagalmi" — the collection of the work of modern Turkish poets. Although published in 1988, Bērziņš actually started translating Turkish poetry as early as the late 1960s: "I'm reading Nazım [Hikmet] and this and that. Not even this and that — about five poems of his have I translated," Bērziņš wrote in a 1969 letter to one of his teachers, Marija Šūmane. "When I visit you in Ogre, I will ask whether it is Nazım or not" (Bērziņš 1969a). Along with becoming acquainted with Hikmet's modernist verse, Bērziņš was concerned with whether he had been able to translate him properly. The next year, Bērziņš sent a small selection of translations to Latvia from Russia, including verses by Dağlarca and Allen Ginsberg, as well as Nazım Hikmet's "New Year's Christmas Tree," translated by Bērziņš as "Jaungada egle." A fragment from the printed version reads:

...Somu līča dienvidu krastā vēlu naktī
    netāl no miglainās jūras
                uzcirtusies garstilbaina jaungada egle
starp tumšiem gotiskiem torņiem un teitoņu ģerboņiem
    rūpnīcu dūmeņiem jaungada egle
jaungada egle sniegainā laukumā dzied igauņu dziesmas
    uzcirtusies garstilbaina jaungada egle
    tanī sarkanā stilka spīgulī Tu
    Tavi salmu dzeltenie mati un zilās skropstas
    es Tevi ieliku spīgulī iekārtu eglē
    Tavs baltais kakls tik slaids tik pilnīgs
ar sirdēstiem rūpēm vārdiem cerībām glāstiem noslēpu
    Tevi stikla spīgulī
visu jaungadu eglēs visos skuju un lapu kokos balkonu
    margās logos naglās un skumjās iekāru sarkanus
    stikla spūguļus kuros Tu
piedod es nomiršu tu paliksi spīguļos
Igaunija pati mazākā sociālistiskā valsts
    uz katru iedzīvotāju
                visvairāk lasītu dzejoļu
                  visvairāk izdzerta šņabja
  [...]

                              (Hikmets 1988: 54)

If we consider the translation as a literary phenomenon of the target culture — that is, without comparing the translation to the original — we may nevertheless appreciate the modernist poetics which imbue the cadences of each stanza. The poem has no punctuation (apart from ellipsis), intensifying the fast-paced tempo of the stream of images; the repetitions create a rhythm akin to an energetic recitative; the original arrangement of lines adds jazz-like breaks to the flow of syntax. Some of these qualities are emblematic of modernist poetry in the West, and Hikmet is known as one of the central practitioners of free verse in Turkish literature. Bērziņš's own poetics can be compared to Hikmet's, but what is more relevant here is that Bērziņš translated this type of literature at a time when such writing was still only budding in Latvia (perhaps a corresponding style can be found in certain poems of Monta Kroma). Furthermore, the references to Estonia not only signal that the poem was written in Tallinn but, for a Latvian reader, it includes the Baltic countries in the wider context of European literature. Bērziņš was aware of how translations of Turkish poetry bridge gaps between Western and Eastern traditions — not only is the translation process itself a line from the literature to a reader, but the poem itself is a mix of influences: a Turkish poet speaking thematically of a Baltic region in a form that resembles Western modernists. The translator was mindful of how Turkish poetry broadens local worldviews. In a letter to Šūmane, Bērziņš expresses joy about a recently published translation: "If I'm called to the sem[inar], then I'll feel the sweetness: that it is possible for us to discuss Turkish translation, that there is an environment, that one may criticize the other — resist. Latvia becomes

at once larger" (Bērziņš 1970). Here Bērziņš is establishing the correlation between poetry translation and national growth — Latvia "becomes larger" due to translations' being made and talked about.

