

# LATVIAN WRITER AS A PUBLISHER OF HIS OWN WORKS: EDUARDS FREIMANIS' (1921–2005) CASE

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*Authors' editions in the Latvian book publishing appear in the first half of the 19th century. Self-publishing flourished particularly during the Republic of Latvia (1918–1940). Unfortunately, in the years of the Soviet occupation (1940–1941; 1944–1990) it was forbidden. The tradition could continue only in exile, chosen by many Latvians at the end of World War II. Authors' self-publishing activity in Latvia began anew after regaining national independence in 1990. So far, the topics related to authors' editions have not been systematically studied in Latvia. This research is aimed to evaluate the strategies for self-publishing and distribution of works by Eduards Freimanis. He was the first exile writer who published his own works in Latvia after the renewal of independence. The paper describes not only the most important challenges, but also the attitude of contemporaries, colleagues and relatives towards the activities of the writer.*

KEYWORDS: *book publishing in Latvia, Latvian exile literature, publishing in exile, self-publishing, authors' editions, book editors, small presses, book trade, Latvian literary criticism, Latvians in Canada.*

## INTRODUCTION

So far, the issue of authors as publishers of their own works in Latvian book publishing has been only partially researched, although the bibliographical information necessary for such research is sufficient (at least regarding certain stages of national publishing). Such a low interest of researchers can be explained by an entrenched viewpoint in the society that “only the writers, whose works are not accepted by any publishing house, would become self-publishers, e.g. the people whose intellectual endeavours are meaningful only for them”.<sup>1</sup> It should be noted

1 One of the latest publications: SADOVSKA, Kristīne. Pats rakstu, pats izdodu: autori par autorizdevumu plusiem un mīnusiem [Write myself,

publish myself: authors on self-publication pluses and minuses]. *Latvju Teksti* [Latvian Texts], 2010, no. 2, Winter, p. 28–29.

that authors' editions in the Latvian book publishing appear relatively late – in the first half of the 19th century when education is accessible to simple and poor people, with an increase in their material well-being and spiritual self-confidence, there is more possibility to finance publishing.<sup>2</sup>

The author's initiative can only flourish when people have reached a certain level of material well-being alongside the freedom of speech and political freedom. The large number of authors' editions in the Republic of Latvia (1918–1940) is sufficient proof of this fact. For instance, in 1936, more than 60 authors were registered as self-publishers with at least 90 editions, mostly branch literature (chiefly law and religion), and only a few fiction books – each year only a few dozen.<sup>3</sup> Most of them were novice publications that rarely earned literary critics' attention. During the soviet occupation period (1940–1941; 1944–1990), self-publishing was forbidden and book publishing was a state monopoly. The tradition of self-publishing could continue only in exile, where many Latvians went at the end of World War II to escape repressions by the soviet power. Every year, more than ten author's editions came out in Latvian emigration host countries, the majority of them in the USA.

Authors' self-publishing activity began anew after regaining of national independence in 1990. However, these works are not separately registered in national bibliography, the authors – self-publishers – are included in the category of “individual publishers”, and information on them has been available only since 1991. Taking into consideration the prevailing attitude in the society (and the long disruption in the tradition), the authors, especially writers, have long refrained from publishing their books on an individual basis. The statistics of 1991 does not show any self-publishing in the Latvian literature and in 1992 there was only one (Jānis Plotnieks (1932). “Pērkonu rātais” (Told Off by Thunder), 20 000 copies). With the change of attitude from the society, the number of self-publishers gradually grew, reaching half a hundred in 2014. The change of attitude was caused by several factors: active communication with emigration writers and self-publishers since the 1980s, and an increasing circulation of their works in the Latvian cultural environment; activities by several well-known local Latvian authors, e.g. Andris Kolbergs (1938), Andra Manfelde (1973), Pauls Bankovskis (1973); growing direct contacts with readers on the Internet (writers' profiles in social networks, blogs, etc.) where writers can publish their reflections and parts of their literary works without mediation of publishing houses.

In the USA, an author's self-publishing is treated not only as a manifestation of freedom of speech, but also as a precondition for cultural diversity and development: “The function and importance of the independent press, the self-publisher and the little magazine are a willingness to publish new authors whose works

commercial publishers refuse to bring out for a variety of reasons: their controversial subject matter, their unorthodox handling of material or, most often, their perceived lack of salability”.<sup>4</sup> It is emphasized that a range of significant authors’ editions have come out in the USA by self-publishing, e.g. the pamphlet “Common Sense” (1776) by the USA philosopher and politician Thomas Paine (1739–1809), several poetry books by the eminent poet Walt Whitman (1819–1892; by the way, he submitted reviews of his own works as well); the first novel “Maggie: A Girl of the Streets” (1893) by Stephen Crane (1871–1900) who died prematurely at an early age, the leftist Upton Sinclair’s (1878–1968) prose, including his first novel “Springtime and Harvest” (1901). Part of authors’ editions mark the avant-garde trend in literature and offer an alternative view of the political, social and culture processes. As an argument against the opinion that there are many valueless and insignificant works among self-publications would serve the fact that professional commercial publishing also contains a lot of trash fiction.

Eduards Freimanis is the first exile writer who dares self-publish his own works in independent Latvia. A bright personality in the Latvian culture, a prolific writer – author of more than fifty books, several hundred press publications, a poet and prose writer, author of plays, journalistic and philosophical essays, a translator of Latvian folksongs into English. Freimanis is a notable writer also because he has tried various ways of publishing books. Thus, he has tried to find publishers who would organize the whole cycle of publishing; he has also undertaken self-publishing, being the text editor, proof reader and author of the book design. Furthermore, he has concluded agreements with and paid to professional publishers to provide high quality printing and partially the sales as well. Thanks to his self-published works, he has become the most published author in exile since the 1980s. As a publisher, Freimanis has acted in the period of transition both in exile and in Latvia. However, despite his independence of publishing activity, the general book publishing processes have affected the quality of his printed works and sales opportunities.

