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**Latvian literature in Lithuania – perception of classic and contemporary  
literature after 1991**

**Lotyšská literatura v Litvě – percepce klasické a současné literatury po  
roce 1991**

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I declare that the following MA thesis is my own work for which I used only the sources and literature mentioned, and that this thesis has not been used in the course of other university studies or in order to acquire the same or another type of diploma.

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## **Abstract**

Although, based on geographical proximity and belonging to one language family, it may seem very likely that Latvian literature will be an inseparable part of the Lithuanian book market, the absence of a more comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach focused on the period after 1991 to this topic rather indicates the opposite. The aim of this work is to evaluate the perception of Latvian literature by the professionals (literary scholars), both classical and contemporary, and at the same time to compare whether the tendency to translate Latvian works into Lithuanian is weakening or strengthening. Even though a wide range of works from Latvian literature were translated between 1990-2023, it could be assumed that there is not a proportionate number of works that would map the development and perception of Latvian literature in Lithuania. Although the goal of this thesis is not to completely fill this empty space, the ambition remains to systematically describe these phenomena and, if possible, also explain the factors that lead to a smaller (or, conversely, a larger) number of translations from Latvian literature.

Keywords: Latvian literature, translations, literary reception, Lithuania, contemporary literature, classic literature

## **Abstrakt**

Přestože se na základě geografické blízkosti a příslušnosti k jedné jazykové rodině může zdát velmi pravděpodobné, že lotyšská literatura bude neoddělitelnou součástí litevského knižního trhu, absence komplexnějšího a interdisciplinárnějšího přístupu zaměřeného na období po roce 1991 k tomuto tématu spíše naznačuje opak. Cílem této práce je zhodnotit vnímání lotyšské literatury odborníky (literárními vědci), jak staršími, tak současnými, a zároveň porovnat, zda tendence překládat lotyšská díla do litevštiny slábne nebo sílí. I když byla v letech 1990-2023 přeložena široká škála děl z lotyšské literatury, dalo by se předpokládat, že neexistuje úměrný počet děl, která by mapovala vývoj a vnímání lotyšské literatury v Litvě. Přestože cílem této práce není zcela zaplnit toto prázdné místo, zůstává ambicí tyto jevy systematicky popsat a pokud možno i vysvětlit faktory, které vedou k menšímu (nebo naopak většímu) počtu překladů z lotyšské literatury.

Klíčová slova: lotyšská literatura, překlady, literární recepce, Litva, současná literatura, klasická literatura

# Table of Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1.1.    DISCUSSING LITERARY RECEPTION – GENERAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE DISCIPLINE AND ITS LIMITS</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1.2.    WHAT IS BALTIC LITERATURE?.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>1.3.    BALTIC LITERARY STUDIES .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>2.    TRANSLATIONS BETWEEN 1990 TO 2012 (AFTER GAINING INDEPENDENCE) .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>2.1. POETRY .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>2.2. MEANS OF PROMOTION OF TRANSLATION QUALITY.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>2.3. TRANSLATIONS AS A KEY FACTOR IN POPULARIZING LATVIAN LITERATURE IN LITHUANIA .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>3.    TRANSLATIONS BETWEEN 2013 AND 2023 .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>3.1. GENERAL TRENDS OF THE CHOSEN PERIODS .....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>4.    SUPPORT MECHANISMS FOR LATVIAN LITERATURE ABROAD - STRATEGIES AND TOOLS.....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>4.1. FUTURE PERSPECTIVES.....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>5.    CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>54</b>

## Introduction

The book market, as well as other segments dealing with culture and its dissemination, have seen fundamental changes with the advent of technology. This work does not aim to map the extent to which the book market has changed due to the greater volume of use of various technologies, the aim of this work is to map the development of one specific market from the perspective of one specific literature. On a global scale, this is a completely marginalized segment, but even so it is of course possible to apply theories that deal with the description of related phenomena to it.

The aim of this work is to map and analyze the perception of literature originally written in Latvian and published in Lithuania in the period after the restoration of independence in 1991. The chosen title may seem very general. The word perception in the title of the work itself is not further developed by any adjective, and it is therefore not possible to determine at first glance what kind of perception it is. This ambiguous title was chosen quite deliberately. In the presented work, I present two seemingly disproportionate perspectives on the given issue. Although it is essential for a work of a similar nature to present a high-quality analysis of specific literary criticism, I consider it no less important to monitor various other factors in connection with this topic - the volume of translated translations and whether these translations have won any literary awards, the presence of translations in literary periodicals, literary relevant events, the presence of active literary institutions, etc.

This work aims to map the current situation regarding the publication and reception of Latvian literature in Lithuania. Both Latvia and Lithuania share a complex history of being part of various empires and states, including the Soviet Union. Exploring how historical events and cultural exchanges have shaped perceptions of each other's literature is essential to detect possible specifics and deviations. The thesis also contains a separate section dedicated to the assessment of translation and accessibility, since these factors are integral to understanding of the reception of Latvian literature in Lithuania. Translation traditionally serves as a bridge for cultural exchange, influencing the dissemination and reception of literary works across borders. Analyzing the quality

and quantity of translations sheds light on the extent of cross-cultural engagement and its impact on the reception of Latvian literature within Lithuanian literary circles. This examination illuminates the dynamics of cultural assimilation and the interplay between linguistic mediation and literary reception in the chosen country (Lithuania). Although it is very difficult and subjective to measure, the presented work will also include an analysis describing the current cultural scene and cultural exchange between Latvia and Lithuania. An inseparable part of the work is also the analysis of literary institutions and their undertaken initiatives. Examining the role of literary institutions, such as publishers, literary festivals, and cultural organizations, in promoting Latvian literature in Lithuania can provide insights into the mechanisms of cultural dissemination and reception.

The most important part of the work will deal with the analysis of criticism regarding the published Latvian literature. Analyzing reviews, critical essays, and scholarly works discussing Latvian literature in Lithuania can reveal the reception of Latvian authors and their works within the Lithuanian literary field. Investigating current trends in the reception of Latvian literature in Lithuania may also provide us with denoting possible future developments and offer insights into broader regional literary landscapes.

Based on the areas of research interest, several research questions were pointed out. These questions delve into the intricacies of the translation and publication of Latvian literature in the Lithuanian environment (Lithuanian market). Firstly, what factors play an essential role in the selection process of Latvian literary works for translation into Lithuanian? Understanding the criteria behind the choice of works may offer valuable insights into the dynamics of cross-cultural literary exchange and the preferences of both publishers and readers.

Secondly, the inquiry extends to the determinants shaping the publication of specific Latvian literary pieces in Lithuania. Is this driven predominantly by shared historical backgrounds, socio-cultural affinities, the commercial success of the original works in their home country, or a combination of these factors? Unraveling the motivations behind the publication decisions provides a better understanding of the cultural dynamics at play in the literary landscape of Lithuania.

Moreover, can patterns be discerned regarding the types of books typically chosen for translation? Exploring trends in the selection of literary genres and themes sheds light on the preferences and interests of the Lithuanian audience, as well as the

strategies adopted by publishers. Finally, having answers on the aforementioned questions, can we anticipate which literary works are likely to be marked for translation in the upcoming years? This forward-looking perspective enables a proactive approach to literary translation and contributes to the ongoing enrichment of the Latvian-Lithuanian literary dialogue.

## **1. Theoretical Framework**

### **1.1. Discussing literary reception – general understanding of the discipline and its limits**

The traditional description of literary reception of a literary work is the complex analysis set in the specified period and specified place. Researching the reception of a literary work is a complex process that should be preceded by a careful analysis of various factors operating in the researched environment. Here, I mostly operate with what is in literary theory known as the reception theory.

Reception theory, which is a branch of reader-response literary theory, focuses on how individual readers interpret and derive meaning from literary texts. It emphasizes that the meaning of a text is not solely determined by the author's intentions but also by the reader's reception, interpretation, and cultural context. In other words, it highlights the active role of the reader in constructing meaning from the text they engage with (Holub, 1984, p. 48; Jauss, 1982, p. 72).

A fundamental step is to determine the target group. In the case of this work, the target group is the professional public. The professional public in the context of this work means literary critics, literary scholars, or people working in the publishing industry — publishers, editors, translators.

In the context of this work, however, I will focus primarily on reviews and articles by literary scholars, but the work will also include comments from translators, as they are closely connected with their translated titles and can provide interesting insight into the whole process of book publishing from their position. However, attention will also be paid to the non-specialist public, usually featuring reviews and other relevant material in non-specialized periodicals or websites. In this case, publications of a non-specialist nature (criticism in non-literary magazines, all



publications related to a literary work, etc.) can be the subject of examination of the reception of the non-specialist public.

In the context of literary translation and publication, the term "non-professional public" refers to readers, book enthusiasts, and the general public who consume literature but may not have specialized knowledge or training in the field of translation or literature studies. In both cases (both in the analysis of the reception of the professional and non-specialist public), both the quantitative principle will be used - responding mainly to the questions of how many works of literature originally written in Latvian were published in the mentioned period and what attention was paid to them (with the aim of finding out whether certain development principles and trends appear, which have a chance to repeat themselves in the future - e.g. the tendency to publish a certain literary genre, preferences of specific authors, etc.), and of course the qualitative principle, which will be applied to selected reviews in order to find out what the attitude of their authors towards the examined works.

Traditionally, the reception of works includes translation of the text, reviews by critics, the functioning of literary opinion in the public space, articles and reviews, the influence of the writer on the literature and culture of the "receiving" country (if any) and opinion shaped by mass culture. But is the quantitative point of view the only one that can really analyze the reception of specific literature?

This issue can be well illustrated by the example of Polish literature situation in Lithuania. For example, what factors will act when trying to analyze the reception of Polish literature in Lithuania? A specific issue arises here. When it comes specifically to the reception of Polish literature in Lithuania, the historical and cultural process must be kept in mind. Already at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, Lithuanian readers were primarily interested in those phenomena of Polish literature that were related to Lithuania, told about its past, nature and evoked patriotic feelings.

Lithuanian national aspirations were found in the works of such authors as Adomas Mickevičius, Józefas Ignacas Kraszewskis, Władysław Syrokomla or Marija Rodziewiczówna (Kalėda, 2009, p. 187). Literary scholar Algis Kalėda further argues that in the case of the reception of Polish literature in Lithuania, one can also observe a phenomenon that can be described as the search for certain national values in the work of Polish writers originating from Lithuania. And this is a natural process (Kalėda, 1994, p. 7).

So, if the search for certain or common national values is one of the factors that influence the selection of a literary work to be translated, what values could be highlighted in the case of Latvian literature? Could it be concluded that this factor is universal? Teresa Dalecka, lecturer at the Polish Studies Center of the University of Vilnius, literary historian, in her article for the cultural periodical *Krantai* (02/2013) writes that: "From what has been said here, it can be defined that Polish literature interests the Lithuanian readers, especially when they talk about problems close to them. There is a kind of mirror that Lithuania, the Lithuanian nation, is looking into. Sometimes this kind of "dialogue" has the features of a polemic. But nevertheless, Polish literature seeks contacts with its own culture, its own problems" (Dalecka, 2013). This is in line with what already in 1999 a reviewer of Mickevičius' translations into Lithuanian noted, that in order to get a broader picture of Mickevičius's work, more of his works, which do not necessarily contain Lithuanian themes, should be translated (Ažubalytė, 1999, p. 151). The author also criticizes the absence of deeper and professional interest of Lithuanian literary critics in Polish literature.

However, this is not an isolated case. The fact that many factors need to be taken into account when analyzing the reception of a certain type of literature in a certain place can be seen, for example, in the reception of Scandinavian literature in Lithuania and Latvia. As Gaižiūnas notes in his book *Skandinavų literatūros ir baltiškieji kontekstai* (Scandinavian literature and Baltic contexts, 2008) "in the first half of the 20th c. the Latvian literature was orientated to the fundamental cognition of the Scandinavian literature by publishing multi-volume writings of K. Hamsun, S. Undset, S. Lagerlöf, H. C. Andersen, whereas the reception of the Scandinavian literature in Lithuania was more closely related to political topicalities" (Gaižiūnas, 2008, p. 4). Although it was not rare that the same books were chosen for translation into Lithuanian and Latvian, their reception depended on the specific environment. It seems that in the case of Scandinavian literature main differentiating factor seems to be the purpose of their publication. Scandinavian literature and its reception are not an unexplored discipline even in neighboring Latvia, where a literary scholar Laimonis Stepiš (1927–1989) is considered the founder of this subdiscipline.