3.2. Translating from the Heartland

Translating Russian literature was not a priority for Bērziņš, as he was more preoccupied with "smaller" languages and more distant mythologies. He did nevertheless publish one bilingual collection of poems by a Russian modernist. Since the relationship between Russian and Latvian languages was a central issue in Soviet cultural politics in Latvia, this translation deserves special attention. Crucial here is not only the strategy of translation but the very understanding of what it means to translate — since translating "from the heartland" meant culturally representing the dominant power. The traditional view of translation, also at times supported by Bērziņš, envisions the process as a transportation of meanings from one signifying system to another. However, if we change our perception and conceptualize translation as a responsible *transformation* of meanings, we must also re-think our understanding of larger concepts. Doris Bachmann-Medick elaborates:

> The far-reaching approaches to translation as transformation incorporate a dynamic that will ultimately trigger a translational reconceptualisation of the notion of culture itself: "culture as translation" [...]. Cultures are not unified givens that, like objects, could be transferred and translated; they are constituted only through multifarious overlaps and transferences, by histories of entanglement under the unequal power conditions of world society. Countering tendencies to standardise, to affirm identities and to essentialise, a translation perspective can bring to light specific structures of difference: heterogeneous discursive spaces within a society, internal counter-discourses, right up to the discursive forms of acts of resistance. (Bachmann-Medick 2012: 31)

To think of translation as a transformation, then, is to deconstruct the division between any "us" and any "them" — because, if we do not "unveil" a stable and unchanging "essence" through translation but rather change the source language elements in accordance with the traditions of the target language, then we are not dealing with two separated, closed entities but are instead working through a process of continuous construction and re-construction. The cultural power dynamic, therefore, is not one where elements from a "major" formation simply are transferred into a "minor" language, but is instead one where translators perform in an interconnected network of interpretation. Bachmann-Medick invites us to try to view cross-cultural relations as such a process of transformations and not as a communication between two holistic units. If translation is not the straightforward exchange between sender and receiver, then cultural encounters are not a simple delivery of cultural material from "them" to "us." Simultaneously, in this perspective, "translation" has strong historical potential: as a term, it can be used for viewing historical events, scenarios, and periods through a

lens that questions assumptions about stable cultural identities. In other words, Bachmann-Medick uses translation as an analytical category — she speaks of the "translation perspective" and a "translational turn" in cultural studies (Bachmann-Medick 2012: 25). And the implications of viewing translation as transformation has great use in colonial contexts.

The traditional view in works of scholars who research postcolonial situations from a translation perspective is the framing of power relations as a kind of translation. It is "the idea of the colony as a translation," Susan Bassnett writes: "For if the colonizing power is the source, the original from which the colony derives, then that colony is de facto a version of the original, a copy, a translation" (Bassnett 2014: 50). The issue then becomes how to end the cycle that holds translations as inferior to their originals. Bassnett concludes that the "answer lies in reformulating the concept of translation itself" (Bassnett 2014: 50). That is to say, if we conceptualize translation in a non-traditional way — as transformation — we also invert the hierarchy of "original-translation," and with it the implied unequal duality of "empire-colony." Bērziņš translations are examples of how translations are written as creative transformations of originals. They can be viewed not only as the Latvian transformation of the Russian "content," but also as original poems themselves, which challenges Soviet Russia as the "original" and subverts its status. The creative qualities of his versions are found in the moments when the poet tackles linguistically complex poems.

His translation of Velimir Khlebnikov's poetry provides a good example. Published in 1985, Bērziņš initiated the process himself. Viola Rugāja, translator and editor-in-chief of the publishing house "Liesma," remembers that, "We did not theorize much about the hardships of poetry translation, they were evident — the meaning and magic of Khlebnikov's newly formed words and phonetic structures" (Rugāja 2020). In a sense, Bērziņš was forced to write creative translations because of Khlebnikov's own innovations in Russian.

*** Усадьба ночью, чингисхань! Шумите, синие березы. Заря ночная, заратустрь! А небо синее, моцарть! И, сумрак облака, будь Гойя! Ты ночью, облако, роопсь! Но смерч улыбок пролетел лишь, Когтями криков хохоча, Тогда я видел палача И озирал ночную, смел, тишь. И вас я вызвал, смелоликих, Вернул утопленниц из рек. «Их незабудка громче крика», - Ночному парусу изрек. [...] (Hļebņikovs 1985: 35–37)	*** Naksnīgais nams, nāc Čingizo! Žūžojiet, zilie bērzi! Nakts rūsa, Zaratustreņo! Zildebess, vēzē un Mocērt! Un, mākuļa nokrēsli, Goijā! Tu naktī, mākon, Roopsies! Bet aizvirpuļo smaidu tracis Un, klaigu nagiem tverdams, smej, Es redzu, bende, kurp tu ej, Drošs pārlaižu naktsklusai acis. Drosvaidži, neļaušu jums gulēt; Slīkones, iznirstiet mājup skriet! "Par klaigām stiprāk nemirstule," Nakts burai bildu, "skaļi zied." [...] (Hļebņikovs 1985: 34–36)

