

*The Transition from Song to Poetry in Latvian Literature in the Second Half of the 19th Century*¹

MĀRA GRUDULE

mara.grudule@latnet.lv

Abstract. The Latvian nation is a singing nation. The Singing Revolution and similar song- and singing-related references are traditionally associated with the image of Latvians. The origins of written Latvian are also related to song: the oldest known Christian song in Latvian, dating from 1530, is also one of the oldest examples of Latvian-language text.

In the second half of the 18th century, as a result of transferring from a German to a Latvian cultural space, a new genre of song was created by the German pastor Gotthard Friedrich Stender, the secular, didactic and sentimental *ziņģe* (a term coined from the German verb *singen*, ‘to sing’). As the level of education among Latvians was low and most information spread by word of mouth, the German pastors and the first generation of Latvian poets made use of *ziņģes* as an informative tool. Around the middle of the 19th century, the Latvian national revival began. Without denying the importance of Latvian folk songs in the creation of national culture, the main focus of this article is on the secular *ziņģes* that were adopted from the German literary tradition, which up until the second half of the 19th century were a favourite tool for entertainment (singing) and spreading information orally. As the level of literacy among Latvians rose, the *ziņģes* receded to the periphery of the literary landscape, paving the way for a new concept for denoting a rhythmic text that was for the first time not melody-bound: *dzeja*, or ‘poetry’. The emergence of the new concept in 1869, which was related to the Latvian national revival and the formation of a national literary culture, at the same time also marked a turning point from orality to literacy in Latvian society.

Keywords: orality, literacy, Gotthard Friedrich Stender, Latvian literature, national awakening

¹ The article was developed within the framework of a project lzp-2020/1-0215 “Woman Agency in Latvian Culture and Society” (1870–1940).

Introduction

Until the second half of the 19th century, in Latvian, all concepts denoting metrical texts written in verses were related to singing, for example spiritual or church song, folk song, odes, songs with secular content borrowed from the German cultural space called *ziņģe* from the German verb *singen* ‘to sing’. During this time, in Latvian society information mainly spread orally, with song acting as a mode of information transfer from the informants, most often German pastors, to the recipients, Latvian peasants. In this paper, attention will be given to how, as the level of education and the number of Latvian readers grew, melody-bound texts gradually lost their informative function. Although in 1859, the composer and director of the teachers’ training seminary Jānis Cimze (1814–1881) said that “books remain on the shelves of the lords and do not come down to the ground because they lack ladders, they lack melodies that would bring them down. A song without a melody is, for a peasant, like a body without a soul²” (Cimze 1859). Ten years later, in 1869, versed metrical text acquired a designation unrelated to performance and singing when it became known as *dzeja* (‘poetry’), and poetry largely became an independent genre of Latvian national literature alongside prose and drama.

A look at history

The singing traditions of Latvians up to the 18th century were related, first and foremost, to the singing of folksongs, for example, in 1761 the Baltic German pastor and Enlightenment thinker Gotthard Friedrich Stender (1714–1796) stated: “Their most complete vocal music is when a group of girls sing together, and a part of them just singing O! join in with one tone, as it introduces the bass, from which the whole area often resounds. We Germans will never be so happy with the most beautiful music as the Latvians with their songs, especially when there’s a lot of eating and drinking³” (Stender 1761: 152–153). Secondly, these traditions were related to the singing of spiritual songs – most

² “...grāmatas paliek kungu plauktos un nekāpj zemē, jo viņām trepju, proti mēdiņa trūkst. Dziesma bez mēdiņa ir priekš zemnieka kā miesa bez dvēseles,” translated by M. Grudule.