But what factors determine which books reach foreign book markets? More and more often we come across that the term globalization is mentioned as a universal explanation for all contemporary phenomena. However, what significance does it have in the context of the identified research problem, i.e., the state of Latvian literature in

neighboring Lithuania? However, the market analysis alone (or the list of published translations) is not sufficient for us to be able to answer these questions satisfactorily.

The research on the impact of globalization on the literary markets has been ongoing for a long period including names such as Tomlinson (Tomlinson, 1991, p. 78) who with his core–periphery model emphasizes its homogenizing effect on the markets or Regev (Regev, 2007, p.133) who underlines the reception approach analysis.

However, undoubtedly the most prominent scholar involved in the research of this phenomenon, is Pierre Bourdieu with his theory of field. For Bourdieu a "field" is like a stage where people and their social roles are placed. Each person's role on this stage is determined by how they interact with the rules of the field, their personal traits (habitus), and their resources (social, economic, and cultural capital). Fields can influence each other and are often arranged in a hierarchy, with most being under the control of larger fields related to power and social class (Bourdieu, 1993, p.92)

This can of course be applied to the field of translation or the field of book production. Bourdieu might also give a possible explanation on why certain works may be more popular than others. Bourdieu's popular work *Distinction a social critique of the judgement of taste* reveals that consumers seek to cultivate and demonstrate a refined taste through their consumption choices, using them to signal (and also possible reinforce) the social class they belong to. Consumers often choose goods that showcase their alleged sophistication, leading to the popularity of activities considered culturally refined and highly esteemed. Bourdieu argues that this discerning taste is a result of historical and educational influences, as cultural consumption requires a cognitive process to decode cultural codes. Bourdieu refers to this acquired knowledge as cultural capital, which allows individuals to navigate and interpret cultural contexts (Bourdieu, 2018, p. 302).

Why is this important and should be noted in the context of this thesis? Given that the core of this work is the analysis of the Lithuanian market in terms of translations from Latvian, not only from a quantitative point of view (i.e. how many books were published, how many books of a particular genre were published during the given period, etc.), but also from a qualitative point of view (i.e. which works have received the most attention, are there any authors whose works have been completely translated into Lithuanian, how is the reception of Latvian literature different from the lay public), it is important to realize who actually shapes the public discourse regarding literature. Marketing and economic factors aside, who or what instance determines what works

become canon, what works become popular? What decides what works will become classics?

In his insightful study of the awards industry, "The Economy of Prestige", James F. English, American literary scholar specializing in modern and contemporary British fiction, argues that despite the "staggering discontinuities" between the canon at any given time and the list of past prizewinners, it is precisely by such embarrassingly social-commercial-cultural mechanisms...that the canon is formed, cultural capital is allocated, 'greatness' is determined" (English, 2005, p. 244).

How, based on the discussion in the preceding paragraphs, should classic Latvian literature be defined? Before delving into the literary analysis of the chosen period and its implications, it is important to clarify the title of this thesis. While the term "classical literature" traditionally refers to the literature of ancient civilizations, such as ancient Greece and Rome, the term "classic literature" does not necessarily carry these connotations. However, the distinction is not that straightforward. The term classic might have also different connotations.

The word classics is derived from Latin where it denotes something or someone pertaining to the highest class of citizens. The term *classicus* was used to denote the members of the highest class in ancient Rome. By the 2nd century AD, the term was employed in literary criticism to describe writers of exceptional quality. Four centuries later, the term started being used for denoting pupils in schools. Thus, the contemporary meanings of the word, which refer both to literature considered to be of the highest quality and to standard texts used in education, originated from its use in ancient Rome. (Ziolkowski, 2007, p. 17). If we were to take these aspects into account, the situation would certainly not be easier. But how could we understand the term classic literature in the modern context?

Considering what Ziolkowski mentions, can we analyze which authors appear, for example, in school curricula in Latvia? Will this division be authoritative?

An interesting perspective on the use of the aforementioned theories is offered by the work of the French literary scholar Gisèle Sapiro, who analyzes the diversity of literary translations published in the USA and France. Applying Bourdieu's framework to the publishing field, Sapiro concludes that while English appears predominantly in large-scale production, there is significant diversity in source languages in small-scale production (which could be applied to the Lithuanian market, as well). This diversity is

attributed to the historical connection between literature, language, and nation (Sapiro, 2010, p. 436).

## 1.2. What is Baltic literature?

Given that this work is written in English and the term Baltic literatures is quite commonly used in English-language sources, it is vital to analyze this term first. There seems to be a general tendency to use the generalizing term Baltic literatures, carelessly mixing Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian literatures based on the geographic proximity of these countries.

This may also be based on the linguistic proximity of Lithuanian and Latvian, however, the literary tradition of both countries should be treated separately, which is unfortunately often not the case. Vigmantas Butkus argues that "Strengthening, protecting or crossing or overcoming boundaries usually form socio-cultural blocks of collective self-concept and memory, which dictate positive or negative, dramatic or comic stereotypical images of the "beyond" and its relationship with the "other" with the "beyond". Therefore, single individual, let alone ephemeral, testimonies about experiences giving meaning to the search for selfhood, lived by connecting "beyond" the border with "beyond" are very significant". (Butkus, 2018, p. 34).

This suggests that there might be a geopolitical nominator enhancing the generalization.

It is not difficult to find works that deal with the analysis of the literature of all three Baltic states within one unit. One such notable work is the publication "20th-century Baltic Drama: Postcolonial Narratives, Decolonial Options" (Kalnačs, 2016), which delves into the complexities of Baltic dramatic literature in the context of postcolonial and decolonial discourse. Another important reference is the encyclopedic edition "300 Baltic Writers: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania: A Reference Guide to Authors and Their Works" (published in cooperation of Vilnius: Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore; Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art, University of Latvia; Under and Tuglas Literature Centre of the Estonian Academy of Sciences, 2009) (Kalnačs, 2009), compiled and edited by Benedikts Kalnačs along with J. Undusk and J. Sprindītis. This comprehensive guide provides valuable insights into the works of numerous Baltic writers, placing them all together in one encyclopedia. Focusing on the publications especially dealing with common denominators of the literary

development in the three respective Baltic countries, the collective monograph "Latvieši, Igauni un Lietuvieši: Literārie un Kultūras Kontakti" (in Eng. Latvians, Estonians and Lithuanians: Literary and Cultural Contacts, Rīga: LU LFMI, 2008) (Kalnačs, 2008), edited by Benedikts Kalnačs, should also be mentioned. The monograph explores the literary and cultural contacts between Latvians, Estonians, and Lithuanians. To date, this is the most comprehensive book dealing with the given topic.

There are several other works focusing on the re-creation of the Baltic identity and its analysis. One of such books is "Back to Baltic Memory: Lost and Found in Literature 1940-1968" (Eglāja-Kristone, Kalnačs, 2008) or the collective monography of authors participating in the literary conference "We Have Something in Common: The Baltic Memory" (Kalnačs, Mihkelev, 2007). These publications collectively contribute to a deeper understanding of Baltic literature and its cultural significance.

Although, as partially exposed in the previous paragraph, it is not uncommon to focus on all three Baltic countries in the literary research, there are also works that deal with researching the Lithuanian-Latvian side specifically (in this context, the term Baltic literature may therefore be understood as referring to the literatures written in Baltic languages only). Such examples could be found in monographs such as "Literatūrinė baltistika: Samprata, raida, perspektyvos" ("Literary Baltic Studies: concept, development, perspectives") (Butkus, 2018, p. 48) a monograph that explores the concept, development, and perspectives of literary Baltistics, authored by Vigmantas Butkus. "Lietuvių ir latvių literatūriniai dialogai" ("Lithuanian-Latvian literary dialogues") (Butkus, 2019) is a collection of articles by various authors that delve into Lithuanian and Latvian literary dialogues. "Kultūros tradicijos baltų literatūrose. XX a. paralelės ir kontaktai" ("Cultural traditions in Baltic literatures. Parallels and contacts in 20th century") (Gaižiūnas, 1989) written by Silvestras Gaižiūnas examines specific cultural trends in Baltic literatures (here again, the term Baltic literatures is understood as literatures written in the Baltic languages) drawing parallels and exploring contacts in the 20th century. These works contribute significantly to the understanding of Baltic literary studies and cultural interactions.

### **1.3. Baltic Literary Studies**

Baltic studies are traditionally perceived rather as a linguistic discipline, which is largely based on the historical development of the studies. Laura Laurušaitė, leading

Lithuanian literary scholar and translator discusses the issue more thoroughly by stating that: "Another dilemma of literary Baltic studies is the question of the definition of the research area. Researches of Baltic literatures are often interpreted not only as researches of ethnically common Lithuanian and Latvian literatures, but as a starting point when considering the geopolitical complex of the three Baltic countries or the Baltic Sea region as a whole, the concept of which is extended not only to Poland, Germany, but also to Scandinavia — let's remember Kazios Pakštas's The idea of Baltoscandia and its modern implementation in the form of the Baltoscandia Academy established in 1991 in Panevėžys" (Laurušaitė, 2019, p. 186-193).

As Laurušaitė further points out, "in the general panorama of Baltic studies, three important trends in the development of literary Baltic studies stand out - 1) comparative Baltic studies conducted in Lithuanian humanities; 2) analogous studies are carried out in Latvian humanities and 3) the works of foreign Baltists (Umberto Dini in Italy, Endre Bojtár in Hungary, Radegast Parolek in the Czech Republic, Stephan Kessler in Germany, Ewo Stryczyńska-Hodyl in Poland, etc.)" (Laurušaitė, 2019, p. 188).

Although it has been suggested that Baltic studies are traditionally more of a linguistic scientific discipline, the history of Baltic literary studies is also quite rich. Butkus defines them as follows: The traditional concept of literary Baltic studies primarily includes comparative studies of the literatures of both Baltic nations: both the so-called genetic studies, when various direct links, influences, and connections between both literatures are studied, and typological studies, when attention is focused on the juxtaposition of the functioning of various cultural-literary universals of the Lithuanian and analysis in Latvian literature (Butkus, 2017, p. 27). He further argues that "The traditional concept of literary Baltic studies is primarily based on the criterion of ethno-linguistic kinship, and the latter not only determines the comparative dimension necessary for this type of research, but also integrates them generally into the totality of the disciplines of general Baltic studies and Baltic philology as a larger or smaller, more important or less significant part of that whole part" (Butkus, 2017, p. 28).

It is therefore clear from the above that it is basically impossible to approach Baltic studies as a homogeneous unit. In order to really achieve the set goals, within this work it is necessary to define which section will be given the most attention.

The central interest of this comparative work will therefore be translations of Latvian literature into Lithuanian. In the case of comparative literary studies translation is regarded as a macro-linguistic and cultural phenomenon.

In the Lithuanian environment, it is Kęstutis Nastopka's fundamental work "Lietuvių ir latvių literatūrų ryšiai" ("Relations Between Lithuanian and Latvian Literatures") (Nastopka, 1971) that is considered to be the formal beginning of the literary Baltic studies; it is also considered to be the first work to lay the foundations of separate discipline of comparative literature studies in Lithuania.

Later, Silvestras Gaižiūnas expanded the field and introduced new perspectives. In the preface of his book "Cultural Traditions in Baltic Literatures: Parallels and Contacts of the 20th Century" (Gaižiūnas, 1989), he described the book as an introductory work to literary Baltic studies, outlining its primary perspectives and directions.