The necessary and inevitable creativity is also a marker of why translation is not a transfer of meanings or a simple process of selecting equivalents, but is rather a transformative act of creation. "Čingizo," "Zaratustreņo," "Mocērt," "Goijā," and "Roopsies" are all verbs formed from proper nouns (surnames of famous persons in this case); along with "nemirstule" (undying one), "naktsklusai" (night-quiet) and "Drosvaidži" (brave-faced) these coinages not only introduce the Latvian language to new linguistic forms and innovative poetics, but also demonstrate how when a translator is faced with what seems untranslatable — the unfamiliar or that which does not already exist in the target language — then the translator must make decisions, must create a new language, new models, new methods. Of course, there are the obvious transformations inevitable in all translation — translating is a violent replacement of one chain of signifiers by another, which changes how a poem is perceived in different languages — in this case, as well as other nuances, there is the addition of "vēzē" in "Zildebess, vēzē un Mocērt!" where the original simply reads "А небо синее, моцарть!" ("The blue sky, Mozart-ing"). My argument is not only that translation changes the original; rather, what I propose is that Bērziņš wrote his translations in a way that not only tried to maintain the distinctive features of the foreign text and introduce fresh approaches into the target culture, but did so in a manner that draws attention to the fact that translation is creative while at the same time creating self-sufficient, fully fledged poems in Latvian.

To translate a poem means to write a new poem in the target language. This realization skews the way we see the cultural and political relations in Bērziņš's Latvian translations of Russian poetry: no longer an inferior derivative, but a coequal work of art. The "us" and "them" construct refers primarily to the Soviet sphere and an imperial, capitalist West, but the traditional notion of translation necessitates a division based on linguistic differences — for instance, Latvian "us" and Russian "them." A non-traditional understanding of translation, on the other hand — the kind I find here — goes against dividing the world as such. *There is only "us,"* a vast polylogue of multiple languages, all engaged in adding to one's own wealth by creatively interpreting the other's. Applying the "translation as transformation" perspective to a wider social context, as Bachmann-Medick suggests, we may say that for Bērziņš, Latvian society and language were never a traditional translation — a simple reproduction — but a kind of mirror on which to reflect the beauty of the collective family of the world's cultures with the same splendor.

3.3. Translating the "West"

The spectrum of Bērziņš's work as a translator included several Western authors, as they were important fragments of world literature. Indeed, there are examples of how the choice to translate a certain text can be viewed as form of hidden political activism. The Bērziņš translation of Robinson Jeffers's "Shine, Perishing Republic," which describes the American state as corrupt, assumes new connotations in Latvian translation; it can be read in multiple ways — not only as criticism towards American imperialism, but as bearing

relevance to any imperial situation in general, including in the Soviet context. What censors might consider to be a westerner's unfavorable judgment pertaining to the West, others might perceive as a humanitarian viewpoint that is applicable globally. Likewise, when Bērziņš translates Allen Ginsberg's "America Is Like Russia," the poem reads as a scathing look on both Russia and America. Similarly, Bērziņš superb translation of W.H. Auden's "The Shield of Achilles," which retains much of the poems dense imagery while reproducing its rhyme scheme and meter, can also be read by a Latvian audience as a parable about the senselessness of violence on any land, ancient or modern. Bērziņš translation invokes a bleak world: "Ka skuķus izvaro, ka divi nodur trešo,/ Bij viņa īstenība, kurai sveša/ Tāda pasaule, kur solījumus pilda/ Vai silta roku nosalušu silda" ("That girls are raped, that two boys knife a third,/ Were axioms to him, who›d never heard/ Of any world where promises were kept,/ Or one could weep because another wept") (Odens 1980: 128). The scene described, we may speculate, reverberates in the psyche of its Latvian readership as a familiar description of day-to-day subjugation.

