

## LATVIAN INTELLECTUALS IN AUSTRALIA IN THE 1950-1980S: SITUATIONS OF CULTURAL FRONTIER

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### Abstract

The author analyses the problems of frontierism in the development of the Latvian community in Australia. After Latvia was Sovietized, Australia became one of the centres of Latvian emigration. Several Latvian intellectuals who began their careers in independent Latvia after the events of 1940 and 1944 lived in Australia. Others were born in emigration, but they were able to become national Latvian activists. The author believes that the historical backgrounds actualized the frontier features of Latvian identity in emigration. The author believes that “Jaunā Gaita”, one of the leading journals of Latvian in the exile, is an important source that provides historians with opportunities to analyse the main vectors and trajectories of the development of Latvian identity in Australia. The author analyses the poetic and prosaic texts of Latvian intellectuals in Australia. “Jaunā Gaita” became an important source of information on the cultural, song and theatrical activities of Latvians in Australia. It is assumed that Latvian communities in Australia, like Latvians in other countries of emigration, became victims of a gradual marginalization process because they imagined exile as a frontier between different periods of Latvian history. “Jaunā Gaita”, on the one hand, paid special attention to the problems of Latvian youth, because its authors were afraid of assimilation. On the other hand, the journal published poetic and prose texts actively that actualized the main vectors and trajectories of the development of Latvian identity in emigration. Texts of Latvian intellectuals published in “Jaunā Gaita”, actualize various forms and dimensions of identity crisis and transformation of historical memory in emigration.

### Keywords

Latvia; Australia; emigration; exile; “Jaunā Gaita”; identity crisis; assimilation; frontier



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## ЛАТЫШСКИЕ ИНТЕЛЛЕКТУАЛЫ В АВСТРАЛИИ В 1950–1980-Е ГГ.: СИТУАЦИИ КУЛЬТУРНОГО ФРОНТИРА

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### Аннотация

Автор анализирует проблемы фронтирности в развитии сообщества латышей в Австралии. Австралия после того, как Латвия была советизирована, стала одним из центров латышской эмиграции. Несколько латышских интеллектуалов, которые начали свою карьеру в независимой Латвии, после событий 1940 или 1944 жили в Австралии. Другие родились уже в эмиграции, но стали национальными латышскими активистами. Автор полагает, что исторические предпосылки актуализировали фронтирные особенности латышской идентичности в эмиграции. Автор полагает, что “Jaunā Gaita”, один из ведущих журналов латышской эмиграции, является важным источником, который позволяет проанализировать основные векторы и траектории развития латышской идентичности в Австралии. Автор анализирует поэтические и прозаические тексты латышских интеллектуалов в Австралии. “Jaunā Gaita” стала важным источником информации о культурных, песенных и театральных активностях латышей в Австралии. Предполагается, что латышские сообщества в Австралии, как латыши в других странах эмиграции, стали жертвами процесса постепенной маргинализации, потому что изгнание было вообразено ими как фронтир между различными периодами латышской истории. “Jaunā Gaita”, с одной стороны, уделяла особое внимание проблемам латышской молодежи, потому что ее авторы опасались ассимиляции. С другой стороны, журнал активно публиковал поэтические и прозаические тексты, которые актуализировали основные векторы и траектории развития латышской идентичности в эмиграции. Тексты латышских интеллектуалов, опубликованные в “Jaunā Gaita”, актуализируют различные формы и измерения кризиса идентичности и трансформации исторической памяти в эмиграции.

### Ключевые слова

Латвия; Австралия; эмиграция; изгнание; “Jaunā Gaita”; кризис идентичности; ассимиляция; фронтир



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## **THE FORMULATION OF THE PROBLEM**

If the 19th century entered the history of Europe as an era of nationalism, when oppressed groups began to change rapidly, modernize radically and turn into political nations and imagined communities vigorously, then the 20th century became an era of a gradual erosion of ethnic isolation and imagined national purity, because the processes of colonialism and anti-colonial movements, the emergence and impressive progress of left and right authoritarian regimes, that claim to become the political norm of the epoch, inspired the processes of cultural hybridization. Therefore, the national state, the nationalists of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century dreamed of, turned into a historical and political rudiment, becoming the archaic legacy of the era of active nationalism in the world, where the processes of globalization and hybridization turned out to be more significant than the political projects proposed by the supporters of nationalism in its traditional and modern understandings. Despite these circumstances, the modern political map of Europe is a legacy of the era of active nationalism, which fought for the liberation of oppressed nations and sought to institutionalize the newly independent states, which actually became nationalizing societies and later transformed into imagined communities of nation-states.

## **FROM NATIONALIZATION TO EMIGRATION AND... HYBRIDIZATION**

Latvia was one of the nationalizing states that emerged after the crisis and disintegration of the Russian Empire, inspired by the first world war and revolution, which stimulated the progress of nationalist movements and ideologies. Until the critical historical moment of 1940 when Latvia was incorporated into the Soviet Union, Latvia was one of nationalizing European states. Sovietization of Latvia and its existence as part of the USSR, on the one hand, institutionalized fragmentation of society into Latvian and non-Latvian segments. On the other hand, the Sovietization of the republic and the political repressions stimulated emigration from Latvia to Western countries. Latvia more than 100 thousand of an educated, socially and politically active citizens as a result of the policy of coercive and forced Sovietization. The USA, Sweden, Germany, Canada and Australia became the states where after 1940 and 1944 new Latvian communities appeared. Germany was the first European country for Latvian refugees, but by 1951 the majority of Latvian immigrants left Germany and moved to the USA (55.000), Australia (21.000), Great



Britain (18.000), Canada (14.000) and Sweden (4.000). 13.000 refugees preferred to remain in Germany.

## **SOVIETIZATION AS A FACTOR OF LATVIAN IDENTITY DUALISM**

Sovietization of Latvia stimulated the processes of simultaneous development of two versions of the Latvian national identity: Sovietized identity existed in the USSR when the transformation of the identity of emigrants continued to change Latvian identity they had since the period of the First Republic. The identity of Latvian intellectuals who emigrated from Latvia and the identity of those Latvians who were born in emigration differed significantly from the identity of Latvians who continued to live in Soviet Latvia. If the Latvian identity in the Latvian SSR developed as an anti-Soviet and anti-communist political project in the context of opposition to Russification, then the identity of emigrants changed under the influence of the processes of hybridization and trans-culturalization. Actually, Latvian identity in emigration, including Australia, became a frontier and peripheral case of the development of Latvian national identity.

### **WHAT IS THIS TEXT ABOUT?**

Therefore, the author of this article will analyse the transformation processes of Latvian identity in Australia in the contexts of intellectual activities of representatives of Latvian communities.

### **METHODOLOGY: FROM POSITIVISM TO FRONTIER STUDIES**

Analyzing the frontier cases of transformations and developments of identities, historians face the problems of methods and the language of description. On the one hand, methodologically archaic language and theoretical tools of positivistic historiography can provide historians with the necessary methods, but the results will be predictable if we will fix facts, use statistical data, compare quantitative indicators of the number of Latvian groups and communities or active use of the Latvian language. If we use neo-positivist practices, the descriptive text will become the main result of our analysis, but the author of this article believes that the dominance of positivism became the part of history and therefore historians, analysing the dynamics of developments and transformations of Latvian identity in Australia, can use other methodological tools.

Rejection of positivism actualizes the potential of interdisciplinary postmodern and constructivist methods inevitably and makes it possible to



write several histories of the identity of Australian Latvians simultaneously. On the one hand, the author presumes that the history of identity transformations of the Latvian frontier communities and hybrid societies can be imagined as intellectual history, cultural history or a history of ideas. On the other hand, the potential of frontier studies can be very useful, because the history of Latvian identity in the Latvian SSR and the history of Latvian identity in exile actualize two scenarios of changes in identities in different frontier societies. The author presumes that the social and cultural histories of the societies of the Latvian SSR and Australia of the 1940s and 1980s provide historians with several examples of situations of frontier and frontierity.

