

49

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Content

- 4** *Eva Eglāja-Kristsons, Zita Kārklā.* Introduction: Women's Agency. Multiplying stories and subjects
- Education, Social Work and Politics
- 14** *Zane Rozīte.* Female Academics at the University of Latvia (1919–1940): A Brief Insight into the Key Issues
- 40** *Anastasija Smirnova.* Female Managers of Social Care Institutions in Riga: the Case of Minority Asylums (1918–1940)
- 64** *Eva Eglāja-Kristsons.* The Beginnings of Women's Agency in Latvian Foreign Affairs: Autobiographical Approach
- 90** *Ineta Lipša.* Women Running for the Office of MP under the Flexible Lists System in Latvia: the Case Studies of Milda Salnā and Berta Pīpiņa (1922–1934)
- Writing, Art and Publishing
- 114** *Baiba Vanaga.* German Women Active in the Study and Promotion of Art History in Latvia from the 1880s until 1915
- 136** *Rasa Pārpuce-Blauma.* The Contribution of Feature Writer Laura Marholm to the Discourse on Women's Emancipation in the German-language Press of Latvia at the Turn of the 19th and 20th Centuries
- 170** *Zita Kārklā.* From Claiming Authority to Sensuous Excursions: Mapping the Female Body in Latvian Women's Travel Writing (1878–1920)
- 194** *Māra Grudule.* Baltic German Women between Two Cultures: Translators of Latvian Literature at the End of the 19th Century and in the 20th Century
- 222** *Signe Raudive.* Women in the Book Publishing Industry of Latvia During the Interwar Period

Saturs

- 4** *Eva Eglāja-Kristsons, Zita Kārkla.*
Ievads: Sieviešu rīcībspēks. Stāstu un tematu paplašināšana
- Izglītība, sociālais darbs un politika
- 14** *Zane Rozīte.* Sievietes pasniedzējas Latvijas Universitātē (1919–1940):
īss ieskats problemātikā
- 40** *Anastasija Smirnova.* Sievietes – pārzines sociālās aprūpes iestādēs Rīgā:
mazākumtautību nespējnieku patversmju piemērs (1918–1940)
- 64** *Eva Eglāja-Kristsons.* Sieviešu pārstāvniecības pirmsākumi
Latvijas ārlietās: autobiogrāfiskā pieeja
- 90** *Ineta Lipša.* Sieviešu balotēšanās parlamenta vēlēšanās
grozāmo deputātu kandidātu sarakstu sistēmā Latvijā:
Mildas Salnās un Bertas Pīpiņas piemēri (1922–1934)
- Rakstniecība, māksla un izdevējdarbība
- 114** *Baiba Vanaga.* Vācu sieviešu ieguldījums mākslas vēstures pētniecībā
un popularizēšanā Latvijā laikā no 19. gadsimta 80. gadiem līdz
1915. gadam
- 136** *Rasa Pārpuce-Blauma.* Publicistes Lauras Marholmas piensums sieviešu
emancipācijas diskursā Latvijas vācu presē 19. un 20. gadsimta mijā
- 170** *Zita Kārkla.* No autoritātes pieprasīšanas līdz jutekliskām ekskursijām:
Sievietes ķermeņa kartēšana latviešu rakstnieču ceļojumu aprakstos
(1878–1920)
- 194** *Māra Grudule.* Baltijas vācietes starp divām kultūrām:
latviešu literatūras tulkotājas 19. gadsimta beigās un 20. gadsimtā
- 222** *Signe Raudive.* Sievietes grāmatu izdevējdarbībā Latvijā
starpkaru periodā

**Introduction:
Women's Agency. Multiplying stories and subjects**

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The idea behind this special issue is the relative invisibility of women's contributions to Latvian society and culture through the ages. One of the reasons why so little is known about women writers, translators, publishers, artists, scientists, politicians, social workers and others is that historiography relies on existing biographical and documentary research, most of which contains little information on women. It is also a result of historical circumstances as, out of all the socially created divides, the gender divide is one of the most resistant to change. Bringing into focus diverse ways in which women of a multi-national society, various social classes and education have asserted agency and contributed to the development of culture and society in Latvia lay at the core of this fundamental research project of the Latvian Council of Science: *Female Agency in Latvian Culture and Society (1870–1940)* (No. Izp-2020/1-0215) which is being carried out by the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of University of Latvia. The project's time frame was established by marking 1870 as the starting point when the position of women in the Latvian social and cultural sphere gained attention with two critical events: the self-educated woman activist Karolīne Kroņvalde opened a debate in Latvian periodicals, defending women's right to education and freedom, and the first Latvian female playwright Marija Pēkšēna's play *Ģertrūde* won a playwriting competition; while at the other end of the timeframe the occupation of Latvia by the Soviet Army in 1940 is seen as the turning point that transformed not only the political environment, but also affected the position of women in society.

The special issue comprises nine articles by scholars from the disciplines of history, art history and literary studies examining a wide range of questions about how women exercised their agency: through education, travel, writing, art criticism, translation, publishing, political, clerical and social work, as well as analysing the obstacles that these women faced. The volume is divided into two parts. The articles in the section *Education, Social Work and Politics* examine female academics as a new phenomenon in the interwar Latvian academic environment, certain aspects of social care work and female managers of social care institutions in Riga, women as active participants in Latvian foreign affairs from the first decades of its formation and also

the voting tactics deployed by female candidates to win popularity and succeed in being elected to parliament. The second section *Writing, Art and Publishing* contains articles that explore the biographies and contributions of German women who were active in the study and promotion of art and art criticism in the territory of modern Latvia, and women who promoted the integration of Latvian literature in the German-speaking world. They also examine a controversial figure in the history of women's emancipation, Laura Marholm, whose publications stimulated a discussion of women's emancipation in the German-language press of Latvia; analyse how women constructed narratives about themselves as embodied travelling subjects in travel writing, and research different publishing strategies used by women publishers in the interwar period.

Thus this special issue resonates with and continues the study of women in Latvia's political and social history, literature and art which started soon after the restoration of Latvian independence in 1990, as shown in *Women of Latvia-75: researches, statistics, reminiscences* (1994), *Feminisms un literatūra* (Feminism and Literature, 1997), *Nezināmā. Latvijas sievietes 19. gadsimta otrajā pusē* (Unknown. Latvian Women in the Second Half of the 19th Century, 2002), *Sieviete Latvijas vēsturē* (Woman in Latvia's History, 2007), *100 Latvijas sievietes kultūrā un politikā* (100 Latvian Women in Culture and Politics, 2008), *Sievietes Latvijas ārpolitikā un drošības politikā* (Women in Latvia's Foreign and Security Policy, 2020), *Viena. Grozāmo sarakstu slazdā: sieviešu politiskā vēsture Latvijā 1922–1934* (Closed off by the Flexible Lists: Women's Political History in Latvia (1922–1934), 2022).

The special issue aims to provide a forum to rethink women's agency through the lens of biographical research. In recent years, biographical criticism has made a comeback as people have increasingly realised that to reach a deeper and more nuanced understanding of a history or a work of art and so on, it is essential to know about a person's life, familial and educational background and preoccupations (Lässig 2008, Renders, et al. 2014, 2017). This was one of the motivations for creating a digital resource *womage.lv* dedicated to the contribution of women to Latvian culture and society. The site already contains biographical information, photos and visual material regarding almost half a thousand public and cultural figures, politicians, writers, artists, actors, teachers, doctors and other professional women whose active career dates back to the period from 1870 to 1940. The resource includes extensive metadata on persons, organisations and data for biographical maps.

Besides multiplying stories and subjects, in the words of Joan W. Scott (1991), who writes that documenting the lives of people omitted or forgotten from the accounts of the past multiplies not only the stories but also the subjects, providing evidence of a world of alternative values and practices and making it possible to

write histories from different, even irreconcilable perspectives, assuming that none of them is complete, the research represented in the articles also stresses the use of various sources by taking into account travel writing, ego-documents and their different forms as diaries, correspondence and autobiographical notes, detailed investigations of personal documents such as passports and student files, family history and studies of periodicals.

A set of questions underlines the exploration of female agency in Latvia's culture and society: How was female activism represented in Latvia's social and political discourses and realities from 1918 to 1940? (Lipša 2023, this issue; Smirnova 2023, this issue; Eglāja-Kristšone 2023, this issue) How do civic responsibility and participation enter into women's narratives, through the media of travel accounts, diaries, letters and autobiographical notes? (Kārkla 2023, this issue; Eglāja-Kristšone 2023, this issue) Which women's organisations were active, and what role did they play in Latvian women's participation in international organisations? (Rozīte 2023, this issue; Lipša, 2023, this issue) What was the importance of the involvement of women in the leadership of local political, educational, social welfare and cultural organisations and institutions? (Lipša 2023, this issue; Smirnova 2023, this issue; Rozīte 2023, this issue; Raudive 2023, this issue) How did the choice of studies reflect women's identity in society? (Rozīte 2023, this issue; Vanaga 2023, this issue) Who were the women publishers, journalists and translators, and what was their role, importance and influence in publishing literature and developing the modern press? (Kārkla 2023, this issue; Pārpuce-Blauma 2023, this issue; Raudive 2023, this issue; Grudule 2023, this issue) Responding to these questions also provides an opportunity to examine how women understood and employed agency in different circumstances.

'Agency', one of the key concepts in the study of women and gender, in its most basic definition is the capacity to act, make choices, initiate change or commit oneself to a transformative or challenging course of action. In this special issue, the emphasis on agency assumes that women are active, rational subjects who desire autonomy and self-realisation by struggling against the dominant norms and institutions that oppress them. However, we also consider that women actively adopt prevailing norms that systematically constrain their options. Thus, women's agency cannot be imagined outside established gender hierarchies and institutional and structural contexts, but is configured in relation to such structures as economy and politics, as well as family and interpersonal relations. When thinking of agency as a capacity for action enabled by historically specific relations, multifaceted, complex, and contradictory features of women's agency appear. Hence we use the concept of agency as a starting point, following researchers in women's and gender studies

who have called for an openness to the diverse, historically possible configurations of agency (Scott 2011, Thomas 2016).

The four articles in the first section *Education, Social Work and Politics* highlight the importance of agency, activism and organisation in women's and gender history. They provide valuable lenses for the study women's interaction with the social world by foregrounding and articulating historical challenges to patriarchy, social structure and the status quo. Almost all articles underline that after the proclamation of the independent Latvian state on 18 November, 1918, women obtained full gender equality and equal rights, possibilities and responsibilities under legislation to advance the economic and cultural development of the new state and to promote democracy and a nationally minded Latvian society. However, women's careers could be significantly affected by practical issues such as financial matters, family circumstances, and the attitude of certain officials towards the presence of women in academia, politics, foreign affairs and the social sphere.

Zane Rozīte opens the section with the article *Female Academics at the University of Latvia (1919–1940): A Brief Insight into the Key Issues*, analysing aspects of the recruitment of female academics, the attitude of male colleagues and the struggle for equality. Rozīte discusses observations applied to women in academia and science, and women's education in general. There was a widespread belief that women chose those professions that were connected with the human being, a belief that had not changed since the 19th century, and the profession of doctor, similar to the job of teacher and in other areas of humanities, was viewed as a suitable occupation for women because of the similarity of the perceived natural qualities of a mother such as care-giving and nursing. Although there were no formal restrictions on women applying for academic positions, the recruitment policy generally showed a masculine bias and a preference for men in all academic posts. Until 1940, there were no women professors in Latvia, and senior lecturer was the highest position a woman could achieve. Only five women earned their doctor's degrees at the University of Latvia, as opposed to 137 male doctoral degree recipients. Ten women were elected to the position of privatdocent (versus 161 male privatdocents). Even though the problem was identified, on the whole, no practical measures were taken institutionally; even the Latvian Association of Academically Educated Women, founded in 1928, among whose main tasks was to defend the professional rights of educated women, also failed to address the problem.

Anastasija Smirnova continues a discussion in her article *Female Managers of Social Care Institutions in Riga: the Case of Minority Asylums (1918–1940)*, and by using statistics shows that 81% of the staff in the Social Welfare Department of the Riga Municipality were women. However, most were employed in lower positions, and

very few women were managers of children's and disabled persons' shelters forming part of social care institutions. Based on the biographies of three female managers of the Riga municipality minority asylums for disabled people: Emilia Tiedemane, Emma Goerke and Eugenia Arente, and their career path to higher positions in the Social Welfare Department of the Riga Municipality, Smirnova traces inclusion of female participation in charity and social care work after World War I which shaped the understanding of female "abilities" in concrete professions, and social care was extremely important in this case.

The article *The Beginnings of Women's Agency in Latvian Foreign Affairs: an Autobiographical Approach* by Eva Eglāja-Kristšone broadens understanding of the feminist sense of international politics and uses the autobiographical approach as instrumentation. The representation of women in foreign affairs from the foundation of the Latvian state in 1918 up until the Soviet occupation in 1940 has not been a central subject of research until today. The statistics show that 278 men and 16 women held the highest diplomatic and consular service positions in the Latvian Foreign Service, and the highest positions open to women were the posts of secretaries, 1st and 2nd class. The article identifies and gives an overview of women's experience and agency in Latvian foreign affairs and diplomacy. Insight into the autobiographical material of the Grosvalds family allows observation of the foreign affairs scene through the gendered lenses of typist, secretary, translator, envoy's wife, and envoy's daughter. The most voluminous autobiographical document is the recently discovered diary of Margarēta Grosvalde, covering the period 1919–1926 when she worked at the Latvian Legation in London. These autobiographical testimonies reflect women's representation in the foreign service, and their specific activities.

In her article *Women Running for the Office of MP under the Flexible Lists System in Latvia: the Case Studies of Milda Salnā and Berta Pīpiņa (1922–1934)*, Ineta Lipša bases her study on Latvian parliamentary election result statistics, women's organisation and political party documents, and articles by female parliamentary candidates published in the press. Lipša adopts the close reading approach for the case studies of two female social activists and their biographies, investigating female electoral results under an electoral system that differed from the closed list system used in other European countries. The social activist and politician Milda Salnā was the only woman whose candidature was put forward for the position of Minister of Welfare, while another female politician, Berta Pīpiņa, is the only woman who became an MP under the flexible lists system. From 1925 until 1930, the two women collaborated, founding and leading the *Latvijas sievietu organizāciju padome* (Council of Women Organisations of Latvia). The flexible list in operation in Latvia complicated enormously the election of female candidates as MPs. The absolute minority of voters who

crossed out women from candidate lists dictated that a woman was elected as MP only once in Latvia during the interwar period.

The five articles in the second section *Writing, Art and Publishing* examine women's life stories and their work with texts, providing further examples of female agency by drawing attention both to individual actions and choices, and tracing different historical circumstances and situations that made agency possible. In *The First Female Art Historians in Latvia, 1880s–1915*, Baiba Vanaga offers information about the very first women from the local Baltic German community who worked in art criticism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Based on publications in the press, including women's own writings on art, as well as archival documents, the study uses a biographical method to introduce Rosalie Schoenflies, Bertha Noelting, Elly von Loudon and Susa Walter and their public activities in the field of art history that have so far been excluded from publications devoted to the development of art history in Latvia. All women discussed in the article, except for the painter Elly von Loudon, were teaching and giving public lectures on art history to earn their living, thus their agency was composed of a mixture of social structures, personal motivations and a keen interest in art.

In *The Contribution of Feature Writer Laura Marholm to the Discourse on Women's Emancipation in the German-language Press of Latvia at the Turn of the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Rasa Pārpuce-Blauma focuses on the biography and writings of Laura Marholm, who was born in Riga and later worked both in Denmark and Germany; her published works on the psychology of women were famous not only in Latvia but also in Germany and Scandinavia. Examining Marholm's influence on the discourse of women's emancipation in the German-language press in Latvia from the end of the 1870s to the end of the 1920s, Pārpuce-Blauma argues that Marholm's focus on women's physiological characteristics and psychological fragility, immaturity and morbidity – a woman is a free individual, but to fulfil herself she needs a man to whom she can dedicate herself – is incompatible with the feminist theory of difference that has been attributed to her. Marholm was not a typical representative of the women's activism movement and belonged to the anti-feminist community – she was called anti-feminist by her contemporaries – nevertheless, her publications stimulated the discussion of women's emancipation in the German-language press of Latvia. Around 1900, many press publications in Latvia when looking at the 'woman question' referred to Marholm's writings as an authority in the field of women's psychology. Delving into Marholm's biography, it is clear that her statements on women's psychology changed together with her own changing personal experiences and the circumstances in which she found herself, confirming that thinking about agency must take into account the multiple and changing forces that influence it.

Zita Kārkla's *From Claiming Authority to Sensuous Excursions: Mapping the Female Body in Latvian Women's Travel Writing (1878–1920)* investigates a relatively little-known field in the history of Latvian literature: the early phase of women's writing, travel literature and the place of women writers' within it. The article provides a summary of the first works of women writers in the genre of travel literature and the trends marked by them, highlighting the importance of the gender category in the direction of cultural and literary developments. Kārkla offers a close reading of travelogues by Minna Freimane (*Par piemiņu*, 1884) and Angelika Gailīte (*Vērojumi un sapņojumi*, 1920) through the lens of feminist criticism, especially highlighting the ideas of the French *écriture féminine* about the bodily connection with subjectivity and the text, arguing that already in the 19th century, women's travel writing whose main purpose was to inform compatriots home about the experiences of travellers in foreign lands, show the value attached to subjective experience. In the early 20th century, as travel writing became more literary, alongside the narrative's informative function, the presence of subjective experience became increasingly important, drawing more attention to the sensual and sensuous aspects of the journey and inscribing emotions as an expression of agency.

In *Baltic German Women between Two Cultures: Translators of Latvian Literature at the End of the 19th Century and in the 20th Century*, Māra Grudule, expanding the ideas about Baltic German cultural space in an empirically rich study examines the biographies, literary activity and translations of Latvian literature of Hanny Brentano, Elisabeth Goercke, Elfriede Skalberg and Martha Grubbe. So far, almost no attention has been paid to Baltic German women translators. This publication is the first comprehensive insight into the life and creative activity of the four. Grudule investigates the reasons that motivated each of the four translators to focus on the transfer of Latvian texts into the German-speaking environment, she also analyses the translations and pays attention to the reception of the translated texts. Her skilful analysis of the translated texts allows us to see the translators' different approaches to the source material, while the focus on specific examples of collaboration between translators and authors increases understanding of the personal motivation and interests behind their work.

With the final article, Signe Raudive's *Women in the Book Publishing Industry of Latvia During the Interwar Period*, we turn from writing and translation to publishing. Raudive's empirical study is based on the evidence of women's activities in book publishing: reviews and booksellers' advertisements published in periodicals, various documents, historical publications and bibliographic indexes, as she analyses the activities of women publishers Ilga Zvanītāja, Anna Grobiņa and Emīlija Benjamiņa. Raudive maintains that there are two courses of action that publishing houses

founded by women in the first half of the 20th century took: in the first, the subject matter of the titles published was closely linked to the publisher's personal political or religious beliefs or interests, resulting in editions that were of interest to a narrow niche of readers. The second trend, discussed in the article, was the commercial publishing of books for general consumption, choosing titles tailored to the interests and needs of potential readers and following the current trends in popular literature in Western Europe. Looking separately at the women publishers, each of them pursuing a different publishing strategy and offering a differing range of publications, and examining the editions they published and how they were received, Raudive expands our knowledge about women working in publishing during the 1920s and 1930s, at the time a viable and profitable economic sector and primarily a patriarchal industry in Latvia.

The articles in this special issue are linked both by the notion of women's agency and by biographical research, studying closely women who have actively contributed to Latvian culture and society, and exemplifying and interpreting the patterns in order to understand individuals' changing experiences and outlooks. They cover cultural background, outstanding accomplishments, and historical significance. The diversity of articles on female agency through Latvian history moves women from the periphery to the centre of analysis, helping to draw attention to the assumptions through which women's positions and records are rendered minor, and joining the discussion at an international level. As editors, we hope that readers will find the articles in this special issue as stimulating and engaging as we did. Our sincere thanks to all the authors who have made their contributions. We would also like to thank the reviewers of the articles, translator and editor Terēze Svilane, as well as *Letonica* editor Jānis Oga. We hope that the perspectives in this volume will contribute to the study of women's agency and serve as a stimulus for further research and scholarship.

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Education, Social Work and Politics

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Female Academics at the University of Latvia (1919–1940): A Brief Insight into the Key Issues

Sievietes pasniedzējas Latvijas Universitātē (1919–1940): Īss ieskats problemātikā

Keywords:

female academics,
academia,
feminization of higher education,
recruitment policy,
University of Latvia

Atslēgvārdi:

sievietes pasniedzējas,
akadēmiskā vide,
augstākās izglītības feminizācija,
mācībspēku rekrutēšanas politika,
Latvijas Universitāte

Summary

The establishment of the University of Latvia encompassed the recruitment of highly trained teaching staff and the training of a new generation of academics that entailed the inclusion of woman as an equal. Although there were no legal restrictions for a woman to hold an academic position, the recruitment process was marked by a masculine orientation. Women's academic careers were hindered by practical circumstances: the low salary, the workload, family circumstances, as well as informal factors such as the negative attitude of male colleagues towards the presence of women in academia. This kind of attitude was a reflection of the resistance of Latvian society towards professionally active women. The issue of women's equality in academia was recognised as an existing problem, acknowledged also by the Latvian Association of Academically Educated Women which had been set up specifically to represent the interests of women who had received higher education. However, almost no practical action was taken to address the problem.

Kopsavilkums

Latvijas Universitātes dibināšana ietvēra pragmatisku vajadzību pēc kvalificētiem pasniedzējiem, kā arī jaunu pasniedzēju sagatavošanu studiju procesā, paredzot arī sieviešu līdzdalību kā pilntiesīgām studentēm un kā pasniedzējām. Starpkaru periodā formāli nepastāvēja ierobežojumi sieviešu darbībai akadēmiskajos posteņos, tomēr mācībspēku rekrutēšanas politikā skaidri iezīmējās maskulīna orientācija. Sieviešu akadēmisko karjeru būtiski ietekmēja gan praktiski apstākļi – atalgojums, noslodze, ģimene, gan mācībspēku nostāja pret sievietēm akadēmiskajā vidē, kas variēja no neitrālas līdz klaji noraidošai, atspoguļojot sabiedrības pretestību sievietei kā profesionāli aktīvai personai. Sieviešu līdztiesības problēma akadēmiskajā vidē tika identificēta, tomēr starpkaru periodā institucionāli netika veikti nekādi praktiski pasākumi, lai problēmu novērstu. To nespēja risināt arī 1928. gadā dibinātā Latvijas akadēmiski izglītoto sieviešu apvienība, kuras viens no galvenajiem uzdevumiem bija izglītoto sieviešu profesionālo tiesību aizstāvēšana.

Introduction

From the second half of the 19th century onwards, the proposition of giving women access to all levels of education, including higher education, became one of the main demands of the women's emancipation movement in Western Europe, North America and the Russian Empire.¹ Receiving education was considered one of the basic elements for improving the social status and social mobility of women, as well as for gaining professional and financial independence. In 1888 Caroline Schultze (1866–?), a Polish medical student at the University of Paris, argued in her thesis about women doctors in the 19th century that women's aspiration for higher education was a part of "a general movement of intellectual and professional emancipation for women" (Clark 2008: 197). Gradually coming to believe that maternal qualities ideally suited women for the teaching profession, the development of secondary education for girls in the 19th century granted the possibility of taking up the position of governess and teacher. While access to higher education for women offered a chance to enter other professions, including the high-ranking positions of doctors, lawyers, engineers, architects and also university professors, these required knowledge acquired through academic preparation and were identified with a masculine world as represented by the male persona (Rennes 2011: 345; Clark 2008: 197).

The pace and character of women enrolling as students in higher educational institutions and also filling academic positions varied from country to country, depending on local socio-political conditions, as well as cultural and religious traditions. In the United States, for example, the first higher educational institutions – women's colleges – were established in the 1830s and women were recruited as lecturers and given a chance to pursue an academic career at the same institutions already as

1 The development of women's higher education varied widely according to particular countries and local social, political, economic, cultural and religious conditions and practices. Women's entry into universities first of all depended on girls' access to primary and secondary education. During the 19th century schooling expanded unprecedentedly for both sexes. Industrialisation determined a need for literate workers. In the process of urbanisation, cities provided new opportunities to open schools for varied society, outside elite and charity schools. The democratisation of European and North American societies advanced a rhetoric about the need to form educated citizens and the educated mothers and wives of future citizens. In Imperial Russia secondary schools for women opened after the 1858 educational reform. After 1858 women were allowed as external students at certain Russian universities. However, student unrest in the early 1860s caused the banning of women from Russian universities. A compromise – Higher Courses for Women – were sanctioned to open in the 1870s, although these women's "universities" were not allowed to award a degree (Rogers 2006: 93–133; Alpern Engel 2006: 306–343).

first-generation alumnae.² In the Russian Empire, on the other hand, women were not allowed to enrol at state universities. Starting from the 1870s, in Russian university centres – Saint Petersburg and Moscow – and in the largest peripheral cities such as Kazan, Kiev, Kharkiv, and Tomsk, organizations and private individuals established and funded an institutional alternative: higher education courses for women (in English translation usually rendered as Higher Courses for Women or Higher Women's Courses). As private organizations, these courses were deprived of the rights and privileges accorded to the single-sex (male) state higher educational institutions. For instance, graduates of these women's courses were denied the right to admission to the civil service and the Table of Ranks³, the rights to teach at all levels and in all types of schools, as well as being denied the chance to pursue an academic degree and respectively also an academic career. The possibilities for women in the Russian Empire to be appointed to academic positions appeared only at the beginning of the 20th century, when the legal status of the women's courses and their certificates of graduation were recognized as equivalent to those offered by a university (Dudgeon 1982: 3–4).⁴

In the territory of present-day Latvia, women were enrolled as the first female students in the Baltic Technical School in Riga, founded by the German occupation authorities on 1 October, 1918⁵, and in the School of Higher Education of Latvia,

2 The first women's college, Wesleyan College, was founded in 1836 as a response to a need for educated citizens and the growing demand for more advanced education for women. Beside the objective to give women access to higher education, one of the main purposes of women's colleges as single sex educational institutions was the creation of a controlled environment for female students in order not to compromise their femininity and maintain their respectability that could be endangered by interacting with male students (Langdon 2001: 7; Schwartz 1997: 507)

3 The Table of Ranks was a formal list of positions and ranks in the military, government, and court of Imperial Russia. Admission to the civil service and Table of Ranks provided different social guarantees, for instance, pensions, medical care, housing, etc.

4 The Russian State Council in 1910 recognized the Saint Petersburg courses, known as the Bestuzhev courses, as the first courses equivalent to a university. The graduates of other women's higher education courses gained the right to take examinations at state universities by law as of 19 December, 1911. From 1904, women were allowed to be hired as demonstrators and trainees at the Saint Petersburg Medical Institute for Women, and from 1906 in the position of assistant.

5 During the World War I, Germany in the summer of 1915 occupied the western part of Latvia – Courland, the rest of the Latvian territory remained part of the Russian Empire. After a separate peace treaty between Germany and Soviet Russia (Treaty of Brest-Litovsk signed on 3 March, 1918), German troops occupied the entire territory of Latvia.

founded by the Soviet authorities on 8 February, 1919⁶. However, the work of these institutions was short-lived and study programmes were limited. Women obtained full gender equality – equal rights, possibilities and responsibilities – in higher education after the proclamation of the independent Latvian state on 18 November, 1918.⁷ Putting into place a broadly accessible and comprehensive system of higher education was one of the most important domestic issues and a quintessential factor to advance the economic and cultural development of the new state and to promote democracy as well, engaging both men and women as equal citizens, and to ensure the creation of a nationally minded Latvian society. There were several higher educational institutions in interwar Latvia. On 20 August, 1919, the government of Latvia founded the Art Academy of Latvia and the Conservatory of Music of Latvia – two specific institutions of higher education to provide a focused education in the arts, but in 1939 the Jelgava Academy of Agriculture was established. However, the epitome of higher education and science, and the largest comprehensive higher educational institution, became the University of Latvia, founded on 28 September, 1919.⁸ The establishment of this new university implied two aspects in the matter of teaching staff: a pragmatic need of qualified lecturers to ensure the study process and the preparation of a new cohort of Latvian academics (as well as other professionals), entailing women's participation as students and academic lecturers. The aim of this article is to characterise female academics as a new phenomenon in the interwar Latvian academic environment, analysing certain aspects of this issue – the recruitment of female academics, the attitude of male colleagues and the struggle for equality.

6 As a result of the invasion of the Red Army, in January 1919 Soviet Latvia was declared, formally an independent entity, but actually a part of Soviet Russia. Soviet Latvia was officially liquidated after the liberation of the eastern part of Latvia – Latgale on January 1920 by the armed forces of the independent Latvian state (proclaimed in 1918), although Soviet Latvia's controlled territory had already shrunk significantly after the loss of Riga at the end of May 1919.

7 As a result of invasion of Red Army and the formation of Soviet Latvia, the first government of independent Latvia – the Latvian Provisional Government – was forced to leave the capital Riga in January 1919. The Provisional Government returned to Riga on 8 July, 1919. On their return to Riga, the Provisional Government continued to strengthen the internal and external defence of the new state (for instance, by creating a unified Latvian army), as well as establishing a number of national and educational institutions.

8 The Minister of Education, Kārlis Kasparsons (1865–1962), in July 1919 made an official decision to establish the University of Latvia. During that summer the Organization Commission of the University carried out a takeover of the assets of Riga Polytechnical Institute, developed and approved the structure of the new university, recruited teaching staff, drew up rules of student admission and approved Latvian language as the language of tuition.

Up until today, Latvian historians and other researchers have studied women's presence in higher education as academic personnel and research staff only fragmentarily and from one viewpoint. One of the most important publications on this subject is the monograph by Swedish historian Per Bolin on the creation of the University of Latvia from a national perspective. Besides discussion about the university's ethnic policy and relationships, Bolin has also researched the university's recruitment policy from the perspective of gender, revealing an orientation towards masculinity in the structure of the university. Discussing the characteristics of the university's recruitment policy, Bolin concludes that the gender issue in this policy was more than obvious, suggesting that the Latvian nation did not need educated women (Bolin 2012: 62). Several publications have been dedicated to some of the most notable Latvian female scientists and academics. However, these articles are not in-depth studies, but a summarization of the biographical data and an overview of the more noticeable professional and public activities of these women (Ķestere, Marihina 2012; Ozoliņa 2010; Ķestere, Marihina, Mareskoti 2015; Grosvalds, Griņevičs 2011; Grosvalds, Griņevičs 2014; Grosvalds 2017; Grosvalds 2019). The historian of medicine, Arnis Vīksna, has examined the biographies of the first Latvian female medical scientists, and has outlined their prospects of an academic career at the University of Latvia as well (Dālmane, Vīksna 2006; Vīksna 2012). Researcher Valda Ozoliņa in her study has aggregated information about the number of female academics and the positions they held at the university in 1939, although here also the focal point of her article is a summary of the basic biographical data: date of birth and death, birth place, previous education, and area of scientific interest (Ozoliņa 2001). Moreover, most of these articles are not based on a study of extensive sources, but on reference literature. Consequently in Latvian historiography there are no broader and more complex evaluations of women's representation in academia, in addition to such themes as the process of feminisation of the university's recruitment policy or the feminisation of various professions, and the gender imbalance at higher educational institutions.

This paper is based on combined methodological approaches: research of archival sources, literature studies, comparison of female academic biographies, data analysis and synthesis.

Female Representation in the University of Latvia

In the early years of the University of Latvia there was a self-evident necessity to define the academic ranks and positions within the university. Definition of the staff was included in the Constitution of the

University of Latvia that was approved by the Saeima in 1923⁹, and established that the university had teaching staff: professors, associate professors (docents), privatdocents,¹⁰ lecturers and assistants – and scientific-pedagogical auxiliary staff: librarians and their assistants, preparators (laboratory technicians), laboratory assistants, instructors and sub-assistants – senior students who acted as aides to the assistants (Latvijas Universitātes satversme 1923: 50–51). A person holding a doctor's degree could be elected to a professor's position, while the position of associate professor or docent and privatdocent required a first academic degree and completion of the habilitation process, fulfilling certain criteria set by the university and its faculties. The Faculty of Medicine, however, determined that only those with a doctor's degree could hold the position of privatdocent (Baltiņš 2003: 68–71). Persons who had completed higher education could be elected as lecturers and assistants, while the university's senior students could be elected as scientific-pedagogical auxiliary staff.

Besides defining academic ranks and positions, the university's early years were characterized by a lack of highly trained Latvian and Latvian-speaking academics. The university's organisation committee and faculties tried to solve this problem by recruiting non-Latvian academics from other countries or recruiting the younger generation of Latvian academics who had received their basic training at the universities of the Russian Empire (Bolin 2012: 197).¹¹ Amongst the younger generation of Latvian academics the first generation of Latvian educated women can definitely also be included, women who had received their education in Russian higher courses for women and European universities before 1918. Respectively, women were recruited as academic personnel and research staff shortly after the founding of the university. This process can be viewed as a part of the so-called "feminisation of universities' recruitment policies" that from the turn of the 20th century entailed a greater representation of women in academia (Cabanel 2018: 90). However, such a recruitment

9 When the university was founded, it was known as the School of Higher Education of Latvia. After the approval of the university constitution project on 22 August, 1922, it was renamed University of Latvia (LU)

10 *Translator's note:* Since academic ranks are country-specific, there is no direct equivalent in English for 'docent': the nearest approximation might be 'associate professor'. A privatdocent was a docent without tenure.

11 Bolin categorizes Latvian academics into four generation groups: *older* – academics educated at Dorpat (present-day Tartu), St. Petersburg and Moscow universities, *middle* – those who were fully established within the Russian Empire universities before World War I, *younger* – those who had received their education at Russian universities, but developed their careers at the University of Latvia, *youngest* – those who received their education and made their career at University of Latvia (Bolin 2012: 183–184).

policy certainly was not a deliberate objective of the University of Latvia (or other universities at that time). Furthermore, the entry and presence of women in academia was characterized by several features: they were few in number, achieved limited positions, and pursued a narrow area of scholarly interests.

The number of women recruited in the university's early years was very small in comparison to male academics. At the same time, sources indicate that an invitation to work at the new higher educational institution came from the university itself. This is confirmed in the minutes of faculty meetings, when proposals were made to invite specific persons to work at the university, as well as by other sources. For example, linguist Alīse Karlsones (1881–1959) personal file as the university's employee includes a confirmation by the rector of the university, Ernests Felsbergs (1866–1928), that Latvia needs Karlsones as a researcher, and an appeal to the University of Kyiv not to delay her return to Latvia (Karlsones at that time was a lecturer at said university) (E. Felsberga apliecinājums 3. februārī). Karlsones's example shows that during the period of Imperial Russian universities the names and professional achievements of educated women were well enough known in the academic milieu of Latvian intellectuals and professionals, also through personal acquaintance (Latvian male teaching staff – Latvian female students), to be considered as candidates for the university's teaching positions.

Although women were being recruited as teaching staff already during the process of the university's organization, for instance, the linguist Anna Ābele (1881–1975) was invited to the university on 18 August, 1919 (Latvijas Universitāte 1925: 291), the highest post to which women were elected in the university's early years was the position of lecturer, which required the applicant to hold a master's degree (at that time known as 'candidate degree') and was a junior academic position. The previously mentioned Alīse Karlsones was elected as a lecturer in the German language at the Faculty of Philology and Philosophy in 1922, along with several other women (Filoloģijas un filozofijas fakultātes sēdes protokols 7. oktobrī).¹² Significantly, the education of these women clearly presented women's inclination to major in the humanities – an area that for a long period of time was stereotypically characterized as the most appropriate specialization for women. For instance, the well-known educator Anna Rūmane-Ķeniņa (1877–1950), who had studied at the University of Paris and the Jean-Jacques Rousseau Institute in Geneva, was elected as a lecturer in modern pedagogy. Educator Ella Rītiņa (1879–1960), who had trained at the Moscow Higher

12 Significantly, Karlsones (as the first woman) was originally offered the position of privatdocent. However, her sample lectures, a mandatory requirement for a candidate for the position of privatdocent, were evaluated negatively by the faculty's council (LU Filoloģijas un filozofijas fakultātes sēdes protokols 8.09.1922.).



Fig. 1. Professor Walter Frost and assistant of the Faculty of Philology and Philosophy Milda Liepiņa (standing in the middle) conduct class of experimental psychology. Photographer Krišs Rake, Riga, 1920–1930s. The University of Latvia Academic Library, LABR R7724-09.

Education Courses for Women, was elected as a lecturer in the methodology of the natural sciences. Graduate of English studies at the University of Zurich, Eiženija Turkina (1881–1967), was elected as an English lecturer (Latvijas Universitāte 1925: 291–292). An Italian, Clara Coisson-Gersoni (1896–1981), was one of the few non-Latvian female academic staff and Head of the Italian Language Institute, and was elected as an Italian language lecturer on the recommendation of the Italian Ambassador to Latvia (Itālijas vēstnieka Latvijā rekomendācija 11. aprīlī). Teacher and writer Elza Stērste (1885–1976), who had studied art history at Sorbonne University, was invited to be lecturer in French, however Stērste declined the offer (LU Filoloģijas un filozofijas fakultātes sēdes protokols 27. maijā; LU Filoloģijas un filozofijas fakultātes sēdes protokols 16. maijā).

Besides the Faculty of Philology and Philosophy, there were only three faculties that recruited first-generation female graduates. The specificity of these other faculties determined a need for assistants whose main task was to organize practical laboratory work, unlike lecturers whose task was to teach one certain subject. The Faculty of Chemistry recruited at junior assistant positions Irma Kvelberga (1887–?) and Katrīna Zēberga (1889–1975), both of them had trained in the natural sciences at the Russian Higher Courses for Women, while the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences recruited biologist Marija Tīlmane (1889–1975) and physicist Tajisa Putniņa (1891–1962), who had previously worked at Vladivostok Observatory and were sent to the University of Latvia after the request of the Ministry of Education of Latvia in February 1920 (Jansons 2008: 39). Significantly, the example of Putniņa, as well as Karlsonē and Ābele, reflects the University Organization Committee and Ministry of Education practice for the recruitment of teaching staff: that of officially inviting Latvian academics working in Russian universities to come to Latvia. However, the previously mentioned women were only the few Latvian female academics who held any position at a Russian university. Several women were recruited also by

the Faculty of Medicine. For instance, Late Veibele (1877–1949), widely known as the first Latvian female dentist, was elected as assistant at the university's Dental Institute. It should be noted that the profession of doctor, similar to the job of teacher and in other areas of humanities, was viewed as a suitable occupation for women because of the similarity of the perceived natural qualities of a mother (caring, nursing) to those required by a doctor. Although feminisation of the doctor's profession took place more slowly than the profession of teacher, there was a widespread belief that women chose those professions that were connected with the human being, a belief that had not changed since the 19th century. The Latvian psychiatrist Hermanis Budulis (1882–1954), on the basis of his observations at the university, claimed that "women mainly studied subjects related to living people – human healing and teaching; women are not interested in purely theoretical sciences" (J. St. 1925: 3). The same observations were applied to women in academia and science.

Alongside the first generation of educated women, the university also recruited the youngest generation of Latvian academics – those women who had enrolled and graduated from the University of Latvia. Amongst the youngest generation of Latvian female academics, those women who were educated at European universities during the interwar period definitely can be included also. However, none of them were recruited by the University of Latvia. One of the main reasons could be that it was widely believed that a doctor's degree was relatively easy to obtain from Western European universities, thus such a degree seemingly held less value. One of the few women who applied for a position at the University of Latvia was Milda Palēviča (1889–1972), who had received a PhD in philosophy from the University of Paris in 1925. However, Ernests Felsbergs during a Faculty of Philology and Philosophy board meeting noted that Palēviča's doctor's degree was not the highest degree, even in the context of the French higher education system, moreover, such an education did not provide the level of knowledge necessary for a lecturer at the Faculty of Philology and Philosophy (Baltiņš 2004: 11; LU Filoloģijas un filozofijas fakultātes sēdes protokols 20. martā). Most of the youngest generation female academics were elected to the position of sub-assistant in the more advanced years of their studies. By recruiting the most capable and talented senior students, the position of sub-assistant was seen as the first step of a potential academic and research career, since most of the sub-assistants after graduating were elected to be junior assistants. In 1929, for example, from 18 women who were elected to teaching staff positions and had graduated the University of Latvia, 17 had been elected as sub-assistants while still studying. However, when investigating female involvement in academic and scholarly work at the university, it must be taken in account that in some cases the position of sub-assistant was a short-term (one month) position to carry out a specific task,

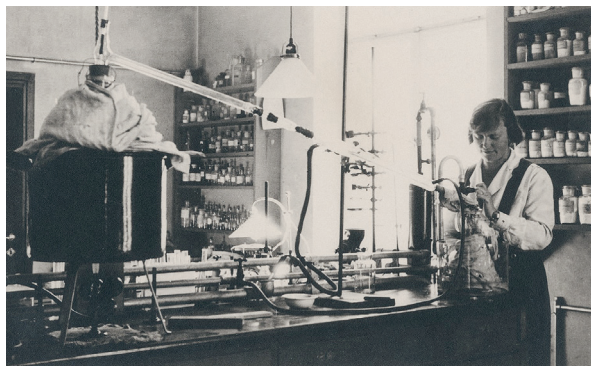


Fig. 2. Olga Grauze, assistant at the Faculty of Chemistry. Photo by unknown author, Riga 1930s. Pauls Stradiņš Medicine History Museum, F 31963.

and basically was not related to scientific-pedagogical work. For instance, Anna Lep-pika (married Rūtiņa, 1903–1987), a student in the Faculty of Agriculture, was elected as a sub-assistant with the main task of organising the faculty’s library: she was to compile and register the library’s catalogue (Paziņojums LU Saimniecības padomei 1. oktobrī), without the option of being elected as a junior assistant.

Although being appointed to the position of sub-assistant or assistant formally depended on the abilities of the candidate, recruitment policy and statistical data shows that junior academic positions were reserved for young Latvian male students and graduates (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4), while talented female students alongside talented students of non-Latvian origin were given considerably fewer opportunities to pursue academic careers (Bolin 2012: 62, 139).

Faculty	Privat-docent	Lecturer	Senior Assis-tant	Assis-tant	Junior Assis-tant
Agriculture			1	1	
Chemistry			2	3	
Engineering					1
Mathematics and Natural Sciences	1			1	1
Medicine				6	4
Philology and Philosophy	2	2		1	1
Veterinary Medicine				1	
Total	3	2	3	13	7

Fig. 3. Women among teaching staff, 1928/1929 (Latvijas Universitāte 1929).

Of course, it should be noted that each faculty had a certain number of academic and pedagogical positions and this depended largely on the size, scholarly activities and financial capabilities of that particular faculty. Besides, the assigning of assistant positions was significantly determined by the composition of students according to gender. For instance, at the Faculty of Mechanics there were no women in any teaching or scientific-pedagogical auxiliary staff position, at the same time it is impossible to speak about resistance to the promotion of the academic careers of female graduates because there simply were no female candidates. Materials from student personal files show that up until 1940 only 13 women had studied in the Faculty of Mechanics and only two had graduated with a degree in engineering technology – Marija Dreimane (1912–?) (Marijas Dreimanes matrikula) and Jūlija Kaplane (1899–?) (Jūlijas Kaplanes matrikula).

Faculty	Senior Docent	Docent	Privat-docent	Lecturer	Senior Assistant	Assistant	Junior Assistant
Agriculture	10	7	5	3	6	2	2
Architecture	8				8	1	
Chemistry	7		3			4	1
Engineering	13		3		3		
Law and Economics	13		6	2		2	
Mathematics and Natural Sciences	3	2	5		2	2	3
Mechanics	8	4	1		5	3	
Medicine	3		14		1	16	8
Philology and Philosophy	6	2	7	6			
Theology	2	1	1				
Veterinary Medicine	2				2	2	1
Total	75	16	45	11	27	32	15

Fig. 4. Men among teaching staff, 1928/1929 (Latvijas Universitāte 1929).¹³

13 Considering that no women held the position of professor until 1940, the table does not provide data on the number of male professors.



Fig. 5. Privatdocent and senior assistant at the Faculty of Medicine Lūcija Jēruma-Krašīņa. Photo by unknown author, Riga 1930s. Pauls Stradiņš Medicine History Museum, MVM 58031 Falb 182/7.

The highest number of academic positions filled by women were at the Faculty of Medicine. For example, in the academic year 1928/1929 there were six female assistants (Fig. 3), but in 1938/1939 – eight (Fig. 6). Nevertheless, such a number did not imply more activity or more talent on the part of female students, or even that professors in the Faculty of Medicine were more open-minded to female academics. Perhaps the relatively high number of female assistants in the Faculty of Medicine partially reflected the proportionally large number of female students in the faculty, despite that, as the physician and former student Kārlis Arājs (1915–2005) remembers, there was an unwritten rule that women were never allowed to constitute the majority of medical students, even if women made up the majority of applicants (Arājs 2005: 28). In general, the number of male assistants in the Faculty of Medicine was still higher: for example, up until 1939, of all senior assistants, assistants and junior assistants who had been elected to these positions, 59% were men (Latvijas Universitāte 1939b: 621–623). The relatively large number of assistants was required due to the specifics of clinical disciplines in the faculty. It is significant that the majority of assistants gave up the position after a short period of time, not being able come to terms with intensive academic work and numerous duties, combined with the necessity of additional part-time employment because of the low salary. Of course, this problem affected both men and women, in addition women often gave up their position for family reasons – marriage and pregnancy. The frequent turnover of assistants at the Faculty of Medicine was also determined by the Faculty Council's decision of 7 April, 1930, that assistants may hold a position for longer than six years only if they have passed their doctoral examinations, but no longer than ten years if the doctoral thesis has not been defended (Baltiņš 2004: 19). As the result of such a rule,

Austra Bebre (1892–1965), who had been elected as assistant at the Institute of Histology, had to leave her position. Bebre was seen as one of the most outstanding and capable candidates to establish an academic and scholarly career in histology, a field that needed development in Latvia, and her doctoral thesis was rated as being of a high quality. Nonetheless, her doctoral thesis was not accepted, neither in 1932 nor in 1933. It is not entirely clear as to what were the reasons why Bebre’s dissertation was rejected, researchers draw attention to the subjectivity of one of the reviewers (Vīksne, Dālmāne 2006: 169)¹⁴, but historian Lilita Zemīte advances an idea that perhaps it was a random coincidence of facts, though perhaps it still may have been a confirmation of the existence of prejudice towards women in the academic environment (Zemīte 2004: 130–131).

Faculty	Senior Docent	Privatdocent	Lecturer	Senior Assistant	Assistant	Junior Assistant
Agriculture		3	1	1	2	
Chemistry		2		3		1
Engineering						2
Law and Economics						1
Mathematics and Natural Sciences	1	1		2	1	1
Medicine		1		1	8	9
Philology and Philosophy	1	2	2	2		
Veterinary Medicine		1				
Total	2	10	3	8	11	14

Fig. 6. Women in teaching staff positions, 1938/1939.

There were no female professors at the University of Latvia during the interwar period. One of the main criteria for being awarded the position of professor was, of

¹⁴ The subjectivity of one of the reviewers is also mentioned by Anna Bormane (1896–1990), who defended her dissertation in medicine in 1934. Bormane personally thought that the critique of her thesis was unduly harsh and unfair. Experiencing disappointment at receiving such harsh criticism, she left her position as assistant and returned to revising her thesis only after encouragement by the professor, Pauls Stradiņš (1896–1958) (Stradiņš 1985: 6). Significantly, Bormane never highlights her gender as a factor in the process of developing and defending her doctoral thesis.



Fig. 7. Anna Bormane, first woman to be awarded a doctoral degree at the University of Latvia.
Photo by unknown author, Riga, 1930s.
Pauls Stradiņš Medicine History Museum,
F 30908/1.

course, a doctor's degree. There were only five women who earned their doctor's degree at the University of Latvia, as opposed to 137 male doctoral degree recipients (Baltiņš 2004). In 1934 a doctor's degree in medicine was awarded to Anna Bormane (1896–1990), in 1935 – by Lūcija Jēruma-Krastiņa (1899–1968), in 1936 – Marta Vīgante (1900–1966), in 1938 a doctoral degree in philology was received Zenta Mauriņa (1897–1978), but in 1939 a doctorate in agriculture was received by Dagmāra Talce-Niedra (1892–1960). However, a PhD did not guarantee the successful and rapid growth of an academic career. During interwar years, senior docent was the highest academic position achieved by any woman. In 1939 only two women (against 69 male senior docents) were elected to this position – Anna Ābele in Slavic philology and Marija Tīlmane in the field of plant physiology. Ten women were elected to the position of privatdocent (versus 161 male privatdocents) (Latvijas Universitāte 1939b: 7–633).

Between or Against Male Colleagues

It is impossible to argue with complete certainty if the low number of female recipients of doctor's degrees was due to the lack of ability, ambition or mentorship. It is possible to argue that the low number of female holders of doctoral degrees and academics overall was affected by financial matters. As a doctor's degree did not guarantee an academic career, the

jobs of assistant teaching staff and teaching staff were not financially viable, moreover writing a doctoral thesis was a time-consuming process, and many women (as well as men) sought more stable, better paid work outside academia, working in secondary education, the civil service, hospitals etc. However, it is also possible to speak about the impact of gendered power dynamics between male academics and female academics. There are a couple of records that demonstrate the attitude of male academic personnel towards their female colleagues and also students, reflecting how male academics exercised power. The attitude of male academics ranged from neutral, objective and equal treatment to an almost contemptuous attitude and strong resistance towards the presence of women in the academic world, both as students and as academics. One peculiarity was the Faculty of Philology and Philosophy, where the proportion of female students during the 1920s and 1930s was around 80 per cent – the highest number of female students among all the faculties (Latvijas Universitāte 1939a: 231).¹⁵ Besides, the Faculty of Philology and Philosophy was one of the first at the university to include women academics, and the high number of female graduates presented potential candidates for teaching staff positions at the faculty.

One of the most prominent academics to express a very negative attitude towards women was the linguist Pēteris Šmits (1869–1938). For instance, during a faculty meeting in the early 1920s he more than once stated that he was strongly against women being on the teaching staff (LU Filoloģijas un filozofijas fakultātes sēdes protokols 24. martā). He argued that it would erode scholarly standards. “In general, the excessive number of female students in our faculty is not a particularly encouraging phenomenon; over time, women could also become teaching staff, and this would lead to the decline of scholarly activities” (LU Filoloģijas un filozofijas fakultātes sēdes protokols 1. decembrī). Šmits’ standpoint, and even the rhetoric used, was nothing unique: it was similar to the arguments used by academics who were against female higher education and professionalisation in the 19th century. For instance, a similar statement to Šmits’ was expressed in 1870, when the board of the Riga Polytechnic discussed the possibility of admitting women as external students. The decision not to admit women was justified because “women could make academic life uncomfortable or even worse” (Grosvalds, Griņevičs 2014: 53).

Šmits’ negative assessment of the scholarly work of Anna Bērzkalne (1891–1956) was one of the main reasons why she did not receive support for her academic development in Latvia (LU Filoloģijas un filozofijas fakultātes sēdes protokols 31. augustā).

15 Due to the high number of female students, the Faculty of Philology and Philosophy was commonly known as ‘the women’s rose garden’, while the premises where the faculty’s auditoriums were located were called ‘the corridor of roses’ (Rūķe-Draviņa 1994: 174; Miezone 1999: 139).

