

# Latvia in Russian Literature (1901–1940)

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**Abstract** The first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was an extremely significant period in the history of Latvia. After the end of the World War I and the fall of the Russian Empire, on the map of Europe new countries appeared — Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland. From the first days of their existence, the new countries started to build new relations with the former metropolis — Soviet Russia, later (from the end of 1922) USSR.

During the time period from 1901 to 1940, three basic models were developing which demonstrated an attitude towards Latvia in the Russian artistic and public consciousness. For understanding a place Latvia took in the Russian consciousness one of the most important binary oppositions in these models was the opposition of “ours – theirs.” The first model started to develop already in the 18<sup>th</sup> century when Latvian territories had been annexed to the Russian Empire forming governorates of Livonia and Kurland. The eastern part of Latvia — Latgale, at first became a part of Pskov, but later Vitebsk Governorate of the Russian Empire. Due to their geographical location, these territories became an integral part in the journeys to the countries of Western Europe for the Russian writers, officials, and philistines.

The second model began to form after the Proclamation of Independence of Latvia on November 18, 1918 and it demonstrated the attitude of Soviet Russia to a new independent country. One of the central themes of this model was participation of Latvians (Latvian Riflemen) in October Revolution of 1917 and in the Russian Civil War that broke out shortly after the revolution.

The third model was forming in the consciousness of Russians who had been living in the territory of Latvia when Independence of Latvia was proclaimed and border agreement between Latvia and Russia signed. This model was also significantly enriched by representatives of Russian Emigration who had escaped or had been expatriated from Soviet Russia.

**Key words** Latvia; Russian literature; emigration; topos

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## Introduction

Study of Latvian-Russian literary contacts is one of the current problems of the contemporary Latvian literary theory. In the 1960s the work *Latvian–Russian Literary Relations (Latyšsko-russkie literaturnye svyazi, 1965)* written by Vera Vāvere and Georgiy Matskov became the first fundamental research regarding this issue. The authors do not decrease nor increase the significance of the Russian literature's influence in the Latvian literature by justly highlighting that the

*Russian influence* — [...] was significant only in those cases when it coincided with trends in the very Latvian literature. The impact of the Russian literature usually only accelerated and deepened the development of natural processes in the Latvian literature. (Vavere, Mackov 6)

Due to objective reasons, the authors could not enlighten the complex, contradictory and important period of the first independent Republic of Latvia and to show the significance of the literary contacts between the local authors and Russian emigrant writers.

In the 1980s–1990s, the literary magazine *Daugava* regularly presented Yuri Abyzov's and Roman Timenchik's publications about authors whose literary activity was linked with Latvia: *An Episode from the life of Valery Bryusov* [Together with Alexandre Parnis] (1983), *Riga Episode in Anna Akhmatova's "Poem without a Hero"* (1984), *"Over the Silver, Foamed Daugava": N. Gumilyov and Latvia, 1916–1917* (1986), *"Foreign Delight": Vladislav Khodasevich and Latvia* (1987), *Mandelstam and Latvia* (1988), *A History of One Mystification [L. Kormchy (L. Korol-Purashovich) – A. Blok's "confident"]*: *Facts and Hypotheses* (1988), *Repercussions. Latvia in the Russian Poetry* (1994), a.o.

The book by Yuri Abyzov, *Russian Printed Word in Latvia 1917–1944: Bibliography: 4 Parts* (1990–1991), became a true guide into the emigrant world of Latvia's Russians. It is a kind of a chronicle of the Russian-speaking society's literary and publishing life in the Republic of Latvia. After familiarizing with

Y. Abyzov's book, it can be concluded that the Russian spiritual culture developed in a more organic, multisided and freer way in the independent, democratic Latvia than on the other side of the border.

Y. Abyzov together with Lazar Fleishman and Boris Ravdin has prepared and published one more work regarding general and individual issues of Latvia's Russian emigrant newspaper world (*Russian Press in Riga. From the History of the Newspaper "Segodnya" in the 1930s*, 1997). The researchers dissipate the myth regarding the provinciality of the newspaper published in Latvia until the Soviet annexation and reveal the real role of this publication in the emigrant press.