³ “Ihre vollständigste Vocal-Musik besteht darin, wenn eine Parthey Mädgens zusammen singen, und ein Theil darunter blos das O! aus einem Ton weg einstimmet, als welches gleichsam den Baß vorstellet, wovon oftmals die ganze Gegend erschallet. Nimmer mehr werden wir Deutschen bey der schönsten Musik so vergnügt seyn, als die Letten bey ihren Liedern, zumal wo Fressen und Saufen vollauff ist,” translation by M. Grudule.

of which were translated from German – during church services and at home. For the first time the concept of *ziņģe* denoting a secular song apparently borrowed from German manors – from a German cultural space and sung with a German melody – appeared in Latvian dictionaries alongside the German word *lied* ('song') in the second half of the 18th century (Stender 1761a: 137). This denoted a song characterised by everyday themes, simple rhythm, most often with three or four iambic feet and regular rhyme. In terms of form, they were close to the German church songs that were well-known to Latvians, differing from Latvian folk songs. If spiritual or church songs were a transfer of musical culture promoted by German pastors from the German cultural space to the Latvian, then *ziņģes* at the point they first appeared among Latvian peasants could be regarded as the transfer of German secular manor culture to Latvian rural culture, probably initiated by Latvians themselves working in German manors.

The transfer from German manor house culture to Latvian culture space took place in the age of the Enlightenment. In European culture, the Enlightenment was characterised by the entry of music into the public sphere. In the introduction to *Oden mit Melodien* (Songs with Melodies), a collection of songs published in Berlin in 1753, the composers Karl Wilhelm Ramler (1725–1798) and Christian Gottfried Krause (1719–1770) conjured up an ideal model of Enlightened society as a singing society. They explained the social functions of singing, saying that a singing person did not overindulge in drinking and eating. A good song had to be simple in form, clear in expression and acceptable to everyone, and it had to be easy to keep in mind (Krause, Ramler 1853: o.S.). In the second half of the 18th century, songs were taken over by Enlightenment-era peasants as an instrument of education, as the music historian Heinrich Wilhelm Schwab points out: “being the heritage of the Enlightenment, this deliberately simplified song with a specific function helps – speaking in the manner of the Enlightenment – to bring the nation out of its innocent lack of education”⁴ (Schwab 1992: 189).

Looking back to the Baltics, in 1774 Courland resident Gotthard Friedrich Stender published his book *Augstas gudribas grāmata no pasaules un dabas* (The Book of High Wisdom About the World and Nature), which from a modern perspective might be called the first encyclopaedia for Latvian peasants. Although at the time of its publication the number of Latvian readers was insignificant,

⁴ “[...] von der Aufklärung überkommene absichtlich simplifizierte Funktionslied, mit dem man – aufklärerisch gesprochen – das Volk aus seiner unverschuldeten Bildungsnot herauszuführen [...], der später als romantisch bewertete echte Volksesang, dessen ungeschliffene, dunkle Individualität man als besonderen poetischen Reichtum gerade der nordischen Völker allmählich zu schätzen began”, translation by M. Grudule.

two years later a new edition was printed. Who were the readers? According to a review published in the local German press, perhaps they were Baltic Germans:

The pastor deserves our greatest gratitude, because with this edition he has not only acknowledged the great power of the Latvian language, but also helped an important segment of our country's population, including Germans, who live among the peasants and are often not much more highly educated than Latvians. They often love Latvian reading material more than German⁵ (Anon. 1775: 27).

Simultaneously to *Augstas gudrības grāmata*, in 1774 Stender published another book in Latvian titled *Jaunas ziņģes pēc jaukām meldejām par gudru izlustēšanu* (New Ziņģes with Lovely Tunes for Intelligent Entertainment). Presumably, this was aimed at the younger generation of local Germans. In the spirit of the above-mentioned Ramler and Krause edition, the book contained 42 translations of popular German songs. A German tune was specified for almost all of them. Most of the songs compiled by Stender were translations of songs by popular 18th century German composers, arias from well-known *Singspielen* or musical plays, songs from oratorios, univocal songs, etc. The texts dealt with love, nature, friendship, sleep, the joy of life, the joy of reading, etc. In line with the 18th century Rococo tradition, pastoral motifs were also included. There was no foreword, so one can only hypothesise about the potential readership. However, a lack of didactics, references to German melodies and a table of contents exclusively in German lead to speculation about Germans being the target audience.

