

*Christian Felix Weiße's Poetry in Latvian and Estonian Literature*¹

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Abstract. The article analyzes the translations of Christian Felix Weiße's poems in Latvian and Estonian within the context of cultural transfer during the age of Enlightenment. Translations of Weiße's poems were of great significance because they paved the way for the emergence of secular poetry in both languages. First translations appeared in the 1770s, and others followed in the next decades. While the first Latvian translations were connected to the popular enlightenment efforts of Baltic German pastor Gotthard Friedrich Stender and addressed to the peasant readers, the first Estonian translations were written in the context of experiments with the language and addressed to the Baltic German intellectual elite. First translations that were addressed to Estonian peasants appeared in the early 19th century. The frame of reference of the poems was transformed when they were addressed to peasant reading public: they acquired didactic meaning. At the same time, these translations demonstrated the poetic possibilities of Estonian and Latvian languages. The analysis as a case study reveals the multifaceted influence of German poetry on Estonian and Latvian literary cultures.

Keywords: Christian Felix Weiße; Latvian literature; Estonian literature; translation of poetry; cultural transfer; Age of Enlightenment

In small literatures, such as those of Latvia and Estonia, translations from other languages and cultures play an important role. They bring with them new themes, stylistic devices, verse forms and modes of expression, thereby shaping the receiving literature. In this article, we take a look at one such case of translation, which strongly influenced the lyrical literature of the two Baltic countries,

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Latvia and Estonia, in the 18th and 19th centuries. The case is the translations of lyrical texts by Christian Felix Weiße (1726–1804), the famous German Enlightenment poet, playwright and pedagogue, into Latvian and Estonian.

The translations and adaptations of Weiße's poetry are of very great significance for both cultural areas, as they are among the first lyrical texts to exist in Latvian or Estonian and paved the way for the emergence of secular poetry in these two country's own languages. The translations of Weiße's texts into the respective national languages began in the 1770s, i.e. when he was at the peak of his fame in Germany, and stretched over several decades, with a translation into Estonian, made at the turn of the 19th century, only appearing in print at the beginning of the 20th century.

The assimilation of Weiße's works in Latvia and Estonia can be divided into three strands: one is the dissemination and adoption of his texts in local Baltic German society, for his poems were printed in local German almanacs, *Taschenbüchern* and calendars, his children's plays were performed in domestic theatres and his works were available from local booksellers (Heinmaa 2017). Weiße's poems also inspired Baltic German authors to create their own works (for example epigrams by J. W. L. von Luce (Jürjo 2011: 194)). On the other hand, it is possible to distinguish from this the adoption of his texts in the languages and cultures of the autochthonous peoples, i.e. Latvians and Estonians. In this article, we will limit ourselves only to the latter two strands, Weiße's translations into Latvian and Estonian, because consideration of Weiße's German adoption in the Baltic region still requires fundamental research and this would go beyond the scope of this essay.

The adoption of Weiße's poetry in Latvian and Estonian has several similarities, but also some differences. Apart from the geographical proximity of the two cultures on the north-eastern shore of the Baltic Sea and the fact that Weiße's translations are among the first secular poems in their respective literatures, another commonality that can be mentioned is that the same translation models were used. Songs and arias from the comic operas of Johann Adam Hiller, whose librettist was Christian Felix Weiße, were translated into Latvian and Estonian. There are translations from the following operas: *Die Liebe auf dem Lande* (1768), *Die Jagd* (1770) and *Der Aerndtekrantz* (1771), as well as from the children's opera *Die kleine Aehrenleserin* (1777). At the same time it is astonishing that only one song, *Die Felder sind nun alle leer* from the opera *Der Aerndtekrantz*, is translated into both languages, the others exist only in one of the two languages: In Latvian there are a total of twelve Weiße texts and in Estonian only three. The choice of translated text depended on the translator and his intention, as well as on the context of publication and the target audience. Translations for a possible peasant readership, which exist

in both national languages, differ from those that were intended as language experiments or plays for a local German audience and are known only in the Estonian context. However, it is still uncertain which translation templates were used in each case. It is very likely that collections of songs, arias or piano scores that were circulating in the Baltic region at the time were used for the translation, as works by Hiller and Weiße were widely available from local booksellers.² This circumstance is not surprising, for the Baltic book market in the second half of the 18th century belonged to the “north-east European communication system” (Ischreyt 1981), which maintained very lively and varied cultural communication.

Another commonality in the adoption of Weiße in Estonia and Latvia stems from their shared history. The close ties between Germany and the Baltic region date back to the time of the European Crusades in the Middle Ages. During the Enlightenment, those ties were further strengthened as a result of the immigration of intellectuals due to the Great Northern War (1700–1721). Academically educated immigrants, mainly from Germany, called “the literati” worked as tutors, pastors, schoolteachers, lawyers, doctors and the like (Lenz 1953). Lutheran pastors played the most important role for the Latvian and Estonian peasants. They brought contemporary ideas, intellectual currents and innovations with them, including fictional literature. Through these men, education and culture spread, and thanks to them, local peasants also became acquainted with the written and printed word as well as the cultural achievements of Europe.