2 The first Latvian author self-publisher, was the farmer Kristaps Kaktiņš (1801–1867). In 1835 he published a brochure “Ar schein pamahzischanas wardeem eedohd swehtas jaunās testamentes grahmatu savam mihlam krustdehlam”. Rīga: V. F. Heker, 1835. 15 p. Published repeatedly in 1842 and 1845. The book was not printed for sale, but as a gift together with the New Testament on baptism day. See also: APĪNIS, Aleksejs. Kristaps Kaktiņš latviešu grāmatniecības un sabiedriskās

domas vēsturē [Kristaps Kaktiņš in the history of Latvian book and public opinion]. V. Lāča Latvijas PSR Valsts bibliotēka. In *Raksti V = Proceedings*, Vol. 5. Rīga, 1974, p. 190–215.

3 *Valsts bibliotēkas biļetens*: Latvijas bibliogrāfijas žurnāls. Rīga, 1936, no. 1–27.

4 HENDERSON, Bill. Independent publishing: Today and Yesterday. *American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Sept. 1975, vol. 421, p. 95.

Freimanis has donated a rich stock of correspondence and manuscripts to two Latvian libraries (National Library of Latvia and Academic Library of the University of Latvia), to the Literature and Music Museum and the Latvian National Archives' Latvian State Archives. The goal of this research is to identify the main problems of the Latvian authors – publishers of their own works – by analyzing and evaluating Freimanis' activity. For this reason, the author of this study has applied a hermeneutic approach for the acquisition of Freimanis' literary and documentary heritage. Such an approach allows different text interpretation (understanding), considering the author's and the researcher's different life experiences, knowledge and situations. To evaluate Freimanis' publishing activity in comparison with other authors – self-publishers – the author has used the method of statistical analysis.

### INSIGHT INTO E. FREIMANIS BIOGRAPHY

Eduards Freimanis was born on 22nd March 1921, in Kurzeme Region, Kurmāle Parish, "Dūmicas", in a farmer's family. He attended Pelči Elementary School, then Kuldīga Vilis Plūdons' Gymnasium, from which he graduated in 1941, already in the time of Soviet occupation. The soviet power accused him of sabotaging elections and writing anti-soviet essays, and arrested him in January 1941. To escape deportation, Freimanis joined the All-Union Leninist Communist League of Youth and agreed to be a KGB informant.<sup>5</sup> In July 1941, at the beginning of Nazi occupation, he was forced to join the self-defence services (working as a warehouse keeper) to escape death penalty for joining the young communists. In later years he depicted his soviet and Nazi occupation time experience in his novels "Ticiba" (Heavy Furrow) (Nebraska: Vaidava, 1978) and "Visādais Jēpis" (All Sorts Jake) (Canada: self-publication, 1990)<sup>6</sup>, these works were later used by the Latvian historians Andrievs Ezerģailis and Aigars Urtāns for the research of holocaust.<sup>7</sup>

As soon as it became possible, Freimanis went to Riga to implement his dream of studying philology. Unfortunately, during the Nazi occupation new students were not enrolled for studying humanities at the University (now University of Latvia). For some time Freimanis worked for the police, then returned to Kuldīga. In March 1942, Freimanis was sent to work in Germany where he stayed after the Second World War. In 1946–1948 (five semesters), Freimanis studied at the Baltic University, Faculty of Philology, in Pinneberg. In 1948, he emigrated to Canada and already in autumn, alongside heavy physical activity at work, he continued his education at Alberta University in Edmonton (the university willingly recognized the courses acquired in the Baltic University) and in 1951 graduated with a bachelor's degree in pedagogy. Freimanis started his teaching career as a teacher

of English, at first in Alberta Province schools (his first job was in a small fishing village school at Canyon Creek), then in an Edmonton secondary school. In August 1950, he married Biruta Tumševica (born in Liepāja 1927), they had three sons and a daughter. Parallel to teacher's work, Freimanis went in for real estate business; this went on for forty years.<sup>8</sup> Having worked as a teacher for 18 years, he quit and took up less responsible jobs to have more time for writer's work. He retired at the age of 65. Freimanis was a socially active writer: immediately upon arrival in Edmonton, he involved himself in publishing of the first Latvian newspaper in Canada "Brīvais Latvietis" (The Free Latvian) (1948-1949).<sup>9</sup> He was one of the journalists' team for the monthly magazine of Canadian Association of Latvian Youth "Ceļinieks" (Traveller), one of the editors of the magazine "Treji Vārti" (Three Gates), he actively participated in the Latvian Press Society of Canada. He was a member in several organizations: the Latvian Writers' Association in Exile, Society of Philologists "Ramave", and Latvian Writers' Union. He died on 27 January 2005 in Edmonton.

## SELF-PUBLISHING ACTIVITIES IN EXILE

Freimanis started his self-publishing activity in 1986, at the age of 65. Almost forty years had passed since his first publication in *Kuldīga* newspaper "Jaunais Kurzemnieks" (Young Courlander)<sup>10</sup>, nine books had been published in exile (the first book of poems "Zemdegas" in 1958 was printed by Alfrēds Kalnājs'

5 Letter to Latvian literary critic and librarian Skaidrīte Rubene (1927) on 9 November 1997. In FREIMANIS, Eduards. *Sarunas aploksnēs: vēstules* [Dialogues in Letters]. Itaka, 2000, p. 144.

6 English publication: FREIMANIS, Eduards. *All Sorts Jake*. Transl. from the Latvian by Robert Fearnley. Ithaca, 2002. 347 p.