### **THE MULTIPLICITY OF LATVIAN FRONTIERS.**

The frontierness of the Latvian SSR and the Latvian communities of Australia had different forms and dimensions, but several factors make it possible to define these societies as frontier and even transcultural. Firstly, Latvian communities in Latvia and Australia never existed in cultural isolation. Secondly, by 1940 the Latvian political nation managed to integrate and assimilate part of the Russian, German and Jewish communities, ceasing to be an ethnic nation and transforming into a Latvian political nation. Thirdly, the Latvian language in Latvia and the Latvian SSR ceased to be the language of only Latvians, it became the language of those Russians, Jews and Germans who were able to integrate into the Latvian nation as a civil project. Fourthly, the Latvian language in the Latvian SSR and Australia became the language of social, cultural, intellectual and political frontiers – the active use of the Latvian language did not mean that the speaker was Latvian because the Latvian language became the language of communication for Sovietized Latvians Jews, Germans, Poles and Russians.

Fifthly, the frontier status of the language became more visible in Australia than in the Latvian SSR, because the younger generation began to more actively use English gradually and the history of Latvians in Australia, unfortunately, does not provide historians with examples when English-speaking Australians became active users of Latvian. The frontier situation of the Latvian language in Australia in this intellectual situation was radically different from similar processes of the Ukrainian language in the United States, because the history of American Ukrainians knows one case when the English-speaking poetess Patricia Nell Warren (1936 – 2019) became Ukrainian-speaking Patrytsiia Kylyna (Патриція Килина) but this metamorphosis of identity was temporary, because the heritage of Patrytsiia Kylyna was part of the frontier cultural discourse. The frontier



history of Australian Latvians, unfortunately, does not know examples of such successful promotion of the Latvian language in transculturalizing and hybridizing identities. Sixthly, the author presumes that the intellectual history of Australian Latvians became a frontier history because the cultural dynamics of the 1940s and 1980s provided historians with examples when Latvian intellectuals were active in their attempts to actualize and preserve Latvian identity in frontier contexts. Therefore, the subsequent sections of this article will be focused precisely on the intellectual transformations of the Latvian community in Australia.

## **SOURCES**

Analysing intellectual identity transformations and various forms and versions of discourse as narrative dimensions of national identity, the historian will be forced to read and use narrative sources inevitably. Therefore, the author believes that the texts of Latvian intellectuals from Australia, published in the Canadian magazine “Jaunā Gaita” since 1955 (Ķiķauka, 1981a; Ķiķauka, 1981b), when the first number was published, became a cultural and intellectual centre for Latvian writers, historians, poets, and artists in emigration. “Jaunā Gaita” is one of the magazines of the Latvian emigration that was able to create their own literary traditions, becoming a phenomenon in the cultural and intellectual life of Latvian communities abroad. Several Latvian authors from Australia, including Eduards Silkalns, Aleksandrs Gārša, Osvalds Lācis, Kārlis Ābele, Lūcija Bērziņa, Mintauts Eglītis, Hugo Kaupmanis, Jānis Sarma, Edgars Dunsdorfs, were among authors of “Jaunā Gaita”. The texts of Latvian intellectuals from Australia, published in “Jaunā Gaita”, actualized various forms and dimensions of Latvian identity in exile.

## **FORMAL ORIENTATION IN THE TEXT, OR WHAT IS THE ARTICLE ABOUT?**

The features of source base, goals and objectives of this text, on the one hand, dictate to the author the following logical structure of the article, which will contain several sections, including 1) introductory notes and comments, where the essence of the problems of Latvian emigration and diaspora in contexts of frontier and hybridization will be characterized; 2) methodological remarks about methods, the author used in this article; 3) chapter about problems of multiple and simultaneous social, historical and cultural coexistence of Latvian frontiers and frontier and transcultural situations.

The author of the article believes that emigration, which actually became a political exile, influenced the vectors and trajectories of the development of Latvian identity significantly, predetermining its main changes, mutations and transformations. Therefore, the analysis of exile as a form of frontier will precede the author's attempts to analyse the intellectual history of Latvians in Australia as a cultural frontier. Analysing exile and emigration as factors for the development of frontier identity, the author will use the texts of Latvian intellectuals published in the journal *Jaunā Gaita* in particular because they actualize the main trends in the transformation of Latvian identity in general.

The main sections of the article will focus on the problems of the formal characteristics of the Latvian community in the Australian frontier, its visualization at the frontier in Australia as a contact zone of cultural hybridization. The author will pay particular attention to the narrative practices of Latvian authors, who in their texts actualized various states, forms, levels and dimensions of the frontieness of Latvian identity in Australia.

### **LATVIANS IN EXILE: FROM IDENTITY AT CROSSROADS TO IDENTITY ON THE AUSTRALIAN FRONTIER**

Emigration, imagined by politically active Latvian intellectuals as exile or *trimdā*, became the factor that changed the basic trajectories and vectors of the development of Latvian identity significantly. The Sovietization of Latvia and its transformation in the Latvian SSR inspired political emigration and the emergence of Latvian communities abroad (Veigners, 1993). Despite the formal intellectual activities of Latvian émigrés (Daukste-Silasproģe, 2002; 2007; 2019), including writers and poets, emigration and the long existence of Latvian communities in the non-Latvian space became the factors that weakened identity, promoting integration and gradual assimilation of Latvians who were born in emigration. Latvian intellectuals in emigration were active in their attempts to comprehend nationalism (Austrālis, 1964; Alksnis, 1964), but all these extensive intellectual and cultural reflections actualized the frontier character of Latvian communities in exile inevitably, because reflections on nationalism in contexts of aspirations to preserve identity and language made visible the alienity of the Latvian groups in Western countries, although some Latvians preferred to integrate in new societies when others saved the frontier status of proponents of ethnic isolation. Problems of identity and language were universal landmarks, which attracted the attention of Latvian authors in exile inevitably because Latvia in the political imagination of intellectuals (Balodis, 1958a) mutated into frontier





between the cultural spaces of the Baltic, Slavic and German worlds (Balodis, 1958b), the unstable border between worlds (Europe – West – USSR), between Orient and Occident, and between historical eras of independence and Soviet occupation. Therefore, prose heroes of exile (Freimanis, 1970) inevitably mutated into people between cultures, worlds and identities:

Tāda ir mana pasaule; to man neviens nav pratis atņemt - varu vēl bradāt pa saviem vārdus džungļiem. Schizofreniķis esmu; šīs ir schizofreniķa piezīmes! Neurasteniķa murgi? Dzīves ārnieka pasaule piekrauta ar nolakotām papīra puķēm? Lai ir! Neviens šīs nodaļas nelasīs... Nieki!... Parasts trakais trakā pasaulē. Ielas pielietas ar nervozitātes dzīvsudrabu; cilvēki ir lapsenes, apstulbušas neona gaismās... Histērijas laikmets! Civilizācija aizskrējusi pa aplamu ceļu, bet neapjēdz kļūdu un cer sasniegt pilnību. Varbūt sasniegs – īsi pirms galīgās eksplozijas – pastardienas... Varbūt šī laikmeta romānam vajadzētu būt sakārtam kopā no tādām lapām kā manējās – vajadzētu būt neurastenisku nejēdzību kollažai. Tādai civilizācijai tādi raksti... Ak Dievs, cik ilgi vēl man būs jāgaida Tavs miers? Vai šī rakstīšana ir schizofrenijas manifestācija? Vēstule būs bezgala gara - līdz nāvei; nē, vēl iestiepsies nākamajā dzīvē. Vai jebkad vairs atvērsies apkaltās durvis?

This is my world; no one has taken it away from me - I can still paddle in my jungle. I'm a schizophrenic; these are schizophrenic notes! Neurasthenian nightmares? The life in the alien's world loaded with dirty paper flowers? Let it be! No one will not read this chapter... Trivia! ... Normal crazy in the crazy world. The streets are used with nervous mercury; people are wasps, astonished by neon lights ... the era of history! Civilization has gone the wrong way, but it does not understand the error and still hopes to achieve perfection. Maybe it will – shortly before the final explosion – doomsday ... Maybe the novel of this era should be sorted out of pages like mine – there should be a neurasthenic nonsense collage. Such articles are for such civilization... Oh God, how long will I have to wait for your peace? Is this writing a manifestation of schizophrenia? The letter will be infinitely long – to death; no, it's still going to come in the next life. Will be a door opened?