Several notable books have been published in the field of Baltic literary studies. In 2018, Vigmantas Butkus released the monograph "Literatūrinė baltistika: Samprata, raida, perspektyvos" ("Literary Baltic Studies: Concept, Development, Perspectives") (Butkus, 2018), offering a comprehensive exploration of the subject. In 2019, "Lietuvių ir latvių literatūriniai dialogai" ("Lithuanian and Latvian Literary Dialogues") (Butkus, 2019) emerged as a collection of articles by various authors, delving into literary exchanges between the two cultures. These works, along with others by scholars such as Vigmantas Butkus, Laura Laurušaitė, and Viktorija Jonkutė, collectively enrich the study of Baltic literary traditions and dialogues.

Two notable literary-scientific publications delving into Latvian-Lithuanian relations are "Literatūra, mobilumas, imago: lietuvių ir latvių XXI a. (e)migracijos patirtys" ("Literature, Mobility, Imago: Lithuanian and Latvian (E)migration Experiences in the 21st Century") published in 2019, and "Tarp nostalgijos ir mimikrijos: Lietuvių ir latvių pokario išėivijos romanai" ("Between Nostalgia and Mimicry: Lithuanian and Latvian Post-war Émigré Novels") released in 2015 (Laurušaitė, 2019; Laurušaitė, 2015). These works (both written by Laura Laurušaitė) offer insightful analyses of the complex interplay between literature, migration, and identity, shedding light on the shared experiences and cultural exchanges between the two Baltic nations across different historical periods.

On the Latvian side, several important works have also been created, which deal with the presence of the literatures of neighboring countries and their reception in Latvia.



For illustration, we can cite, for example, a collective monograph "Latvieši, igauņi un lietuvieši: literārie un kultūras kontakti" ("Latvians, Estonians and Lithuanians: literary and cultural contacts") (Kalnačs, 2008), includes the study of literary scholar, professor of the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Latvia Māras Grudula "Estonians and Lithuanians — culture and literature in Latvian books and periodicals in the 17th-19th centuries", as well as the study of literary scholar Eva Eglājas-Kristsons's "Lithuanian literature in Latvia and the Latvian language."

Other researchers and workers who deal with this discipline are e.g. Liepāja University Faculty of Humanities and Arts and its researchers Zanda Gūtmane and Benedikts Kalnačs, Daugavpils University Center for Lithuanian Studies and its head Vilma Šaudiņas, as well as University of Latvia Center for Lithuanian Studies and its head Edmundas Trumpa.

## **2. Translations between 1990/91 to 2012 (after gaining independence)**

The period after 1990 includes one of the socio-culturally, but also economically, most varied periods of Lithuanian history. It is the post-independence era that brings with it various specifics in the book industry. In this section, I will significantly rely on the analysis of a literary scholar Regina Kvašytė who described this period quantitatively and qualitatively in her article *Latvių grožinė literatūra lietuviškai* (1990–2012 m.), ("Latvian fiction in Lithuanian (1990–2012)"), Kvašytė concludes his research by stating that "Latvian literature is not one of the literatures that are widely translated into Lithuanian, however, Latvian authors and their works of fiction are known in Lithuania" (Kvašytė, 2014, p.).

What does this mean in practice? As the author states, between the years 1990 and 2012, a total of 58 Latvian fiction books translated into Lithuanian were published. At the outset, however, I would like to draw attention to the fact that the sheer number of translations from Latvian to Lithuanian is data that has no informative value, unless it is provided with an accompanying commentary and is not based on various factors. That is why the information on the number should be provided with a comprehensive qualitative analysis of such data.

I compared the data that Kvašytė has presented in her article with official statistics and overview studies published annually by the Lithuanian National Library of Martynas Mažvydas (*Lietuvos leidybos statistika, 2019-2022*).

In some years, the data deviate quite noticeably. This is most likely since Kvašytė lists works of fine literature (or poetry and drama) in her overviews, while in the official statistics of the National Library of Lithuania, this differentiation did not occur at all until a certain year, and from their data, unfortunately, it is not possible to determine exactly what genre are published translations. These official numbers are therefore higher, since they include books of all genres (professional literature, manuals, textbooks, etc.).

The author also states that, compared to the Soviet era, in the mentioned period 1990-2012, there is a sharp decrease in interest in Latvian literature in Lithuanian translations. Due to the absence of official statistics, however, she draws attention to the fact that the given claim is based on a general statement and not official data. Estonian literary scholar Aile Möldre, who primarily focuses on the publishing system and book distribution in Estonia during the 20th century, also agrees with this statement adapted to the Estonian literary environment. In her article Möldre argues that "The most productive period in translating Latvian and Lithuanian literature was the Soviet period when the Baltic unity reached its peak. After regaining independence, the feeling of Baltic identity has diminished along-side with the decline in publishing of books translated from Latvian and Lithuanian." (Möldre, 2010, p. 304).

This may be largely related to the claims about Baltic identity in the previous sections. It seems that the idea of a common identity can also be responsible for a relatively stable number of published translations and the maintenance of closer cultural-literary relations between specific countries as a by-product. However, it is a question to what extent this is really due to the interest in the culture and literary world of one's neighbor and to what extent the stable number of emerging translations is due to a mandatory quota.

Here it is possible to mention a similar trend in the Czech environment, where it can be stated that until 1989, at least one or two works per year were constantly published in the Baltic languages. In connection, however, it is necessary to mention the fact that not always these translations from Lithuanian or Latvian works were obtained from the original languages. Not infrequently there were also translations that

were created with the help of Russian or other languages (for example, Polish or German).

Today, these translations are viewed with relative skepticism in the Czech environment, but in some countries these cases (a translation made with the help of a larger language) are common to this day and logically relate primarily to translations from so-called small languages, for which it is sometimes impossible to find a suitable translator (for example Serbia or the USA).

Kvašytė also points to the fact that in some years, according to available statistics, not a single work from Latvian was published: 1991, 1995, 1999, 2000, 2002. Although the tendency to publish translations from Latvian seem to be improving over time and the number of published works is gradually increasing, based on the available data it cannot be concluded that there is a continuous development. In some years, only one single work of Latvian literature was published in translation (in years 1994, 2001 and 2003). Unfortunately, publicly available data from the National Library of Martynas Mažvydas has only been available to the public since 2004 (*Lietuvos leidybos statistika*, 2019-2022), so all data from previous years need to be searched for separately. Kvašytė believes that the growing tendency of the popularity of Latvian works in Lithuanian translation has appeared since 2005. Since 2009, the number of translations of fiction has reportedly been - stable at least one or two pieces per year. These numbers also correspond to the trends in development until 2023 (including).

Due to the nature of this thesis, which aims to analyze the perception of modern and classical literature, it is important to know not only the number of published works, but also their classification and the original author. In the monitored period 1990-2013, only a few authors who could be included among the classic authors of Latvian literature appear – Jānis Poruks, Kārlis Skalbe, Aleksandrs Grīns. The work of Jānis Poruks (1871-1911) was published in 1996 and the work of Kārlis Skalbe (1879-1945) was published in a translation the following year. Here, it has to be remarked, that Skalbe's work was published again in 2007.

## **2.1. Children's literature**

During the mentioned period, there is an intriguing trend observed in the domain of children's literature, characterized by the revision of previously published children's books. For example, the classic Latvian writer Anna Sakse (1905-1981) enjoyed similar

interest from Lithuanian publishers. Two of her books were published in the observed period, one in 1993 and the second in 2005. It should be noted here that this is not the first contact of Lithuanian readers with this classical writer. As early as 1969, her work "Pasakas par ziediem" (in English Flower Stories, originally published in 1966) was translated into Lithuanian. It was reissued a few years later in 2005, when the translation was revised and published again. The collection enjoyed significant popularity among Lithuanian readers. Notably, select fairy tales from the aforementioned compilation were also incorporated into the reading materials tailored for primary school students.

Here, however, it is important to point out that the fact that in the observed period not so much attention was paid to the translations of classical authors of Latvian literature does not mean that they were never translated into Lithuanian. It is important to keep in mind that a large number of works of Latvian literature (works by authors we would call classic) were published just before independence, during the Soviet period.

However, it seems that it is not possible to generalize and make do with the statement that there is no interest in the publication of the works of classic Latvian authors even nowadays. The aforementioned translation of the works of Anna Sakse was not the only case of the reissue of already existing translations in this monitored period. A similar situation concerns also other books.

Several books have reappeared in translations over the years, showcasing their enduring relevance and appeal across different cultures. Among them are translations of Kārlis Skalbe's fairy tales, including "Aukso obelis" (Pasaka par zelta ābeli, in Engl. The Fairy Tale about the Golden Apple), first published in 1938 as part of the collection "Gara pupa" (The Tall Bean, originally published in 1937) and later reissued in 1997. Additionally, works by Rūdolfs Ezenieks and Andrejs Upītis have been translated into Lithuanian. Notably, Rūdolfs Ezenieks' novels "Varmācība" (1982) and "Nodevība" (1984) were translated as "Priegunda" (in Eng. Betrayal) in 1992, while Andrejs Upītis' novel "Zelta zirneklis smeļās" (in Eng. The Golden Spider Laughs) from 1981 was translated as "Auksinis voras juokiasi" in 1990.

The book examines the endeavors of the youth in Latvia, disillusioned with the socialist system and navigating a society marked by moral decay, to carve out their individual paths. Amidst the absence of clear guidance, these pursuits occasionally veer off course, resulting in the transgression of unspoken societal boundaries. Such boundary crossings, largely unaddressed at the time, linger as enduring marks on their

life trajectories. It is very easy to understand why such a book was translated only after independence. Here we can also test the hypothesis that more often (and not only in this examined period, but also in the second observed period, 2013-2023) translations of works that carry a certain historical or socio-cultural relevance to the Lithuanian audience are published.

Additionally, individual stories from these authors, such as Rūdolfs Ezenieks' "Nakts bez mēnulīcas" (in Eng. Night Without the Moon, 1971) have also made their way into translation collections. Alvydas Butkus made an effort to expand the available literary works from Latvian by compiling a collection of stories called "Namas su kiškio ausimis" (in Eng. House with Rabbit Ears, 2001). This compilation features the literary contributions of Viktors Lagzdiņš (1926-2008), Vija Upmale (1932-1996), Dagnija Zigmonte (1932-1997), Jānis Baltvilks (1944-2003), Andris Puriņš, Lienīte Medne-Spāre (1956-2023), Andra Neiburga (b. 1957), Nelia Kovalevska (b. 1958), Eva Rubene (b. 1962), and Rudīte Kalpiņa (b. 1966). For many of these authors, their inclusion in this publication marked their sole presence in the Lithuanian environment.

However, despite the translator's endeavor to address the scarcity of Latvian literature translations catering to children and youth by encompassing a diverse array of works within a single volume, the endeavor was not entirely successful. Criticism ensued, particularly concerning the heterogeneous audience and the varying artistic merit of the included works. (Šakavičiūte, 2001)

Throughout the specified timeframe, a series of new publications featuring Latvian folk tales emerged. Among these was a concise compilation of translated Latvian folk tales by B. Balčienē, titled "Gražiausias mano vaikystės pasakos" (The Most Beautiful Tales of My Childhood, orig. Manas bērniības skaistākās pasakas), initially released in 2005. Notably, this edition experienced subsequent reprints by "Alma littera" for three consecutive years, in 2007, 2008, and 2009, attesting to its enduring popularity and demand among readers.

The book of one of the most prominent Latvian authors, Imants Ziedonis, "Spalvotosios pasakas" (Krāsainās pasakas, in Eng. Colorful fairy tales, 1973) achieves a similar success in the Latvian environment. For this book, the writer in 1976 was awarded the Hans Christian Andersen Honorary Diploma. In Latvia, this book is published every 3-4 years. The book was also published in a Lithuanian translation in 2007, translated by Arvydas Valionis. These repeated translations underscore the timeless themes and universal resonance of these literary works.