7 EZERGAILIS, Andrievs. *The holocaust in Latvia 1941–1944*. Riga; Washington, DC, 1996. xxi, 465 p. URTĀNS, Aigars. Ebreju tautības civiliedzīvotāju slepkavošana Kuldīgas apriņķī=Assassination of Jewish Civilians in Kuldīga District. In *Holokausts Latvijā: starptautiskās konferences materiāli*, 2004. gada 3.–4. jūnijs, Rīga, un 2004.–2005. gada pētījumi par holokaustu Latvijā = Holocaust in Latvia: materials of an International Conference 3–4 June 2004, Riga and the Holocaust Studies in Latvia in 2004–2005. Rīga, 2006. p. 118–137.

8 Letter to Arvids Celmiņš on 10 August 1995. National Archives of Latvia, State Archives of Latvia (LNA, LVA), Collection (Col.) 1882, Inventory (Inv.) 1, File (F.) 54, p. 55.

9 In his first study years E. Freimanis rented a room in the newspaper's "Brīvais Latvietis" publisher, "old Latvian" Konrāds Dobelis' (1899–1984) house. Here he met the first editor of the newspaper, literary figure and journalist Aleksandrs Kundrats (1915–1993). See: In *Paradokss un relativisms: esejas* [From: Paradox and Relativism: Essays]. Kuldīga, 2005, p. 344. See also: Letter to Skaidrīte Rubene on 25 March 1993. LNA, LVA, Col. 1882, Inv. 1, F. 77, p. 35.

10 Vilnis, Eduards. Dziesma Dzimtenei (Song to Motherland). *Jaunais Kurzemnieks*, 1938, no. 27, p. 7.

publishing house in Chicago), however, dozens of unpublished manuscripts were still piled in the desk drawers. Some of Freimanis' prose works and essays (the journalistic essay "Ideāli un īstenība"<sup>11</sup> (Ideals and Reality), novels "Divas pasaules"<sup>12</sup> (Two Worlds), "Diletants"<sup>13</sup> (Dilettante) and the short story "Atvadišanās"<sup>14</sup> (Farewell)) were printed as continued publications in series which testified to the high evaluation in the readers' community.

Literary critics and writers express their high recognition of Freimanis' works, e.g. Gundars Pļavkalns (1931) considers his first prose book "Daigās rotaļas" (Gloomy games) (Chicago: Alfrēds Kalnājs, 1961) as outstanding and foresees that: "With time Freimanis will be one of our most prominent fiction prose writers"<sup>15</sup> The next prose books also receive laudatory reviews, e.g. novels "Apsēstie"<sup>16</sup> (The Obsessed) (Chicago: Alfrēds Kalnājs, 1968) and "Divas pasaules" (Toronto: Amber Printers, 1977), which the writer Anšlavs Eglītis (1906–1993) praises as "a valuable contribution to our prose"<sup>17</sup>.

However, in 1998, when he was over 70, Freimanis became sceptical about the initial stage of his creative work: "I was writing very 'correctly' back then, I had not noticed many things and had not reflected upon them".<sup>18</sup> Gradually he became dissatisfied with "the hundred years old positive realism which sometimes rambled into sentimental and banal nationalism."<sup>19</sup>

Despite the previous recognition, there is little prospect for Freimanis of any further publishing of a book in the later years. The younger generation of Latvian exile is assimilated in the host countries, the older generation is gradually passing away, thereof demand for the Latvian books decreases. The number of publishers and new publishing are shrinking. In the 1970s, there were 375 publishers in exile, in the 1980s – 343 publishers. The number of books had substantially reduced in certain fiction genres. For instance, 235 novels were published in the 1960s<sup>20</sup>, only 87 books in the 1980s<sup>21</sup>. In correspondence with his friends, Freimanis admitted that book publishers refused cooperation with him because his books remained unsold on the bookshop shelves.<sup>22</sup> In the 1970s, Freimanis' first publisher Alfrēds Kalnājs-Krembergs (1904–1999) narrowed his activity. In 1986, Arturs Augstums (1920–1986), the owner of the publishing house "Vaidava", who published Freimanis' books in the 1970s and 1980s, died of heart attack. From the writer's letters one can assume that the author himself financed the publishing<sup>23</sup>, yet it is not known to what extent.

Freimanis' novel "Draudzības pils" (Friendship Palace) (Edmonton, 1986) is his first self-publication. Evaluating the novel, the literary critic Gunars Irbe (1924–2004) highly praises the distinction of Freimanis' works from other Latvian exile novels "written in the shadow of the 'positive hero', most of which have a 'happy end' – as if there is an automatic necessity for it in the composition.

<...> In Freimanis' latest works his hero fights with shadows pursuing him and cannot get rid of them, the shadows are cast by the surroundings or managing authorities with the help of their officials and yes-men"<sup>24</sup>. Irbe maintains that in the future literary critics (he indirectly indicates splitting and biased attitudes in book appraisers' community) will not be able to ignore Freimanis' prose. However, he justifiably points out that "<...> like all Freimanis' works, this one also lacks stricter editorial attitude – spontaneity of the author himself does not cope with the professional 'craft side' of novel writing. This is a serious drawback in several of Freimanis novels."<sup>25</sup> Unfortunately, the author did not respect the criticism. By 1990, he had published seven prose books, including translations of two novels into English: "The Devil's Priest"<sup>26</sup> (*Piedzīvojums padomijā*) and "Friendship Palace"<sup>27</sup>. The translator of the novels was Robert Fearnley, a Latvian culture expert who lived in Britain and who had translated other exile authors' works into English, e.g. Andrejs Eglītis (1912–2006) and Zinaida Lazda's (1902–1957) works. In his letter to the writer Aina Zemdega (1924) Freimanis admits: "[Fearnley's] free interpretation in some places is disputable", yet he characterizes the translator as a "reasonable, altruistic, unbiased, and not capricious"<sup>28</sup>, he has even refused half of the royalty for the translation.