The poetical hero of the Latvian emigration (Pļavkalns, 1971) ceased to be a romantic hero also, turning into an emigrant (Grasis, 1981), who recalls his homeland painfully



Vēlos redzēt svešas zemes,	I want to see a foreign land
Tur, kur saule spožāk mirdz,	Where the sun shines brighter,
Tur, kur nekad netumst debess,	Where there is never sky,
Tur, kur brīva būt var sirds.	Where freedom can be a heart.
Zeme, zeme, kas tā zeme,	Land, land, land
Ja tev īstas brīves nav?	If you don't have real freedom?
Brīve, brīve, kas tā brīve?	A moment, a moment, what's that moment?
Ja tev savas zemes nav?	If you don't have your land?
Vēlamies mēs mūsu zemi	We want our land
Atkal brīvu redzēt drīz!	to see free soon again!
Laime, lūdzams, mums to lemi!	Happiness, please, let us down!
Kad to reiz kāds sapratīs?	When will one realize it once?
Zeme, zeme, kas tā zeme,	Land, land, land
Ja tev īstas brīves nav?	If you don't have real freedom?
Brīve, brīve, kas tā brīve.	A moment, a moment in its moment.
Ja tev savas zemes nav?	If you don't have your land?

The category of *zeme* in the poetic imagination of the Latvian emigration became frontier between the ideal freedom and lack of freedom. The hero of the poetry in exile changed radically, mutated into a human being of a frontier, a frontier weary creature because he could not define his identity adequately:

Saulei līdzi aiz nedzīvā apvāršņa	The sun behind the dead horizon
Nogrimst ik nakti mirušā gars...	The spirit of the deceased sinks every night ...
...Saulei līdzi atgriežas virszemē –	... return to the sun with the sun -
Klinšu mājoklī rietumu smiltīs;	Rocky dwelling in the sand of the west;
Dzērienus, ēdienus, dejas bauda,	Drinks, food, dancing,
Sievas skārienu jūt kā toreiz...	Feeling a woman's touch then ...
...Tu, kas drīz redzēsi pazemes sauli...	... You will soon see the underground sun ...
...Busiem aizslīdot siltā rītā...	... the buses slipping in the warm morning ...
Manā tuksneša namā.	In my desert house.
Es dzīroju nekropolē.	I live in a necropolis.
Es dziedu saules kuģī...	I sing in sun ship...

These semi-insane reflections, which had much in common with delirium, actualized the crisis of identity of the heroes of exile Latvian prose and the Latvian language in these cultural and intellectual situations remained the only factor that saved Latvians from assimilation. Therefore, the heroes of the prose raved, but they raved in Latvian. The Latvian language (Sodums, 1958), on the one hand, united Latvians in exile and Latvia, but, on the other hand, it transformed in a frontier, because the threat of assimilation existed in emigration always. Threats of assimilation stimulated the extensive reflections of Latvian intellectuals in exile about traditional Latvian religion (Viķe-Freiberga, 1975a), which in fact became



an expression of the frontier nature of identity because the academic approach of Latvian authors in exile intersected with attempts to imagine and invent pre-Christian forms of faith. The frontier became a universal construct of Latvian intellectuals in emigration because they, on the one hand, remembered the frontier and transcultural nature of Latgale in Latvian history (Puisans, 1980) and, on the other hand, realized the peculiarities of the transcultural situation when “kultūra nesākas un nebeidzas pie robežām, aiz kuŗām ir māksla, literātūra, zinātne. Robežu nav” (Irbe, 1967) or “culture does not begin and does not end at borders, behind art, literature, science. There are no borders”. Dzintars Sodums (Sodums, 1959), who realized that “grūts ir mūsu trimdinieku liktenis” (“the fate of our exiles is tough”), was one of those Latvian writers and intellectuals of emigration who tried to understand the sense of frontierity and transculturality of Latvian immigrants who were forced to leave Latvia:

Ir tāda pilsēta, kas atrodas liela ūdens malā. Tā var būt katra pilsēta jūras krastā: Stokholma, Ņujorka, Londona, Melburna, Sidneja, Sanfrancisko. Varētu teikt, tikpat kā Rīgas priekšpilsēta. Jo katram ūdenim otrā pusē atrodas mūsu vecā pilsēta Rīga. Cik tur trūkst, ka trimdinieks ar stiprāku balsi var sasaukties ar tiem jūras otrā malā. Tāpēc, lūk, tur tajā pilsētā notiek visdažādākās brīnumlietas. Ierodas latvieši pāri jūrai. Citi pēkšņi aizbrauc atpakaļ uz Rīgu...

There is a city on the edge of the great water. It can be every city on the seashore: Stockholm, New York, London, Melbourne, Sydney, San Francisco. One could say, that it looked like the suburb of Riga because every water on the other side is our old Riga. There is a shortage of exiles with a strong voice on the other side of the sea. That's why there are a variety of miracles in this city. Latvians cross the sea. Others go back to Riga suddenly...

Therefore, the novel “Lāčplēsis trimdā” of Dzintars Sodums became partly frontier and partly provocative text of the Latvian emigration. The text where the author snatched the national hero Lāčplēsis from the Latvian context, turning him into an emigrant and sending him into exile, became an attempt to deconstruct the archaic mythical ideas about the national heroes of Latvian identity, which in fact were nationalist constructs imagined and invented by Latvian nationalists of the 19th century. Therefore, the heroes of the Latvian exile prose (Grants, 1958), as their authors and creators (Veselis, 1956), who suggested meanings for Latvians in exile, were hostages of the frontier because they fluctuated between phobias of assimilation and temptations of ethnic isolation (Freimanis, 1956), choosing painfully between the collective memory of the past, about Latvian independence and the prospects of integration and assimilation into the new society of the West, which accepted them as refugees who could

escape from Soviet authoritarianism. The heroes of Latvian prose in exile never forgot that

Latvija ir maza nācija... Bet vēsture nevērtē tautas pēc viņu iedzīvotāju skaita, bet gan pēc šo cilvēku drosmes, ticības un spējām. Mēs uzcēlām Latviju no pusnabadzīgas Krievijas provinces un pārvērtām to neatkarīgā, brīvā, turīgā valstī. Latvija ierindojās starp izcilākajām Eiropas valstīm lauksaimniecībā, sevišķi cūkkopībā, mūsu likumdošana bija pazīstama visā Eiropā

Latvia is a small nation ... But history does not appreciate the peoples by their population, but by their courage, faith and abilities. We built Latvia from a semi-poor Russian province and turned it into an independent, free, wealthy country. Latvia has ranked among the most outstanding European countries in agriculture, especially in pig farming, our legislation was known throughout Europe

but Latvian exile intellectuals (Baumanis, 1958) were afraid to understand that the question “cik ilgi gan latviešu liesmiņa degs Amerikas jūras viļņos?” or “How long does the Latvian flame burn in American sea waves?” because, the Latvians in exile lost faith gradually, stating that “Es vairs neticēju brīnumiem. Es vairs neticēju nekam” (Zariņš, 1963) or “I didn’t believe in miracles anymore. I didn’t believe in anything anymore” and Valters Nollendorfs (Nollendorfs, 1955) was forced to state that

Viena no mūsu trimdas dzīves pamatproblēmām ir vecās un jaunās paaudzes uzskatu pretišķība. Vecā paaudze ar bažām vēro jaunatnes centienus un jautā, vai jaunatne būs spējīga turpināt latviskās kultūras tradīcijas trimdā.

One of the fundamental problems of our exile life is the contradiction between the old and the new generations. The old generation is concerned with the efforts of the youth and asks whether the youth will be able to continue the Latvian cultural tradition in exile.