In this subpar rendition of Latvian children's literature, there also emerged a series of publications aimed at younger audiences and preschoolers, featuring collections of Latvian folk tales such as "Latvian Folk Tales" (1992) and "The Most Beautiful Latvian Tales" (1996), with some tales being reprinted from earlier editions. Additionally, in 1997, a reprint of the already mentioned collection of literary tales penned by K. Skalbe (1879–1945), titled "The Golden Apple" (1st ed. 1938), was issued, complemented by an article authored by Eglė Borutaitė-Makariūnienė, daughter of the translator Ona Borutienė, shedding light on her parents' connections to Latvia.

Regarding the reissued translations, it is discernible that the majority of these publications belong to the genre of children's literature. It is noteworthy that such literature enjoyed a comparatively consistent presence within Lithuanian literary discourse even prior to the nation's independence. This enduring continuity suggests a notable cultural and literary appreciation for works tailored to younger audiences, indicative of the enduring significance and appeal of these texts within the broader literary landscape of Lithuania.

It is worth mentioning that in 1988-1989 in a children's periodical "Lietuvos pionieris" there was a section "Journeys around Latvia" (Kelionės po Latvija), which introduced children to the history, regions, and literature of Latvia. The translations of the texts of the classics of the Latvian literature such as Aspazija, Auseklis, Rūdolfs Blaumanis, Anna Brigadere or Kārlis Skalbe were also published in this newspaper and in addition, also in the magazine "Žvaigždutė" (in Eng. The Little Star) which tried to rehabilitate the artistic intentions of these writers, which once seemed unavailable for Lithuanian readers.

During this period, it seems that quite a large amount of attention was paid to the authors who traditionally form the core of the Latvian literary canon. It is interesting and positive that the names of many of these authors also appear in larger collections, or anthologies, etc.

## **2.1. Poetry**

Regarding the prevalence of genres, quite unsurprisingly, it can be stated that mainly prose works were published in the mentioned period. Although only eight poetic works were published independently during the entire mentioned period (1990-2012), a book, an anthology of Latvian poetry, should be mentioned - "Pavasaris bus kaip

visuomet" (published in 2012, Spring will be like always in English) by Erika Drungytė (Drungytė, 2012). Drungytė herself is a well-known Lithuanian poetess, literary critic and translator.

This anthology has garnered considerable attention from literary critics and the broader public alike. Notably, an intriguing book review surfaced on the Lithuanian website Bernardinai, which, despite not being primarily focused on literary criticism, offers insightful commentary. Bernardinai, primarily a Christian-oriented online website, provides a thoughtful description of the collection as follows:

"The book of selected poems of sixteen Latvian poets reflects the current state of Latvian poetry, different features and trends, and the texts prepared by the anthology compiler and translator Erika Drungytė about each of the authors help Lithuanians to better understand the poetry of the fraternal nation." (Pavasaris bus kaip visuomet: šiuolaikinės latvių poezijos antologija, 2012, p.)

The author of the anthology herself, Erika Drungytė, also confirms these words in her statement. She argues that "the readers of the book will feel how the poetry testifies to the changes that happen to the people of Latvia - from the resistance to the captivity of the Soviet regime and its denial, Latvians are slowly moving towards realizing the freedom of the nation and the individual, learning to overcome the challenges of the economic and moral dilemma arising from it." (Pavasaris bus kaip visuomet: šiuolaikinės latvių poezijos antologija, 2012, p.)

It appears that there is a recurrent inclination towards an educative motive, which frequently emerges in the publication of Latvian literary works within the Lithuanian context, and vice versa. This tendency suggests a deliberate effort to present texts that serve to enlighten readers from adjacent territories regarding discernible nuances and deviations, while concurrently fostering a sense of Baltic cohesion. The author herself admits this by saying that "from him (grandfather) I learned how important it is to know the history of one's country and nation, to maintain the spirit of patriotism and treat symbols with respect, to know languages and to know other nations, cultures, and religions. This is a time of many threats to small nations, their languages and unique cultures. We need to support each other. And to do even a small work to make it a future history, a living history. So that our grandchildren have something to remember, something to go on..." (Ibid.) It seems that the book attracted the attention of professional literary critics, particularly those with an academic focus.

For instance, the literary magazine *Metai* featured criticism of the anthology. Arvydas Valionis, a literary translator and critic, authored a review highlighting similar efforts in the realm of poetry translation. In the context of Lithuanian literature, it is essential to acknowledge that the compilations mentioned, including "Mūza ateina nuo Dauguvos" ("The muse comes from Dauguva", 1963), "Varpai" ("Bells", 1968), and "Mes atėjome į šį pasaulį" ("We came into this world", 1983), are not the sole significant collections. Throughout the years, these publications have played a pivotal role in fostering literary relationships, despite not being explicitly categorized as anthologies. The anthology "Mūza ateina nuo Dauguvos" is particularly noteworthy due to its reflection of the prevailing publishing environment of its time. The selection of works in this collection predominantly adheres to the principles of socialist realism, showcasing poems that align with the ideological tenets of the era. However, in the case of "Varpai", there is a noticeable departure from this trend. This anthology presents a collection characterized by qualitatively balanced texts that exhibit a partial liberation from the constraints of their contemporary period and political context.

Additionally, the anthology "Pavasaris bus kaip visada" ("Spring will be as always") features sixteen poets born between 1944 and 1988, representing a diverse range of voices and styles in Latvian poetry. This collection serves as evidence to the evolution of Latvian poetic expression over several decades, offering insights into the rich literary landscape of Latvia across different periods. In his review, Valionis not only evaluates the quality of the work of the represented authors in the anthology, but he also draws attention to the translation qualities of the text, specifically the translation of selected poems from P. Brūveris by the compiler of the anthology, Drungytė. Moreover, he draws the attention to the more practical side of publishing such works. Valionis concludes his review by saying that "The Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Latvia and Estonia support and reward the most talented literary translators of both nations, but, unfortunately, there is no such cooperation between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania and Latvia, there is no similar incentive for cultural exchange, so that bright works of artistic translation receive more solid mutual recognition and appreciation" (Ibid.). Here it is possible and valuable to compare the situation with the situation in Latvian-Estonian relations. In this context, there is an award called the Estonian-Latvian Translators Award. The award of the ministries of both countries for the contribution to the popularization of the Latvian and Estonian



languages has been awarded since 2010. The value of the language prize is EUR 3,000, and it's funded by equal contributions from the Latvian and Estonian Foreign Ministries.

Despite the absence of a more significant and formal source that would increase the prestige of translations from Latvian, many quality works were published in Lithuania. A similar feat in the field of poetry translation was repeated by the reviewer Arvydas Valionis himself. In 2019 he compiled an anthology of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century Latvian poets with the name "Rutulinis žaibas į sielą" ("Ball lightning to the soul", 2019).

## **2.2. Means of promotion of translation quality**

The translator faces the challenge of accurately conveying the cultural nuances and linguistic intricacies embedded within the translated texts. This task is inherently demanding, as it carries the weight of shaping readers' perceptions of the original work, which they may not have direct access to and must therefore rely entirely on the translator's rendition.

The aforementioned anthologies were not the only ones published in the monitored period. There was also published a collection of short stories for young people, which includes 17 short stories written by 10 Latvian authors. In Lithuanian, the collection is called "Namas su kiškios ausimis" ("House with hare ears", 2001). Unfortunately, it has received relatively negative criticism of the translation (Šakavičiūtė, 2001:25). The quality of the translation is of course a factor that can improve the book in a given environment or, on the contrary, significantly harm it if it is a translation of lower quality. In the case of smaller languages, awarding a prize for translation is one way to raise the prestige of the book and make it accessible to readers.

Finally, it is also one of the ways to motivate publishers to be interested in publishing books from smaller markets in the future and not to worry about the financial irreversibility of such an investment.

As we learn from an established translator - Renata Zajančkaitė, it is quite common for publishers to generally approach books from small markets, specifically in this case to Latvian books, quite skeptically. Zajančkaitė has been engaged in literary translation professionally since 1969 (when she made her debut translating Anna Sakse's "Pasakos apie gėles", which, as was mentioned in this section, has been repeatedly reissued). However, there are several supporting mechanisms whose goal is

to draw the attention to supporting translating and publishing of books from different languages.

One of the most prestigious awards is the Dominykas Urbas competition prize for the best translation debut, established by the Lithuanian Literary Translators' Union in 2008. The winner of the award is announced on April 28th to commemorate the birth anniversary of the famous translator, editor and linguist Dominykas Urbas. The prize is awarded to a translator of fiction and humanitarian literature for a debut: a professional, artistic first or second translation into Lithuanian published in the last three years. The purpose of the competition is to evaluate and encourage novice translators of literature and create conditions for easier integration into Lithuanian cultural life and becoming active art creators.

In 2010 the prize was awarded to Veronika Adamonytė for her translation of Inga Ābele's novel "Ugnis nepabudins" (Versus aureus, 2007, orig. "Uguns nemodina", in Engl. "Fire Will Not Wake You"). Here it has to be noted that although the prize is traditionally awarded to translators in their early career for a debut translation, translation of I. Ābele's work is not the first translation published by Veronika Adamonytė. As already mentioned, she is the author of Nora Ikstena's first translation into Lithuanian.

Another such award, no less prestigious, is the St. Jerome prize (Šv. Jeronimo premija). It is awarded to the translator of foreign fiction into Lithuanian, established in 2005. The prize is also supported by the Union of Lithuanian Literary Translators since 2018. This prize was awarded to Renata Zajančkaitė. The authors she translated include, for example U. Ģērmanis, Z. Mauriņa, R. Ezera nebo A. Bels. Zajančkauskaitė was also awarded the Order of the Three Stars by Latvia.

In her analysis, Kvašytė also offers an insight into the number of translations in terms of the gender and age of their authors. She herself admits that this data is not significant from the point of view of analysis and lists it only as additional metadata. In my analysis, I drop this metadata completely. Likewise, a separate section on children's book illustrators appears in her article, which appears in my analysis only in general conclusions.

### **2.3. Translations as a key factor in popularizing Latvian literature in Lithuania**

While the primary focus of this work does not lie in the evaluation of translations or the description of the development of translation studies in Lithuania or Latvia, it is essential to provide an introductory overview of this discipline.

As the work centers around translations and presents a list thereof, it is pertinent to acknowledge one of the pioneers of modern translation studies, James S. Holmes, an American-Dutch translator and translation scholar.

James S. Holmes categorizes descriptive translation studies into three main types based on their focus. The first type, product-oriented, concentrates on individual translations, multiple translations of the same source text, and broader descriptions of translation corpora. This approach aims to document the general history of translations.

The second type is oriented towards the functions of translations within the sociocultural context of the target audience.

Finally, the third type focuses on the translation process itself, exploring the translator's cognitive processes during translation, as well as global processes related to translation strategy and the organization of translation services (Holmes, 1975, p. 89).

Based on this description, it could be assumed that for the research on the importance of Latvian literature in Lithuania, the second type of descriptive translation studies, which focuses on the functions of translations within the sociocultural context of the target audience, might be the most relevant. This approach would allow for an exploration of how Latvian literature is received, understood, and valued in Lithuania. It could involve examining the cultural significance of Latvian literary works for Lithuanian readers, the reception of Latvian authors in Lithuania, and the impact of translated Latvian literature on the literary landscape and cultural discourse in Lithuania.

Latvian scholar Jānis Sīlis, a leading figure in the field of Latvian translation studies and translation practice points out that "In translation studies or translatology (TS), the beginning was a spontaneous evaluation of the quality of a translated text – a literary text in the case of potentially widest readership; at present such evaluation is also embracing the non-literary general language and special language (LSP) texts" (Sīlis, 2022, p. 156). In the context of examining the evolution of Latvian literary translations published in Lithuania, the insights of Sīlis add depth to the study of translation in general.

An equally important issue related to translation is the titles of works of fiction - should one try to follow the original as much as possible, is it allowed to choose the version proposed by the translator or is the translator free to choose. This is also relevant when it comes to some books by Latvian authors in the Lithuanian language.

First, we should pay attention to the translation of N. Ikstena's novel "Jaunavas mācība" (in Eng. literally "The Virgin's Lesson", 2001) which was in Lithuanian published under the title "Gyvenimas yra gyvenimas yra gyvenimas" (2004). The novel was translated by a young translator V. Adamonytė. This book was her debut as a translator, and it was also the first time when the work of Nora Ikstena was published in Lithuania. In general, both debuts, both the translator's and the authors are considered to be quite successful (Laurušaitė, 2005).