There is one more common feature to be mentioned that is characteristic of both cultural areas with regard to Weiße’s translations: the study of them is on-going, especially when the genesis of Latvian and Estonian poetry is taken into account. As already mentioned, translations and/or adaptations of Weiße’s poems are among the first secular poems in the respective literatures, and their study means at the same time working through the genesis of secular poetry in Latvian and Estonian. It is a laborious task, because many documents have either been lost or have not yet been unearthed. The literary historiography of the respective cultures has done a lot (EKA I, 1965: 292–304; Plūdonis 1935; Frīde 1998; Daija 2017), but until recent decades, both early literary cultures had been studied separately, not together. Today they are considered to belong to the same literary field, heavily influenced by German culture, and to be

² In supplement 2 of her dissertation on musical life in Reval/Tallinn in the 18th century, Heidi Heinmaa provides an overview of advertisements in the advertising journal *Revalische Wöchentliche Nachrichten* (1772–1852), which document the city’s musical life at the time well. From the first issues onwards, numerous works by Hiller and Weiße are offered for sale there (Heinmaa 2017).

studied as parts of a common cultural memory. The first steps in the joint research into older Latvian and Estonian literary culture have already been taken, for example the trends of Popular Enlightenment have been explored in comparative perspective (Taterka 2012); an overview of the institutional framework of the Baltic literary culture up to the first half of the 19th century has been published (BKA I, 2021). Further, there are plans to study different areas of literary culture such as religion, fictional literature, law and politics, etc. The first study dealing with the common roots and similar development of Estonian and Latvian lyric poetry from a comparative perspective came from Liina Lukas (2018; 2019). Our research continues the comparative analysis she started, taking into consideration the translations and reception of one author's work in different languages and cultures. As far as we know, such an approach has not yet been undertaken.

Weiß is not the only German poet whose work was conveyed into the respective national language during the Age of Enlightenment. Lyrical works by Johann Wilhelm Ludwig Gleim, Friedrich von Hagedorn, Christian Jakob Wagenseil, Ludwig Christoph Heinrich Hölty, Matthias Claudius, Christian Fürchtgott Gellert and others were also translated or adapted and some of them appeared in the same collections that contained texts by Weiß. It is important to ask why these particular authors and these particular works were favoured by the translators? What strategies were used in the mediation of the texts? Who were the mediators and what was their motivation? How were the translated or adapted works received by the rural population? The series of questions relevant to the study of the formation of lyrical literature in Latvian and Estonian could be continued. Our research below offers answers to these questions using the example of Christian Felix Weiß in order to provide new insights into the development of lyrical poetry in the Baltic region.

In the following, we proceed in two steps. First, we give an overview of the translations of Weiß's poetry into Latvian, because they took place earlier than those into Estonian, and then we present Weiß's poems in Estonian. Only the bibliographical aspect of the adoption is discussed, as unfortunately there is no information about the reading or singing of Weiß's texts in either national language. We will try to demonstrate that the translations of Weiß's poems not only aimed to "educate, refine and improve the people" (as noted by Brednich 1993: 222 within the context of German literature for peasants), but could also acquire a disciplinary character by moulding peasant identity according to the wishes of the upper classes and project acceptance of one's lower status in society (for the interaction of disciplinary and emancipatory trends of the Popular Enlightenment, see, for example Böning 2004: 580; these issues in the Baltic context have been analysed by Taterka 2012).

Weißer's poetry in Latvian

The poetry of Christian Felix Weißer had a significant effect on the first Latvian secular book of verse, *Jaunas zīņes* (New Popular Songs) (1774), by Courland pastor Gotthard Friedrich Stender³ and its revised and supplemented version *Zīņģu lustes* (The Joy of Singing) (I 1783, II 1789). Before 1774, exclusively or almost exclusively, religious and occasional poetry (with some exceptions) was known in Latvian. Stender's collection offered a completely new literary experience by combining the known song genre with secular content. Stender's poems were intended as songs: He called them "Oden" (many of them were accompanied by references to melodies), and most of them were free translations from German. Stender did not indicate the authors of the originals of his translations, but included the introductory lines of the translated songs. Some sources of the translated poetry have been studied (Lejnieks 1939), and in this article these studies will be supplemented by newly found sources. To date, it has been established that Stender translated the works of at least 24 German authors, generally a couple of poems from each author. Some authors, such as Hagedorn and Gleim, are more widely represented. However, the largest number of poems, 12, was drawn from the works of Christian Felix Weißer. It should be noted that a substantial number of the originals of the translated songs are still of unknown origin and await further study in the future. Among them, more of Weißer's poems might potentially be found.

The names of the authors mentioned above show that Stender was influenced by various sources such as the Anacreontic poetic tradition, with its themes of the enjoyment of love and life, sentimentalism (*Gefühlskultur*), and works by poets from Göttingen and the Halberstadt circles. As Liina Lukas notes:

Instead of the enlightening didactic poetry of [Barthold Heinrich] Brockes, Stender now offered songs, odes, elegies that had a new, lyric, folksy tone brought from *Göttinger Hainbund* (Matthias Claudius, Johann Wilhelm

³ Stender (1714–1796) was born in Courland. He studied theology in Jena und Halle (1736–1739) and worked as private tutor and co-rector at the Mitau/Jelgava School after his return to Courland. From 1744 until 1752, he worked as a pastor in several places in Courland, and then went again to Germany where he worked in several education institutions. In 1766, Stender returned to Courland and worked as a pastor until his death in 1796. Stender established Latvian secular literature: He wrote a collection of stories, fables and fairy tales (1766), volumes of poetry (1774, 1783, 1789), scientific encyclopaedia for peasants (1774), and linguistic and lexicographic works. He was also the author of religious works. See more about his biography and his work: Grudule 2018; Grudule 2021.