In the 1920s and early 1930s Bērzkalne was one of the leading figures in developing folkloric studies as an academic discipline in Latvia, and the first director of the Archives of Latvian Folklore (1924–1929). She was also the only one amongst the generation of younger graduates who was working towards a doctoral examination in ethnology (Bolin 2012: 218). After analysing Bērzkalne's correspondence, researcher Rita Grīnvalde concludes that Bērzkalne considered scholarly work to be her calling and the dismissive attitude from the university affected her scholarship morally and practically (Treija 2018: 131). According to Grīnvalde, Bērzkalne herself believed that she was discriminated against in the academic milieu clearly because of her gender (Treija 2013: 16). Pedagogue and psychologist Milda Liepiņa (1889–1972) expressed a similar opinion. Liepiņa, who was a senior assistant at the University of Latvia, was not elected as privatdocent due to a negative evaluation of her sample lecture – one of the requirements for becoming a privatdocent – and in 1939 was forced to quit her position. Liepiņa herself believed that male academics did not want to see women as lecturers (Zigmunde 2006: 162). However, as a rule researchers need to be careful when assessing to what extent the academic and scholarly success of women, including Bērzkalne's, was influenced by their gender and male academic views about the place and role of women in the academic environment. For instance, Šmits along with professors Jānis Endzelīns (1873–1961), Ernests Blese (1892–1964) and Juris Plāķis (1869–1942) were the ones who urged to promote privatdocent Anna Ābele to docent, based on her long-term scrupulously thorough academic and scholarly work (Jāņa Endzelīna, Jura Plāķa, Ernesta Bleses, Pētera Šmita iesniegums 25. maijā). Perhaps Šmits was generally against the presence of women in the academic environment, but was able to objectively assess the scholarly contribution of individual persons, regardless of their gender.¹⁶ Beside Pēteris Šmits, a clearly resentful attitude towards female academics was manifested by assistant professor of pedagogy Eduards Pētersons (1882–1958), who did not shy away from stating openly in his lectures that the main task of a woman was to marry, give birth to children and to raise them, giving up any idea of studying and building a career (Rūķe-Draviņa 1999: 190).

The negative attitude towards female academics from their male colleagues reflects society's resistance to the process of women entering the public sphere which was mostly traditional in character. As in most of Europe, Latvian interwar society saw woman as a mother and devoted wife (Lipša 2014: 186). Professionally active women, as well as female academics, did not conform with this perceived role. Educated and professionally active women were accused of being selfish by

16 Perhaps Šmits' position in favour of electing Ābele as a docent was influenced by his friendship with Endzelīns, who in turn was close friends with Ābele and valued her highly as a scholar.

fulfilling their own professional ambitions, usually at the expense of their family life and even their femininity, because the professional realm was identified with masculinity (Melnalkšņa 1924: 4). Although the concept of femininity was interpreted relatively broadly, it was primarily associated with a woman's desire to become pregnant and to become a mother and wife. The professional field, in particular science and academia, was associated with hard work and long working hours that inevitably influenced the health of women, that is, their ability to carry a child (Ausējs 1937: 3).

The writer Zenta Mauriņa (1897–1978), who was the first female to be awarded a doctorate in philology at the university, also speaks about the resentful attitude towards educated women within the Faculty of Philology and Philosophy. In her autobiographical novel, Mauriņa claims that one of the main reasons why defending her doctoral thesis was such a prolonged and complicated process was due to fact that she was a woman. Mauriņa mentions certain moments in the process of evolution of her doctoral thesis that humiliated her as a woman and a researcher. “[.] I was the first one who wanted to receive a doctorate at the Faculty of Philology – Philosophy. Besides, I was a female. If, in general, this fact is considered a big disadvantage, then it became a powerful obstacle to defending a thesis. It was not proper for a woman to receive a doctorate if a male creature had not yet done so” (Mauriņa 1997: 431).¹⁷ Mauriņa admits that her goal really was an academic career at the university. “By law, a doctorate opened the route to the position of docent; and the position of docent, on the other hand, was the path to academic young people, and this they wanted to block off to me by all possible means”. (Mauriņa 1997: 453). Mauriņa's statements are partially confirmed by one of the official opponents to her thesis, professor Ludvigs Bērziņš (1870–1965). He remembers that academics of the faculty in private conversations stated that there was no chance of Mauriņa receiving a position within the faculty (Bērziņš 1977: 35). However, Jānis Stradiņš (1933–2019) has pointed out that Mauriņa's statements seem to be exaggerated. The reasons for such an outburst could be Mauriņa's extraordinary personality, mental strain and the controversy surrounding her dissertation (Stradiņš 1997). Although there were prejudices in academic circles against the promotion of women to the highest academic positions, the arguments against Mauriņa's dissertation were based more on her close connection with Germany and German culture as well as her existential philosophical thought

17 In reality Mauriņa was not the first who wished to receive a doctorate at the Faculty of Philology: before her, a doctor's degree in philology or in philosophy had already been defended by eight men.

that clearly ran against Latvian nationalism.¹⁸ The fact that gender was probably not the main factor that determined the successful development and defence of a doctoral thesis, as well as an academic career, to some extent is confirmed by the experiences of the *right* gender (male) academics.

The linguist and folklorist Velta Rūķe-Draviņa (1917–2003), who was a student at the Department of Baltic Philology at the Faculty of Philology and Philosophy from 1934 till 1939, recalls that it was not regarded as something peculiar at the time that despite the large number of female students and graduates, men were in the majority at the highest academic positions at the faculty and at the university in general (Rūķe-Draviņa 1994: 174). At the same time, she accents that in the attitude of the faculty's male academics towards colleagues there was no distinction between male and female students and staff (Rūķe-Draviņa 1994: 174). However, her observations were based solely on her personal experience. As examples of a neutral attitude, she mentions professors Ernests Blese, Juris Plāķis, who was known as a strong opponent of the women's movement and also head of the Department of Baltic Philology, and Jānis Endzelīns, who promoted the careers of several female linguists (Rūķe-Draviņa 1994: 176–177). Per Bolin, at same time, even considers that among the most prominent professors at the university, Endzelīns appears to have been the most open to the advancement not only of non-Latvians, but also women academics, defining as a priority knowledge and experience, not gender and nationality. Endzelīns clearly supported the academic careers of linguists Anna Ābele and Edīte Hauzenberga-Šturma (1901–1983), and also the lecturer in German, Alīse Karlsona (Bolin 2012: 218). However, we should not simplify Bolin's conclusion by considering that these three examples indicate Endzelīns' more favourable attitude towards female students and academics. These examples demonstrate rather the objectivity of Endzelīns, who expressed criticism or praise wherever necessary. For example, Endzelīns was very critical about Karlsona's scholarly activities and objected against her election as privatdocent during her studies at the University of Munich and after receiving her doctor's degree in 1926. Endzelīns objected that Karlsona had turned more attention to comparative studies, rather than to German philology, the

18 The negative attitude towards German culture and Germany was based on the complicated relationships between ethnic Latvians and the Baltic Germans who previously were the ruling class in the Baltic provinces (the region of modern-day Latvia and Estonia) of the Russian Empire, and were reduced to the status of minority in interwar independent Latvia. The attitude towards the Baltic German minority, as well as German culture, was significantly aggravated by the policy of the authoritarian regime of Kārlis Ulmanis. One of the ideological foundations of the Ulmanis' regime was the principle of nationalism and the primacy of ethnic Latvians, envisaging the Latvianization of economic and cultural life.

field in which she was elected as lecturer and was supposed to be specializing in and focussing on at the university (Jāņa Endzelīna atsaucsmē, 20. janvārī).

Struggle for equal academic opportunities and positions?

All in all, the presence of women in academia during the interwar period remained marginal and the progress of academic positions being filled by women was modest, at least when compared to the feminisation of studies. Consequently it raises the question of whether women's equality in academia was identified as a topical problem in interwar Latvia and whether this problem was actively addressed, and if so – how.

The Latvian Association of Academically Educated Women (LAAEW), which was established in 1928 to promote the scientific activities of university women and to protect their professional rights, identified that there were professional areas that women were unable to break into, despite having equality "on paper" and an absence of formal laws forbidding women to pursue certain positions in the workplace. Some of these positions were: diplomat, ordained pastor, and also professor at higher educational institutions (Brante 1931: 164).¹⁹ Although such an evaluation was based more on statistical data regarding the positions reached by women at the university, and not on concrete legal examples of the restriction of women's rights to these positions (as such restrictions did not exist).

Women's professorships were non-existent or rare also in other countries²⁰ and this was even recognized as a problem by the International Federation of University Women (IFUW), which was the first international organization uniting university women globally and at international level, bringing up discussions about university women's professional equality, as well as inclusion and career opportunities in the sciences (Rozīte 2021: 62).²¹ As the number of educated women increased, IFUW considered it was necessary to ascertain what higher education had given to women in certain professional areas. The IFUW Committee for Intellectual Cooperation,

19 Women were banned from being ordained in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia. This ban aroused discussions among Latvian society because the Faculty of Theology, which prepared pastors, enrolled women. Women graduates of this faculty worked mostly as school teachers.

20 For instance, in 1938/1939 there were only five female professors in all of Poland's universities (Popiński 2019: 125).

21 The Latvian Association of Academically Educated Women was admitted to the IFUW on 9 August, 1929.

whose main activities were the endowment of fellowships for travel and research in the arts and sciences, promoting the exchange of female researchers, academic personnel and teachers, and the granting of travel cards for intellectual workers to give access to libraries, museums, archives and institutions of a scientific, literary or pedagogical nature (Goodman 2012: 366), created questionnaires directed to national federations of university women. These included questions about the impact of higher education on women's search for employment, whether women were working in an area related to their education, whether the occupation provided sufficient financial, family status and how it impacted women's professional career, as well as whether women had experienced discrimination due to their gender and whether they received the same salary as men, etc. (Lūgums visām akadēmiski izglītotām sievietēm Latvijā). Unfortunately, due to the passivity of its members, the LAAEW failed to obtain comprehensive data, and the number of completed questionnaires was not sufficient for IFUW to draw general conclusions about the status of educated women in Latvia.

IFUW also regularly collected separate data about the number of female students in universities, their specialization, as well as information from women in academic positions and their experience in the workplace (IFUW questionnaire). Reports of these data and practical problems faced by university women were discussed at IFUW conferences and linked into different committees of the League of Nations, as this was viewed as one of the most important channels to make an impact on women's legal and professional positions at international level (Goodman 2011: 703–704). The Latvian association managed to collect more than a few answers to questionnaires, for instance Dagmāra Talce-Niedra, agronomist and senior assistant at the University of Latvia in the early 1930s, answered that the education she acquired and employment at the university provides for her financially, however it requires great devotion and can be balanced with family life only because she does not have children (Dagmāras Talces-Niedras atbilde) Yet generally the LAAEW also failed to obtain sufficient data to submit the survey about women in academia and their status in the academic environment to the IFUW. Besides identifying the problem, neither the LAAEW nor any other organisations took any other practical measures to advance women's equality in academia, despite that most of the female academics were members of the LAAEW. To a certain extent this was due to the fact that there were no legal restrictions for a woman to hold an academic position at a university. Moreover, any possible struggle for equal academic opportunities and positions was determined by the traditional opinion prevailing among the public that an academic person is male.

Conclusions

During the interwar years, female academics emerged as a specific new phenomenon of the academic environment. The establishment of the University of Latvia, which was one of the important domestic issues and embodied the creation of a comprehensive higher education system, encompassed two aspects: the recruitment of highly trained teaching staff and the training of a new generation of academics. The process entailed the inclusion of women as equals within the university's teaching staff and represented a wider process in Europe and North America – the feminisation of universities' recruitment policies.

Female academics were represented by two generations of academically educated women: those who were trained at Russian and European universities before 1918, and those who were educated at the University of Latvia. However, none of the female academics managed to achieve a professorship, a widespread problem even in the whole of Europe. Women's academic careers were hindered by practical circumstances: the low salary of junior teaching staff, the workload, family circumstances (marriage, childbirth etc.), availability of vacant academic positions, as well as informal factors such as the negative attitude of male colleagues towards the presence of women in academia, and their scholarly and academic advancement. This kind of attitude was a reflection of the resistance of Latvian society overall towards professionally active women, who were confronted with the idealized and accepted woman's role as mother and wife. The issue of women's equality in higher education institutions as a professional environment was recognised as an existing problem, acknowledged also by the Latvian Association of Academically Educated Women which had been set up specifically to represent the interests of women who had received higher education. However, almost no practical action was taken to address the problem.

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Female Managers of Social Care Institutions in Riga: the Case of Minority Asylums (1918–1940)

Sievietes – pārzines sociālās aprūpes iestādēs Rīgā: mazākumtautību nespējnieku patversmju piemērs (1918–1940)

Keywords:

social care history,
municipality of Riga,
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Atslēgvārdi:

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mazākumtautību izpēte

Summary

One of the features of the Social Welfare Department of the interwar Riga Municipality was the division of the inmates of social welfare institutions according to national and religious affiliation, which was a legacy of the asylums founded in the 19th century. The article is based on the biographies of three female managers of the Riga municipality's minority asylums for the disabled: Baltic Germans Emilia Tiedeman (1880–?) and Emma Goerke (1865–?) – and also Latvian Orthodox, who managed a Russian asylum, Eizhenia Arent (1871–1939) and their career path to higher positions in the Social Welfare Department of the Riga Municipality. Although 81% of the staff in the Social Welfare Department of the Riga Municipality were women, most of them were employed in lower positions than male colleagues and very few women were managers of children and disabled persons' shelters in social care institutions. Minority women, unlike Latvian women, were even less likely to become managers of social care institutions. The common trend among both Latvian and minority women was that men were more often appointed as managers of children's shelters. For the three women, analysed in the article, the focus on social care work was a continuation of family tradition, most often the work of the husband after his death.

Kopsavilkums

Viena no starpkaru Rīgas pašvaldības Sociālās apgādības departamenta iezīmēm bija sociālās aprūpes iestāžu iemītnieku iedalījums pēc nacionālās un reliģiskās piederības, kas bija 19. gadsimtā dibināto patversmju mantojums. Raksta pamatā ir trīs Rīgas pašvaldības mazākumtautību patversmju vadītāju: vācbaltiešu Emīlijas Tīdemanes (1880–?) un Emmas Gērķes (1865–?), kā arī Eiženijas Ārentes (1871–1939), latviešu pareizticīgās, kas vadīja krievu patversmi, biogrāfijas un viņu karjeras ceļš uz augstākiem amatiem Rīgas pašvaldības Sociālās aprūpes departamentā. Lai gan 81% Rīgas pašvaldības Sociālās aprūpes departamenta darbinieku bija sievietes, vairums no viņām strādāja zemākos amatos un ļoti maz sieviešu bija patversmju vadītājas. Mazākumtautību sievietes, atšķirībā no latviešu sievietēm, vēl retāk kļuva par sociālās aprūpes iestāžu vadītājām. Trīs rakstā aplūkotajām sievietēm pievēršanās sociālās aprūpes darbam bija ģimenes tradīciju turpinājums, visbiežāk tas bija vīra darba turpinājums pēc viņa nāves.

Introduction

In the European democratization process, the development of municipal social care in the late 19th century played a crucial role. The modernization process of big industrial European cities had negative side effects, too. It increased the number of marginal inhabitants, who did not obey social norms and were considered as dangerous to others. Volunteer organizations, such as Christian and Jewish religious charity organisations, temperance organisations, rich philanthropists, various middle class ladies' clubs, were not able to deal with the problems caused by such individuals, because the decentralised model of charity was outdated. Moreover, the practices implemented by central institutions, where marginalised groups were taught discipline and norms to be integrated in urban society, became understood as the best practices to deal with the poor. Only gradually it was concluded that care for the poor was not a matter of private and church initiatives, but one of the basic tasks of the municipality and state. In reality, however, private services assisting the poor were integrated in the public policy (Fejtová, Hlavačka 2017: 12, 15). It is crucial to note that European social care developed from individual charity and only in the 19th century modern, centralised and institutionalised protection for the poor was mentioned in the City Law. For example, in the 1830s the British Law on the Poor postulated that only those poor, who were willing to work in coercion could be financially supported. In the Domicile Act (1862 and 1863) of the Austro–Hungarian Empire it was stipulated that the community is obliged to care for its poor in a village or municipality. Consequently, social care became an essential component in municipal policies and a requirement to establish a modern and socially responsible city.

Riga, the capital of Latvia, was the third most industrialized city in the Russian Empire (1721–1917); therefore, it faced social problems that were common in other European cities. Latvian social policy was developed on the basis of the welfare policy entailed in the municipal and rural laws of the Russian Empire in the 19th century, similarly to most European countries. The City Law was adopted in Riga in 1877. The City Law of Riga also mentioned the municipality's responsibility for its poor (except Jewish citizens, who were not addressed in this Law). In addition, it also implemented the best practices in municipal legislation of Europe due to the influence of Baltic Germans that made Riga part of the West European development in the late 19th century sharing similar social values (Smirnova 2021b). The Russian Empire followed the German Elberfeld social system, where the Baltic German humanitarian voluntary organisations of the social elite pioneered the core modern ideas and played an

important role in the law developing process. As mentioned previously, volunteer organisations and the municipality took care for the city's poor by cooperating. Therefore, the development of social care in Latvia emerged in the cities, was municipalized and assigned to a responsibility of a special department. Social care in the 19th century was administered by the Riga City Council but financed by private organisations.

After World War I, the two most essential aspects of European democratization were (1) establishing new democratic states (Latvia among them) and (2) developing modern social care policies. Gradually, social care was understood not as a charity provided by 'good persons' but as a right of an individual in need (Kuhlmann 2003: 102–103). Social care policy can also be seen as a democracy indicator; therefore it is crucial to investigate the development of the national social care.

In the democratization process in the 19th century, females were important actors because they overtook all practical responsibilities and often communication activities to help their husbands in aiding the poor due to the increase of people in need in industrial urban areas (Walton 1975: 1–3, 11–12, 152; Crawford, Greenwood, Bates, Memel, 2021: 96; Pierson, 2021:106–107). The professionalization of social care is also connected with the female agency – female activists such as French activists Jeanne Deroin (1805–1894) and Pauline Roland (1805–1852), or American suffragette and social worker Laura Jane Addams (1860–1935) or “the British originator of workhouse reform” Louisa Twining (1820–1912) (King 2004: 29–30) and many others, included social issues in their political programmes. Female agents, who fought for social welfare laws, fought mainly for the equal rights and social reforms; however, they were not so active in the suffrage movement for democratic laws advocating women particularly (Walton 1975: 66, 69); however, female employees in social work were agents carrying a lot of social responsibility because they knew the practical management aspects of social care and they tried to solve problems by speaking to males to change the situation (Moller, Paulmann, Storing 2020: 11). World War I shaped the female professionalization in social care – females needed to compensate the men in professions they had limited access to before – mainly medicine and pedagogics (Walton 1975: 91, 167, 227). Practical experience was significant in social care and administrative responsibilities of social work; therefore females were not only accepted, but also needed in these professions. Due to these circumstances, social care, until nowadays, has remained among the professions traditionally connected with females.

Contrary to the fact that social work was created by the partnership of both men and women, female actors historically had a complicated situation in this profession, because not always she “had a voice” in the real policy changing (Walton 1975: 81; Hering, Waaldijk 2003: 11; Moller, Paulmann, Storing 2020: 11). In the 19th century

and the interwar period, female social workers were more significant than male workers, because female employers did almost all the hard and dirty work that male workers considered to be of little value. For instance, male workers were not interested in the issues of mental health of each recipient of social care, nor they understood hygienic matters, etc. However, this did not mean better employment conditions for female social care workers – they were paid less, and they were employed in lower professional positions in social care than male employees with similar knowledge and experience. Also, a male worker, who could change and adopt municipal legislation was privileged (Walton 1975: 105). Such discrimination was internalised by hegemonic values, yet at the same time provided real opportunities for female workers. Moreover, the municipality administration preferred male workers in the role of the administration of the social care institutions. Traditionally, he would have a wife, who would become the household manager. Also, a lot of female workers did not underestimate themselves to be valuable employees and to earn as equal as male colleagues.

The paper aims to analyse the social portrait of female managers of the municipal minority asylums in the multi-ethnic and multi-religious interwar Riga. The social portrait of the female workers will be based on the analysis of their socio-economic status, education and career path in becoming the managers of social care institutions. In this paper the term “minorities”¹ is defined as a nationality-based aspect, referring to all non-Latvians. Partly, this term also refers to the religious denomination; however, in this paper it is of secondary importance, because attention is mostly drawn to municipal and non-church related social care institutions. The author will examine only those female managers of minority asylums that managed asylums in long term, namely, for more than ten years. To reach the aim, three female managers will be examined: Emilia Tiedeman (1880–?), Emma Goerke (1865–?) and Eizhenia Arent (1871–1939). Since this paper aims to reveal the female agency in official municipal social work, the author will focus exclusively on municipal female asylum managers and will not analyse female asylum managers in volunteer charity organizations.

The chronological borders of this study span between the proclamation of the Republic of Latvia in 1918 and the Soviet occupation in 1940. The author will not analyse the situation during the War of Independence (1918–1920). It is important to mention that during the wartime, Emilia Tiedeman, Emma Goerke and Eizhenia

1 Minority in this paper is a complex term that is both ethnicity and religion-based. Minority can also be defined, when a concrete group of people, differing by ethnicity, religious beliefs, culture and spoken language, is identified as such by themselves or others. By such definition, Latvians in the 19th century were a minority not because of the number of inhabitants but because their national awareness was in its early stage. Therefore, just a few of them could actively participate in the cultural, political and economic life of the Riga Municipality.

Arent already participated in social work; only their professional official status changed after the war. In the interwar period (1918–1940), the Riga Municipality took over almost all social care institutions mainly established in the late 19th century. The exception were those institutions that continued to work under the management of private organisations, mostly run by ethnic and religious minorities. There were also some new social care institutions established both by the Riga Municipality and private organisations, such as the municipal Jugla orphanage (est. in 1927) or the asylum in the Bolderāja district (est. in 1927) or the private Jewish asylum *Meišav Zkenim* (est. in 1928). The features were similar to both municipal and private institutions, which continued to run in parallel (both sectors needed funding, professionals and other resources) (Smirnova 2021a).

The field of research presented in this paper is interdisciplinary and covers national history and its development, referring to military, economic, cultural, and ethnic relationships, examining municipal and international policies. Many findings in the paper will open space for future discussions in national history. Historiography so far has been fragmented. The field of research is understudied providing an opportunity for certain mythology to emerge.

One of the most classical books in West European historiography dedicated to the development of professionalization of females in social work was written by Dr Ronald Gordon Walton, a senior lecturer in Social Work at the Cardiff University College, in 1975. The book can be seen as a contribution to the *herstory* studies aiming to reveal the female agency in all spheres of life and examining the development of the professionalization of women in social care from a practical point of view (Walton 1975). Walton's research is very detailed, both from the social worker and social recipient's perspective. However, research is more aimed at social workers, to "learn the good practices" to follow in their work, at times lacking a study of theoretical sources.

Another important source is *History of Social Work in Europe (1900–1960). Female Pioneers and their Influence on the Development of International Social Organisations* (2003) focused on the influence of female social workers and their contribution to the development of humanitarian aid and the professionalization of social work in various European countries (Hering, Waaldijk 2003: 11; Moller, Paulmann, Storing, 2020). As regards the Baltic States, this book contains two chapters on Lithuania, but none on Latvia and Estonia. For researchers, not acquainted with the situation in Latvia, it could lead to a false conclusion that Latvian females did not participate in the national social care development. German professor of education, history of literature and history of social work Sabine Hering is one of the most active researchers in the field of the history of social work. She has also examined the gender aspect in

the history of social work, cooperating with other researchers (Hering, Waaldijk 2003; Hering, Münchmeier 2014; etc.). Hering reveals that female workers not only participated in German social work, but also shaped its history and therefore modernised institutionalised social care is not imaginable without the female social care workers.

The most recent study on the general development of social policy in the United Kingdom is the book by the social work practitioner John H. Pierson, who worked in Cheshire Social Services and after several years started his academic career at the Staffordshire University. Pierson also emphasises the unique female role in the development of social policy arguing that social work developed from gaining the practical skills and experience. To draw a parallel, social work studies as an academic discipline has been only known for some decades. In his chapter *Women Take the Field* Pierson argues that female workers were active fighters for social care reforms, because they understood the vulnerability of the marginals and due to their own vulnerable position in society. He claims that “female friendships, based on shared values” in the late 19th century left an impact on the female status and confidence in social work (Pierson 2021).

Overall, social care studies, especially gender based social care studies, is a topical issue in historical and interdisciplinary research, still lacking a comprehensive and comparative approach. Therefore, this paper will be a starting point to emphasise female minority social workers in Riga in the interwar period. The author offers innovative ideas by examining two understudied topics in Latvian historiography – minorities in social work in Riga and the employment of minority women in the highest positions in social work. The primary sources are statistics and documents from the Latvian State History Archive, whereas academic literature and Latvian press have been used as secondary sources.

Female Workers in Social Care Institutions in Latvia: Introduction to Development of Professionalization

One of the features that characterizes Latvian parliamentarianism in the interwar period was the effort dedicated to establishing various social volunteer organizations. Female activists wanted to participate in all aspects of social life in Latvia, hence volunteer organisations became both an educational and entertaining platform for women. Historically it can be linked to the Prussian Elberfeld social system, which since the 1870s also intended women’s involvement in voluntary social care organizations in industrial cities. Riga was one of the first cities in the Russian Empire, where these ideas were incorporated

(Smirnova 2021b: 122–135; Satka, Moilanen 2011: 43; Hering, Münchmeier 2014: 53–57). In addition, the development of the right of freedom to associations should be seen as a crucial factor in Riga, and especially in the context of ethnic minorities, Latvians being among them in the 19th century (see footnote No 1). One of the first official female charity organizations in Riga, outside the churches and monasteries was Women's Society (*Der Frauenverein*), established as early as 1818. This organization sought solutions for social problems after the Napoleonic War (July–December 1812). The female society was mainly responsible for fundraising. Female members organized knitting classes and cooperated with Elisabethian institutions, namely, orphanages, an asylum for female servants, and a training house for young girls. Another German female institution in the late 19th century was the Young Female Society (*Der Jungfrauenverein*), established in 1842 to help young females in need (Ante, Zeiferts 2018: 53–79; Tobien 1895: 277–292). In the late 1870s, there were Ladies' clubs almost in all social care volunteer organizations. There was also a Female Jewish society that cared for the poor Jewish inhabitants of Riga (*ibid.*). The first Latvian orphanage was the Katrina Orphanage established in 1897 (by Katrīna Dombrovska, 1830–1903) by the Latvian Charity organization (*Rīgas latviešu labdarības biedrība*; however, as the historian of kindergartens Vineta Jonīte points out, it was the first Latvian kindergarten with social functions as well. Later, in 1908, Līvija Mengele (1877–1966) became the head of Latvian Charity organization and started her active social work here. However, the first building of Latvian “kindergarten” was the “Green School”, supported by Latvian entrepreneur and the leader of the temperance organisation Augusts Dombrovskis (1845–1927). The “Green school” is associated with a woman, a long-time director Marta Rinka (1880–1953) (Smirnova 2021b: 131). Traditionally, female charity organisations were aimed at helping mainly other women in need and children, less – at helping adults in need (Zelče 1991: 71–72).

After World War I, humanitarian issues towards children became relevant, like kitchens for the poor and orphanages because the previous breadwinners – husbands, sons, and fathers – had been killed or injured in the war. Therefore, the consequences of World War I led to a situation where many women in the previous territories of the Russian Empire became involved in social work. The so-called merciful sisters/ Sisters of Charity or the Red Cross nurses should be especially emphasised.² Female

2 Russian sociologist Elena Kostina writes that Charity Sisters in the territory of Russia had two directions. First, in Crimea, where the Christovozdvizhenkaya Merciful sisters church was established, the second one was International Red Cross (1863), established in 1867, later became the Russian Red Cross. In addition, these women were taught as merciful sisters, which provided a status in society and trust in the sisters as professional medical workers. However, only women from the upper social class had a chance to become one of the sisters. In the territory of Latvia, it

workers assisted males in the frontlines as well. They needed to learn the military strategy and become familiar with the first aid to help the wounded soldiers and to calm down small children. Also, some women even became soldiers, for example, Līna Čanka (1893–1981).

In the interwar period in all Baltic States, World War I and the War of Independence were catalysts to all social problems in a new modern society. Modern women could obtain higher education and become valued specialists. A modern family model emerged, where both the mother and father were officially employed, and children were raised in pre-school educational institutions. Because of these social changes, social problems became one of the main priorities in internal policies. Social policy was implemented on three levels: (1) state-level, (2) municipality and (3) public organizations. Women in Latvia gained their political right to vote and be elected since Latvia got its independence in 1918, which was earlier than in some other European countries, for example, in Switzerland it was possible only in 1971. However, it does not mean that Latvian women were successful in Latvian Law and politics because patriarchal traditions were still maintained. Another factor was the so-called flexible lists in the election of Latvian parliament – Saeima, as historian Ineta Lipša argues (Lipša 2022). To increase the number of political supporters for Latvian women, the only elected women to Latvian Saeima Berta Pīpiņa (1883–1941) and Emīlija Jurevica (1894–1967) established women's organizations; many of those organizations such as Latvian National Women League (LNWL) / *Latvju Nacionāla Sieviešu apvienība* or Latvian Female Association / *Latvju Sieviešu apvienība* focused on solving social, not political, issues. In Western literature, the connection between the professionalization of women in social work and political agency is quite frequently addressed (Walton, 1975: 91, 256). Female workers, who in the interwar period became professionals and abandoned their roles of housewives of prominent husbands, wanted to be recognized and also to earn the same salary for equal work. Therefore, as Pierson was quoted before, women understood that they needed to unite to have a "stronger voice". Female social workers still depended on political solutions adopted by their male colleagues because they still were seen as "too emotional" to become policy makers and "were reluctant to view the problems through the lens of patriarchy and capitalism" (Satka, Moilanen 2011: 48).

was possible to become a merciful sister from 1879 in Riga and a few years later in Daugavpils. Almost all women taught in Riga and Daugavpils were orthodox Christians. That means that almost none of the Latvian women could become one of the sisters in the late 19th century. National Latvian Charity sisters are linked with Women Relief Corps, established in 1915 and the activity of the Latvian Red Cross in WWI and later in the interwar period (Odina, Salaks 2011; Odiņa, Millere, Circenis, Deklava 2015; Kostina 2003: 83).

An outstanding example is German activist Alice Salomon (1872–1948) – the activist of German female organisations, reformer of social policy, politician and also the one who in 1925 established the first academic institute for social work education in Berlin – *Deutsche Akademie für soziale und pädagogische Frauenarbeit* (German Academy for Women’s Social and Educational Work) (Hering, Münchmeier 2014). Unfortunately, Latvian social policy and education system was not so modern to follow this example because the University of Latvia was newly established at that time. Therefore, the question on the role of female movement organisations and professionalisation of the social work is crucial to understand the education possibilities for social workers in the interwar Latvia (Feustel 2011: 162). The author of this paper defines such organizations as women’s socio-political organizations, namely, organizations that tried to solve both social and political issues. Women tried to be elected in parliamentary and municipal elections through these organizations as evidenced by different researchers (Lipša 2014; Lipša 2022; Smirnova 2016). Other organizations were, for example, religious women organizations, sororities, professional organizations, etc., where members implemented just one main goal and did not deal with the complexities of socio-political issues (Smirnova 2018). Amongst socio-political organizations was Latvian Women Relief Corps (LWRC, Līvija Mengele was one of the members) / *Latvijas Sieviešu Palīdzības korpuss* (LSPK), which was established following the example of the United Kingdom’s Women’s Defence Relief Corps. Unlike other socio-political female organisations, the Corps did not have any nationality or social census. In 1920, when the Latvian War of Independence ended, LWRC established an orphanage for war orphans.

The most active and oldest Latvian national women socio-political organization in Latvia was Latvian National Women’s League (LNWL) / *Latvju Nacionāla Sieviešu apvienība*. It had a section *Mother and Child*, which was linked with two health sections from Lady Pledge missions. There also used to be an organization of children welfare *Mother and Child* / *Bērnu labklājības biedrība “Māte un bērns”* that taught how to examine the health of the child and what a mother must do to improve the physical state of her child. The teaching programme was free of charge and was funded by the Riga Municipality (Smirnova 2018: 29–31).

Another active women’s socio-political organization in the interwar Latvia was the Latvian Women’s Association (LWA) / *Latvju Sieviešu apvienība*, which had the most considerable number of women members and represented themselves as a “working women association.” This organization actively dealt with social issues. For example, it established an institution for unemployed women and established the Green Cross for those who attempted suicide. In the municipal elections of 1931, the organization added childcare related points to their political programme that were missing in the

elections of the Latvian Parliament / Saeima in 1928. In 1931 the programme emphasised the importance of improving the economic situation of the city, as well as the need for reformation of the policy of the Social Welfare Department (*Rīgas Sociālās apgādes nodaļa*) ([Anon.] 1930: 3).

According to the activities of both organisations LNWL and LWA, the leaders of organizations were employed in the Riga Municipality and both in different times of their lives in the Riga Social Welfare Department. The leader of the LNWL, Berta Pīpiņa (1883–1941) worked in the Riga Social Welfare Department from 1925 to 1928. Previously, she had studied for three years in Berlin and was trained to work with defective children.³ Therefore, Pīpiņa was responsible for the management of the work of all municipal social care institutions – orphanages (social care institution exclusively for the poor and/or orphaned children) and asylums (social care municipal institutions for the poor, old and/or people disabled to work) in Riga (Kroders 1928: 252). Another Latvian woman that was active in politics and volunteer organizations was Otilija Riekstiņa (1906–1972), both an active member of LWRC and a member of the “Open door” organization (see more, Lipša, 2022). She worked at the Riga Social Welfare Department from 1921 to 1940; from 1931 until 1943, she was the manager of asylums on Ķīmiņš Street 1 and Telts Street 1 in Riga. The leader of LWA, Emīlija Jurevica, was less successful in politics as evidenced by the fact that she did not have high occupational positions in municipality. Jurevica worked in the children’s summer camp “Baltezers” in the 1940s as a laundry manager (LNA LVVA 2881–2–538).

Women in Social Care in the Riga Municipality: Statistics

Similarly to other cities in Europe, Riga in the interwar period faced problems in the attitude towards female workers in social care. For example, in 1933, in the Riga Social Welfare Department in the Riga Municipality, out of 567 employees 460 were women, constituting around 81% (A.Br 1933: 311–321). However, the majority of those women worked in lower positions than male colleagues (see Fig. 1–8). It can be concluded that in Riga from the 19th century onwards, orphans and disabled people were separated in different orphanages and asylums by nationality and religious denomination, and in the interwar period this principle was still maintained. Historically, it is linked with the modern City Law in 1877 and Public Welfare Law in 1892 that postulated that the city is

3 Term from the interwar period, children with mental or physical illness that needed special care and/or education.

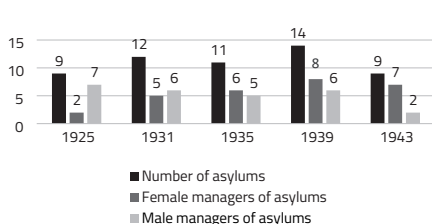


Fig. 1. Number of the asylum managers by gender, 1925–1943.

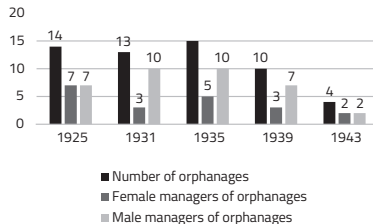


Fig. 2. Number of the orphanage managers by gender, 1925–1943.

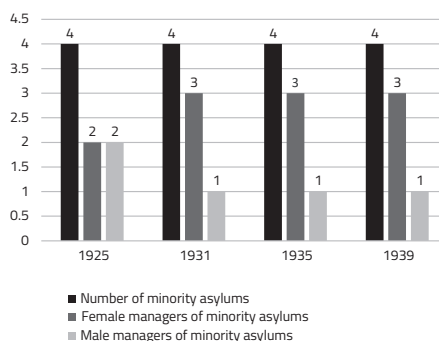


Fig. 3. Number of the asylum managers by gender and nationality, 1925–1939.

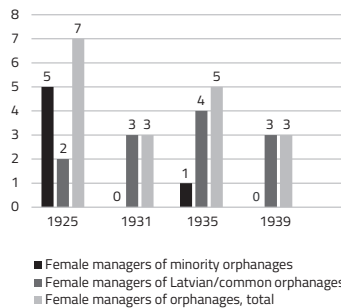


Fig. 4. Number of the orphanage managers by gender and nationality, 1925–1939.

responsible for “its poor” and limited the “poor of the city” only to those registered (Smirnova 2021b: 127). Therefore, access to the municipal aid was limited for the minorities and less for financially stable people. Therefore, Latvians, whose national awareness at the time was still developing, Jews, partly poor Russians (separately Old Believers and Orthodox), also catholic Lithuanians and Poles in need were aided by organizations of their minority. In the interwar period, the Riga Municipality took over the minority social care institutions and the orphanage and asylum residents

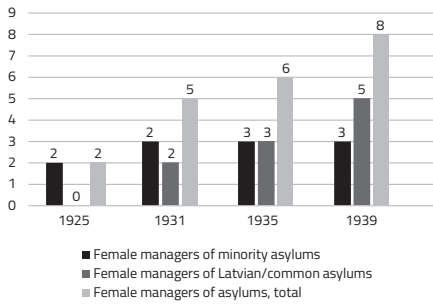


Fig. 5. Number of the asylum managers comparing the number of female managers in minority and Latvian or "common" asylums, 1925–1939.

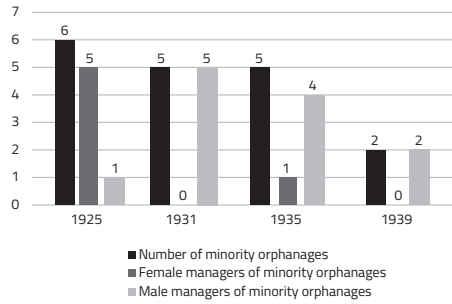


Fig. 6. Number of the orphanage managers comparing the number of female managers in minority and Latvian or "common" orphanages, 1925–1939.

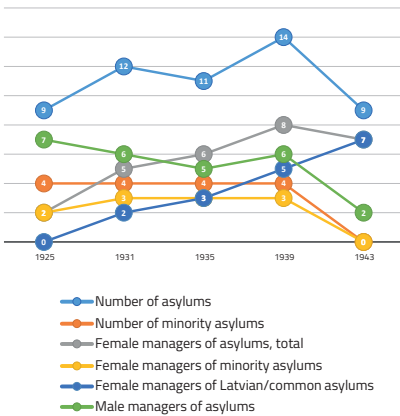


Fig. 7. Number of the asylum managers comparing the number of female and male managers in minority and Latvian or "common" asylums, 1925–1943.

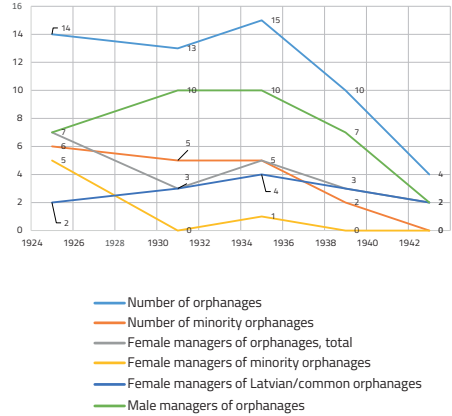


Fig. 8. Number of the orphanage managers comparing the number of female and male managers in minority and Latvian or "common" orphanages, 1925–1943.

Fig. 1–Fig. 8 (Rudzītis 1925: 43, Rīga City Board 1931: 224–229, Rīga City Board 1935: 10–16, Rīga City Board 1939: 11–18, Statistic Board of Latvia 1943: 198–200).

were divided by their nationality and/or religious denomination. Such a multinational factor of Rīga and its democratic municipal policy was one of the characteristics of the social policy of the interwar Rīga.

Interwar statistics reveal that the number of minorities in Latvia in the interwar period differed from the number of minorities in Rīga. The most significant minority

in Latvia were Russians (around 11 %); meanwhile, in Riga the biggest minority was Germans (around 12 %). Jews were the second biggest minority in Latvia (around 5%) and Riga (around 11 % in Riga), whereas the third most significant minority in Latvia were Germans (around 3,2%), whereas in Riga – Russians (9%). Because of the significant number of Germans in Riga, the social portrait of two German female asylum managers is further analysed in this paper.

The choice to study the female managers of the minority asylums is grounded in the controversial fact that female managers of the social institutions were a rare phenomenon in the interwar Riga. At the same time, minority females became asylum managers more often than they became managers of orphanages. Females of ethnic minorities rarely took highest positions in social care in minority asylums. In addition, there were more female managers in minority asylums than male managers in those asylums. For example, in 1925, there were two female and two male managers in four minority asylums, whereas in the period 1931–1939 there were three female managers in four minority asylums. The biographies of these three female minority managers will be examined further in this paper. The number of female managers gradually increased in the interwar period in Riga (in both Latvian and common asylums for different nationalities). The situation with the number of asylums in Riga was favourable, especially in the minority orphanages – there were around 75% of female managers in minority asylums and around 50–60% in Latvian or common asylums (see Fig. 1–8).

As regards the orphanages in the interwar Riga, a common tendency of the orphanages was the monopolization of male managers in orphanages because males were seen as the “strong hand for both genders” of children and for children to be raised following a strong discipline (Smirnova 2018). The same tendency was evident among Latvian and minority orphanages (see Fig. 4, 6, 8).

The biographical research of three female managers further in the text is carried out since a small number of female managers in asylums can be identified. Besides, many females were unable to remain in managers’ positions for in a long-term. It can be explained not only by the competition with male social care professionals but also by the lack of time and physical resources because it was complicated to raise children and manage social care institutions. Managing a social care institution was a full-time job, and managers usually lived in the asylums or orphanages they managed, sometimes even with their families. The three female managers analysed further in the text had grown-up children; therefore, they could be asylum managers without sacrificing their family lives.

Social Portrait of Minority Female Asylum's Manager in Interwar Riga

Emilia Anna Tiedeman (Emīlija

Anna Tīdemane) was born in Riga on 10 February 1880 in the family of German Peter Nagler (1847–1881) and his wife Adelaide Nagler (1850–1890). She graduated from the Riga City Girls' School in 1895. One year later, she gained a certificate from Friedrich Froebel⁴ kindergarten female tutor courses, most likely also in Riga. She worked as a governess (19.10.1896–29.12.1903) in baron Samson–Himmelstjern's family. She had a good command of German and Russian and some Estonian and French. Emilia stopped her work as a governess after her marriage with landlord Heinrich Franc Tiedeman on 29 December 1903.⁵ From 1903 until 1905, her husband owned a small farm in the Ogre district, but he had to sell it because of financial difficulties. Heinrich Tiedeman also owned two little Summerhouses in Majori with two and five rooms (LNA LVVA 2881-2-1316).

Emilia's involvement in social care is related to the profession of her husband. From 1906 to 1911, Emilia's husband was a manager of one of the Princess Meschersky manor, but he had to leave because of the illness. In the following year, 1912, Heinrich Tiedeman became a manager in the asylum in Riga, Kuldīgas Street 37, also known as a "Peter house", established in 1910. Emilia was an unofficial manager, helping her husband manage the asylum (LNA LVVA 2881-2-1316). The Tiedeman couple lived in the asylum and were the "soul" of the asylum on Kuldīgas Street before 1921 (LNA LVVA 2881-1-324; LNA LVVA 2881-1-326), when the reorganization and municipalization of the asylums started. They were relocated to another asylum because the asylum on Kuldīgas Street became a Latvian asylum. Neither the Tiedeman couple nor the asylum residents wanted the Tiedeman couple to relocate to another asylum. There were several letters sent to the Riga Municipality, where the residents of this social care institution wrote that "both Baltic Germans and Latvians, did not want manager Heinrich Tiedeman and his Lady to go away" (LNA LVVA 2881-1-325, 60). Also, Heinrich himself wrote an official letter to the Riga Municipality claiming that he refused to become a manager of the German asylum on Matīsa Street because of the bad condition of this asylum (LNA LVVA 2881-1-325, 61–65). Therefore, Edgar Goerke with his Lady became the asylum manager on Matīsa Street (see below). In September 1922, Emilia and Heinrich Tiedeman relocated to

4 Friedrich Wilhelm August Froebel (Fröbel, 21.04.1782–21.06.1852) was a German pedagogue and education reformer who created the concept of "kindergarten" for preschool-aged children to educate and develop their skills and abilities with unique toys, called "Froebel gifts". His ideas spread in Europe, so special education courses were named after him.

5 The couple raised son Valter (born 23.12.1905 in Ogre) and daughter Ruta (born 27.07.1914).



Fig. 9. Emilia Tiedeman.
Latvian National Archive,
Latvian State Historical Archive,
LNA LVVA 2996-18-4618.

the asylum for poor German female teachers on Puškina Boulevard, later Slokas Street, where Heinrich became a manager (LNA LVVA 2881-1-334). The majority of residents were German Lutheran unmarried females (LNA LVVA 2881-1-355). Emilia became the manager (LNA LVVA 2881-1- 336; LNA LVVA 2881-1-337) of the asylum after the death of her husband. She worked from 25 May 1930 till 16 March 1939, when she was dismissed due to Article 14 (negligence in the performance of duties), Article 20 (has not prevented harm to society), and Article 25 (poorly supervised her subordinates or do not follow instructions of the superior) of the disciplinary action of the Riga Municipality. Unfortunately, there is no information about concrete issues Emilia faced. However, at this time, there was no social care institution that did not have issues or conflict situations. The previous order was amended on 1 April 1939, and E. Tiedeman was dismissed from the manager's position at the asylum at her request. After that, she became a manager in the asylum on Brivzemnieka Street (01.04.1939–31.08.1939), and for a little period of time, she worked as an acting manager of asylum (01.09.1939–13.11.1939) on Kalēju Street, before she resigned voluntarily due to the resettlement (*Umsiedlung*) of the German nation to Germany (LNA LVVA 2881-2-1316). Unfortunately, there is no further information about Emilia's life afterwards.

Emma Sophie Goerke (Emma Sofija Gērķe) was born on 27 November 1865 in Riga in one of the most prominent families of Baltic Germans. Her father was a merchant Heinrich Christian Heinrichsen (11.11.1812–1867), and her mother was Emilia von Laurentius (1822–1888). From 1872 to 1882, she studied and graduated from the Glazenap Private School. Emma knew German, French, Latvian and a little bit Russian. In 1885, she obtained a private teacher certificate, and from 1887 to 1886, she worked as a private teacher. From 1890 to 1897, she worked as a secretary in



Fig. 10. Emma Goerke.
Latvian National Archive,
Latvian State Historical Archive,
LNA LVVA 2996-7-13827.

Riga–Orla railway station. On 27 November 1897, she married a merchant Edgar Karl Vilhelm Gustaf Goerke (LNA LVVA 2881-2-417).⁶

Edgar Goerke died in 1925. From 1922 until 1925, Edgar Goerke was a manager in the German asylum on Matīsa Street, the one Heinrich Tiedeman refused to manage. Unfortunately, there is no information about Edgars Goerke's position before the asylum on Matīsa Street. After her husband's death, Emma Goerke became a manager (08.10.1925–17.05.1935) of the asylum on Matīsa Street until she was dismissed by the head of the city of Riga "due to maximum age and lost ability to work". On 1 August 1933, Emma Goerke wrote to the Riga City Board: "I now kindly ask for the consent of the Riga City Board to allow me to work, as I have reached the maximum age, in the service of the city municipality. I have always performed my duties satisfactorily and with the best conscience. My physical health conditions allow me to perform my duties properly. I am a widow, and my husband, an employee of the city of Riga, died without a pension. Because of that, after my husband's death, I started to work for the Riga Municipality. Although I have reached the maximum age, I have not yet received my pension and, in the event of my dismissal, I will be completely deprived of any funds. I have no property, capital, business or other income other than my salary (...)" (LNA LVVA 2881-2-417). In 1939, she needed to resettle to Germany with her youngest son and grandchildren. Unfortunately, there is no further information about Emma's life afterwards.

6 The couple raised sons Hedvigs (18.08.1898–?), Oskars (24.06.1900–1919), Kurts (21.12.1907–?). Son Kurts later lived in Baldone and raised two sons: Eberhards-Oto (08.05.1938–?) and Rolf-Ulrich (24.07.1924–?) ([Anon.] 1939: 4)



Fig. 11. Eizhenia Arent.
Latvian National Archive,
Latvian State Historical Archive,
LNA LVVA 2996-1-15395.

Eizhenia Arent (Eiženija (Jevģenija) Ārente) was born on 27 November 1871 in Odziena, in a family of six children of Latvian Christian orthodox priest Andrejs Ivanovich Kangers (29.01.1839, born in a Lutheran Latvian farmer family in Vidzeme–20.07.1909) and Elisabete (Bistrevska, 19.08.1839–17.07.1908) (LNA LVVA 2881-2-51). Eizhenia’s father Andrejs was highly respected among inhabitants of Riga, especially in the oldest Latvian Orthodox church of the Ascension Church in Riga, where he conducted prayers in Latvian (20 April 1879–20 July 1909) and was a member of the Riga Consistory.⁷ Andrejs Kangers died in his summerhouse in Melluži. He was buried in the Riga Pokrov cemetery (which was a family burial place) near daughters Vera and Olga (died aged four, 1879–11.08.1881), little son and son Aleksandr (1860–17.01.1822, died at the age of 22) (Vidiakina (no date); Gusachenko; Shenikova; Vitols 2019: 383–384).

Eizhenia Arent graduated from the Riga Lomonosov’s Female Gymnasium (LNA LVVA 2881-2-51), which was quite prestigious, but required some funds. On 6 September 1898 she was married to Christian Orthodox priest Jānis (Ivans) Petrovič Arent (17.10.1870–29.08.1911). Jānis Arent studied at St. Petersburg Theological Seminar. From 1897 until 1911, he was a priest in Tukums, where he lived with his family. From 1903 until 1911, Jānis was an editor of *Pareizticīgo Latvijas Vēstnesis* ++

7 A. Kangers received his education at the Riga Diocesan Seminary and the Riga Theological Seminary. A. Kangers led the translation of Orthodox spiritual literature into Russian and Estonian, taught children, also helped orphans and needy children, and engaged in charity. In 1904, he was awarded the St. Order of Vladimir. He arrived in Riga with his family in 1869. Prior to that, he led the Sausnēja church and the congregation in Ērgļi.

(The Orthodox Journal of Latvia)⁸ (Pommers 1940: 79; Gusachenko; Shennikova; Vitols 2019: 92).⁹ The period 1909–1911 was extremely hard for Eizhenia – in 1909, her father died, a year later – her mother and in 1911, she became a widow (LNA LVVA 2881-2-51). From 1911 until 1918, she lived with her brother Jānis (Ivans) Kangers (1871–25.01.1936). Jānis Kangers Jun. graduated from the Aleksander Gymnasium in Riga with a silver medal and continued his studies at the University of Moscow as a lawyer (Prediger 2018: 71, 133). Jānis Kangers lived in Soviet Russia, longed for Latvia and returned to Latvia in 1924, where he started to work in a Civil Division of the Riga Regional Court as a member of the Regional Court. He was an honorary member of the Latvian Association of Judges ([Anon.] 1936: 5).