Nowadays, unlike in previous decades, translators have a wide range of support programs that can support them financially. They are described in more details in the *Support mechanisms for Latvian literature abroad - strategies and tools* section.

### **3. Translations between 2013 and 2023**

While the post-independence period up to 2012 is relatively well researched in the Lithuanian setting, the following decade, i.e. the years 2013 to 2023, seems to be less officially researched by literary scholars. Like the previous decade, this period was also accompanied by certain development tendencies, which I will try to describe in the following paragraphs. The first noticeable difference is, for example, the emergence and better interconnectedness of supporting institutions that deal with the export and promotion of Latvian literature.

As in the analysis of the previous decade, I will first try to express this period quantitatively and gradually move to a qualitative analysis of the published translations. If we stick only to the quantitative point of view, we find that a total of 37 books were published in the mentioned period (2013-2023) – this figure comes from the official data available on the Latvian Literature platform. All the mentioned books were published with the financial support of the Latvian side. The mentioned number includes only books falling outside the category of professional books; this figure includes fiction, poetry (collections of poetry), or dramas exclusively. If we wanted to compare this number with the official data published by the Lithuanian National Library

of Martynas Mažvydas, we would have completely different numbers at our disposal. As already indicated in the previous section, this is due to the fact that these statistics also include professional books and periodicals that do not necessarily fall into the category of fiction.

If we were to judge this period purely on the basis of the quantity of published translations, we could state that the number of published translations is gradually increasing (58 published translations in the period 1990-2012 vs. 37 published translations in the period 2013-2023).

The attached table shows the names of all Latvian authors whose works were translated into Lithuanian in the period 2013-2023. However, it does not only include translations that were published as books, but the table also includes the names of authors whose works were only published as a fragment translation in a literary magazine or were represented in some other way.

Author			
Aivars Eipurs	Aivars Neibarts	Jānis Akuraters	Anna Brigadere
Anna Rancāne	Anna Sakse	Arno Jundze	Arnolds Auziņš
Arvīds Skalbe	Artis Ostups	Andra Neiburga	Dace Vīgante
Eva Mārtuža	Eriks Ādamsons	Guntis Berelis	Guntis Zariņš
Gundega Repše	Imants Auziņš	Imants Ziedonis	Ilva Skulte
Ieva Lākute	Inese Paklone	Inese Zandere	Inga Ābele
Inga Gaile	Indra Brūvere	Jānis Akuraters	Jānis Baltvilks
Jānis Jaunsudrabiņš	Jānis Joņevs	Jānis Peters	Jānis Poruks
Jānis Rokpelnis	Jāzeps Osmanis	Juris Kronbergs	Jurģis Liepnieks
Juris Zvirgzdiņš	Kārlis Skalbe	Kārlis Vērdiņš	Knuts Skujenieks
Krisjānis Zelģis	Laima Kota	Lāsma Gaitniece	Laura Vinogradova
Leons Briedis	Liāna Langa	Maira Dobeļe	Māra Cielēna
Māra Zālīte	Mārcis Bokmanis	Māris Čaklais	Māris Gaikų (Māris Rozentāls)
Māris Rungulis	Māris Bērziņš	Nora Ikstena	Marts Pujāts
Monta Kroma	Semyon Khanin	Ojārs Vācietis	Pēters Brūveris

Author			
Pauls Bankovskis	Rainis	Roberts Mūks	Ronalds Dobrovenskis
Rūdolfis Blaumanis	Uldis Bērziņš	Talridis Rullis	Toms Treiberģs
Uldis Auseklis	Viesturs Ķerus	Uldis Daugaviņš	Valdis Spāre
Viktor Kalniņš	Zane Zusta	Vilis Plūdons	Vītauts Ļūdēns
		Zigmunds Skujiņš	

1.1. *The table with names of authors whose work was published in Lithuanian between 2013-2023*

The books published as part of the Mēs. Latvija, XX gadsimts (We. Latvia, 20th century) project probably received the most attention. The idea was conceived by writer Gundega Repšē. Literary experts regard it more as a series of novels about the history of the century of independence of the Latvian state.

The creators of thirteen novels brought back historical facts and personalities; each author tried to reveal the political and social conditions of the selected period as convincingly and delicately as possible. In Latvia, books by leading national authors were published between 2014 and 2018.

Several works from this series have also been translated into Lithuanian, namely the following titles: "Motinos pienas" by Nora Ikstena (translated by Laura Laurušaitė, orig. "Mātes piens", 2019)<sup>1</sup>, "Raudonasis gyvsidabris" by Arno Jundze (translated by Jurgis Algimantas Banevičius, orig. "Sarkanais dzīvsudrabs", 2019). Both books were published in 2019, but interest in books from this series did not end there.

In the following year, 2020, another work was published, the book "Kambarys" by Laima Kota ("Istaba", translated by Laura Laurušaitė, 2020). In 2021, the novel "Švino skonis" by Māris Bērziņš (translated by Laura Laurušaitė, orig. "Svina garša", 2021) was translated, a year later in 2022, the novel "Bogenē" by Gundega Repša, the initiator of the whole series, was translated (translated by Jurgis Algimantas Banevičius, orig. "Bogene", 2022). From the publishing point of view, it is interesting that although

<sup>1</sup> The literal translation of the novel would be Mother's milk, however, the English translation of the book was distributed under the title Soviet Milk.

these are books from the same series and the same translators repeatedly worked on the translations, not all works were published by one publisher.<sup>2</sup>

All of the mentioned books received not only professional literary criticism, but also mentions in popular and news websites. The fact that the books not only caught the attention of literary critics, but also made their appearance on the pages of the most read news websites can clearly be assessed as a success not only for the authors in question, but also for their translators.

The first novel from this series that was translated into Lithuanian is the novel of the currently most translated Latvian writer Nora Ikstena – "Motinos pienas". Predictably, this novel also captured the interest of the Lithuanian public and literary critics. The book could be taken as an example of how one book can make its way to a foreign market and to gain the attention of critics and readers. One of such examples is an article in *Literatūra ir menas* titled "Geriausi šiandieniniai latvių romanai?" ("The Best Latvian Contemporary Novels?") by the Lithuanian popular literary scholar Virginija Cibarauskė provides an intriguing glimpse into the diverse range of reviews (Cibarauskė, 2023). Cibarauskė questions the coherency of the text and subsequently the quality of the translation, in her review, the critic says:

"First of all, my doubts about the qualities of N. Ikstena's work were caused by the fact that the mother and daughter's voices are identical. I hesitated, maybe it was a problem of a translation, but the further I went, the clearer it became that the problem was already in the original. Although the mother and daughter are depicted as radically different personalities (the mother is hypersensitive, negative, hysterical, and the daughter is a positive, stoic fighter), both speak about the world around them in the same dry, unnatural sentences. In other words, they simply tell, declare what is happening, how they feel, but we do not see the events themselves, authentic states, feelings, their subtle shades. The characters of "Mother's Milk" - both narrators and side characters - resemble empty shells, voiceless mannequins, for whom the author speaks, which she arranges and regroups as needed in a specific situation. Characters are easy to identify, either good or bad." (Cibarauskė, 2023, p.)

She also adds that "The symbolism of N. Ikstena is stenciled, pathetic, and exalted. (...) Phrases about freedom, life in a cage sound especially artificially on the lips of both mother and daughter. It is clear that the non-Soviet period, depicted in "Mother's Milk" in a rather stereotypical way, is to blame for the mother's illness, the

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<sup>2</sup> The following information concerns publishing houses where the respective books were published. (Bogene=Naujoji klasika, *Raudonasis gyvsidabris*=*Lietuvos rašytoju sąjungos leidykla*, Švino skonis and Motinos pienas=Tyto Alba, Kambarys= Aukso Žuvys)

daughter's codependency and all the other ills of this family." She, however, admits that "The fates of mother and daughter would hardly have been different if both lived in a free country." (Ibid.) The basis of her review is a well-known shared historical background of the Soviet period. She argues that the ending of the novel following the death of the main protagonist is artificial and pathetic by saying that:

"And we know how complicated, financially and psychologically difficult the post-independence period was in all the Baltic countries. In addition, not everyone was really involved in the singing revolution, not everyone, having forgotten their troubles, felt the euphoria." (Ibid.)

The intention of this work is not to challenge the reviewer's perspective. Rather, what is notable is the reviewer's use of historical and cultural-social contexts in a manner that resonates with Lithuanian readers. By employing elements familiar to both Lithuanians and Latvians, stemming from their shared Soviet history, the reviewer establishes a connection that makes her analysis more relatable and accessible to readers. She also refers to selected themes common for other works that may be familiar to the Lithuanian readers, such as novel "Trys sekundės dangaus" ("Three Seconds of Heaven", 2002) by Sigitas Parulskis.

In her review, she features another book, "Upē" ("The River") by Laura Vinogradova. She mentions that the work won the prestigious literary prize of the European Union in 2021. "Prize laureates are nominated by national commissions, so the status of the writer in Latvia is undoubtedly high." (Ibid.)

Cibarauskė comments on the quality of the books by comparing "Upē" to "Motinos pienas" by saying that:

"Fierce symbolism allows for more concise speech, but when everything is emphasized, the meanings begin to fade. The story of "The River" would be more interesting and even livelier if L. Vinogradova simply told more often (paradoxically, the problem of Nora Ikstena's "Mother's milk" is just the opposite) - there was a lack of more detailed stories of men's lives and characters."

She concludes her review by declaring that: "And I will continue to look for the best Latvian novel: the Lithuanian Literary Translators' Union declared 2023 the "Year of Latvian Literature", so 2024 quite a few translations of Latvian poetry and prose will certainly appear. (Ibid.)

Another review on Motinos pienas published in the popular website 15min.lt which is primarily not focused on literary reviews, points out that: "The novel has



already conquered the hearts of not only Latvian readers, but also our country's readers, because the era written in it is close and recognizable to everyone who has personally experienced the "love" and "care" of the "stepmother" of the Soviet Union. In this autobiographical work, Nora Ikstena reveals the history of the country of Latvia through the aspects of the spiritual and moral life of three generations of women." (Mandrijauskaitė, 2019)

The author of the review explains the success of the novel by saying that: "One of the reasons for the success of this book is that the author is able to skillfully maintain balance, harmony between good and evil, love and cruelty, light and darkness, life and death, joy and sadness. The rivers of time and milk merge in this novel into a magical, poetic, therapeutic fabric that I'm sure has the properties to heal the wounded souls of people who had similar experiences in Soviet captivity. This is a very intimate story, dissecting the darkest corners of the human soul, pains, marks left by the described era in people's destinies. All this is told in a simple and at the same time poetic language, without any pathos, embellishments, through everyday stories, details, so it is easy for thousands of people to identify with this story." (Ibid.) This review did not provide any evaluation or critique of the translation quality.

Similarly to the previous review, here we also see an attempt to identify elements that would resonate with Lithuanian readers, enhancing their connection to the book.

Even though the novel "Motinos pienas" is the most translated work of contemporary Latvian literature, the popularity of the *Mēs. Latvija, XX gadsimts* series, was reflected in the increased interest of literary critics in other works belonging to this series.

The reviews appeared not only in the popular news server (such as 15min.lt), but also in serious literary periodicals, such as *Litratūra ir menas*. In the review regarding the aforementioned series, Marija Sulaberidze reveals details apparently unknown to the Lithuanian reader: The author also weaves in an important date recognizable to the Latvian audience – the death of Klavs Elsberg, co-author of the Latvian monthly intellectual publication "Avots" (lit. "Spring"). This is how the collective memory of Latvians is emphasized (Sulaberidze, 2019, p.).