Ludwig Gleim, Christian Adolph Overbeck), though still mixed with Rococo and Anacreontic traits. These songs, too, soon acquired an anonymous, folk-song-like life of their own, became popular songs with the help of beloved composers, and travelled from one popular songbook to another, sometimes with sheet music and the names of composers, but most often without the names of the original authors. (Lukas 2018: 54)

Why should a Lutheran pastor translate such poems for Latvian peasants? Stender himself answered this question in the foreword to his book of 1774:

Serious minds will wonder that I have written songs of love at my age. I see this from a different viewpoint. They are not only to delight. Such an intention would be too narrow. I am trying to instil tender feelings in peasant hearts. Combined with this is the intention to make them tender towards their parents, tender towards their supervisors, and finally also tender towards God and religion. The first source of this tenderness lies in the innocent love towards the opposite sex planted by nature itself. I try to kindle these far from forbidden inclinations. Without this first path of nature towards tenderness, the rough peasant heart would remain unfeeling. And to strive in whatever way for its tenderness would be to strive for a leap in nature. Men of a higher mindset will find this self-evident. (Stender [2001]: 32)

Elsewhere, in 1789, Stender noted the link between education and entertainment and emphasised that his “odes have been intended for the pleasure and the education of the nation that is so important to us” (Stender [2001]: 92).

Stender classified his songs into several groups (chapters): Courland Songs, Stories, Songs of Love, Mourning Songs, Lessons, Songs of Joy, and The Joy of Singing. The second part also includes Songs of Nature and Songs of Virtue, as well as Wedding Songs and Joy of Dancing.

Anacreontic poetry was suitable for translation into Latvian because it thematised the idealisation of rural life and was dominated by peasants. In a broader context, Stender selected poems the common feature of which was the pastoral imagination. In Stender’s songs, peasant figures of the time were synthesised with sentimental idealisations. The translations of Weiße’s poems fit into this context. Originally, these songs were addressed to middle-class readers for whom the rural imagination helped formulate their identity and values (cf. Wyngaard 2004). When translating poems into Latvian, Stender addressed them to the peasants themselves, so that from these poems Latvians could learn how to love and enjoy in a ‘civilised’ manner. By way of a cultural transfer, Anacreontic motifs gained a didactic and in a way disciplinary potential by becoming a model worthy of imitation. However, this was not a specifically Baltic phenomenon. Anacreontic songs could undergo similar

transformation when included in peasant songbooks in German-speaking countries.

Stender also used various translation strategies. Some of his songs consist of rather precise translations, although he often translated very freely, borrowing only the main ideas, which he then processed creatively. In some instances, he adapted details to the living conditions of the Courland peasants. His translations of Weiße's songs provide a good example of these various translation strategies and may be useful as a case study that uncovers the types of translation practiced in the 18th century.

Stender mainly focussed on the songs included in Weiße's comic operas. Three songs – *Meitas stāsti* (Maiden's Stories) (after Hannchen's aria *Als ich auf meiner Bleiche*), *Ak tu zeltenīte* (Oh you golden maid) (after Christel's aria *Schön sind Rosen und Jesmin*) and *Vecs likums* (An Old Law) (after king's aria *Was noch jung und artig ist*) – were taken from the comic opera *Die Jagd* (1770). Two songs – *Strādnieka laima* (Worker's Happiness) (after *Der Schwelgereyen Ueberfluß*) and *Ciema meita* (Village Girl) (after *Ein Mädchen, das auf Ehre hielt*) – were taken from the comic opera *Die Liebe auf dem Lande* (1768).

Two of the above-mentioned songs, which are included in the chapter titled Stories attracted Stender's attention through the theme of the harassment of female peasants by higher class men. In the translation of the song *Als ich auf meiner Bleiche*, the count who harasses the young woman and locks her in a castle has been replaced by a lord of the manor. In the translation of the song *Ein Mädchen das auf Ehre hielt*, meanwhile, Edelmann has been replaced by a landowner, with Stender also substantially modifying and idealising the ending of the song.

The presence of these songs in Stender's collection is significant as they attach an increased importance to criticism of landlords' violence, a topic which was sensitive at the time and especially prominent in peasant literature (cf. Daija 2017: 105–124). In general, in his songs Stender called for social loyalty and depicted harmony between peasants and landlords. Translations of Weiße's songs mark a break in this harmony, even though it is expressed through a misogynist interpretation where responsibility for the consequences of harassment lies with the woman, while the violence of the higher-class men is depicted as almost self-evident, without judgement of their morality.