Latvians in exile preferred to ask, but could not answer their own questions. For example, Paula Jēger-Freimane (Jēger-Freimane, 1962) asked in 1962 “kas tad ir latviskais?”. Answering her own question, she proposed to take into account formal indicators only, believing that “Latviskais ir latviešu valoda, latviešu dziesma, latviskais pasaules skatījums, latviešu dzīves izjūta” or “Latvian is Latvian, Latvian Song, Latvian world view, sense of Latvian life”. On the one hand, emigration forced Latvian intellectuals (Irbe, 1958) to perceive the history of the country, they came from, as personal tragedies of exile, forcing to recall the past constantly and





Vecā pilsēta... Pilsēta starp tiltiem... To es atcerēšos, atcerēšos... atcerēšos... Un tad nomirst

The Old Town ... The city between the bridges ... I will remember it, I will remember ... I will remember ... And then die

On the other hand, history taught Latvian intellectuals (Lelis, 1967) in exile to imagine their country as a frontier, because

Mēs esam savas pagātnes mantinieki - arī nacionālos centienos un politiskā ideoloģijā... Gadsimtos pirms neatkarības iegūšanas latviešu tauta tika malta starp varām, kas bijušas vistiranniskākās Eiropā. Kā sociālajā, tā politiskajā laukā latviešu tauta no saviem kakla kungiem varēja mācīties un mācījās daudz negatīva... 1918. gadā, nodibinoties Latvijas valstij, latviešu vairākums varbūt bija nobriedis neatkarībai, bet tauta vēl nebija nobriedusi, lai sevi demokrātiski valdītu

We are the heirs of our past in national efforts and in political ideology... For centuries before independence, the Latvian people were lurking among the powers that were most European in Europe. In the social and political fields, the Latvian people could learn from their necks and learned a lot of negative... In 1918, when the Latvian state was founded, the majority of Latvians might have been mature, but the nation was not yet mature to rule democratically

Ethnocentrism and politically motivated anti-communist phobias (Spekke, 1957) transformed the collective memories of intellectuals in exile about the nation (Ģērmanis, 1957b), freedom, political independence, state sovereignty and the Latvian Republic (Ģērmanis, 1957a; Ģērmanis, 1966). The imagined frontier divided consistent nationalists into supporters of isolation and supporters of adaptation and integration. The dominance of this viewpoint among intellectuals in emigration inspired the ethnicization of Latvian intellectual discourse, its isolation and actualization of its frontier character between Western societies and Latvia, which became an unattainable dream for emigrants. Therefore, Latvian immigrants were waited for integration, realizing that

Mēs esam trimdinieki, bēgļi, dezertieri... Jā, mēs esam savas dzimtenes dezertieri, mēs esam to atstājuši un izglābuši savas dzīvības. Pēc pāris gadiem mūsu vidū būs latvieši, kam piederēs savi veikali, automašīnas, varbūt pat savi uzņēmumi. Ar šiem praktiskajiem latviešiem mēs nevaram rēķināties, jo viņi nerēķināsies ar mums. Ja kāds no mums varbūt cer, ka šie latvieši reiz atgriezīsies dzimtenē, kad tā būs brīva, tad tie ir maldi. Šie cilvēki to nedarīs. Viņi ir par daudz gudri, tādēļ viņi

We are exiles, refugees, deserters ... Yes, we are deserters of our homeland, we left it and saved our lives. In a couple of years, there will be Latvians who will own their shops, cars, and even their own companies. We cannot hope for these practical Latvians, because they will not hope for us too. If one of us hopes that these Latvians will return to their homeland, as soon as it becomes free, they are mistaken. These people will not do that. They are too smart, so they will get

iegūs turību un nekad neuzņemsies Antiņa lomu, lai atgrieztos mūsu nabadzīgajā dzimtenē. Tad - trimdā mēs varam sastapt latviešus, kas ir aktīvi sabiedriskā un politiskā laukā. Viņi ir nozīmīgi kā atgādinājums mums un citiem, ka mēs vēl ceļam un ticam uz latviešu valsti. Bet es neticu, vai trimda viņiem ko iemācīs, tāpat, vai viņi vēlas ko mācīties

wealth and will never assume the role of Anthony to return to our poor home country. Then in exile, we can meet Latvians who are active in the social and political spheres. They are important as a reminder to us and others that we still travel and believe in Latvian State. But I do not believe that exile will teach them what they want, just as they want to learn.

On the one hand, the desire to be isolated from the outside world in emigration became a negative factor in the development of Latvian identity in exile, because it inspired and stimulated the conservation of Latvian communities. Despite the fact that some Latvian prose characters asserted that “Es gribētu zināt vairāk par Latviju” (Ridzinieks, 1976), by the middle of the 1970s, intellectuals in exile understood the situation of uncertainty, asking strange questions, including “Vai latviešiem vajadzīga popmūzika?” (Zālītis, 1974). Some exile intellectuals hoped their isolation from the mass culture as a frontier between high and low cultures, will provide Latvians in emigration with the abilities to preserve their ethnic identity. A few years later, Latvian intellectuals (Rūķe-Draviņa, 1981) realized once again the frontier character of exile, because they began to analyse the problems of the interconnections between folk songs (Rūķe-Draviņa, 1985) and modern music. The question of the necessity or uselessness of popular music sounded too naive because other Latvian exile authors (Viķe-Freiberga, 1974) preferred to ask unpleasant questions, including

Cik no visiem tiem, kas Latviju atstāja kā bēgļi, vēl arvien uzskata sevi par latviešiem?

How many of those who left Latvia as refugees still consider Latvians themselves?

Therefore, the forced existence on the frontier of cultures, languages and identities forced the Latvian intellectuals in exile (Viķe-Freiberga, 1974) to recognize the identity crisis:

Lielā apmēra emigrācija, kas notika Otrā pasaules kara beigās, līdz ar kara zaudējumiem un deportācijām ir decimējusi latviešu tautu. Tik mazai tautai kā latviešiem tas ir grūti aizpildāms zaudējums, kā to it skaudri apzinās savā tēvzemē palikušie latvieši, dažreiz ne bez zināma rūgtuma... Latviešu tautas turpmākai eksistencei ikkatrs indivīds ir kļuvis nozīmīgs

The large-scale emigration that took place at the end of the Second World, the loss and deportation decimated the Latvian nation. For such a small nation as Latvians, it is a hard loss... the Latvians remaining in their homeland, sometimes not without a bit of bitterness, are hardly aware of also. Every individual has become important for the future existence of the Latvian people



By the middle of the 1970s, Latvian intellectuals, including Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, who were active in their attempts to popularize the concepts of *latviskums* (Vīķe-Freiberga, 1975b) among exile Latvians (Vīķe-Freiberga, 1978), recognized that the frontier became the unpleasant reality of Latvian emigration. Therefore, intellectuals (Vīķe-Freiberga, 1976; Vīķe-Freiberga, 1985a) idealized and absolutized the traditional ethnic culture, its motifs and images in Latvian art and literature (Vīķe-Freiberga, 1979a; Freiberga, 1980; Ozoliņa, 1986; Bērziņa-Baltiņa, 1987; Bērziņa-Baltiņa, 1989) and collective neo-pagan ideas about it (Tupesis, 1981), although Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, who fluctuated between popular culture and the idealization of the First Republic (Vīķe-Freiberga, 1979b), believed that the long existence of Latvian communities in Europe and America led to the erosion of Latvian identity. Despite the fact that it was almost impossible to define the boundaries between various forms of Latvian identity because their differences acquired the frontier, Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga (Vīķe-Freiberga, 1974), could not determine the status of Latvians in emigration and asked “Vai esam bēgļi, vai trimdinieki, vai emigranti, vai vienkārši - klaidas latvieši?” or “Are we refugees, or exiles, or emigrants, or simply Latvians?” (Vīķe-Freiberga, 1977). Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga presumed that it was possible to distinguish three types of Latvian identity in exile, including 1) Latvian immigrant identity of the older generation; 2) forced Latvian identity of emigrants who were born in Latvia, but grew up in emigration; and 3) the Latvian identity as a conscious choice of the younger generation of emigrants who were born in Europe, America or Australia and have never been in Latvia. The fear that successful integration will lead to financial well-being in emigration frightened Latvian intellectuals in exile always, and emigrants understood that exile became only a frontier between their collective memories of the First Republic and the attempts of the new generation to find their place in Europe, America, Canada or Australia. Intellectuals in exile (Vīķe-Freiberga, 1982) were forced to recognise inevitability and imminence of assimilation of Latvians who were born in exile, realizing that the number of Latvian children who learn Latvian and speak it in the United States or Canada declined steadily. Therefore, Tadeušs Puisans (Puisans, 1982) actualized the frontier status of the Latvian language in exile and the Latvian SSR, because assimilation threatened the Latvian language everywhere:

Katrai valodai, lai tā dzīvotu kā vitāls spēks, ir vajadzīga tieša un dzīva saskare ar tās atspoguļoto kultūru... Bez šīs vides valoda var gan dzīvot un nīkuļot, bet ne	Every language lives as a vital force and it needs direct and lively contact with its culture ... Without this environment, language can live and die, but not grow
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augt un apliecināt sevi kā dinamisku spēku sociālās attiecībās. Trimdas organizācijās latviešu valoda dzīvo mākslīgi. Tai nav sakaru ar vietējo ģeogrāfisko un sociālo vidi, tai nav sakaru ar vietējām tautām un to kultūrām. Latviešu valoda ārpus Latvijas robežām ir pielīdzināma skaidiņai, kas mētājas jūras viļņos, nespējīga pieķerties ne pie vienas klints radzes, kas tai dotu spēku laist jaunas saknes jaunai dzīvot spējai. Katra valoda šī veida vidē ir jau notiesāta uz nāvi. Latviešu valodai ir tikai viena dzimtene: Baltijas jūras austrumu krasts. Nelaimīgā kārtā latviešu trimdas sabiedrība ar savu valodu un kultūru ir šķirta no šīs dzimtenes ļaunu politisku spēku iedarbē... Valoda un kultūra tomēr aug dzimtenē un izstaro savu iespaidu uz visiem kontinentiem pie tur dzīvojošiem latviešiem. Tikai šis spēks trimdas sabiedrību var vienot... Sakari ar tautu Latvijā ir vienīgais veids, kā pašreizējos apstākļos uzturēt pie dzīvības latviešu trimdas saimes jaunākās paaudzes interesi par latvisko kultūru

and assert itself as a dynamic force in social relationships. In exile organizations, Latvian lives artificially. It has no connection to the local geographic and social environments, it has no connection with the nations and their cultures. The Latvian language beyond the borders of Latvia is comparable to the crumbs that thrive in the sea waves, unable to cling to a rock cliff, which would give it the power to put new roots to a new life. Every language in this environment is already sentenced to death. The Latvian language has only one homeland: the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea. Unfortunately, the Latvian exile community, with its language and culture, is separated from homeland occupied by the evil political power... The language and culture, however, are growing in their native country and exert their influence on all the continents where Latvians live. Only this power can unite the exile community ... Communication with the nation in Latvia is the only way to maintain the interest of the Latvian younger generation in Latvian life in the current circumstances.

If in the USSR the Russian language became a threat to Latvian, then in emigration the Latvian language was weaker in its attempts to compete with English. Intellectuals in emigration realized gradually that the development of diaspora contacts with Latvia would be the only way to avoid complete assimilation of communities in Europe, America and Australia. By the early 1980s, Latvian intellectuals in exile recognized the importance of nationalism (Purviņš Jurjāns, 1983; Steprāns, 1984; Upenieks, 1985) as a tool for preserving and developing the identity of the group they belonged to. Collective intellectual representations (Tupešis, 1985) about who Latvian is, changed radically in comparison with earlier periods in the history of emigration. The exile intellectuals imagined Latvian in the 1980s as a human being between different historical eras, between time and timelessness, between past and future, realizing that the situation of *fin de siècle*, would change Latvian identity and culture radically:



Latviskās dzīves ziņas pamatlikumības (tikumi, paražas, daiļuma izjūta, sabiedriskās normas un attieksmes pret dabu / visumu) nenāk no augšas, nav kāda Dieva nemainīgi nosacījumi, bet gan organiski izveidojušās tautā...Latvietis nedzīvo(ja) tikumīgu un dievāju dzīvi, lai patiktu kādai transcendentai varai vai arī sagatavotos kādai „pēcnāves svētlaimībai... latvietis nemeklē(ja) dzīves jēgas attaisnojumus pārlieku komplicētās abstrakcijās, formālismā un no dzīves atsvešinātās sistēmās...Latvietis vēl joprojām nemīl transcendentas abstrakcijas un par kādu mistisku viņsauli/pasauli daudz neprāto. Viņš ir nelokāms, pat stūrgalvīgs reālists (un tikai pēdējās paaudzēs kļuvis par pesimistu). Dieviņš parādās kā migla, rūsa un vai gaisma, un no purva velns pārcēlies uz nēsātāja pleciem. Pasaule pati ir brīnumu pilna... bet katra indivīda mūža ritējums ir konkrēts ar saviem priekiem... un bēdām

The fundamental rights of the Latvian life (virtues, customs, sense of beauty, social norms and attitudes towards nature / universe) did not come from above, they are not constant conditions of Lord, but nation formed them... The Latvian does not live a virtuous and godly life to enjoy a transcendental power or to prepare for a "post-death bliss"... the Latvians does not seek the excuses of the meaning of life in excessively complicated abstractions, formalism, and alienated systems of life... The Latvians still does not love the transcendent abstractions and the mystery of the mysterious world. Latvian is a steadfast, even stubborn realist (and he became a pessimist in recent generations only). The Lord appears as a mist, rust and light, and the Devil moved to the shoulders of Latvian who bear him. The world itself is full of miracles... but the life-cycle of each individual is specific to joys... and sorrows

Therefore, the character of *Jaunā Gaita* became even more frontier in the 1980s, because Latvian intellectuals preferred to publish fiction, poetry, articles on culture and art, which in the pages of the magazine coexisted and neighbored with academic texts (Viķe-Freiberga, 1985b) or political essays focused on current issues of freedom (Viķe-Freiberga, 1986), identity, nation, politics and nationalism (Purviņš Jurjāns, 1983; Vāvere, 1982). If by the middle of 1950s *Jaunā Gaita* was a cultural, literary and intellectual frontier, in the 1980s the magazine's frontierity became different meaningfully because its editors tried to politicise the journal. Therefore, in the 1980s, they became more active in their attempts to cross the ideological and political frontiers between the emigration communities and the Latvian SSR, realizing that contacts with the homeland could prevent the Latvian communities in exile from complete assimilation and loss of identity. Juris Rozītis in 1984 suggested that new stage began on the development of the Latvian culture of emigration, and changes of social and cultural generations inspired the beginning of this new era because Latvian intellectuals understood that "Latvijas nākotne kopā mūs sauc" (Rubess, 1985) or "the future of Latvia together call us". Juris Rozītis (Rozītis, 1984) presumed that Latvians who belonged to the new younger generation lost connections with the cultural community they came from and became Canadians, Americans or Australians. Therefore, Latvian

intellectuals in exile (Rodze-Ķīsele, 1983) began to cross the frontier boundaries actively between the Latvian culture of emigration and the Latvian culture of the Latvian SSR, publishing in *Jaunā Gaita* texts focused on the cultural situation in Latvia.

## **LATVIANS IN AUSTRALIAN FRONTIER: FORMAL ORIENTATIONS**

Australia as a country with a colonial past has its own traditions of academic studies of frontier and frontier situations. If the history of the early Australian frontier was a history of contacts and contradictory relations between colonists and Aborigines (Attwood, 2017; Critchett, 1990), then the history of the frontier in the 20th century was different because the political processes in Europe and its ideological split into two opposing blocs stimulated political emigration from countries that entered the zone of Soviet influence. Latvia was one of these states, which became a victim of Sovietization. Australia has become a state that adopted more than 20 thousand Latvian immigrants, who rushed to this country together with Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Estonians, Croats, whose states lost their sovereignty and independence or became pro-Soviet satellites. Therefore, the history of the Australian frontier became the history of relations between English-speaking Australians and new immigrant communities, or the history of integration and assimilation of emigres into the Australian frontier between memories of a lost homeland and attempts to find a place in a new society.

The social, cultural and intellectual histories of Latvia in the second half of the 20th century became heterogeneous. Therefore, the history of Latvia was a history of Latvians in Latvia and Latvian communities in emigration and exile (Akmentiņš, 1958; Baltaks, 1960). Australia became one of the centres of Latvian emigration (Daukste-Silasproģe, 2014) after the Sovietization of Latvia and the end of the Second World War. The first Latvian arrived in Latvia in 1853. The revolution of 1905 stimulated political emigration from Latvia to Australia and by 1918 the first Latvian cultural organization emerged in Sydney. By 1938, 427 people of Latvian origin lived in Australia. By the early 1950s, Australia had become the second largest country with a Latvian minority. By 1951, 21,000 Latvians lived in Australia – more than 55,000 Latvians lived only in the United States. By the beginning of the 1970s, 14,478 citizens of Australia indicated Latvia as their birthplace. New South Wales (8,200), Victoria (7,500) and South Australia (4,300) were the regions of Australia where most Australian Latvians lived (Putniņš, 1981). By the middle of the 2000s, 20,058 citizens of Australia had Latvians roots.