This statement is supported by the theory that common features and realities are relevant for the Lithuanian readership, which are as transparent to the Lithuanian reader as to the reader of the original work. Based on the same principles, we could also

analyze another work published within the series *We. Latvia. 20<sup>th</sup> century* (Mēs. Latvija, XX gadsimts) "Kambarys" by Laima Kota. "Pievagrybių testamentas" (translated by Dzintra Elga Irbytė, orig. "Šampinjonu Derība", 2003) and "Kilpa" (translated by Veronika Adamonytė, orig. "Cilpa", 2006).

In an interview with the Lithuanian news server 15min.lt, of the most popular and most read news websites in Lithuania, with over one million unique users per month, the author Laima Kota answers the question of how she perceives the publication of her work in Lithuania by recalling the same historical experience. Laima Kota's "Kambarys" was published as a part of the *Keliautojų laiku* (Time Travelers) series.

Time Travelers series is an EU-supported translation project that brings together books by contemporary European writers, telling stories about the past and present. The book serves as another testament to historical events shared by both countries. While it may be impractical, both in terms of capacity and finances, to publish all works from the Latvian "*We.Latvia. 20th century*" series (Mēs. Latvija, XX gadsimts), the inclusion of another Latvian author, Ines Zandere (along with Estonian authors Andrus Kivirähk and Meelis Friedenthal), in the Lithuanian "Time Travelers" series demonstrates that these themes, common to all Baltic states, are still able to resonate and find their way into public discourse.

However, the interest in reconstruction and coming to terms with the past does not seem to be just a random interest without a real basis randomly used in book evaluations. One of the most prominent Latvian literary scholars, Benedikts Kalnačs in an interview with Marija Leščinska comments on the supposed Baltic united identity as follows:

"It seems to me that many things, whether we realize it or not, happen in cycles, including in art. Today, it is very much a return to defining the spectrum in creating an identity, we can clearly see that the 90s reprinted a lot of what was written in the 20s. And the path of the theater is exactly like that. Even now, we see a growing interest in Latvian themes, not only in plays - the restoration of Soviet reality has begun, which is both a look back at the past and an attempt to critically evaluate it." (Leščinska, 2017)

Kalnačs, who has in his academic career dealt with various topics and belongs to scholar focusing on postcolonialism in the Baltic context (which, again, in this context is applied to all three Baltic countries), also argues that: "Those scholars who were in exile or grew up in exile began to deal with postcolonialism as a Baltic phenomenon in which it was possible to position common things. However, this has

always been a dilemma in the Baltic context – unity is sought in moments of crisis, but as soon as the situation normalizes, individual and individual development is important for everyone." (Ibid.)

This motivation is, of course, entirely appropriate given the common history and shared historical trauma.

Despite its belonging to the same series, not all works translated in Lithuanian were given the same attention. The novel "Bogenė" written by Gundega Repše (translated by Jurgis Banevičius, 2022), for example, has been unfairly overlooked in this regard by critics. Although Repše was awarded the Baltic Assembly literary prize in 2018 for the series of these historical novels (*Mēs. Latvija, XX gadsimts*) and the novel "Bogene" published in this series, her name does not resonate in the Lithuanian literary world accordingly. However, this does not mean that there is no interest in the works of G. Repše. A year before the translation of her novel was published, an excerpt of her work was published in the literary magazine *Metai* (11/2021, "Eskizų sąsiuvinis", in Eng. "Sketchbook"), translated by Arvydas Valionis (Repše, 2021).

In contrast, the novel by the author Māris Bērziņš "Švino skonis" did register an increased interest even on various portals. In an article "Romanas apie Holokaustą „Švino skonis“ – daug diskusijų Latvijoje sukėlus knyga" ("The novel about the Holocaust "The Taste of Lead" is a book that has caused a lot of discussion in Latvia") published on the website *Bernardinai.lt*, the author of the review tries to find the answer to why the book was supposedly so popular in Latvia and tries to predict whether it will work the same in the Lithuanian context.

Review is based on the interview that was led by the translator of the book Laura Laurušaitė and the author himself. It is one of the very rare reviews that actually reflect the translator as one of the co-authors of the work and reflects their opinion too.

"L. Laurušaitė, who translated "The Taste of Lead" into Lithuanian, calls it a unique novel, because the author managed to find a unique key to the story. According to the translator, Bērziņš proves that it is possible to write about tragic experiences in a playful tone, although it becomes more and more dramatic as it approaches the virtuosic final requiem." (Laurušaitė, 2022)

The periodical *Šiaurės Atėnai* also provided a platform for a literary review of books from the series *Mēs. Latvija, XX gadsimts* (*We. Latvia, 20th century*). The author of the review is one of the most prolific literary translators from Latvian, Arvydas Valionis. In his review, he points out that literary scholars consider this series a unique

project, not just within Latvia but also globally, as it involves authors from one country writing about a century of their nation's history. He concludes his review with a sigh at the absence of a similar project in the Lithuanian environment: "Comparing our cultural landscape to our neighbors", it's disheartening to see the absence of similar national-level projects in Lithuania. This gap persists due to the limitations imposed by the current funding policy of the Culture Council, which unfortunately hinders the emergence of such initiatives." (Valionis, 2021)

In his review, he also tries to draw attention to the new series of novels being created at the time – “Es esmu” (“I am...”). This series, as in the case of the previous series *Mēs. Latvija, XX gadsimts*, is the initiative of Gundega Repše. This series is a collaborative effort involving 13 writers and 13 literary scholars, each focusing on one of Latvia's most renowned personalities. Through 13 novels and monographs, these authors aim to immortalize the greatest masters of Latvian literary scene, such as: Aspazija, Anna Brigadere, Anšlāvs Eglītis, Jānis Ezeriņš, Gunaras Janovskis, Ivande Kaija, Vilis Lācis, Janis Poruks, Kārlis Skalbe, Ilze Šķipsna, Andrejs Upīts, Eduards Veidenbaums. Unfortunately, by the time of publication of this work, not a single work from this series had been translated into Lithuanian. However, the works have not been translated into any foreign language. The reason may be the strong socio-cultural anchoring of personalities in the Latvian environment, which may not be attractive to foreign book markets.

Unsurprisingly, the authors (or their works) that stand out in some way received particular attention. One such book is the "Mane vadina Kalendorium" (in orig. "Mani sauc Kalendārs", published in 2022). In her review for *Šiaurės Atėnai* (11/2022) Laurušaitė argues that: "In 2020, a novel in Latvia received multiple reprints, with a total of 15,000 copies published. This is remarkable for Latvia's small publishing and book distribution market, which makes one want to look for reasons for the book's succes." (Laurušaitė, 2022)

A review of this novel by the same literary critic also appeared on the popular news site 15min.lt, where reviews of published translations have appeared regularly in recent years. Although the article on this news site is not a literary academic review, we can call it relatively formative and beneficial in terms of raising awareness of Latvian literature in Lithuania.

Laurušaitė answers the editor's question whether Lithuanian and Latvian literature is full of common features or rather differences as follows:

"It is interesting that we will hardly find emigration literature in Latvia, while in our country, on the contrary, it is increasing in geometrical progression. Perhaps Latvians are distinguished by the fact that they have more quality fantasy prose, detective authors, and their strong tradition of writing biographical novels. However, most literary processes seem similar. Although the Latvians were ahead of us in many places in the 19th and 20th centuries, since the ban on the press had not entered into force in their country (disrupting the natural development of literature), but now our forces have equalized. I get the impression that the Latvian publishing market is a bit narrower than the Lithuanian one." (Laurušaitė, 2022)

Another review that dealt with this book was the review of Viktorija Daujotytė-Pakerienė, at the cultural website Bernardinai. (Daujotytė-Pakerienė, 2022)

The presence of educational reviews, even in periodicals not primarily focused on this, can be unequivocally seen as a positive factor that enhances awareness of Latvian literature.

Although it may seem purely based on the numbers that there is more interest in Latvian literature in all its forms in the second observed period (2013-2023), if we focus on classic literature and really observe the distinction between classical and contemporary literature, we will find that authors, which in Latvia belong to a kind of canon, were not translated as much in the second observed period. Most of the works of these authors appeared in the children's anthology "Tirpsta diena kaip ledai" ("The day melts like ice cream"). Most of the other authors, however, were given more official space in the literary newspaper Šiaurės Atėnai.

While the first monitored period showcases a notable presence of classic Latvian literary figures, the trend continues into the second monitored period (2013-2023). However, it is essential to delve deeper into the nature of these translations, particularly their mode of publication—whether they appear in magazines or books. Although not looking as prestigious and not comparable as for the volume, publications in magazines can offer an immediate encounter with the chosen piece of literature. They may even reach a larger audience and are incomparably faster publish than books. On the other hand, books provide their readers with a more lasting platform for such translations, allowing for a permanent presence on the literary market. Therefore, examining the forms in which translations were published in Lithuania may provide us with valuable insights into how the future perspectives of Latvian literature in Lithuania may look like.

In the monitored period, the Latvian literature published in Lithuania has been enriched by the translations of several prominent Latvian authors. Among these authors, we can find Jānis Akuraters and fragments of his work published in an article featuring various Latvian poets (Šiaurēs Atēnai, 2022 10/21 translated by A. Musteikis) (Akuraters, 2022).

Another notable inclusion is Anna Brigadere, whose work is featured in the anthology "Tirpsta diena kaip ledai", a collaborative effort by a group of authors. This anthology, published in 2023, showcases the depth and diversity of Latvian literature for children, offering readers a nuanced perspective on life and society.

Māris Čaklais, another distinguished Latvian writer, was featured in an article titled "Latvių literatai apie įkvėpimą ir kūrybos esmę" ("Latvian writers on inspiration and the essence of creativity"), published in Šiaurēs Atēnai 2021/09/10 (Čaklais, 2019). His work, along with others in the anthology, delves into the intricacies of the creative process, offering valuable insights into the world of literature.

Jānis Jaunsudrabiņš, like Brigadere, is also featured in "Tirpsta diena kaip ledai". The anthology also features the works of Jānis Poruks, Rainis, Anna Sakse, and Kārlis Skalbe, all of whom are celebrated figures in Latvian literature. Their inclusion in "Tirpsta diena kaip ledai" further cements the anthology's status as a comprehensive collection of Latvian literary works.

Another Latvian poet, Ojārs Vācietis, whose work is featured in "Nesakykite motinoms" ("Don't tell the mothers"), published in Šiaurēs Atēnai, 2022 11/11, adds a touch of modernity to the collection (Vācietis, 2022). His poems are also featured in the "Tirpsta diena kaip ledai" anthology. Overall, the translations of these authors' works have not only enriched the literary landscape of Lithuania but also fostered a deeper cultural understanding between the two countries. This is further evidenced by the sustained interest in these authors, as demonstrated by their inclusion in a collaborative anthology.

If we compare the situation regarding articles and translations of classic authors in literary magazines, we may see that there was a couple of trends that could be pointed out. For example, the works of Aleksandrs Čaks, were published in a series of releases spanning from October 2010 to May 2011. The specific dates of publication are as follows: December 3, 2010; February 25, 2011; October 22, 2010; May 6, 2011; and April 8, 2011. These publications reflect a consistent effort to bring his works to the

public over a period of several months, showcasing the enduring interest in and relevance of his writings.

The following table shows the number of published translations from Latvian to Lithuanian. Although the tendency is clearly positive – there is a very gradual increase in the number of translated books, in the mentioned period there were three times when one or no books were published (2013+2014 and 2017).

The table also (p.39) shows that the most favorable period for the publication of Latvian literature was the years 2021 and 2022, when seven books were translated in each of the mentioned years. This contrasts with 2023, which was declared as the Year of Latvian Literature by the Lithuanian Association of Literary Translators.

The numbers from 2023 may not align with the expectations set by the announcement of 2023 as the Year of Latvian Literature by the Lithuanian Association of Literary Translators. Official data shows that only five translations were published in 2023, contrasting with the seven books published in both 2021 and 2022. It's important to consider that the process of publishing a book is lengthy, sometimes taking up to a year from assigning the translation to a suitable translator, acquiring the rights, translating the work, and preparing it for publication.