The song *Pļaujams laiks* (Harvest Time) (after *Die Felder sind nun alle leer*), which is included in the chapter Songs of Joy, was taken from the comic opera *Der Aerndekrantz* (1771). It fits into the Stender's collection, with its idyllic depiction of field work and the physiocratic concept of peasants as feeders of those in the higher classes. In this song, the joy of harvesting leads to romantic themes such as feelings of affection between peasants, then turns into a rather

sharp polemic against town dwellers who mock the peasants for their calloused hands without realising that these hands feed them. Weiße's invitation to "Blick unsern Fleiß mit Lächeln an" was translated by Stender as "mūsu sviedrus cienījiet" (honour our sweat) (Weiße 1772a: 216; Stender [2001]: 84).

The contrast between a peasant and a representative of a higher class – one of the general nature–culture oppositions of the 18th century – was also conceptualised in the translation of the song *Der Schwelgereyen Ueberfluß* (Weiße 1770: 16–17; Stender [2001]: 73). Here, also, one can see a shift in the meaning alongside the shift in the addressee mentioned above in which the wholesomeness of peasant life is opposed to the insomnia, lack of appetite and fatigue of the representatives of higher classes takes on a didactic form. Now, it can be read as an invitation to accept one's own standing and not to strive for a higher status.

It is also interesting to see how the song *Meita strādniece* (The Working Girl) (after *Mein Mädchen*) in the chapter Songs of Love has been modified. Stender has retained the sensual details in the description of the beloved woman – the beauty of her cheeks, hands, legs, waist, and eyes – while at the same time introducing a contrast between this idealised object of love and a decent and hard-working female peasant who does not exist in Weiße's original. In this way, the epithets which, in Weiße's song, were addressed to the beloved woman, in Stender's reproduction are addressed to another woman to whom the hard-working and decent female peasant is superior. Otherwise, the reproduction closely follows the original:

Rühmt man eine kleine Hand	Lai teic: viņas rociņa (Let them say: her hand)
Und ein Aermchen, weich, zu drücken, Einen Wuchs, den man umspannt,	Miksta esot taustēšanai, (Is so soft to touch,) Knēpe sprīžiem kampjama, (Her waist can be embraced in inches,)
Und ein Füßchen zum Entzücken:	Kāja viegla grozišanai. (Her leg is easy in movement.)
O dieß ist sie!. Dieß, dieß, dieß Ist mein Mädchen ganz gewiß	Mana meita labāka, (My girl is better,) Strādniece un godīga. (She's hard-working and decent.)
Lobt man großer Augen Nacht	Lai teic: it kā zvaigznītes (Let them say that her eyes)
Und ein Haar von Rabenschwärze, Einen Mund, zum Kuß gemacht,	Viņas acu spīdums esot (Shine like stars) Un ka virs šās zemītes (And that there's no bigger beauty)
Eine Brust, den Thron der Scherze:	Lielāks daiļums jau neesot. (In this world.)

O dieß ist sie!. Dieß, dieß, dieß	Mana meita labāka, (My girl is better,)
Ist mein Mädchen ganz gewiß	Strādniece un godīga. (She's hard-working and decent.)
(Weiße 1772b: 239–240)	(Stender [2001]: 58)

In this way, Stender attached to his adaptation the same opposition method as was used in the structure of the song *Schön sind Rosen und Jesmin* from the opera *Die Jagd*, where he opposes the beauty of roses and jasmines (in the translation roses and lilies) to describe the appeal of the beloved woman (Weiße 1778a: 109–110; Stender [2001]: 57–58). Iris, who was the original character of the song, was replaced by Stender with a more general depiction of a woman who often appears in his songs, namely a “zeldenite”, a golden maiden.

The sensual themes which relate these songs to Anacreontic lyrics reproduced in the collection are expanded in the translation of the song *Was noch jung und artig ist* from the opera *Die Jagd*. It advocates, while following the original rather precisely, the willingness of young people to spend their time joyfully and indulge in the pleasures of lust and kisses by referring to the fact that their ancestors did the same. There is no precept or other rational core except the legitimisation of love, which is characteristic of the Anacreontic worldview (Weiße 1778a: 80; Stender [2001]: 88).

Stender also translated some children's songs by Weiße. The song *Dieva apgādāšana* (God's providence) (after *Der kleine Vogel in der Luft*), which is included in the Lessons chapter (Stender [2001]: 72–73), was taken from the children's play *Die kleine Ährenleserin* (Weiße 1777a: 25–26). *Bërna dziesmiņa* (Child's Song) (after *Das Glück eines Kindes* or *Wenn ich artig bin*), included in the Songs of Virtue chapter (Weiße 1777b: 87–88; Stender [2001]: 126) was borrowed from Weiße's *Neues ABC Buch* (1772). Mention should also be made of another two songs which were later included in Rudolph Zacharias Becker's *Mildheimisches Liederbuch* (1799): *Bišu skola* (Bee School) (after *Die Bienen*) (Weiße 1807: 93–94) in the Songs of Nature chapter (Stender [2001]: 113) and *Veselība* (Health) (after *An die Gesundheit*) in the Songs of Virtue chapter (Stender [2001]: 113–114; Weiße 1807: 65–66). The religious reflection of God's care for the world, the positive consequences of good behaviour, the comparison of the diligence of bees with discipline among people, as well as the undertaking to protect one's own health expressed in these songs fit into the didactic framework of Stender's collection. The reader is informed by simple but convincing and non-negotiable lessons that direct the experience of reading to a field which is different from Anacreontic themes, specifically to a rational reflection of oneself and the world.