The early 21<sup>st</sup> century is marked by the issue of V. Vāvere and L. Sproģe's monograph *Outset of the Latvian Modernism and "Silver Age" of the Russian Literature* (2002). This study uses previously unknown or little-known archive materials (letters, diaries). The main attention in the monograph is paid to the literary contacts of the first Latvian modernists (so-called decadents) with the brightest representatives of the Russian symbolism and the Silver age. Their typological closeness and difference are stressed (Viktors Eglītis, Edvarts Virza, Kārlis. Krūza, Fricis Bārda — Aleksey Remizov, Valery Bryusov, Fyodor Sologub, Konstantin Balmont, a.o.). Combination of the literal-historical and comparative views in regarding both Latvian and Russian literary processes in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century is successful, also the European literary context is not forgotten.

Doctoral thesis devoted to various aspects of this problem have been successfully defended in University of Latvia and Daugavpils University: Pāvels Glušakovs *Genres of the Russian Exile Historical Prose (1920–1930s in Latvia)*, (2007), Žans Badins *Latvia in the Russian Literature (1901–1940)*, (2008), Natālija Makašina *Artistic World Models in Andrei Zadonskiy's Prose Fiction* (2012), Marija Sivašova *The Latgale Text in Writings of Russian Writers-Emigrants (1920–1930s)*, (2012).

Concurrently with the scientific study of Latvian-Russian literary contacts also methodological and educational work took place in this direction. A significant section in understanding and examining of Latvian-Russian literary contacts is represented by B. Infantyev multifaceted and diverse publications, such as *Latvia in Fates and Creations of Russian Writers: Folklore, Russian-Latvian Literary Contacts in the Late 18<sup>th</sup> – Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century*: a text-book for secondary schools (1994); *Lines Devoted to Latvia: Russian-Latvian Literary Contacts. Second Half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*: a text-book for secondary schools (1999).

Practically the same problematic is considered in Sergey Zhuravlyev's books: "... I Pass by Livonia's Countryside...": *Russian Writers in Riga, Mitau, Dinaburg*

*and Other Towns of the Baltic Region (16<sup>th</sup> century – 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century)* (1990); *Russian Writers in Livonia and Kurland, 2<sup>nd</sup> Half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century* (1995); *There, Where Livonia Used to Be: Stories on the Russian History, Stay of Famous Writers in Livonia and Kurland in the 18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> Century* (2005), *Latvia's Russian Writers of the 1920–1930s: from the Russian Foreign Anthology* (2015).

### **Methodology**

Structure and semantics of the topos study in the Russian literature have started already several decades ago. Yury Lotman's works *Petersburg's Semiotics and Problems of City Semiotics* (*Semiotika Peterburga i problemy semiotiki goroda*), *Semiotics of a City and Its Culture* (*Semiotika goroda i gorodskoj kul'tury*) and Vladimir Toporov's book *Petersburg and the "Petersburg Text" of the Russian Literature* (*Peterburg i «Peterburgskij tekst» russkoj literatury*), being devoted to the study of the formation and development of the "Petersburg text" in the Russian literature, must be recognized as the starting point of this research. In the editor's preface, Y. Lotman writes:

The common trait of articles in this edition is that on the one side Petersburg is regarded in them as a text, yet on the other side, as a mechanism to create these texts; the city exploration is included in the history of civilization as a text sui generis. Even more — some text peculiarities are particularly notable on such an object. [...] Evidently the text peculiarity of accumulating and independently regenerating its history appears. (Lotman 3)

After the "Petersburg text," also "capital texts" started to appear with greater or lesser success — Moscow, Rome, Kyiv, etc. Later — also texts of the Russian province, such as "Perm text."

Human life is located in space, and inevitably proposes the question of living place — a country, district, town: what is it and what is the meaning of my life while being here? A human did not stand the emptiness of their living place meaning and value, they vitally need to comprehend it and arrange it to its value.