## THE FRONTIER AND VISUALIZATION OF IDENTITY

Latvian intellectuals in Australia understood that emigration (izceļošana) and exile (trimdā) institutionalized the gap, on the one hand, between Latvians and their historical and ethnic homeland, and, on the other hand, the gap and even failure between different generations of the Latvian communities, which stimulated Latvian authors to systematize the experience of the expulsion and forced existence of Latvians in Australia (Eglītis, 1984). Despite the psychological trauma of exile, the understanding that “nepazīta aug rītdienas vara” (Pļavkalns, 1962) or “the power of tomorrow is unknown”, Latvian intellectuals in emigration believed that “latviešu tauta turpinās eksistēšanu” (Sarma, 1962a) or “the Latvian nation will continue to exist”. This historical optimism of forced exiles and inhabitants of the frontier was combined, on the one hand, with their attempts to doubt the universality of “mechanizētais intelektuālisms” or “mechanized intellectualism” (Sarma, 1963).

On the other hand, an interest in national history, imagined by emigrants as one of the foundations of identity, became inevitable in Latvian communities in Australia. The history was extremely important for Australian Latvian intellectuals (Sarma, 1962b), because, by the time they left Latvia for Australia, positivism was dominant in the art of history writing and the intellectuals believed that the historical past was stable. These ideas were extremely important to them in contexts of Australian frontiers. Therefore, intellectuals sought to actualize the values of Latvian identity, they paid particular attention in their texts to the prospects for the development of the Latvian language in foreign cultural contexts (Dunsdorfs, 1964), problems of life of Latvian communities in exile (Dunsdorfs, 1963), cultural activities of Latvian groups and communities in emigration including Australia. Eduards Silkalns, for example, sought to acquaint readers with events in the life of Latvian communities organized by national activists in Australia, believing that various events such as music festivals (Silkalns, 1957b), became attempts to mainstream Latvian identity in alien cultural and foreign language landscapes.

Eduards Silkalns was among those emigrants who took an active part in the organization of the Days of Latvian Culture, which became a collective attempt to actualize the identity of emigrants and make Latvian ethnicity more visible in Australian contexts. “Latviešu nams”, or “Latvian House”, became the centre of Latvian cultural events (Silkalns, 1958a). The days of Latvian culture, including literary readings, exhibitions, competitions of Latvian folk musical groups, became attempts to revitalize and encourage the use of the Latvian language among young Latvians in Australia. The Days of Latvian Culture (Silkalns, 1958d) became an

attempt to preserve the continuity of the cultural, literary and intellectual generations of the Latvian community in Australia because they provided young authors with a wide range of opportunities to present their new texts written in Latvian. The Days of Latvian Culture, which were organized in Brisbane in 1959, included youth debates, where participants discussed the problems of living among the younger generation of the Latvian community in Australian cities among non-Latvians (Silkalns, 1959).

This problem was extremely relevant for the Latvian community in Australia, because intellectuals became passive witnesses of the processes of their integration in Australian society (Gārša, 1961) and in fact attempts of young Latvians to become a part of Australian society institutionalised frontier between two generations of emigration and made Latvian in Australia to choose between integration and assimilation. Latvian intellectuals sought to find their place in Australian society, which forced them to imagine themselves as part of the Latvian or Australian political and cultural nation because permanent residence on the frontier between different cultures and identities became impossible. By the middle of the 1970s, Latvians were able to integrate into Australian society successfully, and it allowed them to accept the success of Patrick White, Australian writer and Nobel Prize winner, as the achievement of the nation, they belonged to (Bērziņa, 1974). Therefore, by the early 1980s, Latvian intellectuals in Australia (Vāvere, 1982) became more active in their attempts to compare Latvian and Australian traditions, mapping Latvian culture and identity in Australian contexts.

Therefore, the dissemination of information about the cultural life of emigration, about song festivals, the repertoire of Latvian theatres (Ābele, 1969; Ābele, 1970; Ābele, 1971; Ābele, 1972) was used by emigrants to preserve and visualize Latvian identity. The theatre in exile (Freimanis, 1974; Tompsons, 1979) became an important channel for the visualization and promotion of Latvian identity. Despite these diverse cultural activities and practices, Eduards Silkalns in 1957 stated the threat of assimilation of young generation can inspire negative results, including erosion of Latvian language and identity. Despite negative external factors, Latvian intellectuals in the second half of the 1950s believed that Latvian culture could survive in extremely difficult external conditions that stimulated its resistance and the desire of Latvians to preserve language and identity (Silkalns, 1957a). Kārlis Ābele (Ābele, 1962a) in this situation believed that only two alternatives existed for Australian Latvians, especially for young people, because



latviešu jaunietis Austrālijā dzīvo starp divām teorētiskām galējībām. Viena no tām ir visa latviskā aizmiršana, saejoties tikai ar austrāliešiem un lasot grāmatas tikai angļu valodā. Otra ir pretējā – dzīvošana tikai latviskā vidē

a Latvian young man in Australia lives between two theoretical extremes. The first one is the Latvian oblivion, life among the Australians only and reading in English also. The second one is the opposite – life in a Latvian environment only

Latvian intellectuals in the emigration of the 1960s and 1970s realized the painfulness of choosing between integration and assimilation, between isolation and attempts to find their place in Australian society in particular and the Western world in general, where actually various national identities became political and economic competing projects.

Therefore, Lūcija Bērziņa (Bērziņa, 1963) in one of her articles published in the first half of the 1960s quoted Mārtiņš Zīverts, Latvian playwright from Sweden, whose hero, Jānis Bicēns in the play “Raķete”, was forced to state that

dzīve ir tirgus, kur pērk un pārdod ne tikai maizi, konservus, automobiļus un veļu, bet arī sirdsapziņu, godu un patiesību

life is a market where not only bread, canned food, cars and linen are bought and sold, but conscience, honour and truth also

Kārlis Ābele presumed that historically the Latvians were doomed to be a nation of the frontier because they had unique historical experience of “living under the influence of two different cultures... and became spiritually more vigilant ... there is no need to deceive the Australian to be a real Latvian. Latvians in free Latvia lived under the influence of foreign cultures. Latvians received much from German, Russian and French cultures” (Ābele, 1962a).

Jānis Sarma, one of the Latvian intellectuals in Australia, commenting on the genesis of modern Latvian culture and identity, believed that Latvian national self-consciousness was historically frontier because neighbours, including Germans, became an important factor in the cultural development of Latvians: “Latvian literature in the early 20th century was in a transition, trying to get closer to European literature... Latvian literature has grown from the foundations of German literature. German literature was a model for us, Russian literature was also, but less. The structure of our sentences is German, although we do not want to admit it, because the Germans were our political enemies” (Sarma, 1962).

The feeling of Latvian identity as the frontier in this situation combined with collective political phobias and cultural fears, although Latvian cultural activists in exile were bold enough to admit that Latvian culture was never only Latvian and ethnic pure. Kārlis Ābele insisted that “the word ‘Australian’ should be used to mean a much vaguer concept than



the word ‘Latvian’ because the Australians have a much less developed national idea and patriotism”. Kārlis Ābele in exile offered to revise some of the values of Latvian nationalism, believing that “unshakable belief in the freedom of Latvia in the future is not a basic necessity for the preservation of Latvia. If we were confident that Latvia would never regain independence, we would have to remain Latvians as long as possible. Unconditional faith in Latvia’s freedom is not a duty, and the struggle for Latvia’s independence is our duty ... we should not try to be ‘pure’ Latvians: we can learn a lot from other cultures without becoming worse than other Latvians” (Ābele, 1962a).

### **FRONTIER TEXTUALIZATION: THE EXPERIENCE OF AUSTRALIAN LATVIAN INTELLECTUALS**

Different cultural events were among means, intellectuals used in their attempts to actualize and visualize Latvian identity in Australia, but narrative practices, including various texts, prose, poetry, essays, played a more important role in the preservation of Latvian identity in a situation when another culture and language dominated. If cultural events made Latvian ethnicity more visible and Latvian language more audible, then intellectual practices formed the Latvian discourse in Australia, encouraging intellectuals to reflect constantly on the possibilities and ways of preservation and development of Latvian identity. Poetry (Pļavkalns, 1967b) was one of those narrative practices and strategies that Latvian intellectuals in Australia used actively to preserve identity.