The above-mentioned song *Die Bienen*, which is included in *Mildheimisches Liederbuch* as *Tragt nur in die Zellen ein, kleine Honigsammlerinnen* (Becker 1799, No. 42; Becker 1815, No. 95), was translated by Stender creatively. While the original expanded the image of bees as an allegory of the human population from various aspects, Stender supplemented it with an explicit description of alcohol-related harm, while suggesting that alcoholics should follow the example of the bees. In this way, he used Weiße's example as a source of inspiration and complemented it with new content which was no longer allegorical, but rather didactic in a direct way.

Stender freely merged elements of love poetry and didactic themes when transforming Weiße's song *An die Bücher* (Weiße 1778b: 211–212). From this song, he mainly borrowed the idea, while substantially redrafting the text. Stender further developed the address to books employed in the original by comparing books with young women and brides, and even equating each page read to a kiss. The degree of freedom of the translation can be seen in this reproduction of the final verse:

<p>Ja, Bücher, ihr sollt meine Freunde bleiben, Gesellschaft mir und Spielwerk seyn;</p> <p>Die lange Zeit mir ohne Reu vertreiben, Und mir Geschmack und Licht verleihn!</p> <p>Wie dank' ich dem, der euern Werth, Und euch zu brauchen, mich gelehrt!</p> <p>(Weiße 1778b: 212)</p>	<p>Ak jūs, dārgas zeltenītes, (Oh, my dear maidens,) Manas mīļas grāmatas! (My dear books!)</p> <p>Esiet manas dvēselītes / (Be my souls,) Mantas visu dārgākas. (My asset most valuable.)</p> <p>Jūs paliksiet mana rota, (You will remain my treasure,) Kā no debess manim dota. (As if given to me by the sky.) Ak, kā saldi kavēšos (Oh, I will immerse myself with pleasure) Jūsu gudros padomos! (In your clever advice!)</p> <p>(Stender [2001]: 69–70)</p>
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In general, these translations show how freely Stender handled Weiße's originals by sometimes attributing a completely new meaning to them (Daija 2017: 63–66). The two most significant themes which relate the translations of Weiße's songs to other songs in Stender's collection are, firstly, praise of the peasant and rural life as opposed to the higher classes and, second, sentimental love lyrics. The first topic has a didactic purpose, focussing on promoting peasants' self-esteem and also – to borrow the name of the translation of a Matthias Claudius song – on “liking for one's own class” (Stender [2001]:

81), in other words, on discipline and turning against upward social mobility. The second topic focusses on education of the peasants' feelings, so also here a shift in meaning or its expansion can be seen in the translation. In general, Stender didn't find it hard to adapt Weiße's songs to a new audience, as they were imbued with the rural imagination, simplicity and *Volkstümlichkeit*. From the analysis above, it can be seen that Stender's collection consisted of various layers – the entertaining, the didactic, and the civilising one aimed at the nurturing of feelings. In Weiße's creative work, Stender found songs that were useful to anyone wishing to advance these layers.

Weiße's poetry in Estonian

The first translations of Weiße's songs in Estonian were published at a time when poetry in Estonian had existed for about a century and half. The main focus at that time was clearly hymns, of which several volumes already existed. But there was also secular poetry. However, the state of Estonian-language secular poetry before the 19th century was quite poor. From the middle of the 17th century to the beginning of the 18th, only about 70 occasional poems appeared, some of them very short, only two lines, some very long, some printed, some handwritten in *Stammbüchern*, in poetry albums for friends that circulated among the academically educated nobility and literati. Their authors, 23 known by name, were mainly Baltic German, in some cases Swedish literati, in very rare cases Estonians, only one of whom is known by name. In recent years, academic research in this field has gained momentum and previous works have been supplemented both in terms of discovery of new texts and their contextualisation (Wimberg 2022; Urmet, Viiding 2021).

Weiße's first poems in Estonian appeared in a German poetry volume entitled *Ehstländische poetische Blumenlese für das Jahr 1779* (1779), issued by the German publisher, translator and popular novelist Johann Friedrich Ernst Albrecht (1752–1814), who briefly stayed in Estonia. The *Blumenlese* volume is an anthology of 57 German poems by several German (Baltic) authors, including the editor's wife Sophie Albrecht and Sembard (Friedrich Gustav Arvelius), who are mentioned by name in the volume, as well as Philipp Werner Loos, Balthasar Gerhard Schumacher and Johann Friedrich Ernst Albrecht himself, as previous research has discovered (Sangmeister 2011: 443). The authorship of numerous other texts, which are signed with initials only or not at all, has not to date been established. At the end of the volume are three poems in Estonian, two of which are taken from the opera *Die Jagd* by Hiller and Weiße. They are easy to identify because the originals are referred to in the title. The first title is as follows: *The aria / Mein, lobet mir nur nicht die Nacht*