This aspect — existential in its essence — of human relations with their living place was for us one of the most important impulses for studying the Perm text. (Abashev 8)

A significant aspect is activation of one or another provincial topos in the centre's (capital) consciousness. We should also speak about the heterogeneity of the provincial and foreign topoi. Every historical era has brought one or another provincial topos to the foreground. Apart from the Moscow's and St. Petersburg's topoi, Kiyv, Odessa, Kishinev, Caucasus, Poland's, Baltics a.o. topoi are of significance for the Russian culture.

### **Reception of Baltic Culture Space in the Works by Russian Writers and Journalists in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

In the Russian Empire, the regions that were inhabited mainly by Latvians were not administratively united. Thus, Latvians formed the majority of the Kurland and Livonia Governorates, as well as a significant part in the (Latgale) Vitebsk Governorate.

One of the most significant peculiarities of Latvia's text in Russian literature is that the "Latvian text" is formed in a considerably wider sense in the Russian public and cultural awareness. The *Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopedic Dictionary* stresses:

Though this [Baltic] region does not form a particular administrative unit since 1876, still in many aspects its constituents have many things in common, and they are radically different from other parts of Russia. (Jenciklopedicheski slovar')

Thus the "Latvia's text" is incorporated in the joint paradigm of the "Baltic text." In the early twentieth century, the public awareness in Russia became more and more interested in the proceedings in the region. In this context, one must note the special significance of the Courland — Livland text in Russian literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The territories included into the Russian Empire *de jure* were an intrinsic part of the multi-national state formation where ethnic Russians constituted a minority and the Russian language had a secondary status until the implementation of the Russification policy. Hence, the topos of Courland — Livland must be regarded not only as a variant of Russian provincial text but as a specific structure that was territorially perceived as one's own but mentally it continued existing as other — distant, at times obscure; this is proved by the majority of texts created at that time. This topos makes an organic entity of the opposition 'Russia – abroad' (Russia – West).

The administrative border (inside the Russian Empire) becomes a mental

border in the consciousness of authors (Vasily Rozanov, Ivan Konevskoy, Valery Bryusov, Leonid Andreyev, Maxim Gorky), who go to Riga. The first encounter with the Roman letters brings out Rozanov's admiration:

Is the border really close? And my heart started to beat faster. I love borderlands because of this uninterrupted life in outland Russia. I just love in them this sensation of the new, I love my new excitement, the new line of colour in my eye span, new smell, new taste. (Rozanov 45)

Each topos has an individual original structure and semantic, therefore spatial texts are based on not only highlighting the common dominants of sense but on the sets of their own internal structure elements that determine the specificity and autonomy of the topos. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Baltic provinces of Courland, Livland, Estland formed the western border of the Russian Empire that were associated in Russian perception with a German area. Riga was the most significant topos of the Baltic at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> centuries. As to its exterior, architecture, lifestyle, public relations, Riga differed from other province capitals of the Russian Empire. Riga surprised by its European qualities, whereas Old Riga had an air of the Middle Ages. In this period Russian writers and journalists were not interested in Latvian cultural environment but in the life of local old-believers, the development and existence of other religious confessions in a foreign cultural space. The specificity of a 'spatial text' is first and foremost determined by the existence of another, often foreign component that attributes certain colour to a particular culture space. The existence of this component complicates the structure of the particular locus. It is diversified by another language, different history, often by another religious confession, as a result creating a completely different world picture.

Many realia of the Russian life would be perceived here as completely inappropriate, would not correspond to the Riga space. According to V. Rozanov's everything that is Russian attains German shade in Riga. Riga, just as the whole Baltic territory, is a small corner of Germany for Leonid Andreyev, just as for the majority of Russians. In L. Andreyev's perception, Riga — it is not just an uncharacteristic for the Russian Empire enclave of the German architecture and culture, though definitely this is also present, it is rather the space of natural, harmonic behaviour of people.