Eduards Silkalns was one of the leading Latvian poets in Australia in the second half of the 1950s and 1960s. The poetic texts of Eduards Silkalns actualised a wide range of diverse images, including attempts to understand the role of Latvians in exile. Eduards Silkalns (Silkalns, 1961a) imagined exile as parting from the Motherland, which became visible only in dreams, when

šis sapnis dažkārt liek man jūras malā

this dream leads me sometimes to the edge  
of the sea

Kārlis Ābele (Ābele, 1961b) also found peace only in shaky realities of the frontiers between spaces of sleep, memories, imagination, delusions and hallucinations, when his hero

nevaicāju, kas ir Dievs, kas ir mīlestība,  
patiesība, cerība, taisnība, laime

do not ask who is God, what is love, truth,  
hope, faith, happiness



The forced stay in Australia became emigration for Latvian intellectuals (Silkalns, 1959b; Silkalns, 1961b), who imagined Latvia as motherland where

tik daudzu kurpju nospiedumus smiltīs      so many shoe footprints [were left] in sand

Therefore, Eduards Silkalns defined the state of the Latvian community in Australia as a frontier:

parīt	the day after tomorrow
gribētos salīt	I'd like to salad
un pirmdien nokārtu	and on Monday
galvu	head
mīlētās balvu...	loved prize ...
piektdien gribētos	on Friday would like
zvanīt	to call
jaunai ar mītni	new with headquarters
siltu	warm
kas vērtu	what's worth
drīzi	soon
uz paradīzi	to paradise
vārtus	gates
un karstu sārtu	and hot pink
lietus trāpītam	rain hit
gribētu iedegt	would like to light up
un teikt – esmu Toska	and say – I'm Tosca
tad parīt	then the day
atkal kā svētdienā	again as on Sunday
gribētos salīt	I'd like to salad

Actually, Eduards Silkalns in these contexts tried to fix the state of frontierity of time, when existence in a formally prosperous consumer society lost its spiritual meaning, because life turned into a series of chaotic days, which are full with attempts to realize gastronomic and biological needs of the poetic hero, who lost any links with his romantic and national predecessors.

The exile actualized the states and feelings of transitivity, frontierity and fluctuation, and the Australian realities of a society without a historical past and cultural heritage forced Latvian intellectuals to realize the frontier status of their own community, which started to exist between the past and the future, because the present became the frontier between historical memory and social amnesia, between isolation and assimilation. Emigration actualized images of death in the texts of Latvian authors in Australia:

Es abām acīm skatu promenādi,	I look at the promenade with both eyes
Kur paēnā uz trula trotuāra	Where in the yard on the troll sidewalk
Kāds čalis stāv un malko limonādi,	Some guy standing and sipping lemonade
Jo mani gūsta vēlēšanās kāra.	Because I am lusted by desire.
Man ilgas zūd pēc skaļa alus bāra	I miss a long beer bar
Un naudas, par ko kožlāt šokolādi,	And the money to chew chocolate
Pēc kioskiem, kur karstus suņus vāra,	At kiosks where hot dogs boil
Un vaļas, kad var lasīt Iliādi.	And wake up when you can read the Iliad

Eduards Silkalns (Silkalns, 1961b) in this intellectual situation actualized other hypostases of the frontier poet: a blurred, extremely conditional and imagined border between prosperous consumer culture, a feeling of saturation, bourgeois satiety and biological thirst and high classical antique culture.

Osvalds Lācis (Lācis, 1963b) believed that Latvians in emigration became a sleeping nation, and sleep turned into a shaky space, one more frontier where sleepers can return to the past. Past, collective and individual memories became factors that did not allow Latvians in Australia to lose their identity and language. Hugo Kaupmanis (Kaupmanis, 1963), commenting on the contradictory relationships between Latvian intellectuals in exile and their history, stressed that

pagātne ir prologs, tā nav nenožīmīga, bez	the past is a prologue, it is not
tās nevar iztikt, no tās var sākt. Tā ir	insignificant, it cannot be dispensed, it can
vakardienas tradīcija, uz kuŗu balstās	be started. It is yesterday's tradition... it is
tagadnes un celsies nākotnes dzejas	based on the present, but the tradition of
tradīcija	future poetry will rise

Eduards Silkalns (Silkalns, 1961b) described the Latvian community in emigration as a nation at a crossroads, comparing it with “daudis vēl nekāpa vilcienos, jo vilciens nebija kustīgs” (“the people who are not moving”), because exile became a search for compromise with the memory of the homeland. Therefore, the non-lyrical hero in emigration got incarnations that were radically different from features of the romantic hero, because Latvian poets decided to part with romanticism (Pļavkalns, 1965b) because its heritage became too problematic for Latvian intellectuals who understood that traditional romantic poetry became an obstacle in their attempts to integrate into Australian society.

Kārlis Ābele (Ābele, 1961a) was one of those Latvian intellectuals in exile who expressed the state of frontierity very subtly in his texts, where he recognized pessimistically the precariousness and fragility of the world and space





Mēs esam šaubītāju paaudze.	We are a generation of doubters.
Mūsu vide	Our environment
Ir trausla kā sidraba burbulis	is fragile like a lemon bubble
Straujas straumes virsmā;	The surface of a rapid stream;
Un mēs nezinām, kas rītu būsim:	And we don't know what will be
Latvieši – vai austrālieši, amerikāņi,	tomorrow:
Angļi, vācieši vai zviedri,	Latvians – or Australians, Americans,
Vai arī krievi.	Englishmen, Germans, Swedes
Šis gadu simts ir karogu dzimšanas un	Or Russians.
nāves laiks.	This century is the time of the birth and
Robežas rodas un gaist	death of the flags.
Kā viļņi jūrā,	Boundaries arise and flies
Kā dūmi vējainā dienā.	as waves, you feel
Nekas nav pastāvīgs:	As smoke on a windy day.
Klintis lēnām sairst smilšu graudos,	Nothing permanent:
Un zeme trakā steigā riņķo apkārt saulei.	The rocks fall slowly into the sand,
Senie vārdi -	And the earth is raging around the sun in a
Dievs, mīlestība, patiesība,	hurry.
Cerība, taisnība, laime -	Ancient words -
Valkā sirmus klišeju mēteļus	God, love, truth,
Vai elegantas frakas ar cinisma nelķēm	Hope, True, Happiness -
pogcaurumos.	Wear plain clover coats
Pasaule liekas neīsta -	Or elegant cascades with cynic carnations
Ka kino teātra greznā fasāde,	in buttonholes.
Kas aizsedz aizmugures pagalmā	The world seems to be dull -
rūsošās atkritumu tvertnes	The Cinema theatres luxurious facade
Un putekļu klātās, saplēstās pudeles.	What's in the back yard
Kam lai ticam? Vai vispār kam lai ticam?	rusty waste bins
	And dusted broken bottles.
	Who do we believe in? What do we
	believe at all?

If the hero of Kārlis Ābele reflects painfully on the political metamorphoses and radical changes that led to the disappearance of his homeland, replacing the national flag with the red Soviet one, if the hero of Kārlis Ābele realizes that assimilation is a possible scenario, if the hero of Gundars Pļavkalns (Pļavkalns, 1967a) tried to understand the reality of another world, then the hero of Eduards Silkalns does not want to put up with it and seek a compromise with the anti-human reality of Soviet authoritarianism or coercion and dictate of the consumer society and therefore he justified and legitimized suicide (Silkalns, 1965b) as a radical strategy of struggle against the anti-human nature of consumerism. The frontier hero of Eduards Silkalns (Silkalns, 1965a) claims that

ir skaistāk lasīt par pagātņi, nekā laužties pagātnē iekšā it is more beautiful to read about the past than to break into the past

Therefore, Kārlis Ābele recognized that immigrants lost gradually their ability to control memory of the past, because “atmiņu aizsaulē dziestošās dienas” or “memory went in the days of desolation” (Ābele, 1962b). Gundars Pļavkalns, commenting on the metamorphosis and misadventures of literary heroes of Latvian prose in exile, presumed that they “became biocentric personalities ... they are not idealists or romantics, they are not inclined to be interested in art, philosophy and the correction of the world ... They themselves realize sometimes that they are the same with other types of mammals” (Pļavkalns, 1965a).