About ten years later, Stender published a new supplemented edition of *ziņģes*, this time containing 113 songs in two volumes and titled *Ziņģu lustes* (The Joy of Singing, I 1783, II 1789). Both parts had a foreword in German. This time, Stender emphasised that the collection was intended “for the joy and education of the [Latvian] people, who are so important to us” (Stender

⁵ “Der Herr Pastor verdient also wohl recht großen Dank dafür, daß er seine Talente und große Stärke in der Lettischen Sprache dazu angewendet hat, einem der wichtigsten Bedürfniße des größten Theils der Einwohner unsers Landes abzuhelpfen. Denn in der That ist durch dieses Werk nicht blos für die Letten gesorgt, auch Deutsche, die unter den Bauren auf dem Lande wohnen, mehrentheils nicht viel aufgeklärter, als die Letten sind, und oft Lettische Lektüre mehr als Deutsche lieben, auch diese werden aus diesen Bogen manche falsche Begriffe von der Welt und der Natur berichtigen, und ihre Erkenntniß von den herrlichen Eigenschaften Gottes merklich verbeßern können, die sonst bei den mehresten unter ihnen sehr unvollkommen, und daher auch sehr unwirksam ist,” translation by M. Grudule.

1789: 3)⁶. A similar idea was expressed by the Swiss Enlightenment-era educator Martin Planta (1727–1772) in the article *Vorschlag die Denkungs-Art des gemeinen Volks durch Liedern zu verbessern* (A Proposal to Improve the Way of Thinking of the Folk with the Help of Songs, 1766) (Siegert 2021: 580). The content of Stenders' *Ziņģu lustes* collection had been conceptually supplemented. The newly included songs focused on social relations, encouraged friendly coexistence between the gentry and peasants, and outlined the image of the ideal peasant. The collection opened with *Kurzemes ziņģes* (Ziņģes Devoted to Courland), which were saturated with patriotic motifs, indicating that the peasant was a citizen of his native country, the Duchy of Courland. The aspect of joy was highlighted by the melody, and its significance was confirmed by the concept of *luste*, borrowed from German *Lust* and meaning 'joy'. These songs gained great popularity among Latvians. In the middle of the 19th century, several of them dealing with nature, love and the joy of brotherhood were included in the first collections intended for Latvian choral singing and composed by Latvian teachers, for example the book titled *100 Dziesmas un ziņģes ar notēm jaunekļiem par labbu* (100 Songs and Ziņģes with Notation for Young People, 1858) contained 23 songs borrowed from *Ziņģu lustes*. Latvian peasants went on enjoying Stender's *ziņģes* throughout the 19th century⁷.

A step towards Latvian national literature

In 1817 and 1819, serfdom was abolished in Kurzeme/Courland and in Vidzeme/Livland, two of three districts or historical Latvian lands that today are part of Latvia. In 1839, teacher training seminaries began in Valmiera and Irlava; however, the level of education remained low, for example in 1835 in Vidzeme only 7.3% of all Latvian children attended school, while in Kurzeme in 1841 there were 1,358 Latvian children who attended school irregularly and 578 children who attended regularly (Daukšte 2000: 270). Gotthard Friedrich Stender had followers among local German pastors, and in the 1830s had already gained some among the first generation of Latvian writers, encouraged by the Popular Enlightenment. They went on using songs as entertainment and an educationally informative tool. In 1806, at the initiative of German pastor and peasant Enlightenment thinker Karl Gotthard Elverfeld

⁶ "...die auf das Vergnügen und die Bildung der uns so wichtigen Nation gerichtet sind," translation by M. Grudule.

⁷ For example, in the drama *Pazdušais dēls* (The Prodigal Son, 1893), by Latvian writer Rūdolfs Blaumanis, which depicted rural life in the second half of the 19th century, the peasants read, enjoy and discuss *ziņģes*.