However, what is more outstanding about some of Bērziņš's translations is the way they enact strategies that critiqued the language politics of the Soviet Union. The story of linguistic hegemony in Soviet-era Latvia is a set of complex, heterogeneous, and dynamic discourses that are, at times, contradictory and paradoxical. On the one hand, there is the state-led effort to promote further solidarity among occupied nations by supporting translation projects, i.e., the proud multilingualism of the USSR; on the other hand, as an empire, the Soviet Union established Russian as the common tongue of all territories that fell under its rule, i.e., USSR's obligatory monolingualism. "Promotion of the federative principle of multinationalism was extremely important at that time: it contributed to national unity and served as a firewall from accusations of aggression," Natalia Kamovnikova writes, adding that "the federative principle of multinationalism manifested itself specifically in the state multilingualism, which was officially stipulated by the Soviet constitution and therefore had to be conformed to on all levels of social life including original literature and literary translation." This was — and this is the paradox — "despite the fact that the Russian language was politically maintained as the language of the dominant majority and the lingua franca of the USSR" (Kamovnikova 2019: 150). Violeta Kelertas describes the situation aptly: "Although literature was still allowed to be written in the native tongues, the linguistic clock was ticking, as most scholarship was required to be written in Russian and after the 1978 Tashkent conference intensive Russification in the schools was taking a toll" (Kelertas 2006: 5). As a colonial power with inner contradictions, the "Soviet propaganda," Janusz Korek adds, "while praising internationalism and demanding freedom for the oppressed movements and nations of the 'third world,' was quite simply diverting attention from its own actions: Russification" — which can be described not only in linguistic terms, but also as "the total subordination to itself and the economic exploitation of the non-Russian republics and the political and economic domination of the countries and nations incorporated into the Eastern Bloc" (Korek 2009). Metaphorically speaking, the Soviet Union had *taken possession* of the languages in its domain, imposed Russian as the master, and "claimed" Latvian through various mechanisms of control — from political and literary censorship to laws that prescribe official and scientific realms to be conducted in Russian.

In Jacques Derrida's book-length essay "The Monolingualism of the Other," published in translation in 1998, the philosopher explores the supposed connection between a language and cultural identity — questioning it as an inevitably exclusionary construction, since it always involves a type of appropriation, a process of making language into property. A key passage, which should be quoted fully, refers directly to this illusory ownership of language:

> [C]ontrary to what one is often most tempted to believe, the master is nothing. And he does not have exclusive possession of anything. Because the master does not possess exclusively, and *naturally*, what he calls his language, because, whatever he wants or does, he cannot maintain any relations of property or identity that are neutral, natural, congenital, or ontological, with it, because he can give substance to and articulate [*dire*] this appropriation only in the course of an unnatural process of politico-phantasmatic constructions, because language is not his natural possession, he can, thanks to that very fact, pretend historically, through the rape of a cultural usurpation, which means always essentially colonial, to appropriate it in order to impose it as 'his own.' (Derrida 1998: 23, italics in original)

Within this paragraph, Derrida not only reiterates a fundamental revelation — that the relation between signifier and signified is not naturally occurring — but also comments on the "terror inside languages" (Derrida 1998: 23) such a revelation precipitates. What Derrida interrogates is the Platonic-essentialist perspective on language that presupposes a stable and unchanging correlation between words and what they denote. For Derrida, this correlation is not stable and unchanging: he takes a Nietzschean-conventionalist approach to language wherein signifiers do not naturally correspond to things, since they are only a finite sum of concepts applied to an infinite number of phenomenon. Therefore, *precisely because* this correspondence is not stable and unchanging, whoever has the power to impose and decide the meanings of a language — the rules and laws — has "justification" to govern, nationalize, conquer, and suppress. This is the danger that Derrida warns against — supposing that language "belongs." Though he develops his argument in reference to specific political developments in Algeria, he also notes that the ideas he proposes are applicable to anyone — his statements have "the value of a universal exemplarity," he says elsewhere (Derrida 2005: 101). I believe that we may apply Derrida's theorizing to the reading of Bērziņš's translations. As an illustration, I present a fragment from a translation of a poem by Allen Ginsberg, entitled "Paterson."