The place we should definitely go to — it's Riga," — he writes to his fiancée. "Here in boulevards, gardens and seaside people peacefully sit and walk

hugging one another — Nerts! (Andreev 189)

Other towns and small-towns of Kurland and Livonia Governorates were of optional significance for the Russian awareness of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, they remained shadowed by governorate Riga. They were perceived as a kind of Riga's suburbs, a German-Latvian province, or a by-place, sometimes completely cut off from the civilisation. The majority of such settlements existed in their closed, patriarchal world. In the midst of all these towns, it appears that Libava stands out. It is not a coincidence that Fyodor Sologub devotes to it his *Triolet* (Triolet), included in his poetic cycle *Cities (Goroda)*.

When speaking about more typical personality traits of Latvians, most often “*on the one hand — hard-working nature, on the other — distrustfulness,*” closeness, suspicion towards the unfamiliar are indicated. Already Garlieb Merkel wrote about this in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, he claimed that “slave tremulousness and distrustfulness — these are the most notable character traits of a Livonian peasant” (Merkelis 25).

A folk song has always been a true outlet for a Latvian-peasant. For Latvians, specifically the song has become the niche in the public conscience where Latvians could show their national identity and express their problems. A Latvian-singer has organically melted with the image of a Latvian-working man. Work and songs turned out to be inseparable throughout the whole people's history. We can find a more successful formulation of this idea in the work by Apollon Korinfsky *In the Latvian Region (V Latvijskom krae)*. The Latvian song in the Korinfsky's reception fills all the space, the whole world of Latvians, everywhere where Latvians are present one can hear singing. The nation's character is revealed exactly in songs. The Latvian song does not show complexity, boldness, rather on the contrary, its distinctive qualities are conciseness, simplicity, availability, monotone, calmness, and softness. In a way we deal with idealization of the Latvian song on the one hand, and of the Latvian people on the other.

During the World War I, especially after the formation of the Latvian Riflemen battalions, the image of a Latvian-soldier moved upfront in the Russian public thought. Also, Russian writers participate in creating the new image, thus Aleksandr Kuprin writes a couple of sketches, united under the title *Livonia*. Kuprin's reception — it is a view of an outsider, for this reason his evaluation, his vision of the Latvian people is more reserved. He defines the Latvians' character traits and behaviour by their affection to earth, sacred attitude towards it. In his eyes, Latvians are utterly devoted to their Fatherland, they are fearless defenders of their rights and property, ready for any, even the hardest work and the most unpredictable turns of



the history. *A Latvian goes to war just like to ploughing*, (Kuprin 232) states Kuprin, thus creating the image of the Latvian-soldier immediately following the image of the Latvian-ploughman.

It is undeniable that during this period the Latvian literature feels an impact of other cultures, one can clearly notice influence of the Scandinavian, German, and Russian literature in it, yet the presence of the “foreign text” in general shows a more open character of the literature and culture. For the Latvian culture, establishment of new, more active culture contacts with other cultures and literatures is an evident step forward. The very literature was the field of the nations’ mutual dialogue, culture development and enrichment.

### **Reception of Latvia in Russian (Soviet) Literature of the 1920s and 1930s**

Emergence of Latvian text in Russian (Soviet) literature of the 1920s and 1930s is directly linked with the formation of Latvian Rifleman Regiments during World War I. The Latvian Riflemen took an active part in the revolution and the Civil War in Russia and it was portrayed in the texts written by the authors of two opposite sides. As a result, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Russian literature an ambivalent image of the Latvian Riflemen had been developing which was projected on Latvians and Latvian state as such.

The conceptual dominant of the Latvian rifleman’s image in the literature began to develop even before the tragic events of the revolution and Civil war when also Latvians were active participants. Already the first sketches mark a specific, confabulated stereotype of the Latvian rifleman’s perception that will become the basis for the more detailed revelation in the Soviet-time literature. Many of the things that created the Latvian-soldier’s image will turn out to be central for the image of the Latvian Red Rifleman during the first years after the October Revolution.