Therefore, the results of this initiative may be more accurately evaluated towards the end of 2024. However, based on publicly available data from the Latvian Literature platform, it is evident that the rights to several books have been purchased, with publication planned for the second half of 2024, namely the work of Jeļena Glazova, Toms Treibergs, Anna Auziņa, Svens Kuzmins, Arvis Viguls and Sergejs Timofejevs, whose work has never been published in Lithuanian before (except for fragments). (*Latvian Literature grant program 1/2024 results have been announced, 2024*)

The prevalence of poets among the mentioned names is an encouraging sign, indicating a notable push for translating poetic works. Traditionally, poetry has not been among the most frequently translated genres, making this shift particularly positive.

Year	Number of Books Translated
2013 + 2014	1
2015	2
2016	4
2017	0
2018	3

2019	2
2020	6
2021	7
2022	7
2023	5

1.2. *Number of published translations from Latvian into Lithuanian based on Latvian Literature platform data*

The fluctuating pattern in the number of books translated each year from 2013 to 2023 may reflect various factors influencing translation activity, such as economic conditions, publishing trends, and cultural exchange initiatives. The steady increase in translations from 2015 to 2022 suggests a growing interest in spreading literary works. The peak in 2021 and 2022, followed by a slight decline in 2023, could indicate a saturation point or a temporary fluctuation in the translation market. Despite these fluctuations, the overall trend indicates a positive inclination towards the translation of books, highlighting the wish to nurture the literary market with translations from Latvian.

Another interesting perspective on the presence of Latvian literature in Lithuania can be gained by examining literary magazines.

Metai (Years), is a literary magazine published ten times a year. Metai has been published since 1991. In each issue, at least forty pages (from the overall one hundred pages) are dedicated to fiction alone, the remaining 60 pages are usually dedicated to literary reflections and documentary materials. There is a prominent literary award associated with the magazine - Antano Vaičiulaičio literatūrinė premija (The Literary Prize of Antanas Vaičiulaitis).

Antanas Augustinas Vaičiulaitis (1906–1992) was a Lithuanian writer and diplomat. He was also engaged in literary criticism and literary translation. The literary prize, which is named after him, is awarded every two years. The laureates are selected from the short prose published in Metai. The prize is then awarded biannually on June 23, the birthday of Vaičiulaitis. The history of the Metai magazine goes back to the literary magazine Pergalė (Victory) that was published between years 1942 and 1990.

While the quantity of articles may appear modest at first glance, a more thorough examination reveals that during the specified period, the magazine provided a platform



for authors previously unknown in Lithuania, none of whose works had been published in the country before (Aivars Kļavis 11/2015, Arnolds Auziņš 04/2017, Krišjānis Zelģis 05-06/2019) (Klavis, 2015; Auziņš, 2017; Zelģis, 2019) Additionally, *Metai* featured several book reviews, enriching its content with critical assessments of contemporary literature.

All translations featured in this magazine during this period were rendered by established translators, including Arvydas Valionis, Jurgis Banevičius, Laimantas Jonušys, and Renata Zajančauskaitė, all of whom have multiple book publications to their credit. While the promotion of literature cannot rely solely on translations published in books, the regular inclusion of various fragments in literary magazines is undeniably beneficial.

Year	Number of Articles Published
2013 + 2014	0
2015	2
2016	1
2017	2
2018	2
2019	3
2020	0
2021	2
2022	2
2023	0

1.3. *Number of published articles (including reviews and translations of fragments) with Latvian theme in the literary magazine Metai between 2014 and 2023.*

Year	Number of Articles
2023	10
2022	14
2021	6
2020	9
2019	5
2018	7
2017	2
2016	4
2015	3
2014	2
2013	1

*1.4. Number of published articles (including reviews and translations of fragments) with Latvian theme in the literary magazine Šiaurēs Atēnai between 2013 and 2023.*

In my analysis, I also delved into the pages of the cultural periodical Šiaurēs Atēnai which has been a prominent platform for literature since its first issue published in 1990.

When analyzing this periodical and its publication of translations, it is evident that this marks the most significant increase among all the media outlets observed. At the outset of the monitoring period from 2013 to 2023, articles or translations featuring Latvian themes were not prominently featured, with only one Latvian translation published in the entirety of 2013.

However, since 2019, there has been a noticeable increase in interest in topics related to Latvian literature. The peak of this interest was observed in 2022, with the publication of 14 contributions, indicating a substantial surge in content related to Latvian literature. Similarly, 2023 also saw significant success, with ten contributions published, further highlighting the growing interest in Latvian literary themes.

Regarding the contributions published, it is important to note that it wasn't just translations of individual authors' works that were featured. Reviews of published books and interviews with authors also constituted a relatively stable base of contributions. This diversified content not only added depth to the publication but also contributed to

its appeal and relevance within the literary sphere. These articles included book reviews (L. Laurušaitė Odė kitoniškumui, review of the book "Mane vadina Kalendorium", in 11/2022 (Laurušaitė, 2022), Laurušaitė's "Komparatyvinė staltiesė" in 01/2022 or review of the books from the series Mēs. Latvija, XX gadsimts (We. Latvia, 20th century) by A. Valionis in 02/2021) (Valionis, 2021) or interviews with authors (Kārlis Vērdiņš: "Kas skriaudžia poeta?" 10/2022) (Musteikis, 2022).

An unambiguously positive piece of news, which testifies that the interest in classical Latvian literature is of a long-lasting nature, is the fact that in this observed period additional, revised translations of books that have already been translated once appear.

One such case is, for example, the book "Pasakos apie gėles". The book was published for the first time in 1969 (that is, three years after its publication in Latvia). The first revised edition was published in 2005, the next in 2014. The fact that the author's work is still read and in demand in the Lithuanian environment is also evidenced by the fact that the author's selected poems were included in the anthology of children's poems - *Tirpsta diena kaip ledai* (published in 2023 by Asociacija Slinktys). This excellent publishing and translation effort is all the more valuable because, in the case of Sakse, she is not the only classical author represented in the book. In the anthology, for example, such names as Rainis, Aspazija, Anna Brigadere, Jānis Poruks, Jānis Jaunsudrabiņš, Kārlis Skalbe, Rūdolfs Blaumanis appear. The anthology is the work of the publishing house Asociacija Slinktys, which has been active on the Lithuanian market since 2015.

Slinktys is an organization engaged in various cultural and educational activities. According to the official presentation of the platform, the main goal of Slinktys is to bring together young representatives of the arts and create a space for them - an opportunity to freely express themselves and improve. In addition to the anthology "*Tirpsta diena kaip ledai*", the publishing house's portfolio includes another translation project – a bilingual mirror edition of translations of the Latvian poet's poems by Kārlis Vērdiņš: "*Vidaus tvarkos taisyklės*" (org. "Iekšējās kārtības noteikumi"). However, the anthology project is also remarkable due to the fact that not only translators were involved in the translation of the works, but also translator-literary scholars such as Silvestras Gaižiūnas or Kristina Vaisvalavičienė, who have already been mentioned several times.

Although, unfortunately, there is not a single review of the translation of the works of Anna Sakse, even though her book *Tales of Flowers* was published in Lithuania three times, the fact that the work is still relevant is also evidenced by its inclusion in the event called the Nordic Literature Week in 2022. Traditionally, the Nordic Literature Week is held in various libraries across the country in November. During this thematic week, Nordic authors and their works were presented to young readers.

The topic of the 2022 event was Northern nature in children's literature. The selected books by Nordic authors depicted nature, real and fictional creatures. ("Šiaurės gamta vaikų literatūroje", 2022) Both classics of (children's) literature (Hans Christian Andersen, Selma Lagerlöf or Anna Sakse) and modern authors (Riitta Jalonen, Jukka Wieslander or Sven Nordqvist) were selected for the list of selected books.

As already mentioned in the previous section, two important anthologies of poetry were created in the Lithuanian environment during the monitored period. An anthology of Latvian poetry of the 20th and 21st centuries was compiled in 2019. The author of the anthology and most of the translations is the literary critic and translator Arvydas Valionis. No less interesting is the review by the literary scholar Vigmantas Butkus, also in the *Metai* magazine. In his review (*Metai* 11/2021), he already compares both published anthologies of poetry by Latvian authors – Valionis's "Rutulinis žaibas į sielą" and Dungytė's "Pavasaris bus kaip visuomet". He is quite skeptical about the very existence of these anthologies: "Unfortunately, there are many publications of Latvian poets in our periodicals, various continuous and similar publications, as well as, from my point of view, less significant authorial or collective books of Latvian poets published in Lithuanian." (Butkus, 2021)

However, he is positive about the quality of the translations as such. "I think the Lithuanian reader is lucky, because the most important Latvian texts or at least their fragments are translated into Lithuanian and most of them are translated really reliably and professionally." (Ibid.)<sup>3</sup>

If we analyze the number of works that were published as books, we can state that there have been no fundamental changes compared to previous years. Between 1990-2012 there was a total of 58 books published, whereas in 2013-2023 a total of 37 books was published, which indicates (at least numerically) an increased interest in

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<sup>3</sup> This issue of the magazine was dedicated to Latvian literature.

Latvian books. Furthermore, if we focus on literary periodicals, the situation is quite varied. Surprisingly enough, although the year 2023 was elected as the Year of Latvian literature, it is interesting to see that there was no article, review or translation with a Latvian theme published in the given year. However, this does not mean that no attention was paid to Latvian literature. If we focus on other periodicals, such as *Šiaurės Atenai* or *Literatūra ir menas*, the overall opinion may not be that negative. In *Šiaurės Atenai* only, a total of ten articles were published in 2023. In the periodical *Literatūra ir menas* a total of four articles were published in 2023. Except for the last article with a slightly provocative title "Geriausi šiandieniniai latvių romanai?" ("The Best Latvian Contemporary Novels?") by the Lithuanian Virginija Cibarauskė, where she questions the quality and ratings of the most popular Latvian novels in Lithuanian translations, other articles feature authors such as Jelena Glazova (a Russian-writing Latvian author) and translations of the work of Guntis Berelis, who already had a stable position when it comes to the attention of the Lithuanian translators.

## The presence of Latvian literature in Lithuanian literary magazines

1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Jānis Baltvilks, Pēteris Brūveris, Leons Briedis (6), Rainis (10),	Eva Rubene. Anglas. Vladis Spare (4)	X	X	X	Vizma Belševica, Rimants Ziedonis (5), Uldis Bērziņš (8-9)	X	X	X
Essay - Magiškasis Janio Ežerinio pasaulis (6) Essay - Grālio bardai Rygoje (11)	X	X	X	Essay - Šiaurės melodijos latviškam smuikui (8-9)	X	X	X	X

### *1.1. Articles, reviews, translations with a Latvian theme, 1991-1999 (Metai)*

2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Nora Ikstena, Gundega Repše (5)	X	X	Knuts Skujenieks (4), Pēters Brūveris, Jānis Rokpelnis, Ēriks Lanss (12)	X	Guntis Berelis (1)	Eduards Aivars (10), Vladimirs Kajjaks (10)	Māris Bērziņš (10)	X	Arno Jundze- essay (1)
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Essay - Sapnis par Latviju (8-9)

### *1.2. Articles, reviews, translations with a Latvian theme, 2000-2009 (Metai)*

2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Ēriks Kūlis (2)	Nora Ikstena	Pēteris Cedriņš (8-9)	Pauls Bankovskis (7)	x	Leons Briedis (7),	Svens Kuzmins (3)	Guntis Berelis (1),	Uldis Bērziņš (5-6),	Nora Ikstena (3),

Māris Čaklais (8-9)	(2-3 +4 )	Guntis Berelis (12)			Aivars Kļavis (11)		Arnolds Auziņš (4),	Eriks Ādamsons (10)	Krišjānis Zeļģis (5-6), Artis Ostups (7)
x	x	Essay - Neįveiktas dvilypumas lietuvių ir latvių egzodo romanuose (1)	X	x	x	X	x	X	X

*1.3. Articles, reviews, translations with a Latvian theme, 2010-2019 (Metai)*

2020	2021	2022	2023
X	Essay (Lietuvis latvių poezijoje, 5-6), Pēteris Brūveris, Inga Ābele, Toms Treibergs, Imants Ziedonis, Andra Neiburga, Vladis Spāre (11)	Hermanis Margērs Majejskis (11), Nora Ikstena (12)	X

*1.4. Articles, reviews, translations with a Latvian theme, 2020-2023 (Metai)*

### 3.1. General trends of the chosen periods

As reiterated, a purely quantitative approach is insufficient for our analysis. To effectively ascertain developmental trends and assess their stability or change, data on the number of published translations must always be complemented by an analysis of the genres involved—whether prose, poetry, or drama predominates in the translations. Additionally, examining the list of authors whose works are most frequently translated can provide further insights into developmental tendencies. The recurrence of certain names in the list of translated books over the years 1990-2012 indicates a consistent presence and contribution of these individuals to the field of translation. Regīna Ezera, Andris Puriņš, Anna Sakse, and Laima Muktupāvela are among those whose names

reappear multiple times, suggesting a sustained involvement in translating literary works.