(1756–1819), the first volume by a Latvian poet, Indriķis Hartmanis (known also as Blind Indriķis, 1783–1828), was published. With Elverfeld's support, his songs appeared in Latvian and local German periodicals for the next couple of decades. In addition to the topics (most likely suggested by the pastor) of the abolition of serfdom, Napoleon's invasion in Russia, and news about the Russian tsar's family, Indriķis Hartmanis also discussed personal experiences, such as love for his native land and his future wife Anna. All 23 songs were supplemented with an indication of a definite tune, six of them borrowed from well-known German Lutheran songs, ten from Stender's *ziņģes*, four to be sung to Indriķis's own melody, and three had tunes composed by Johann Abraham Peter Schulz (1747–1800)⁸. The melodies matched the content of the songs. Those with church-song melodies were dedicated to local clergy, members of the tsar's family and the peace treaty between France and Russia, and were of socially significant festive content. The dedication to the peace treaty included a refrain borrowed from a Lutheran song, which could be regarded as a formulaic or oral mnemonic element (Ong 2002: 65). The use of a familiar melody made it easier for the illiterate audience to retain the new content in their memory and pass it on. The other songs dealing with everyday problems and joys were supplemented with an indicated tune from Stender's *ziņģes*, generally a tune composed by Indriķis Hartmanis himself or by Schulz (mentioned above). Thus, the first collection by a Latvian poet included a musical transfer from the German Popular Enlightenment to the Latvian culture space. This song was reminiscent of the German *Lied im Volkstone* ('folk style song') tradition, with *Volkstone* being a stylistically appealing framework for the transmission of ideas among people of another social layer through an easily perceived instructive approach (Siegert 2021; Grudule 2021).

In 1830, with the support of a popular Enlightenment thinker and pastor Jakob Florentin Lundberg (1782–1858), another first-generation Latvian writer, the parish singer and organ player Ansis Līvontāls (1803–1878), began his career in poetry. Pastor Lundberg, a supporter of Līvontāls, was well-acquainted with one of the fiercest critics of serfdom of his time, the Baltic German Garlieb Helwig Merkel (1769–1850). At around the time of Līvontāls's first publications, the Merkel-led newspaper *Provinzialblatt für Kur-, Liv- und Ehstland* issued numerous publications that indirectly criticised the colonial situation, especially the role of German pastors as supervisors and regulators of Latvian culture. In 1830, an anonymous newspaper correspondent asked:

⁸ *Blühe, liebes Weilchen* (Bloom, Sweet Violet), perhaps popular among Latvians in an unknown translation of Christian Adolph Overbeck's (1755–1821) poem *Knabe und Veilchen* (The Boy and the Violet).

“Have we, Germans, ever wanted to recognise French translations of French poetry into German? The poetry of every nation can arise only from the spirit of the nation itself”⁹ (B-r. 1830), thus indirectly espousing support for publications by Latvian writers. Unlike Indriķis Hartmanis songs, Līventāls’s texts contained more personal motifs, and he did not shy away from social criticism. Most of Līventāls’s text included an indication of accompanying tunes. Three of his songs were based on the poetic form of Friedrich Schiller’s text *An die Freude* (Ode to Joy, 1786), praising freedom, humanism and the joy of life. This was typical of the time: after the abolition of serfdom in the early 19th century, descendants of Latvian serfs used cultural models established by the Germans to create their own culture and subsequently to develop Latvian national ideology (Daija, Kalnačs 2021: 213).

During the first half of the 19th century, Schiller’s song *An die Freude* won great popularity with the Baltic Germans. As the Estonian literary historian Herbert Salu (1911–1988) pointed out:

An die Freude as the most famous song among the Baltic German educated people was sometimes quoted on occasions where one would least expect it – even in sermons and at funerals [...]. It was therefore to be expected that this song, known to all educated people and universally sung, would be the first attempted reproduction in the language of the local peasant population¹⁰ (Salu 1968: 125, 128).

The first translations in Latvian, all by local German pastors, appeared in 1804 (Elverfeld 1804: 3–5) and 1805 (Stender 1805: 11–13), followed by another translation in 1827 (Hugenberger 1927: 24). All three of Līventāls’s texts, based on the poetic form of *An die Freude*, were conceptual: the first, including notation, invited Latvians to unify and was titled *Bezvainība* (Innocence, 1833), the second, *Domas jaunā baznīcas gadā* (Contemplations on the New Church Year, 1835), was introduced with Latvian history, emphasising the bloody methods of Christianisation and, in the spirit of the age, criticising the injustice of the

⁹ “Man frage sich, ob wir Deutsche uns von Franzosen in’s Deutsche übersetzte Französische Gedichte jemals aneignen möchten oder könnten? Die Dichtungen eines Volkes können immer nur aus seinem eigenen Geiste hervorgehen,” translation by M. Grudule.