Cruelty and blood lust become the dominant trait of the perception of Latvians among the Russian population. It is not a coincidence that the first literary echoes regarding events where the Latvian Red Riflemen were active participants appeared not in the works by those authors who sympathized with the new power, but on the contrary, among the ideological opponents who themselves quite often became victims of the new regime, such as, for instance, a son of the grand duke Pavel, eighteen-year-old poet Vladimir Paley. He was one of Alapaevsk martyrs and shortly before his death, when imprisoned in Vyatka, wrote the poem *Silent Night Is Creepy. Minutes Crawl by...*

In literary texts Latvian riflemen are portrayed as carriers of destruction,



violence, death, personalizers of power. Many truly did not perceive the Bolshevik power as the Russian power. This impression was even further reinforced by penalty actions where Latvian riflemen, who spoke Russian poorly or with an accent, were active participants.

The same motif of destroying and abusing symbols of the Russian State power done by foreigners sounds in the revolutionary poem *Iskander Name* (*Iskander-Name*, 1921) by imagist A. Kusikov. It shows a particularly significant line where Latvians are mentioned next to Chinese. In the eyes of the Bolshevik opponents the Red Army was nothing else, but a foreigners' get-together. The folklore of that time is extremely eloquent: *The Soviet power holds on the Jewish brains, Latvian bayonets and Russian fools, or Do not look for a villain, look for a Latvian* (Ross 255).

Quite often in the works of the 1920s Latvian characters are endowed with repulsive, zoomorphic qualities, such as, for instance in I. Babel's diary: *I worked in the command post (the horse galloped smashing), I go to sleep next to Lepin. He is Latvian, his face — dullish, like that of a piglet, glasses, it seems he is kind-hearted.* (Babel' 192) The motif mentioned in Sergey Bekhteyev's poem *Russian Golgotha* (*Russkaya Golgofo*) is reinforced by the catastrophe of all the Christians, while the Latvian riflemen are part of the Antichrist's army.

Also, Soviet poets who turned to poetization of the Latvian Riflemen's "glorified" past had difficulties to break out of the dual world matrix — the past world and the present world, and of the opposition of the red and white colour. But, of course, this type of system included diametrically opposed sense. The first Soviet poets set the art's key purpose — serving to the political topicality, political environment.

The first substantially significant text where the "glorified" past of the Latvian Riflemen is sang of becomes the poem *Latvian Red Soldiers* (*Latyshskie krasnye bojcy*) by Demyan Bedny. Both in the mentioned text and in all his creative works Demyan Bedny gradually embodies requirements of the appearing Soviet literature and the awareness model of the socialistic realism type. First of all, the requirement for truth ("life reality"), as well as accessibility and understanding of the deliverable material is realized. The Bolsheviks' revolutionary ideology is not being masked in any way, on the contrary, it is placed in the foreground.

For Bedny, the Latvian Riflemen are carriers of destruction and death. Yet in the Soviet ideology with its class approach they acquire the status of a kind of a true hero of the new age that *requires neither canvassing, nor appraisal* (Bedny 391). A particular place in the works by Demyan Bedny and a range of other Soviet authors

is devoted to the enemy's character. The enemy, ideological and actual opponent for D. Bedny has always been primitive, rough, and caricatured. There is nothing attractive in the opponent's character, nothing causing compassion, the enemy is always of a lower stratum, for this reason he should be not only destroyed, but also humiliated, his dignity shattered. And battalions of the Latvian Riflemen do exactly this. Merciless, ready to self-sacrifice for the ideals of the New world, such are the Latvians — participants of the Civil war in the works by Isaac Babel, Boris Pilnyak, Aleksey Tolstoy, in the novel by Nikolay Ostrovsky *How the Steel Was Tempered (Kak zakalyalas' stal')*.

Another plane of the "Latvia's text" in this model is satirical depiction of the Republic of Latvia. Due to its geographical location, Latvia has become a borderline between two worlds. Influenced by this fact, the border between Latvia and Russia acquires specific semantic load in many poetic and prosaic texts by various authors. It is not just a cordon separating two countries, but the truest border between two worlds.