If we were to express the two observed periods purely quantitatively, a total of 58 books were published in the first observed period (1990-2012), which when averaged makes 2.6 books/year. In the second observed period (2013-2023) there were 37 books, which is an average of 3.7 books/year. Here it is important to keep in mind that the two observed periods are of different length (22 years vs. 10 years). If we tried to break down the first monitored period, which is almost twice as long as the second monitored period, we would obtain additional valuable information regarding development trends. A total of 21 books were published in the period between 1990-2000 (out of a total of 58 published between 1990-2012). The period 1990-2000 is the first period immediately after independence. From the thematic point of view and from the point of view of the selection of authors, it is interesting to note that a large part of the translated works consisted of the works of Latvian authors, who we could describe as authors forming a kind of classical canon of Latvian literature - Jānis Jaunsudrabiņš (1877-1962), Jānis Poruks (1871-1911), Laimonis Pūrs (1922–2016), Jānis Rainis (1865-1929), Anna Sakse (1905-1981) and Kārlis Skalbe (1879-1945). Several compilation works also appear in this period, mainly collections of fairy tales for children - *Gražiausios latvių pasakos* (Martišius, 1996), *Keturios latvių apysakos* (Sisaitė, Balčiūtė, Valionis, 1990) or *Latvių pasakos* (*Latvių pasakos*, 1992).

A total of 37 books were published between 2001-2012. During this period, interest in classic authors seems to be slightly declining. In this period, for example, the works of Anna Saks and Kārlis Skalbe are revised, but classic works no longer make up a significant part of the total volume of translated books like it was the case in the period 1990-2000.

It is noteworthy that, in the earlier period under review, there was a gradual decline in the number of translations. For instance, between 2005 and 2007, a total of 20 books were translated, with six books translated in both 2005 and 2006, and eight translations in 2007. This trend shifted in the later period, where we observe a different pattern. Despite the initial continuation of the declining trend from the previous period (namely, only one book-published translation for the years 2013 and 2014 or even no published translation for 2017), the second period showed a contrasting tendency. Beginning in 2020, there was an uptick in the number of published translations, with a consistent range of six to seven translated books per year.



When comparing the number of books translated from Latvian and published in Lithuania to those translated from Lithuanian and published in Latvia, a notable disparity emerges. From 2010 to 2022, a total of 80 books translated from Lithuanian were published in Latvia, while slightly less than half of that number was translated and published in Lithuania. Upon closer examination, it becomes evident that children's literature was the most prevalent genre among the translated Lithuanian books in Latvia. Within this domain, three authors notably dominated the landscape - Kęstutis Kasparavičius (a total of 9 books published), Tomas Dirgėla (4) and Lina Žutautė (13). Translations of children's literature accounted for a fourth of all translated books. Such a high number was not found in the context of Latvian literature in Lithuania.

#### **4. Support mechanisms for Latvian literature abroad - strategies and tools**

Although the process of publishing a book depends on many other factors, the financial one remains one of the basic ones. Successfully meeting the financial requirements for publishing a book is a fundamental step towards its promotion abroad and the subsequent building of a literary tradition. This is also true in the case of Latvian literature, where this process cannot be done without supporting institutions. The first institution in the modern history of Latvia (after independence) that dealt with the support of Latvian literature and its export abroad was Latvijas Literatūras centrs (The Latvian Literary Center). It was the first association in the modern history of Latvia that ensured the recognition and availability of high-quality Latvian prose, poetry, drama, journalism and children's literature in the world.

Latvijas Literatūras centrs (The Latvian Literary Center), shortly LLC, was founded in 2002 by prominent figures in literary and cultural circles in Latvia - Andris Akmentiņš, Pauls Bankovskis, Pēteris Bankovskis, Pēteris Draguns, Nora Ikstena, Liāna Langa, Ieva Lešinska, Karstens Lomholts, Sergejs Timofejevs, Kārlis Vērdiriņš. Currently, this platform is no longer active. However, this does not mean that there is no similar institution operating in Latvia. The activities and activities that were carried out by the LLC are currently being continued by the Latvian Literature platform. Officially, the platform was created in 2016, although preparations began already in 2015. As an institution dedicated to fostering the presence of Latvian literature outside Latvia, the Latvian Literature platform undertakes a multifaceted approach to its promotion.

The platform ensures the same variety of activities that used to be conducted by the previous LLC. However, the set of activities it deals with has grown even more and the platform's offer is even more diversified than before. The Latvian Literature platform also deals with active engagement in forging valuable connections with foreign publishers and administering grant programs to support the translation and dissemination of Latvian works. Through strategic representation in international book markets, cooperation with literary festivals, organizations, embassies, and media abroad, the Latvian cultural presence worldwide is ensured.

Currently, it is the most prominent and visible institution that supports the publishing of Latvian literature abroad. The volume of financial assistance that this platform gives not only to publishers, but also to the translators themselves, has increased significantly from 2019, when the auditions were first officially announced, until 2023. For comparison, while in 2019, when these grants were first awarded, only publishers received support worth almost 72 thousand EUR and the grants for translators were awarded in the amount worth about 65 thousand EUR, in 2023 the amount of financial support reached 124 thousand EUR for publishers and 75 thousand EUR for translators.<sup>4</sup>

As mentioned in the previous section, a great deal of credit for the popularization and visibility of Latvian literature in Lithuania goes to the translators themselves, who decided to declare 2023 as the Year of Latvian Literature within the framework of the Lithuanian Association of Literary Translators. The activities of the Lithuanian Literary Translators' Union are financed by the Lithuanian Culture Council (Lietuvos kultūros taryba). Several other institutes were involved in the event, such as the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore (Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas), Lithuanian Comparative Literature Association (Lietuvos lyginamosios literatūros asociacija), Latvian Studies Office of Vilnius University, Latvian Center of Vytautas Magnus University, or association "Baltų centras" (Šiauliai).

As outlined in the previous sections, there is considerable room for enhancement in supporting translations from Latvian into Lithuanian. Implementing measures such as introducing a special award for translators from Latvian coupled with financial incentives (just like the Latvian-Estonian award), organizing regular seminars focused exclusively on Latvian translations, hosting diverse support events and networking

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<sup>4</sup> Internal annual report of the Latvian Literature platform 2023, available on request.

opportunities for translators, among others, could significantly elevate the (financial) status of literary translators and foster a more vibrant translation field.

#### **4.1. Future perspectives**

In an effort to outline possible future perspectives of development, it is necessary to take into account the rapidly and dynamically developing book market, which is simultaneously strongly influenced by the development of technologies, which have a decisive influence on its form. The already mentioned Estonian literary scholar Möldre offers an interesting view of possible development tendencies. She believes that "The access to the national book culture becomes less dependent on the actions and decisions of publishers, further boosting the transformation of the traditional role of a publishing company. The readers, however, only benefit from free and wide availability of the most valuable works of the national literature" (Möldre, 2014, p. 110). Although the presence of e-books is nothing new in Lithuania, it is not a matter of course that every printed work also has its electronic form. It can be assumed that this step could simplify access to already translated books, but the step itself cannot sufficiently promote literature, it can only ensure easier access to it.

Writing anything about the interference with AI or its role in changing what has been written about the topic so far is a very precarious move at the moment, as the speed at which it is evolving and changing the face of various industries is too rapid and unprecedented to be analyzed in a work of this style. The implementation of AI in different disciplines is often cited as a game-changer, groundbreaking or revolutionary. Some sources may even deliberately ignore the essential importance of finding a balance between human expertise and machine power provided by AI and may focus solely on the maximization of profits which stems from not having to pay a human translator. Of course, concerns about the loss of human potential and calls for increased attention regarding these topics are not just issues of recent years linked to the rise of AI. Here, the name Michael Apple, an American educational theorist who specializes on the relations between education and power, may naturally come up. He contradicts that progress would come with the immediate implementation of technology in the educational environment, and right after this statement he questions the fact of who actually determines the notion of progress (Apple, 1988, p. 186).

The very identical questions could be asked also in the case of the development of the book market. Although currently there are big changes even in official places in official institutions such as the EU (more on the policy of regulation of the AI in the EU see Justo-Hanani 2022, Edwards 2022 or Carnat 2023). All these sources are relatively recent and agree that the current situation and the regulations adopted to date are not sufficient in terms of intellectual property protection, copyright or work ethics.

Writing about future perspectives, at the time of writing this thesis, an edition of the Hieronymus magazine exclusively dedicated to Latvian literature was also in preparation. The main editor of the issue was already mentioned literary scholar and translator Laura Laurušaitė. The public company "Leidykla Hieronymus" (Publishing house Hieronymus) was established in 2020 by the Lithuanian Literary Translators' Union. Their official website aims to establish a strong presence for literature from different countries, providing a platform for translators to showcase discovered texts and authors. This endeavor expands the horizons of publishers and inquisitive readers, offering a diverse range of literature and access to valuable works in Lithuanian. The mission of Hieronymus, according to their own declaration, is to publish high-quality translated literature, including the almanac of foreign literature "Hieronymus," whose very first issue was launched in 2016 under the initiative of the Lithuanian Literary Translators' Union.

## **5. Conclusion**

Monitoring and analyzing the reception of a certain nation's literature in a foreign environment is a challenge. Literature, like language, is a living organism that cannot be described in its entirety. Just as language changes every day and its transformations depend on many factors, the same situation occurs with literature. No academic text is able to contain all the echoes that can be attributed to a certain literary work. It is also important to keep in mind that the fact that the selected works have attracted the attention of academics or literary scholars does not automatically mean that the works have received the same attention from the non-academic public. It is also impossible to include these non-academic observations, although they undoubtedly form an important part of the readership and recipients of translations. The closest we got to these materials was the mention of reviews that reached readers through news sites that do not primarily specialize in literary criticism.

The output of this work can also be the statement (which is supported by official data from various sources) that interest in Latvian literature is still visible in Lithuania and even though translations from Latvian are in tough competition with translations from English or Scandinavian languages, translations from Latvian occupy a stable place on the market.

In this thesis, I tried to answer the set research questions regarding which factors are crucial when choosing a work of Latvian literature to be translated for the Lithuanian market, what the determining factors that shape the publication of particular works of Latvian literature in Lithuania are, or whether it is feasible to anticipate which literary works will be earmarked for translation in the forthcoming years. The common denominator of most reviews analyzed was the search for similarities and differences, especially those that stem from a common historical fate, usually reflecting the Soviet period.

Another significant determinant influencing which works were chosen for translation into the Lithuanian market was whether the book had been awarded with any major literary award in Latvia or internationally (such as "Motinos pienas" and "Upė"). Additionally, certain works were selected based on other factors, such as being part of a successful series with a unifying theme, as seen in titles like "Bogenė" and "Švino skonis." (books from the Mēs. Latvija, XX gadsimts, We. Latvia, 20th century, series).

Based on the data presented, we can remain optimistic about the prospect of more translations from Latvian to Lithuanian emerging in the future. The ongoing projects highlighted (2024), such as poetry translations and the specialized Latvian edition of the literary magazine Hieronymus, undeniably play a substantial role in fostering a conducive environment for further translations. These initiatives not only contribute significantly in the present but also lay a solid foundation for the reception of future translations.

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