¹⁰ “An die Freude” als bekanntestes Lied unter den baltendeutschen Gebildeten manchmal auch bei Anlässen zitiert wurde, wo man es am wenigsten erwarten konnte – sogar in Predigten und bei Begräbnissen (...). Es war darum zu erwarten, dass man gerade dieses allen Gebildeten bekannte und allgemein gesungene Lied als erstes in der Sprache der einheimischen Bauernbevölkerung wiederzugeben suchte,” translation by M. Grudule.

German gentry as contrasted with the good will and benevolence of the Russian tsars. The third song, *Uz Gūtenberga piemiņu* (In Memory of Gutenberg, 1840), celebrated the anniversary of Johann Gutenberg's invention of the printing press. Līventāls emphasised the role of typographically reproduced books as carriers of the Christian message to Latvians; however, in the final stanza he also indicated that the printing press brought Latvians the written language and was an opportunity to educate and emancipate, and in the distant future to become a nation equal to others: "One hundred years later, Latvian songs / Will be sung far and wide; / Other nations will greet / Latvians enlightened in the flames of the mind."¹¹ (Līventāls 1840)

In the first half of the 19th century, most of Stender's songs, either folk songs or the *ziņģes*, continued to spread by word of mouth and did not lose their informational function. From the point of view of form, they followed the same patterns characteristic to oral culture:

...thought must come into being in heavily rhythmic, balanced patterns, in repetitions or antithesis, in alliterations and assonances, in epithetic and other formulaic expressions, in standard thematic settings, in proverbs which are constantly heard by everyone so that they come to mind readily and which themselves are patterned for retention and ready recall, or in other mnemonic form. Serious thought is intertwined with memory systems. Mnemonic needs determine even syntax. Protracted orally based thought, even when not in formal verse, tends to be highly rhythmic, for rhythm aids recall, even physiologically (Ong 2000: 34).

The range of issues touched upon in the second half of the 19th century was significantly expanded. This was due to changes in attitudes towards city life: in the mid-century, suspicions about the urban realm increased, characterised by a lack of forgiveness, impatience with failure, and the inability to compete. As Andrejs Plakans points out, "the cities were highly stratified and filled with corporate entities closed to outsiders, except as servitors [...] Styles of dress and places to eat, sleep, work and relax all underlined differences rather than commonalities and discouraged integration." (Plakans 2011: 242). To encourage Latvians to visit Riga and to dispel fears about city life and the myth about the city being a centre of degradation, prostitution and all kinds of other evils, on the initiative of two school teachers, Mārcis Reinbergs (1826–1861) and Ernests Dinsbergs (1816–1902), the song *Rīga jeb Ziņģe par Rīgu un viņas dzīvi* (Riga, or a Ziņģe about Riga and its Life, 1860–1864) was published, depicting

¹¹ "Pēc simts gadiem latvju dziesmas / Augstā pulkā skandinās / Citas tautas sveicinās / Apskaidrota prāta liesmās".

modern urban life. It contained 1,350 seven- to nine-syllable rhythmic lines with regular rhymes¹². It glorified the city as a centre of technical innovation (the railway, the telegraph, a gas plant), culture and recreation. It was addressed to Latvian peasants or *mūsu lauku brāļi* ('our countryside brothers'), as defined by the authors.

The Young Latvians and Juris Alunāns

The 1850s to 1860s could be called the period of Latvian national enlightenment (Plakans 1969: 17)¹³. The question of peasant education was set in motion due to the abolition of serfdom in Imperial Russia (1861), the Young Latvians movement and the repeal of the corvée system (after 1860 in Vidzeme peasants could acquire land as property). The 1865 Law on Parish Schools and the 1866 Parish Self-Government Law in Vidzeme defined procedures for financing parish schools that involved the local population in school administration. While in 1858–1859, 11.3% of school-age children were educated in parish schools, by 1872 the number had already reached 30.8% (Daukste 2000: 284). The Young Latvians movement had begun, and the first group of Latvian students was formed at the University of Tartu (1856). Their articles reached the Latvian press. They developed the concept of an emerging nation and shaped ideas substantiating an understanding of national uniqueness, stimulating self-awareness and confidence. Elements of common Latvian history were created, and an idea of Latvian national culture was conceived. In terms of content and scope, it corresponded to the needs of the emerging nation. In 1856, Juris Alunāns (1832–1864), one of the students at the University of Tartu and a member of the Young Latvians, published a collection titled *Dziesmiņas, latviešu valodai pārtukotas* (Songs, Translated into Latvian). However, this volume was dominated by translations of popular German society songs by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Jakob Ludwig Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Philipp Friedrich Silcher and other German composers. The cultural historian Jānis Straubergs points out: "Alunāns's *Dziesmiņas* [Songs by Alunāns] were simply a selection of songs that were popular among the intelligentsia at the time, and even now these 'songs' by Alunāns are the best example of the literary interests of German society in the

¹² Reminiscent of the form of German *Knittelvers*, frequently used in Latvian *ziņģes*.