The motif of border overcoming, transit turns out to be of significance for Vladimir Mayakovsky *How Does the Democratic Republic Work (Kak rabotaet respublika demokraticeskaya)* and for Demyan Bedny *Political Nepman (Nehpman politicheskij)*. Both books depict the lyrical protagonists who are afraid of crossing borders. For Mayakovsky in his trips abroad, Latvia becomes the first bourgeois country. D. Bedny, unlike V. Mayakovsky, has never been to Latvia, and he had quite a poor idea about the order of things in the neighbour country. In the Bedny's text, the main satire object is Nepman, but his trip to Riga with a fake surname and most probably bought papers involuntarily links this character with emigrant characters.

If Mayakovsky depicts a wide reality scene of Latvia, where he deals with territory, army, culture, government, then for Bedny the whole Latvia is presented as a single restaurant topos. The restaurant is a separate social, pragmatic space, a space for bodily amusements and delights. In addition, in the early 1920s restaurants were more related to bourgeois, nepmen, but the restaurant space outside Russia — to the white emigration that burnt their lives in the restaurant fumes. Bedny depicts Nepman's stay in Riga, in a foreign place, as a kind of sobering that penetrates the restaurant topos in a paradoxical way. The protagonist is subjected to nostalgia, citizenship and patriotism awake in his soul. For the first time he realizes that he has made an unequal exchange: *he has exchanged the native Moscow for Riga's condoms* (Bedny 1). Nepman feels his isolation and its consequences — his insignificance, uselessness for anyone, one's own contempt. Actually, it is

an adjusted person, fawner, pseudo-victim, so now — a pseudo-patriot who has changed and accepted the new power on the outside, but has remained alien and hostile to it on the inside. Even more — rules cannot change such a character due to his class background. From Mayakovsky's and especially Bedny's point of view, the Latvian state is adjusted, just like Nepman is.

After the declaration of the USSR the bourgeois-democratic Republic of Latvia a priori was put on the list of enemies of the Soviet power. In the 1920s in the Soviet culture it was impossible to depict an image of Latvia as being favourable or even neutral. In the Soviet literature of that period, a satirical image of Latvia is dominating.

### **Latvia in the Russian Emigrant Literature**

Along with the Latvian majority, several notable national minorities (Russians, Germans, Jews, Polish) were present in the independent Latvia. In the 1920–1930s, more than 200 thousands of Russians lived in Latvia. During the interwar years, Riga was one of the cultural centres of the Russian émigrés. It is possible to trace one important idea in publications of Russian authors — the young states are not yet burdened with the bitter legacy of the historic right that weighs over the life of old states. The young states can be built freely, along the lines of justice and freedom for everyone. They need not to fear centrifugal force, they need not to resort to oppression of minorities, repressions, and restraints of freedom. Latvia must become an example of new nationhood that is built along the lines of freedom, rights, justice for all.

From the very first days of Latvian independence Russian newspapers of heroic and patriotic kind started to eulogize Latvia, Riga and other towns as well as brave fighters for the independence: both military and civil people. It is typical for a new culture, which is trying to become firmly established on the political and mental map to fill different cells with different texts, including propagandistic ones. Not only publicistic articles, but also the first attempts of creating literary texts on pages of the printed press are of particular interest. When speaking about the Russians of Latvia, we need to mention poetical works by two Riga's authors — M. Argunov and M. Rodionov, who actively cooperated with the newspaper *Utro* in 1919 and 1920.

Undoubtedly, all texts written by M. Argunov and M. Rodionov, and also the majority of the material of this newspaper presented a good example of propaganda. The idea to create the independent Republic of Latvia was not and obviously could not be dominant in the Russian society. The character of publications, as well as M.

Argunov and M. Rodionov's poetical works prove clearly that it is only an attempt or the way to create the general public mood of a specific kind with a simultaneous transfer of the propagandistic information.