Ginsberg's prose poem is a case where, if it were an original Latvian composition and not a translation, it would be less likely to be published — seeing as it describes a decadent body that masturbates and is covered with fluids, a scene that would probably be poorly tolerated by censors. Bērziņš recreates Ginsberg's verse creatively while sticking close to the images and rhythm of each line; he even imitates the rhymes of "hire and fire and make and break and fart" as "īrēt, fīrēt, šaustīt, taustīt, kost un ost, un bezdēt." This translation is striking in that it works intimately with Latvian linguistic specificity, bringing forth creative new word formations that are possible only in Latvian. A translation strategy that makes use of the translator's creativity is also simultaneously a critique of the ownership of language, as it

demonstrates that meanings are "(re-)invented" rather than transported. The translator does not "carry over" some natural and metaphysical unit dormant in the original, but creates a new, corresponding construct which in turn diffuses new meanings.

What do I want in these rooms papered with visions of money?
How much can I make by cutting my hair? If I put new heels on my shoes,
bathe my body reeking of masturbation and sweat, layer upon layer of excrement
dried in employment bureaus, magazine hallways, statistical cubicles, factory stairways,
cloakrooms of the smiling gods of psychiatry;
if in antechambers I face the presumption of department store supervisory employees,
old clerks in their asylums of fat, the slobs and dumbbells of the ego with money and power
to hire and fire and make and break and fart and justify their reality of wrath and rumor of wrath to wrath-weary man,
what war I enter and for what a prize! the dead prick of commonplace obsession,
harridan vision of electricity at night and daylight misery of thumb-sucking rage.
[...]

(Ginsberg 2007)

Ko es meklēju šajās dolārtapetēm piesapņotajās istabās?
Cik varētu noelnīt, apcērpjot matus? Naglojot tupelēm jaunus papēžus,
mazgājot miesu, kura smird no sēklas šķiešanas un no sviedriem, kārtu kārtām apskretusi ar izdalījumiem,
kaltušiem darba birojos, redakcijās, ierēdņu glāžbūros, rūpnīcu treptelpās,
smaidīgo psihiatrijas elku gaidkambaros;
jau slieksnī mani saņem universālveikala virslūku nicīgā pamanība, ak,
vecīgie klerki treknuma trīsmetru bruņās, jūs rausta un dancina ego, kam nauda un vara
īrēt, fīrēt, šaustīt, taustīt, kost un ost, un bezdēt, un piepildīt savu mūžīgo nīdesamību, nīdesamību mums naidgurušajiem;
kādu karu lai ceļu, un kas būs ar mani! statistiskās apsēstības gļēvais gļendenais falluss, nakšu spuldžgaismas,
dienu – nabaga naggraužu trakuma beziziešanas vecišķā vīzija.
[...]

(Ginsbergs 1980: 160–161)

Similarly, language is not naturally owned by anyone, since there exists no natural tie between reality and its representation: neither do the words "room" or "papered" *belong* to the complex phenomenon we know as rooms or wallpaper, nor do entire linguistic systems *naturally belong* to their speakers. This is illustrated by translations that do not adhere to a simple strategy of substituting signifiers under the assumption that the new signifier refers to the same signified as the original's signifiers; the assumption crumbles when the translator adds semantic values to the translation that are absent in the original but that nevertheless allow for the translated poem to be read as a finished, worthy literary product in its own right. This is precisely the kind of generative process we may read in Bērziņš's translation of Ginsberg. "[D]olārtapetēm," "piesapņotajās," "glāžbūros," "gaidkambaros," "pamanība," "nīdesamību," "naidgurušajiem," "gļendenais," "spuldžgaismas," "naggraužu," and "beziziešanas" are all newly invented words, neologisms, that are not found in the original — but in the translation they nevertheless seem fitting and poetic. "Linguistic domination should [...] be resisted through a revolutionary language strategy," Bassnett writes (Bassnett 2014: 43). This is Bērziņš's "revolutionary strategy" — to apply a non-essentialist approach to translation that doubts the language politics of its time while synchronously furthering the linguistic specificity of the target-language and embracing a kind of strategic national essentialism. Annus explains that the task and challenge for scholars looking into Baltic postcolonialism is