11 Latvija Amerikā (Latvia in America), from 1964, no. 95 till 1965, no. 1.

12 Latvija Amerikā, from 1973, no. 38 till 1975, no. 17.

13 *Laiks*, 1984, no. 15-88.

14 *Latvija*, 1982, no. 23-29.

15 PĻAVKALNS, Gundars. Talantīgs prozas rakstnieks: [Talented prose writer]. *Austrālijas Latvietis* [Australian Latvian], 1965, no. 771, p. 10–11.

16 APSE, Arnolds. Ar drosmi rakstīts romāns [A Novel Written with Courage]. *Treji Vārti* [Three Gates], no. 17, 1969, p. 61–62.

17 EGLĪTIS, Anšlavs. Eduarda Freimaņa romāns "Divas pasaules", 332 lpp. Amber Printers Kanadā, p. 332. *Daugavas Vanagu Mēnešraksts* [Daugavas Vanagi Monthly], 1977, no. 5, p. 49–51.

18 Letter to Māris Brancis on 13 January 1998. In FREIMANIS, Eduards. *Sarunas aploksnēs*. Itaka, 2000, p. 56.

19 Letter to Skaidrīte Rubene on 6 March 1993. LNA, LVA, Col. 1882, Inv. 1, F. 77, p. 33.

20 DUNSDORFA, Lilija. Latviešu trimdas grāmatniecība 1960–1969 [Latvian book publishing in

exile 1960–1969]. In *Archīvs. Raksti par latviskām problēmām* [Archive. Articles on Latvian problems]. 1970, vol. 10, p. 241.

21 DUNSDORFA, Lilija. Latviešu trimdas grāmatniecība 1980–1989. In *Archīvs. Raksti par latviskām problēmām*, 1990, vol. 30, p. 77.

22 Letter to Anšlavs Eglītis on 5 June 1990. LNA, LVA, Col. 1882, Inv. 1, F. 54, p. 105.

23 Ibid.

24 IRBE, Gunars. Negatīvā varoņa ēnā [In the Shade of the Negative Hero]. *Brīvā Latvija: Apvienotā "Londonas Avīze" and "Latvija"*, 1986, no. 8, p. 2.

25 Ibid.

26 FREIMANIS, Eduards. *The Devil's Priest*. Transl. from the Latvian by Robert Fearnley; [ill. by T. Dean]. [Canada], 1988. 280 p.

27 FREIMANIS, Eduards. *Friendship Palace*. Transl. from the Latvian [and introd.] by Robert Fearnley. [Canada], 1989. 248 p.

28 Letter to Aina Zemdega on 8 February 1990. LNA, LVA, Col. 1882, Inv. 1, F. 64, p. 6–7.

A professional editor has edited only one of his self-published books in Canada. The writer and graduate librarian Magdalēna Rozentāle (1915–2009) was a proof reader for the selection of short stories “Likteņi” (Destinies) in 1989. As the literary quality of the included works is not homogeneous, the critic Mārtiņš Lasmanis (1930) is doubtful “whether she is responsible for selection of the chosen works; anyway, the criteria should have been stricter.”<sup>29</sup> Despite Lasmanis’ critical views, the book may be considered as one of the most outstanding selections of Freimanis’ works. It sparkles with the author’s wit and rich language, the expression is clear and concise, the message is targeted, the turns of the plot are unexpected and interesting. The author’s attitude towards his heroes is light and good-natured (unlike his other works, where the author is ironic, even scornful to his heroes). The author himself was not quite satisfied with Rozentāle’s selection, as she had chosen the “correct” stories. The other works – “more existential and bloodier” – were included in another collection of stories “Ļaudis, ko nepiemin” (People Who Are Not Remembered) (Canada, 1992).<sup>30</sup>

The visual look of the author’s self-published books was uniform and austere: a glued block without a flyleaf, a thin cardboard cover with a simple, sometimes childish drawing, dense text typesetting. Only the first book deserves more attention, on its cover we see a drawing by Anšlavs Eglītis, an outstanding writer, a responsive and intelligent pen friend of Freimanis. The drawing was used without the author’s permission, though.<sup>31</sup> Unfortunately, Freimanis did not take the buyers’ taste in books into account. Plain-looking book covers could raise readers’ interest only in the early stages of exile when both publishers and the readers’ incomes were low, but the wish to read books in their mother tongue – big, while in the 1980s, when the Latvians had become prosperous in their host countries and learned their languages, the Latvian books had to compete not only for the content but also for the aesthetical quality.

## HOPES AND DISAPPOINTMENTS IN INDEPENDENT LATVIA

In 1989–1990, after the iron curtain had fallen, Freimanis visited Latvia (after forty years of exile). He made contacts with the Latvian writers, organized publishing of his books, and gave lectures both in Riga and in the province. Freimanis returned to Canada very enthusiastic: he had made many friends, received an invitation to join the Latvian Writers’ Union, fiction publishing house “Liesma” was preparing his novel “Draudzības pils” for printing, ‘literature gurus’ valued it as the most exhaustive reflection of the political and cultural life in exile,