from the operetta *Die Jagd*, translated into Estonian, and continues with: *Oh, ärge kiitke mulle ööd* (Oh, praise me not the night). The second Weiß poem begins with the words: *Aria from Die Jagd / Der Graf bot seine Schätze mir* and continues with: *Saks pakkus rikkust minnule* (The Lord offered his treasures to me). The third Estonian poem, the source of which is not named, is entitled *Tomas ja Liso* (Tomas and Liso) and is the most appreciated of the three by Estonian literary historians because of a certain experiential quality, semantic skill and flowing trochaic rhythm (EKA I, 1965: 293). On the basis of these qualities, earlier literary historians suspected that this poem might be an original creation, but its content (a shepherdess at first resists the advances of the meddling shepherd, but soon gives in to them), the realities depicted (hair ribbons, weaving each other wreaths) and the form of the dialogue (which turns into a duet at the end), are clear indications that *Tomas and Liso* also belongs to the tradition of the rococo opera. Our research revealed that it is an adaptation of a song no. 49 from the collection *Sammlung neuer Weltlicher Lieder und Arien* (1750?), that begins with the words: *Komm mit mir in dunkeln Schatten, komm...* (Come with me in dark shadows, come...). Instead of Tomas and Liso it has Sylvia and Damöt as main characters, who appeared as protagonists in several German operas of that time. Further research will hopefully help to clarify the origin of this text. This collection of German secular songs and arias also includes two Weiß poems published in Estonian translation in *Blumenlese*, suggesting that this collection may be the source of all three translations.

Although *Tomas and Liso* does indeed display a higher level of artistry than the two Weiß translations, all three are hampered by the rather bumpy and halting language, which, without knowledge of the originals, leads to a partial lack of understanding of the text. Individual lines of verse are rendered word for word, in some passages one can only recognise phonetic similarities to the original. Prosodic features (metre, rhythm, rhyme) are taken into account, which is a sign that they may have been intended for singing, although their rendering is not always flawless. From the technique of the rhymes the rendering of Hannchen's aria *Der Graf bot seine Schätze mir* (The Count offered his treasures to me), is successful, in which the refrain-like line "Mein Herz ist nicht mehr mein" (My heart is no longer mine) is expressed by repeating the line "Ma ollen kihlatud" (I am engaged).

The three poems were probably not the only ones produced at the time, for in the preface to the volume the editors say: "Should lovers of these [pieces translated into the vernacular] express a desire to read more, we shall endeavour to arrange a good collection of them." (*Ehstländische poetische Blumenlese 1779*: (8)) The reference to possible further texts in Estonian,

whether by Weiße or by other authors, also explains the somewhat strange theme of one Weiße text. While two poems deal with the theme of love – one Weiße poem is indeed about the harassment of a peasant girl by her master, and in the poem *Tomas ja Liso* two lovers meet –, the second poem by Weiße deals with a nightmare. The inclusion of this text in the collection can perhaps be explained by the fact that it is an aria sung by Röschen, Hannchen's sister from the opera *Die Jagd*. The arias of the two sisters, the main protagonists of the piece, thus form a quasi-duo, which could possibly have been sung by two women. However, there were no more Estonian poems or translations in the *Ehstländische poetische Blumenlese für 1780* (1779), and thereafter the series was discontinued by the editor Albrecht. In later years, Albrecht did not publish any Estonian-language texts at all, so that these three Estonian poems have gone down in literary history as a peculiar experiment.

The publication context of the volume, as well as the authorship of three Estonian-language poems, has not to date been established.⁴ Of the authors from whose pens the German *Blumenlese* poems originated and who have been identified, only Friedrich Gustav Arvelius (1753–1806) would feature Estonian-language texts in his later work. However, the other poem translations into Estonian or original creations in Estonian known from him are much more dexterous and skilful than the texts discussed here, planting doubt that the Estonian-language *Blumenlese* poems originate from him. Moreover, no study dealing with Arvelius's life and work points to possible Estonian translations in the *Blumenlese* volume (Webermann 1978; Vinkel 1958). One can assume that the volume is related on the one hand to the enthusiasm for drama and music at the Baltic manors and on the other hand to the emergence of clubs in Reval/Tallinn. As was the case elsewhere in the Europe of the Age of Enlightenment, new forms of social life emerged in the Baltic region in the second half of the 18th century. New kinds of forum for social discussion and gathering were established to provide opportunities for people with similar ideological or cultural interests to spend their time in a pleasant and cultivated manner. From the 1770s onwards, the people who gathered in these societies, clubs and circles were representatives of different social classes who could socialise on an equal footing (Jürjo 1997; Heinmaa 2017: 136–172). The clubs of Reval also included a total of four Masonic lodges, the origins, activities and membership of which are documented in detail (v. Wistinghausen 2016). The editors and authors

⁴ In the case of *Tomas and Liso*, female authorship is suspected because this poem has some similarities with three other Estonian poems that were published anonymously in German collections and journals in the early 1780s and are attributed to aristocratic women (Kaur 2021).

of the *Blumenlese* volume identified so far were either employed as tutors or doctors in noble houses, where various musical activities were highly valued, or they participated in the activities of Reval society, just like their employers, the nobles. At this point, unfortunately, there is no possibility of tracing individuals or tracing the possible networks that led to the creation of the Estonian-language poems in the *Blumenlese* volume from 1779, but it is very likely that they were created in the context of language games and social entertainment, in Baltic German rural mansions and/or urban clubs.