"to unfold the construction of cultural essentialism while [...] avoiding the reproduction of essentialist discourse" (Annus 2018b: 52). A construction of cultural essentialism is found in the way Bērziņš cultivates the originative aspects of the Latvian language — he constructs word formations specific to Latvian, yet he does not entirely revert into essentialist discourse. And nor must we — because his translations can be read in a way that deconstructs essentialist notions of stable cultural identities and linguistic possession. Bērziņš was not a pure and simple nationalist, though independence was, of course, important to him; he was instead deeply invested in serving his true "master," the Latvian language.

Conclusion

The colonial matrix of power implemented by the Soviet Union in Latvia cracked down on national specificity and linguistic freedom through censorship and Russification. On a national scale, this process was, of course, hardly challenged by the political ambition dormant in Uldis Bērziņš's literary projects; they were, alas, utopian. Nevertheless, Bērziņš wrote translations that refined Latvian poetry by introducing neologisms and untraditional word formations that furthered the evolution of linguistic specificity, thus resisting Soviet coloniality. Attempts to undermine the dogmas of socialist realism or Marxism-Leninism took place on different levels — first, there was networking with colleagues from other national republics, which created groups of like-minded poets that share anti-Soviet convictions; second, the choices of authors and texts to translate also contributed to an atmosphere of free thinking camaraderie; finally, the linguistic level — the very poetics of each translation go against the stream of generally accepted artistry. This sharpening of poetic expression in the face of an ideology that opposes nationalism can be read as a form of strategic national essentialism, which emphasizes the value, possibilities, and depth of the Latvian language and cultural identity. However, Bērziņš's essentialism is ambivalent, as it does not support the colonial essentialization of cultures in the form of dividing the world into categories of "us" and "them." Selected translations can be read to show an understanding of interpretation as a form of re-creation rather than transfer. Moreover, a creative translation eradicates purely essential categories because it can only exist if there is no "essence" that is supposed to be conveyed; instead, in the fact that a creative translation can be read as a legitimate poem we find the suggestion that each translation is only one version out of many possible versions, and that therefore we are not dealing with unchangeable invariants or cultural identities but are instead participating in a global conversation between creative individuals. The creativity of Bērziņš can also be read as a critique of the idea of linguistic possession. If one of the ways Soviet coloniality expressed itself was by declaring ownership over the Latvian language, then Bērziņš's creativity demonstrates that language is never owned — because for that to be true there must be a *natural* correspondence between signifier and signified, but it is precisely because the relation is not natural that it is possible to impose a language as a belonging. Meanings and, by extension, legislative regulations can be changed precisely because they are not pre-determined. This is revealed by translations that present a generative rendition of the

original, as in the case of Ginsberg's translation — because, again, a creative approach signals that the translation process is not only one of looking for "natural" equivalents, but is also a poetic response to an initial impulse, much like a dialogue. Finally, Bērziņš's choice of texts also bears significance in that he strived to introduce the Latvian readership to novelties of modernism, and by doing so opposed the trivialities of Soviet art. He also picked poems that could bypass censorship but could be interpreted in a way that pointed to faults in the Soviet systems. Though his translations did not create political movements, they did however resonate within the poetic landscape of their time, and the influence on Latvian literary circles of the modernists translated by Bērziņš deserves a separate study.

This article provides a reading of only a handful of Bērziņš's translations, and further interpretation and research into the legacy of one of Latvia's greatest poets and translators is very much needed and intended. It is known that there are more cases that speak to the political subversion through poetry translation, and the Soviet period still has much to offer in terms of relevant translations and their relationship to the power dynamic of the time. Bērziņš's work from the 1990s and the 21st century is even more alluring since it was done after the regaining of independence. It was then that Bērziņš not only started to translate more freely, but also perfected his translational skills and became the virtuoso translator as we know him today. Comprehensive studies should be conducted in exploring Bērziņš's contribution to translating religious literature, the epics from various cultures, and West Asian literature.