The first Eizhenia's workplace was at the public kitchen in Petrograd in 1918 where she worked as a manager. She returned to Latvia in March 1918. From 1 September 1919, she started to work as a manager in Russian asylum on Sadoviņikova Street 20. For nearly 20 years her life was connected with the asylum. She lived and worked in the asylum similarly to the Tiedeman and Goerke couples. It was a standard practice for the municipal social care workers. From 1925 her brother Jānis Kangers lived in the asylum service apartment with Eizhenia (LVVA 2881-1-333; LNA LVVA 2881-2-51). Jānis Kangers was buried in the Riga Pokrov cemetery, and it was told that he was "a true child of the Orthodox Church and was committed to evangelical truths in his life with great honour and modesty" ([Anon.] 1936: 5). Those words could also be said about Eizhenia. Both were raised in a caring Christian family; they were hardworking and cared for those in need. Archive materials show the attitude of Eizhenia toward her position of a manager. For example, from 1919 to 1924, she only had four co-workers to care for 150 disabled and/or old asylum residents (LVVA 2881-1-332).

In 1939 she was dismissed by the order of the head of the city of Riga "due to maximum age" when she was 67 years old. Some months later, on 15 August 1939, she died in Krimulda, and she was buried in the Riga Pokrov cemetery (LNA LVVA 2881-2-51).

8 Before 1906, called *Rīgas Garīgais Vēstnesis* (Spiritual Journal of Riga).

9 Eizhenia and Jānis raised four daughters – Olga, Marija, Ludmila (she graduated from the Riga State Gymnasium (ex-Riga Lomonosov's Female Gymnasium) in 1928) and Eizhenia (Jevgenija) (in the 1920s–1930s she was a teacher at the Sloka Primary School).

Conclusion

Industrialization and urbanization of European cities led to female participation in charity and social care work. Riga was not an exception. World War I shaped the understanding of female “abilities” in concrete professions, and social care was one of the most significant aspects in female agency. In the interwar period Latvian women already had experience and knowledge in social care work, and almost 90% of the employees at the Social Welfare Department of the Riga Municipality were female. However, the number of women in high positions in municipal social care work was minimal. Female managers of social work institutions (orphanages, asylums) were rare; the smallest number was among minority women. Managing a social care institution was tricky, since one had to have knowledge of economics, bureaucracy, good communications skills, and enthusiasm. Moreover, people in need could often be marginal, nervous, suffering from the post-war trauma, etc. Therefore, female managers needed to solve conflict situations as well. The uniqueness of Riga compared to other European cities and other bigger states in the interwar period was that the Municipal Law of Riga still kept the tradition to stratify the residents of the social care by their nationalities not only by the volunteer organizations but also in municipal social work. In addition, the common tendency was to reduce the number of female managers in the orphanages, which was connected with the understanding of the importance of the “strong hand” and was stereotypically associated with male managers.

The social portraits of three minority asylum female managers that worked for the longest time show that all were well-educated female gymnasium graduates from middle to upper-class families (the same tendency in Europe – Walton 1975: 91, 187). The tendency also reveals that the females were Lutheran Baltic Germans (case of Emilia Tiedeman and Emma Goerke) and Latvian Orthodox (case of Eizhenia Arent). There were no female managers from Slavic ethnic background like Russian, or Polish. Nor it is possible to identify any Jewish female asylum managers. This tendency was connected with the different understanding of the female role and the developing process of social care from Latvian and as well as German society. In the 19th century Baltic Germans were the first, who established social care institutions in the municipality; Latvians incorporated those ideas into their volunteer organizations and continued in municipal work. Also, in all three cases women started their work in social care after the death of their husbands; in two cases, Baltic German Emilia Tiedeman and Emma Goerke, took over the work of their husbands. At the same time, Eizhenia Arent had social work experience as a refugee in Petrograd. All of them had children; however, when they started to work as managers, almost all their lives were connected with the asylums; their adult children had their own families. All three female managers continued to work till they “reached maximum age” in a municipal institution.

In addition, there was a prejudice against women in senior positions in social care (Walton, 1975: 91, 259). Comparing Latvian female managers of the social care institutions in Riga and minority asylum managers, the most significant difference is that in many cases, Latvian social care institution managers were also active members of socio-political female organizations, and a lot of them were also active in politics. As examined in this paper, the managers of minority asylums were not a part of any organization. This paper, however, presents cases only of the municipal asylum, no cases of private asylums are analysed. At the same time, it is possible that minority females were more active in their social, political, or cultural organizations and worked in private asylums of those organisations, that could be a valuable case for further research. Also, the cases of female managers in Latvian and common asylums and female managers in orphanages could be further investigated. The strong traditions of municipal social care were interrupted after the Baltic German resettlement to Germany and the following wartime and German and Russian occupations. Therefore, this paper shows the minority women's involvement in social care and the history of minorities living in Latvia.

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Social Welfare Department of Riga, LNA LVVA 2881-1-337, asylum on Slokas Street 6;
Social Welfare Department of Riga, LNA LVVA 2881-1-324, asylum on Kuldīgas Street 37;
Social Welfare Department of Riga, LNA LVVA 2881-1-325, asylum on Kuldīgas Street 37;
Social Welfare Department of Riga, LNA LVVA 2881-1-326, asylum on Kuldīgas Street 37;
Collection of passport cases of Riga prefecture, LNA LVVA 2996-1-15395,
passport of Eiženija Ārente;

Collection of passport cases of Riga prefecture, LNA LVVA 2996-7-13827, passport of Emma Gērke;

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The Beginnings of Women's Agency in Latvian Foreign Affairs: an Autobiographical Approach

Pirmsākumi sieviešu iesaistei Latvijas ārlietās: autobiogrāfiskā pieeja

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Atslēgvārdi:

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dienasgrāmata,
Grosvaldu ģimene

Summary

This article aims to name and place women as active participants in foreign affairs and to offer a case study through the research of autobiographical documents. The Latvian Foreign Service from 1919 to 1940 had 575 paid women employees in civil service positions, both at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in diplomatic and consular missions abroad, but only 16 held the highest positions open to women at the time, namely the posts of secretaries, 1st and 2nd class, due to the domination of a patriarchal model in which women were given a subordinate role. The involvement of the Grosvalds family women in the foreign service presents an almost complete picture of women in Latvian foreign affairs in the first decade of its existence, and their autobiographical material is hitherto unrecognised, though essential and diverse, especially the diary of Margarēta Grosvalde. The autobiographical evidence, such as letters and diaries, adds an extra layer for research and allows observation of the foreign affairs scene through the gendered lenses of typist, secretary and envoy's wife, something which had not been done before. The research presented in the article demonstrates conclusively that women were present in, not absent from, diplomacy in the era preceding their full inclusion in the national diplomatic service in the later twentieth century.

Kopsavilkums

Šī raksta mērķis ir nosaukt un izcelt sievietes kā aktīvas līdzdalībnieces Latvijas ārlietu vēsturē, kā arī piedāvāt gadījumu analīzi, izmantojot autobiogrāfisko dokumentu izpēti. Latvijas ārlietu dienestā no 1919. līdz 1940. gadam bija 575 algotas darbinieces civildienesta amatos Ārlietu ministrijā un diplomātiskajās un konsulārajās pārstāvniecībās ārvalstīs, taču tikai 16 ieņēma tobrīd sievietēm pieejamos augstākos amatus, proti, 1. un 2. šķiras sekretāru amatus, jo dominēja patriarhālais modelis, kurā sievietēm tika piešķirta zemāka loma. Grosvaldu dzimtas sievietes iesaiste ārlietu dienestā sniedz gandrīz pilnīgu priekšstatu par sievietēm Latvijas ārlietās pirmajā desmitgadē, un viņu autobiogrāfiskais materiāls ir līdz šim neapzināts, lai gan būtisks un daudzveidīgs, īpaši Margarētas Grosvaldes dienasgrāmata. Autobiogrāfiskās liecības, piemēram, vēstules un dienasgrāmatas, pētniecībai piedāvā līdz šim neizmantotu papildu slāni un ļauj vērot ārlietu ainu caur dzimuma prizmu, atklājot mašīnrakstītājas, sekretāres, sūtņa sievas pieredzes. Rakstā izklāstītais materiāls pārlicinoši pierāda, ka sievietes bija klātesošas diplomātijā laikā pirms viņu pilnīgas iekļaušanas diplomātiskajā dienestā 20. gadsimta otrajā pusē.

The history of Latvian foreign affairs is gendered, as diplomacy has traditionally been reserved for men for centuries. Before World War II, women were barred from serving as diplomats¹ in many countries (Leira, Neumann, 2008), including Latvia. In her legendary book *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (1989), feminist theorist Synthia Enloe has titled the first chapter *Gender Makes the World Go Round. Where Are the Women?* Enloe's main argument is that researchers should listen to women carefully: "Listen to those trying to break out of the strait-jacket of conventional femininity and those who find security and satisfaction in those very conventions" (Enloe 1989: 11). Diplomatic historians have provided essential insights into how gender was understood and practised in diplomacy over the past few hundred centuries². Karin Aggestam and Ann Towns, both professors in political sciences, have written on ministries of foreign affairs as gendered institutions. They state that these institutions seem to have predictable divisions of labour, including a familiar division of responsibilities and tasks among women and men, with women often ending up in support functions and "soft" policy areas. In contrast, men cluster in "hard" policy areas³ and are overrepresented in leadership positions. (Aggestam, Towns 2019: 21).

The representation of women in foreign affairs from the founding of the Latvian state in 1918 to the Soviet occupation in 1940 has not been a central subject of research until today. An insightful overview is provided by an article by the Latvian historian Daina Bleiere on women in the foreign service and the security policy of Latvia in the 1990s after restoration of independence (Bleiere 2020). Another commendable contribution is the chapter *Personal Portraits of the Foreign Service of Latvia* by Mārtiņš Drēģeris (Drēģeris 2022: 509–542), a lawyer and employee of the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the subsection about the first female diplomats *The First Female Diplomats* (ibid.: 515–519), he highlights some of the female employees of the

1 The first female diplomat to head a foreign post was Aleksandra Kollontay from Russia, who was appointed to Kristiania (now Oslo), Norway, in 1923.

2 See, for example: McCarthy 2014; Cassidy 2017; Sluga, James 2015.

3 The difference between soft and hard power in international politics is the use of force. 'Soft power' is a type of influence wielded by persuading others through political, moral, or cultural attraction. 'Hard power' coerces compliance through inducements such as military force, economic sanctions, or the control of exports to compel policymakers in other countries to acquiesce.

Latvian foreign service of the interwar period. The presence and contribution of women is mentioned, albeit not explicitly, in fundamental studies of Latvian foreign policy (Andersons 1982, Lerhis 2005) or more popularly written overviews (Treijs 2003), also in some research articles (Gueslin 2017; Lipša, Vizgunova 2018; Viķe-Freiberga 2020).

The compilers of the *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Foreign Affairs* (Jēkabsons, Ščerbinskis 2003) have chosen to include 16 women; in alphabetical order they are: Elza Blaua, Emīlija Bole, Alma Ducmane, Līna (Karolīna) Grosvalde, Margarēta Grosvalde, Milda Heninga, Anna Ķeniņa-Rūmane, Elfrīda Lauva, Antonija Lūkina, Angelika Miķelsons, Austra Ozoliņa-Krauze, Anna Rudzīte, Marī Žilbēra Rukvēra (*Marie-Gilberte Rouquiére*), Margrieta Sandere, Matilde Vesmane, Ērika Vilsone. The criteria for inclusion were according to the highest positions open to women at the time, namely the posts of secretaries, 1st and 2nd class⁴. However, the document collection of the Administrative Department and Contracts Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the Latvian State Historical Archives (ĀM, Fund No. 2570) shows a much more widespread involvement of women. It also reveals the range of positions held which were hierarchically lower: typist, clerk, telegraphist.

This article aims to name and place women as active participants in foreign affairs and to offer a case study through the research of autobiographical documents. There are several sources to use for the research of women's agency in foreign affairs. It is possible to distinguish between three main categories as offered by the professor of women's and gender history, June Purvis, in her article on primary sources when researching women's history from a feminist perspective: (1) official texts, (2) published commentary and reporting, and (3) personal texts. The last category is personal texts that reveal a person's subjective experience. They include letters, diaries, photograph albums, autobiographies, and life histories. (Purvis 1992: 275) My research is mainly based on the third category, using autobiographical documents of women of the Grosvalds family, although background information has been taken from all sources.

The research of women's participation in Latvian foreign affairs by use of women's autobiographical documents is a completely uncharted field. Daina Bleiere, in the conclusion of her article 'Women in the foreign and security policy of a restored Latvia in the 1990s: the foreign service', expresses the hope that "over time, memoirs or diaries of women diplomats will be published which could provide deeper insights into their actual experiences" (Bleiere 2020: 47). Autobiographical documents of both men and

4 In the 1920s and 1930s, the secretaries of the foreign office were graded in three classes. Class I secretaries were responsible for the records and correspondence of a legation and the management of the clerical staff. Formally, they could not perform the functions of envoys, but in practice, this did take place in Latvia's missions abroad. (Jēkabsons, Ščerbinskis 2003: 427)

women in the foreign service during Latvia's first period of independence, including memoirs, diaries, correspondence and notebooks, are scarce. There are several factors to consider. First, the women involved rarely left any testimony about this period of their lives or otherwise it has been destroyed or lost. Secondly, several officials and diplomats from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were deported, and a few men were put on death row. A small number of testimonies have been left, however. Firstly, memoirs were written by men in senior diplomatic positions as envoys and ministers who managed to stay in their posts and travel while abroad during World War II (Miķelis Valters, Fēlikss Cielēns, Kārlis Ozols, Donass, Vilhelms Munters, Fridrihs Vesmanis⁵). There are also annotated collections of autobiographical documents (Ludvigs Sēja⁶) or semi-documental portrayals (Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics⁷, Miķelis Valters⁸). The records of male activities in the public sphere of politics, government, war, diplomacy, administration, and business have usually been carefully preserved, making a fruitful store for the malestream historian. (Purvis 1992: 278) The concern in feminist history with finding women's voices from the past has led to a search for women's personal accounts to capture the complexity of women's lives in all their diversity. The most voluminous autobiographical document is the recently discovered diary of Margarēta Grosvalde covering the period 1919–1926, when she worked for the newly established Latvian foreign service. Other autobiographical material left by women includes diaries, correspondence, autobiographies, and memoirs, such as the autobiography of Anna Rūmane-Keniņa⁹, Angelika Gailīte's memoir *Ceļiniece* (The Wanderer, published 1962), and the diary of Ivande Kaija (partly published in 1931). Relevant for research are also autobiographical documents of the wives of diplomats, e.g., the

5 Fēlikss Cielēns. *Laikmetu maiņā* [In the Change of Eras] (1963); Felikss Donass. *Politiskos krustceļos* [At Political Crossroads] (1969); Edgars Krieviņš. *Viņās dienās* [In Those Days] (1966); Alfreds Bērziņš. *Labie gadi* [The Good Years] (1963); Ādolfs Šilde. *Valstsvīri un demokrāti* [Statesmen and Democrats] (1985); Ādolfs Šilde. *Ardievas Rīgai* [Farewell to Riga] (1988); Arnolds Spekke. *Atmiņu brīži* [Moments of Memories] (2000).

6 Ludvigs Sēja. *Es pazīstu vairs tikai sevi: diplomāta dienasgrāmata un memuāri, 1941–1961* [I Only Recognise Myself: Diary and Memoirs of a Diplomat, 1941–1961], sast. Uldis Neiburgs (2017).

7 Līgotņu Jēkabs. *Zigfrīds (Anna) Meierovics: Mūžs, darbs, liktens* [Zigfrīds (Anna) Meierovics: Life, Work, Fate] (1938); Ansis Gulbis. *Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics: Biogrāfisks romāns* [Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics: a biographical novel] (1959); Rihards Treijs. *Zigfrīds Meierovics* (2007); Jānis Ūdris. *Zigfrīda Meierovica trīs Annas* [The Three Annas of Zigfrīds Meierovics] (2007).

8 Rihards Treijs. *Miķelis Valters: Politikis, diplomāts un literāts* [Miķelis Valters: Politician, Diplomat and Writer] (2012).

9 The manuscript is held at the Academic Library of the University of Latvia.

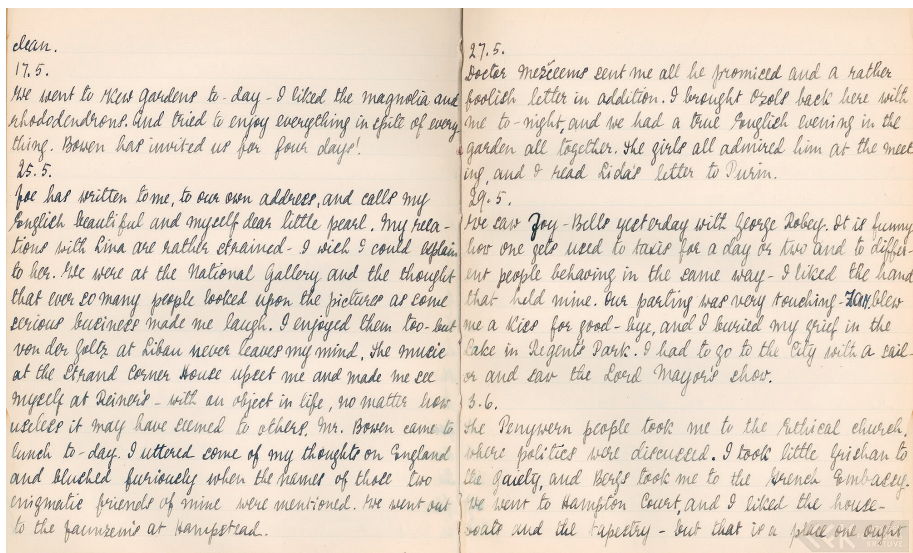


Fig. 1. Margarēta Grosvalde's diary: double-page spread from May, 1919. Archives of Latvian Folklore, Autobiography Collection, Ak75, p. 8

autobiography of Milda Salnā¹⁰, written at the end of her life in exile in America; and the correspondence of Berta Vesmane¹¹. The written testimonies of the Grosvalds family women inspired me to look at women and their different roles in the Latvian Foreign Service. They allow observation of the foreign affairs scene through the gendered lenses of typist, secretary, translator, envoy's wife, and envoy's daughter, which had not been done before. The testimonies also offered an opportunity to review the history of diplomacy through the prism of life writing, which is the only way to obtain more information about most women in official positions, along with archive documents. The autobiographical material of the Grosvalds family women is hitherto unrecognised, though essential and diverse. It includes the family correspondence held in the memorial collection of Jāzeps Grosvalds at the Latvian National Museum of Art. Moreover, the diary of Margarēta Grosvalde already mentioned is a unique historical testimony providing an inside look at the beginnings of the Latvian state and the Latvian Foreign Service. The diary is housed in the Autobiography Collection of the Archives of Latvian Folklore (autobiografijas.lv). The involvement of the Grosvalds family women in the foreign service presents an almost complete picture of women

10 Hoover Institution Library and Archives (USA).

11 Literature and Music Museum (Latvia) and private archives.

in Latvian foreign affairs in the first decade of the establishment. The autobiographical evidence, such as letters and diaries, adds an extra layer for research to trace the nuances of attitudes among service personnel and the promotion of international relations through the activities in the daily life of the diplomatic service.

The study of these testimonies correlates with a widespread turn in feminist research to historically disparaged sources, especially personal texts and autobiographical testimonies, to find women's agency in the past, though use is also made of official sources. To sum up, there are several testimonies upon which to base arguments and deepen the existing gender perspective on Latvian foreign affairs, which is mostly masculinised. This article thus will join the discussion on female diplomacy, which has become a lively field of study within international relations. It will identify and give an overview of the beginnings of women's agency and experience in Latvian foreign affairs and diplomacy, and analyse women's representation in the foreign service and specific activities through autobiographical material. Keeping in mind Enloe's encouragement to "exercise genuine curiosity about each of these women's lives" (Enloe 1989: 3), the analyses will broaden understanding of the feminist sense of international politics and use the autobiographical approach as new instrumentation.

We do not want women in diplomatic work.

Women's positions and roles in foreign affairs before WWII

The exploration of gender in Latvian diplomacy and Latvia's foreign service should be started by naming women who served in the foreign service before World War II. The Latvian Foreign Service from 1919 to 1940 had 1331 paid employees: 756 men and 575 women worked in civil service positions, both at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in diplomatic and consular missions abroad. Of these, 278 men and 16 women held (the criterion used by historians Jēkabsons and Ščerbinskis in compiling the encyclopaedic compendium of foreign service staff) the highest diplomatic and consular service positions. Thus 56.8% of all salaried workers were men and 43.2% were women. However, of the 294 senior positions in the diplomatic and consular service, 94.6% were held by men and 5.4% by women (Križevica 2019). These statistics support the statement that women were thus prohibited from occupying official diplomatic positions in virtually all countries until the early to mid-twentieth century (Aggestam, Towns). Although the principle of equal opportunity was established in most European countries due to legislation passed in 1919, Diplomatic and Consular Services posts remained reserved for men until the end of World War II. Statistics compiled by Neumann show that a law

on female diplomats was passed in Denmark in 1934, and Norwegian women became legally entitled to be diplomatic and consular civil servants by law in 1938. In France, this happened in 1929; in Britain in the wake of World War II. During the following decades, the legal barrier to female diplomats was eliminated throughout Europe (Neumann 2008: 676). However, in Latvia this choice to exclude women from the highest grades in the diplomatic and consular service was not fixed in any law¹²; it was an unwritten internal agreement. In theory, there were no legal obstacles in Latvia and, in principle, equality between men and women was recognised, but no women were employed in diplomacy and consular services abroad after 1923, except as technical staff.

A glance into the career of some of the 16 women who have held the highest diplomatic and consular service positions and are included in the *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Latvian Foreign Affairs* reveals that only two of them (Margarēta Grosvalde and Margrieta Sandere) held senior positions in the Foreign Service from its beginning in 1919 until the ministry was dissolved in August 1940 after Soviet occupation. Another two were transferred to the Ministry of the Interior (Milda Henninga and Anna Rudzīte). The rest had shorter careers in the diplomatic service, mainly until the second half of the 1920s.¹³ In 1920–1925, when the ministry was reorganised several times, 12 women had to leave their jobs, 7 of them were dismissed due to the disbanding of the department or downsizing, 4 – of their free will, and one left the service arbitrarily.

Most of these 16 women were recruited by word of mouth within closed social circles. However, they had specific skills, such as foreign language knowledge and/or (type)writing skills. Women who held senior positions often were primarily related by familial ties to men who worked in leading positions in public institutions, including in the foreign ministry. Of the 16 cases analysed, this correlation can be observed in at least nine cases. Three women held the highest position of secretary,

12 Regulations on service in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were promulgated on 2 November, 1922, and remained in force throughout the first period of independence of the Latvian state. Service in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was divided into two categories: 1. Diplomatic-consular service; 2. Technical service. The diplomatic-consular service and the technical service were divided into a) officials serving with the central authority (the ministry itself) and b) officials serving in diplomatic and consular missions abroad. Service Grade IV: *Secrétaire de Légation de I-re classe* included secretaries, 1st class, working at the ministry and in the legations. Service Grade V: Secretary of the Legation of the Second Class – *Secrétaire de Légation de II-me classe* included secretaries, 2nd class, working at the ministry and in the legations. (*Likumu un valdības rīkojumu krājums* [Collection of Laws and Government Orders] No 26 December 28, 1922).

13 In accordance with the 1922 Regulations, there were four secretaries, 1st class and five secretaries, 2nd class.

1st class: Anna Rudzīte¹⁴, Milda Heninga¹⁵ and Margrieta Sandere¹⁶. Rudzīte was married to Dāvids Rudzītis, Head of the State Chancellery already before her recruitment, but Sandere married Miķelis Sanders, a previous 1st secretary at the diplomatic mission in London, while working at the Foreign Ministry. Emīlija Alvīne Bole¹⁷ is also an example of the widespread tendency establish family relations among colleagues. In 1920, she started working as secretary, 2nd class, at the Latvian Consulate General in Berlin, and in 1921 she married Pēteris Bole, Head of the Economic and Statistical Department of the same Consulate General. Alma Marija Ducmanis¹⁸ served as secretary, 2nd class, at the Consulate General in Copenhagen from 1920, while her husband Kārlis Ducmanis started his career in the diplomatic service in 1919. Although Alma had a good education, as she had graduated from The Bestuzhev Courses in St Petersburg, the largest and most prominent women's higher education institution in Russia, she had to reconcile herself to the role of a diplomat's wife when Ducmanis took up the post of Consul General in Copenhagen. After the Consulate General was dissolved, Ducmanis became Consul General in Stockholm. From 1927, he became an independent representative to the League of Nations in Geneva, where Alma worked as his assistant. Ducmanis had to justify this choice in a letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He stated that after the abolition of the secretarial post in Geneva, finding a qualified Latvian-speaking assistant was impossible, so "for the time being, my wife served as an employee without contract" (ĀM 1928). Matilde Vesmane (née Bērziņa, 1888–1950) also became the wife of the envoy to Soviet Russia, Jānis Vesmanis. From 1919–1920 she served as a record keeper and secretary, 2nd class, in the Foreign Passport Department.

14 Anna Rudzīte (née Stonslava, 1884–1959) started working as a civil servant in 1919 and became the Head of the Foreign Passport Section.

15 Milda Heninga (1891–1930) who, like Anna Rudzīte, worked in the Foreign Passport Section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1919–1926). Before 1919 she was a foreign correspondent and assistant accountant at the *Allgemeine Elektrizitäts-Gesellschaft* (AEG).

16 Margrieta Sandere (née Buša, 1899–1979) graduated from the Lomonosov Gymnasium, one of the highest-level women's gymnasia in Riga, in 1916 and immediately began working as a typist. In 1921 she was a clerk at the Consulate General in Berlin for a few months, and the post was soon abolished. She continued working at the Foreign Ministry until World War II, starting as a clerk, 3rd class, and rising to secretary, 1st class, in 1926.

17 Emīlija Alvīne Bole (née Vītola, 1893–after 1959) in 1923 was dismissed due to the abolition of her post. Soon afterwards she divorced Bole, and in 1930 she married Arvīds Bredermans, acting 1st Secretary at the Consulate in Kaunas.

18 Alma Marija Ducmane (née Vītola, 1888–1946).

Several female foreign service employees are also known as prominent exponents of women's writing, art, and other professional and social activism of their time. Elfrīda Lauva was a multi-talented woman, considered the first speech therapist in Latvia after completing studies in speech therapy in Vienna¹⁹. She worked for the foreign service (1919–1922) as secretary, 2nd class, in the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and at the diplomatic mission in Switzerland. She was also a great supporter of the disabled writer and philosopher Zenta Mauriņa²⁰ before her emigration in 1944. Alise Ērika Vilsons, from 1930 onwards Valtere (1896–1973) is one of the most visible figures, finding fulfilment in the foreign service, journalism, and book art, becoming the first woman artist-bookbinder in Latvia. In 1919 she went to Finland and worked at the Latvian Legation in Helsinki. From there, her life's path followed that of her eventual husband, Dr Miķelis Valters, Latvia's first Minister of the Interior and later envoy in Poland and Italy. In 1920, she was appointed as secretary, 2nd class, and stenographer at the diplomatic mission in Rome. In 1923 she was dismissed due to a staff reorganisation, but in 1924 she became a freelance employee at the Latvian Legation in Paris, where she managed League of Nations affairs and communication with Spain and Portugal. Her position in the foreign service had been most hotly debated, with envoy Miķelis Valters and Minister of Foreign Affairs Meierovics defending her. Quotes from official correspondence and protocols from debates in the Saeima prove her exceptional status. For example, the debate in the Saeima Budget Commission on the budget allocations for envoys in Rome and Paris (12 March, 1925) where the Minister for Foreign Affairs [Meierovics] takes the floor: "As for Miss Vilsons, she has been in the Latvian civil service for six years, is a capable employee, and, apart from languages, also knows shorthand. She has been repeatedly employed as a secretary by the envoy Valters. Still, since it is impossible to enlist women in the diplomatic service, she works on a casual contract basis" (ĀM 1925).

Antonija Lūkina and Angelika Miķelsone were colleagues at the Press Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, both working as secretaries, 2nd class. Antonija Lūkina, better known as the writer and women's rights campaigner Ivande Kaija (1876–1942), and Angelika Miķelsone (née Gailīte, 1884–1975), better known as the writer and educator Angelika Gailīte, should be singled out separately. Both were dismissed in connection with redundancies: Lūkina as early as 1921 and Miķelsone

19 In 1937, the Riga City Council decided to train a special teacher for the correction of language disorders and sent Elfrīda Lauva, Head of the Psychology Department at the Riga Institute of Psychotechnics and Vocational Training, to Vienna to complete a specialized course with one of the best specialists in correcting language disorders, Prof. Dr. Emil Froeschels

20 For more on Zenta Mauriņa, see: Ronne 2018.

in 1923. Both also left autobiographical accounts of their work at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Lūkina recorded her duties and impressions in her diary, and Miķelšone in her memoirs. Miķelšone recalls how she obtained the job and what her main responsibilities were:

In the Information Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, later renamed the Press Department, the director was Pauls Ašmanis, a *tālavietis*²¹ whom I knew from my youth. I went to see him. He asked me if I spoke French²². I told him that I had studied it at school and then improved my French language by reading French books. He gave me a questionnaire to fill in. Soon I received a notice to come to work in the Information Department, working with monitoring the French-language press.

So I started working in the Foreign Ministry on 20 March, 1920. My task was to read the French newspapers, choose the most important articles, and summarise them. I handed over my work to the typists (there were several of them). My abstracts were sent on to Minister Zigfrīds Meierovics, who did not have time to read all the newspapers. The work was interesting, and my colleagues were pleasant. (Gailīte 1962: 102)

The passage from the diary of Lūkina (Ivande Kaija) reflects on her first working day, her responsibilities, and her salary, presenting the job as a solid opportunity to combine her literary and social activities.

And today is such a big, delightful day for me; I've started working in the Information Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where I am supposed to report on the French press. I have been working all day without lifting my head from the desk. 9-3. I had such a pile of French newspapers in front of me that I became scared. But when I read them, it was so interesting that I forgot. [...] I won't have to fear hunger anymore. My salary is 600 roubles a month, and if I receive, as I ought, a 10% supplement for each child, that comes to 180 roubles, 780 roubles in all. (Kaija 1931: 79)

Anna Rūmane-Ķeniņa²³ and Austra Ozoliņa-Krauze also occupied a prominent place in high society and the literary scene of the time. Both Rūmane-Ķeniņa and Krauze-Ozoliņa are considered the first female employees²⁴ of the Latvian Foreign Service

21 Member of the Latvian student fraternity *Talavija*. Membership in such fraternities was an important channel for building a reliable social circle with high levels of mutual trust. Six of the first nine Latvian envoys from 1920 to 1922 were members of fraternities (corporations). For more, see: Kaktiņa 2005.

22 The Cabinet of Ministers decided (on 4 August 1919) to raise the salaries of French or English-speaking civil servants in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by 10-25% above the established rate.

23 For more, see: Kārkla, Eglāja-Kristsons 2023; Ikstena 1993.

24 Krauze-Ozoliņa was Head of the Information Bureau of the Provisional Diplomatic Mission in Berlin (September 1919–October 1920) and Charge d'Affaires of the Diplomatic Mission in Berlin (September 1920–November 1920). Rūmane-Keniņa was Head of the Information Office at the Latvian Diplomatic Mission in Paris (1919 October–1920 July).

and were also involved in public diplomacy and propaganda work for Latvia during World War I. Rūmane-Ķeniņa wrote about Latvia in Swiss, French and English newspapers, making speeches at congresses and meetings, and working at the French Foreign Ministry press centre as a specialist in Baltic affairs²⁵. Krauze-Ozoliņa wrote in German and Swiss newspapers, and published an information bulletin on Latvia and two books in which she exposed with incisive logic the unjust statements of German propaganda. However, foreign affairs or diplomacy as a theme appears outside their literary works, although in 1928 a newspaper reported that Austra Ozoliņa-Krauze was going to write a novel about the lives of diplomats ([Anon.] 1928). The reason given was that Ozoliņa-Krauze knew diplomatic society well, having been a representative in Germany and having worked for many years in diplomatic circles in Switzerland. Unfortunately, the novel remained at the level of an idea. As a public figure, parliamentary candidate and leader of Latvian women's activism, Anna Rūmane-Ķeniņa was one of the most severe critics of masculine domination among public authorities. She made known that Foreign Minister Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics in a conversation had said to her: "Your work is worth more than [its weight in] gold, but we do not want women in diplomatic work" (Rūmane-Ķeniņa 1934). The last-mentioned point is of particular interest, for it draws on the discursive precondition that the term "female diplomat" is an oxymoron; and proves general masculine resistance to re-categorization of diplomatic work as exclusive for males only. (Neumann 2016) Even in 1934, Rūmane argued that exclusion was still the case since Latvia was one of the few countries which did not include women in its delegations to meetings of the League of Nations (Lipša and Vizgunova 2018: 93). Rūmane openly reflected on Latvian diplomacy, referring to the exceptional situation during World War I when women were admitted to diplomatic work and then shown injustice after the country had obtained *de jure* state status:

Later, in Latvia, women in diplomacy were sidelined. The Foreign Ministry gradually dismissed the most self-reliant and capable women. The ministry retained only typists, translators, and other technical staff. However, some good secretaries and typists in our foreign legations are the ones doing all the mission work. (A.M. 1934: 7)

At the end of her report, as the newspaper mentions, Rūmane-Ķeniņa submitted a request for the Latvian government to allow women to work as diplomats. However, it did not receive attention from the relevant institutions.

To recapitulate, after their high-quality and difficult diplomatic work before 1918, Rūmane-Ķeniņa and Ozoliņa-Krauze were denied the opportunity to continue their

25 For more, see: Gueslin 2017.

work in the independent state – only because they were women. The whole situation in the diplomatic service in the interwar period reflected the contradictory attitudes towards women’s employment that generally characterised Latvia at that time. Although the level of women’s work skills and education was relatively high, a patriarchal model in which women were given a subordinate role dominated the public consciousness.

My hand is stiff with writing. **Women of the Grosvalds family in the Foreign Service**

The Grosvalds family played an essential role in Latvian culture and foreign policy during the last century (Eglāja-Kristšone 2020)²⁶. Frīdrihs Grosvalds (1850–1924) was a lawyer and long-serving head of the Riga Latvian Society, the organisation linked to the cultural emancipation of the Latvian nation. His election to the Russian State Duma and involvement with the Refugee Supply Organisations which fostered the development of the elite of the first Latvian politicians played an important role. In 1919 he was appointed as Latvia’s diplomatic representative to Sweden (and soon after to Norway and Denmark as well). His wife Marija Elizabete Grosvalde (1857–1936) was a well-educated mother of eight (three children died in infancy), and a charity activist. Their eldest daughter Mērija Grīnberga (1881–1973) was the wife of Jānis Grīnbergs, Bishop and Consistory President of the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Churches of Russia, later also a populariser of Latvian ethnography.²⁷ The oldest son was a diplomat and Latvian envoy to France, also one of the first Latvian professional art historians, Oļģerds Grosvalds²⁸ (1884–1962). Another son was a renowned painter, one of the first Lat-

26 The Grosvalds family name has been prominent in the last five years, most recently featuring in the book *Grosvalds*, a fictionalised account of the Grosvalds family (2021) by the writer and film director Kristīne Želve. The documentary drama *Mērijas ceļojums* (Mērija’s Journey) (Želve 2018) was made about her as part of the series Latvian Films for Latvia’s Centenary. In 2019, the Latvian National Museum of Art presented the exhibition *Mērija’s Journey. The Grosvalds Family Story*, and in 2023 an exhibition of Jāzeps Grosvalds.

27 Mērija wrote her memoirs and kept a diary which were recently published: Mērija Grīnberga. *Mērijas Grīnbergas atmiņas un dienasgrāmatas: mana pasaku zeme* [Memories and Diaries of Mary Greenberg: My Fairyland], sast. Agita Ančupāne (2021).

28 For more, see: Gerharde-Upeniece 2014; Pelše 2010.

vian modernists, Jāzeps Grosvalds²⁹ (1891–1920), who for a short while served as a secretary in the diplomatic mission to the Paris Peace Conference and at the Latvian Legation in France. There were two more daughters who were also foreign service secretaries: Līna Grosvalde (1887–1974) and Margarēta Ternberga (née Grosvalde, 1895–1982). The Grosvalds family is one of the extremely rare cases where five family members were working in diplomacy at the same time. While putting together the first Latvian diplomatic service, Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics was willing to place his trust in this family as it had been regarded as one of the high-status Latvian families since the end of the 19th century. Besides the role Frīdrihs Grosvalds had played in Latvian society for decades, the Grosvalds family had grown-up children with extensive language skills who, as young and educated people, were part of the social elite of Riga before World War I. The fact that three women of the Grosvalds family were involved with the foreign service, as well as the fact that father, mother, and daughter served at the same legation, is not typical and should be analysed more fully.

Marija Grosvalde is one of the examples of the first Latvian diplomatic wife. She spoke several languages, including German, French and English. She was active in charity and ladies' committees in Riga, and her work in organising aid for refugees (Kremans 1935) in the Baltic refugee colonies in St Petersburg during World War I is particularly noteworthy. From the summer of 1919, she helped her husband at the Latvian Legation in Stockholm. Her position for the first years was not an official position with set duties and a salary. But from 1921 to 1922, as her husband and envoy Frīdrihs Grosvalds mentioned in documentation, she was an accountant, cashier and press interpreter (ĀM 1922). From 1919 onwards, when the family was separated, Marija wrote long letters to her children, sometimes up to ten pages, in different languages. She could use Latvian, German, French and some Russian in the same letter. In the letters she reflects on her life in Sweden, the people she has met, politics and diplomacy.

Marija describes everyday life at the newly established legation in Stockholm: "We write and talk like in the Tower of Babel." She also reflects on the huge amount of unpaid work and very varied responsibilities: "Goodness gracious, I am going to get into a complete muddle with languages and become a typewriter. It's just a pity that I don't get paid, I really have a heavy workload. Who's laughing???? Figaro here, Figaro there, rewrite, check, pay, record – and nothing but reprimands, often very, very unfounded." (JGM 1920) In the same letter to her oldest son Olģerds, she stressed the importance of knowing several languages. And gives an example by recalling a funny situation: "I very much hope that you have listed all your languages in

29 For more, see: Kļaviņš 2006.



Fig. 2. Marija Grosvalde with her son Oļģerds in Stockholm, on the balcony of the Latvian Legation. Photo from Margarēta Grosvaldes' album, kept at the Riga History and Navigation Museum

the *Dienstlist*³⁰, it is a question of showing the abilities of envoys and secretaries, and this is also important when thinking about salaries. Your father wrote in his list 'sufficient' French [language skills] after he had introduced me to the Viscount as *mon mari*³¹." She reflects on several diplomatic receptions and gatherings, giving a vivid picture of people and places: "Our week is really filled up with business and visits. The Ukrainians are *живчики*³² and overly attached to us. We spent the evening of 31 December in the Royal with du Champ – then we went to the theatre and Cecil³³. Finally, we were invited to their place with a minister and his wife from Ukraine, and at the very end, I went to a cabaret for the first time in my life!!!" (ibid.) Her notes show that

30 *Dienstlist* (German) – the Service List.

31 *Mon mari* (French) – my husband.

32 *Zhivchiki* (Russian) – energetic, lively people.

33 Cecil, often referred to as Cecil's, was a restaurant in Stockholm with a dance floor. It was established in 1917 and was a famous entertainment venue.

the early years of Latvian diplomacy were difficult, and emotionally depict the role of women and the distinctiveness of a woman's perspective on the efforts to bring the Latvian state into the foreign arena, since winning the sympathy and trust of foreign political and diplomatic representatives was a great challenge. After her return to Latvia and death of her husband Frīdrihs in 1924, Marija Grosvalde closed herself off from Latvian society and accepted into her salon almost exclusively members of the diplomatic corps, with whom the Grosvalds women maintained friendly relations. It is undeniable that this attitude led to consequences, for example, even the newspaper mentioned that Marija Grosvalde as the wife of the first Latvian envoy in Sweden had not received an invitation to a reception with the King of Sweden during his visit to Latvia in 1929, "although the King knew her personally and would have been pleased to meet his acquaintances." ([Anon.] 1929)

The Grosvalds daughters provide another perspective and insight into foreign affairs. Līna was a talented pianist who, in the 1910s, went abroad to take classes for piano and languages, but there was no encouragement from her parents to study music or any other subject at an academically higher level. Studying and acquiring an academic education was the priority of both of the Grosvalds sons. As a pianist, Līna is mentioned in many advertisements of concerts in support of the Latvian Riflemen from 1915 and 1918 in Riga and in St Petersburg. Līna had completed language courses in several Western European cities, including Stockholm, and was fluent in German, English and French, and with an adequate knowledge of Russian and Swedish. There are only some letters and postcards left from Līna, and they give a partial insight into her duties and interests. Like her mother, Marija, she was engaged in social relief work. While in London, she mentions a new organisation set up after the war to help children in Latvia in cooperation with the Red Cross³⁴. Līna thus was one of the many women around after World War I who temporarily redirected their activist, feminist energies towards patriotic war relief under the patriarchal constraints of the Red Cross to define a female citizenship that valued service and sacrifice. In August 1919, she began diplomatic work as secretary, 2nd class (for a while even as 1st class), at the Latvian Legation in Stockholm. Līna was the main helper for her father, indispensable for paperwork requiring language and technical skills. She was a very versatile legation employee because, in addition to her language skills and ability to type, her professional musical talents were regularly put to use at legation events and beyond, representing the Latvian state. In her letters Līna reveals more about her contribution to what can be called cultural diplomacy, namely the presentation of national music and traditional culture:

34 For more, see: Jēkabsons 2010.

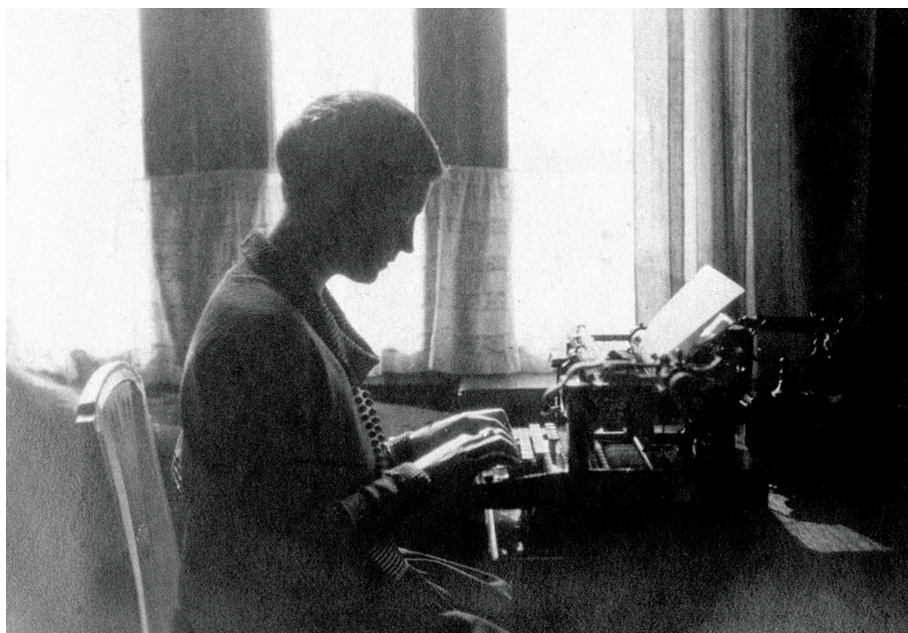


Fig. 3. Lina Grosvalde while working at the Latvian Legation in Stockholm.
Photo from Margarēta Grosvaldes' album, kept at the Riga History and Navigation Museum

Anna Lindhagen³⁵ was giving a lecture on Latvia in Uppsala and was determined to get me to play Latvian compositions there. But since I have never done that and don't have any [Latvian pieces], we agreed on folk songs. But now I had to translate them. We tried with a Swedish poet from a text in German by Blaumanis, but when I saw that nothing would work, I immediately sat down with Arabella and started translating myself. I know enough Swedish to hear if the words and the music fit. I know that folk songs are generally untranslatable, but I find that these words are extremely successful and find the greatest acceptance among the Swedes. Anna Lindhagen, a lady in her 50s, is in love with me and Latvia and is doing her best. (JGM 1921)

The friendship with Lindhagen which started while serving in a diplomatic mission continued even when the Grosvalds family returned to Latvia in 1923, and Lina became an active member of the Swedish–Latvian Society.

Margarētas Grosvalde's biography is worth a novel or a drama if we consider that she was at the epicentre of events of Latvia's entry into the international arena

35 Anna Lindhagen (1870–1941) was a Swedish social democrat politician, social reformer and women's rights activist. Lindhagen was a member of the Stockholm City Council 1911–1923, a licensed nurse and an activist in the Labour movement. In 1902, Lindhagen was one of the leading voices calling for a suffragette movement in women's organisations to stand up for women's suffrage.

as a state, looking to consolidate its independence and Western support. At a more intimate level, she had a romantic relationship with a married man, the first Latvian Foreign Minister Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics from 1919 to 1921, and with other men from the diplomatic service afterwards, as revealed in her diary. In 1940 she was married to Helmuth Ternberg³⁶, one of the best-known spies of the Swedish intelligence service (alias Teddy). Grosvalde had an education typical of girls from high society Latvian families. She graduated from the German girls' school in Riga and spoke several languages. She worked as a schoolteacher till 1918, when the family left Riga to escape from Soviet occupiers. In February 1919, at the age of 24, Margarēta began working as a typist and later as secretary, 2nd class, at the Latvian Legation in London and started to write her diary in English. One of the first entries in her diary characterises her feelings about the new position and the independence it demanded and offered:

19.2.[1919] My hand is stiff with writing, but the day is too remarkable not to be described. I was engaged at the Legation as a sort of secretary yesterday and entered my post today after writing a beautiful letter to President Wilson³⁷. I like my post, my chef [Sir George Bisseneek³⁸], and most of all the money I am to receive! But I grew absolutely faint when I was told to write letters out of my poor head. I was not surprised any more at being sent to the City and the letter-box – in fact, I would do everything he made me do – if only I were able to. (Grosvalde 1919–1926)

Margarēta appreciated and took responsibility for this position and participation in important national and foreign policy processes. When going through the files of the London Legation and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, one can often note Margarēta's neat handwriting, making a notation, the date of receipt, etc. As she states in a letter to her brother Oļģerds: "I will tell you, as you told me, that I want to stay here – we need people with a lot of brains here, and even if I can't do everything as well as I should yet, I think I am one of those brains that can be shown abroad. So, I hope they will keep me here." (JGM 1919a) The first employees of Latvia's legations and consulates were overworked, and it took time to understand the real amount of the work and the human resources needed. Margarēta's diaries and letters to

36 Ernst Axel Hellmuth "Teddy" Ternberg (13 September 1893–24 May 1971) was a Swedish Army major and intelligence officer who, together with Carl Petersén, led the intelligence service *C-byrå* during World War II. Ternberg continued his intelligence activities under a cover name after the war at *T-kontoret*, the successor organization to *C-byrå*.

37 Woodrow Wilson, 28th President of the United States (1913–1921).

38 Georgs Bisenieks (in old orthography: Bisseneek, 1885–1941) was a Latvian politician and diplomat. From December 1918 he was the Head of the Latvian Legation in London, and the first Latvian envoy to Great Britain (1921–1924).



Fig. 4. Margarēta Grosvalde at the Latvian Legation in London.
Photo from Margarēta Grosvaldes' album, kept at the Riga History and Navigation Museum

her brother Oļģerds reveal this aspect. After a few months in the new position, Margarēta writes:

I feel deeply sorry for you that you have so many duties, but first, you are the only one who can do them properly. Second, you ended up in the right place, and third, don't think that many better ones are coming to us. My rather weak female powers also often make me feel they are being overwhelmed. But it's still interesting [...]. (JGM 1919b)

However, constant overwork and emotional experiences, especially the death of her brother Jāzepts in 1920 and her relationship with Foreign Minister Meierovics, had consequences for her health which Margarēta, with a good dose of self-irony, mentions in her diary, for example: fainting, prescriptions for spectacles and injections.

12.5.[1921] I had horrid headaches and went to a specialist – the result is tortoiseshell glasses. This goes well with the grey hairs I pull out after washing my hair. (Grosvalde 1919–1926)

16.9. [1921] This afternoon the doctor came to see me [...] said that my illness was more moral than physical, and that I had better marry – nevertheless I am going to have injections "dans le bas du dos". (ibid.)

In Margarēta's diary, affairs of the heart and foreign affairs are the leitmotifs, offering an insight into her life and work as a young woman in London and a unique testimony to the events and personalities of Latvian foreign service history. She also reflects on the different attitude she received from her male colleagues and higher-ranking officials, for example, her impression of the manners of Foreign Minister Meierovics is one of admiration. She initially tries to distinguish between the public/professional and the private, as if using masculine standards.

22.2.[1919] I get my hair waved at 10 o'clock and arrive after my chef, who leaves the door open for me. I said I wondered when he would begin scolding me – but he says some nice words in return. [...] He opens the door for one at any moment and is dear in his way. I have no time to think about *les affaires de coeur* – as I have started reading the papers and being interested in politics. (ibid.)

However, her feminine gaze at Meierovics's overtly friendly behaviour, a familiarity that develops into flirtation, leads to a response in the tradition of patriarchal stereotypes: she becomes his London 'dangerous liaison'. Margarēta's outbursts of affection, which can be traced in the diary, coincide with events of national importance. Her most intimate diary entries are when Meierovics is in London or Paris on foreign visits, which Margarēta has coded in the diary behind the name "Murrey" or the initials "ZAM". For example, in January 1921, Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics and the events leading to the *de iure* recognition of Latvia were entered into Margarēta's diary in a personal and playful way. On 1 January, Meierovics arrived in London from Paris as Latvia's Foreign Minister, with an entourage including Oļģerds Grosvalds, Latvia's envoy to France. Margarēta was there to greet the minister and the delegation at Victoria Station. She is later invited to join the delegation at the Carlton Hotel and the Trocadero Leisure Centre. Margarēta admires Meierovics and his manners; she is asked to join the delegation for visits to the theatre, restaurants, and shopping. She often stays at the hotel where Meierovics and his entourage are staying. The diary reflects Meierovics' visits to British politicians and gestures of diplomacy.

12.01.[1921] This morning he placed wreaths on the Grave of the Unknown Warrior and the Cenotaph – those charming manners are admirable. (ibid.)

Diplomatic dinners and various events, including cocktail and dance parties, and balls, are a part of the everyday routine in diplomacy. It required women to look attractive and bare their shoulders.

18.03.[1922] We dined at the Carlton Grill last night – I felt quite giddy from my glass of champagne. Today he entertained Kallas and the legation employees at Piccadilly; we went to the National Gallery and met Marie for tea at the Savoy. We danced a little and saw Hella. In the evening I was sleeveless in mauve and silver – the Savoy looked at me and I hardly knew myself. We danced in the crowded Ballroom after a lovely dinner. (ibid.)

The diary shows Margarēta's struggle with herself to gain the confidence and courage to express her femininity in a highly masculine environment without fear of ambiguous misunderstandings and offensive remarks. At the same time, Margarēta exploited her femininity to create the networks among families of diplomats and officials that facilitate diplomatic work and exchange of information and messages, official and unofficial.

11.03.[1921] Last night we had a party on account of the memento for General Burt³⁹. Capt. Bray and I were duly admired one-stepping, the General patted me on the shoulder for getting up for the Anthem and said dear words about Latvia, and the others had too much and were noisy. (ibid.)

Despite her loyalty, hard work and communication with the British military and diplomatic representatives, Margarēta, just like other women in Latvian diplomatic missions abroad, was dismissed from her job in 1923:

31.03.[1923] This is our last official day here – both Gilbert and I have received the sack and been offered ridiculous salaries in Riga. I am stopping on for a while to do the files, at £5 a week. (ibid.)