For the next few decades, silence reigned both in the field of Weiße translations and, in fact, in Estonian poetry as a whole. Until the turn of the century, only individual lyrical texts appeared in calendars, and new developments only came to light in the first years of the 19th century. These are again associated with the name of Weiße, although they did not involve new translations. In the first Estonian lyric anthology *Monned Laulud* (Some Songs), published in 1806 and containing nine poems, the already-published Weiße translation *Saks pakkus rikkust minnule* was also printed. The Weiße poem appears in the same version in which it had already become known in 1779, the name of the translator is not stated, only the German opening line/melody is given. Other poems are presented in a similar way, i.e. their authors are not named, with one exception (Hölty). The opening lines/melodies of the texts show that, in addition to the one Weiße poem, three poems are by Hölty, one by Wagenseil and one by Justus Gottfried Reinhardt. The three other poems are well-known German folk songs that were printed anonymously in many popular song collections of the time.

Just as with the *Blumenlese* volume, there is still much uncertainty surrounding this first Estonian poetry volume. It is not known by whom the adaptations were written, which original(s) were used and who published this volume. Only two Baltic German pastors, Otto Reinhold von Holtz (1757–1828) and his brother-in-law Reinhold Johann Winkler (1767–1815), who were both from Estonia but received their theological education in Germany and had also published other Estonian-language lyrical texts in the early 19th century, are known to have translated some of the poems. Von Holtz is also mentioned as a possible editor of the anthology, but there is no definitive evidence of this. Estonian literary history still does not know the names of other possible authors, just as it is not clear how the Weiße translation got into the volume. It is interesting to note that the son of Pastor von Holtz, Reinhold von Holtz, who died at an early age, was a member of the Isis Lodge in Reval, with which some of the co-authors of the *Blumenlese* volume were also connected, although this connection cannot be followed up here due to lack of space.

Thematically, two tendencies can be identified in the *Monned Laulud* volume. On the one hand, one finds poems with a sentimental Christian and pious undertone that deal with life as suffering, the longing for death, and charity, such as *Ma olen monda näinud* (I Have Experienced Some Things), which is a translation of the popular song *Ich habe viel gelitten auf dieser schönen Welt* (I Have Suffered Much in this Beautiful World). On the other hand, peasant life is idyllically depicted and praised, as for example in *Ühhe perenaese hommiko-laul* (Morning Song of a Housewife), which is a translation of the song *Du lieber Gott, wie wohl ist mir* by Justus Gottfried Reinhardt. This song comes from the *Mildheimisches Liederbuch* by Rudolph Zacharias Becker and was created specifically for the songbook prize competition in 1787 (Weissert 1966: 25, 190). From the *Mildheimisches Liederbuch* (1799, extended edition 1815), which became one of the best-known and most popular German songbooks at the turn of the 19th century, one finds several poems translated in the first Estonian poetry anthology, including Weiße's *Der Graf bot seine Schätze mir*. However, not all the texts are taken from this collection, which indicates that there were several models for the first Estonian poetry anthology.

The *Mildheimisches Liederbuch* leads us to the next translator of Weiße's poems into Estonian, Gustav Adolph Oldekop (1755–1838). He came from western Estonia, studied theology in Halle and worked as a pastor in southern Estonia after his return. His name is writ large in Estonian cultural history, especially in south Estonian literary history, although many of his merits were only recognised posthumously.⁵ Oldekop's lyrical oeuvre, which as far as we know today includes 20 original creations, 22 poetry adaptations and several more works of uncertain status, was not presented in full to posterity until 1985, in the volume *Suve õdang* (Summer Evening).

Among Oldekop's adaptations, most of which comprise songs from the *Mildheimisches Liederbuch*, is an aria by Christian Felix Weiße from the opera *Der Aerndekrantz*. Again, the original is easy to identify because the opening line/melody is stated. The poem, written in the south Estonian dialect, is entitled *Perran poimamist* (After the Harvest) (Oldekop 1985: 71) and is a reworking of the poem *Die Felder sind nun alle leer* (The Fields Are Now All Empty) in the *Mildheimisches Liederbuch* version (song no. 395 in the 1799

⁵ With his multi-faceted activities, Oldekop had a significant influence on south Estonian written culture, which was still alive until the 19th century, after which it was increasingly pushed out of written use, but has been experiencing a renaissance again since the 1990s. He was one of the editors of the short-lived first south Estonian newspaper *Tarto-ma-rahwa Näddali-Leht* (Tartu Peasant's Weekly) (1806, 41 issues), a translator of peasant laws into south Estonian, a prose writer and a poet (Vinkel 1985).

edition and no. 591 in the 1815 edition), although Oldekop has omitted the final stanza meaning that his poem has six stanzas rather than seven.