consequently, it should be the first emigration Latvian novel.<sup>32</sup> The publishing house “Artava” promised to publish six books.<sup>33</sup> As “Artava” was a new publishing house without its own material basis, Freimanis supplied it with a new computer and a printer<sup>34</sup>. Freimanis’ first book in Latvia was self-published in 1990, it comprised two short novels – “Mantojums” (Heritage) (1982) and “Cildenis” (The Noble) (1988). Contrary to the other Freimanis’ self-published books, several editors and a proofreader were involved in the preparation for printing. The book was published in solid print run – 10 000 copies. The publishing house “Artava” put out the novel “Dieva joks” (*God’s Joke*) in the series “*Latviešu trimdas rakstnieku darbi*” (Latvian Exile Writers’ Works) (first edition in Canada, Edmonton, 1988). Even though the book had a plain cover, it had a large print run – 15 000 copies. However, the success was followed by disappointment: at first, the exile culture magazine “Jaunā Gaita” published sharp criticism of the novel “Dieva joks”.<sup>35</sup> It was also ruthlessly criticized in Latvia. Antra Torgāne “God has really played a bad joke, though, not on the main hero Ārgailis, but on the author of the novel, by inspiring him with the necessity to write such a piece, therefore the more incomprehensible seems “Artava” publishers’ choice to publish such a primitive and moralizing material when they have a huge range of works from emigration authors to choose from.”<sup>36</sup> Magazine “Karogs” (Flag) published a scathing review of two more Freimanis’ self-published novels “Visādais Jēpis” and “Zvaigžņu gaisma” (Star Light) (Canada, 1991). The author of the review was the Head of Literary Criticism Department Guntis Berelis (1961)<sup>37</sup>. Presumably, these reviews questioning the author’s literary skills and the fast introduction of market economy in the Latvian publishing business was the reason why Freimanis broke up his relationship with both publishers (“Liesma” and “Artava”) as they preferred works with

29 LASMANIS, Mārtiņš. Stāsti par apsēstiem (Stories about the Obsessed). *Jaunā Gaita*, May 1991, no. 182. Available at: [http://www.zagarins.net/jg/jg182/JG182\\_gramatas\\_Lasmanis.htm](http://www.zagarins.net/jg/jg182/JG182_gramatas_Lasmanis.htm)

30 Letter to Māris Brancis on 20 September 1996. In FREIMANIS, Eduards. *Sarunas aploksnēs*. Itaka, 2000, p. 32.

31 Letter to Anšlavs Eglītis on 9 September 1986. LNA, LVA, Col. 1882, Inv. 1, F. 54, p. 94–95.

32 Letter to the Latvian librarian Gunta Dubrovskā on 25 June 1991. LNA, LVA, Col. 1882, Inv. 1, F. 54, p. 80.

33 Letter to Māris Brancis on 6 July 1996. In FREIMANIS, Eduards. *Sarunas aploksnēs*. Itaka,

2000, p. 27.

34 Freimanis indicates – 5000 dollars worth. Letter to Skaidrīte Rubene on 6 March 1993. LNA, LVA, Col. 1882, Inv. 1, F. 77, p. 33.

35 SŪRMANE, Biruta. Liela brēka, maza vilna jeb rakstīšanas sērga [Much Ado about Nothing or Writing Epidemic]. *Jaunā Gaita*, March 1991, no. 181. Access through Internet: <[http://jaunagaita.net/jg181/JG181\\_gramatas\\_Surmane.htm](http://jaunagaita.net/jg181/JG181_gramatas_Surmane.htm)>.

36 TORGĀNE, Antra. Grāmatas [Books]. *Karogs*, October 1990, no. 3–4, p. 269.

37 BERELIS, Guntis. Jaunas grāmatas [New books]. *Karogs*, September 1991, no. 9–10, p. 257.

profit potential. “Liesma” refused to publish the novel “Draudzības pils” under the pretext of lack of paper, although the royalty to Freimanis had already been paid and the typesetting was ready<sup>38</sup>. “Artava” kept silent until 1993 when it published one more novel by Freimanis “Kļūda” (Mistake) with a print run of 3000 copies. Freimanis blamed Berelis’ “yes-men” who administered the magazine “Karogs”: “It is the culture people who are indignant that the Latvian prose is sleepy and stagnant. Unfortunately, the faultfinders, products of the soviet education system, are not able to evaluate any modern research in literary directions (existentialism, problematism), character formation (metamorphosis, anti-heroes, psychological conflicts) in interaction of environment and individuals. Being critical, they think only within the frame of the positive and social realism,” he wrote to the writer and editor Maiga Valentina Aserīte (1920–2008) on 1 March 1991.<sup>39</sup>

This is the reason why in 1991–1992 Freimanis returned to self-publishing of his works in Canada. In addition to the previously mentioned novel “Zvaigžņu gaisma” (1991), he published two other prose books: “Liepu rinda” (A Line of Linden Trees) (1991) and “Ļaudis, ko nepiemin” (1992).

## BOOK PUBLISHERS IN LATVIA AND USA

Luckily, Freimanis soon found a new cooperation partner in Latvia. A retired journalist Arvīds Voldemārs Celmiņš (1931) became the publisher of his books and editor of jointly published Kuldīga weekly “Ziņas” (News) (1991–1996). In his “A.C. grāmatu apgāds Kuldīgā”, nine Freimanis’ books were published from 1993 until 2004, almost all of them financed by the author himself. Celmiņš took the responsibility of visual presentation, typesetting, printing and selling. The publisher’s product was typical of book production in the early 1990s: stitched or glued paperbacks, low quality paper, dense typesetting inconvenient for reading, inconsistently structured information and countless typographical errors. This meant that Celmiņš publishing house economized on designer, literary editor and proofreaders’ account. The books practically did not differ from Freimanis’ plain-looking self-editions. The correspondence of the author proves that despite the regular advertisements in the newspaper “Ziņas”, it was difficult to sell the books: in some cases, they managed to sell only a few dozen, the others were disseminated by donations. In 2004, the publishing house donated Kuldīga County libraries 260 books, including Freimanis’ works.<sup>40</sup>

Cooperation with the neurobiologist Maija Veinberga Hinkle’s (1937) publishing house “Mežābele” (established in 1987, in Ithaca, USA)<sup>41</sup> continued from 1993 until 2002. Eight books by Freimanis’ came out, all with the author’s own financing.