The directive published in the newspaper given by Meierovics is relentless: "In connection with the downsizing and reorganisation of the Ministry, I dismiss from service, based on Section 37 of the Civil Service Act, the secretary, 2nd class, of the Legation in Great Britain, Margarete Grosvalde, with effect from this day." ([Anon.] 1923) Margarēta does not comment further on this order. After her return to Riga, she was invited to work in the Economic and Financial Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from September 1923 and from October 1923 to August 1940 as a secretary, 2nd class, in the Western Department, where her duties included drafting and translating articles mainly from French and English; she was also despatched to carry diplomatic mail to different countries. Grosvalde was awarded the Order of the Cross of Recognition, V class, for her selfless work in 1938. As research of international politics has uncovered, in the 1920s and 1930s Riga was justifiably considered an espionage capital. Latvia's geographical position and proximity to the border of Soviet Russia made it an ideal location for such activity. Grosvalde's lengthy employment at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs may have been related to intelligence work. (Drēģeris 2021: 516–517) This assertion may explain the encounter and marriage between

39 Alfred Burt (1875–1949) was a Brigadier-General in the British Army, and took part in the World War I. During the Latvian freedom struggle, he was head of the Allied Military Mission in Latvia (1919–1920).

Margarēta and Hellmuth Ternberg,⁴⁰ although the families of Helmuth and Margarēta had known each other for a long time. Their mothers, the then unmarried Marija Pakalniēks and Auguste Otilie Limberg⁴¹, attended the Lintene well-to-do girls' school in Alūksne (Marienburg), in the northern-east part of Latvia. The friendship between them continued, and they also met when Marija accompanied her husband as an envoy to Sweden, where Auguste, too, was living.

The existence of these letters and diaries opens a broad research perspective on the implications of networking and informal ties of the people involved in international relations. Margarēta's diary describes the entire flowering of the Latvian diplomatic service in the 1920s and a succession of foreign ministers, starting with Latvian representatives in Great Britain such as Georgs Bisenieks, Eduards Bīriņš, and ministers Zigfrīds A. Meierovics, Ludvigs Sēja, Hugo Celmiņš, Hermanis Albats, Kārlis Ulmanis, Kārlis Zariņš, Voldemārs Salnais, Vilhelms Munters and other officials. Various foreign diplomatic and military representatives in Latvia are mentioned, such as the British Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to Latvia, John Charles Tudor Vaughan (1870–1929), the British Consul in Latvia, John Lowdon (1881–1963) and the Head of the Allied Military Mission in Latvia, General Alfred Burt, who subsequently became an ardent advocate of Latvia's political, economic, and cultural interests in Great Britain.

The Grosvalds family women's social activities and private friendships unexpectedly revealed a few personalities who had played a role in women's suffrage and the women's rights movement in Sweden and Great Britain. However, neither Margarēta nor Līna nor Marija applied this knowledge in any way to the Latvian women's movement. A small note in Margarētas's diary "Packer sent me Gade's article on women diplomats" on September 17, 1924, leads to a publication which might be one of the few at that time speaking out for women's equality in diplomacy. Gerhard Gade was a secretary at the US Legation in Riga in 1923, and Margarēta has mentioned him in her diary several times. After returning to the US, he published a quite feminist article 'The diplomatess' in *The Foreign Service Journal*. Opening the article with an atypical and passionate setting for male writing, especially in the context of the Latvian diplomatic service: "The hand that rocks the cradle has frequently wielded a sword and— what they say is mightier than the sword — a fountain pen. But while there have been Valkyries and Battalions of Death, yeomanettes, and policewomen, the 'frail' sex so far has neglected diplomacy as a profession", Gade gives four

40 For more, see: Lindskog 2011.

41 In 1889, she married Robert Ternberg, a naval engineer, and settled in Sweden.

examples of women in diplomatic services around the world. Besides the Bulgarian Nadejda Standoff, the Russian Alexandra Kollantay⁴² and the American Miss Atcher-son, he mentions Margarēta: "Miss Groswald, sister of the Latvian Minister to the Court of St. James, was appointed a Secretary of the Legation to London, but was not received as a diplomatic officer by the British Government." (Gade: 219). Margarēta, neither in the diary nor in correspondence, elaborated on her view of this article and her being mentioned in it. She generally does not discuss gender imbalance or equality in her diary, probably preoccupied with her professional duties and private life. Also, the influence of a patriarchal family, which has already been described, must be acknowledged, though she strived to overcome this, becoming more and more independent and creating the image of a modern woman.

Conclusion

As in many interwar countries, diplomacy, as an area of high social prestige, was not considered a career suitable for a woman in Latvia. However, there were no legal restrictions as there still were in some foreign countries. In general, Latvia's first Foreign Minister Meierovics was liberal and more concerned with knowledge of languages, technical skills, representation, and capacity for work rather than gender. However, the generally conservative standards of the European diplomatic service and the ambivalence of the government led to the dismissal in 1921 and 1923, in waves of redundancies, of 12 of the 16 women previously holding secretarial positions, 1st and 2nd class, in the foreign service.

To sum up, the role of women in the foreign service or in diplomatic work is rarely highlighted. Both the memoirs of diplomats themselves and the commentaries give grounds to speak of two reasons: (1) the foreign service was a highly homosocial structure, especially before World War II, (2) women's role was an auxiliary one, not a process-driving one, and their role in the strategic process of foreign policy was not highlighted. They were regarded as technical workers such as secretaries, typists, stenographers, clerks, and telephonists. Alternatively, there were those who took on the role of representatives and supplied hospitality as envoys' wives. This underrepresentation is entirely borne out by the few surviving autobiographical accounts of women who were associated with the foreign service for a shorter or longer period. Through feminist research, we get to know female secretaries who have played relevant roles in international events. Thus, the role of women in national foreign affairs and diplomacy is a topic where the development of various lines of gender-related

42 For more, see: Novikova, Ghodsee 2023; Nicolaidis, Nilsson, Dunér 2021.

research and recovering women's agency makes it an essential tool for understanding the gendered nature of diplomacy as a profession and political practice. This conclusion is consistent with the statement by political scientist and researcher of international relations, Ann E. Towns, that "often by focusing on the remarkable lives of individual women who – while not officially designated as diplomats – have historically filled crucial diplomatic functions as letter-writers, behind-the-scenes negotiators, unofficial envoys, and wives in charge of receptions and dinners." (Towns 2020: 576) The research presented in the article shows conclusively that women were present in, not absent from, diplomacy in the era preceding their formal inclusion in national diplomatic service in the later twentieth century. In future research it is essential to outline both the portrayal, the role, and the testimonies of the wives of Latvian envoys abroad and the role and the importance of women employees of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and also to continue the study of other female representatives in the foreign service.

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**Women Running for the Office of MP
under the Flexible Lists System in Latvia:
the Case Studies of Milda Salnā and Berta Pīpiņa
(1922–1934)**

**Sieviešu balotēšanās parlamenta vēlēšanās
grozāmo deputātu kandidātu sarakstu sistēmā Latvijā:
Mildas Salnās un Bertas Pīpiņas piemēri
(1922–1934)**

Keywords:

women's
organizations,
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closed lists

Atslēgvārdi:

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saraksti

Summary

Adopting the close reading approach for the case studies of two female social activists and their biographies, this article is an investigation of the outcomes for women candidates under an electoral system that differed from the closed list system used in other European countries. In Latvia, a flexible lists system was in use, and the result of this was gender specific: due to the crossing out of candidates' names by electors, women were elected very rarely. The objective of the article is to examine the kind of voting tactics and affiliations that were deployed by female candidates from mixed-sex political parties in order to win popularity among non-party women's organisations and succeed in being elected to parliament. The politician Milda Salnā (1886–1970) was the only woman whose candidature was put forward for the position of Minister of Welfare in 1925. The other female politician, Berta Pīpiņa (1883–1942), is the only woman who became a Member of Parliament under the flexible lists system.

Kopsavilkums

Izmantojot divu sabiedrisko darbinieču biogrāfiju tuvā lasījuma pieeju, rakstā ir pētīti sieviešu ievēlēšanas rezultāti, pastāvot vēlēšanu sistēmai, kas atšķīrās no citās Eiropas valstīs lietotās negrozāmo sarakstu sistēmas. Latvijā darbojās grozāmo sarakstu sistēma, kuras rezultāts bija dzimtes specifisks – vēlētāju svitrojumu rezultātā sievietes tika ievēlētas reti. Raksts atklāj, kādas balotēšanās taktikas un afiliācijas kandidātes no jauktu dzimumu partijām izmantoja, lai gūtu popularitāti ārpus-partiju sieviešu organizācijās un tiktu ievēlētas Saeimā. Politikē Milda Salnā (1886–1970) bija vienīgā sieviete, kuras kandidatūru viņas partija – Latvijas Strādnieku sociāldemokrātu maziņu partija – izvirzīja tautas labklājības ministra amatam 1925. gadā. Savukārt Berta Pīpiņa (1883–1942) 1931. gadā vienīgā kļuva par parlamenta deputāti, pastāvot grozāmo vēlēšanu kandidātu sarakstu sistēmai. Izpēte balstīta uz parlamenta vēlēšanu rezultātu statistiku, organizāciju dokumentiem un presi.

Introduction

In Western historiography an assertion persists that after World War I, when the right to vote (suffrage) had been achieved, many women abandoned political activity, while others redirected their energies to the League of Nations so as to not only promote disarmament, but also, with the help of instruments of international influence, to “secure legal equality between men and women” (Miller 1994: 219). In Poland, for example, at the beginning of the 20th century women’s interest in political involvement declined (Dajnowicz 2021: 72). In this context, the question of what happened to the women’s movement after their common goal – that of suffrage – had been achieved becomes important, as women’s electoral rights were enshrined in national legislation by the newly independent states that emerged after World War I: Austria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czechoslovakia and others.¹ Politically active women continued their work in the form of a struggle for political power within Parliament. They discussed what it meant for women to be citizens, and on what basis they should participate in political life and influence policy-making. Female activists pursued different paths for continuing to improve the status of women: some chose to do so as members of mixed-gender political parties, others through women’s organisations. The relations between both sets of women were complicated, because the women who considered that women’s political goals could be attained only through same-sex women’s organisations doubted the loyalty to these aims on the part of the women who were members of political parties. In the 1920s, female party members supported women’s organisations as an additional arena for shaping their politics. They were active in numerous organisations, maintaining many affiliations (Hunt, Hannam 2013: 129). Without raising their profile through their work in women’s organisations it was impossible to carve out a career within the structures of mixed sex political parties. In the interwar period, women began to view the idea of women’s service differently than before, emphasising “the mutuality of self-fulfilment and community development, not self-sacrifice or the neglect of the self” (Colpus 2018: 199, 201). One of the goals was to train themselves to be citizens and to educate other women to be citizens, and to take part in nation-building and the formation of the new state and its politics, also by articulating specific

1 In Latvia the equality of the sexes with regard to electoral rights was prescribed by the political platform of the *Tautas Padome* – People’s Council (1918), the law On the Election of the Constitutional Assembly (1919), the Constitution (1922) and the law On the Election of the Saeima (1922). For more, see: Osipova 2019; Smiltēna (2022).

women's rights and demands. In Great Britain, many women's organisations included in their names the concepts 'citizen' and 'citizenship'; the majority, however, avoided using the term 'feminist' (Innes 2004: 623–627, 636). Women's organisations interpreted and incorporated the concept of 'citizenship' into their rhetoric, turning it into a motivational factor for women to become politically involved in the women's movement (Wright 2009: 423–425). By working in social and other kinds of organisations, women were able to take part in public life and create a feminised political sphere. Gender determined and shaped the forms that women's political participation could take – women's organisations sought ways of becoming influential at local and national level (Leszczawski-Schwerk 2018: 11). Over time it became clear that women had differing political allegiances, and their motivating factors were diverse, nonetheless for a time different women's groups would come together in pursuit of the common cause (Gullace 2021: 363, Grayzel 2021: x). The tactics of the various groups differed with regard to the question of whether a separate women's party or an all-female candidate list were necessary.

Women candidate electoral results under the closed list system

In all of the parliamentary elections of the 1920s–1930s, women in Latvia made extensive use of active electoral rights, while passive electoral rights (the right to be elected to parliament) were exercised by a relatively small number of women. The departure point was the same for each of the three independent republics which had been proclaimed in the aftermath of World War I, as the Russian Empire collapsed. With the principle of closed lists in existence, one that does not permit the voter to make any changes to the list, six female MPs were elected among a total of 150 MPs in the *Latvijas Satversmes sapulce* [Constitutional Assembly of Latvia, the first elected legislative body of Latvia] (Lipša 2021: 262). Seven female MPs were working in the Lithuanian Constitutional Assembly, out of a total of 112 MPs (Birmontienė, Jurėnienė 2012: 87). In the Estonian Constitutional Assembly there were seven female MPs among a total of 120 MPs (Biin, Albi 2012: 121). The situation in Finland was markedly better due to historic reasons, because in the Finnish Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire, women received the vote in 1906, and in 1907 the Finns elected 19 women (nearly 10% of 200 MPs) into parliament (Sulkunen 2007: 29). Finland was the third country in the world, after New Zealand (1893) and Australia (1894), where women were awarded full (passive and active) suffrage (Sulkunen, Markkola 2009: 1). In 1917, 18 women had been elected to the Finnish parliament. In Germany in 1919, among a total of 423 elected

members of parliament, there were 37 women (8.7%). In the same year in Poland, conversely, female politicians constituted only 1.38% of the MPs elected (Zarnowska 2004: 58). However, an examination of Latvia's neighbouring countries shows that as regards the proportion of women elected under a closed list system, the situation was the best in Lithuania, where female MPs made up 6.25% of the composition of parliament, followed by Estonia with 5.8%, but the most meagre representation was in Latvia – 4%. Thereafter the proportion in Latvia declined to zero level because in 1922 the Latvian parliament changed the law and introduced into the new legislation the flexible list principle (Tifentāls-Dziļleja 1923: 91–92).² This meant that, by crossing out candidates' names, voters in Latvia were able to not only change the order of candidates in the list they had selected, but were also able to write the name of any candidate from any other electoral list in place of those crossed out. As a result, the candidates in every list were in competition not only with candidates on other lists, but also with the other candidates on their own list. The members of the *Satversmes sapulce* (Constitutional Assembly) introduced this electoral system in order to award voters maximum freedom of choice. At the time, not a single politician could have even imagined that a democratic principle of interwar Europe would prohibit women in Latvia from becoming members of parliament. Already in the summer of 1920, the idea of a flexible list was touted in the press by the journalist Hermanis Asars, who had seen this principle in action in the local government elections that had taken place in Siberia in 1919 (Asars 1920). He was of the opinion that with the aid of a flexible list, it would be possible to evade what he called the socialist party central committee diktat to voters. Closed lists meant that the list of candidates and the order in which they were to stand were decided by the central committee of the party, rather than determined by the electorate. Asars considered that this course of action would have been acceptable if all Latvian citizens had been active members of political parties, but in 1920 this was the case for only about 1% of the population (Asars 1920). In the Constitutional Assembly, meanwhile, the idea of flexible lists was promoted by one of its members, Mārgers Skujenieks, and in the course of political debates lasting about a year and a half the majority of Constitutional Assembly members came to support the introduction of the principle of flexible lists in both

2 In 1923, on making a comparison of electoral systems in Europe, Kārlis Tifentāls came to the conclusion that in Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Germany (at that time excepting Bavaria and Lübeck) and Austria closed lists were in use. Flexible lists were being used only in Latvia and Finland. Electors in Finland, however, did not have the right to amend the content of lists; up until 1935 they had to select a list with a maximum of three candidates, however, the opportunity to change the order of candidates and write in a maximum of three other candidates in fact lost its effect during a procedure whereby votes were transformed into mandates (Tifentāls-Dziļleja 1923; Sundberg 2002, 77).

local government and parliamentary elections. During the discussions, not a single member of the Constitutional Assembly, including the six women among them, had foreseen that this principle could influence the election of women (for the course of discussions see Lipša 2022, 46–54)

An analysis of the lists elected to the *Saeima* (the Latvian parliament consisting of 100 members) presents the following data (Skujenieks 1923, 1926, 1929, 1933; Lipša 2022): 56 women stood for election to the Constitutional Assembly, but in the 1922 elections to the First Saeima they were four times fewer: only 14 women. In the elections to the Second Saeima in 1925, there were 15 women on the lists that were elected. For the Third Saeima (in 1928) there were 43 female candidates, and for the Fourth (in 1931) – 39 candidates. The increase in the number of female candidates in the elections to the Third and Fourth Saeima was due to the existence of women-only lists: the *Latvju sieviešu apvienība* (Latvian Women's Association) list with 18 candidates in 1928 and the *Sieviešu organizācijas* (Women's Organisations) list with 20 candidates in 1931 (Lipša 2022, 258). It is significant that of the 56 female candidates who stood for election to the Constitutional Assembly, only 5 women were candidates in the 1922 elections to the First Saeima. On the other hand, now the more active Polish and Russian women in Latgale had embraced the necessity of becoming involved in policy-making (Lipša 2022, 60–61). This article will not undertake to analyse the ethnic affiliation of candidates, however, it can be pointed out that in all four elections to the Saeima, the lists that had been compiled according to the principle of ethnicity had included five women. In the elections for the First Saeima, there was one female candidate in the *Vienotais krievu saraksts* (United List of Russians) and three in the *Poļu savienība Latvijā* (Polish Union in Latvia) list. In the Third Saeima elections there was one female candidate in the *Latvijas poļu savienības poļu katoļu* (Polish Catholics from the Union of Poles in Latvia) list (she had previously been a candidate in the First Saeima elections as well), but in the Fourth Saeima elections, there was one female candidate from the *Latvijas vācu baltiešu partija* (Party of Baltic Germans of Latvia) (Lipša 2022, 326–327). It was not until 1931 and the Fourth Saeima that voters elected a woman to parliament. These were the last parliamentary elections to be held in interwar Latvia, as in 1934 Prime Minister Kārlis Ulmanis mounted a coup d'état, as a result of which the Saeima was dissolved and all political parties were banned. In Estonia and Lithuania, meanwhile, where voters voted according to the principle of closed lists, there were female MPs in all parliaments. In Estonia, however, there was the possibility of a preferential vote. That is, the elector was able to write a plus mark against the names of candidates, though these were only taken into account if the number of preferential votes exceeded the number of votes required to obtain one MP mandate (Sikk 2010, 567–568). This meant that they had minimal

impact on election results. In Estonia during the interwar period there were six parliaments (the *Riigikogu* with 100 MPs). There were three female MPs in the first parliament, but in the second, third and fourth parliaments there was only one female MP (1%); in the fifth – two MPs (2%) and in the sixth, the bicameral parliament of 1937, women made up 8.8% of MPs (Biin, Albi 2012: 121). In the Lithuanian parliament, (the *Seimas*) of 1922 consisting of 78 MPs, five female politicians (6.4%) had been elected, but in 1926, when a total of 85 MPs were elected, there were four women (4.7%) among them. (Birmontienė, Jurėnienė 2009: 36, 39). A testament to the powerful sense of self-belief of Lithuanian female politicians is the fact that in 1926, when the Seimas of Lithuania were voting for the State President, of the four candidates vying for the post two were women. However, in 1926 there was a coup d'état in Lithuania, as a result of which from 1927 until 1935 there were no parliamentary elections at all. (Jureniene 2008: 289). Meanwhile, not a single woman was in the Seimas elected in 1936 and consisting of only 49 MPs, because in the wake of electoral reform candidate lists could only be submitted by district councils, and only a few women had been elected to these. In Finland, the number of women in parliament (the *Diet*) reached 10% only in 1922; the lowest proportion of women was in 1930 when 11 female candidates (5.5%) were elected (Korppi-Tommola 2012: 57; Women 2022). In Germany, the proportion of female MPs did not exceed 10% in any of the interwar parliaments (Debus, Hansen 2014: 343). Meanwhile in Poland, up until 1927 women made up 2% of the total number of MPs, but after that – only 1.8% (Leszczawski-Schwerk 2018: 4, 11). Possibly if in Latvia the principle of the closed list had been in existence women might have had the same level of representation in the Saeima as they had managed to achieve in parliament in Estonia and in Lithuania.

Results of women standing for election under the flexible lists system

When evaluating the election results for the First Saeima (1922), the popular poet Aspazija³, a female MP candidate from the *Latvijas Sociāldemokrātiskā strādnieku partija* (Latvian Social Democratic Workers' Party), ascertained that in the Riga electoral district, from 45,000 social democrat voters only about 3000 made amendments to lists by crossing out names. However, it was precisely this minority that determined the ranking of elected candidates. The result was a difference of approximately 800 votes

³ Aspazija's political activism has not yet been researched. On Aspazija as a poet, see: Novikova 2006. For more on Aspazija: Zelče 2020.

between the top-ranking candidates who were elected and those candidates at the head of the list of the unelected. Aspazija came to the conclusion that 800 votes were enough, therefore, to eliminate from the list unwelcome candidates, and it turned out that all women had been accorded this status. Aspazija wrote that with this kind of electoral system women's passive suffrage "has been robbed, and it is not likely that in the future they would be able to regain it because there will always be some thousand anti-women opponents, even amongst the best [party] members" (Aspazija 1923).

After the First Saeima elections, politically active women realised that the flexible list principle put them at a disadvantage. Yet it was also a fact that in these elections only a small number of female candidates ran for election, and this could explain why no women were elected. In 1925 the voters who used their right to cross out candidates once again achieved that not a single female candidate received a mandate. The propaganda disseminated by the most politically active women's organisation LSNL (*Latvju sieviešu nacionālā līga*) – the National League of Latvian Women – at the very beginning of the election year had not helped. They had addressed as their target audience all women, and had put forward female candidates to those electoral lists who had wished to include women (Pīpiņa 1925b). The LSNL encouraged women to write into their chosen lists the names of women from other lists, and thus increase the chances of women being elected (Pīpiņa 1925b). An analysis of the Second Saeima elections clarified how many men and women had crossed out the names of candidates. By studying data from the ballot boxes allotted to male and female voters separately in the Riga electoral district, statisticians found that among those men who had amended lists, 75% had crossed out the names of women, while among women voters the prevalence was 50% (Lipša 2005: 22). In the elections to the First Saeima, 19.97% of voters made use of the opportunity to amend candidate lists, but in subsequent elections, these rights were exercised by an increasing number of voters. For the Second Saeima the percentage was 26.03%, for the Third Saeima it was 32.44%, and for the Fourth Saeima – 35.47% (Lipša 2005: 22).

Female MP candidates employed a variety of approaches for ensuring their visibility to the electorate. One group positioned itself only in tandem with a political party, for example, members of the Latvian Social Democratic Workers' Party. Another group placed the emphasis on their identity as social activists, hence their standing on party lists or electoral association lists could have been perceived as short-term, with the sole aim of attaining the prestigious position of MP and without any interest in the everyday work of the political party. Female candidates used their numerous social activist affiliations as political capital in order to attract the attention of voters. Their persistent running for office in regular elections became a kind of empowerment

for political participation: their energy galvanised other women. The election years of the Saeima coincided with municipal election years, and in Riga, these usually took place in February or March, while the Saeima elections were held in October. Politically active women stood as candidates at both national and local elections, gaining political experience and building up their political reputation.

In the 1920s, the most influential women's organisations in Latvia were the LSNL and the LSPK – *Latvijas sieviešu palīdzības korpuss* – Latvian Women's Relief Corps (Pīpiņa 1928a, Albertiņa 1928). The statutes of the LSNL stipulated the advocacy of women's rights and the inclusion and consolidation of equal gender rights in legislation. In order to facilitate this, in 1923 the LSNL established a Legal Section headed by Berta Pīpiņa (Pīpiņa 1932: 29). Milda Salnā was also active in the section. The women who worked in the Legal Section decided to create a powerful united women's movement centre – the *Latvijas Sieviešu organizāciju padome* (LSOP) (Council of Women's Organisations of Latvia). A provisional council was established in 1925, but the statutes of the council were registered in 1929. The LSOP was a moderate/conservatively oriented organisation, and internationally as well it chose to work with the International Council of Women, which was similarly inclined (Lipša, Vizgunova 2020: 87–93; De Haan, Daskalova et al. 2006: 10).

Milda Salnā: in political parties and in women's citizens' (non-socialist) organisations

The social activist, politician and journalist Milda Salnā stood as a candidate in three Saeima elections (1925, 1928, 1931) and in three Riga city council elections (1922, 1925, 1931) as a representative of the *Latvijas Strādnieku sociāldemokrātu maziņu partija* (Latvian Social Democrat Menshevik Workers' Party) and the *Progresīvā apvienība* (Progressive Union).⁴

However, Salnā did not receive sufficient support from the electorate to obtain the mandate of an MP. Her political affiliations had shifted from being a radical revolutionary Socialist in the 1905–1907 Revolution (Jēkabsons 2016), to being a member of the *Latvijas Sociāldemokrātiskā strādnieku partija* (LSDSP) – Latvian Social Democratic Workers' Party or left-wing social democrat (1918–1921), and thereafter conservative socialist or Menshevik social democrat, until the party was dissolved (1921–1930). After that she worked in the Progressive Union (1930–1934), which

4 In the First Saeima elections in 1922, there was not a single woman candidate on the social democrat (Menshevik) party list, but in the 1928 elections for the Riga City Council the party did not participate at all.



Fig. 1. Passport photo of Milda Salnā. 1928. Latvian National Archive, Latvian State Historical Archive, LNA LVVA 3234-33-49969.

distanced itself from the urban labour force in favour of a rural worker and *jaunsaimnieki* (literally, 'new farmers')⁵ target audience.

In June 1921, Salnā left the LSDSP and took part in the founding of the social democrat Menshevik party, because together with her spouse and MP of the First Saeima, Voldemārs Salnais, she belonged to the group of social democrats who wished to take part in the government coalition. Salnā's husband became vice Foreign Minister, but Milda Salnā herself in 1921 became a member of the board of *Latvijas Telegrāfa aģentūra* (Latvian Telegraph Agency) and until the late 1924 worked as an assistant to the LTA director. At the start of 1925, the general assembly of the Riga committee of the Latvian Social Democrat (Menshevik) Workers' Party elected her chairwoman of the Riga committee (LSSMP 1925). In one of her first speeches in her newly appointed position, Salnā underlined that the party had not done anything as regards the issue of organising women and that she wished that the Riga committee would adhere to the principle that they should be active also among that sector of society where the party did not have a determining influence. By this, she meant non-socialist women's circles. Salnā's reputation within the party was solid enough for the social democrat Mensheviks to nominate her for the position of Minister of Social Affairs in 1925, but right-wing party politicians in the government coalition rejected her candidature ([Anon.] 1925). Salnā's husband Voldemārs Salnais was

5 The *jaunsaimnieki* were newly established smallholders who had received land as a result of the Agrarian Reform Law of 1920, when land was confiscated, mostly from manorial estates, and redistributed to individuals.

appointed minister instead. In Finland, meanwhile, a year later the social democrat Miina Sillanpää became Minister of Social Welfare and Health; she was the first-ever female government minister in Europe (Sulkunen Irma 2007: 29).

Already as a member of the LSDSP, Salnā had recognised the necessity of organising women. In late 1920 she was elected chairwoman of the Women's Centre of the LSDSP ([Anon.] 1920). Meanwhile in early 1924, while still employed as assistant to the director of LTA, Salnā began to build her public profile as a social activist and broaden her electoral appeal, joining one of the most popular women's citizens' associations: the National League of Latvian Women (LSNL), where she soon became a member of the board (1925–1928). The conservative socialist Salnā hoped that through non-socialist women's organisations she would be able to encourage an interest among women to participate in politics. She explained in the press that party political agitation and propaganda were not enough to promote women's interest in politics. Salnā emphasised that "culturally edifying organisations play a much greater role in stimulating a woman's activity [in politics]" for the advocacy of the interests of women as mothers and housekeepers (Salnā 1928b).

Salnā took part in the organisation of the first women's conference in Latvia and on 26–27 September, 1925, she was a speaker. During the conference, the non-socialist women's organisations decided to establish a joint centre for the development of the women's movement. Salnā became one of the leaders of this centre, known as the *Latvijas Sieviešu organizāciju pagaidu padome* (LSOPP) – Provisional Council of Women's Organisations in Latvia. Working on the council helped female politicians and party members to attract the attention of voters because, in the run-up to each election, the council urged its members to write the names of women from other candidate lists into the list they had selected. This gave female candidates additional votes. The LSNL slogan exhorted: "Vote for women! By writing [the name of] a woman from another list into your own party list, you bolster a woman's candidature without harming your own party!" (LSNL 1925) Salnā wrote articles in the press, inviting readers to vote for the social democrat Menshevik party list. In publications and at pre-election rallies she particularly addressed female *jaunsaimnieces* (new farmers) and rural labourers, reminding them that it was her party that had initiated and succeeded in the adoption of legislation in the Saeima that gave rural workers the opportunity to buy construction timber for the building of their own dwellings at an affordable price (Salnā 1925a, 1925b). In the Second Saeima, however, Salnā did not get elected. In the Vidzeme electoral district, for example, she remained second from the bottom in her list, separated from the winner of this list by some 1000 votes.

Salnā's party members did not rate her leadership of the Riga committee as being particularly successful, and so at a meeting of the Riga branch of the social

democrat Menshevik party in February 1926 she was not re-elected chairwoman of the committee. She then put all her energy into LSOPP activities, acting as the representative of the LSNL. Within LSNL itself, meanwhile, she became the Head of Press and Propaganda (1927–1930).

Before every election, Salnā rejected the drawing up of a separate list of female candidates. Her rationale was that it was not possible to unite in a single list all the ideologically diverse women that there were. Hence Salnā encouraged female voters to vote for mixed-gender parties and to be fully cognisant that the only common duty for all women was not to vote for those party lists which had not nominated a single woman. Because to vote for a party that has stated that it does not acknowledge the necessity of women's political activism would be "tantamount to welcoming a spit in the face with gratitude" (Salnā 1925c). Moreover, if a political party declares that it does not have any women candidates to offer, then female voters should understand that a party that "up till now has not been able to bring up from within its midst a single woman who would be worthy of taking a seat in the Saeima" was not worth anything at all. Salnā urged women voters to give female candidates the opportunity to learn parliamentary work by formulating the following argument: of the 100 MPs in the Saeima, those working with full commitment were, at a maximum, only 30 men, while the others due to lack of experience did nothing but vote and evidently were still learning about working in parliament. Therefore, if voters allow men to use parliament as a school, then the same opportunity should be offered also to "at least a few women". In the run-up to the 1928 election, Salnā became more strident in her urgings to renounce a separate list of female candidates. She underscored that, first of all, women must learn to defend their interests within political parties. If they were unable to achieve that their fellow party members included them in their list of candidates for MPs, and because of this had to create their own list of female candidates, then – Salnā asks – "how do these women intend to defend their interests in the Saeima, [when] surrounded by political enemies?" (Salnā 1928a) She explained that political work was not only a matter of standing for elections and campaigning at pre-election rallies. Salnā wrote: "Politics should be practiced every day! Every day you should be alert to your economic situation, [aware of] your political rights, the independence of your cultural development." (Salnā 1931) She asserted that this was only possible to do by working together with "people inspired by the same ideology", but this could not be done by a women's party whose members held a variety of ideological views.

In 1930, the Latvian Social Democrat (Menshevik) Workers' Party was dissolved. Salnā then joined the Progressive Union, whose voters were rural labourers and *jaunsaimnieki*. At the end of the same year, however, she left the National League of

Latvian Women (LSNL) for reasons that were not disclosed (Salnā 1930). Thus Salnā abandoned social activist affiliations and participation in the organised non-socialist women's movement. After standing in the 1931 municipal and parliamentary elections, without success, Salnā started working for the weekly newspaper of her party, *Lauku Dzīve*, later *Latviešu Balss*. She was the only female editor in the Latvian political press (Oz. 1932). In 1933, when her spouse Voldemārs Salnais was Foreign Minister, Salnā carried out the duties of a foreign minister's wife, which was not a position as such but rather unpaid work.

Berta Pīpiņa: Member of the Riga City Council and the MP

Unlike Milda Salnā, pedagogue

Berta Pīpiņa did not have any experience of involvement in an illegal party – the Latvian Social Democratic Workers' Party. Her engagement with politics began after the bourgeois-democratic February Revolution of 1917, when she started to participate in the activities of the *Radikāldemokrātu partija* (Radical Democrat Party) and in the council of the *Latvijas Sociālistisko sieviešu izglītības biedrība* (Socialist Women's Educational Society of Latvia), whose aim was the political education of women, and whose members already then had agreed that women should take an active part in "men's parties" (Lipša 2021: 238, 242). In 1920, while the closed list system was still in use, Pīpiņa was elected to the Riga City Council, though she did not succeed in being elected to the *Satversmes sapulce* – Constitutional Assembly (Lipša 2021: 260, 261). After the flexible list system was adopted, Pīpiņa stood for two Saeima elections (1925, 1931)⁶ and all four elections (1922, 1925, 1928 and 1931) of the Riga City Council as a representative of the *Demokrātiskā Centra partija* – Democratic Centre (DC) party. Pīpiņa was also active in the National League of Latvian Women, she was the league's chairwoman from 1925 up until the Soviet occupation in 1940. She was also chairwoman of the Provisional Council of Women's Organisations in Latvia (LSOPP) (later Council of Women's Organisations in Latvia –LSOP). Pīpiņa is the only woman in the historiography of post-1990 Republic of Latvia who has an entire entry devoted to her as a female politician of the interwar period (Pičukāne 2006; Zariņa 2019), but scholarly research of her life and work has not yet been carried out.

Pīpiņa started her political career while a married woman; her husband was the journalist Ērmanis Pīpiņš. In an interview she stated that it was precisely her spouse's

6 In 1922, the Democratic Centre and non-party (independent) allied candidates did not include any women in their list.



Fig. 2. Passport photo of Berta Pīpiņa. 1927. Latvian National Archive, Latvian State Historical Archive, LNA LVVA 3234-33-5291.

ironical attitude, even embarrassment while listening to her first public speech that was an insult to her womanly self-esteem. Pīpiņa stated to her interviewer that at the time she swore to herself that there would come a time when she would be able to speak in public so well that nobody would smirk scornfully about her any more (Astra 1933). After her husband died in 1927, the widow Pīpiņa became the co-owner of a publishing house, later its owner and manager. Pīpiņa's tactic of building up popularity through the LSNL and the LSOPP and to run in the elections from the list of the DC proved to be justified. In the elections of the Riga City Council in 1922 and 1925 Pīpiņa was not elected, nonetheless, in 1925 the party nominated her for work on the *Rīgas pilsētas valde* – Riga City Board. Pīpiņa became the first-ever female member of the Riga City Board and head of the *Sociālās apgādes nodaļa* – Department of Social Welfare, and worked there from 17 December 1925 until 31 March 1928 (Pīpiņa 1934a). It had not been easy to earn respect in masculine environment. In an interview Pīpiņa related that while she was a member of the city board, male colleagues had refused to shake hands with her, regarding her as a 'suffragette' who had stormed the male citadel, despite the fact that, in her own words: "I was surely doing work that was the most suitable of all to a woman's-mother's heart and nature – I ran the Riga city social welfare [department]" (Mednieks 1939).

In the Riga City Council elections of 1928, Pīpiņa received the support of a great many voters from other lists, and as a result, she was elected to the Riga City Council as the second most popular politician on her list, outdoing even the well-known writer Jānis Akuraters ([Anon.] 1928). This popularity had been promoted by her active work heading the provisional board of the National League of Latvian Women (LSNL)

and the Provisional Council of Women's Organisations of Latvia (LSOPP) which organised the Latvian Women's Conferences in 1925 and 1928, and also by participating in the events held by her organisations as well as being published in the newspaper *Jaunākās Ziņas* (Lipša 2022). Another contributing factor was her leadership of the Riga City Department of Social Welfare, where by dealing with visitors and seeking to assist them she became a recognised figure among the residents of the city who had sought help. During the period from 1925 until 1927, for example, the volume of social benefits handed out by Riga city increased almost three times over, from Ls 34,500 to Ls 99,700 (Zvirbule 1932, 572). A criterion testifying to the popularity of a politician was the number of *taloni* or coupons⁷ given to the candidate by voters of other lists. In the Riga City Council elections of 1928, the most popular candidate in Riga was Arveds Bergs, publisher of the newspaper *Latvis*, but he was followed by Berta Pīpiņa in second place, leaving behind her Kārlis Ulmanis, the popular leader of the dominant party of the governing coalition, *Latviešu zemnieku savienība* (Latvian Farmers' Union), and numerous times Prime Minister (Vanaga 1928). While on the Riga City Council, from 21 November 1928 until 6 May 1931 Pīpiņa was a member of the Audit Committee. Pīpiņa did not stand as a candidate in the Third Saeima elections in 1928, most likely because she had been elected member of the Riga City Council. She was not elected in the 1931 Riga City Council elections, though a few months later Pīpiņa became a councilwoman when a member of her party gave up his mandate. Her candidacy at the Fourth Saeima elections in 1931, was successful, however, here too, Pīpiņa was elected with the so-called 'soft mandate'. Pīpiņa became an MP of the Fourth Saeima when her party member, General Eduards Kalniņš, declined his mandate. This was regarded by the Latvian Women's Association as an affirmation of support from the Democratic Centre party for a female candidate (LSA, 1931). In the Riga electoral district Pīpiņa received the sixth largest number of coupons (2495), ahead of both Kārlis Ulmanis, who received more than two times fewer coupons (1083), and Arveds Bergs with 1709 coupons (Skujenieks 1933: 12; Lipša 2022: 217).

Pīpiņa's popularity was promoted by her numerous affiliations: she was the chairwoman of the LSNL and the LSOP, chairwoman of the society *Valsts darbiniece* (State Employee), member of the Riga City Council and board member of the Riga City, head of the Department of Social Welfare and member of the Central Committee of the DC party. Like Milda Salnā, she promoted the idea that women's work as

7 The ballot paper was divided by horizontal and vertical lines into approximately 90 sections. Each section contained the name of a candidate. When votes were counted, the ballot paper was cut up into the separate sections and these pieces were known as *taloni* or coupons.

social activists served as political start-up capital. In 1925 Pīpiņa made known that there were women working in permanent commissions of the Riga City Board as unpaid advisers and that their work therefore “has been inspired by selfless interest – for the good of society” (Pīpiņa 1925a). She suggested that female candidates should be seen as ideological workers, as defenders of women’s interests, and emphasised that support of female candidates indicated whether women voters themselves had any self-respect. At the first Latvian Women’s Conference in 1925 Pīpiņa avowed that “in order for a woman’s work to stand out more, the propaganda needs to be louder”, but “women have always been quiet and wholehearted workers” (Pīpiņa 1925c). She elucidated that “a man does not hate a woman as such”, but when competing in the workplace “the stronger pushes aside the weaker”. She recommended that women should stand as candidates on party lists rather than forming a separate list comprising females only because when debating certain issues, the women on this kind of list were likely to diverge politically. On becoming a member of a political party, however, every woman should develop her own agenda which the party should then incorporate into its own programme.

All the same, in the run-up to the Third Saeima elections in 1928, Pīpiņa’s attitude towards the setting up of a separate female candidate list in the Saeima elections was supportive. As far as she herself was concerned, her position was unchanged – she would stand as a candidate for her party, nonetheless she regarded the women’s list as a means for educating women in politics and a way of attracting new members to the women’s movement. At a meeting of representatives of women’s organisations in the summer of 1928, despite the urgings of the majority of participants not to put forward a separate women’s list in the forthcoming Saeima elections, Pīpiņa suggested that they reconsider. Her reasoning was that the ten years that had passed since the founding of the state was “a long enough period of time for women to stand for their cause” and that “doubts about [not] getting elected to the Saeima should not hold us back from our task” (Pīpiņa 1928c). She asserted that there was no shame for women in not being elected, rather it would be the inability “not to stand for their cause” that would be shameful. In the 1931 elections that followed, the LSOP gave its support to Pīpiņa’s idea of using a women’s list in order to popularise the essential importance of women’s participation in politics. Women who wished to stand as candidates on the list established a *Sieviešu vēlēšanu komiteja* – Women’s Electoral Committee as part of the LSOP. Its remit was to popularise the women-only list by holding meetings, giving speeches and by distributing flyers, advertisements and posters. In the elections of 1934 as well, the LSOP decided to continue its support of a separate women’s list and the formation of a Women’s Electoral Committee under its aegis. Berta Pīpiņa specified that those political party

female candidates who wished the organised women to give them their vote would have to agree with the election manifesto drawn up by the Women's Electoral Committee. The LSOP would demand that parties include women in their lists, but if the parties were to refuse to do that, then the electoral committee would campaign against the party in question. The LSOP envisaged as its target audience women only. The three main election slogans are a testimony to this: Women, vote for a woman; Do not cross out a woman [a woman's name], Write into your chosen list a woman from another list as well. (Pīpiņa 1934b) In this way, Pīpiņa, who herself stood for election on a party list, regarded the proposal of a female-only candidate list as a means for the political education of women. Hence, in her view, the list would have achieved its purpose even if not a single candidate were to be elected. For Pīpiņa, encouraging women to engage with politics was an important objective and she used every opportunity to popularise this among target audiences of voters.

Prior to the 1928 Saeima elections, Pīpiņa shared her reflections about women's political participation on the front page of *Jaunākās Ziņas*, the most popular newspaper in Latvia. She wrote that a voter judges a woman engaged in community service ten times more severely than a man, moreover, women's participation in politics is also held back by female voters, who do not place enough trust in "the capability of their own sex in politics" (Pīpiņa 1928b). Nonetheless, it is through their public persona in social activism that women gain the trust of voters. Women's organisations, active in all kinds of spheres of life, accustom a woman first of all to have confidence in herself and, second, to respect the aptitudes of another, more talented fellow activist. Pīpiņa's conclusion was that "we need to keep on working indefatigably, more and more," (Pīpiņa 1928). Before the Saeima elections of 1931, once more Pīpiņa explained – on the prestigious front page of *Jaunākās Ziņas* – that up until now female candidates for the Saeima had not succeeded also because the women who crossed out the names of female candidates on electoral lists "stamped on their gender [...] the mark of incapacity", as a result of which "man begins to disdain a woman's mind" (Pīpiņa 1931). As a consequence, female candidates are nominated only on the lists of the democratic non-socialist citizenry and workers' parties, while the right-wing Latvian Farmers' Union ignores them.

Conclusions

The flexible list system that, unlike in other countries, was in operation in Latvia complicated enormously the election of female candidates as MPs. The absolute minority of voters who crossed out women from candidate lists dictated that in Latvia during the interwar period, a woman was elected as MP only

once. Berta Pīpiņa was elected in 1931, when she had already accumulated substantial experience of being a candidate by running in municipal elections on a political party list and twice being elected a member of the city council. In the public arena, however, Pīpiņa identified herself less with her membership of the Democratic Centre party and more with her numerous affiliations as a social activist. Milda Salnā – member of the Latvian Social Democrat (Menshevik) Workers' Party – also gained popularity in the public sphere through her work in women's organisations. As party members, Pīpiņa and Salnā became involved with the organised women's movement and led it with the goal of, firstly, educating women voters in politics and, secondly, attracting to political activism women-potential MP candidates and drawing new members to the women's movement. To this end, the Council of Women's Organisations of Latvia (LSNL) they headed supported the nomination of women-only candidate lists.

When comparing Milda Salnā and Berta Pīpiņa on the basis of their affiliations and the results of their candidacy as part of mixed-gender party lists, it can be concluded that Pīpiņa's election to the municipal council and her work on the Riga City Board was of great significance. Through this work she gained enough of a public profile to garner more popularity in various electorates of the Saeima elections in 1931 than the well-known Prime Minister of several ministerial cabinets and member of the Latvian Farmers' Union, Kārlis Ulmanis. Pīpiņa's example was an inspiration to many women. Both Pīpiņa's and Salnā's persistence in standing as candidates in almost every Riga City Council and Saeima election became a kind of empowerment for political participation – not just for themselves only, because their energetic activity galvanised other women as well.

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Writing, Art and Publishing

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German Women Active in the Study and Promotion of Art History in Latvia from the 1880s until 1915

Vācu sievietes ieguldījums mākslas vēstures pētniecībā un popularizēšanā Latvijā laikā no 19. gadsimta 80. gadiem līdz 1915. gadam

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Susa Walter

Atslēgvārdi:

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Rozālija Šēnflīsa,
Berta Neltinga,
Ellija fon Loudona,
Zuza Valtere

Summary

During the last decades of the 19th century and in the early 20th century, there was a quite large and diverse body of critical and historical texts about art published in newspapers and magazines in Latvia; these were written by various authors, among them some women as well. This article collects together for the first time information about the very first women of German origin whose public activities in Latvia were in the field of art history. It provides a brief overview of the life stories and professional activities of four women from local German society: teachers Rosalie Schoenflies (1844–1916) and Bertha Noelting (1848–1921) who gave public lectures on art and wrote texts dedicated to art; the painter Elly von Loudon (1852–1926) who focused on researching and copying Italian Renaissance frescoes, and published several articles on Italian art; and the artist and art teacher Susa Walter (1874–1945) who at the beginning of the 20th century was one of the most prolific art critics in the local German-language press.

Kopsavilkums

19. gadsimta pēdējās desmitgadēs un 20. gadsimta sākumā Latvijā izdotajos laikrakstos un žurnālos tika publicēts diezgan liels un daudzveidīgs mākslas kritiku un vēsturiskajai mākslai veltītu tekstu apjoms; tos radījuši dažādi autori, starp kuriem arī atsevišķas sievietes. Šajā rakstā pirmo reizi vienkopus apkopota informācija par pašām pirmajām Latvijas vācu sievietēm, kas darbojās mākslas vēstures pētniecības un popularizēšanas laukā. Tas iepazīstina ar četrām Latvijas vācu sieviešu dzīves stāstiem un profesionālajām aktivitātēm: skolotājām Rozālijai Šēnflīsu (1844–1916) un Bertu Neltingu (1848–1921), kas lasīja publicētas mākslas vēstures lekcijas un rakstīja par mākslu, gleznotāju Elliju fon Loudonu (1852–1926), kas nodarbojās ar itāļu renesanses fresku izpēti un kopēšanu un publicēja vairākus rakstus par itāļu mākslu, un mākslinieci un mākslas skolotāju Zuzu Valteri (1874–1945), kas bija viena no ražīgākajām mākslas kritiķēm 20. gadsimta sākuma vietējā vācu presē.

Introduction: The beginnings of art history in Latvia and its research

In the 19th century, when art history was still a new academic discipline, its findings also entered the Baltic space. The works of Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768), the founder of scientific archeology and the father of the history of art, had reached the Baltic very quickly, but almost nothing was written about art here for a longer time. According to the local press, as early as the 1810s Karl Friedrich Wilhelm Fleischer (1777–1831), an actor, journalist and teacher from Prussia, offered a series of lectures on various arts and poetry to residents of Riga. (Grosmane 2019: 59) In 1857, the first series of lectures on art history in Latvia was offered in Jelgava by the painter, art teacher and cultural researcher Julius Döring (1818–1898), and in his audiences there were far more women than men. (Ābele 2019: 56–57) Towards the end of the 19th century, lectures on art history given by various authors were also offered by the *Rigascher Kunstverein* (Riga Art Society), which was founded in 1870 and whose activities significantly energised the artistic life of Riga.

The active establishment of learned societies demonstrated a striving for the discovery of new knowledge with regard to the local heritage. In 1816, the *Kurländische Gesellschaft für Literatur und Kunst* (Courland Society for Literature and Art) was founded in Jelgava, and two years later it established its own museum – the *Kurländisches Provinzialmuseum* (Courland Provincial Museum). From the viewpoint of cultural history, especially significant were the collections of the society's yearly meeting reports, better known by their later title *Sitzungsberichte der Kurländischen Gesellschaft für Literatur und Kunst* (published from 1819 to 1937 with slightly different variations of the title). In 1865, Julius Döring was elected secretary and librarian of the society; he was actively involved in research and regularly published articles about important architectural monuments and the most outstanding artists of the past in the society's publications. Of great importance for art history are the materials he collected for the dictionary of Baltic artists, *Ostbaltisches Künstler-Lexicon*, which remained unpublished, but was later used by Wilhelm Neumann to prepare his biographical reference books. (Döring; Neumann 1902; Neumann 1908) Less important in the development of local art history, though very active in its research of general history, was the *Gesellschaft für Geschichte und Altertumskunde der Ostseeprovinzen Russlands* (Society for the History and Antiquity in the Baltic Provinces of Russia), which was founded in 1834 in Riga and published several volumes of the series on the history of Livonia

(Vidzeme and part of modern-day Estonia), Estonia and Courland (Kurzeme), *Mittheilungen aus dem Gebiete der Geschichte Liv-, Est- und Kurlands* (1834–1939), as well as collections of its meeting reports, *Sitzungsberichte der Gesellschaft für Geschichte und Altertumskunde der Ostseeprovinzen Russlands* (1873–1936).

In the 1880s, research into the art history in the Baltics became significantly more intensive. Articles on art and architectural monuments were published with increasing frequency by the archaeologist Carl von Löwis of Menar (1855–1930), the historians Anton Buchholtz (1848–1901) and Joseph Girgensohn (1849–1933), the architects Wilhelm Bockslaff (1858–1945) and Wilhelm Neumann (1849–1919), and others. Neumann, who had studied architecture at the St Petersburg Academy of Arts, became the most important researcher of Baltic art of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and the first art historian in Latvia with a university degree. His book on the history of the fine and applied arts in Livonia, Estonia and Courland from the late 12th century to the end of the 18th century, *Grundriss einer Geschichte der bildenden Künste und des Kunstgewerbes in Liv-, Est- und Kurland vom Ende des 12. bis zum Ausgang des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Reval: Kluge, 1887), was the first publication on the history of Baltic art and earned him a doctorate in philosophy and fine arts from the University of Leipzig. In his numerous articles and books on art and architecture Neumann “consistently and purposefully transformed art history from ‘the illustration of past events’ into an independent branch of science in the local context”. (Ābele 2014: 47)

During the 19th century, the German orientation of contacts was traditional both in seeking opportunities for better art education and in the development of an artist’s career, and was certainly echoed also in the texts on art. During the last decades of the 19th century and in the early 20th century, there was a quite large and diverse body of critical and historical texts about art published in newspapers, magazines and yearbooks of learned societies; these were written by various authors, among them some women as well. During the 19th century, texts pertaining to the field of art criticism and art history which had been written and published in the territory of Latvia were mainly in German. In the last decades of the 19th century, texts on art also appeared in publications in Latvian, and the terminology of art in the Latvian language began to develop.

In the 1880s, the first two women whose public activities were in the field of art history entered the art scene of Latvia. German teachers Rosalie Schoenflies (1844–1916) and Bertha Noelting (1848–1921) gave public lectures on art and wrote texts dedicated to art, and it is interesting that they both were born outside the Baltic and educated in Germany, but had lived in Latvia for some time and actively participated in various public activities.

At the turn of the 20th century, women in Latvia increasingly turned to professional involvement in art, and became active on the art scene, and the first women of Baltic descent also turned to the history of art. In the last decade of the 19th century, the Baltic German painter Elly von Loudon (1852–1926) focused on researching and copying Italian Renaissance frescoes, and later published several articles on Italian art in the local German press.

Around 1900, the first women appeared who were working in literature, art and culture journals and/or actively focusing on art criticism, and regularly publishing reviews of exhibitions in local newspapers. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Baltic German artist and art teacher Susa Walter (1874–1945) was one of the most prolific art critics. At that time there were also two women of Latvian origin who promoted art and art history in the local press: Hermīne Zālīte (1858–1932), who selected illustrations for the monthly *Mājas Viesa Mēnešraksts* and introduced readers to significant works of art, and Matilde Jureviča-Priedīte (1872–1957), who published reviews of several art exhibitions, but they will not be analysed in this article.