¹³ "Enlightenment, meaning a people becoming endowed with a literature (in the widest sense of the word)... the concept of enlightenment also includes the growth of stratum of men-of-letters... a likely additional component of a larger process of modernisation... a gradual improvement of the means of communication of a people – its literature, language and so on."

mid-19th century”¹⁴ (Straubergs 1939: 1). The choice of lyrics was not accidental. An important place in the collection was given to songs that expressed ideas of individual freedom and encouraged Latvians. The high-quality translations, ranging from Horace to the recently dead Heinrich Heine (1797–1856), provided insight into the history of world poetry and at the same time confirmed the status of Latvian as a language of culture. As Heines’s ‘Lorelei’ in the original and Alunāns’s translation began the collection, encouraging Latvians to evaluate folksongs and perhaps make use

...of the looseness and flexibility of rhythm and tone of the folk song so as to make it befit highly individualized, differentiated psychological impulses. What was once a device of creating the ‘semblance of the well-known’, of social objectivity, was put... into the service of radical subjectivism (Adorno 1986: 447).

Only a few years later, in 1860, the first poem based on the poetics of Latvian folksongs was published, expressing deep pain regarding the history and sorrowful fate of the emerging Latvian nation (Zvaigznīte 1860: 13, 14). Well-educated Young Latvians started the purification and modernisation of the Latvian language. As pointed out by Tomasz Kamusella, “it was elites who invented imagined nations and their languages into being” (Kamusella 2021: 12), taking over from Baltic German clergy the Enlightenment of Latvian peasants¹⁵.

Bernhards Dīriķis and the first history of Latvian literature in Latvian

In 1860, *Latviešu rakstniecība* (Latvian Literature), by Bernhards Dīriķis (1831–1892), was published. It was the first history of literature written by a Latvian author, moreover, as Andrejs Plakans points out, “Dīriķis had performed an invaluable service in supplying Latvian writers with the means of locating their kind of creativity in space and time” (Plakans 1969: 144). In the same year, Bernhards Dīriķis also initiated the establishment of the Society of Latvian Language and Literature (*Latviešu Valodas un literatūras biedrība*), modelled on German learned societies but more responsive to Latvian needs. This could

¹⁴ “Dziesmiņas bija vienkārši to dzeju izlase, kas toreiz bija populāras inteliģences aprindās un vēl tagad šīs Alunāna “Dziesmiņas” ir vislabākais paraugs par vācu sabiedrības literārām interesēm XIX g.s. vidū,” translation by M. Grudule.

¹⁵ For more see Daija 2013: 276–278.

be regarded as an alternative organisation to the Latvian Literary (Friends) Society (*Lettisch-literarische Gesellschaft*, 1824–1939), which was established by Baltic German pastors. The statutes of the Society of Latvian Language and Literature were signed by 21 people with different social backgrounds and education levels: students, craftsmen, merchants, newspaper editors, self-taught individuals, university students, etc. The aims of this organisation were defined as follows: the maintenance of the Latvian language and written culture, and the collection of folklore and educational work. In short, the establishment of a society without the controlling eye of the Baltic German clergy. However, permission for this plan was refused by the Russian government (Altements, Tentelis 1939: 139–156). Bernhards Dīriķis's *Latviešu rakstniecība* was probably becoming proof of and justification for the need for such a society. Although Dīriķis's book could be regarded as a continuation of the historical Latvian literary tradition, considering preceding editions by the Baltic German pastors Ulrich Ernst Zimmermann (*Versuch einer Geschichte der lettischen Literatur*, 1812) and Karl Eduard von Napierksy (*Chronologischer Conspect der lettischen Literatur*, 1831), the fact that in 1855 the first history of Baltic German literature was published should not be overlooked. An admirer of Johann Gottfried Herder's cosmopolitanism and humanism, and a true believer in the autonomy of the Baltic provinces and the participation of Latvians and Estonians in local legislation, Jegor Julius von Sivers (1823–1879) (Piiirimäe 2012) in his book *Deutsche Dichter in Russland. Studien zur Literaturgeschichte* (German writers in Russia. Literary History Studies, 1855) captured the general mood of German nationalism, discussing the expansion of German culture to the east. At the same time, he also admitted that Germans should not impose their own (i.e. foreign) culture, but rather help awaken the forces abiding in these nations and allow them to develop further (Sivers 1855: LXXVIII). Bernhards Dīriķis's *Latviešu rakstniecība* is reminiscent of Jegor Julius von Sivers's *Deutsche Dichter in Russland* in terms of structure as well in that it was an insightful biography of an author and was followed by a bibliography and a small selection of creative work, mainly poems. However, there is no direct evidence that Dīriķis was influenced by Sivers's work.