Freimanis' works formed 25% of the producer's production because 32 books were published altogether by 2006. They had simple graphic design made by Hinkle herself, however, the text was clearly structured, without typographic errors, printed on good paper. There was no indication of an editor, though, but two books mentioned a proof reader (it was a Latvian resident of the USA, teacher Inese Leimane). The first book printed by the publishing house was a novel by Freimanis "Kultūras rija" (In Culture's Granary) (1993), which was previously printed in the newspaper "Laiks" (Time) under the title "Diletants". Like several other writers' works, the novel received diametrically opposite appraisals: the exile press found it intriguing: "it gives an insight into the collective exile pathology"<sup>42</sup>, while the Latvian magazine "Karogs" harshly criticized it for its heavy, unfamiliar, hardly understandable language.<sup>43</sup> However, the author did not lose courage and continued financing his books. "I like cooperation with Dr. Hinkle: her bills are clearly understandable; I know where I stand, and what I have to pay. No guessing, no fumbling in the dark," concluded Freimanis in his letter to Celmiņš on 10 August 1995.<sup>44</sup>

In 1995, he started cooperation with the publishing house "Solvita" (founded in 1992 in Riga) specializing in original poetry and fiction. The first published books were two collections of historical plays ("Pagātnes atbalsis" (Echoes of the Past) (1996) and "Ziemciešu rīts" (Morning of Perennials) (1997)), intended for distribution to schools. They were followed by several books of poetry, selected essays and letters, and the repeated edition of the outstanding novel "Divas pasaules" (1997). The cooperation lasted until 2004, ending with a poetry collection in English "My Folk" and the novel "Redzēju Ameriku" (I Saw America). The books were financed by the author, however, contrary to Celmiņš and Freimanis' own self-editions, these books had meticulous editing, they had well considered and neat graphic design (several books were bound in hardcover, the poetry collection "Pasaules novadā"<sup>45</sup> [In the World Region] contained colour photos of Freimanis and his family members). Almost all the books (except the last two publications) were edited by the remarkable Latvian poet, literary critic Imants Auziņš (1937–

38 JUGĀNE, Vija. Spriguļa cilātājs kultūras rijā [Flail Thresher in Culture Granary]. *Karogs*, November 1994, no. 11, p. 194.

39 LNA, LVA, Col. 1882, Inv. 1, F. 54, p. 20.

40 Dāvina grāmatas [Donation of books]. *Kurzemnieks*, 2004, no. 109, p. 3.

41 Zommers, Juris. Atzinība Mutvārdu vēstures projekta vadītājam [Recognition to Oral History Project Manager]. *Latvija Amerikā*, 2005, no. 16, p. 14.

42 [EZERGAILE, Inta]. Romāns ar ironiju [The novel with irony]. *Laiks*, 1994, no. 65, p. 5. As author referred: I, E.

43 JUGĀNE, Vija. Spriguļa cilātājs kultūras rijā. *Karogs*, November 1994, no. 11, p. 194–196.

44 LNA, LVA, Col. 1882, Inv. 1, F. 54, p. 55.

45 FREIMANIS, Eduards. *Pasaules novadā* [In the World Region]. Rīga, 1998, p. 170.

2013), who had several years' experience in editorial work in the publishing house "Liesma". However, no matter how carefully edited, the books did not always have complimentary reviews. For instance, a literary scholar living in USA Juris Silenieks (1925), analyzing "Pasaules novadā" indicated: " <...> a metaphor and all the numerous ways of expression that poetry is based upon, appear very little in Freimanis' poems, quite often it plunges into clichés and banality, deep emotion becomes a gesture, the idea becomes simple-minded when it is clothed in prosaic "life is life".<sup>46</sup> Whereas the editor of the magazine "Treji Vārti" (Tree Gates) Julieta Rumberga (1926) praised Freimanis' poetry for its patriotism, lucidity, the writer's joy of life and faith for the future of Latvia.<sup>47</sup>

## DISTRIBUTION OF BOOKS

In accordance with the general trend in the Latvian publishing business, the print run of Freimanis' book editions rapidly decreased (in 1990 it ranged from 10 000 to 15 000 copies, whereas in 1993 it fell to only 3000 copies). The last books were printed in 200 copies only. No detailed information is available on the print runs of books published in the USA and Canada with the exception of the novel "Friendship Palace", which was printed in 500 copies. It has to be stated that according to the general practice the print run usually did not exceed several hundred copies. However, even this small number created difficulty in sales. Being an experienced tradesman in real estate business, Freimanis combined various sales methods. Part of the books was sold in bookshops and book stalls during social events. Freimanis also sent his books by post to his friends and acquaintances. If the receiver kept the book, she/he paid for it (the average price in 1980s and 1990s was 14 US dollars); otherwise, the book was sent back. These mailings caused disagreement with many people as a large part of them ignored Freimanis or answered with reproach. "Dozens of our professors, priests, writers and public figures demonstrate their scorn on me for my efforts to keep literature alive in exile <...> Sometimes they lecture me," the writer complained in his letter to Aserīte on 10 July 1989<sup>48</sup> and concluded: "I have lost almost all my friends with self-publishing and the American way of selling..."<sup>49</sup> The number of book recipients was falling, for instance, selection of stories "Likteņi" was offered only to 49 potential buyers, the rest part was simply given away for free.<sup>50</sup>

The Latvian libraries have received the largest part of his donations. For example, in 1995, the Latvian National Library (LNB) received 400 copies of the novel "Ticība" translation into English under the title "Heavy Furrow", intended for distribution to libraries<sup>51</sup>. LNB owns almost a complete set of Freimanis' books,

received as a present from the author. The Academic Library of the Latvian University, Misiņš Library, systematically received new publications. The writer wished to donate books to exile libraries as well, like the Latvian Study Centre in Kalamazoo, however, he was refused.<sup>52</sup> Edmonton public library, museum and archives did not accept translations of Freimanis' works in English either. Freimanis explained the refusal by a sort of censure<sup>53</sup>. However, in reality it was based on the pragmatic principles of acquisition, meaning that priority was given to books that the readers were interested in.