On August 11, 1920, in Riga in the building of Ministry of Foreign Affairs the Latvian–Soviet Peace Treaty was signed and the Latvian and Russian border defined. The border factor of the new state strongly affected a usual lifestyle of the inhabitants of these territories. Best of all it was understood by people living in border zone who sometimes, especially in the 1920s got to the territory of another country. The brightest example is *chastushkas* recorded in Latgale by the teacher and folklorist Ivan Fridrihs. In these folklore texts the theme of border is one of the most important. The border activated an opposition *own – strange*: if earlier this opposition existed on social level (a stranger was an inhabitant of another village) then now it reached the state level.

All emigrants suffered much their motherland loss. They were the people who had left the soviet Russia and started their lives in emigration. Insurpassability of border strengthened homesickness, activated space of border zone, especially it was true with the places where actual facts of Russian pre-revolution culture and social life had survived. The border turns into a barrier that divides two different systems of values and concepts, and emphasizes it as an invincible line in space and time. The border symbolically demonstrates fragmentation of Russian culture, two kinds of parallel, not contacting with each other Russian worlds — Soviet Russia and Russian emigration. But all in all, it activates Latvian text in Russians' artistic consciousness.

In the 1920s–1930s Riga becomes a large centre of Russian emigration. In Riga a huge number of newspapers, magazines, periodicals are published, in addition the most well-known writers and poets of the Russian émigré cooperate with the largest of them. In Riga poetic collections and novels by authors who had decided to link their destiny with Riga and Latvia, such as Yuri Galich, Viktor Tretyakov, Nikolay Belotsvetov were published regularly enough. More often than not essays, stories, feuilletons, and playful sketches from urban life start to appear on the pages of Riga's periodicals. Latvia appears on the pages of publications of such authors as Ivan Bunin, Vladimir Nabokov, Pyotr Krasnov. Riga's present — it is the careless world of entertainment: world of theaters, cafes, world of play. World of townly entertainment — it is one of the favourite themes of Riga's essayists and writers of the 1920s that will be more deeply exposed in novels by Pavel Chunchin (Korol-Purashevich) *Diamonds in the Heel* (*Brillianty v kablukhe*) and *Riga's Bar-Lady* (*Rizhskaya bar-dama*). The true ambience of the city is rendered not by urban

planning, but the natural beginning. Riga's gardens, parks, boulevards become the true embodiment of the city, its *genius loci*.

The local provincial *topoi*, such as Kurland and Latgale, become the semantic opposition of the capital Riga. The contemporary Latvian-Courlander, for instance, as the protagonist of Andrey Zadonsky's story *Arvid Jaunarajs' Fortune* (*Schast'e Arvida Jaunarajsa*), is doomed to leave, flee from a patriarchal family in order to realize his own creative potential. He becomes a popular Riga poet, regular customer of saloons and literary evenings, he finds his love and is happily married, yet an attempt to reconcile with the family turns into a catastrophe at the end of the story. Jaunarajs' offered hand meets austere silence, while his younger brother Janis responds with a spit in the face.

The Latgalian text in the Russian emigrant literature in Latvia of the 1920s-1930s is a quite interesting phenomenon. On the one hand, the Latgalian Russian world is proclaimed to be one of the main values, on the other hand, the same world increasingly becomes an object of satirical representation. Irony and satire in evaluations attest particular changes in the awareness of the Russian émigrés.

## Conclusion

The "Latvia's text" of the Russian literature becomes, though not the main, yet a significant part of the Russian literary space texts that undoubtedly possesses its own peculiarities.

One of the peculiarities of the "Latvia's text" in the Russian literature is that the very notion 'Latvia' did not exist in the Russian consciousness for a long time, though the territory that was mostly inhabited by Latvians was included in the Russian Empire already in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. We can speak about full-fledged formation of the "Latvia's text" in the Russian literature starting from the moment when Latvia gained its national independence. Yet a particular perception of the Kurland and Livonia *topos* also existed in the Russian literature; thus Russian writers created a text that was a typological predecessor of the "Latvia's text." But one should take into account that this text was one part of the common "Baltic text" that mainly focused on the depiction of the German world of the Russian Empire's Western governorates.