In the Latvian tradition of art history, female art historians have never been singled out and researched, nevertheless studies on art history writing and publications on art in the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century have been published on several occasions, both in the local press and in more scholarly articles by researchers. The earliest studies are associated with the name of the notorious Baltic German art historian Niels von Holst (1907–1993), who participated in Nazi art looting during World War II in the Baltic and elsewhere in Eastern Europe. According to von Holst, between 1800 and 1939 approximately 2000 studies of varying length were published on Baltic art and architecture. (Holst 1942: 8) He counted that in the period outside the time frame of this article, between 1919 and 1939, a total of 280 studies of Baltic art history were published, and among the authors 203 were German (of these, 151 were Baltic Germans), 39 were Estonian, 16 were Swedish, 15 were Latvian and 6 were Danish. (Holst 1942: 9) When interpreting these numbers, it should be taken into account that in the 1930s and 1940s everything Niels von Holst wrote was political and emphasized German dominance in Baltic history, but presumably these numbers reflect quite precisely the productivity of Baltic Germans, even though they may be erroneous in relation to the publications of Latvian and Estonian authors. Moreover, in this publication he mentions only the research and articles that were devoted to Baltic art history, regardless of writings on European art history, and publications on local exhibitions and art news in the local press.

In recent decades, articles on the writing of art history in Latvia and other topical issues of art history in the 19th century and early 20th century have been published by Latvian art historians Elita Grosmane and Kristiāna Ābele, to whom thanks is due

for her profound interest in the identities of the art critics who were published in the Baltic German press and her findings as regards the biographies and activities of two of the women featured in this article. (Grosmane 2001; Grosmane 2019; Ābele 2012a; Ābele 2012b; Ābele 2014; Ābele 2019) During the period covered by this article, art life in all the Baltic provinces of the Russian Empire was partially unified, so in recent decades important publications on art history issues have also been produced by Estonian researchers such as Krista Kodres and Kristina Jõekalda. (Kodres 2012; Jõekalda 2015) On her own, Latvian art scholar Stella Pelše has studied art criticism and other art theory issues published in the Latvian language in the first four decades of the 20th century (Pelše 2007; Pelše 2010), but these, although relevant in terms of time, go beyond the scope of this article because the focus here is on the work in the field of art history that has been done by women of German origin.

The goal of this article is to collect in one place information about the very first German women who worked in the research and promotion of art and art history in the territory of modern-day Latvia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This is being done for the first time in Latvian art history, as the contribution and professional activity of local German women in Latvian cultural history, and in history in general, has scarcely been researched.

The article provides a brief overview of the life stories and professional activities of four women from the local German community: Rosalie Schoenflies, Bertha Noelting, Elly von Loudon and Susa Walter. More extensive studies of their life stories or professional activities have not been published about any of these women; there is absolutely no information about some of them in the publications dedicated to the evolution of art history in Latvia. Thus the main sources for compiling this study were publications in the press – both the articles advertising various events, and the texts on art written by the women themselves. Additional information was provided by other researchers' publications on related topics, as well as archival documents. When collecting information about the women mentioned in the article, the biographical method was used, but the texts created by the women themselves were not analysed according to their content or formal qualities.

Rosalie Schoenflies

The first woman in Latvia to be mentioned as being publicly active in the field of art history was Rosalie Schoenflies (née Hirschfeld), who in the 1880s published articles on fine art and pedagogy in the local press, and offered lectures on art history. Schoenflies, a teacher, journalist and women's rights activist, was born in the Pomeranian town of Pyritz (now Pyrzyce in Poland). She

turned to pedagogy early and participated in the founding of the *Verein deutscher Lehrerinnen und Erzieherinnen* (German Women Teachers' and Tutors' Association) in Berlin in 1869. (Jucker 1916: 14)

In 1875, she arrived in Riga accompanying her husband Martin Schoenflies (1840/1841–1879), a mathematician and engineer who became professor of technology and mechanical engineering at the Riga *Politechnikum*, and remained in Riga also after her husband's death in 1879. On arriving in Riga, Rosalie became involved in various public activities. She helped to establish a craft school for girls, the *Mädchen-Gewerbe-Schule des Jungfrauenvereins*, which began work in 1878, being the first institution of this kind in the Russian Empire and serving as a model for the establishment of other similar schools. (Schoenflies et al. 1897: 227, 229) In 1878, the local press reported that Rosalie Schoenflies was one of the teachers in the continuing education courses in pedagogy organized by Lina Stahl (1835–1905), the owner of a private secondary school for girls in Riga. (Anonymous 1878: 5) Schoenflies also became involved in the work of the Riga Art Society, and in 1884 was elected chairman of the society's library commission. (Anonymous 1884: 5)

For ten years Rosalie Schoenflies worked at the newspaper *Rigasche Zeitung*, which was the most significant voice of German-language newspapers in Latvia in circulating art news and art-related opinions. In her articles, she analysed the activities of the Riga Art Society, popularised and examined illustrated publications from the library of the Riga Art Society and those on offer at book stores, reflected on the significance of photographic reproductions of artworks in cultural education, and informed about discoveries in art history, current events and significant figures in the art world of Germany. (Schoenflies 1885a: 1; Schoenflies 1885b: 1; Schoenflies 1887c: 1–2; Ābele 2019: 61–62)

In the first half of the 1880s, Schoenflies delivered several series of art history lectures for women at the *Jung-Stillingsche Zeichenschule* (Jung-Stilling drawing school). The school was founded in 1873 by local artist Elise von Jung-Stilling (1829–1904), and initially was intended for women only, but from 1895 onwards it also accepted male students. (Jung-Stilling 1895: 3) It was the first art school in the southern Baltic region to be established by a woman and it laid the foundations for art education in Latvia. (Howard 2006: 112)

In 1883, the *Rigasche Zeitung* reported on a second course of lectures being offered by Rosalie Schoenflies at the Jung-Stilling drawing school. The lectures were intended for both students of the school and other women interested in art history, and were scheduled to run from September to May. The programme included lectures on the art of antiquity, mainly works of ancient Greek art, to which the examples of ancient Egyptian and Asian art, as well as the art of ancient Rome, were added for

better understanding and comparison. Introducing the programme, the newspaper *Rigasche Zeitung* wrote: "The treatment of a subject, as we know, is determined by the wish to reveal the cultural-historical basis and spiritual specificity of the people from which art grows, also to emphasise aesthetic viewpoints, not just in order to give knowledge of art objects and art-historical facts, but also to promote deeper understanding and development of taste."¹ (Anonymous 1883: 9) In 1885/1886, Schoenflies also offered a lecture course on Renaissance art, both of Italy and from the North of the Alps. (Anonymous 1885b: 5)

Around 1887, Rosalie Schoenflies left Riga, but her articles from Rome were still being published in the *Rigasche Zeitung*, describing not only her visit to the studio of the Estonian sculptor August Weizenberg (1837–1921), but also the treasures of art in Kassel seen on her way to Rome. (Schoenflies 1887a: 1–2; Schoenflies 1887b: 1) Later she continued to work as a journalist and women's rights activist in Germany. For example, in 1896 she was one of the organizers of the *Internationaler Kongress für Frauenwerke und Frauenbestrebungen* (International Congress of Women's Works and Aspirations) in Berlin and the head of a commission that compiled a collection of speeches, reports and discussions from the congress. (Schoenflies et al. 1897) Topics included the state of the feminist movement around the world, schooling for girls and women, women in industry, philanthropy, the legal status of women, women writers and peace activists, dress reform, and moral issues. Rosalie Schoenflies herself was represented in the collection of articles with her lecture on the craft school for girls in Riga. (Schoenflies et al. 1897: 227–229)

Bertha Noelting

In the late 1890s and early 1900s, public art history lectures in Riga were also offered by another woman from Germany, teacher and writer Bertha Noelting (also Nölting). She was born in Allermöhe near Hamburg, and worked as a teacher in Pinneberg, Hamburg, Braunschweig, Helmstedt, Karlsruhe and Gießen. Between 1876 and 1915, Bertha Noelting lived in Riga, where she worked as a teacher and also wrote poetry, publishing her poems under the pseudonym 'E. Heldt'. (Hagedsted 2011) In 1878, her collection of poems *Ewige Liebe: Novelle*

1 In the original German: "Für die Behandlung des Stoffes ist, unseres Wissens, das Bestreben maßgebend, den culturgeschichtlichen Boden und die geistige Eigenart des Volkes, aus der die Kunst erwachsen, mit zur Anschauung zu bringen, auch ästhetische Gesichtspunkte hervortreten zu lassen, so daß nicht nur die Kenntniß der Kunstgegenstände und der kunstgeschichtlichen Thatfachen, sondern auch die Erschließung eines tieferen Verständnisses und die Bildung des Geschmacks erstrebt wird." English translation quoted after: Äbele 2019: 61

in Versen (Riga: Verlag von J. Deubner) was published; in 1884, the collection *Verwehte Spuren: Drei epische Dichtungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Grobel) followed; and in 1889 – the collection *Zurück in's Leben: Novelle in Versen und andere Dichtungen* (Riga: N. Kymmel). At the turn of the 20th century, Noelting's poems were also published in other collections such as *Baltische Dichtungen* (Riga: Verlag von L. Hoerschelmann, 1896) and *Riga und Umgegend in Wort und Bild* (Riga: Deubner, [ca. 1900]).

Press publications show that in the early 1880s, Bertha Noelting offered courses in the art of reading for ladies, advertising herself as a student of the Austrian reciter, actor and speech teacher Alexander Starkosh (1840–1909); she also presented lectures on important works of classical literature. (Anonymous 1881: 7) For some time she gave lectures on art history to the students of the previously mentioned craft school for girls. (Cera 1903: 1) But in 1897–1904, advertisements for public lectures on art history were also published in the local newspapers. In the rooms of the Riga Art Society and the venues of other public organisations, Noelting offered a series of lectures on both the art of the previous centuries and important 19th century artists and art movements. For example, in early 1897 she gave a lecture on the typological development of the representation of Christ in art; in the first half of 1899, throughout the lecture series she spoke about German painters of the second half of the 19th century such as Moritz von Schwind (1804–1871), Anselm Feuerbach (1829–1880) and Arnold Böcklin (1827–1901); in the autumn of the same year, she gave lectures on the Pre-Raphaelites, the group of English painters founded in mid-19th century who sought a return to the values of 15th century Italian art; in 1900, she lectured about the pioneers of the mid-19th century French Naturalist movement in landscape painting, the Barbizon School, and the French Impressionists; in the spring of 1901, she introduced the ancient Greek sculptors Phidias (c. 480–430 BC) and Praxiteles (working 370–330 BC) and their time; but in March 1904, she offered a lecture on contemporary sculpture, in the advertisement for this lecture mentioning artists such as the German Max Klinger (1857–1920), the Frenchman Albert Bartholomé (1848–1928) and the Belgian Constantin Meunier (1831–1905). These varied lecture topics show that she had extensive knowledge and was interested in painters and sculptors of the most important art movements and schools of the 19th century, as well as sacred iconography and the sculpture of antiquity.

Bertha Noelting not only gave public lectures, but also published articles on art history, the most important of which is a brochure on frescoes by the Italian Renaissance painter Andrea del Sarto (1486–1530), *Andrea del Sarto's Fresken im Chioströ dello Scalzo zu Florenz*, published in Riga in 1902. The reason for this publication was an exhibition of copies of frescoes painted by the Baltic German artist Elly von Loudon. In her article, published in a 24-page brochure, Noelting presented Andrea del Sarto's

biography, detailed the painting qualities and stories of all the frescoes, and described Elly von Loudon's work on making copies. (Noelting 1902)

Elly von Loudon

Baroness Helene (Elly) von Loudon (fig. 1) was born in Zelgauska (Selgowsky) Manor, and studied art with the painter Julius Döring in Jelgava and at the St Petersburg Academy of Arts in the 1880s. She then travelled to Europe to visit art cities such as Brussels, Amsterdam and Paris, improved her painting skills in the private studios of several French artists and anatomical knowledge at lectures at the Sorbonne University in Paris, and returned to St Petersburg, where she worked briefly as a portrait painter. (Neumann 1902: 144) Around 1890, Elly von Loudon settled in Florence and specialized in the works of Andrea del Sarto.

Monika Hunnius (1858–1934) from Riga, at the time a singing teacher but later a writer, visited Elly von Loudon in early 1896 during a trip to Italy. In her autobiographical novel *Mein Weg zur Kunst* (Heilbronn: E. Salzer, 1925), she writes that the painter in Florence lived together with another Baltic woman – sculptor Olga Philippow von der Launitz (1854–1943), who inspired the writer's travel companion Doris von

Fig. 1. Portrait of Elly von Loudon.
Photo by Miss Angiolini in Florence, ca. 1902.
Private collection



Krüdener (date of birth and death not known) to study sculpture. Visitors from Riga visited the salon of both Baltic women artists, and Elly von Loudon would take them on excursions to old, forgotten churches, showing the art treasures there. In one such chapel, in the *Chiostro dello Scalzo*, von Loudon copied damaged frescoes by Andrea del Sarto. The cycle of frescoes consisted of 16 paintings; the murals comprised twelve scenes from the life of St John the Baptist and four figures representing Christian virtues.

In late 1902 and early 1903, the Riga Art Society organised an exhibition of Elly von Loudon's artworks in Riga. It featured copies of the cycle of frescoes, which were in their original size (2.5–3 metres high), and she had worked for them for 11 years. (Noelting 1902: 21–24) With the help of the Riga Art Society, the exhibition later travelled to Austria to be displayed at the *Genossenschaft der bildenden Künstler Wiens* (Vienna Artists' Society). (Acta des Rigaschen Kunstvereins 1902–1903: 220) A few months later, an album of photo reproductions was released in Riga. (Anonymous 1903) (fig. 2)

As Berta Noelting wrote in her brochure, by the time when Elly von Loudon decided to copy Andrea del Sarto's frescoes, they had already suffered greatly, so the

Fig. 2. A copy by Elly von Loudon after a fresco by Andrea del Sarto, ca. 1890–1903. From: *Johannes der Täufer nach den Fresken Andrea del Sarto's gemalt von E. v. Loudon*. Riga: Hebensperger & Co, [1903]. The University of Latvia Library



artist initially spent three years researching del Sarto's drawings and engravings in various European private and public collections. (Noelting 1902: 22) In her copies of frescoes, she not only depicted the parts of the paintings that had survived, but she also reconstructed the missing details, based on the works of the Renaissance artist that she had researched. Von Loudon described her work on painting the copies in several letters sent to the organizers of the exhibition, the Riga Art Society, and partly published in the local press. (Mengden 1902: 1; Mengden 1903: 5) Presenting her work, she wrote: "As much as it lay in my poor powers, which relate to a del Sarto like one to an indeterminable number, I have naturally not only tried to portray the style and character of the great Andrea, but have also proceeded technically following his traces."² (Loudon 1902: 26 rev.–27)

At the end of the letter, describing her motivation to paint copies of the frescoes rather than to restore them in real life, Elly von Loudon also presented her views with regard to art restoration, which were quite progressive at the time: "Finally, the art-historical motivation for my attempt to restore all the missing and more or less destroyed parts of the magnificent frescoes in the Scalzo: when a *capolavoro* is on the verge of destruction, I am deeply convinced that it is sacrilegious to attempt to restore it with any kind of repair. The slightest and most discreet retouching of a masterpiece deprives it of its artistic and art-historical value. However, it is a different matter to make an absolutely accurate copy which, on the basis of conscientiously collected material, supplements the destroyed parts of the original in the copy. Only in this way can a masterpiece be preserved for posterity without being damaged. Certainly, as always, one must do justice to the intention and try to be lenient towards the deed and the ability."³ (Loudon 1902: 30 rev.)

2 In German: "So viel es in meinen armen Kräften lag, die zu einem del Sarto sich verhalten, wie 1 zu einer unnenbaren Zahl, habe ich natürlich nicht allein Stil, Charakter des großen Andrea getreu wiederzugeben versucht, sondern bin auch technisch genau aus seinen Spuren vorgegangen." (*English translation by Jennifer Stinglwagner*).

3 In German: "Zum Schluß noch die kunsthistorische Motivirung meines Versuches, die herrlichen Fresken im Scalzo in allen fehlenden und mehr oder weniger zerstörten Partien wiederherzustellen: Wenn ein capolavoro der Zerstörung entgegengeht, so ist es nach meiner tiefsten Ueberzeugung eine Frevelthat, mit irgend welcher Reparatur die Zerstörung ausflicken zu wollen. Die leiseste und discreteste Retouche an einem Meisterwerk benimmt demselben seinen künstlerischen und kunsthistorischen Werth. Ein ander Ding aber ist eine absolut getreue Copie, die auf Grand gewissenhaft gesammelten Materials die Zerstörten Theile des Originals in der Copie ergänzt. Nur auf diesem Wege wird ein Meisterwerk, ohne geschädigt zu werden, der Nachwelt erhalten. Hier, wie immer freilich, muß man dem Willen Gerechtigkeit gönnen, und der That, dem Können nachsichtig entgegenzugehen versuchen." (*English translation by Jennifer Stinglwagner*).

Fig. 3. Article by Elly von Loudon in journal *Illustrierte Beilage der Rigaschen Rundschau*, 1910, No. 3

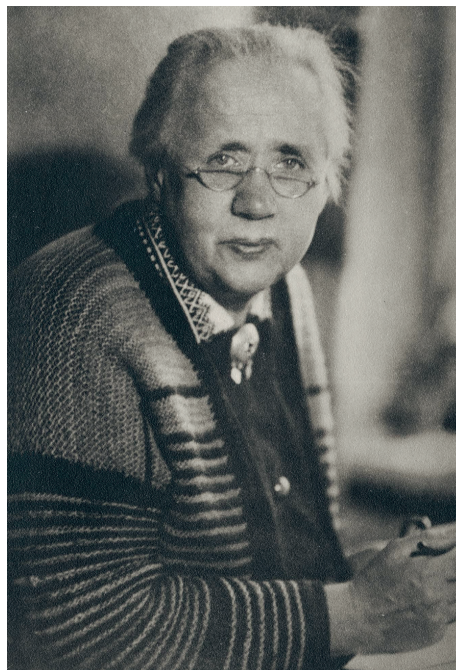


Elly von Loudon's interests included not only Andrea del Sarto's legacy and Renaissance fresco painting, but also other monuments of Italian art (fig. 3). Between 1904 and 1911, she published several articles in the magazine *Illustrierte Beilage der Rigaschen Rundschau* (1900–1914) about the frescoes of Andrea del Castagno (1421–1457), tombstones from the 15th–17th centuries, and some works by Renaissance and Baroque artists etc. (Loudon 1903: 33–34; Loudon 1904a: 34–35; Loudon 1904b: 43–46; Loudon 1905: 12; Loudon 1910: 17–19; Loudon 1911: 30–32)

Susa Walter

At the beginning of the 20th century, one of the most prolific commentators on art was Sophia Helene (Susa) Walter (fig. 4), an art teacher, painter and applied artist. She was born in Tartu in Estonia, in the family of Piers Walter (1836–1879), a doctor of medicine. Her brother Roland Walter (1872–1919) initially studied medicine, but later turned to art, studying in Berlin, and became involved in the Baltic art scene at the beginning of the 20th century. Susa Walter entered the Riga art scene at the very beginning of the 20th century, after first studies in her native Tartu, further education at the *Königliche Kunstschule zu Berlin* (Royal School of

Fig. 4. Portrait of Susa Walter.
Photo by unknown author, 1920s–1930s.
Herder-Institut, Bildarchiv, HI 135496



Arts in Berlin) and then with several Berlin artists, including influential landscape painter Walter Leistikow (1865–1908).

Shortly after moving to Riga, Susa Walter opened her own art studio, where her students included many actively working women artists. She also gave lectures on various issues of art history and contemporary art, both in her studio and sharing them also more widely. For example, in the summer of 1907, she gave lectures on 19th century art to more than 200 participants, teachers from the Baltic, Russia and Germany, as part of a holiday course in Tallinn (*Revaler Ferienkurse*). (Anonymous 1907: 1) The courses were organized by the *Estländischer Deutscher Schulverein* (German School Association in Estonia) and lasted for four weeks. The photograph of the organizers and lecturers of the course (fig. 5), commented in detail by Margot Mecketh (1889–1956), a teacher and participant of the course, also shows the graphic artist and painter Charlotte Hoepfener (1863–1934), who introduced the methodology of teaching of drawing and modelling, also Mary von Haken (c. 1852–1934), a teacher and author of articles in the newspaper *Düna-Zeitung*, the magazine *Rigasche Hausfrauen-Zeitung*, and others. The teacher Mecketh, already mentioned, also remembered Susa Walter's art studio and her lectures on art history, writing that the studio soon after its opening became "the magnet for all young people interested

Fig. 5. Organizers and lecturers of the Tallinn holiday course (*Revaler Ferienkurse*). Photo by unknown author, 1907. 1st row from the left: Susa Walter from Tartu, Bertha Fleischhut, Ella Fritz from Riga, Mary von Haken from Riga, Charlotte Hoepener from Tallinn; 2nd row from the left: two unknown persons, Mr. Lawrinowicz from Jelgava (?), Sophie Dehio from Tartu, Olga Kalning from Kasan, Alexander Eggers from Tallinn, Karl Girgensohn from Tartu. *Herder-Institut, Dokumentensammlung, DSHI 100 Campe 18a Bl. 213*



in arts. [...] And it was here where ceramics were made, where people played 'Piff-paff-poltri' in the shadow play, but it was also here that large circles gathered in the afternoons to listen to Susa Walter's art history lectures, which seemed quite new to many people. [...] For 15 years I myself listened to art history in Susa's studio once a week in afternoon classes."⁴ (Mecketh 1951: 84 rev.–85) Walter also worked as a teacher of applied arts at the Elise von Jung–Stilling drawing school and its successor, the Riga City Art School; she left the school shortly after Vilhelms Purvītis (1872–1945) took over duties as the school principal in 1909.

Until World War I, Susa Walter's exhibition reviews appeared regularly in the local German-language newspapers *Düna-Zeitung* and *Rigasche Zeitung*. According to art historian Kristiāna Ābele, "Susa Walter, perhaps even more often than Wilhelm Sawitzky [(1879–1947), an author of reviews of cultural events in newspaper *Rigasche Rundschau*], went to exhibitions in apartments, newly established art salons and

4 In German: "Dieses Atelier wurde bald der Magnet aller jungen Menschen, die sich für Kunst interessierten. [...] Hier entstanden auch keramische Dinge, hier spielte man "Piff-paff-poltri" im Schattentheater, hier aber fanden sich nachmittags auch große Kreise zusammen, die der Kunstgeschichtsvorträgen von Susa Walter – die vielen ganz neuartig erschienen – folgten. [...] 15 Jahre lang habe ich selbst in Susas Atelier einmal in der Woche in einer Nachmittagsstunde Kunstgeschichte gehört." (*English translation by Jennifer Stinglwagner*).

similar 'informal places' out of collegial interest." (Åbele 2012a: 112) Her writings are characterized by keen observation and at the same time a reserved style of analysis. In reviews of exhibitions, she offered harsh, seemingly cool and subjective judgments that were independent of those of the artistic authorities of the day, therefore, as Åbele has pointed out, her reviews were more suitable not for cultivating public taste, but for professional use. (Åbele 2012a: 112) In Walter's writings, the emphasis was often on coloristic values, which were also important in her own painting.

Susa Walter was actively involved on the local art scene. She participated in most exhibitions of the *Baltischer Künstlerbund* (Baltic Artists' Union, founded in 1910), and also participated in the almost all fine arts and crafts exhibitions of local German artists that took place in Latvia in the first two decades of the 20th century. In 1910, Walter was elected chairwoman of the *Künstlerinnen-Klub* (Women Artists' Club), and held this position until the outbreak of World War I. The club was founded in 1907, and the official register states that its purpose was "artistic and social activities". (Richter 1908: 251) Unfortunately, no further information can be found about the activities of the Women Artists' Club or its members, only the officials are known from historical Riga address books.

As Margot Mecketh wrote, Susa Walter moved to Berlin in 1920, where "Susa not only continued to create her beautiful embroideries and artistic flowers as she had learned to do in Paris, but immersed herself in seriously scientific works from the Prussian State Library for a decade to write her life's work *Die konstanten Elemente in der Kunst* (The Constant Elements in Art)."⁵ (Mecketh 1951: 85 rev.) The title of the work suggests that it was a theoretical essay, but unfortunately its contents is unknown, as the unpublished manuscript of the work perished during World War II. (Lenz 1970: 850)

Conclusion

This article was an attempt to examine and collect together for the first time the life stories and works of the first four women of German origin whose public activities in Latvia were in the field of art history, and to mark their place in the research of Latvian art history. The biographies of all four women: Rosalie Schoenflies, Bertha Noelting, Elly von Loudon and Susa Walter are different, but

5 In German: "[.] bis sie beide 1920 nach Berlin übersiedelt, wo Susa nicht nur weiter ihre schönen Stickereien und künstlerische Blumen schuf, wie sie das in Paris erlernt hatte, sondern sich im schwer wissenschaftliche Werke der Preußischen Staatsbibliothek ein Jahrzehntlang versenkte und ihr Lebenswerk schrieb "Die konstanten Elemente in der Kunst"". (English translation by Jennifer Stinglwagner).

there are also some common features among them. All four have in common an interest in art history and were members of local German society.

The first two, Rosalie Schoenflies and Bertha Noelting, came from Germany in the 1870s to live and work in Latvia temporarily; nothing is known about their origins and level of education, but it can be assumed that they may have been educated in pedagogy. It is supposed that they knew each other because both were active participants in Riga's cultural life and were connected with the *Mädchen-Gewerbe-Schule des Jungfrauenvereins* – Schoenflies as one of the founders of the school, and Noelting as a teacher. The latter most certainly had connections also with the painter Elly von Loudon, especially at the time when an exhibition of von Loudon's copies of frescoes was being prepared in Riga and Noelting wrote a brochure about the Renaissance frescoes she had copied. The correspondence of Elly von Loudon and Bertha Noelting with the Riga Art Society regarding the organization of exhibitions in Riga and in Vienna, and the accompanying brochure and album of reproductions have been preserved in the Latvian State Historical Archives, and it clearly shows a link between the two. (*Acta des Rigaschen Kunstvereins 1902–1903*)

Unlike the first two women educators working in art history – the women who entered the field around 1900, Susa Walter and Elly von Loudon were educated as artists. They certainly knew about each other, but probably did not know each other personally or had met in person, because at the time Susa Walter moved to Riga, von Loudon was already living and working in Florence, although she did maintain ties with her homeland.

Three of the four women written about in this article were not married, thus they did not have to worry about the wellbeing of a family and they could devote more time to professional activities. The exception was Rosalie Schoenflies, who was married to a university professor; she had started an active public life already during her marriage, but probably after becoming a widow she had to focus more on the jobs where she could earn money – presenting series of art history lectures at the Jung-Stilling drawing school and writing for the newspaper *Rigasche Zeitung*.

Teaching and giving public lectures on art history are occupations shared by all women discussed in this article, except for Elly von Loudon. This can be explained by the fact that she was of noble descent and probably from a wealthy family, while the other women had to earn their own living. Employment in art education, and occasionally also work as exhibition reviewers in periodicals, where Susa Walter was actively involved, was an important source of income for those women who did not come from wealthy circles or had lost their breadwinners, the work allowing them to be financially secure.

All women discussed in this article showed a keen interest in art history from

the previous centuries – the sculpture of antiquity, Italian Renaissance sculpture and fresco painting, etc. However, Bertha Noelting and Susa Walter also gave lectures and wrote on recent, 19th-century art. In terms of occupation, Elly von Loudon stands out for her research of historical works of art: frescoes and drawings by Andrea del Sarto, visiting a number of European museums and private collections for the purpose of seeking out del Sarto's works, and then for many years copying frescos and reconstructing the lost sections of the damaged frescoes in her copies of the frescos.

Susa Walter, on the other hand, is the only woman discussed in this article who in her work also focused on local Baltic art, at that time researched only by men such as Wilhelm Neumann and a few others. Walter not only described and analysed art exhibitions of her time in press articles, but also turned to art theory, writing a book on the constant elements in art; its manuscript has not survived.

In the late 19th century and during the first two decades of the 20th century, among the women involved in introducing art history and reviewing current exhibitions, members of the local Baltic German community dominated, but in the interwar period, an increasing number of women of Latvian origin turned to art criticism and art history. Hermīne Zālīte (née Balode) must be named as the first Latvian woman who, in the late 19th century, actively started to promote knowledge of significant works of art. In the monthly *Mājas Viesa Mēnešraksts* (1895–1905) edited by her husband, doctor of philosophy Pēteris Zālīte (1864–1939), she was responsible for the visual design, selected artworks for illustrations and commented on them, wrote exhibition reviews and notes about travels abroad. Her dream was to study painting in Italy, but instead she mastered the autotype and zincography in Germany, as these were needed for a modern magazine. (Aspazija 1932: 4; Briedis 2003: 642) At the beginning of the 20th century, Matilde Jureviča-Priedīte turned to art criticism. She was a teacher with some education in music and painting, and in 1902–1904, she submitted several "lengthy, detailed and accurate articles on major exhibitions" for the local Latvian daily press, using the pseudonym 'Matilda'. (Buša 2011: 39)

It is interesting that over the following period, the writing of local art history in the Latvian language also developed, and this was mainly done by men. Women continued to work with the history of European art, for example, Lauma Juliana Sloka (1891–1960), who during World War I completed art history studies at Moscow University with the archaeologist and researcher of ancient art, Professor Woldemar (Woldemar) Malmberg (1860–1921) and in the early 1920s wrote the first book in Latvian on the history of prehistoric and ancient art (Sloka 1922), or Olga Rudovska (1893–1963), who worked in the Cabinet of Art of the University of Latvia and focused on the sculpture of antiquity in her research (Rudovska 1937; Rudovska 1939). During this period, several Latvian women also worked in art criticism, for instance

Maija Cielēna-Eliase (1889–1988) who also wrote the first book in Latvian dedicated to medieval art and contributed to the academic edition of art history of the world (Cielēna-Eliase 1924; Purvītis 1934); or women who published articles dedicated to art and aesthetics, such as Milda Palēviča (1889–1972), who was the first doctor of philosophy and a pioneer of aesthetics as an academic discipline in Latvia. Thus it can be seen that in the interwar period Latvian women art historians followed even more intensively the path that their predecessors, women of German origin working in the field of art history, had begun in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

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The Contribution of Feature Writer Laura Marholm to the Discourse on Women's Emancipation in the German-language Press of Latvia at the Turn of the 19th and 20th Centuries

Publicistes Lauras Marholmas pienesums sieviešu emancipācijas diskursā Latvijas vācu presē 19. un 20. gadsimta mijā

Keywords:

playwright,
translator,
difference feminism,
anti-feminism,
women's activism,
'the woman question',
female psychology

Atslēgvārdi:

dramaturģe,
tulkotāja,
diferences feminisms
antifeminisms,
sieviešu aktīvisms,
"sieviešu jautājums",
sieviešu psiholoģija

Summary

The Riga-born playwright, feature writer and translator Laura Marholm (1854–1928) was a distinctive albeit contradictory public figure and was well-known in Latvia, Germany and Scandinavia. With the conviction that a woman can succeed in reaching her goals through the intercession of an intermediary, most often a man, Marholm was in conflict with representatives of the women's emancipation movement. Her contemporaries called her an anti-feminist; reference literature listed her as a difference feminist who, among other things, contributed to the promotion and development of the cult of motherhood. In Latvia, press publications referred to Marholm as an authority in the field of women's psychology. She was a popular amateur who dealt with a fashionable theme of the era – psychology. Together with her husband, Swedish writer Ola Hansson (1860–1925), she corresponded with famous personalities in Scandinavia, Germany and France. The Hanssons came into conflict with many of them which, in turn, increasingly pushed to the couple into creative self-isolation. This article investigates Marholm's influence on the discourse about women's emancipation in the German-language press of Latvia from the late 1870s up until the late 1920s.

Kopsavilkums

Rīgā dzimusī dramaturģe, publiciste un tulkotāja Laura Marholma (1854–1928) bija spilgta lai arī pretrunīga personība un pazīstama Latvijā, Vācijā, Skandināvijā. Ar pārliecību, ka sieviete savus mērķus var sasniegt ar otra cilvēka starpniecību, visbiežāk vīrieša, viņa nonāca konfliktā ar sieviešu emancipācijas kustības pārstāvēm. Laikabiedri dēvēja viņu par antifeministi; izpētes literatūra viņu ierindo kā diferencēto feministi, kura cita vidū deva pienesumu mātes kulta veicināšanā un attīstībā. Ap 1900. gadu daudzas preses publikācijas Latvijā atsaucās uz Marholmu kā uz autoritāti sieviešu psiholoģijas jomā. Viņa bija populāra amatiere, kura aizskāra laikmeta modes tēmu – psiholoģiju. Rakstnieces apgalvojumi mainījās līdz ar viņas personisko pieredzi. Viņa kopā ar vīru, zviedru rakstnieku Ūlu Hansonu (*Ola Hansson*, 1860–1925) komunicēja ar pazīstamām personībām Skandināvijā, Vācijā un Francijā. Ar daudzām no tām pāris nonāca konfliktos, kas savukārt arvien vairāk noveda viņus līdz radošai pašizolācijai. Rakstā pētīta Lauras Marholmas ietekme uz sieviešu emancipācijas jautājumu diskursu Latvijas vācu valodā izdotajā presē no 1870. gadu beigām līdz 1920. gadu baigām.

Introduction

The obituary devoted to Laura Marholm in the newspaper *Rigasche Rundschau* in October 1928 imparted to readers news of the recently deceased writer who had been popular at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, but had now fallen into obscurity: "At a time when the women's movement in Latvia was at the centre of attention and almost everything had been set at extremes: blue-stockings or little housekeepers, Laura Marholm was almost the only woman who, with the greatest determination, emphasised women's powerful erotic tendencies and, because of this, determinedly warned against the kind of women's emancipation prevalent at the time that basically envisaged intellectual learning. In old Riga, the freedom that Laura Marholm demanded for women aroused horror and disapproval, and in 'certain circles' her books were read in great secrecy, [books] such as, [for example], *Zur Psychologie der Frau* and others, likewise her many articles on the subject that were published in German newspapers."¹ (Eckardt 1928)

Born in Riga and later actively working both in Denmark and in Germany, the playwright, feature writer and translator Laura Marholm (1854–1928), was a distinctive albeit contradictory public figure of her time, especially in the context of the history of women's emancipation. Her reflections on a woman's role – the fulfilment of her goals through an intermediary, most usually a man – elicited contradictory responses among her peers and contemporaries. Her ideal was woman as the inspiration for a genius, a man. Although she did speak about the interaction and further development between two independent, mature personalities, the woman nonetheless was supposed to be subordinate to the man. At the same time, Marholm criticised the traditional upbringing that stifled a woman's natural instincts, for example, her sexuality and quest for love.

One of the most prominent feminists of the German women's movement of the time, Hedwig Dohm (1831–1919), criticised Marholm's views and deemed her an 'anti-feminist' (Dohm 1902: 84–104). Present-day researchers Ebba Witt-Brattström and Sophie Wennerscheid have dubbed Marholm a 'difference feminist'

1 "In einer Zeit, in der die Frauenbewegung im Mittelpunkt der Interessen stand und so ziemlich alles auf die beiden Spitzen gestellt war: Blaustrumpf oder Haustöchterlein, war Laura Marholm so ziemlich die einzige Frau, die mit der größten Entschiedenheit die starke erotische Veranlagung des Weibes betonte und deswegen vor der damals üblichen Frauenemanzipation, die es vor allem auf geistige Schulung absah, auf das entschiedenste warnte. Die Freiheit, die Laura Marholm für das Weib forderte, erregte natürlich im alten Riga Grausen und Entsetzen und man las bei uns "in den Kreisen" nur sehr heimlich ihre Bücher, wie "Zur Psychologie der Frau" und andere, sowie die vielen Artikel, die sie uz diesem Thema in deutschen Zeitschriften veröffentlichte." (Eckardt 1928)



Fig. 1. Portrait of Laura Marholm, 1889. Brantly, Susan. *The Life and Writings of Laura Marholm*. Beiträge zur nordischen Philologie, Bd. 21. Basel, Frankfurt am Main: Helbing & Lichtenhahn Verlag, 1991.

(in German *Differenzfeminismus*) (Witt-Brattström 2007: 147; Wennerscheid 2014: 134, 146). This concept, as opposed to the description used previously, does not repudiate nor simply express negative criticism about her activities and views, but rather analyses her authorial position and includes her in the overall panorama of women's activism in the period around 1900.

Without a study of Marholm's activities, a comprehensive overview of the women's emancipation movement at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries in Latvia, and likewise in Germany and Western Europe, would be incomplete. Marholm's articles and books on women's psychology were popular at the time, they were widely read, talked about and much discussed in Latvia also – both in German-language as well as Latvian-language periodicals (F. K. 1895; W. 1902; Seska 1914; Celms 1937).

For the purposes of this article, the author when researching press publications from the turn of the 19th-20th centuries takes the women's emancipation discourse to mean the consideration of issues relating to a woman's intellectual, social, economic, political independence and the recognition of equal rights and opportunities, for instance, the right to study at university (Becker-Cantarino 2010: 70).²

² During the period in question, not all of these freedoms were available to men as well, as Latvia and the Baltic in the 19th century was subjugated by Tsarist Russia, with a class system of social inequality in existence. In this article the focus is on women's equal rights in comparison with those granted to men, which can be compared in a situation of social inequality as well.

Although during Marholm's time the concept of 'women's emancipation' did exist, the term most often used was 'the woman question' (in German: *Frauenfrage*).³

For the greater majority of the reading and writing world Laura Marholm ceased to exist in 1905, when she and her spouse Ola Hansson (1860–1925) were constrained to spend several months in psychiatric institutions, after which she was no longer actively published. Some 20th century history of literature compendiums and studies have even presented 1905 as the year of her death (Brantly 1991: 1–3). Marholm's return to the history of literature and the women's movement began in the 1970s–1980s, and has continued, with increasing intensity, until the present day. This evolved in connection with studies about the creative output of her husband Ola Hansson, and his influence on Scandinavian and German literature (Brantly 1991: 1–2; Fuchs 1997), with particular emphasis on the writer's Berlin Period at the beginning of the 1890s (Glossmann 1999; Niemiowski 2000). Another direction of study is related to a more intensive and in-depth research of the history of women's activism, where it is Marholm's contribution to Scandinavian literature (drama, journalism) as a female writer that is highlighted (Scott-Jones 1982; Diethel 1996; Bland, Müller-Adams 2003; Colvin 2003; Witt-Brattström 2007). Studies carried out during the last ten years highlight Marholm's complex nature – her ability to be an active and animated communicator or networker – largely through written correspondence, her published works and personal contacts – in this way intensively shaping and influencing her own and her husband's spheres of activity, even if only for a brief period (Jiresch 2013; Wennerscheid 2014).

The book published in 1991 by language and literature scholar Susan Brantly, *The Life and Writings of Laura Marholm* (Brantly 1991), is currently the only existing monograph about the writer. The work was translated into German and came out in 2004 (with a 2nd edition printed in 2013)⁴ and it was produced by the association Kulturhistorischer Verein Friedrichshagen e.V which these days popularises Marholm's Berlin Period and her participation in the Friedrichshagen Poets' Circle (*Friedrichshagener*

3 In the latter half of the 19th century, the word 'emancipation' was popular in the press and much used, for example, when speaking of 'peasants' emancipation', 'Jewish emancipation' etc. The concept 'woman question' has been analysed by the Latvian culturologist Deniss Hanovs, revealing this to be a form of expression created by men (Hanovs 2002: 23); the usage of this term simplifies the discussion around issues of women's emancipation. Marholm herself, inter alia, has written about the 'men's question' (*Männerfrage*) in her work *Zur Psychologie der Frau. I* (Witt-Brattström 2007: 147: 155).

4 The German translation is technically poor, in particular the arrangement of the scientific framework. In order to understand both the text and framework, the English edition is necessary.

Dichterkreis). Former chairman of the association, Ronald Vierock, has published popular essays about her (Vierock [2014]; Brantly 2013: 7–18).⁵

This article analyses the influence Laura Marholm had on the discourse around the issues of women's emancipation in the German-language press of Latvia from the late 1870s up until the late 1920s, that is, starting from Marholm's first published writings until her death in 1928. The sources used in the research are press publications printed in Riga and in Liepāja.

The article consists of two basic narrative parts: the first presents an overview of the life of Laura Marholm and a description of her chief works. The second part is an analysis of the German-language press in Latvia that published articles about women's emancipation issues in the context of Marholm's activities; in this section Marholm's articles in the Latvian press are examined separately from reviews of her published works by other authors. The publications reviewed cannot claim to represent the German press in Latvia in its entirety, rather they are selected fragments, chosen according to certain criteria and presenting a precise insight into the attitudes adopted by German-language periodicals with regard to issues concerning women's emancipation. The criteria for selection were articles by Laura Marholm that had appeared in the German-language press of Latvia and references about her activities, reviews of her works or the application of her ideas, and the citation of them.

Marholm's life story and her chief published works

The Riga Period: up until 1885

Laura Marholm, birth name Laura Katarina Mohr, was born in Riga on 1 May, 1854 (19 April), in the family of Danish sea captain Fredrik Wilhelm Theodor Mohr (1820–1915) and his wife, Baltic-born German Amalie Mohr (nee Roeder, 1823–1897). As so many educated middle-class women of her time, Marholm was educated to be a home tutor. Her passions, however, were literature and the theatre, about which she learnt as an autodidact, despite her parents' – her mother in particular – efforts to stop her from doing so and to bring her up as a housewife according to the strict traditions of Baltic Germans (Brantly 1991: 8–10; Jiresch 2013: 367).

5 In the foreword to the German translation Vierock has expressed his own views about Marholm (Brantly 2013: 7–18). Unfortunately, Vierock's works lack precise references. Thus, for example, Vierock asserts, without foundation, that Marholm had been the inspiration for the famous work *The Scream* (1893) by the Norwegian painter Edvard Munch (1863–1944) (Vierock [2014]: 2). Munch himself has spoken about the evolution of this work and its inspirations, but Marholm was not mentioned (Plaga 2008: 90–93).

Apparently Marholm spent a great deal of her time in the Riga city library which formed part of the Dom (Cathedral) precinct (Reinhardt 1933). The city librarian Georg Berkholtz (1817–1886) was one of the founders and publishers of *Zeitung für Stadt und Land*, he was also either the publisher or editor of other periodicals as well: *Baltische Monatsschrift*, *Rigasche Zeitung*. The reading of *Baltische Monatsschrift*, as one of the leading publications of the Baltic press, definitely would have been part of Marholm's process of self-education during the Riga period. From the 1870s onwards the monthly also featured articles devoted to the issue of women's emancipation – both explanatory as well as negative, nonetheless it was possible to glean from them information about currents of Western European thought (Cohn 1870; Wilhelmi 2008: 50). In the context of Marholm, the publication in the *Baltische Monatsschrift* of a lecture by the socio-economist Gustav Cahn (1840–1919)⁶ at the Riga Polytechnicum in 1870 should be mentioned. In the lecture Cahn both expounded on the causes that gave rise to the women's movement (in his opinion, fundamentally poverty) and also made a comparison of the situation in Latvia and in Germany, concluding that women's emancipation in the Baltic was being hindered by poor socio-economic conditions and the "modest level of culture" ("*einfaucher Culturzustand*"; Cohn 1870: 413). Marholm's later criticism of Baltic provincialism echoed this notion of the spiritual poverty of her surroundings ("*geistige Armut meiner Umgebung*"; cited in Brantly 1991: 14). Later on, in the discourse of the Baltic press, and also in Marholm's works, some other ideas expressed by Cohn in the article can be recognised, for example, about "a woman's life vocation", when speaking of woman as mother ("*weiblicher Lebensberuf*"; Cohn 1870: 414). Although, as opposed to Marholm's later ideas about women's incapacity to be equal to men, Cohn did not deny that a woman had the natural ability to be so, however, he considered that philosophy and science were not accessible for women because of their inadequate education, that is, due to human-created conditions, and hence deemed this possibility as a misconception ("*Irrthum*"; Cohn 1870: 428). In Marholm's view, conversely, a woman was not able to be equal to a man because of her essential state of being, as decreed by nature.

Laura Marholm published her first literary works – plays and essays – in the late 1870s in Riga, under the pseudonym Leonhard Marholm. Part One *Gertrud Lindensten* of the play *Johann Reinhold Patkul* was published in 1878, Part Two – *Patkul's Tod* – in 1880, and even before the books were published, some excerpts of these appeared and were discussed in local periodicals. The censorship of the Russian Empire did not

6 Later, in Germany, Gustav Cohn became a well-known national-economist (socio-economist); at the beginning of his career, from 1869 until 1872 he was a docent at the Riga Politechnikum; inter alia in 1896 he published a book, *Deutsche Frauenbewegung*, in Berlin.

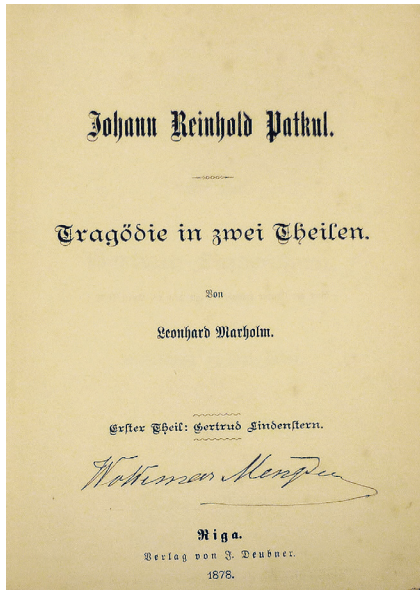


Fig. 2. First play of Laura (Leonhard) Marholm, published in 1878. Berlin State Library – Prussian Cultural Heritage

permit this, her first play, to be staged: it was only allowed to appear in print.⁷ The second play *Frau Marianne*, on the other hand, was staged in theatres in Riga, Berlin and Amsterdam ([Anon.] 1895a; Brantly 1991: 18–19).⁸

Literary critics remarked on the talent for language, and sharp and witty mind of “the new playwright” Leonhard Marholm, but there were mixed feelings about his touching on historic themes that Baltic Germans found sensitive (Schiemann 1884; Ungern-Sternberg 1882).⁹ It should be noted that both Marholm’s publishers and

7 It was representative of the ‘literary play’ typical of the time.

8 The play *Frau Marianne* had a history of controversy; the reviewer slated Marholm’s choice of a hero with a weak character, the poet Johann Christian Günther (1695–1723) (Ungern-Sternberg 1882: 602). It should be noted that this “hero” or motif was popular in the German language area in the late 19th century, when at least three plays were written about him, and Susan Brantly has pointed out that only one has been staged, that is, the one by Marholm, albeit without any particular success (Brantly 1991: 18–19). The play was published in book form in 1882 with the support of Marholm’s employer, the newspaper *Zeitung für Stadt und Land*, i.e. by its publishing house.

9 At the end of the 19th century, in parallel with Marholm’s play and reviews about it, and afterwards as well, the German-language press of Latvia published articles by historians on Johann Reinhold von Patkul (1660–1707), a historic figure of the so-called Swedish era in Livonia [present-day Latvia and Estonia] who was condemned to death. Against the background of the personality of von Patkul, the local Germans began to examine their history and presence in the Baltic, an especially topical subject given Tsarist Russia’s policy of Russification at this time.

the Riga critics knew that she – a woman – was the actual author.¹⁰ Similar criticism was expressed on publication of the short story *Im Dienste Zweier Herren. Eine Episode aus der Zeiten der Kalenderunruhen*, which appeared in the *Rigascher Almanach* (Marholm 1882). Alongside the chief male protagonists and real-life historic personages, Marholm assigned a significant place to her female heroines who for the most part were the fruits of her imagination, an embodiment of the ideal woman who sacrifices herself for the good of others. In the subtexts of the plays there was a perceptible socio-economic criticism of society (Scott-Jones 1980: 87–88; Jiresch 2013: 368, 389). In reviews of her work, however, the main emphasis was on the treatment of historic themes and personages, and against this background her female characters were only mentioned as if in passing.

The success of her first publications led to Marholm working as an editor, and also theatre and literature critic, at the Riga newspaper *Zeitung für Stadt und Land*¹¹ where she signed her articles with “–m.”, but in 1885: “L. Marholm” (Marholm 1885b; Reinharde 1933; Brantly 1991: 17). During the Riga period she was also published in other German-language publications in the region: the *Baltische Monatschrift* of Riga, the monthly *Nordische Rundschau* of Tallin, and the *St. Petersburger Zeitung*.

Susan Brantly considers that in 1883 a sea change occurred in Marholm’s worldview and moral stance, including her attitude towards women, when after an intensive study of history¹² and on making a closer acquaintance with the social realist dramas of Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906) she came to doubt the ruling authorities (Brantly 1991: 20–21, 39; Jiresch 2013: 368). As a no less significant event in Marholm’s life during her time in Riga, a painful personal experience must be mentioned: her first great love had not dared to propose to her due to his lowly social status and impecunious background. She felt very acutely the pain of the “injustices of the prevailing marriage system, where money and social status were primary considerations, but talent, character, and, most of all, love were merely of secondary importance”

10 For example, the librarian, publisher and editor Berkholtz.

11 From 1894 onwards *Zeitung für Stadt und Land* was published under the title *Rigasche Rundschau*.

12 After the failures (or relative success) with performances of her play *Frau Marianne*, Marholm turned to the study of history, as an autodidact, with increased enthusiasm (Brantly 1991: 19–20). In the Riga Cathedral precinct, alongside the library there was also the city archive. In about 1883 Marholm gave a series of lectures about Baltic history for women in Riga, a total of no less than 25 lectures. She later acknowledged that the writing of history in the Baltic was being politicised: “I recognised that the method by which the history of the Baltic was being driven here was motivated by a political goal rather than a critical assessment of history.” (“*Ich erkannte, daß die Methode, nach der baltische Geschichte bei uns getrieben wird, aus einem politischen Zweck, nicht aus historischer Kritik hervorging*”) (quoted after Brantly 1991: 20).

(Brantly 1991). This episode had an influence on the themes she later explored in her literary and journalistic works: both with regard to the necessity of a woman sacrificing herself for the benefit of the man – genius, in the case where financial circumstances were precarious, and also about the choice of married partner made by the woman herself in order to serve society more productively.

In 1885 Marholm moved to Denmark to live, as relations had broken down with her high-born Baltic publishers, including her benefactor Georg Berkholtz and also the publisher of the *Baltische Monatsschrift*, Friedrich Gustav Bienemann (1838–1903), because of the criticism she had expressed about the literary darlings they and other members of the social elite had taken to their hearts, about the provincialism of the region, and about their socio-economic tenets, for example, their endeavours to preserve the privileges of the Baltic German ruling class (Marholm 1885c; Eckardt 1928; Brantly 1991: 23–24)¹³

The Copenhagen Period (1885–1890)

In Copenhagen, with the assistance of writer Georg Brandes (1842–1927), Marholm gained access to Danish literary circles and met her future husband – ‘the misunderstood genius’ Ola Hansson. As Ronald Vierock writes, in Denmark “[.] for this purpose she, as a greying 34-year-old, acquired as husband, this Ola Hansson, who with his descriptions of perverse relationships (*Sensivita amorosa*) had made himself a social outcast in Sweden. Marholm, on the other hand, was excited about it.” (Vierock [2014]: 8).¹⁴ Shortly before she became acquainted with Hansson, in a letter to the Norwegian playwright Jonas Lie, (1833–1908), Marholm had admitted: “My strength doubles when I can bear another person up – one is of course, a woman, one must be something for others in order to feel life completely.” (quoted after Brantly 1991: 49, 65). In Hansson Marholm found such a person, through whom and with whom together she would be able to fulfil her life goals; the couple married in 1889. Marholm, though, had not wished to get married officially: she married under pressure from her father, who had threatened to cut off his financial support (Brantly 1991: 61).