The question remains unanswered: how large is the audience of Freimanis and other exile authors in their host countries and in Latvia today?

One should not ignore the author's – self-publisher's – complicated material situation and his communication problems. Even though almost all his life Freimanis traded real estate, thus having additional income to his salary and retirement pension, he had to lead an ascetic way of life to set aside some money for book publishing and selling. On 24 July 1996, he wrote in his letter to Māris Brancis, an expert of the Latvian State Archives: "We live like misers. We sold our cars long time ago. We buy only discount food. We choose clothes from the stock that is sent to Latvia. Biruta sometimes goes to the cinema when tickets are for reduced price. We have excluded many things from our lives: drinks, restaurants, sports, theatre performances, travels. From time to time we buy a book."<sup>54</sup> According to his own calculations, by 1994, Freimanis had invested 75 000 US and Canadian dollars in book publishing.<sup>55</sup>

In his correspondence with pen friends in the period from 1990s to the beginning of the 21st century Freimanis often complained about loneliness. He was disappointed in the Latvian literary and cooperation partners, so he did not want to visit Latvia any more.<sup>56</sup> The writer had a reason to believe that the cause of his

46 SILENIEKS, Juris. Rakstīt vai nebūt [To Write Or Not To Be]. *Laiks*, 43, 1999, no. 43, p. 4.

47 RUMBERGA, Julieta. Zeme un debesis, miestība un uzticība [Earth and Sky, Love and Faith]. *Treji Vārti*, January 2000, no. 193, p. 55–57.

48 Letter to Maiga Aserīte on 10 July 1989. LNA, LVA, Col. 1882, Inv. 1, F. 54, p. 8.

49 Letter to Anšlavs Eglītis on 5 June 1990. LNA, LVA, Col. 1882, Inv. 1, F. 54, p.105.

50 Letter to Maiga Aserīte on 23 August 1989. LNA, LVA, Col. 1882, Inv. 1, F. 54, p.11.

51 FREIMANIS, Eduards. *The Heavy Furrow*. Transl. from the Latvian by Robert Fearnley. [Canada], 1995. 154 p.

52 Letter to Maiga Aserīte on 1 December 1991. LNA, LVA, Col. 1882, Inv. 1, F. 54, p.18.

53 FREIMANIS, Eduards. Edmontona. In *Paradokss un relativisms: esejas*. Kuldīga, 2005, p. 337.

54 FREIMANIS, Eduards. *Sarunas aploksnēs: vēstules*. Itaka, 2000, p. 29–30.

55 Letter to Skaidrīte Rubene on 19 August 1994. LNA, LVA, Col. 1882, Inv. 1, F. 77, p. 52.

56 Letter to Latvian literary historian Līvija Volkova (1931) on 14 February 2001. LNA, LVA, Col. 1882, Inv. 1, F. 87, p. 31. However, Freimanis together with his family did visit Latvia one more time, but more detailed information is missing.

loneliness was his prose where he openly and ruthlessly reflected the exile problems, boldly displayed the contradictory pages of the history of Latvia, showed recognizable public figures in a grotesque way and introduced many neologisms. The communication with his compatriots was also shaken by the persistent selling of his books. Freimanis' correspondence leads us to the conclusion that his intolerance of other people, often without any grounds, and a drastic change of attitude was probably caused by the writer's nervous ailment – depression (he openly mentioned it in his letters).<sup>57</sup>

### Conclusions

Book publishing as a culture industry cannot operate without subsidies. Quite often, a pre-requisite for obtaining them is obeying certain cultural, political and stylistic canons, which may hinder searching new ways in literature, art and science. In emigration situation, it is difficult to find a publisher due to the narrow range of buyers and readers. In this situation, an author's self-published book is often the only chance of presenting oneself in literature or any other sector.

Evaluating Freimanis' books, one should conclude that the quality editions have been in cooperation with professional publishers in the second half of the 1990s and beginning of the 21st century. They prove that regardless of the source of financing and the type of publication, the publishing phases that determine the quality of the contents and design (evaluating and selection, editing and perfection, design, printing control and proofreading) are mandatory.

Unfortunately, Freimanis did not pay decent attention to either of these processes, publishing most of his books without involving professional editors. Only a few exile editions, the only author's self-publication in Latvia and the books by publishing houses "Solvita" un "Artava" have been edited. This shows that Freimanis was not against the edition of his works on principle, he was just saving on it. In the 1990s, Freimanis could even afford experienced editors in Latvia, as many of them were unemployed: with shrinking state support, the publishing businesses were forced to economize to survive. The publishing houses established in the soviet time had been overstaffed, and now they dismissed people regardless of their qualification.