The study of creativity in translation must regularly stress that being creative does not mean being careless. Gayatri Spivak famously wrote, in reference to her having translated Derrida's "De la grammatologie" (1967) (as "Of Grammatology" (1976)), that "translation [is] the most intimate act of reading" (Spivak 2000: 20). Spivak has, much like Derrida himself, oftentimes theorized about the inescapability of interpretation in the process of such reading; this inescapability, for Spivak, is what constitutes the ethical responsibility of the translator. Translators may only be free if they are responsible for what and how they translate; Bērziņš's freedom in translation is also Bērziņš responsibility: responsibility towards language, the original, the reader, himself, and his time. In fact, temporality, as has been noted, was a key factor in Bērziņš's creative work. Comparing Bērziņš to Nobel laureate Czesław Miłosz, Marians Rižijs accurately describes the poet's sense of time: "They both felt Soviet reality on their skin. They not only are cognizant of, but also emotionally feel, that the world does not start with them, that they are not separated from history, and that they are, in a sense, the continuation of other voices" (Balode 2012). In both his own writing and in translations, Bērziņš became an extension, a "continuation," of the voices of the world, and as such he advocated universal humanist values — something that was not only lacking in Soviet coloniality, but also something we, the readers, can learn and be reminded of today: Bērziņš's global mentality, which does not divide or discriminate, but invites instead to speak out in celebration of linguistic difference.

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Dzejas tulkošana kā pretošanās padomju kolonialitātei. Apzinot Ulža Bērziņa mantojumu

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Atslēgvārdi: valodiskā specifika, neesenciālisma perspektīva, postkoloniālā teorija, kultūras identitātes konstrukts, vara

Rakstā aplūkoti atsevišķi dzejnieka un atdzejotāja Ulža Bērziņa (1944–2021) rakstīti ārzemju dzejas tulkojumi, kas tapuši padomju laikā, piedāvājot lasījumu, kas novieto šos literāros darbus opozīcijā koloniālajam padomju režīmam. Ulža Bērziņa atdzejojumi tiek lasīti kā radoša pretošanās padomju kolonialitātei dažādos aspektos: nozīme bijusi gan teksta izvēlei, gan lietotajām atdzejas stratēģijām. Raksta sākumā aprakstīti veidi, kādos izmantotas postkoloniālo teoriju sniegtās idejas, aplūkojot Baltijas un padomju vēsturisko kontekstu. Otrajā apakšnodaļā aprakstīti literārās tulkošanas un cenzūras procesi Padomju Savienībā, atklājot unikālo Latvijas situācijā. Noslēdzošajā raksta daļā, sintezējot postkoloniālo teoriju un tulkošanas studiju perspektīvas, analizēti Ulža Bērziņa atdzejojumi, uzrādot, ka Bērziņš attīstījis latviešu valodas valodisko specifiku, atdzejojumos ieviešot neparastu leksiku (jaunvārdus), tādējādi īstenojot stratēģisku nacionālo esenciālismu un pretojoties padomju ideoloģijai, kas tiecas slāpēt ar nacionālo specifiku saistītas izpausmes. Vienlaikus Bērziņš savos atdzejojumos uzrāda radošumu, kas izvairās no esencializēšanas, jo, kā ļauj spriest tulkošanas filozofu atziņas, radošums tulkojumā pierāda oriģināla "esences" neesamību – faktā, ka iespējams leģitīms tulkojums, kurš vienlaikus ir radošs, redzams apstāklis, ka teksts pēc būtības neietver kādu kultūras identitāti izsakošu kodolu, bet gan pastāv nemitīgā interpretācijas procesā. Bērziņa radošums sasaistīts ar tulkotāja humānistisko nostāju, kas uztver starpkultūru sakarus kā daudzbalsīgu dialogu, kurā nepastāv imperiālais nošķīrums starp "mums" un "viņiem".