Latvian intellectuals (Eglītis, 1978) presumed that spiritual crisis became a defining factor in the life of Latvians in exile:

<p>nav ne zelta, ne zīda. Un nav arī kuģa. Nav pat ielas vairs, un nav arī māju. Tikai varens ceļš priekšā, viņā pusē ugunis logos. Vienā tā tumša, vai tur dedzina sveces? Nē, tā vienmēr tur tumša, to jau vajadzēja zināt... Nekā nevar darīt. Nekā to uzzināt. Pretī plašais ceļš, logā tumša gaisma, uz stūra tālruņa būda. Un viņš tur stāv un nezina, ko darīt. Tā reizēm gadās: cilvēks nezina, ko darīt</p>	<p>there is no gold or silk. And there is no ship. Not even the street anymore, and there is no house. Only the mighty road ahead, the lights in the windows on its side. Is it dark... did candles burn here? No, it is always dark, it should have been known... Nothing can be done. Don't know it. Opposite the wide road, the dark light in the window, the rack of the phone. And he stands there and doesn't know what to do. It sometimes happens: a person does not know what to do</p>
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Therefore, the rhetorical question of Eduards Silkalns (Silkalns, 1964)

<p>kas bez pagātnes pavisam būtu bešā remains unanswered because the Latvian writers (Ābele, 1963a), describing their heroes, emphasized that</p>	<p>who would be without a past</p>
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<p>šaubas: manas māsas. Nervu Šķiedras: gītāras soprāna stigas</p>	<p>doubts: my sisters. Nerve Fiber: Guitar soprano strings</p>
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The past as an imagined ideal history and collective memories did not release Latvian immigrants, turning them into hostages of their own past and the frontier between the unfinished past (the memory of independent Latvia was consciously cultivated in emigration) and an uncertain future. Therefore, critics in exile admitted that Latvian emigration writers became a hostage of the frontier because their heroes fluctuated painfully between a



free Latvian state, camps for displaced persons, emigration (Eglītis, 1963; Rozentāle, 1972) and traditional Latvian culture.

The traditional ethnic culture was a universal ideal for Latvian intellectuals in exile because foreign reality seemed to them a ghostly frontier when ethnicity was imagined as a stable and powerful basis of identity: “Latvians were lyricists. For decades, we looked with envy at our northern neighbours – Estonians, Finns, Norwegians, whose novels entered the world literature. There were about 2 million Latvians, and we had 2 million folk songs” (Kaupmanis, 1963). Questions about the preservation of the nation, language and identity, Latvian intellectuals (Lācis, 1977) asked themselves in exile, remained unanswered because

atbilde laikam paliktu tikpat neskaidra kā the answer would probably remain blurred  
nakts miglā viesnīca as a hotel in the night fog

Actually Eduards Silkalns actualized the frontier character of Latvian culture in particular, and Australian culture in general, because they mutated in the symbiosis of the mass cultural welfare of the consumer society and rare random memories of the high cultures of antiquity: classical Greek texts degraded to external backgrounds of consumption and satisfied social and biological needs of protagonist, who ceased to be a romantic hero, but became a man of the frontier between existence and consumption, various cultures and identities.

The transformation of the poetics of Latvian verse in this intellectual and cultural situation became virtually inevitable, and therefore the heroes of Kārlis Ābele (Ābele, 1963a) were forced to listen to “sludina dīvaini apustuļi” (“preach to strange apostles”) in a situation of “neuzticības un vienaldzības austā” (“unbelief and indifference”). Kārlis Ābele’s heroes of this period imagined the world as

pasaule šķiet slima kā viņu pašu spilgto, the world seems sick like their own bright,  
sakropļoto murgu un noreibušās domas mutilated nightmare and frowning thoughts

where “noguris vējš laiski trenkā pelēku pelnu pārslas” (“tired wind blows grey ash flakes”). The world in this poetic imagination lost its naturalness, transforming into a technocratic nightmare: “mākslīgu sauļu sirdis glaudīsies pie zemes” (“the hearts of artificial suns will shrink to the land”). The world of emigration, imagined by Kārlis Ābele, became the frontier space between norm and madness. Therefore, a situation when “sarkanu iedomu debesis novilkta lejā pie zemes” or “red imagined sky pulls down to the earth” (Ābele, 1963b) became possible in this world only.



Therefore, images of frontierity and uncertainty were inevitable in his poetic texts, where the lyrical hero ceased to be a romantic, feeling an agonizing identity crisis, calling for the help of God (Silkalns, 1958b) and remembering the inevitable presence of death in everyday life

Dievs ir liels un skaists kā mākonis.	God is great and beautiful as a cloud.
Es bez Dieva būtu izmisis.	I would be desperate without God.
Dievs man rāda skaidros gaismas ceļus	God shows clear paths of light to me
Ceļos.	Roads.
Nāve ir kā melna, ļauna sieva.	Death is like a black, evil wife.
Nāve izkāmējusi un tieva.	Death has melted and died.
Nāve vēlas pulcēt daudzus veļus	Death wants to bring together many linens

The poetic narratives of Eduards Silkalns were filled with images and motives of the frontier, the fragility of boundaries and inconstancy of states. Emigration and exile, a distance from the historical centres of Latvian culture, daily existence in a different cultural environment inspired identity crisis. Latvian identity in Australia existed in an alien cultural environment which was separated from Latvian culture and identity by an unsteady and uncertain frontier. This situation of frontier institutionalised the threat of integration, which could lead to complete assimilation and loss of Latvian identity.

## PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

Summarizing up the main ideas of the article, several factors should be taken into account because they determined the main vectors and trajectories of transformations and developments of Latvian frontier identity among intellectuals of Latvian origin who lived in Australia between the 1940s and 1980s. Initially, Latvian identity among emigrants from Latvia to Australia developed as a predominantly ethnic Latvian, because they were afraid to lose ethnicity, their language and elements of folk culture. The emigrants did not bring traditional and archaic versions and forms of Latvian culture and identity to Australia, because a significant part of the emigrants had an education and their cultural level was higher than the level of their historical predecessors, whose identity was more traditional and archaic.

The modernization of identity, which began in Latvia, on the one hand, was the factor that inspired the processes of erosion and the gradual destruction of the ethnic foundations of Latvian identity in Australia. On the other hand, Latvian immigrants in Australia found themselves in a society that was radically different in comparison with the society of the First Republic or other European countries. Australia, which historically



emerged as a British colony, in contrast to European countries, has never been a nation-state or a nationalizing society. Australia, like the USA or Canada, became a country of immigrants and a society of various national communities, which lost their ethnic characteristics and national languages, becoming an Australian political nation gradually. This situation of national development was radically different from the realities that were known to Latvian immigrants before the exile.

Forced, politically stimulated emigration and exile into Australian realities changed Latvians as a community radically in general and their identity in particular, because yesterday Europeans emigrated in the country where social, cultural and linguistic frontiers were normal. The previous social statuses were lost, cultural guidelines were changed, the language became an obstacle to successful integration into Australian society. These factors stimulated the tendencies of hybridization and marginalization of Latvian identity in Australia simultaneously, but despite the role of negative factors, Latvians were among those communities that were able to survive on the situation of the frontier, integrating their identity into Australian contexts, retaining the language and other attributes of politicized ethnicity. Latvian identity in emigration and exile became a victim of textualization: the frontier contributed to its marginalization and mental migration to the periphery of social and cultural life.

Discourse, as a set of politically and ideologically motivated narratives in the Latvian language, became the main form of the existence of the identity of intellectuals in exile who became hostages of the frontier: they taught at universities in English, their business became English-speaking, they and their children became bilinguals, but they continued to speak Latvian in national clubs, in societies and churches. Therefore, the writing of intellectual texts and essays in Latvian, the writing of prose and poetry in Latvian, the cooperation with journals in Latvian from Australia, the USA, Canada and Europe became a form of actualization of the identity of the frontier groups and communities that existed between their own and others' traditions, between different political and social identities, between languages and cultures.

Emigration and exile altered the Latvian identity substantially, but they could not inspire its death, because Latvian intellectuals rejected the idea of assimilation as the euthanasia of culture and identity, they perceived and imagined as their own. Emigration became the factor that stimulated the mutation of the Latvian identity, turning it from a national into a peripheral, frontier and virtually alien. The presence of the Latvian community, language and identity in a multicultural mosaic of modern Australia once again actualizes the constructivist potential of nationalism as

a political project, because nationalists, as intellectuals who imagine and invent a nation, were able to adapt and integrate into a new society, recognizing themselves as aliens and therefore maintaining their identity and language, abandoning the radical extremes of assimilation and isolation. Therefore, the Australian cultural frontier did not become the space of euthanasia of Latvian identity but turned into another cultural space for its existence and articulation.

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