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*LITAUISCHE LYRIK, Eine Anthologie ausgewählt und übersetzt von Lucia Baldauf (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1972).*

This German translation and anthology of Lithuanian poetry is another effort of the Wilhelm Fink Verlag to make expert translation of some of the Lithuanian classics accessible to the German public. Lucia Baldauf herself notes the need for more translations and for a history of Lithuanian literature in the German language. She sees her own selections and translation in that light.

Although her goals are praiseworthy, the execution is not. As a history of literature the anthology provides only the dates of the authors included. Such pertinent information whether the author remained in Lithuania or wrote in exile is missing. Indeed the suspicion arises that the translator might not be very well acquainted with the works and trends among the poets in exile. Thus the important exile poets and notable contributors to Lithuanian poetry in general A. Nyka - Nylūnas, H. Nagys, and A. Mackus have been excluded from the collection.

Since the anthology pretends to be representative of Lithuanian poetry and poets, one has to raise the question whether the selections are balanced and whether each poet is sufficiently represented according to his position in the history of Lithuanian poetry. Again the editor must be criticized. The significant national poet Maironis appears with three poems while Salomėja Nėris, whose literary output is much less significant in the history of Lithuanian literature, appears with 40. Similarly, K. Korsakas and H. Radauskas contribute one poem each despite the much greater literary merits of Radauskas. One cannot escape the impression that the editor followed her own subjective preferences, in taste.

The most important question about this book concerns the quality of the translation. Lucia Baldauf indicated her aims and limitations in the closing word of the book. She found almost impossible to translate every form of the Lithuanian language, and with good reason, for the ancient Lithuanian language possesses forms which do not have an equivalent in German. She also dispensed with the rhyme which seemed to her of secondary importance in Lithuanian poetry. All she preserves are the lines and the content of the original. This approach is defended by the rather dubious premise that content and melody are the most important elements in Lithuanian songs and poems. Thus the translator limited herself from the very beginning and the question arises whether she was justified in doing so.

Fortunately, we have in front of us the translations of some Lithuanian poems by the German Horst Engert (*Aus Litauischer Dichtung*, Kaunas - Leipzig, Ostverlag der Buchhandlung Pribačis, 1938). He also was aware of the profound differences between the two languages. However, beside the rhythm and form, Engert also preserved the rhyme of the original. His translation not only reflects the meaning of the words, but preserves their emotional content. His translation is a „Nachdichtung" in its truest sense, an attempt to recreate the meter, content, rhyme, melody, and emotional impact of the poem by the means available in the German language.

Since both translators include Maironis' „Užmigo žemė" (The Earth Fell Asleep) and Salomėja Nėris' "Gyvenimo giesmė" (The Hymn of Life), a comparison of the their versions should lead us to some conclusions about the quality of their work. For purposes of comparison Maironis' poem and Baldauf's as well as Engert's translations follow.

## UŽMIGO ŽEMĖ

*Užmigo žemė.*

*Tik dangaus Negęsta akys sidabrinės,*

*Ir sparnas miego malonaus*

*Nemigdo tik jaunos krūtinės.*

Neužmigdys naktis žvaigždės,  
Nei nuramins širdis troškimų;  
Dvasia ko ieško, kas atspės,  
Kai skęsta ji tarp atminimų!

Aušra saulėtekio nušvis,  
Ir užsimerks nakties šviesybės;  
Neras tik atilsio širdis:  
Viltis nežvelgs į jos gilybes!

## *DIE ERDE SCHLIEF EIN*

*Die Erde schlief ein. Nur des Himmels  
Silberne Augen stehen weit offen,  
Der sanfte Flügel eines Traumes  
Zieht nicht das sehend Herz in seine Bahn.*

*Die Nacht vermag die Sterne nicht in Schlaf wiegen,  
Das Herz vermag was begehrt, zu stillen nicht,  
Was suchtes, wer wird das ergründen,  
Wenn es versinkt in dem, was ihm gewesen?*

*Doch wird das Morgenrot die Sterne loschen,  
Was nachts geglüht, sinkt jetzt in Schlaf,  
Allein das Hertz, es findet keine Ruh,  
Die Hoffnung blicket nicht in seine Tiefen.*

*(Translated by Lucia Baldauf)*

## *EINSCHLIEF DIE ERDE*

*Einschlief die Erde. Doch die Nacht  
Schliesst nicht des Himmels Silberaugen,  
Des Schlafes sanfter Flügel Macht,  
Sie kann der jungen Brust nicht taugen.*

*Nicht löscht die Nacht nur seinen Stern,  
Nicht stillt das Hertz sein heisses Sehnen;  
Was Seele sucht, wer anhnt's von fern,  
Wenn sie versinkt in traumend Wähnen!*

*Das Frührot flammt bald sonnenwärts  
Und tilgt der näch't'gen Lichter Runde;  
Nicht findet Ruh allein das Herz:  
Hoffnung blickt nicht zu seinem Grunde!..*

*(Translated by Horst Engert)*

Baldauf translates Maironis grammatically correctly into prose; however, the poeticism of the poet's language is gone. Even worse, she takes liberties with his vocabulary and renders the Lithuanian word for 'sleep' into German as 'dream'. Engert stays closer to the original although the need for a proper rhyme word forces him sometimes to choose words which are not as exact renderings of Maironis.

In the second stanza Baldauf again departs from the original: Maironis' "dvasia" (spirit, soul) is translated as 'heart'. Looking at the original and at Baldauf's translation, one is struck by the fact that Baldauf's lines are almost twice as long. Obviously, the preciseness, the economy, and the impact of the original must have suffered.

One arrives at the following conclusions: Baldauf's translation lacks the poeticism of the original, for rhyme and rhythm are absent from it. The exactness and economy of the original are not reflected in the translation where the expressions are

longer and more prosaic. Indeed, sometimes the original word has been changed and one gains the impression that Baldauf might have been carried away by her own thoughts and tastes. Engert's translation is more lyrical, with rhyme and rhythm. Baldauf's translation is more exact in those instances where Engert has to use a rhyme word; however, the thought expressed by the poet does not suffer any distortion. Similar conclusions can be reached by comparing both versions of Salomėja Nėris.

Engert's example should prove that it is possible to translate Lithuanian poetry into German. Only a translation which keeps the original form, its rhyme, rhythm, and thought is capable of expressing the full beauty of a poem. There has always been a debate about the importance of form and content in a poem and the answer is clear: they are inseparable — the form expresses the content of a poem. A translation should, therefore, reflect both. Baldauf drew her limits, but can she? Especially if she saw it as her goal to acquaint Germany with the beauty of Lithuanian poetry. What beauty is there left at all if a poet's sentence is transferred prosaically into a foreign language?

On the whole Baldauf's book shows that great effort was put into it and hopefully it will arouse an interest in the German reader to get to know the unknown world of Lithuanian poetry a little better. But this book will not fill the gap which Baldauf recognized herself — there is no history of Lithuanian literature accessible to the German reader. For that purpose attempts in Engert's direction are needed, a "Nachdichtung" in the German language which does not merely transcribe a poem into prose and which preserves the greatest possible authenticity of the poet's own images.

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