13 Marholm defined herself as a representative of this community and its traditions, stating “we Balts” (“*wir Balten*”, Marholm 1885c), which during the period in question and in this context was understood to mean Baltic Germans.

14 “*So kommt sie mit damals für diesen Zweck schon eisgrauen 34 Jahren endlich auch an ihren Ehemann, eben jenen Ola Hansson, der sich gerade durch Schilderungen perverser Partnerschaften (“Sensitiva amorosa”) in Schweden unmöglich gemacht hatte. Laura Marholm ist aber davon begeistert [.]*”.

In Denmark Laura Marholm made her name as a translator, and she was later recognised as an invaluable propagator of Scandinavian literature “who labored valiantly, and erratically, to bring the North to Germany, and Germany to the North.” (George C. Schoolfield, quoted after Brantly 1991: 2). Marholm, among other things, made a considerable contribution to the dissemination and popularisation of the ideas of Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844–1900) in the German-language space, being the translator of essays by Hansson and Brandes (Fuchs 1999: 19; Plaga 2008: 45–46; Jiresch 2013: 371)¹⁵.

It was due to Marholm that Ola Hansson entered into the history as one of the first who revealed or explained Nietzsche in the German-language press. Even though the essay by Georg Brandes had been written earlier, based on his own lecture about Nietzsche, Marholm delayed translating it until the one by her husband had been published (Fuchs 1999: 19; Plaga 2008: 42).¹⁶ There were other instances where the biographers of both writers draw attention to the collaboration between the spouses, and also to the fact that Marholm had regarded herself and her husband as a literary partnership and basically worked as translator in order to promote her husband’s works (Brantly 1991: 70).

During the Copenhagen period, Marholm continued to contribute to periodicals published in Riga, Tallinn and St Petersburg; she also continued to translate works by Scandinavian authors for publication in the *St. Petersburger Zeitung* (Jiresch 2013: 389; Brantly 1991: 32, 37). From about 1884 onwards the writer signed her works

15 Nietzsche was unable to enjoy his late found popularity that had started to emerge only in the 1890s, as by then he was seriously ill.

16 The argument about this translation culminated in Hansson’s quarrel with Georg Brandes, which resulted in the Hanssons leaving Stockholm. At other stages of their life the couple came into conflict with prominent personalities, and instead of reconciliation they changed their place of residence. In history books these disputes are judged variously. Roland Vierock, for example, seeks to understand Marholm: “Throughout her life, Laura Marholm’s bold and uncompromising stand led her into conflicts with powerful personalities. This can happen. But her pride prevented any kind of reconciliation: the clash with Brandes drove her away from Copenhagen, with Strindberg – from Berlin, with Bjørnson – destroyed her in Bavaria.” (Vierock [2014]: 33) (*Laura Marholm bestimmtes und nachdrückliches Auftreten führt sie lebenslang immer wieder in Konflikte mit starken Persönlichkeiten. Das kann passieren. Aber ihr Stolz verhindert danach jede Auflösung: Der Konflikt mit Brandes hat sie aus Kopenhagen vertrieben, der mit Strindberg aus Berlin, der mit Bjørnstron ruiniert sie in Bayern.*) The people mentioned here are the Swedish playwright Johan August Strindberg (1849–1912) and the Norwegian writer and Nobel Prize laureate in 1903, Bjørnstjerne Martinius Bjørnson (1832– 1910). A comprehensive account of the disputes can be found in the monograph by Susan Brantly (Brantly 1991) and other publications about Marholm (Jiresch 2013). It must be noted that in their dispute with Brandes, the Hanssons revealed their anti-Semitism, and this did not enhance their popularity among their contemporaries; likewise, when their activities are analysed today, this aspect is taken into account (Fuchs 1997: 19).

'L. Marholm' (Marholm 1884), but at some time around 1890 the recently married Mrs Mohr-Hansson began to publish her writings under the pen-name 'Laura Marholm', that is, as a female author.¹⁷

The Germany Period (1891–1905)

The year 1890 was for the Hansson family a year of travelling and exploration in Switzerland, Germany and Sweden. During this time their son Ola (1890–1958) was born, and in 1891 the family moved to Friedrichshagen, near Berlin,¹⁸ and joined the poets' circle active there (*Friedrichshagener Dichterkreis*). The Berlin Period, up to 1893–1894, was for the Hanssons an active, creative and productive time: Laura was able to fulfil her mission as the handmaid of a genius, she became more self-confident and devoted herself to self-fulfilment, this time as the heart and soul of a literary salon (Glossmann 1999; Niemirowsky 2000). Many drafts and manuscripts for future books were developed during this time (Glossmann 1999; Niemirowsky 2000).

From 1894 onwards the Hansson's place of residence was in Bavaria, by the lake Schliersee, and here "they first became Catholic and then went mad" (Vierock [2014]: 15).¹⁹ From Catholicism Marholm derived new impulses for her theory of a woman's vocation. The couple converted from Protestantism to Catholicism in 1898, and the following year they moved to Munich (Brantly 2013: 149). In the history of literature and ideas their contribution to the promotion and development to the so-called cult of motherhood is appreciated. A woman's vocation to devote herself to a man in Marholm's interpretation extended to the duty to procreate and bring up children. At around the turn of the 19th–20th centuries and later, influenced by World War I and revolutions, for Marholm this vocation was further augmented with the mission to devote herself to society: in her ideas, Catholicism was intermingled with currents of social thought Brantly 2013: 16; Wennerscheid 2014).

During the Germany period Laura Marholm translated a great deal, she was widely published in the German press (reviews, essays) and she published 10 books, mostly devoted to women's psychology. Between 1894 and 1899 her best-selling book *Das Buch der Frauen: Zeitpsychologische Porträts* was reprinted at least five times

17 Already in 1886, in a discussion with Strindberg that appeared in the press it was noted that "Leonhard Marholm" was "Miss L. Mohr in Copenhagen" (*Politiken* 25.01.1888, quoted after Brantly 1991: 45). In this same year *Libausche Zeitung* included Marholm among the most talented female writers of the Baltic (E.K. 1888)

18 A suburb of present-day Berlin.

19 "wo sie zuerst katolisch und dann verrückt wurden"

in German, it was translated into eight languages and “reached a wider audience than anything Ola Hansson ever wrote” (Marholm 1899; Brantly 1991: 183).²⁰ The book featured portraits of six well-known women of the period: Ukrainian-French artist Marie Bashkirtseff (1858–1884), whose posthumously published diary in 1887 acquired cult status among European women’s activists; Swedish writer Anne Charlotte Edgren-Leffler (1849–1892); Italian actress Eleonora Duse (1858–1924); a female author writing in English under the pen name George Egerton (1859–1945); Norwegian-Danish writer Amalie Skram (1846–1905); and Russian mathematician and professor at Stockholm University, Sonja Kowalewska (1850–1891).

During the Germany period Marholm also produced *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter* (1895);²¹ the two-part *Zur Psychologie der Frau. I–II* (1897, 1903);²² and *Die Frauen in der sozialen Bewegung* (1900).²³ Her literary works during this time were the play *Karla Bühring* (1895); a collection of short stories, *Zwei Frauenerlebnisse* (1895); the autobiographical short story *Frau Lilly als Jungfrau, Gattin und Mutter* (1897); the collection

20 The first edition of the book was dated 1895, although it was actually published in mid-November, 1894 (Marholm 1899: VII; Brantly 1991: 106). Marholm updated the editions, and wrote additional introductions. The book was published in Swedish, English, Norwegian, Russian, Polish, Dutch, Czech and Italian; although Marholm had a contract for the book to be translated into French, it was never published (Brantly 1991: 106).

21 Seven poets were reviewed in the book: a Swiss, Gottfried Keller (1819–1890); a German, Paul Heyse (1830–1914); two Norwegians: Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906) and Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson; a Russian, Lev Tolstoy (1828–1910); a Swede, August Strindberg; and a Frenchman, Henry René Albert Guy de Maupassant (1850–1893). In the 2nd revised edition of 1896 an eighth poet was added, another Frenchman: Jules Amédée Barbey d’Aurevilly (1808–1889), as well as Marholm’s concluding essay ‘*Wo stehen wir?*’ (Marholm 1896: 271–295).

22 Marholm was not a specialist, i.e. had not received an education or had practised in the field of psychology, despite that she had read widely on the subject. The book was not highly regarded. Susan Brantly considers that “public taste was changing, and Marholm’s revelations about female sexuality were no longer titillating” (Brantly 1991: 151). After the lack of success of Part I, Marholm had been forced to write the second part by her publisher. In 1903, both parts were published as one book. The work is peculiar and it would be more appropriate to call it “*Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter II*, since five out of eight essays have to do with literature” (Brantly 1991: 159).

23 The book touches on the aspect of socio-economic consciousness more than her previous works. Marholm’s ideal society at that moment was “a type of Catholic socialism, which she believes to have existed in the Middle Ages.” Ideally women were wives and mothers, whose rights were defended by the Church. “A woman may find fulfilment through being the wife of a good man or a bride of Christ” (Brantly 1991: 153–154). Marholm had already presented a critique of society and ideas of social utopias in her book *Zur Psychologie der Frau*, writing about potential welfare institutions that would be financed by a special “men’s tax” and which would protect women and help them, about a women’s (sisterhood) state within the state (*Schwesternstaat im Staat*), and about “a universal feeling of motherhood” (*Allmüttergefühl*) (Brantly 1991: 142; Witt-Brattström 2007: 154).

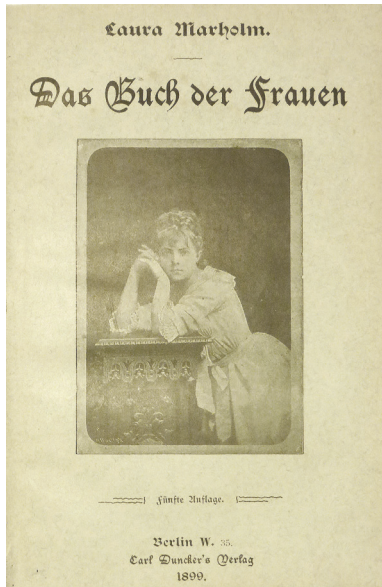


Fig. 3. The fifth reprint of the book *Das Buch der Frauen*, with a portrait of the Ukrainian-French artist Marie Bashkirtseff, 1899. Berlin State Library – Prussian Cultural Heritage

Der Weg nach Altötting und andere Novellen (1900);²⁴ and a collection of partly autobiographical short stories, *Buch der Toten* (1900).²⁵

Other authors referred to Marholm as an authority on women's psychology. Professional psychologists read her, too, and she communicated with them: she kept up correspondence and sent copies of her books, and they, for their part, used Marholm's writings as proof of women's weakness because these were, as Marholm herself had said, "a woman's utterances about her gender" (quoted after Brantly 1991: 111).²⁶ Marholm in her works mentioned, among other things, the so-called (ineluctable) differentiation or split of the modern woman's personality which allegedly leads to internal conflicts and psychological problems (Marholm 1899: VI, 136).

24 The short stories in the collection are characterised as "Catholic", one is also "anti-Semitic" (*Scwesterliebe*); the story *Im Bann* is the culmination of Marholm's literary offering – about the relationship between the deceased mother and her daughter, where she confesses her mother's sins to the priest (Brantly 1991: 152–153).

25 The book "is probably Laura Marholm's most curious work" (Brantly 1991: 154). It comprises three essays: *Aus Liebe* about a young woman who becomes Marholm's follower after reading *Das Buch der Frauen*; *Die kleine Fanny* about her childhood in Riga; *Dreimal* about the three attempts the Hanssons made to live with Ola's parents in Sweden.

26 "[...] eine Äusserung einer Frau über ihr Geschlecht."



Fig. 4. *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter*, 1895.
Berlin State Library –
Prussian Cultural Heritage

A woman's inner conflict, frailty and ill health occurs because she is split or differentiated²⁷ in her choice between developed, educated individuality, inculcated to be sexless²⁸ and the natural instincts or sexuality that, in Marholm's opinion, had been retained by the peasantry. In this case the "uneducated", or unspoilt, in the perception of Marholm, peasantry was being idealised. In her texts, the dislike for the existing educational system and institution of marriage oriented towards the preservation of the class order in society and the suppression of women's natural instincts that had emerged while still in Riga was mixed with the latest currents in European thought that she had found out about in Copenhagen and Berlin, ideas such as Nietzscheism, pan-Germanism, Darwinism, naturalism, biologism, some of which even for late 19th and beginning of the 20th century Latvian readers were no longer unheard-of (Eglāja-Kristsons 2015: 210–216, 239–240, 242). It must be pointed out that contemporaries criticised Marholm for her fondness for foreign terms and her inclination to use them too often in addition to ideas, at times even

27 Marholm used the adjective 'differentiated' (German: *differenziert*) to express a woman's split (German: *geteilt*) personality; her use of this adjective bears no relation to the later concept 'difference feminism' attributed to her by some researchers. For an analysis of the latter, see further (in Conclusion).

28 In the book *Zur Psychologie der Frau* (1897, quoted after Brantly 1991: 139).



Fig. 5. The autobiographical short story *Frau Lilly als Jungfrau, Gattin und Mutter*, 1897. Berlin State Library – Prussian Cultural Heritage

contradictory, expressed chaotically and vaguely, having been crafted in expansive texts that had been superbly formulated from a literary aspect ([Anon.] 1895b; Dohm 1902: 86, 88).

The Hanssons, having come into conflict with other public figures of their time and becoming marginalised, likewise developed an idea that the more brilliant the personality was, the more deniers and naysayers there would be (Jiresch 2013: 375). “During the worst of her mental illness, Marholm constructed an astonishingly complex paranoid system of conspiracies” (Brantly 1991: 156). In 1905 the couple were ordered, by police injunction, to seek medical treatment; for six months Laura, diagnosed with paranoia, was hospitalised in the Munich district psychiatric institution (*Kreisirrenanstalt*). However, as their son Ola was later to write, despite the problems that bedevilled the family both before and after this crisis, these including financial difficulties, the Hanssons remained united (Brantly 1991: 171–172).²⁹

In her book, *Die Frauen in der sozialen Bewegung* (1900), Marholm wrote about herself: “My life would have undoubtedly been easier if I hadn’t been so intensively

29 Ola junior himself was separated from his family for seven years from 1899, when his parents left him during school term time with a housekeeper in Schliersee (Brantly 2013: 149).

preoccupied with the woman question but instead would have written short stories and novels" (quoted after Brantly 1991: 154).³⁰

After 1905 After 1905, the Hanssons entered into a period of creative self-isolation. Together with her husband, Marholm often sojourned in France, with intervals in Austria, Switzerland and Sweden, staying in each place for about half a year; they also travelled around. In 1907 they spent a month in Riga, staying at Laura's parents' house.³¹ The Hanssons could have participated in the cultural life of Paris, though they did not make use of this opportunity. In 1906, Ola Hansson received a grant from the Bonnier Foundation (*Bonniers stipend*), but later, in 1911, a Fröding scholarship (*Fröding stipend*), and this improved the couple's financial situation. From 1909 until 1914 they lived in Meudon, in the south-west suburbs of Paris (Brantly 1991: 172).

During World War I, the family lived in several different places in Switzerland and France, but after the war they went to Denmark and then moved on to Sweden, where Ola Hansson had book contracts. In 1922 the family set off on a journey through Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey where, in 1925, Ola Hansson died.³² In 1926, students at Lund University organised the transport of Hansson's mortal remains from Turkey and a funeral in Sweden; meanwhile Marholm bequeathed to Lund University her husband's archive that she was preparing to publish. After her spouse's death, Marholm spent the rest of her life together with her son in Latvia, where she retired and lived anonymously in an apartment on Jomas iela in Jūrmala (Majori). She was there from 1926 until the autumn of 1928, but her acquaintances did not even know that she was living in Latvia (Brantly 1991: 180–183; Eckhardt 1928).³³

30 "Es wäre mir gewi sehr viel besser im Leben gegangen, wenn ich mich mit der Frauenfrage nicht so eifrig befasst und statt dessen Noveletten und Romane geschrieben hätte"; the book came out at a time when her creative activities began to be beset by failure, even though around this time she was being published extensively (Brantly 1991: 151, 154; Jiresch 2013).

31 Marholm's mother had died but her father had started a new family and did not wish to meet. Later, in 1911, with the help of consuls Marholm sought to make contact with her father, but he refused allow his address to be passed on (Brantly 1991: 172).

32 In 1922 they had abandoned Sweden in a hurry because Marholm had not wished act as witness in a court case to do with the authorship of a translation of a work by Strindberg (Brantly 1991: 180).

33 Marholm died on 6 October and she was interred on 11 October in the *Lielie kapi* (Great Cemetery) of Riga (Brantly 1991: 183; Reinharde 1933: 212). Laura Marholm's archive, like the Ola Hansson materials, are held in the library of Lund University (Brantly 1991: 185–186).

As World War I continued, Ola Hansson became melancholy, often ill, introverted, and dwelt on the past, while Laura Marholm, conversely, was inspired by the war to write journalistic articles with left-wing content about social problems, namely a melange of social ideas, Catholicism, women's rights and duties (implied meaning: responsibilities) and racial issues (anti-Semitism). Marholm was published, though not as prolifically as before 1905, mostly in the Scandinavian left-wing press (Brantly 1991: 173–179; Fuchs 1997: 19; Witt-Brattström 2007: 155).³⁴

Marholm and issues of women's emancipation in the German-language press of Latvia

Marholm's articles in the German-language press of Latvia

As previously stated, after the success of her first play Marholm started working for the newspaper *Zeitung für Stadt und Land*, writing reviews about theatre and literature.³⁵ The frequency of Marholm's reviews for the paper was about once a month, and in these pieces she did not touch upon the so-called woman question; if she expressed any criticism, then it was about the socio-economic conditions in the Baltic (Marholm 1885a).

The most significant writings by Marholm that can be placed within the discourse on women's emancipation, although without any further direct resonance in the Latvian press, were Marholm's articles in the *Rigasche Hausfrauen-Zeitung* (henceforth – *RHZ*) in 1884 and in 1887 about the employment of women. The first article, as a series of five instalments, was published at the close of 1884: *Über die Tätigkeit der Frau: Betrachtungen über das Alltägliche* (Marholm 1884). In it she critically examined the traditional, conservative role of woman in the family, in society, and described disparagingly the institution of marriage which was seen as the only conventionally approved place for a woman to fulfil herself. She was critical of the fact that outside the family there was no recognition of female work or occupation. Likewise she deprecated women's education and training which was geared towards the preservation

34 The first work by Marholm published after 1905 was an essay *The Woman of To-day* about contemporary woman; it appeared in a collection of works *The Woman Question* published in 1918 in New York (Brantly 1991: 191). Her son Ola averred that in 1906, while living in France, Marholm had recovered and had started writing again, and that in 1906 several of her articles had been published in the Swedish press under Ola Hansson's name (Reinhadre 1933: 210).

35 The first review by Marholm that has been possible to identify as hers, signed "–m.", was published on 18 August, 1881 (–m. 1881). Two of Marholm's articles, overviews about the Riga city theatre, were published by *Nordische Rundschau* in 1884 (Brantly 1991: 187).

of the existing social structure. Even though Marholm found fault with the conservatism of the educated, well-to-do class – its attitude to life, aspirations and prejudices, she did not offer any answers as regards alternatives or solutions (Marholm 1884).

At the end of this exhaustive account Marholm, having elevated women slightly above the clouds and come to the conclusion that there were many professions and occupations (but not all) where a woman could be educated and independent, she did not, however, concede woman as being of equal status with a man. In Marholm's opinion a woman's self-development as an individual was limited, that is, it was biologically preordained by nature. In her view, a woman did not possess enough psychological resilience, her delicate nervous system had not been created to endure long-term pressure (not mature enough) in order to carry out that same tasks as men. Marholm asserted that sustained mental strain rendered women prone to ill health (Marholm 1884).³⁶ Marholm's compilation is slightly confusing: criticism of society's conservatism together with unproven assertions about women's inadequate psychological development in comparison to men, which in fact corresponded to the attitude of the conservative majority she herself had just criticised, one that saw a woman's role in society as being subordinate and was oriented to maintaining the existing social structures. As already mentioned, later, after Marholm's popular books had been released in Germany, Hedwig Dohm commented on her chaotic and contradictory style and difficult to follow exposition of ideas along with outstanding literary language (Dohm 1902: 86, 88).

A second article by Marholm was printed in the newspaper *RHZ* in January 1886, shortly after she had moved to Copenhagen: *Frauenarbeit hüben und drüben. Flüchtige Umriss* (Marholm 1886). In two of the three parts of the article she described her impressions at an applied arts and crafts exhibition in Copenhagen, but in the third part she turned to a description of children's shelters. What was in common for both themes was that they both examined the work of women's organisations.

The organizer of the applied arts and crafts exhibition was a women's drawing school (*Zeichenschule für Frauen*)³⁷ and Marholm likened it to the Jung-Stilling schools in Riga, "if one conceived of combining together a drawing school and a school of

36 "Für eine ununterbrochene, geistig anspannende Thätigkeit [...] hat die Frau [...] gar nicht die hinreichende physische Ausdauer. Ihr Zartes Nervensystem ist den Anstrengungen auf Länge nicht gewachsen, sie wird blaß, mager, kränklich und verblüht von der Zeit, oder ihr Wesen erhält etwas unerfreulich Gesteigertes."

37 Referring, possibly, to the *Tegneskolen for Kvinder* founded in 1875.

applied arts” (Marholm 1886).³⁸ The Copenhagen school was more elite than the one in Riga, apparently, and was not oriented towards attracting women from the lower classes to whom it could impart practical skills that would be useful in life. On the one hand Marholm criticised this “production of luxury items” (*Produktion von Luxusgegenständen*), but on the other she admired and described in detail what she had seen: the things women had made, created. In the article Marholm thematised two important aspects of women’s emancipation: women in paid employment and the higher education of women. At the exhibition Marholm saw the potential of women’s productivity and independence, and expressed an opinion – if only at the level of conjecture – that women working could cause a crisis in the existing economic system and at the same time that it was an inevitable process.³⁹ Marholm likened the activities of the Copenhagen drawing school and its artworks to the Academy of Art,⁴⁰ which women were not permitted to attend. With warm approval Marholm informed that at one of the schools of higher education in Saint Petersburg women were allowed to attend as external students, for example, in the Faculty of Medicine.⁴¹

The third part of the article was devoted to children’s shelters in Copenhagen, and mentioned as an example the work of the Young Children’s Welfare association (*Das kleine Kinder-Wohl*). In this section Marholm drew attention to the poverty of the lower class that compels women to avoid having children. After a critique of the inequality of socio-economic classes and ruminating on the traditional and humane duty to help children, she arrived at the conclusion that giving birth to and bringing up children was a woman’s “most beautiful and natural profession” (Marholm 1886).⁴²

38 Marholm was speaking about the *Jung-Stillingsche Zeichen- und Malschule* in Riga, a private school for women established in 1873 and run by Elise von Jung-Stilling (1829–1904), and the *Mädchen-Gewerbeschule des Jungfrauen-Vereins* founded in 1876 and headed by Luise von Jung-Stilling (1842–1921).

39 “Wer wollte es leugnen, daß die Frauenarbeit überhaupt eine zweischneidige Waffe ist? Ausgezeichnet geeignet die Würde, den Werth und die Entwicklungsfreiheit der Frau nach außen zu schützen aber zugleich abhängig von so mannigfaltigen und unberechenbaren sozialen und wirtschaftlichen Constellationen, so angeordnet und zufällig in ihrem Verhältnis zur allgemeinen Production, daß sich schwere Krisen und gewaltsame Rückschläge mit Sicherheit voraussehen lassen.” (Marholm 1886)

40 Obviously referring to the *Det Kongelige Academie for de skjønne Kunster* as it was at the time.

41 Even though Marholm was sympathetic to female external students, in her later book *Das Buch der Frauen* she criticised women’s education because even though this created a few female doctors [and] elementary school teachers, for the most part it led to ill health in women (Jiresch 2013: 390–391).

42 “ihr schönster und natürlichster Beruf”

It has not been possible to find in the Latvian press any reviews of these works by Marholm, but they are in alignment with the themes tackled by *RHZ* with regard to the education of women and work that was aimed at the improvement of social welfare, whilst retaining society's traditional structures (Proveja 2017).⁴³ In essence Marholm's *RHZ* articles conformed with the conservative Baltic German majority worldview dominated by the belief that a woman needs only just enough education to be able to offer the required assistance to her family and society – in the case of Marholm, society only, since she had severely criticised the institution of family as the preserver of social status – so that it could continue to exist economically and culturally (Wilhelmi 2008: 51–53, 87–89, 104, 107).⁴⁴ Marholm's opinions did slightly differ from those of the *RHZ* in that she breached the approved framework for women in the Baltic and accepted as admissible the development of the woman as an individual outside her age-old, established community; she found appealing the idea of women having the chance to be educated in tertiary institutions and thus enabling them to serve society beyond their predetermined narrow social stratum.

After Marholm left Riga, articles written by her in the German-language press of Latvia were a rarity. In 1890, the *Düna Zeitung* printed Marholm's essay *Tolstoi als Frauenschilderer* (Marholm 1890 a, b).⁴⁵ While still in Riga, as part of her repertoire of activities she had already begun to write longer essays about various writers, and continued to do so in Denmark and in Germany.⁴⁶ Some of the essays, including the one about Lev Tolstoy (1828–1910), were included in her book *Wir Frauen und unsere Dichter*. In it, she called the Russian writer a *Weiberhasser* – that is, a misogynist (Marholm 1896: 179). In the *Düna Zeitung* article she examined several of Tolstoy's

43 *RHZ* printed articles about, for example, the education of women, teaching them how to carry out the duties of family life. *RHZ* was a publication organised by women and intended for women, and it came out from 1883 until 1906. Its readership was made up of middle and upper-class women, and included existing pedagogues and those in the making (Baranius-Molien 1895; Proveja 2017: 127; Zigmunde 2009).

44 As the ruling class, Baltic German interest in the issue of women's emancipation was limited to (stopped at) the education of women for the strengthening of the family and society, for the promotion of its welfare. Everything that transpired outside this was viewed as a threat to the stability of society, and in the case of the local Baltic Germans – also as a threat to the position of the ruling class.

45 Although in the Riga publication there was a note that it had been reprinted from *Neue Freie Presse* (Wien), the essay had been published a week earlier in the *Düna Zeitung*.

46 The essays about Ibsen and Keller were published in *Nordische Rundschau* in 1884 and 1885, the one about Brandes in *Rigasche Zeitung* (1885), and the essay on her future husband Hansson appeared in *St. Petersburger Zeitung* (1888) (Brantly 1991: 187–188).

works, characterising his depiction of women in each of them. Marholm found that the Russian authors, and Tolstoy especially, adopted an intuitive approach to women, their nature, and she was critical about the way they treated a woman as an object. For these writers a woman was a naive child of nature with her indefinable attractiveness, with her impatience untrammelled by thought, a kind of physiological private property for the man. This way of regarding a woman was no more than a process from the animal world, presented as a mystery of psychology (Marholm 1890).⁴⁷

In this essay Marholm once again confirmed her knowledge of literature and also her talent for language. Nonetheless, one cannot escape the feeling that Marholm was not only criticising Tolstoy, but was also studying and drawing on ideas. The most popular of her later works on women's psychology scrutinised precisely these natural, physiological instincts, except that now it was from a woman's viewpoint.

Reviews of Marholm's works in the German-language press of Latvia

During Marholm's first phase of creative activity – the Riga Period and Copenhagen Period – “Leonard Marholm”, and later Laura as herself, were unequivocally acknowledged as a new talent – a genius that had finally emerged in the Baltic provinces. Unfortunately, “Leonard's” literary women passed by unnoticed (Schiemann 1884; [Anon.] 1894a).

At some time around 1888, Marholm began to be included among the most talented female writers in the Baltic. The newspaper *Libausche Zeitung* published reviews by one certain E.K. (either male or female), in which the writer employed prejudiced phrases about educated women as ‘bluestockings’ and simply counterposing one female author against another (E. K. 1888; 1889). Marholm received a positive appraisal by the said critic and they contrasted her to “watery, standardised blue-stockingery” (E.K. 1889).⁴⁸

The greater majority of the critiques, reviews and mentions that appeared in the German-language press of Latvia and reflections on the so-called ‘woman question’ were in relation to Marholm's most popular book *Das Buch der Frauen*. As early as December 1894, the *Rigasche Hausfreun-Zeitung* published a review of the work. Basically it was a summarisation of the book's contents, about the people portrayed,

47 “unreflektiertes Naturkind”; “das Weib bloss als Geschlecht mit seiner undefinierbaren Anziehung mit seiner gedankenlosen Ungeduld [...]”; “physiologische Eigenthümlichkeit”; “Es ist eigentlich nichts als ein Prozeß des Tierlebens als psychologisches Geheimniss hingestellt [...]”

48 “wässrigen, schablonenhaften Blaustrümpferei”

and allowed that even though one could disagree with Marholm's depiction of a woman's essential being, it was not possible to deny her compelling and sure-footed style. Although the style was praised, the reviewer particularly marked out and criticised the language for the fact that there were so many comparisons with death, illness and division, which for the educated reader of *RHZ* was, apparently, too harsh. The reviewer (either male or female – not specified) emphasised that the title of the book was also misleading: in accordance with it a reader might be led to think that Marholm had researched and generalised knowledge about women as a whole. Here, as in other reviews of the book, it was underlined that the six women chosen by Marholm were exceptions ([Anon.] 1894b).

In September, 1895, Marholm's former place of employment – now known as *Rigasche Rundschau* – published a review of her book. It was actually a reprint of a review that had appeared in the *Kölnische Zeitung* ([Anon.] 1895a). This review, like the one previously mentioned, emphasised that the women selected were not representative of all women. Marholm had chosen six women-foreigners (the first edition of the book and the reprinted review had been published in Germany), who were one-off exceptions in society. There had been such like that throughout the ages, among representatives of the male gender as well. That was why, on the basis of these women, it was not possible to express generalised views about all women, nor were these views applicable to the women of Germany, it did not correspond to reality. The critique concluded that the work was superficial and that the author did not even know all the biographical details about the people that she had written about.⁴⁹ Likewise Marholm's method of drawing conclusions about creative personalities based on their creative (visible) activities was criticised, for instance, about the Italian actress Eleanora Duse on the basis of the roles she had played, and this was not a fair reflection of the person, just as it would not be correct to make judgements about literary figures according to the literary (fictional) protagonists they had created ([Anon.] 1895a).⁵⁰

Unlike the reviewer published in the *Rigasche Rundschau*, the critic – gender unknown – of the newspaper *Düna Zeitung* in the article *Ein Buch einer Frau* of

49 Other reviewers also wrote about Marholm's errors in the biographies of her subjects (Dohm 1902: 85; Bjørnson 1895)

50 Possibly many of the assumptions Marholm made about creative people and other women were based on her own personal experience, also she treated the life stories she described as literary works, that is, as fiction, dramatizing the contents and exploiting it to suit her own aims. Many of her own literary works were autobiographical or included her own life experiences. For more on these kinds of reflections in her works, see the analyses of her works in the monograph by Susan Brantly (Brantly 1991).

October, 1895, not only presented a review of Marholm's book but also offered an extensive array of their own opinions with regard to the issue of women's emancipation in the Baltic. The author of the review declared that Marholm was not one of those "now usual Amazonian women squealing about equality with men" ([Anon.] 1895b).⁵¹

Marholm's assertion that the modern woman had made herself ill due to the division that had come into the world together with the woman question, [and] as a result of the split between reason and woman's dark nature, was Marholm's rationale upon which the entire book was based (Marholm 1899: VI; [Anon.] 1895b).⁵² The 'dark nature' was obviously supposed to be understood as a woman's need for love and devotion to a man (*Hingabe*), which supposedly forms part of the basic characteristics or fundamentals (*Grundzüge*) of the great creator – nature. The reviewer in *Düna Zeitung* disputed this, stating that "an understanding woman will seek to avoid this kind of conflict and without any question will hasten to her most difficult yet most beautiful profession", i.e., that of being a mother ([Anon.] 1895b).⁵³ Similarly, the author disputed Marholm's use of the concept 'women culture-bearers' (*Cultur-trägerinnen*) and meaning of the term, and presented their own interpretation of it. For Marholm these women were representatives of so-called high culture, but for the reviewer a 'woman culture-bearer' was a wife, a mother, an upbringer, a teacher, that is, one who preserves and passes down the traditions of family and her people, that is – in keeping with Baltic German tradition and necessity.

The *Düna Zeitung* reviewer warned readers about the dangers of women's emancipation which "is haunting all countries and also in our little land is casting an uncomfortable shadow" ([Anon.] 1895b)⁵⁴ and would soon create countless girls without a provider and a source of support in their lives.. At the same time, the author expressed approval for so-called conservative advocates of women's rights, who

51 "... daß sie nicht in jetzt übliche Amazonengeschrei der Frauen nach Gleichstellung mit den Männern einstimme."

52 "Sie alle waren krank an einer inneren Spaltung, die erst mit der Frauenfrage in die Welt gekommen ist, an einer Spaltung zwischen ihrer Verstandesrichtung und der dunklen Basis ihrer Weibnatur."

53 "werständige Weib [...] wird den Conflict vermeiden, [...] wird ganz fraglos seinem vielleicht schwersten, aber schönsten Berufe zueilen"

54 "Frauenfrage, die in aller Herren Ländern spukt, und auch in unsere Ländchen ihren unbequemen Schatten wirft"

help impoverished women with education and work so that they can maintain their family, and society, because in that way it all develops naturally.⁵⁵

The reviewer asked a rhetorical question: how did Marholm manage to research these six people and will they not refute her, as the book is not by any means a monument to these women but rather it brings to the fore the morbid, neurotic, erotically inclined character traits of their personalities.⁵⁶ The *Düna Zeitung* author also stated that Marholm “was no longer one of us, she has become completely Scandinavianised” ([Anon.] 1895b).⁵⁷ The lengthy critique and explication about conditions in the Baltic finished with the assertion that “a man strives for freedom, but a woman for tradition (*Sitte*)” ([Anon.] 1895b).⁵⁸

A few months after this lengthy review, the *Düna Zeitung* published yet another review, though this one more brief and concise, about Marholm’s collection of short stories *Zwei Frauenerlebnisse*. The reviewer, like others, praised the writer’s talent: “intimate painting of the soul demonstrates her talent as a keen observer”(A. 1895)⁵⁹ but was not in agreement with the souls she had described: “Possibly I may not yet be

55 “Denn man darf nur ja nicht vergessen, daß bittere Noth die Frauenfrage in’s Leben gerufen hat, deren Voraussetzungen das Weib am schwersten treffen. Auf dem conservativen Flügel der Frauenrechtlerinnen wickelt sich Alles ganz naturgemäß ab [...]”. It should be emphasised that the author was not speaking of women’s emancipation, but of women’s rights, which in his text he did not elaborate on. It can be understood that he was not referring to the self-organisation of women who were the poorest or the proletariat, but about the care and concern of the well-off stratum of society for its most impoverished members, that is, charity, which is in itself conservative, and dispensed so-called rights only so far as this did not disrupt the existing social structure. At the same time, it should be noted that the women’s emancipation movement in Germany and Europe in its proletarian left wing also encountered structural problems and conservatism that hindered the dissemination of its ideas (Schtreichhahn, Vincent 2020: 50–55).

56 Three of the six women written about in the book were still alive at the time. Here the characterisation of Marholm by Georg Brandes in 1897 is apposite: “She is a completely ignorant woman [...], a fairly good head, but without a trace of originality, moreover impudent, perverse, common, filled with the coarsest ruthlessness in elbowing her way forward. She and her husband have developed into a pair of literary bandits according to this Recipe[.] She lives as an authoress by having made the discovery that women are sexual beings and by having made espionage visits to the homes of famous men” (quoted after Brantly 1991: 63).

57 “Sie gehört nicht mehr zu uns. Sie hat sich ganz und gar skandinavisiert.”; here one can observe the exclusion, albeit symbolic, of those who think differently, who were not working for the good of the community, the preservation of its traditions and status.

58 “[.] für uns steht es felsen-fest, daß der Mann nach Freiheit, das Weib nach Sitte strebt.”

59 “Das Talent componierend lebensvoll zu malen, ist hervorragend, ihre [...] intimste Seelenmalerei zeigt von scharfer Beobachtungsgabe”

'differentiated' enough to understand women's nature as depicted according to Laura's heart" (A. 1895).⁶⁰ The reviewer further elaborated on this differentiation from several angles, attempting to employ it stylistically, with irony, thus referring to Marholm's short story: "We women are already too differentiated" (quoted after A. 1895).⁶¹

After the first wave of reviews that followed the publication of *Das Buch der Frauen*, there were no further expansive articles as regards reviews of Marholm's works. Editors and reviewers evidently had formed their opinions about Marholm, placing her works in the category of being unsuitable reading material for conservative Baltic German society and thereafter she was mentioned only in more generalised contexts – whether in overviews of literature (Büttner 1897) or specifically literary works by women (m. 1897; W. 1898). On the one hand, it was not possible not to mention Marholm, but on the other, there was nothing more than the occasional invocation of her name or a brief criticism as, for example, in a *Baltische Monatschrift* article of 1896 about women's literature (Sintenis 1896).⁶²

A similar token mention of Marholm's name can be observed in the case of the *Rigasche Hausfrauen-Zeitung*: in an article of 1895 titled *Brautpflichten (The Duties of Brides)* about a woman's preparation for married life (Baranius-Molien 1895). The article refuted Marholm's thesis that in married life a woman takes on from the man all that is good, but as for the bad she is inclined by nature to deny.⁶³ The *RHZ* accepted

60 "Es mag sein, dass ich noch nicht genug "differenziert" zu vermag, um die Weibernatur nach dem Herzen Lauras zu begreifen [...]"

61 "sind wir Frauen jetzt schon zu differenziert".

62 The article presented a comprehensive survey of women's literature from the earliest beginnings of the written word, through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance up to the end of the 19th century and women's emancipation literature in Germany. The article finished with a brief reflection on Marholm's *Das Buch der Frauen*. The article in question should be viewed in context with the first *Internationaler Kongress für Frauenwerke und Frauenbestrebungen* which took place in Berlin in September, 1896. It should be mentioned that the participants of this congress dubbed Marholm *Die Feindin der Frauenbewegung* ["Enemy of the Women's Movement"] (Brantly 1991: 109).

63 Marholm in her creative oeuvre idealised this kind of attitude of a woman and was of the opinion that a woman takes only what she wants (i.e. what is in her nature to want) if she allows natural development to run its course. Marholm considered that a woman has to choose for herself who she marries. Later, influenced by Catholicism and World War I, Marholm spoke of the duty of a woman to choose a husband with whom she could develop together, and through him and their family serve society. All Marholm's opinions and amplifications in her world view system need to be interpreted through the prism of her own personal experience, taking into account the experiences in her private life, both of her youth and her adult years, and also keeping in mind the fact that she was more talented, knowledgeable and full of life than many of her readers – men, at least until the culmination of her career circa 1900.

the possibility of this, but only for the duration of a so-called transitional period, until it is overcome – evidently, when the woman has become reconciled to her fate. Essentially this article in the *RHZ* had little to do with Marholm's creative oeuvre or ideas, and the citing of her name here can be deemed to be a matter of form.

In the Latvian-language press, the activities of Laura Marholm were mentioned in association with her biography. Marholm was reviewed and commented upon in the press as a well-known public figure, and when observing her personal life, the writer's views on women were invariably mentioned and thus the so-called 'woman question' was indirectly thematised. The events in Marholm's life that drew particular press attention were her marriage in 1889 and her conversion to Catholicism (1898), her commitment to a psychiatric institution (1905) and her death (1928).⁶⁴

The editorial office of *Rigasche Rundschau* had reviewed Marholm's works formally and dispassionately by, for example, reprinting the review from a newspaper in Germany. However, according to a Bavarian press publication, the editorial office of the Baltic publishers in their criticism of Marholm's conversion to Catholicism had reacted in emotionally heightened manner ([Anon.] 1899a). *Rigasche Rundschau* denied this, and once more reaffirmed the support it had given to Marholm at the start of her career, when she was given ample opportunities to be published in the Baltic.

Even though at the start of Marholm's career the Liepāja-based newspaper *Libausche Zeitung* had published bigoted articles, characterising educated women as "bluestockings" (E.K. 1888; 1889), then over a course of ten years it had changed its position and in 1898 published a progressive article by H. Aronstamm, either an author or authoress in Berlin, about the women's movement and women's studies in which it was stated that "nowadays it is generally acknowledged that a woman's intellectual capacity as well physical ability are scarcely less or no less than those of a man" (Aronstamm 1898).⁶⁵ At the same time, the article criticised Marholm's views about a man's psychological supremacy over a woman and the fact that her female protagonists suffered erotic madness.⁶⁶ The article expressed support for women's right to study, meanwhile criticising German politicians who sought to block this. The author gave a figure for the number of female external students at German

64 A typical path for the spread of news in the press about the course of Marholm's life was: the German-language press in the Baltic would reprint information from publications in Germany, this then would be picked up by publications in the Latvian language.

65 "Es wird allseits immermehr anerkannt, dass die Leistungsfähigkeit der Frau der des Mannes in geistiger Beziehung sowohl wie auch in physischer Beziehung wenig oder gar nicht nachsteht."

66 "Des Mannes, des Mannes ... das Grundgedanke, der die Marholm stets durchdringt, die ihre Heldinnen im erotischen Wahnsinn enden läßt."

universities, and concluded that having to permit women to study was inescapable: "A woman should not leave her strengths and abilities unused, she must not be condemned to housekeeping duties, but must be allowed to put her talents to good use outside the house as well – endeavours that should meet with the approval of every modern human being" (Aronstamm 1898).⁶⁷ In ten years, the position of *Libausche Zeitung* had radically turned around in favour of women being educated at tertiary institutions, but after publication of her most popular book *Marholm*, from being a much-lauded, talented young writer, had become a degrader of women's souls (Aronstamm 1898; Büttner 1897). In the views expressed by the newspaper *Libausche Zeitung* there was evident progress, even if this was only a fleeting occurrence.⁶⁸

Conclusion

The first writings by Marholm that overtly dealt with the so-called woman question appeared in the *Rigasche Hausfrauen-Zeitung* in 1884 and 1886. These were about women's work and put into words the ideas that she had hinted at indirectly in her first literary works: a woman is a free individual, but in order to find fulfilment she needs a man to whom she can devote herself because women have not yet sufficiently developed, they do not have psychological endurance. These kinds of views about a woman's psychological feebleness, lack of endurance and morbidity accorded with the opinions of male psychologists at the time. Through the *RHZ* articles Marholm did not prove her thesis, but instead expressed it as an assertion. On the grounds that there was no further discussion about the issue, it may be assumed that both the editorial office and the readership of the newspaper were content with this. It must be taken into account that during Marholm's lifetime the science of psychology was only at a developmental stage, and any pronouncements in the field, especially if well (in Marholm's case – even outstandingly well) formulated could inspire credibility and claim to be the truth. In addition, it should be borne in mind that at the time when the *RHZ* was being published, for the readers Laura was still 'Leonards', that is, a male author, which would enhance the level of believability, as it thus fitted in with the traditional male dominated (masculine) world order and did not divert attention away from an assessment of the woman's role (Hacker 2007: 107; Eglāja-Kristsons 2015: 205).

67 "Frau soll nicht ihre Kräfte und Fähigkeiten ungenützt lassen, sie soll nicht lediglich auf den häuslichen Pflichtenkreis angewiesen bleiben, sondern auch außerhalb ihres Hauses ihre Talente verwehren dürfen, Bestrebungen, die gewiß die Billigung eines jeden modernen Menschen finden müssen."

68 For the present the author of this article has examined *Libausche Zeitung* articles only in the context of Marholm's activities.

Marholm attempted to provide proof for her assertions about women's inadequate psychological development in her subsequent books on women's psychology, by now writing as a female author. Influenced by the circle of creative personalities of Sweden and Germany, and her husband Ola Hansson, Marholm became increasingly carried away by Nietzsche, pan-Germanism, naturalism and also, unfortunately, anti-Semitism (Wennerscheid 2014: 148; Fuchs 1997: 19). At the centre of this chaos of theories there was Marholm's neurotic, sickly, sexually frustrated woman whom she "degraded to a sexual creature that only with the assistance of a man would be able to develop as an individual" (Büttner 1897).⁶⁹ Her preoccupation with the ideas of Catholicism and social thought in her later years, and her elevation of the role of mother, did not effect any change on her basic thesis of the woman who must sacrifice herself for the good of others.

Marholm's focus on women's psychological idiosyncrasies and, in her opinion, psychological frailty is not, however, compatible with the theory of difference feminism, as proposed by Sophie Wennerscheid and Ebba Witt-Brattström (Witt-Brattström 2007: 147; Wennerscheid 2014: 135, 146).⁷⁰ In accordance with Barbara Holland-Cunz's categorisation of feminisms, proponents of difference feminism, taking into account the positions of equality and inequality between the sexes, view as separate the notions of natural inequality and social inequality (Holland-Cunz 2003: 124–125). However far biological (whether physical or psychological) inequality were to extend in Marholm's theoretical construct, she did not place woman on equal social footing with a man.

Despite that Marholm was not a typical representative of women's movement activism, it was in connection with her writings, and especially after her book *Das Buch der Frauen* was published in 1894, that the Latvian press began to discuss issues of women's emancipation. The most vigorous conservative criticism targeted at Marholm came from the *Düna Zeitung*. Thus Marholm gave her contribution, however contradictory, to the discourse in the German-language press of Latvia. Readers were able to find out more about the currents of thought in women's literature, and more specifically Marholm's ideas, meanwhile the local press, for its part, defended all the more fiercely its conservative position in reaction to them.

69 "Laura Marholm degradiert das Weib zum bloßen Geschlechtswesen, das sich erst mit Hilfe des Mannes zur Individualität entfalten kann."

70 Wennerscheid states this while highlighting biological differences between the sexes, not only as diminishing a woman's worth, but occasionally also underscoring its superiority, for example, the capacity of becoming a mother.

Even if it were not possible to include Marholm, despite her originality and uniqueness, in the phenomenon of turn of the 19th–20th century current of feminism, she definitely forms part of the anti-feminist community to which she had already been consigned, during her lifetime, by Hedwig Dohm and the women’s congress held in Berlin in 1896 (Dohm 1902: 84; Brantly 1991: 109). At the turn of the century, when among society issues of women’s emancipation were being actively discussed, anti-feminist currents and writings began to surface (Planert 1998; Becker-Cantarino 2010: 70; Streischhahn 2020). One can only agree with Ebba Witt-Brattström that “the example of Laura Marholm points to the limits of theorising living people during various [historical] periods”, and that, at the same time, her “texts are important, because they awaken the joy of contradiction and in the process we are given the opportunity to define ourselves”.⁷¹

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71 “Das Beispiel Laura Marholm verweist auf die Grenzen des Theoretisierens lebendiger Menschen in unterschiedlichen Epochen.”; “Diese Texte sind wichtig, weil sie die Lust zum Widerspruch wecken und uns in diesem Prozess die Möglichkeit geben, uns selbst zu definieren.”

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From Claiming Authority to Sensuous Excursions: Mapping the Female Body in Latvian Women's Travel Writing (1878–1920)

No autoritātes pieprasīšanas līdz jutekliskām ekskursijām: Sievietes ķermeņa kartēšana latviešu rakstnieču ceļojumu aprakstos (1878–1920)

Keywords:

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Atslēgvārdi:

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Summary

Although Latvian women started to publish their travel writings during the 1870s, until recently they have not attracted much scholarly attention. Thus the aim of this article is twofold: first, by focusing on Latvian women's travel writing published in the last decades of the 19th and early 20th centuries, to expand the knowledge of women's contributions to the genre and to the history of literature in general; and second, by concentrating on the female body, to analyze how women construct narratives about themselves as embodied travelling subjects. Based on the ideas of feminine writing (*écriture féminine*) and the insight that travel writing is one of the most physical of literary genres because it thematically involves the body moving through space, the travelogues of Minna Freimane (*Par piemiņu*, 1884) and Angelika Gailīte (*Vērojumi un sapņojumi*, 1920) are read in order to trace the changes in the representation of the female traveller's body.

Kopsavilkums

Latviešu sievietes ceļojumu aprakstus sāka publicēt 19. gadsimta 70. gados, taču līdz šim tie nav izpelnījušies lielu pētnieku interesi. Raksta mērķis ir divējāds: pirmkārt, sniegt īsu ieskatu latviešu sieviešu ceļojumu aprakstos, kas publicēti 19. gadsimta pēdējās desmitgadēs un 20. gadsimta sākumā, paplašinot zināšanas par sieviešu ieguldījumu ceļojumu aprakstu žanrā un rakstniecības vēsturē kopumā. Un, otrkārt, koncentrējoties uz ķermenisko aspektu klātbūtni ceļojumu aprakstos, analizēt, kā sievietes konstruē naratīvus par sevi kā iemiesotiem, ceļojošiem subjektiem. Balstoties atziņā, ka ceļojumu apraksts ir viens no fiziskākajiem žanriem, jo tematiski ietver ķermeņa pārvietošanos telpā un laikā, un sievišķās rakstības idejās (*écriture féminine*), aplūkotas izmaiņas ceļotājas ķermeņa atainojumā 19. gadsimta beigās un 20. gadsimta sākumā: Minnas Freimanes ceļojumu aprakstu grāmatas "Par piemiņu" (1884) un Angelikas Gailītes ceļojumu aprakstu grāmatas "Vērojumi un sapņojumi" (1920) tuvlasījumos.

The need to highlight Latvian women's contribution to literature and to expand the traditional literary canon with texts previously considered marginal and omitted from literary histories, while at the same time asking questions about the strategies and agency of women's writing, makes it useful to draw attention to the hitherto little-studied Latvian women's travel writing. Based on the idea that travel writing is the most physical of literary genres because it involves the body moving through different configurations of time and space, and on the ideas of women's writing (*écriture féminine*) that highlight the importance of the corporeal in the text, the article focuses on the representations of a female traveller's body in women's travelogues published in the last decades of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century.

Foregrounding women as subjects and speakers, Latvian women's travel writing already from the last decades of the 19th century onwards placed value on subjective experiences: travellers whose writings' primary purpose was to inform their compatriots at home interpreted the unfamiliar through themselves, often grounding the narrative in their judgment and the authenticity of lived experience. I argue that the presence of subjective, embodied experience, drawing attention to the sensory aspects of the journey, became increasingly important in women's travel writing in the early 20th century, when, in addition to being informative accounts, travel writing became more literary.

Although feminist interest in autobiographical texts (letters, diaries, autobiographies, memoirs, etc.) has led to serious reconsiderations of vast and various sources of women's travel writing, showing that travelling, traditionally seen as a socially privileged activity, has also involved less privileged social groups who have their own stories to tell, the objective of this article is to look at travel writing that was published and circulated. Thus my analysis is limited to travel writing by middle-class female travellers, read as examples in order to trace the changes that took place with regard to the position of women in the social order and in women's writing. The close readings of travelogues by Minna Freimane (*Par piemiņu*, 1884) and Angelika Gailīte (*Vērojumi un sapņojumi*, 1920), which originated from their travel experiences, were published as books at the essential stages in the development of Latvian women's writing: Minna Freimane's travelogue was published during the emergence of women in Latvian literature, while Angelika Gailīte's travelogue was published in the same time period that saw phenomena such as the New Woman and increased attention being directed to the issue of women's emancipation. Being aware that the

field of Latvian women's travel writing is still at an early stage of research, where women's travelogues need to be identified and itineraries mapped, and acknowledging that a few case studies could never encompass the whole range of women's travel writing, what this analysis can do is to trace the contours of the tradition of Latvian women's travel writing in relation to self-presentation and literary culture, and highlight connections and changes.