To publish all the books or only the best ones is the author's own dilemma. Freimanis' endeavours to publish everything he had written, have led to failure of understanding between him and the exile and Latvian literary critics, and a wish to disassociate from the author (many of Freimanis' books have never been reviewed). It has provoked negative attitude to all his creative work. The literary critic

Mārtiņš Lasmanis admitted in 1991: “Eduards Freimanis has not been honoured with awards and recognition. Maybe we have lacked patience to notice things in his flood of works that have enduring value.”<sup>58</sup> However, there is still hope that Freimanis’ achievements “sooner or later will see the daylight.”<sup>59</sup>

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### Santrauka

Nors Latvijos kultūroje jau nuo XIX amžiaus paplito paties autoriaus leidžiamie kūriniai, autoriai kaip savo kūrinų leidėjai nebuvo sistemiskai nagrinėjami dėl įsigalėjusio požiūrio, kad didžioji dalis pačių rašytojų išleistų kūrinų – tik antraeilė literatūra. Autoriui suteikiama galimybė pačiam išleisti savo kūrinius – gera alternatyva tuomet, kai neįmanoma rasti kito leidėjo. Knygos istorijoje esama pavyzdžių, rodančių, kad tokiu būdu išleidžiama avangardinių kūrinų, pateikiančių naujovišką požiūrį į politinius, socialinius, kultūrinius ir mokslinius procesus.

Šio straipsnio tikslas – nagrinėjant ir įvertinant išėivijoje gyvenusio ir kūrusio latvių rašytojo Eduardo Freimano kūrybą, atskleisti pagrindinius iššūkius, su kuriais susidūrė savo kūrinius leidę latvių rašytojai, išsiaiškinti šių iššūkių priežastis ir rasti sprendimus.

Freimanas ėmėsi savilaidos veiklos Kanadoje 1986 m., sulaukęs 65 metų amžiaus ir suvokęs, kad jo galimybės išleisti kitą savo kūrinį vis menkės. Tuo metu išėivijoje gyvenanti jaunoji latvių karta jau asimiliavosi, o senosios kartos atstovų gretos vis retėjo, todėl latviškų knygų poreikis vis mažėjo. Leidėjų ir naujų leidinių skaičius taip pat mažėjo. 1986–1990 metais Freimanas Kanadoje išleido septynias prozos knygas ir tapo vienu produktyviausių išėivijoje gyvenančių 9-ojo dešimtmečio rašytojų. Jis buvo ir pirmas rašytojas, išdrįšęs leisti savo kūrinius Latvijoje iškart po Nepriklausomybės paskelbimo 1990 metais. Freimanas užmezgė ryšį su dviem profesionaliomis Latvijos leidyklomis („Liesma“ ir „Artava“), kurios pažadėjo išleisti daugelį jo prozos kūrinų. Deja, dienos šviesą išvydo tik dvi jo knygos. Latvijos leidybos pramonės situacija greitai keitėsi – ir dėl rinkos ekonomikos dėsnių, ir dėl aštrios Freimano kūrybos kritikos, išsakiusios abejonių dėl rašytojo literatūrinių gebėjimų, ryšiai su leidyklomis, pasirinkusiomis potencialų pelną žadančius kūrinius, nutrūko.

Nusivylęs Latvijos leidėjais ir literatūros kritikais, 1991–1992 m. Freimanas vėl ėmėsi savilaidos Kanadoje, ieškodamas bendradarbiavimo partnerių. Laimei, jis greitai juos surado ne tik Latvijoje (leidykla „Arvīda Celmiņa“ Kuldygoje ir „Solvita“ Rygoje), bet ir JAV (leidykla „Mežābele“ Itakoje). Nuo 1993 iki 2005 m. šios leidyklos išleido 28 Freimano kūrinius. Visos leidybos išlaidos teko pačiam rašytojui. Deja, leidinių kokybė ne visada buvo tinkama. Pavyzdžiui, leidykla „Solvita“ užtikrino kruopštų redagavimą, korektūrą ir patrauklų knygų dizainą, o leidyklos „Arvīda Celmiņa“ (su keliomis išimtimis) išleisti kūriniai buvo niekuo neišsiskiriančios išvaizdos, jų dizainas primityvus. Šios knygos sulaukė visiškai priešingų literatūros kritikų vertinimų. Recenzijose išsakytus kaltinimus grafomanija keitė pagyros už novatorišką požiūrį į išėivijoje gyvenančių latvių problemų refleksijas.

Nors Freimano leidžiamų kūrinų tiražai vis mažėjo ir paskutiniaisiais metais siekė tik kelis šimtus egzempliorių (1990 m. – 10 000–15 000 egz., 2004 m. – 200 egz. Latvijoje išleistų kūrinų), rašytojas susidūrė su sunkumais parduodamas knygas. Nelaimėi, įkyri knygų pardavimo strategija (pavyz-

džiui, savo išleistų knygų siuntimas draugams ir pažįstamiems be išankstinio susitarimo) nutolino išėvijoje gyvenančius latvius nuo rašytojo. Didžiąją dalį savo knygų Freimanis padovanojo Latvijos bibliotekoms.

Atlikus rašytojo veiklos tyrimą, nustatyta, kad autorius – ir kaip savo kūrinių leidėjas, ir kaip rėmėjas – turėjo atremti kelis iššūkius: 1) įveikti bendro pobūdžio stereotipus (palaipsniui nykstančius), kad didžioji dalis pačių rašytojų išleistų kūrinių – tik antraeilė literatūra; 2) būti pasirengusiam daug investuoti į leidybą, rinkodarą ir prekybą (paties rašytojo skaičiavimais, iki 1994 m. jis į šią veiklą investavo 75 000 JAV ir Kanados dolerių), nesitikėdamas, kad investicijos atsipirks parduo-dant knygas; 3) imtis tokių leidėjo funkcijų kaip leidžiamų kūrinių vertinimas ir atranka, knygų rinkodara ir platinimas. Nepriklausomai nuo finansavimo šaltinio ir leidybos būdo, būtina laikytis leidybos ciklo reikalavimų, lemiančių turinio ir dizaino kokybę (vertinimas ir atranka, redagavimas ir sumaketuoto leidinio maketo peržiūra, spausdinimo valdymas ir korektūra).

*Įteikta 2016 m. vasario 1 d.*

*Priimta 2016 m. kovo 15 d.*