Bernhards Dīriķis looked back through the history of literature and focused on the texts of his time, while his contemporary Atis Kronvalds (1837–1875) set out the theoretical foundations for literary theory in Latvian, with contemplations on the comprehensive development of Latvian literature in future, or more precisely the “bringing into existence of a totality of creative acts and the ensuring that such acts would continue forevermore” (Plakans 1969: 167). In 1869, Kronvalds intended to work on three conceptual articles to explain the basics of literature, outlining the differences between poetry, prose and drama.

The first two articles were published in Latvian periodicals (Kronvalds 1869a; Kronvalds 1869b), while the third apparently remained unwritten. Kronvalds coined the word *dzeja*, or ‘poetry’, first of all relating to the composing of literary texts with inspiration, vigour and faith, as well as with catharsis. Poetry means “to raise, to lift above others, to heal... to hope..., to strive, to flourish”. Secondly, poetry also relates to art: “poetry is a form of art” (Kronvalds 1869a)¹⁶. For the first time, a genre denoting rhythmical text without accompanying music emerged, signalling changes in Latvian society as it steadily moved away from self-expression through word-of-mouth (or orality) to literacy.

Conclusion

The years 1860 to 1870 showcased changes in the Latvian cultural landscape. The total number of new published titles in Latvian was 2,300 during the 1867–1885 period, rising to an astonishing 35,000 in the 1886–1900 period; the content of publications was becoming increasingly secular, leaving only an estimated 15% of religious works in Latvian (Plakans 2011: 233). The education level of Latvians improved rapidly. In the years 1884 to 1890, of all recruits in the Imperial Russian army, 74.22% were illiterate, while among the recruits from the Vidzeme governorate only 5.25% were illiterate, and from the Kurzeme governorate this figure was 39.66% (Daukšte 2000: 285). In the 1860s and 1870s, folk songs, fairy tales, and legends became a source of inspiration for Latvian poets when working on plot and imagery, and in formal and poetic searches and experimentation. It stimulated the expansion of previously rather limited notions and vocabulary. The designation, borrowed from German, of *ziņģe* – domestic in content, sentimental in the revelation of emotions, flat and simple in ideas, language and form – gradually turned into a byword for weak poetry and moved from the centre of literary development to the periphery. The Latvian literary landscape diversified and expanded. In 1875, the first collection of poetry by a Latvian female writer debuted among Latvian poets (Reinowsky 1875). The poem, as a poetic text, served as a tool for the revelation of the poet’s intimate experiences, focussed on reading and reflection. Songs went from an educational and informative tool to become a confirmation of Latvian unity and freedom. In 1880, Latvian school teacher and writer Matīss Kaudzīte (1848–1926) published the first anthology of Latvian poetry, running to almost 700 pages and titled *Smaidi un asaras jeb dzejnieku labdienas* (Smiles and Tears, or the Poets’ Fortune). Although Kaudzīte still looked back

¹⁶ “dziet nozīmē uz augšu celt, pāri pār ko citu pacelt, dziedināt (..) cerekli [cerību] turēt (..), uz augšu censties, izplaukt (..) dzeja ir dailes daļa,” translation by M. Grudule.