Looking for Tradition

Whereas travel writing has long been considered male territory and the tradition of women travellers was obscured, starting from the 1970s, Western academic feminist critics rewriting the male-authored history to include women's contributions revealed that women have always not only travelled but have also written about their journeys. From the mid-19th century onwards, the number of travelogues published by women increased rapidly, and from then until today, women writers have made a significant contribution to the genre in all its various forms.

There is substantial scholarly literature on women's travel writing that both seeks to identify women's travelogues and looks for similarities in themes, voice, style, and perspectives, however, without arriving at a single answer to the question of whether women's travel accounts are fundamentally different from men's (Mills 1991, Siegel 2004, Saunders 2014). While gender as a reference point has generated much historical and theoretical research in travel writing studies, by developing a more nuanced approach to travel accounts researchers have concluded that an individual's travel experiences and representations are shaped by the interaction of different factors, and gender identity is intertwined with ethnic and national identity, race, age, class, wealth and status, education, political and religious beliefs, ideals and convictions, the narrative conventions of the genre at a particular time period, as well as the circumstances of publication (Bassnett 2002, Thompson 2011, Bird 2016). Despite the differences, the flexibility of the genre offered women a public space in which they could take a subject position, gain a voice, and claim agency. As Carl Thompson argues, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries "travel and travel writing constituted an important route to self-empowerment and cultural authority for women" (Thompson 2011: 189). By travelling and writing about their journeys, women were able to obtain education outside the official institutions which were closed to them, and acquire a degree of independence, social power, and authority. In addition, they were able to subvert expectations of women's roles and dominant norms by explicitly positioning themselves as travellers and writers.

In the late nineteenth century, when women's travel and travel writing had reached a previously unprecedented scale and women travel writers began to be singled out as examples of the new women's liberation, Latvian women also began to publish their travel accounts. In the 1870s, as women started to make inroads into Latvian literature in poetry, prose, drama, and journalism, the first known Latvian female travel writer Minna Freimane (1847–?) published her travel writing *Iz Kaukāzijas* (From the Caucasus, 1878) in the newspaper *Baltijas Vēstnesis*. Later she published impressions about her travels in Germany, France, and Italy: *No Baltijas tālā svešumā* (From the Baltic to Distant Foreign Lands) (*Baltijas Vēstnesis*, 1880), and Egypt: *Par Ēģipti* (About Egypt) (*Latviešu Avīzes*, 1880). As can be concluded from the scant biographical information, she travelled as a governess and later as a servant to a baroness (Kārkla 2020). In 1884 Freimane's travel writings were compiled as a book *Par piemiņu* (For Remembrance) (Liepāja, Klāva Ukstiņa apgāds). Returning to the Caucasus, she continued to travel and write, publishing *Pa Volgas upi uz Kaukāziju* (On the Volga River to the Caucasus, 1884) and *Dagestānē* (In Dagestan, 1886) (*Baltijas Vēstnesis*). Although the time span of her public activity was short and little is known of her life after 1886, Freimane's travelogues allowed women authors who came after her to comfortably place themselves within the tradition of Latvian women's travel writing.

Writer Marija Medinska-Valdemāre (1830–1887) in her *Vēstule "Rotai", ko cien. tautiete M. M. no Krievzemes laidusi* (Letter to Rota sent by the honorable compatriot M. M. from Russianland), published in the family magazine *Rota* in 1884, stated: "Although there are already a few female compatriots in my homeland who have travelled and told a lot about their adventures, I know that there are even more who, having lived in their homeland all their lives, long to know and hear something from the lives of other people (..)" (Medinska 1884). After managing her brother's estate in Novgorod Province for almost 20 years, Medinska-Valdemāre, looking for better living conditions, moved together with her husband to Aksay in southern Russia. The purpose of her writing was both to educate and to entertain her readers, and the target audience of her travel letters were Latvian women who, as the author points out, had less time and fewer opportunities than men to gain either formal or informal education.

Examining narratives of the 19th-century travellers from Courland, Māra Grudule notes the different positions of Latvian male and female travellers: while men travelled independently, on their own initiative, women were mostly able to see foreign lands as travel companions (Grudule 2005: 123). Undeniably, the opportunities for men to gain education, travel independently and have a professional career, which often took them abroad, were much more plentiful. The dominant ideology of middle-class

culture that predicated the separation of public and private spheres, mapped as masculine and feminine, was not publicly questioned until the mid-1880s (Zelče 2002, Hanovs 2003, Eglāja-Kristsonsone 2017). On the one hand, women writers and journalists in their own discussion of women's role in society accepted the idea of natural differences between men and women, the notion of women as the weaker members of society, and the association of women with domesticity (Kronvalde 1870, Freimane 1882, Medinska 1884, Birzniece 1886). The discussion included questions on women's education and professional careers, from which they voluntarily withdrew for the benefit of men. According to Hanovs, the liberation of women from male dominance was illusory and "middle-class women actually did not create an opposition to the male discourse but legitimized men's views, as they shared with them the same social and cultural values". Women's identity was dominated by class, not by gender, and the double male dominance of the time (the competition of native and foreign male cultures) "left women the role of man's companion". A professionally active woman would only make the difficult struggle of Latvian men for social status in a multinational Baltic society more complex and challenging (Hanovs 2002: 30–31). On the other hand, female-authored travel writing was an opportunity to subversively address the particular social order and the related notions of masculinity and femininity. As women travellers moved across different geographies, their positions as subjects changed, and their travel writing revealed an alternative set of models, destabilizing the assumptions about separate, differentiated spheres of activity, as well as the idea of women as passive and inert.

In the 1890s, the extensive travel narrative *Ceļojumu vēstules* (Letters from Journeys) (*Dienas lapas feļetons*, 1891–1892) by governess Piliņa Katrīna (?–?), whose biography is almost completely unknown, was published. While staying with her employer in Berlin, she was able to travel to Austria, Switzerland, and France together with a female companion, as the improved modes of transport and accommodation had made travel in Europe more accessible, affordable, and safer for people from different social classes, especially for women. Her travel letters belonged to the travel writing of the time and, like the travelogues of her predecessors Freimane and Medinska-Valdemāre, contained both entertainment and useful information. According to the editor's note accompanying the letters: "Although these letters are from 1885 and therefore seem to be out of date, we are nevertheless presenting them to our readers because, firstly, they will not be displeasing for them as written by a woman of our country, and secondly, we hope that they will in no way bore them because they are written in a concise and rather attractive manner. Some of them will serve as historical reminders, others as introductions to foreign lands" (Piliņa 1891). In 1891, Piliņa Katrīna continued her journeys as a governess, travelling by

steamship from Odessa to Vladivostok and visiting South Asian port cities on the way. Two slightly different versions of her Asian travel impressions were published: *Brauciens ap Āzijas pasaules daļu* (A Journey Around the Asian Part of the World) (Balss, 1891) and *Ceļojuma vēstules* (Letters from Journeys) (*Dienas lapas feļetons*, 1892). When she embarked on this journey, she already had some experience in travel writing, thus her Asian travel letters contained more detailed information and historical facts about the places visited than her previous travelogues.

Almost a decade later, Marija Jēgere-Šmite's (1872–1950) Asian travel narrative *Pa tālajiem Austrumiem* (In the Far East, 1900–1901) was published in the magazine *Mājas Viesa Mēnešraksts*. At the time of her travels she had lived in Beijing, China for more than two years (from 1896 to 1899), accompanying her husband Pēteris Šmits, who did his internship there to qualify for a professorship. Together with her husband Jēgere-Šmite visited Korea and Japan. In her travel writing, she claimed the status of a female intellectual and established her authority from the outset by criticizing male travellers' superficial and misleading accounts about East Asia, which she aimed to correct by providing her readers with reliable information based on her own experience, her observations, and knowledge gained from books and journeys with professors. Her carefully crafted, informational, and thoughtful descriptions show that while the practice of science was almost exclusively a male domain at the time, the genre of travel writing as semi-scientific encouraged women to conduct empirical investigations into many topics and gave them the opportunity "to do science while not necessarily appearing to do science" (Thompson 2017: 136). Šmite's political and ethnographic essays, travelogues, and translations that were published in the Latvian press during her stay in Beijing and Vladivostok show a woman trying to establish herself in a very specific branch of science alongside her famous husband (Dunajevs 2023). Using her independent powers of observation and judgment, learning about foreign cultures, languages, histories, social organizations, and natural environments, as a traveller she became an active agent and cultural commentator with her travelogue participating in a broader range of cultural debates and the study of East Asia.

At about at the same time, travel accounts by another female traveller, Hermīne Zālīte (1858–1932), were published in the magazine *Mājas Viesa Mēnešraksts*. Like Jēgere-Šmite she travelled together with male family members – her brother, professor Kārlis Balodis and her husband, editor Pēteris Zālīte. In her travelogues *Uz dienvidiem* (To the South, 1896) about travels in Germany and Italy and *Uz Parīzi, uz pasaules izstādi* (To Paris, to the World Exposition, 1900), she voices the emancipated middle-class woman's view of travel in Europe as an important part of self-education and cultural enrichment. She aims to foster the knowledge and appreciation of Western art as she describes the tour of foreign art galleries and museums while

also providing practical details of her journey, including information about accommodation, food, transport, entrance tickets to the museums, and recommendations of cultural sites. At the beginning of her Paris account, she also pays attention to women's travel apparel, advocating dress for increased mobility and showing that the turn of the century marked the beginning of a change in women's clothing: luxurious, impractical and uncomfortable garments that hindered freedom of movement were replaced by simpler and more comfortable clothing, which was also more suitable for travelling.

Changes in women's access to travel in the early 20th century coincided with the impact of first-wave feminism, the *fin-de-siècle* challenges to the gender order, and the emergence of the image of the New Woman in culture. The cultural influences of modernity gave rise to a new kind of female traveller, characterized by Sidonie Smith as "the woman of some independent means and some independence of mind who was just as eager as certain men of the time to expand her horizon of knowledge and her arena of agency through travel" (Smith 2001: 16). In the early 20th century, travel became a symbol of the modern woman as well as a feminist practice that involved the deconstruction of social privilege and power, and travelling women, in particular, were seen as pointing to broader social and cultural themes of power, resistance, and emancipation (Marsh 2004). Latvian women increasingly travelled not only as companions but also independently, seeking educational opportunities, enjoying Western European culture, for leisure as well. Teacher and publicist Anna Rūmane-Ķeniņa (1877–1950) was one such woman who had an income that allowed her to travel abroad. In her unpublished autobiography she writes: "In 1901 I felt so tired that I decided to go abroad for a few months. The management of the school was left to Mr Ķeniņš, the two small children in the care of my parents, while I, with a small bag in my hand and a little money in my pocket, wandered through Vienna, Switzerland, [and] Northern Italy, to spend a few weeks in Ospedaletti, where I wrote my series of literary works *Iz Dienvidiem* (From the South) [..]" (Rūmane 1938). The lyrical cycle *From the South*, in which the specific geographical place is discovered through sensual perceptions, was later published in the literary supplement of *Pēterburgas Avīzes* (1902), marking the beginning of her literary activity. Thus travelling to Italy provided the author not only with new, stimulating experiences, but also undisturbed time for writing and self-reflection (Kārkla 2019). In 1911 Rūmane-Ķeniņa travelled to Paris and afterwards published her impressions *Vēstules iz Parīzes* (Letters from Paris, 1912) in the monthly journal of literature and art *Druva*. She deliberately avoided describing monuments, churches, famous buildings, and museums but instead concentrated on the rapidly changing everyday life of Paris that took place on the boulevards, in magazines, and in café-restaurants. She paid special attention to the impressions left by

modern dance, focusing in detail on Isadora Duncan's performances. Rūmane-Ķeniņa conveyed to the Latvian readers innovations in Duncan's choreographic language, as well as characteristic changes in a woman's role in the artistic process, since modern dance not only completely transformed the types of movements seen on the stage but especially sought to liberate the female body, and "for women especially, Duncan's dance bodied forth the vitality and agency they were continually denied in their daily lives" (Coates 2013: 185). Ideas about the new freedom of movement of the body and the emancipation of the dancing female body can also be linked to the freedom of movement that many 20th-century women experienced when travelling.

The well-known Latvian oculist, Antonija Lūkina, wife of Fēlikss Lūkins, later known as the writer and feminist activist Ivande Kaija (1876–1942) in her travel narrative *Vagonā no Cīrihes uz Lugano* (In a Railway Carriage from Zurich to Lugano) (*Dzimtenes Vēstnesis*, 1910), signed with her maiden name Tonija Meldere, described a train ride, revealing how technological advances made middle and upper-class women's independent journeys in Europe possible, as travelling by train became an increasingly comfortable and safe mode of transportation. The text follows the linear trajectory of a train journey from the "cold north" of Switzerland to the "sunny south" of Italy. To entertain readers, the travelling companions encountered are painted in contrasting and vivid colours, with impressions based on the narrator's subjective feelings towards the cheerful, carefree Italian workers returning home after seasonal work, and the old Swiss ladies with their cackling voices who move about in their daily routine and among whom the traveller feels as if "among the witches of Walpurgis Night" (Kaija 1910). Sidonie Smith, examining how women's travel and travel writing in the twentieth century was shaped by particular modes of vehicles, writes that in train carriages "women were in enclosed spaces designed to protect them from the elements and from their own vulnerability as travelling women" (Smith 2001: 127). Kaija's travel narrative captures the subjective impressions of a female traveller in the protected space of a train carriage, placing the journey itself at the centre of attention. Observations, brief encounters with other passengers, and contemplation caused by watching the landscape outside the window become the content of the narrative, and the narrator, a woman who can travel alone, is the sign of female emancipation.

In the context of Latvian women's changing social roles and cultural experiences at the beginning of the 20th century, organized teachers' excursions also played a role. In 1909, artist and teacher Lilija Sērmūkša (1882–?) went on one of the five travel itineraries offered by the commission of the educational department of the Russian Society for the Dissemination of Technical Knowledge in Moscow. Her travelogue *Ceļojums pa Turciju, Grieķiju, Ēģipti, Palestīnu, Sīriju un Bulgāriju* (A Trip through Turkey, Greece, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and Bulgaria) was published in the newspaper

Dzimtenes Vēstnesis in 1911. Travelling through many countries over two months, the trip was not only an educational journey – the group was accompanied by guides – but also intensive and physically exhausting. In the summer before World War I, teacher and writer Angelika Gailīte (1884–1975) travelled with a group of teachers from Moscow to Italy. Her travelogue *Vērojumi un sapņojumi* (Observations and Dreams), centred on the experience of the travelling female subject, is a narrative about her escape from a failed marriage and the depressing, provincial Russian city where she resided, and the discovery of the riches of Western culture, vivid impressions from seeing original works of art which surpassed any written art history. However, most of all it speaks of personal freedom, mapping the topographies of the identity of a New Woman – independent, relatively educated, sexually liberated and oriented towards life in the public sphere. While all travel narratives discussed above are informed by the writers' subjective positions as women, to perceive this corpus of texts as homogenous would be fallacious, taking into account the significant social and literary changes during the time period in question. In the next two sections of the article, I will look closer at the travelogues of Minna Freimane and Angelika Gailīte to examine how the woman traveller represents her body in the narrative in different time periods. The examples I have chosen mark the beginning and the end of the period in question, thus allowing us to map both the continuities and differences of women's travel writing.

Minna Freimane: The experiential, sentimental observer and body in motion

Travelling, at least historically, has usually been understood as a deeply bodily experience, and travelogue, mainly because its subject matter involves the movement of the body through different configurations of time and space, can be considered the most physical literary genre (Helmets, Mazzeo 2005, Forsdick 2016). The presence of the traveller's body ensures the authenticity of the travelogue, assuring that the source of the narrative is based on eyewitness experience. Simultaneously the presence of the body in travel writing "is always a matter of selectivity and performativity, and must therefore be read in the wider context of cultural and travel history" (Forsdick 2016: 68–69). Although travel was seen as a sign of women's emancipation, given the long-dominant link between travel and knowledge as rational and the view that women's corporeality affected their rational capacity and thus weakened their agency, female travellers had to make a special effort to gain authority as storytellers and create space for their narratives within the dominant notions of travel. Traditionally

the protagonist of a travel narrative was coded as “male crossing borders”, but the woman in a man’s itinerary was mostly mapped as an “object of desire” or “destination” (Bassnett 2002: 225). This the positioning of women in men’s travel accounts was closely linked to the perception of women as bodies, embedded in conventional binary thinking, drawing parallels between the intellectual and the rational as masculine, and the corporeal, intuitive and emotional as feminine. While women travel writers, telling their own stories, destabilized certain assumptions, all the same they wrote in a masculine tradition in which the travelling woman, at least to some extent, had to subordinate her material self in order for her text to compete with male accounts (Bassnett 2002; Helmers, Mazzeo 2005; Bird 2016).

The second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century was a time when Latvian national identity was gradually emerging, and travel accounts, predominantly male-authored, played an essential role as political and cultural polemics. Rather than focusing on direct experiences of travel, foreign travel impressions were used to address social, political, and cultural issues, as well as “to legitimize claims to cultural development and, to some extent, cultural uniqueness” (Goloubeva, 2003: 13). Pointing to the fact that travel writing plays a significant role in allowing women to participate in a wide scope of debates and discourses, Carl Thompson writes that consequently a travelogue could become a “journey to authority” (Thompson 2017: 133). For female travellers during this time period, the genre was an important route to wider recognition as intellectuals and writers. This statement can be applied to the first known Latvian female travel writer, Minna Freimane (fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Portrait of Minna Freimane.
Photo by Oswald Lange, ca. 1890.
The University of Latvia Academic Library,
The Museum of Literature and Music,
LABR R6902-11, Alksnis Miķelis 6-11.

Freimane was born in Jurgumiža, where her father was a manorial taskmaster. Belonging to a family of the Latvian upper social class shaped her future possibilities – she was hired as a governess in the family of a Russian colonel and later as a maid for the baroness, and both professions enabled her extensive travels. Overall, little is known about her personal life story, her public portrait consists of involvement in the national movement (collecting folklore, participating in the work of the Liepāja Latvian Society), literary activities, public speeches, and travel writing (Kārkla 2021). Before being compiled as a book, her travel writing was published serially, mostly in the political, social, and literary newspaper *Baltijas Vēstnesis*, one of the most important Latvian civic publications of the time, thanks to which also Latvian journalism began to emerge (Hanovs 2002), and Freimane was later mentioned also as one of the first Latvian journalists–war reporters as a result of her witnessing and describing the beginning of the Russo–Turkish war (1877–1878) (Akmentiņš 1943).

Her book of travel accounts *Par piemiņu* (For Remembrance, 1884) (fig. 2), divided into four sections, begins with an eyewitness account of the outbreak of the Russo–Turkish war, and the first part of the travelogue documents her travels in the Caucasus. The second section, entitled *Vācu kolonijas grūtumi un kara briesmas* (The Hardships of the German Colony and the Perils of War), is a historical description of the German colonies in the Russian Empire that suffered during the Russo–Persian War (1826–1828). While this story had little to do with Freimane’s direct travels, it gave her the opportunity to express her views about the colonial movement, pointing out the dangers to which colonists exposed themselves by moving to foreign

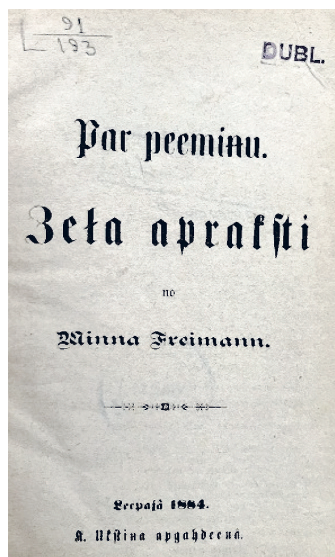


Fig. 2. Book cover:
Minna Freimane. *Par piemiņu*
(For Remembrance).

territories. In the narrative, Freimane also focuses on the fate of women who were taken captive and later returned. By recording their stories, she emphasizes women's journeys that were very different from her own. The historical account is followed by her actual travel through Germany, France, and Italy, focusing in detail on Pompeii. The fourth part of the book chronicles her journey to Egypt, where she stays in Cairo for three months and goes on a desert tour.

Her travel writing is descriptive in nature, understanding travel as a means of gaining and passing on new knowledge, and she repeatedly expresses a great responsibility to her readers, at the same time filtering the observations through herself. According to Mary Louise Pratt, who counterposes scientific, objective travel accounts and experiential texts, Freimane's narrative is sentimental travel writing, as the authority of the narrator is based on "the authenticity of felt experience" and she clearly supports her message in sensory experience, judgment, and agency. Instead of a "disembodied eye" or panoptic observer who erases the body in order to claim complete, objective knowledge, the sentimental, experiential protagonist is "composed of the whole body" (Pratt 1992: 76–78). In November 1879, starting a new journey, Freimane wrote: "My mind was joyful like a bird that forgets everything else and soars into the sky singing. I thought about how I wanted to remember everything I saw and tell my compatriots at home" (Freimane 2021: 143). The pronouns 'my' and 'I' clearly emphasize the presence and significance of the traveller's personality – the traveller is a central figure of her account.

When describing the practical inconveniences of travel, Freimane writes about her body in functional terms: it must be capable of enduring the difficulties of the journey. Whether it is the headache caused by the unbearable smell of *kizjak* (fuel made from dried cattle dung); the freezing cold of an unheated Paris apartment in November: "The chattering teeth while in my flat was no small matter. But so what! My job was to see the city – and that's what I did"; travelling bad roads with uncomfortable means of transportation: "On the way back I had to endure some difficulties: for 160 versts I travelled well; but when I got higher up the mountains it was no longer possible to drive the cart, I had to climb on the horse unwillingly and continue on horseback"; severe seasickness: "I lay there like a corpse and thought that this hand will no longer hold a pen"; or dizziness when climbing down the steps of the pyramid: "Looking down, [my] head feels dizzy and shaky, seeing the big blocks I have to climb down" – she makes the reader participate in her physical experiences.

The narrative offers Freimane the perfect opportunity to represent herself as an adventurous, fearless traveller who went to and wrote about places that were considered inhospitable for women. Already at the beginning of her travelogue Freimane ventures into the heart of male territory – a soldier's settlement shortly before

the declaration of war. Later, she travels into the African desert, longing for adventure and proudly reporting that she was chosen as the leader of the caravan whilst going along a narrow road in a rocky area: "Everyone wanted me to ride up front on a camel. The others rode on donkeys because the remaining camels were loaded with baggage. Our caravan had a pretty appearance when we rode behind each other in a long line. I, a distant stranger, sitting on a camel, was proud to be the leader of the others" (Freimane 2021: 240). The described experience reveals the freedom of movement – when riding a camel, she is physically rising above the others who are riding on donkeys, and both her gaze and the whole body are empowered with a sense of agency.

Despite the fact that Freimane's narrative is primarily informative, it also makes use of emotions to emphasize her observations and sometimes cause action. While emotions, associated with the physical, irrational, and female, have traditionally been attributed a negative meaning, renewed critical attention to emotions suggests the importance of feelings in historical narratives, including women's travel writings (Harper 2001, Adam 2019). Observations of the landscape cause Freimane joy and excitement, emphasizing the extraordinariness of the sights: "A dark blue sky; darker still, a gently swaying sea, and there, in that darkness, enchanting dancing lights. At such illumination, as we haggled in the boat, we were quite swept away with the joy of the heart" (Freimane 2021: 105). She is flooded with emotion as she watches a Muslim festival in Egypt: "I was so overwhelmed by it all that I couldn't stay any longer and went home". But when she learns of the assassination of the Russian Tsar, she is full of anger and indignation: "Tears brimmed up in my eyes. Feeling that I could not restrain myself, I went away, throwing another glance at the happy revellers". On the way, she is invited by some Arabs into their tent, where she meets a Russian missionary: "Angry as I was [...] I stood up and said to him: 'You'd better go back to your homeland and see to it that you destroy the evil seed in your own land, and [only] then go abroad!'" (Freimane 2021: 198–200) The self-positioning as an emotional and responsive narrator adds significantly to Freimane's observations, and emotions play an undeniable role in motivating her speech and actions. Thus the authority of the traveller is based on the authentic, lived experience of the journey, emphasizing the traveller's personality and including the presence of the physical body by describing the practical discomforts of the journey, the freedom of movement, and her emotional responses to different encounters. Freimane in her travel writing not only transgressed and questioned traditional gender roles by portraying a self-confident woman traveller on the move, but by bringing a physical dimension into the narrative and positioning herself as a corporeal and emotional being, she also explored personal ways of mapping the world.

Angelika Gailīte: A modernist tradition of women travellers

In the early 20th-century, women's travel was no longer exceptional. There were several factors that distinguished these travellers from women who had travelled before: female travellers were freer from expectations and constraints, as women's changing social and geographic mobility had made the conditions of women's identity much more fluid. Alongside the informative 'realist' travelogues, much travel writing in the modern period at the beginning of the 20th century became "less didactic, more subjective, more literary" (Carr 2002: 75). Women writers often used travelogues to redefine themselves through interactions between exploration of self through the experience of travel and self-articulation in writing. Addressing the relationship between geographical space and the female body in the travel accounts of American and British modernist women writers, Joyce E. Kelly points out that by inscribing subjective, lived bodily experiences in travelogues women writers also sought more creative and liberating ways for self-expression. Because women writers of the modernist period focused increasingly on the female body and the right of women to control and articulate their bodies, as well as on the issue that women had been bound to their bodies because of the roles society had assigned them, Kelly finds that the ideas of French feminists who thought and wrote extensively about the intersection of female body, language, and writing practices were particularly suitable for discussing modernist women's writing (Kelly 2018: 23). The ideas of feminine writing – *écriture féminine* – focus on the right of women to articulate their bodies: to 'write the body' and 'write through the body' call for a woman to symbolically reclaim power over her body by linguistically reclaiming this space (her body) as her own (Cixous 1976: 880). The recovery of the female body and sexuality that for centuries had been denied and repressed because of male power was the main source of *écriture féminine* that called for a new representation of women's consciousness, which would include the corporeal and a type of women's language that would be transgressive and challenge patriarchal norms. Reclaiming the female body by writing the body was envisioned as a path to empowerment, self-determination, and liberation from masculinist notions of being. This view can also be at least partially applied to Latvian modernist authors who, at the beginning of the 20th century, began to publish work that differed from the texts written in the previous century.

Angelika Gailīte (fig. 3) broke into literature by exploring the workings of the inner life of her female characters. Like many other women writers of the period, she opened up the soul of women and brought a new image of the intelligent, independent, and sexually liberated woman to Latvian literature. Belonging to the first generation of gymnasium-educated Latvian women writers, Gailīte, after graduating



Fig. 3. Portrait of Angelika Gailīte.
Photo by unknown author, 1912.
National Library of Latvia, Lettonica and
Baltic Reading Room, Aleksejs Apinis
Rare Books and Manuscripts Reading Room,
LNB RX80, 2, 25, 4. lp.

from Daugavpils Gymnasium in 1903, worked as a teacher. She became engaged to writer Haralds Eldgasts (Jānis Miķelsons, 1882–1926), the author of the novel *Zvaigžņotas naktis* (Starry Nights, 1905), considered to be the first Latvian modernist novel (Vāvere 1998). The novel was dedicated to Gailīte (Angelika Jadviga G.), who rewrote the manuscript. Gailīte in her memoir writes: “Two to three pages were written by me and it is the first thing I wrote that was published” (Gailīte 1962: 12). Unfortunately, she does not reveal which pages are hers. Subtitled *Vienas dvēseles stāsts* (The Story of a Soul), Eldgasts’s novel was innovative in its revelation of an individual’s psyche. Such intimate revelation of the inner plot of the soul was alien to Latvian literature at the time (Vāvere 1996: 30). An extensive theoretical preface, added to the novel, is considered one of the manifestos of Latvian decadence, beginning with the postulate: “The real immediacy is not outside us, but is inside us” (Vāvere 1998: 265). In the autumn of 1910, the couple moved to Vologda, a Russian provincial city where Eldgasts had a job as a teacher. In the first winter in Vologda Gailīte didn’t have work outside the house, thus she had time to compile her first book of short stories and sketches (most of which were written in 1908) called *Ilgas un maldi* (Longings and Delusions, 1913). The collection was published at the same time when works by other Latvian women authors (*Aina Āre* by Antija, 1912; *Iedzimtais grēks* (Original Sin) by Ivande Kaija, 1913), openly exploring issues of women’s emancipation, calling for the spiritual awakening of women and discussing women’s rights including the demand for the realization of a woman’s personality in all spheres of life, including the sexual,



Fig. 4. Book cover:
Angelika Gailīte *Vērojumi un sapņojumi*
(Observations and Dreams).

were published and discussed in literary criticism. Focusing on the dilemma of the modern woman who, on the one hand, longs for family life and motherhood and on the other hand, feels like it all is a prison to her, they show female characters who want to become heroines themselves and be proud of their independence, but cannot find firm ground under their feet. The choice of themes was largely determined by autobiographical experience, and the open display of women's inner conflicts was a novelty.

When in 1914 Gailīte travelled to Italy with a group of teachers, her marriage had broken up and the trip was the symbolic beginning of a new life. Her Italian impressions, collected in the book *Vērojumi un sapņojumi* (Observations and Dreams) (fig. 4), start with crossing both geographical and deeply personal borders, thus the physical journey is closely linked to the psychological liberation: she crosses the border of the Russian Empire for the first time, leaving behind not only gloomy Vologda, but also an unhappy marriage: "New page. Brand new. Such lightness as if without a past. Among people who see you for the first time, who know nothing of how you have lived, what you have felt before, who take you just as you are, standing in front of them that instant" (Gailīte 1920: 5). Although the travelogue follows the itinerary of the journey, as the chapter headings show – To the Border. Poland. Austria. Vienna. Italy. Florence. Fiesole. Naples. Pompeii. Capri. Rome. From Rome to Venice. Venice – and includes information about the places visited, the focus is on the traveller's experience of the new surroundings that cause enjoyment of mind, body and soul.

Gailīte's travel writing celebrates a state of intense wonder, coming from the strange joy of travelling abroad: "All of us, except Yulia Mikhailovna and the classics teacher, were crossing the border for the first time, so we didn't complain about the inconvenience, but with a strange joy we entered a new, unfamiliar country" (Gailīte 1920: 7). She feels thrilled and elated, looking at the places she encounters with great excitement: "As if carried on wings, we head for the Italian train and take our seats in small Italian carriages with doors on the side facing each seat. We are fascinated by every little thing that reminds us of this country. We are delighted by the first Italian expression: *Vietato fumare* (it's the quite commonplace: No Smoking), that we read on the walls of the carriage" (Gailīte 1920:17).

The book is characterized by sincerity, sensitivity, delight, a personal and sensual experience of the place and the objects seen, as well as an embodied response to the beauty. The impressions of the journey are captured and re-created in the text, involving not only the gaze but through focusing on sensual experiences, the whole body. A series of expressive, sensual reflections in Gailīte's travelogue resonates with the corporeal turn in tourism studies that points to the recognition of sensual awareness in the travel experience. Focusing on the whole sensuous-thinking body and how it perceives and understands the world, several studies have addressed sensory perception in travel accounts, questioning the previously dominant visual perception as primary (Pritchard et al. 2007, Edneron, Falconer 2011, Edneron 2018). For Gailīte the conditioned perception of the outside world dominates, with an emphasis on the search for a personal, bodily connection, the direct, sensory experience of a new place. She imagines Florence, the first Italian city on the itinerary, as a lover who makes "the blood flow faster in my veins" (Gailīte 1920: 26). Deep fusion with the place is evidenced by sensory perception: "I went out alone. Alone in a strange city, without a goal, without a purpose. And there you embraced me in your caressing sunbeams and, pressing a burning kiss on my forehead and lips, took me captive forever. I wandered in enchantment through the silent streets. My feet glided lightly on the broad white stones, as if they were not cobblestones but soft blankets that would carry me" (Gailīte 1920: 27). While the freedom to move around the city and observe without interacting with others was one of the hallmarks of modernity, characterized by masculine privilege and leisure, Gailīte's early morning walk without a goal in Florence and also later in the text, where she describes the pleasure of aimless wanderings in Venice, show that when travelling, women could experience the freedom to move about alone and carefree in the city, becoming a *flâneuses* (Wolff 1985, Elkin 2017).

Identifying herself as a Northerner, the traveller repeatedly describes the hot Italian sun, which pleasantly "seeps through all limbs": "All I take from it [Bologna] is the sun's sweltering heat, which seems to reflect off the yellowed walls of the

buildings and the stones of the streets" (Gailīte 1920: 20). Her senses are awakened by the contrast between the scorching sun and the cool stone floors; the scent of lemons and oranges in the garden; the music heard in the convent church; the smell of clean, fresh air after the thunderstorm; or when picking flowers in the mountains and "inhaling their strong but fragrant aroma" or running with the waves on the Naples waterfront: "(...) when the waves rose in the wind and, splashing white foam, crashed against the rocks of the shore, we couldn't resist from running down. Once there, we stood on a wide stone staircase by the boat landing. In between every new gush of water coming in, we each tried to run from one side of the steps to the other, to get over to the side elevation with our feet still dry. When playing like this, we were as if challenging the waves to hurry up. And when a whole shower of spray surprised us halfway across and hit the body, we became even merrier" (Gailīte 1920: 51). The narrator surrenders to the flow of the journey, focusing on personally significant moments which are described as meaningful.

Gailīte does not pretend that her account is objective: this is already evidenced by the word "dreams" in the title, pointing to the presence of imagination, fantasy, and inner geography, merging external and internal journeys and also accessing the unconscious dimensions of herself. The episode of arrival in Naples during the night where she is enchanted by the moonlit waters of the Mediterranean, a sense of dreamlike unreality, is telling: "When I opened the door to our room, I stopped in amazement: a stream of pale blue light was streaming towards me through the open door of the high balcony, then it went straight out to sea in a shining crescent moon. I looked to the side and saw myself in the mirror of the large wardrobe, in the same pale blue illumination that made myself alien, a purely ethereal being" (Gailīte 1920: 51). Using the images of the moonlight and mirror, Gailīte touches the unconscious, also revealing the fluidity and viscosity of the body.

Despite the fact that the account follows the itinerary of the journey and provides information about the places visited, the emphasis is on the traveller's experience which can be described as a state of intense happiness brought about by the journey abroad. Literary critic Andrejs Upīts, critically calling the book "a work characteristic of a woman" noticed the specific: a series of sensual first impressions dominated by a conditioned perception of the outside world. It allows looking at Gailīte's work as the experimental explorations of modern women that have been made possible because of the experience of travel: "This book is full of attractive details, colourful miniatures. But it has no centre, no guiding and unifying thread. [...] We see only a woman travelling for pleasure and relaxation, who looks with alert curiosity at everything that happens on the way, gets excited about everything, and writes about everything in a lightly chattering, poetic journalistic style" (Upīts 1921: 362). Thus Gailīte's

travel account, consisting of personal insights and sensations, creates an Italy of her own. It is as much a book about a trip to Italy as about a female traveller, Gailīte herself. Gailīte's travelogue is a modern woman's self-expression in which her body becomes a vehicle for exploration and imagination, also drawing parallels with the French *écriture féminine* that calls for a new representation of women's consciousness.

Conclusion

Both Minna Freimane and Angelika Gailīte travelled and wrote their travelogues during periods of change, and both of them with their writings were actors and commentators during these transitions. Freimane published her travelogue at a time when the first women authors began to emerge in Latvian literature, and women's presence in the public sphere and their access to education were contested issues. Gailīte travelled abroad to gain new impressions and broaden her horizons in tune with the opportunities that had been opened up for Latvian women by the new age of modernity. In different time periods travel writing had other functions as the predominant ones: while at the end of the 19th century its primary function was informative and the genre worked as a route to intellectual and cultural authority for women, at the beginning of the 20th century, besides being informative travel accounts, the texts became more autobiographical, more subjective and more self-consciously literary, also functioning as a means for creative self-exploration. Both Freimane and Gailīte assign importance to the corporeal, the subjective, and the private in their travel accounts by placing female travellers and their experiences at the centre, also in line with the observation that women writers' biographical and literary maps often overlap (Kārkla, Eglāja-Kristsons 2022). Highlighting the experiences and challenges of the physical body, Freimane bases her authority as a traveller on authentic, lived travel experiences. Gailīte, on the hand, by focusing on sensual experiences and personal impressions and by emphasizing the state of intense happiness elicited by the journey, clearly states that the work is based on both fact and imagination. In the examples discussed, both women's physical mobility, movement through space and time, and writing suggest the importance of travel in the construction of women's identity, agency and authority. They show that female-authored travel accounts are a rich source for the study of women's experiences, self-perception, and self-representation, as well as strategies of women's writing. Moreover, the theoretical framework outlined in the article opens the way to the study of gendered genre modifications – which is certainly worth pursuing further and more in depth, employing access to the deeper mechanisms of textual and cultural form reversal and generation.

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

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

Keywords:

Hanny Brentano,
Elisabeth Goercke,
Elfriede Eckardt-Skalberg,
Martha von Dehn-Grubbe,
Baltic German literature,
translation,
translated verse

Atslēgvārdi:

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

Summary

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

Kopsavilkums

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

Introduction

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

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

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

Johanna Brentano: subjective deformations of Latvian short prose

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

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



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

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

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

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

2 Cf. Brentano 1916, S. 59.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Elisabeth Goercke: an improved text of Latvian Modernism

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

(Eldgasts 1908: 39)

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

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

(Eldgasts 1925a: 11)

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

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

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

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

Antonie Elfriede Hildegarde

Skalberg was born in the Riga neighbourhood of Kęngarags⁹. Her father, teacher Jozefs Skalbergs (born Jahsep Skalberg, 1842–1927) was of Latvian peasant stock from Lode Manor in Vidzeme, but in the family German was spoken and it became Elfriede Skalberg's mother tongue as well. She learnt Latvian when she started school, acquiring an education together with her Latvian schoolmates. Skalberg completed her secondary education in Riga and after that she spent some time living with relatives in Moscow, where she also improved her knowledge of Russian. Her Latvian origins she neither confirmed nor denied.

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

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

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

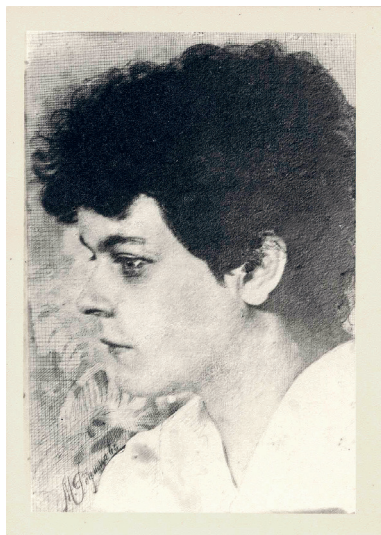


Fig. 2. Elfriede Eckardt-Skalberg.
Latvian State Archive,
LVA 2176-1v-243-47001

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(Mediņš 1940)

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

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

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

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

The Baltic Ger-

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

(Baumaņu Kārlis 1928).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusions

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

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

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Women in the Book Publishing Industry of Latvia During the Interwar Period

Sievietes grāmatu izdevējdarbībā Latvijā starpkaru periodā

Keywords:

women's history,
publishing industry,
the 1920s–1930s,
popular literature,
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Atslēgvārdi:

sieviešu vēsture,
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bērnu literatūra

Summary

This article explores the materials available that reflect women's achievements in the publishing industry of Latvia during the period from 1918 until 1940. The publications produced by Ilga Zvanītāja, Anna Grobiņa and Emīlija Benjamiņa are analysed in detail, including the way they were critiqued and received by the public, and also the specialisation in publishing particular literary genres. Each of the female publishers pursued a different publishing strategy and offered a differing range of published works. The empirical foundation for the article encompasses evidence of women's activity in the publishing industry as found in documents from the *Latvijas Valsts vēstures arhīvs* (Latvian State Historical Archive), overviews published in periodicals, reviews and bookseller advertisements, and bibliographic data. The aim of the publication of this article is to provide a more comprehensive background to the collective discourse about the history of Latvian book publishing, enhancing knowledge about the women working in the industry in the 1920s and 1930s.

Kopsavilkums

Rakstā pētīti pieejamie materiāli, kas atspoguļo sieviešu darbību izdevējdarbībā Latvijā no 1918. līdz 1940. gadam, un sīkāk analizēti izdevēju Ilgas Zvanītājas, Annas Grobiņas, Emīlijas Benjamiņas apgādātie izdevumi, to kritika un vērtējums sabiedrībā, specializācija atsevišķu literatūras žanru izdošanā. Katra no izdevējām piekopj atšķirīgu izdevējdarbības stratēģiju un piedāvā atšķirīgu izdevumu produkciju. Raksta empīriskā bāze ietver liecības par sieviešu darbību grāmatniecībā – Latvijas Valsts vēstures arhīva dokumentus, periodiskajos izdevumos publicētos pārskatus, recenzijas un grāmatu tirgotāju sludinājumus, bibliogrāfiskos rādītājus. Publikācijas mērķis ir veidot pilnīgāku priekšstatu par latviešu grāmatniecības vēstures kolektīvo diskursu, paplašinot zināšanas par 20. gadsimta 20.–30. gados nozarē strādājošajām sievietēm.

Introduction

Unlike other fields of research in the humanities, in the study of the history of books women's practical involvement as book publishers, retailers and distributors has been little researched, and studies have been for the most part limited to the period leading up to the proclamation of the independent state of Latvia in 1918.¹ The history of women's readership up until the end of the 19th century has been investigated to a slightly greater extent.²

It has to be acknowledged that there is a perfectly rational reason why the study of the history of women in the book industry has ended up on the periphery of researchers' field of vision. That is, the small number of women working as publishers at the end of the 19th century and in first decades of the 20th century, and the books they published: of inconsistent quality and rarely making a contribution of enduring cultural value. A feminist approach in the research of the publishing industry is essential, given that as late as the 20th century book publishing in Latvia was, in the main, to be regarded as a patriarchal sector of industry. In Latvia, as opposed to other larger Western countries where individual women working in publishing and journalism³ opened up the way for remarkable progress and broke the stereotypical

1 Essential sources for the biographies of the people involved in the sector are the database *Latviešu grāmatniecības darbinieki līdz 1918. gadam* (<http://lgdb.lnb.lv>) created by Latvian National Library staff members (Ināra Klekere, Lilija Limane, Viesturs Zanders) and also the article by Klekere and Limane: *Latviešu grāmatniecības profesiju attīstības tendences līdz 1918. gadam: datubāzes "Latviešu grāmatniecības darbinieki līdz 1918. gadam" analīze* (Latvijas Nacionālās bibliotēkas zinātniskie raksti, Volume 3, 2017). The work of women as book distributors and publishers up until the beginning of the 20th century has been researched by Limane in the article *Latviešu grāmatniecības vēsture un sievietes* (Latvijas Luterānis, 01.05.2007, 22.–23. lpp.).

2 See, for example, the articles: Daija, Pauls, Eglāja-Kristsons, Eva (2016). The Discourse on Dangerous Reading in Nineteenth-Century Latvia. *Literature and Medicine*, No. 34(2), pp. 468–483; Limane, Lilija (2017). Latviešu sieviešu grāmatas līdz 19. gadsimta vidum Latvijas Nacionālās bibliotēkas Reto grāmatu un rokrakstu krājumā. Vilks, Andris (chief ed.). *Latvijas Nacionālās bibliotēkas zinātniskie raksti*, 3. (XXIII) sējums. Rīga: Latvijas Nacionālā bibliotēka, 62.–78. lpp.

3 Eleanor 'Cissy' Patterson (1881–1948), who in 1930 became the editor and publisher of one of Washington's largest morning newspapers *Washington Herald*; Elizabeth Garver Jordan, editor of *Harper's Bazaar* from 1900 to 1913; the publishing house *Hogarth Press*, jointly owned and run by Leonard and Virginia Woolf; Louise Seaman Bechtel (1894–1985), the first person to head a juvenile book department established by the American publishing house *Macmillan Publishers*; May Massee (1881–1966), an American children's book editor, the founding head of the juvenile departments at *Doubleday* from 1922 and at *Viking Press* from 1932; Bertha Mahony (1882–1969) and Elinor

views entrenched in society about the capabilities of women, these kinds of exemplars are very few. A more fully inclusive women's involvement in the development of the book publishing industry in the territory of present-day Latvia was also hampered by a lack of education, society's attitude with regard to a woman's place and role within it, and existing laws and regulations.

The limited rights women had to pursue entrepreneurial activities, these including the right to undertake any kind of publishing under their own name, was to a great extent determined by the existing laws of the Baltic governorates of the Russian Empire. As in the jurisdictions of other countries, so, too, in the legislation of the Baltic provinces in the 19th century men's rule prevailed and a woman's legal rights were largely defined within the context of family rights. With the exception of certain cases, any property (both goods and real estate) belonging to the wife that she brought to the marriage, or had acquired during the marriage, were considered the property of the husband, likewise it was the man's right to take action with and receive all income deriving from his wife's property, both goods and real estate (Zelče 2002: 21–23). In this respect women's rights in the Baltic governorates were not far removed from those on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, where "women were not recognized as or legally allowed to become publishing professionals until the late nineteenth century", and of those few pioneers "women who were leaders in these family businesses printed and published under a male relative's name". (Claro 2020) In the Baltic, women were able to inherit property on the death of their husband, in addition they were permitted to take over management of their husband's property in the case of illness, or if the husband was unable to carry out his duties for some other reason. (Kreicbergs 1909: 26) Several Latvian women – for instance, Anna Misiņa (1865–1928), wife of the eminent Latvian bibliographer and librarian Jānis Misiņš, also Emma Kukure (1879–?), spouse of the book publisher Jānis Alfrēds Kukurs, and others, would manage their husband's publishing enterprise whenever their husband was absent, however, more detailed information about how active a part these women may have taken in making executive decisions related to the enterprise more often than not cannot be found, or has not been preserved. One can begin to speak of a more significant women's participation in the industry in Latvia as women became owners of publishing houses, starting from the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. All the same, during this period also the number of these women was negligible, and mostly they continued to be employed in low-paid jobs, carrying out various technical duties.

Whitney Field (1889–1980), founders of the *Horn Book Magazine*; Emma Ihrer (1857–1911), editor of the German newspapers *Die Arbeiterin* un *Die Gleichheit* and defender of women's rights; Hedwig Dransfeld (1871–1925), from 1905 onwards editor of *Die christliche Frau*, and many others.

At the turn of the century, as the socio-political importance of books and the press, in particular, steadily increased, the publishing industry became the chief shaper and influencer of public opinion. It also became a viable and profitable economic sector. After the foundation of an independent Republic of Latvia in 1918 and *de iure* recognition of the state in 1921, there was a gradual increase in economic growth and public spending power, and the Latvian book publishing industry thrived as well. Both in Latvia and in the whole of Europe, the interwar period “marked the beginning of women’s access to professions, which was dependent on the civil and political rights they enjoyed.” (Gardey et. al. 2017) Publishing houses and individual publishers who had either completely or partially halted work during World War I resumed operations, these including publishers of note in Latvian book publishing history such as *Valters un Rapa*, Jānis Roze, Ansis Gulbis and others. Women were often employed as technical staff, typesetters, layout designers, and editors at printing works, in the editorial offices of publishers and newspapers; occasionally they opened their own bookshops, and in the rare case started up independent publishing activities, quite frequently out of necessity, having to provide for their family on the death of their spouse, though only very few of them became more widely known and appreciated by the public. A similar situation with respect to women’s employment in journalism and publishing existed also elsewhere in Europe and in North America, starting with the colonial era, when “women were involved in the publishing and printing business, nearly all of them doing so in the context of helping out family members.” (Chambers et. al. 2004: 44)

A precise figure for the number of women employed in the publishing industry in the 1920s and 1930s is difficult to establish. In the *Latviešu grāmattirgotāju un izdevēju biedrība* (Latvian Bookseller and Publisher Association) and *Latvijas Rakstu izdevēju un tirgotāju biedrība* (Latvian Publisher and Retailer Association) archive documents held by *Latvijas Valsts vēstures arhīvs* (Latvian State Historical Archive) that have been researched up until now, the composition of the membership of the organisations is not shown according to gender. In membership lists most often members were named by surname, or otherwise were listed under the name of the enterprise they owned, which more often than not had been named after the founder rather than their current – male or female – owner⁴. According to the data so far assembled, up until 1940 only 20% of all members of the Latvian Bookseller and

4 For example, in 1926 the *Latvijas Grāmatizdevēju un tirgotāju biedrība* list of members named a K. Paucītis of Limbaži. In fact, at the time the enterprise formerly owned by publisher Kārlis Paucītis (1866–1919) was being managed by his wife, the widow Līze Paucītis (1870–1975).

Publisher Association⁵ were women, although the number of women working in the sector was greater.⁶ Not one of the female publishers featured in this article was a member of the Latvian Publisher and Retailer Association.

The publishing work carried out by women in Latvia in the 1920s and 1930s was very varied, both in terms of genre of the published works (popular literature was widely represented, especially translations of works by foreign authors and literature intended for children; works by classic writers of Latvian literature as well as the first attempts of fledgling writers received their first publications or repeat editions; health and beauty handbooks; works with contents of a religious nature; calendars), and also in terms of the extent of operations as manifested by print runs and methods of promotion (marketing). The manner in which the women started working in the publishing business differed: there were instances when they continued to run a family enterprise after the spouse had died, or they took over from another family member; occasionally they registered and started up an independent enterprise which, however, required abundant financial means or potential sponsors, something that not all women had available to them.

When processing the existing data about the publishing activities of those women who had inherited the enterprise on the death of their husband, it can be seen that, on the whole, the widows continued pursuing the same direction of business as had been established by their late husband. Relatively often these publishers issued reprints of works previously published by the founder of the enterprise. A woman most often would continue to run the publishing enterprise under the founder's name, in this way affirming the intent to continue to pursue the same course as had been set in place by the previous owner. The aim of these publishing houses was to preserve the legacy left by their founders, to maintain the established

5 On investigation of the minutes of meetings and the submissions for membership of the *Latviešu grāmatirgotāju un izdevēju biedrība* and its successor *Latvijas Rakstu izdevēju un tirgotāju biedrība* (held by LVVA, files 2309 and 2402), and also the lists of members published annually in *Latvju Grāmata*, it can be seen that at various periods there were 73 female members in both associations. From 1924 until the association was dissolved in 1936, the *Latviešu grāmatirgotāju un izdevēju biedrība* (LGIB) had 46 female members. In the newly established *Latvijas Rakstu izdevēju un tirgotāju biedrība*, 29 women (only two of them former members of the LGIB) were admitted in 1938–1939, most of them book retailers. For comparison – on 26 November, 1939, the *Latvijas Rakstu izdevēju un tirgotāju biedrība* had 139 members. (*Latvijas Rakstu izdevēju un tirgotāju biedrība* 1939b)

6 So far in research when comparing data from the publication *Latvijas tirgotāju saraksts* (1936) issued by the Ministry of Finance, the minutes of meetings and lists of members of the professional associations already mentioned, and the catalogues *Iespiedu darbu izplatītāji Rīgā* compiled by the private historian Voldemārs Eihenbaums (1951), the author of this article has found 236 women who were working in publishing and book retailing between 1918 and 1939.

standards and reputation; the publishing of works that were not characteristic of the established profile of the imprint or of a different literary form or genre was not a typical occurrence. This kind of approach was characteristic of, for example, Elizabete Alunāne and Līze Paucīte, who will not be described in more detail within the parameters of this article. Although Elizabete Alunāne continued to manage the enterprise founded by her husband Heinrihs Alunāns (1904–1944) for 40 years after his death, during these years she avoided implementing any major innovations. The greater proportion of books produced by Alunāne was made up by reissues of works that had already been published by her husband's publishing house in the 1870s–1890s, with the most attention being devoted to the repeated publication of plays by the Latvian thespian, actor, director and playwright Ādolfs Alunāns (1848–1912), who was the nephew of Heinrihs Alunāns. Alunāne also published individual works by turn of the 19th and 20th century authors that were already well-known in Latvia, among them novels by the German writers Eugenie Marlitt, birth name Eugenie John (1825–1887) and Wilhelmine Heimbürg, real name Berta Behrens, (1848/1850–1912), short stories and the novel *Erdsegen* (published in Latvian with the title *Zemes svētība*, 1926) by Peter Rosegger, and works by the Swedish writer Selma Lagerlöf (1858–1940).