Yet we can affirm that the "Latvia's text" began to form gradually and rather vigorously in the depths of the "Baltic text." It was favoured by various factors: 1) rather frequent visits of famous Russian writers to Riga and other cities; 2) rather active participation of Latvians in political events of the country and the Baltic

region (the revolutionary events of the 1905, World War I); 3) emergence of serious literary contacts between two cultures, as a result of which the “Collection of Latvian Literature” edited by V. Bryusov and M. Gorky was published (1916).

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, literature presents the first attempts to create a typological Latvian’s portrait. The literature of that time shows two types of Latvian characters. On the one hand, it is a Latvian-ploughman, but on the other hand — a Latvian-soldier (rifleman). A rather exact representation of the Latvian nation is generalized by Aleksandrs Dauge in the book *Latvians*, published in 1917 in Petrograd:

But Latvians are not just “God seekers” in the soul, they are also careful and reliable performers of all the small daily works and tasks. They even believe that proper doing of these small tasks and works, if only they are done in the spirit of the Almighty and in His honour, is a safer way to a person’s perfection than the most noble and laudable intentions, if they remain just intentions. (Dauge 29)

The existence period of the Republic of Latvia in the interwar period from 1918 till 1940 turned out to be both unusually productive and interesting, as well as exceptionally contradictory throughout the whole “Latvia’s text” in the Russian literature. Its structure was significantly influenced by the division of the Russian culture into two camps — Metropolis (Soviet Russia’s) culture and Foreign Russian culture (Russian emigrant culture).

Thus, two models of the “Latvia’s text” exist simultaneously during this period of time. One model consists of creative works by authors who live in the Soviet Russia (that is later represented by the Soviet literature); this model actively, though not long (early and mid 1920s) praises divisions of Latvian Riflemen for establishing and strengthening the October ideals. At the same time in the early 1920s a considerable number of texts appear that reflect atrocities of Latvian Riflemen and Red Latvian Commissars.

Also, the process of discreditation of the Latvian State takes place. A series of satirical and ironical works appear that ridicule the bourgeois values of the Republic of Latvia. The caricature character of a Latvian begins to form by combining many stereotypical traits of Latvian characters.

Another model of the “Latvia’s text” in the Russian literature of that period — it is the result of the creative efforts of those Russian emigrant writers whose destiny was related to Latvia. The formation of this model begins right after the

independence is proclaimed. The Russian periodicals in Latvia become the main field for the formation of the “Latvia’s text.”

This model implements Latvia as the second home, as an idea of a new Fatherland. The Latvia’s Russian emigrant literature created a significant number of poetic and prosaic texts. Quite many works are devoted to the implementation of the values and normative potential of the “Latvia’s text” by creating a particular Russian-Latvian mindset that anticipates representation of historically consistent value dominants that form the semantic core of the Latvia’s spatial mentality.

A particular place in the system of the “Latvia’s text” topoi is taken by Riga who becomes the conceptual core of the whole “Latvia’s text” in the Russian literature. The provincial, local topoi, such as Kurland and Latgale, become the semantic opposition of the capital Riga. In this relation we can note a significant peculiarity — provincial authors strive for idyllic, almost sacred representation of the provincial world of towns, villages, and homesteads; while Riga authors mainly highlight the provincial backwardness of Kurland and Latgale topoi. That is proven also by the character system of the most diverse texts. The collision between a Rigan and a provincial often turns out to be devastating for the latter.

When reading and analysing works by Latvia’s Russian writers and poets, we understand that they were mainly interested in the fact that the Latvia’s topos opened a new field for literary activity, it permitted to create other characters, helped to implement authors’ intentions in a completely new space. The inspiration that grew into a new philosophy, into comprehension of the previously incomprehensible, enriched the Russian literature with new realia that were attractive for both the reader and the literary reviewer, showed social life of the previously unexplored territory that people used to write about earlier without knowing the true state of affairs.

Thus, it is possible to substantiate the phenomenon of the “Latvia’s text” as a semantically unified system of characters that reflects the cultural peculiarities and uniqueness as represented by its values and norms, while preserving and objectivising traits of mental national and cultural existence.

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