GRUDULE

- Kamusella, T. 2021. The fallacy of national studies. – J. Fellerer, R. Pyrah, M. Turda, eds., *Identities In-Between in East-Central Europe*. London, New York: Taylor & Francis Group, Routledge, 11–44. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429282614-2>
- Kaudzīte, M., ed. 1880. *Smaidi un asaras jeb dzejnieku labdienas*. Jelgava: H. Alunāns.
- Krause, C. G., Ramler, C.W. *Vorbericht*. 1753. – C. G. Krause, ed., *Oden mit Melodien*. T. 1. Berlin: Birnstiel, o. S.
- Kronvalds, A. 1869a. *Dzeija jeb poēzija*. – *Draugs un Biedris*, 37, 02.01.1869.
- Kronvalds, A. 1869b. *Stāstu dzejoli jeb epīgi dzejoli*. – *Draugs un Biedris*, 47, 13.03.1869.
- Līventāls, A. 1840. *Uz Gūtenberga piemiņu*. – *Latviešu Avīzes* 17, 25.04.1840.
- Ong, W. J. 2002. *Orality and Literacy. The Technologizing of the Word*. London, New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Piirimäe, E. 2012. *Humanität versus nationalism as the moral foundation of the Russian Empire: Jegór von Sivers' Herderian cosmopolitanism*. – *Ajalooline Ajakiri*, 129/140, 79–113. Available at <https://ojs.utlib.ee/index.php/EAA/article/view/589>
- Plakans, A. 1969. *The National Awakening in Latvia 1850–1900*. Cambridge University: Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Plakans, A. 2011. *A Concise History of the Baltic States*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Reinowsky, K. 1875. *Latvijas Jūrmalas puķītes jeb dziesmiņas*. Rīga: P. Lucau.
- Salu, H. 1968. *Seid umschlungen, Millionen! Die frühesten Übersetzungen von Schillers Liedern und Balladen in Skandinavien und im Baltikum*. Tampere: Julkaisija, Tampereen Yliopisto.
- Schwab, H. W. 1992. *Die musikalpolitischen Aktivitäten von Johann Abraham Peter Schulz. Zur deutsch-dänischen Musikkultur im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*. – K. Bohnen, S.-A. Jørgensen, eds., *Der dänische Gesamtstaat: Kopenhagen – Kiel – Altona*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 182–190. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110942460.181>
- Siegert, R. 2021. „Lieder für das Volk“ – Vorgeschichte und Vorläufer des „Mildheimischen Liederbuchs“ (1799/1815). – R. Siegert. *Studien zum Zeitalter der Aufklärung im deutschsprachigen Raum 1750–1850*. Bd. I. *Gesammelte Studien zur Volksaufklärung*. Bremen: edition lumière, 577–607.
- Sivers, J. J. von 1855. *Deutsche Dichter in Russland. Studien zur Literaturgeschichte*. Berlin: E. H. Schroeder.
- Stender, A. J. 1805. *Dziesmas, stāstudziesmas, pasakas u.c. tiem latviešiem par izlustēšanu un prāta pieaugšanu sarakstītas*. Jelgava: J. F. Stefenhāgens un dēls.
- Stender, G. F. 1761. *Neue vollständigere Lettische Grammatik, Nebst einem hinlänglichen Lexico, wie auch Gedichten*. Braunschweig: Fürstl. Großes Waisenhaus.
- Stender, G. F. 1761a. *Entwurf eines Lettischen Lexici, darinn alles nach den Stammwörtern aufzuschlagen, Nebst einer Sammlung Lettischer Sprüchwörter und einiger Rätzeln*. – G. F. Stender. *Neue vollständigere Lettische Grammatik, Nebst einem hinlänglichen Lexico, wie auch Gedichten*. Braunschweig: Fürstl. Großes Waisenhaus, 1–199.

Stender, G. F. 1789. Ziņu lustes. Otra daļa. Jelgava: J. F. Stefenhāgens.

Straubergs, J. 1939. Cīņa par «Jauno Latviju» 1856. gadā. – Izglītības Ministrijas Mēnešraksts, 1, 1–10.

Zvaigznīte, J. 1860. Tauta. – Sēta, daba, pasaule. Trešā grāmata, 13–14.