Līze Paucīte ran the family business for a considerably shorter period of time: from 1919, when her husband died, until she handed over management to her son in the 1930s. Paucīte published a variety of calendars, brochures of an instructive or religious nature, and hymn sheets. She also offered printing services on order and printed the newspaper *Limbažu Vēstnesis*. During Līze Paucīte's time in charge, the range of goods on sale at the K. Paucītis book and writing goods store was expanded with haberdashery, wallpaper, typewriters, suitcases, money purses and wallets, briefcases and other wares, in addition to photographic equipment for photographers and amateurs – plates and film. (Ozola 2010: 7) The departure from the original core business of the store and the diversification of goods on offer indicate, possibly, efforts to attract a broader client base and find new sources of income.

It was a different picture in the situations where the publishing enterprise had been started up by the women themselves. This scenario can be roughly divided into two courses of action. In the first, the themes or subject matter of the published works may have been closely linked with the publisher's personal political or religious convictions, or a deeper interest in a particular field, thus rendering these publications of interest to a narrow niche of readers, but unknown by the wider public or being given a mixed reception. The majority of these female publishers produced few books and soon closed down the enterprise.

The other course of action was the production of books on a commercial basis, catering for a broad consumer base. In this case the books were selected according to the potential interests and needs of the readership, and taking as their guide the latest currents of popular literature in Western Europe (Ilga Zvanītāja, Anna Grobiņa, Emīlija Benjamiņa), which could potentially be reflected in healthy sales figures in Latvia as well. These publishers strived to ensure good sales of their products, acquiring advertising spaces and regularly publishing advertisements and blurbs of the most recent books in major press publications (*Jaunākās Ziņas, Atpūta, Hallo, Latvija*), as well as by distributing sales brochures. "Through the repeated placement of advertisements week after week in specific periodicals, publishers were seeking to create a shared readership with magazines whose pricing, thematic emphases, and explicit demographics matched their own." (Battershill, 21) The potential readership was addressed with catchy slogans and when valuable editions or series of books were being planned, the publishers invited future readers to sign up for the books in advance or as subscribers.

This article will examine more closely the activities of three publishers whose operations in Latvia took place in the latter half of the 1920s and in the 1930s, with a particular emphasis on the printed works they published and the reception these received from the public. Although the publishers specialised in different literary forms and genres, they are united by both the scale of production (the large number of books produced) as well as their visibility among others working in the sector. The conclusions were grounded in detailed and widely scattered and diverse sources of information: publications of the period (advertisements, announcements about the start of activities of the publishing house or the closing down of the enterprise, reviews), memoirs, archive files, in the attempt to reconstruct the strategies employed by the publishing house, as indicated by the choice to publish works of a concrete genre or by certain authors. The chief obstacle that hindered drawing generalised and credible conclusions was the shortage of materials – documents regarding the activities of the smaller publisher, contracts signed and performance indicators were either not accessible, or have not been preserved. In many cases it was difficult or even impossible to judge the role and influence of the woman in the work of the publishing house. As new discoveries come to light, the assumptions and findings written about in this article may need to be changed.

Ilga Zvanītāja and the publishing house *Orients*

Ilga Zvanītāja (also known as Zvanova, after marriage in 1937 her surname changed to Melnalksne) was born on 16 June, 1909, in Moscow. Her mother was Anna (née Bēniņa, 1887–1966), after marriage Zvanītāja, later Grobiņa, her father was the town elder of Līvāni, Jānis Zvanītājs (1879–1941). After Ilga's mother married for a second time, her stepfather became the entrepreneur Oto Pēteris Grobiņš (1890–?), the owner of several distilleries of spirits and one of the founders of the Latvian private moneylender savings and loan society, the so-called Lombardbanka (1924–1928)⁷ and for the first years also the owner of the publishing house *Orient*, later to be known as *Orients*.

In the cultural history of Latvia, the name of Ilga Zvanītāja is more widely known in association with her professional work in the theatre. Initially she studied acting in private studios in France, then later attended the theatre courses of Ernests Feldmanis and also at the *Krievu teātra studija* (Russian Theatre Studio); she was one of the leading actresses in the *Rīgas Drāmas teātris* (Drama Theatre of Riga) and also *Liepājas Jaunais teātris* (New Theatre of Liepāja), performing in more than 100 roles. She also gained acclaim as a public declaimer – a soloist with the *Filharmonija*. Zvanītāja acted in plays and operettas of various genres; she also appeared in several feature films, for which she was awarded the title of Meritorious Stage Artist of the Latvian SSR in 1950 (Tjuņina [bez dat.]). Her work in publishing up until now has received less attention in cultural history, notwithstanding that from 1931 until 1937 she worked as the manager of one of the largest publishers of popular literature in Latvia – the publishing house *Orients*.

The publishing house *Orients*⁸ was started up some time around 1925, when its first books appeared. Its first owner was Oto Grobiņš, however, at the beginning of the 1930s the enterprise was transferred to the name I. Zvanītāja, who was at the time 22 years of age. Possibly the change of ownership had been necessary to avoid potential confiscation of the establishment, which could have happened as the result of a court case against Grobiņš. With a power of attorney issued on 6 May, 1931, authority to run the enterprise was assigned to the mother of Ilga Zvanītāja, Anna Grobiņa, who had worked there previously.

7 During the latter half of the 1920s, the name of Oto Grobiņš featured in the press a great deal; as the director of a bank, he had appropriated very large sums of money from the bank without a guarantee, had issued these kinds of loans to other people, and had also forged bills of exchange. In 1928 the Lombardbank was declared insolvent and in 1932 Grobiņš was sentenced to 5 years imprisonment for financial misdemeanours. (Latgales dati [bez dat.])

8 At first located in Riga, at Brīvības iela 36.



Fig. 1. The actress Ilga Zvanītāja in the late 1920s. Photo by Rūdolfs Egle. The Museum of Literature and Music, RTMM 414140, I. Zvan. F2/6

During Oto Grobiņš's time, the spectrum of publications produced by the publishing house was geared towards a Russian-speaking readership, primarily works by Russian writers, as well as translations into the Russian language of adventure stories and crime novels by French and English authors. The release of a Russian translation of Erich Maria Remarque's novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* (in Russian: *Na zapadnom fronte bez peremen*) in 1929 caused a stir, especially when it became one of the first precedents in the Latvian book publishing industry where the publishers were sued for publishing a work by a foreign author without their permission. On 6 February, 1931, the *Tiesu palāta* – the Latvian judicial panel sentenced representatives of the publishing house *Orients* Oto Grobiņš, Anna Grobiņa and the writer S. Karachevtsev to one month in prison for publishing the book by Remarque. The plaintiff was the *Ullstein Verlag* publishing house in Berlin. In addition, the Court awarded damages to *Ullstein* of 2400 lats. ([Anon.] 1932: 6) The verdict was appealed, because already by April, 1933, newspapers were writing about the case reaching the Senate ([Anon.] 1933: 6), however, the author has not been able to obtain any further information about the outcome of the matter. As Konstantīns Karulis has pointed out, although Latvia had not yet joined the Berne Convention for the protection of authors' rights, there were already in place agreements that had been signed with France, United Kingdom and Germany and which provided for the protection of authors' rights in the other contracting party country, though usually translators and publishers ignored these regulations (Karulis 1997: 223). Publishing houses that printed works in translation did not pay authors' fees, took liberties with the texts, frequently they even did not indicate that the work was a translation, all of which served to make the publishing of translations very profitable (Veisbergs 2022: 119). The case of *Orients v. Ullstein Verlag* publishing house did bring to the fore an issue which up till then had been all too little discussed: that of the exploitation of intellectual property rights of authors from countries that had signed the convention and their insufficient protection in Latvia.

At some point around 1931–1932, which coincides with the change of ownership and when Ilga Zvanītāja became the new manager, the profile of the books published by the imprint partly changed. While retaining the publishing of translated literature as its core activity, the spy and crime novels that *Orients* previously published were gradually replaced by so-called women's fiction. The chief protagonists of these novels were mostly young women or girls, most often children born out of wedlock, who "come from a poor background, but after a variety of trials land in another world, where money, power, splendour and sometimes also destruction prevail" (Daukste-Silasproģe 2005: 666). The publishing house *Orients* gradually inherited its defined specialisation and readership, and became one of the largest publishers of popular fiction in Latvia, alongside other publishers such as *Latgrāmata*, *Dzintarzeme* and *Sfinkss*, largely publishing women's novels translated from German into Latvian. Until *Orients* ceased to exist, it "produced approximately 200 books, comprising almost solely light literature in translation" (Veisbergs 2019: 180).

The choice to publish literature such as this was a fairly typical feature of the era. In order to satisfy people's need for literature, and readers with differing intellectual or aesthetic requirements, in the early 1920s "translated pulp fiction was extensively published, by the end of the 1920s an increasingly larger market share was taken up by translations of modern works" (Veisbergs 2019: 176). In the 1920s–1930s, the selection of works to be translated was largely in the hands of publishers and the translators themselves. The decision whether to cater to the demands of professionals and aficionados of high culture or to pander to the desires of the average reader, whether to publish highbrow classical literature or junk fiction was to a large extent determined by the level of education of the publisher, their professional occupation, convictions, opinions about the role of literature in society, and their strategic vision about the most viable business activity to ensure the continued existence of the enterprise. Since the major proportion of the novels published by *Orients* had already achieved popularity and a certain notoriety in their country of origin, the publisher Zvanītāja could be confident that readers (mostly female) in Latvia would also be interested in topics that were current in Western Europe at the time. With her offering, Ilga Zvanītāja was able to satisfy the interest of that stratum of society who in low-priced books and booklets sought a pleasant, undemanding way to pass the time and an opportunity to escape the everyday cares and worries that affected the poorest and most vulnerable of the population particularly severely, in circumstances where the financial crash of the 1920s–1930s had reduced purchasing power and opportunities for employment.

Some of the female authors of the women's fiction novels published by *Orients* these days have been practically forgotten, however, they were popular in the late

19th century and early 20th century. Among the writers published by Ilga Zvanītāja the following were represented by one or several translated novels: the British novelist Olive Wadsley (1859–1959); the Italian journalist and writer Flavia Steno (1877–1946); German writer Eugenie Marlitt, birth name Eugenie John (1825–1887), the German writer and women’s rights activist Magda Trott (1880–1945); the Austrian writer and author of over 120 novels, Annie Hruschka, pseudonym Erich Ebenstein (1867–1929), and others. In 1936 *Orients* published the novel *Am Glück vorbei* (in Latvian: *Laime bija tik tuvu*) (1st edition of the German 1920) by Clara Sudermann (1861–1924), German writer and second wife of the playwright Herman Sudermann; it is the only novel by this author to be translated into Latvian. The most widely known author in translation published by *Orients* became the German writer Hedwig Courths-Mahler (1867–1950). From 1931 till 1937, the publishing house released 60 of her novels: of these, 18 came out in 1934, 15 in 1935, and 19 in 1936; in this way *Orients* became the leading publisher of the German author’s works in Latvia.

The books by novelist Courths-Mahler were popular and much-favoured women’s reading matter. Her works were attractive to the less well-off and also middle-class women, and “appealed chiefly to housewives and chambermaids but managed to touch on some social issues to raise her apolitical readers’ consciousness”. (Harlan 2016: 31) The storylines were rife with unexpected incidents and twists and turns in the lives of the protagonists: the wife of a wealthy wholesaler falls in love with an impoverished artist and runs away from her husband, leaving behind her daughter;



Fig. 2. Hedwig Courths-Mahler (1935). *Lyselotte's Wedding*. Transl. V. Spandegs. Rīga: Orients.

a husband starts to doubt the paternity of his wife's child; a wicked plan is devised for the inheritance of wealth; a rich relative dies, but there are complications preventing the rightful legatee from receiving their money, and similar. There was no shortage of flirtation, intrigue, family secrets, imprisonment, unexpectedly inherited wealth and fame, hopes for love, fulfilment or disappointment in love. The novels of Courths-Mahler often also became the first examples of adult literature that young girls and women encountered, when "after the fairy tale and special children's literature phase girls usually turned to Courths-Mahler, but boys – to a variety of adventure and gangster pieces." (Kroders 2011: 130) When urging readers to buy novels, the advertisements that appeared in the press about the latest books published by *Orients* highlighted the "heart-wrenching" account of the suffering and miserable experiences the chief heroines had undergone, and promised that "the novel, rich with complications and events" would be read "with unflagging interest" ([Anon.] 1936: 29)

Gradually, little by little, gaining experience in book publishing and diversifying her potential reading audience, alongside the pulp fiction Zvanītāja also published several period novels featuring historic personages as well as informative literature aimed at those bringing up children and young mothers, and a series of children's books *Jaunatnes literatūra* (Young People's Literature). A few original works of Latvian literature were also published, for example, the novel *Pūļa elks* (Idol of the Multitude, 1935) by Vilis Lācis and a collection of short prose, *Amora bultas* (The Arrows of Cupid, 1934) by Jēkabs Birgers.

The people employed by *Orients* for the translation of books were on the whole little known, for example, Ādolfs Andersons (also A. Rudzudruva, ?–?), the pedagogue Kārlis Pētersons (also working under the pseudonym Medards Olis, 1891–1952). The poet Valdis Grēviņš (1895–1968) was involved in the translation of a number of books, but his translations were most often under the pseudonym V. Gaitnieks. Working under various pseudonyms (T. Atauga, R. Selga and others), the journalist Oto Brikšķis (1904–1980) translated several pulp novels. Among women translators, the best known were the actress and translator Olga Ezerlauka (1858–?) and singer and theatre critic Anna Grēviņa, who was also the wife of Valdis Grēviņš. The most prolific translators for the publishing house *Orients* were Olga Ence (1904–?) and Velta Ozole (?–?): each had translated more than 15 novels, chiefly women's fiction from German and Russian. The field of translated literature also offered vast work opportunities for "a string of rather poor translators, [who were] in fact regurgitators of the contents." (Daukste-Silasproģe 2005: 630) As regards visibility of the translator, the tendency for a translator to intentionally hide their identity behind a pseudonym or an abbreviation can occasionally be observed in the case where the source text might be regarded as a weak composition of trivial literature, or could in

some degree discredit previous work by the translator, or where the translation was of poor quality. And, conversely – the translator’s visibility was increased if the work to be published was of a high quality. This feature is particularly noticeable during the second half of the 1920s and in the 1930s, when practitioners of the trade actively discussed the prohibition of wide-ranging access to junk literature. Frequently on the title page the choice had been made to put ‘adapted by’ instead of ‘translated by’, thus an admission of a free retelling and veering away from the original text. According to the observations of translator Andrejs Veisbergs, in the 1920s–1930s a translator’s approach to their work was to a large extent determined by the contents of the book. Unlike texts of good quality, pulp fiction was translated very freely, with frequent omissions [and] abridged passages, indicating on the first page that it was a free adaptation, a retelling, a transposition. (Veisbergs 2019: 184) As prior to 1938 Latvia was not yet a signatory to the Berne Convention, the publishing of translations was financially more profitable for the publisher as well, bringing in clear profit more so than original literature in Latvian, where the authors would have to be paid an author’s fee.

The publishing house *Orients* was closed down on 29 May, 1937, by a ruling of the Minister of Social Affairs, Alfrēds Bērziņš, based on the regulations of martial law ([Anon.] 1937: 2). The regulations provided that a minister had the right “for internal security of the state and for maintenance of the public peace to issue regulations and orders on the procedure for the publishing and distribution of periodical and non-periodical publications.” ([Anon.] 1934: 6) A number of the publisher’s books ended up on the so-called list of banned books, among them a novel in 20 parts, *Kaislību viļņos* (In the Waves of Passion) by the Russian emigrant Olga Bebutova (*Olga Mihájlovna Bébutova*, 1879–1952) and its accompanying advertising brochure. More than 70 thousand unsold copies were removed from circulation (Paeglis 1996: 73), causing a huge financial loss. As far as can be perceived, at some time around 1935–1937 Ilga Zvanītāja gradually withdrew from the business, entrusting its management to her mother Anna Grobiņa, as indicated by the several petitions addressed to the Head of the Press and Association Department of the Ministry for Social Affairs and signed by Grobiņa,⁹ requesting a review of the ministry’s decision to ban several of the books published by *Orients*.

Although the publishing house *Orients* managed by Ilga Zvanītāja cannot be regarded as being notable for the publication of significant works of lasting value in the history of Latvian book publishing, and its editions these days may be destined to be

9 Sabiedrisko lietu ministrijas Preses un biedrību departaments (1937). LVVA 3724. f., 1. apr., 932. l., 3. lp., LVVA 3724. f., 1. apr., 932. l., 4. lp.

forgotten, it deserves acknowledgement as a successful and high-profile publisher catering for the consumers of popular culture in its time. By publishing mainly works by the German novelist Courts-Mahler, much loved by the average reader in 1920s–1930s Western Europe, as well as other authors, *Orients* became a recognised brand among those women who sought lightweight, easy-reading novels for relaxation and for whiling away their spare time. The books published by *Orients* were widely available, moreover, they were made even more attractive by their low price: as the so-called *puslata romāni* (half-lat novels), they enabled readers to enjoy works by Courts-Mahler and also the compositions of other female German novelists.

Anna Grobiņa and the publishing house *Kaija*

The publishing house *Kaija* was registered in late 1935. Although the lifespan of the enterprise – up until its nationalisation in 1940 – was not a long one, its activities are worthy of notice for the production of major editions of the works of several prominent and popular authors, as well as for launching an ambitiously envisaged book series *Latviešu literatūras pieminekļi* (Monuments of Latvian Literature, associate creator of the series Kārlis Egle). The owner of the new enterprise was the already previously mentioned Anna Grobiņa, wife of the general manager of *Lombardbanka*, Oto Grobiņš, and mother of Ilga Zvanītāja. From 1931 until 1936 Grobiņa held power of attorney for the publishing house *Orients*. While it was in existence, the publishing house *Kaija* produced a total of some 80 books, these including authors of adventure novels and science fiction that were popular abroad, also Jack London, Mark Twain, the children's author Hugh Lofting, and original works of literature in Latvian as well as research in Latvian literary studies as part of the series Monuments of Latvian Literature. After *Orients* was closed down, *Kaija* continued with the series *Jaunatnes literatūra* that *Orients* had initiated.

Very little is known about the life of Anna Grobiņa, but the few scraps of information available form the impression of a tenacious, combative and resourceful feminist. In 1930 she, together with her husband Oto Grobiņš, sued the editors of the newspaper *Jaunākās Ziņas*, Pēteris Bākulis and Ernests Runcis-Arnis, for defamation; Arnis received the sentence of a 1500 lat fine and two weeks imprisonment. (M.S. 1931: 3) The court proceedings of the trial of Oto Grobiņš for the misuse of investors' funds, lasting several years, were widely reported in local newspapers, who also showed interest in the lifestyle of the two women – Anna Grobiņa and Ilga Zvanītāja, when the trial against the directors of *Lombardbanka* began. In several



Fig. 3. Passport photo of Anna Grobiņa.
Early 1920s.
Latvian National Archive,
Latvian State Historical Archive,
LNA LVVA 2996-7-34677.

interviews Grobiņa strenuously defended her husband, pleading his innocence, and also emphasising the importance of *Orients* as the source of additional income:

“Recently my husband has no longer received a wage. We had a small publishing house, but no money. I concluded that I should sell my things and start up some small shop from which we could all eke out a living. My daughter [Ilga Zvanitāja – S. R] is 19 years old, she studied languages in Paris. When hard times began, she had to return to Latvia and we installed her at the publishing house on a wage of 1500 roubles per month. To work in the office [...] On the day that [my] husband was arrested and taken to the central prison, we were auctioned off. We remained in an empty apartment. Just us women, Grobiņš sitting in prison. But I did not lose heart. Whatever may happen. If other directors were to undertake to pay their share, we would do so too. Let everyone pay the same. But [my] husband will be saved.”
([Anon.] 1928: 3)

As reported by the press, in 1932 and 1934 the Grobiņš's property was sold at auction; with the family's financial means now reduced, Anna Grobiņa began to take an active involvement in the establishment and maintenance of the publishing house *Orients*: “Both of the Grobiņš's are energetic people and after their great misfortunes a couple of years ago have now started their life afresh. To experience better times [...] [Anna Grobiņa] stands at the cash desk, carries around the recently published copies of novels, collects money from kiosks and keeps the household going.” (Ls. 1932: 3)

On 15 July, 1936, the newly founded publishing house *Kaija* began printing the collected works of Jack London as luxury editions and launched a major subscription campaign. It should be remarked that in the 1930s the American writer Jack London (1876–1916) was plentifully represented in the lists of several Latvian publishing houses – the last (14th) volume of Jack London's works (1922–1932) was published by Atis Freinats; in 1933, the publishing house *Grāmatu Draugs* released the novel *Piedzīvojums* (Adventure); and the short stories of London in a selection titled *Sievietes spēks* (The Power of a Woman, 1934) was produced by Jānis Miķelsons (1891–1967)

in Rūjiena. Noting the writer's popularity and positioning herself as the most complete publisher of the collected works of writers, Grobiņa's publishing house started on printing the works by Jack London. In its offer, the publishing house *Kaija* envisaged publishing all of London's works in 30 volumes, divided into 5 series comprising 6 books each. The cost of one series or six books was 6 lats for subscribers, while the price per book if bought individually was Ls 2.50. The works of Jack London was one of the rare projects that *Kaija* completed in full, and it did not, one may presume, leave its readers disappointed. The author of the introduction to the collected works was the writer Vilis Lācis, then at the zenith of fame, and responsibility for the quality of the translation was borne by a large and talented collective of translators: Anna Grēviņa, Roberts Kroders, Zelma Krodere, Sigurds Melnalksnis, Elizabete Kauliņa and others, but the translations of poetry were produced by the Latvian poet Eriks Ādamsons (1907–1946). In comparison with the Atis Freinats editions, the *Kaija* production was more comprehensive, and some works in the series, for example London's first novel *A Daughter of the Snow* (Latvian title: *Sniega meita*) appeared in Latvian for the first time (Gailītis 1976: 156).

During its period of existence *Kaija* began the publishing of several ambitious, large-scale series of authors' works, but this was not completely finished, halted by World War II. Thus from the intended eight volumes of collected works by the Austrian writer Peter Rosegger, (1843–1918), only six (1938–1940) were released. The publishing of works by Vilis Lācis (1904–1966) was begun in 1939, the first four volumes came out under the *Kaija* imprint, but thereafter, starting from 1940, several of the Lācis volumes prepared by *Kaija*¹⁰ were released without indicating the name of the publisher. Of the selected works by the Russian writer Maxim Gorky (*Maksim Gorkij*, 1868–1936) that had been prepared for publication at *Kaija* in the spring of 1940,¹¹ the first two volumes *Bērnība* (Childhood) and *Ļaudīs* (In the World) were released at the close of 1940 and in 1941, though by now no longer by the nationalised publishing house *Kaija*, but by the *Daiļliterāras apgādniecība* of the *Valsts apgādniecību un poligrāfisko uzņēmumu pārvalde* (VAPP) set up by the occupying Soviet regime.

10 Vilis Lācis Novels. Book 3. *Atbrīvotais zvērs* (*The Liberated Beast*, 2nd edition, without imprint); Novels. Book 4. *Piecstāvēja pilsēta* (*Five-storey Town*, 2nd edition, without imprint); Novels. Book 5. *Pasaules jūrās* (*On the Seas of the World*, printed at the Universal printing works, jacket printed by *Latvijas Kultūra*); Novels. Book 6. *Putni bez spārniem* (*Birds with no Wings*, without imprint); Novels. Book 7. *Pūļa elks* (*Idol of the Multitude*, without imprint) (all in 1940).

11 *Kaija* had planned to publish a selection of works by Maxim Gorky in six large illustrated volumes, including the works *My Childhood*, *In the World*, *My Universities*, *The Lower Depths*, *The Life of Matvei Kozhemyakin*, *Through Russia*. The first volume was supposed to come out in March, 1940. ([Anon.] 1940: 23)

Anna Grobiņa had also hoped to publish the collected works of the Russian writer Lev Tolstoy (1828–1910) in 20 books and five series with variants and annotations. The journalist, poet and literature critic Jānis Kārklīņš (1891–1975) in his assessment of the editions of collected works offered by Latvian publishing houses, rated highly the direction taken by *Kaija*: “Tolstoy has been undertaken on a grand scale – with variants and comments, *War and Peace* alone in eight large volumes. In truth that is the only way that *War and Peace* can be published.” He also rated highly the efforts of the publishing house managed by Anna Grobiņa to provide new translations of classical works into modern Latvian, and praised the work invested by editors in the modernisation of the language of the Jack London works and in maintaining uniformity of style. (Kārklīņš 1937: 15)

The Tolstoy series of works that had been started did not have time to come out to its full extent – up till 1940, 16 volumes were released.

Other *Kaija* editions worthy of note are also the four volumes (1939–1940) of works by American author Mark Twain (1835–1910). In 1937–1938 the full complement of seven stories by the classic children’s author Hugh Lofting (1886–1947) was released, featuring the beloved animal physician Doctor Doolittle in a translation edited by the poet Valdis Grēviņš and with a foreword by Jānis Jaunsudrabiņš.

The emergence of the series *Latviešu literatūras pieminekļi* (Monuments of Latvian Literature) was hailed by critics as a much-anticipated and very worthwhile undertaking. After the publishing house *Valters un Rapa* halted the publication of their

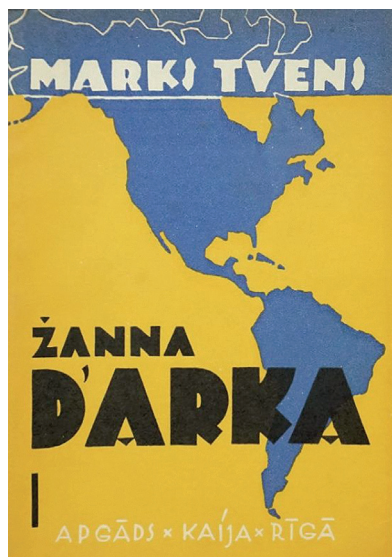


Fig. 4. Mark Twain (1939). *Joan of Arc*.
Rīga: Kaija Publishing House

series of selected works by Latvian authors, *Rakstnieku sejas* (11 books were produced, 1927–1928), no other publishing house had turned to the printing of earlier works of Latvian literature. In 1938, the first in the *Kaija* series was issued: the monograph *Neredzīgais Indriķis. Dzīve un dziesmas* (Indriķis the Unseeing. His Life and Songs) by Kārlis Dziļleja, with an annotated appendix of verse by the first native Latvian poet Neredzīgais Indriķis (1783–1828) and a foreword by Kārlis Egle. A total of 3000 copies of the book were published and it still remains today the most complete compilation of Neredzīgais Indriķis' works. The first book in the series was followed by *Vecā Stendera dzīve un darbi* (1938), the life and works of Baltic German pastor and writer Gotthard Friedrich Stender (1714–1796) – again compiled by Dziļleja and with a foreword by Egle, and the book included Dziļleja's monograph on the writer as well as the songs by Stenders: *Rāms laiks pēc pērkona briesmas* (Calm Weather After the Danger of a Thunderstorm) and *Jauna gada vēlēšanās pēc ikkatra gribēšanas* (New Year's Wishes according to the Desires of Each and Every One).

The turning to the publication of academic writings, historic and biographical surveys and monographs leads one to think that the decision to publish precisely these authors was made not so much at Grobiņa's initiative but rather at the suggestion of the author of the monographs, Kārlis Dziļleja, possibly also Kārlis Egle, to diversify the production offered by the publishing house. Unfortunately, the time remaining for the working life of *Kaija* was too short to carry out all its plans and concurrently with a successful production of the collected writings of foreign authors to develop further the publishing of annotated scholarly editions that had been so promisingly commenced. It should be stated, moreover, that having been preoccupied with the production of popular women's fiction, and adventure and easy-reading literature, Anna Grobiņa quite possibly lacked the knowledge and awareness, as well as informed advisers, with regard to the preparation and design of scholarly publications. This was immediately seized upon by literary critics. One can only agree with reviewers who found fault with the poor visual impact of the books, the flimsiness of the paper used and the ill-considered, user unfriendly and completely impractical location of the references at the centre of the book: "A silvery grey cover, with an advertising verselet on it, a fictionalised account of [the author's] life story, source notes somewhere in the middle of the book so as not to bother the reader for whom they may not be of interest – in that kind of form works are still appearing which are supposed to be serving the science of literature." (Ancītis 1938: 128) Leaving aside the imperfections due to a lack of experience in the publishing of scholarly works, Grobiņa's openness to new ideas and the extensive circle of contacts that she had developed and which permitted the carrying out of time-consuming publishing projects of competitive quality should be acknowledged.

Grobiņa worked hard to attract loyal clients for her publications, inviting readers to sign up for the now-familiar system of subscriptions. *Kaija* books were also available in bookshops and kiosks, but at a higher price. New subscribers were promised thick volumes bound in beautiful and original covers, and an opportunity to make a thorough acquaintance of works by the most popular authors abroad. The owner of the publishing house Grobiņa, in targeted manner, bought up large areas of advertising space in all the major press publications with the largest circulations, including the newspaper *Jaunākās Ziņas*, and also the radio programme *Hallo, Latvija*, as well as the publication *Skolu Dzīve* intended for school-age youngsters.

Emīlija Benjamiņa as the publisher of children's books

The socialite Emīlija Benjamiņa (1881–1941) in the cultural history of Latvia is more widely known as the publisher of the newspaper *Jaunākās Ziņas* (1911–1940) and weekly magazine *Atpūta* (1924–1940) together with her husband, the journalist Antons Benjamiņš (1860–1939). The journalistic empire successfully run and overseen by the two was one of the most prominent in 1920s–1930s Latvia. The activities of Emīlija Benjamiņa in publishing children's books is far less well known.

Emīlija Benjamiņa (née Simšone) was born in Riga on 10 September, 1881, in the family of railway employee Andrejs Simsons (?–1899) and his wife Ede (1849–1932). After the death of her husband, Emīlija's mother was left to bring up three daughters on her own. She worked in the editorial offices of the newspapers *Zeitung für Stadt und Land*, *Dienas Lapa* and *Dzimtenes Vēstnesis* as despatcher and newspaper distributor, and additionally, to supplement her income, as a laundress. Emīlija learnt to read from the German-language newspapers that were brought home. She learnt book-keeping at the local school of commerce and from the age of 17 started working in the office of the German-language newspaper *Rigaer Tageblatt*, where she came to acquire a good knowledge of the technical side of running a newspaper, becoming a skilful acquirer of classified advertisements and newspaper display advertising; she also learnt how to handle payments and became involved in the commercial life of the newspaper. In 1906 she married the actor and singer Valdemārs Elks-Elksnītis, but two years later the marriage was dissolved. Already in 1904 Emīlija had made her acquaintance with Antons Benjamiņš, and in 1911 they started living together. They did not formally marry until 1922 – after Benjamiņš had obtained a divorce. At the time they met, Antons Benjamiņš after unsuccessful business ventures in Madliena and Skrīveri had moved to Riga, planning to start a career as a reporter and editor.



Fig. 5. Passport photo of Emīlija Benjamiņa.
Early 1920s.
Latvian National Archive,
Latvian State Historical Archive,
LNA LVVA 2996-2-14100.

He soon began working as correspondent – reporter at the Riga-based German-language newspaper *Rigasche Rundschau*, then from 1907 until 1908 as editor of the newspaper *Mājas Viesis*, and in 1910 he became editor of the newspaper *Rīta Vēstnesis* owned by the publisher Haims Blankenšteins.

Emīlija Benjamiņa persuaded Antons Benjamiņš to carry out “simple economic theft” (Muktupāvela 2008: 74) – to leave Blankenšteins’ newspaper, taking with him lists of the newspaper’s subscribers. At the close of 1911, Emīlija together with Benjamiņš founded the newspaper *Jaunākās Ziņas*, she signed as the publisher of the newspaper. At around this time she also opened her own printing works in Riga at Parka iela 3, but a year later she acquired zincography equipment. (LU LFMI, n. d.) As described by his contemporaries, Antons Benjamiņš, later to be dubbed *Vecais kungs* – the Old Gentleman – by the employees of his own enterprise, by nature was a mild-mannered man who was averse to taking risks, and it was directly the pragmatic and clear-sighted vision of Emīlija Benjamiņa that played a crucial role in forging the success of the enterprise (Kārklīņš 1990). During the first years of the newspaper’s existence, Emīlija oversaw the entire technical production of the newspaper as well as the accounts; she was also in charge of the distribution – mailing out and delivery. The largest share of the profits was brought in by advertisers, who were enlisted as a result of Emīlija’s wide circle of contacts.

From 1911 until 1916, Emīlija Benjamiņa, as the co-owner of the *Darbs* printing works, printed some 25 books in the Latvian language. In 1917 she opened her own enterprise: a stationery and office supplies store in the heart of Old Riga at Audēju iela 12, which over the course of time became the largest shop of its type in Riga. (Limane [bez dat.]) The store continued trading throughout the 1920s and 1930s, and in the publishing house that was attached to it all the children’s books published by Emīlija Benjamiņa were produced and later printed in the printing works of *Jaunākās Ziņas*.

Even before World War I the Benjamiņš couple were involved in the founding of two illustrated magazines: from 1911 until 1912 the illustrated magazine *Atpūta*, and the illustrated literary and general interest weekly magazine *Tagadne* in 1913. It must be noted that these early ventures in publishing gave the Benjamiņš couple valuable experience and allowed them to try out in practice themes and columns that would elicit the greatest interest from readers. When in 1924 they started publishing the new magazine *Atpūta*, the Benjamiņi followed and imitated the contents and layout of the magazines published by their competitors, following both the local pioneer of illustrated magazines – the *Ilustrēts Žurnāls*, which had been coming out since 1920, as well as trends abroad. Over time, the magazine developed its own familiar columns and sections: articles of popular science, a review of the week's most striking events in photographs, style, fashion, beauty and handicraft sections, humour, and puzzles for children. In the 1920s–1930s *Atpūta* became the most popular mass circulation magazine in Latvia.

Emīlija Benjamiņa was in charge of both attracting advertising as well as the choice of serialised novels, initially for the newspaper *Jaunākās Ziņas* only, but later also for the magazine *Atpūta*. A great proportion of the readers enthusiastically embraced the literary fiction section of the magazine, which was a first opportunity to encounter the very latest writings by well-known Latvian authors, works which only later would be coming out as books. A string of the most talented Latvian writers, among them Kārlis Skalbe, Jānis Akurāters, Jānis Ziemeļnieks, Anšlavs Eglītis and Vilis Lācis were engaged to write their works solely for publication by the Benjamiņš couple. In many respects it was precisely Emīlija Benjamiņa's farsightedness and vision honed by many years' experience of what constituted a reader's expectations and needs, and the adaptation to Latvian conditions of themes and ideas taken over from Western Europe that made the magazine she published, *Atpūta*, the best-loved magazine ever, which has retained its status as a cultural historical treasure and can still be read with interest today.

In the history of the Latvian book industry, the place of Emīlija Benjamiņa in the publishing of children's books has been little researched. Although Benjamiņa did not publish many books, the few that she did produce means that she can be added to the most prominent publishers of Latvian children's books in the 1920s–1930s: Andrejs Jesens, Jānis Roze, the publishing houses *Valters un Rapa*, *Grāmatu Draugs*, *Zelta Ābele* and others, and makes Benjamiņa one of the most highly visible female book publishers among those very few women who worked in the industry in 1920s–1930s Latvia. As the linguist and cultural historian Konstantīns Karulis (1915–1997) has noted, Benjamiņa at one time had wished to develop a more wide-ranging book publishing enterprise, but Antons Benjamiņš had not agreed to such a step and wanted

to focus their business activities by publishing a newspaper and a magazine only. (Karulis 1990: 243) Emīlija Benjamiņa nonetheless insisted on publishing books as well, and from 1927 until 1940 under the imprint *Em. Benjamiņ, Em. Benjamiņ izdevniecība* or *Em. Benjamiņas rakstāmlietu tirgotavas izdevniecība* issued about 30 editions, mostly books intended for children, as well as original works by Latvian authors, colouring-in books and so-called fold-out books, and also a few calendars and other informative materials.

As the editor of influential press publications, Emīlija Benjamiņa was able to attract to her publishing projects some of the most talented Latvian writers and artists of the time who were already working at the enterprise she jointly owned with her husband. One of these proteges was the poet Jānis Ziemeļnieks (1897–1930), who had been closely collaborating on publications produced by the Benjamiņi since the 1920s. From 1925 until 1930 Ziemeļnieks was a member of the editorial board of the newspaper *Jaunākās Ziņas*. Towards the end of the 1920s, several children's books in his translation were released by Benjamiņa's publishing house, for instance, a selection of stories *Skaistāko pasaku izvēle* (A Selection of the Most Beautiful Stories, 1927), which included well-known fairy tales by the Brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm: *Little Red Riding Hood, Hansel and Gretel, Snow White, Sleeping Beauty* and *Cinderella*.

Typically the authors of the translated children's stories in Emīlija Benjamiņa's books were not named. In the books it was stated that the verses and little poems intended for children had been retold and Latvianised by Jānis Ziemeļnieks, that is, that there would have been an original in a foreign language, however, searches for these original sources have not always met with success.¹² The majority of the books were illustrated with reproductions of the illustrations from the foreign editions which was financially more cost-effective rather than having to pay Latvian artists.

The pedagogue Kārlis Videnieks (1880–1965) pointed out, as the chief imperfection of Benjamiņa's early publications intended for children, the inability to produce a book that would be enriching and educational both in terms of form and of contents. Videnieks stated that although the coloured and black and white illustrations chosen seemed rather nice, they were, however, mostly reprinted from foreign publications and therefore alien for a Latvian reader. When making a comparison of all the children's books produced by Emīlija Benjamiņa's publishing house in 1927, the critically inclined Videnieks declared the picture books without text to be more of far

12 For example, the authorship of several children's story books in verse that Benjamiņa published at the end of the 1920s is not known: *Laimis bērns un Pinkšķētāja raibie piedzīvojumi* (The Wild Adventures of Lucky Child and the Crybaby), *Ceļojums uz mēnesi* (A Journey to the Moon) (both published in 1927 and translated by Jānis Ziemeļnieks).

more value, where at least “the owner of the book themselves can colour in a horse or a cow according to their own liking of the moment. If then a suitable verselet were to be found, among folk songs or elsewhere in literature, and added next to it – a cherished book will be had.” (Videnieks 1927: 724)

In critical reviews of later years, in addition to the internal page artistic finish and contents, attention was drawn to other aspects of the choice of book: its binding, durability and suitability for a young reader, also the price of the book. In one assessment by an anonymous reviewer about the children’s books published by Benjamiņa, the rather high price (ranging from two lats to four and a half) was decried, pointing out that less well-off purchasers could do with a “cheaper cost” (K.V. 1928: 198) The little books had, on the whole, good print quality and large letters, but criticism was elicited by the soft, “weak” binding that was not appropriate for the most energetic of readers – children. Critical remarks were also levelled at the lumpiness of the text: the laboured rhythms and absence of harmoniousness in the translation. The colourful illustrations were described as being nice, evocative, nevertheless – foreign, which, along with the high prices, was deemed to be the greatest shortcoming of Benjamiņa’s books:

“A picture, fine, a typical one should help accustom a child’s eye to recognise our own facial expressions, physique and movements. We must help children to become familiar with their surroundings, their own yard and then let us walk among strangers. Cannot the books be published more cheaply, if the pictures have been borrowed from foreign publications and the authors do not need to be paid – that is the publisher’s secret.” (K.V. 1928: 199)

It must be admitted that the works for younger readers published in the second half of the 1920s by Benjamiņa’s publishing house cannot be regarded as significant, worthy of attention and achievements of lasting value in the realm of children’s literature, and in the main took over and modified models from abroad; not much creative thinking was invested in the production of these books.

Momentous changes in the quality of the range of books for small children produced by Emīlija Benjamiņa took place from 1931, when regularly, each year, children’s books of high artistic quality began to come out. Compared with the previous period, these books are of better typographical quality, enhanced with elaborate illustrations by homegrown artists. The publishing of these and also to a large extent the resumption of book publishing in general by Benjamiņa would not have been possible had it not been for the new equipment that was imported, primarily with the future success of the Benjamiņš’s press publications in mind, and the exigency to increase the number of readers of *Jaunākās Ziņas* and *Atpūta*. The copperplate printing press bought in 1931 also allowed the Benjamiņi to fulfil more ambitious and long-term publishing projects, these including the publication of children’s books

of a quality hitherto unseen. This development was also of great significance in promoting the development of the industry in general, because with Emīlija Benjamiņa launching into the children's book market as an experienced, strategically thinking publisher with a vast array of contacts, standards were raised and had to be met by the existing players.

The first book to be printed in the new *Jaunākās Ziņas* copperplate printing press was the children's book in two parts *Mazais ganiņš un viņa brīnišķīgais ceļojums* (The Little Shepherd Boy and His Wonderful Journey). It was also the first story book written and beautifully illustrated by Alberts Kronenbergs (1887–1958), who up until then had worked solely as a book illustrator. Critics immediately commented favourably on the vastly improved quality of the illustrations. The writer Ernests Birznieks-Upītis (1871–1960), for example, lauded the tasteful visual presentation of the book, declaring that "about the execution and prettiness of the book every genuine booklover can only be overjoyed. With full rights and pride we now can place it alongside any more elaborate editions of the big nations abroad." (Birznieks-Upītis 1963: 254–255) The publisher Emīlija Benjamiņa also was accorded congratulations as one "who no longer has utilised illustrations and texts from abroad, as previously, but has given work to our own artist". (Šreinerts 1932: 46) There were, however, admonitions about the high price of the two parts of the set (each book cost three lats), though it was recognised that it was in keeping with the worth of the work.

The publication of the book was also a milestone in the biography of Alberts Kronenbergs. Up until then his claim to fame was as the first illustrator to work for the Andrejs Jesens' publishing house, and one of the most recognisable and popular Latvian book artists of the 1920s–30s, who had also created the artistic design for children's books by E. Birznieks-Upītis, Rainis and other Latvian writers, as well as children's books in translation. With his picture storybook *Mazais ganiņš*, in the 1930s Kronenbergs joined the ranks of Latvian children's authors. The way that the artist arrived to the field of Latvian children's literature happened by chance, as the result of a completely unexpected and an altogether happy coincidence. As pointed out by Finnish researcher Jukka Rislakki: "prior to Christmas 1931, Emīlija Benjamiņa – partly for the publicity and partly to make money – wished to produce at her printing works the most lavishly presented and interesting children's book that had ever appeared in the Latvian language. It was going to be in four colours (but cheap!) and would be the story of a shepherd boy. The lady wished for it to be easy to understand for children, richly embellished and, most importantly of all, with good rhymes." (Rislaki 2017: 125) Kronenbergs had already been approached to be the illustrator, but difficulties had arisen in finding a suitable text which finally, at the very end, the artist undertook to create. As Jāzepe Osmanis has stated, "the inspiration for creating a

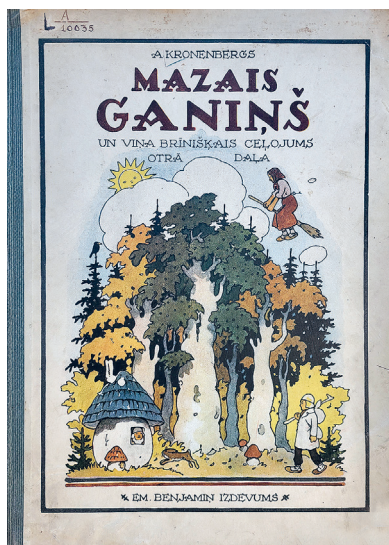


Fig. 6. Alberts Kronenbergs (1931).
The Little Shepherd and His Wonderful Journey.
 Illustrations by Alberts Kronenbergs.
 Rīga: Em. Benjamin Publishers.

humorous children's story in verse came to Kronenbergs from the repeated editions of the poem *Max and Moritz* by W[ilhelm] Busch translated by Aspazija, with the caricature-like pictures by W. Busch." (Osmanis 1977: 282)

Mazais ganiņš un viņa brīnišķīgais ceļojums came out in 1931 in two parts (16 and 33 pages) because Benjamiņa considered that the initial version was too long. In terms of size, the two were the largest of Kronenbergs' books. (Risłaki 2017: 139) Reviews of the book after it came out were overall favourable, remarking on the lightness and comprehensibility of Kronenbergs' language, the beautiful illustrations and the wonderful events taking place in the story which would enthral young readers, moreover they were all happening in a Latvian environment, hence easier to understand and closer than the motifs and worldview borrowed from foreign sources, as had been the case until now (Puķe 1932: 6) The storybook *Mazais ganiņš*, in which for the first time there was such good harmonisation between the exciting, cheery narrative and vivid illustrations, became instantly recognisable, was quickly sold out and became a bibliographic rarity. After the success of the first book, Kronenbergs received another commission from Emīlija Benjamiņa, and already by the following year a second book for children written and illustrated by Alberts Kronenbergs was produced at the *Jaunākās Ziņas* copperplate printing press. This was a collection of poetry *Zelta laiki* (Golden Times) (1932).

The discovery of Alberts Kronenbergs as a new and talented children's writer can be regarded as one of the greatest achievements of Emīlija Benjamiņa's work as

a publisher. In addition, the popularity of these two first children's books by Kronenbergs allowed Benjamiņa to become convinced that the public would be interested in purchasing for children books of high print quality that were joint efforts by local illustrators and authors, even if the price were to be higher than average market price.¹³

Over the years to come, Benjamiņa's publishing house produced children's books illustrated by Latvian artists, both those who were already well known as well as new artists, with texts written by Latvian authors, for example, a collection of poetry for children *Pasaciņu šūpulītis* (A Little Cradle of Fairy Stories, 1933) by the poet Vilis Plūdons and designed by the magazine *Atpūta* illustrator, the painter Reinholds Kasparsons (1889–1966); the storybook *Mīlulīša daiņu dārzs* (Little Darling's Garden of Dainas, 1936) written by the literary historian, folklorist and poet Ludis Bērziņš (1870–1965) and illustrated by his son, at that time the still young graphic artist Ansis Bērziņš (1913–2001), and also the story *Čigānmeitēns Ringla* (Gypsy Lass Ringla, 1939) by the writer Eriks Ādamsons (1907–1946) illustrated by the artist Margarita Kovaļevska (1910–1999), who also created drawings for the magazine *Atpūta*. In the few reviews that can be found, generally appreciative words have been lavished on the excellent typographical quality of the children's books and the cohesiveness between form and contents.

Undeniably, the first picture books published by Emīlija Benjamiņa can be considered as purely commercial ventures. The little books were decorated with pretty illustrations taken from the original editions and slightly odd for Latvians, with the text often being assigned a secondary role. With the arrival of the new copperplate printing press at the beginning of the 1930s, which permitted for the first time the printing of artists' works at an unprecedented level of quality, the books for children produced by Benjamiņa with their texts by recognised authors became sought after and highly regarded niche publications. Up till 1939, under Benjamiņa's patronage books came out for children by new and already well-known Latvian writers beloved by readers: Vilis Plūdons, Rūta Skujiņa, Elza Stērste, Alberts Kronenbergs, Atis Ķeniņš, Ludis Bērziņš, Pēters Aigars and Eriks Ādamsons with illustrations by talented home-grown artists Margarita Kovaļevska, Alberts Kronenbergs, Ansis Bērziņš, Reinholds Kasparsons, Roberts Tilbergs and others.

On 13 September, 1940, the *Valsts apgādniecību un poligrāfisko uzņēmumu pārvalde* requisitioned the nationalised enterprise *Em. Benjamiņš* and established itself in its place. The *Em. Benjamiņš* office supply and stationery retail concern under

13 The price of books for children with texts by Latvian authors and artists' illustrations published by Benjamiņa fluctuated around Ls 1.80–3.60. The fold-out books for children were cheaper, and could be bought for Ls 0.50–1.25.

whose name the children's books were published in the 1930s, after the shake-up of the regime, became the *VAPP Rīgas centrālo rakstāmlietu tirgotava* ([Anon.] 1940: 8). On 14 June, 1941, Emīlija Benjamiņa, like more than 15 thousand other Latvian citizens, was deported from Latvia. She died on 23 September, 1941, in Solikamsk, Russia, but her final resting place is not known.

When attempting to compare the situation in Latvia with the state of affairs in Western countries during the first decades of the 20th century as reflected by studies conducted abroad, it has to be stated that in the context of Latvia it is not possible to speak of a numerous and unified group of female publishers. Unlike Western countries, where already in the 1920s women were actively involved in professional organisations of the publishing industry and taking part in discussions about the setting of industry standards and remuneration,¹⁴ activities and manifestations of leadership such as these among women in Latvia involved in the publishing and retail of books cannot be observed. Although women did become members of the Latvian Bookseller and Publisher Association and later Latvian Publisher and Retailer Association, this happened sluggishly.

Did women working in the industry in 1920s–1930s Latvia establish alliances and form closer professional and personal relationships? Research undertaken up until now does not reveal this; the most useful for proving whether such links existed would be finding personal correspondence, however, given the modest size of the territory of Latvia, communication could well have taken place in undocumented conversations. There were, however, several preconditions that could have facilitated these kinds of professional friendships: mostly belonging to one particular social stratum, being of the same generation, a similar family status (a majority of book publishers and retailers had become premature widows as a result of the Wars of Independence and World War I), the level of education, similar working conditions, potential encounters with wage differences for doing the same job as men, a commonality dictated by the profession, the inevitable confrontation with the precepts of public opinion and enshrined in legislation about a woman's place in the public sphere and the kinds of occupations that were deemed suitable for her.

The American cultural historian Robert Darnton has stated that the archives of publishers can be considered to be one of the richest sources of information for the history of book publishing (Darnton 1982: 76). Unfortunately, the changes in political regimes as well as the somewhat casual attitude of both publishers and their successors to this kind of documentation, with possibly also a large part being lost during

14 This has been described, for example, by the American researcher Jacalyn Eddy in her work *Bookwomen: Creating an Empire in Children's Book Publishing, 1919–1939* (2006).

World War II, has meant that any contracts, correspondence and other documentary material have not remained extant until the present day. For this reason, it is complicated to determine the terms and conditions under which a female publisher and author (male or female) agreed to publish a specific work, and the mutual agreements and relationships that a publisher concluded and established with book authors, artists and translators. The answers to questions such as these would significantly enhance knowledge about the attitude of society towards the women who, at the beginning of the 20th century, actively strived to take their place in a sector of industry – publishing, which until then had been monopolised by men.

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