Oldekop noted the following about his poem translations: “I [have] not bound myself exactly to the German original...because I feared that its foreignness would be easily identified. I have endeavoured to capture as much as possible the spirit of the nation for which I write.” (Beiträge 1823: 150) And he was right to do so, for his translations are generally vernacularising rather than alienating and do not adhere strictly to the source texts. However, he succeeded in translating the Weiße poem so masterfully that one can speak here simultaneously of adherence to the original and of the naturalness of his expression. Like Weiße, Oldekop’s version paints an idyllic picture of the golden harvest season and shows how happy the farmers are about the beauty and richness of nature and about their own industriousness. There are also hints of young love between a girl and a boy. Oldekop uses the same metaphors (full barns, golden grains, blossoming trees, crickets making music for joy, etc.) as Weiße, even retaining the verse meter – alternating four- and three-beat iambs. In his translations, however, the cadences are alternately feminine and masculine, not consistently masculine as in Weiße. However, in the south Estonian version of the Weiße song, God is thanked by name for the plentiful harvest, and the juxtaposition of town and country people is missing at the end, where the townspeople are admonished not to mock peasants for putting bread on the table for everyone (cf. Weiße’s original and Latvian translation). There are some versions of Weiße’s *Die Felder sind nun alle leer* with Christian references to paradisiacal promises (cf. Taschenbuch [1795]: 41–43, Song No. 22), but the mention of God seems to be an addition by Oldekop that does not exist in German versions of this song. As mentioned earlier, this poem is the only one that has been translated into both Estonian and Latvian, although the Latvian translation, which contains a total of eleven stanzas, was made from a different version of the aria than the Estonian one.

In Oldekop’s lyrical oeuvre, the glorification of nature and farm work, in harmony with the peasants’ world of thought, is prominent. Vinkel assumes that many of Oldekop’s poems were intended for the secular repertoire in singing lessons at the parish school, which is why he dealt not only with the beauty of nature but also with themes such as love, the joy of life, playfulness and humour. Didactic tones are also to be found in his lyrics, for example the glorification of work and learning, being satisfied with little, loyalty and mercy (Vinkel 1985: 17–20). These are typically Popular Enlightenment ideals that he praises in his poetry and to which Weiße’s *Die Felder sind nun alle leer* also adheres.

The date of Oldekop's translation of Weiße's poem, or when he started writing poetry at all, are both unknown. His first poems appeared anonymously in calendars in the last years of the 18th century, and later some of them were printed under the name of his brother-in-law, Johann Philipp von Roth (1754–1818), who probably encouraged him to write poetry. Only four texts were published under his own name during his lifetime (Vinkel 1985: 11). Oldekop's poems, including *Perran poimamist*, circulated in the 19th century either anonymously or under von Roth's name in handwritten song collections and were only reprinted in various song collections in the 20th century. Furthermore, they were not attributed to him until 1985, when his entire lyrical oeuvre was published. Of Oldekop's 22 translated poems, a full 16 are from the *Mildheimisches Liederbuch*, which underlines the importance of this collection for early Estonian lyric poetry. A closer study of Oldekop's poem translations from the *Mildheimisches Liederbuch*, as well as the significance of the *Mildheimisches Liederbuch* for Estonian and Latvian poetry as a whole, is still pending.

Concluding remarks

The study of translations of Weiße's poetry into Latvian and Estonian has shown that "texts underwent not only linguistic but also cultural transformations on their way through Europe", which is to say that "in translation they changed not only their language but above all their cultural frame of reference" (Stockhorst 2010: 8, 23). By changing the addressee from the bourgeoisie to the peasantry, the meaning of the texts was often significantly altered: pastoral imagery now became a model worthy of imitation. In general, the translations of Weiße's texts into Latvian and Estonian pursued two objectives. On the one hand, they tested the poetic possibilities of the peasant language and, on the other, they aimed at didactic goals. In that way, these poetry translations were set in a special ideological context of Popular Enlightenment that mirrored similar trends of songs "for the people" in German-speaking countries (cf. Brednich 1993). In addition to several similarities, there are also some differences that characterise the translation of Weiße's poetry in the Baltic area. The Latvian adaptations were more compact and extensive, associated with the name of one mediator and the time period of the 1770s and 1780s, while the Estonian adaptations were sparser, more diffuse, stretching over several decades, even centuries, encompassing different audiences, language dialects and several mediators, not all of whom have been identified to date.

With regard to readership, there is a lack of reliable information, but it can be assumed that Weiße's texts reached peasant readers at the time when

the translations were made for them, as reading skills among peasants in the Baltic region were remarkably high at that time (Apinis 1991: 110; Talve 2005: 235236). We can therefore assume that the translations of Weiße and the other German poets of the 18th century whose work was circulated at the time, played a significant role in the development of the literary taste of the peasants and created conditions for the foundation of national literature. It is certainly the case that they provided the decisive impetus for the emergence of the secular poetry of the two cultures. The Baltic translators of Weiße probably did not have the creation of Latvian or Estonian literature in mind, however. Their translations served either to enlighten the autochthonous peasantry or as entertaining language experiments. The history of translations of Weiße's poetry as a case study reveals not only the multitude of ways in which German poetry had a formative influence on Estonian and Latvian literary cultures, but also the overlapping of various discourses (Anacreontics, Enlightenment, Romanticism, peasant literature, children's literature, plays, lyrics) that took place when the texts were being translated. Weiße's poems, of course, are only one element in the diverse landscape of 18th- and 19th-century Estonian and Latvian translated poetry. Further studies, which would focus on other German writers, might uncover new insights and enrich our understanding of similarities and differences between the development of Estonian and Latvian literatures.

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