

"Small" Literatures in the Big World: Worldwide Reception of Latvian and Lithuanian Literature in Translation Greifswald, 17 - 18 June 2025

Conference languages: German, English

The literature of Latvia and Lithuania is no longer terra incognita to European readers. Up until a mere few decades ago, fiction originating from these countries was still relatively unfamiliar to the wider reading public of the Western world, and foreign publishers were often reluctant to engage with Baltic literature. Following the regaining of independence by Lithuania and Latvia and their subsequent participation in international book fairs, there

was a notable increase in interest from Western countries in Baltic fiction. Furthermore, over the past three decades, the governments of Lithuania and Latvia have facilitated the translation of over 600 works of prose and poetry into more than 40 languages worldwide.

Literary translation is a complex phenomenon that extends beyond the mere transfer of information. It serves to facilitate intercultural dialogue and also has an impact on the perception of foreign literature and culture in the country of the target language. There has been a notable increase in the recognition

of Latvian and Lithuanian literature in Germany, which may be attributed to the efforts of literary translators. This is evidenced by the repeated prizes and nominations upon translations of works from these countries. In 2021, Saskia Drude's translation of Jurga Vilé's "Sibiro Haiku" was awarded the German Youth Literature

Prize, while Nicole Nau's translation of the novel "The Bed with the Golden Leg", written by Zigmunds Skujiņš, was nominated for the 2023 Leipzig Book Fair Prize. Moreover, the German online magazine for translated literature, „Tralalit“, has on several occasions selected translations from Lithuanian and Latvian as Translation of the Month, and the GERMERSHEIM Translators' Encyclopaedia is increasingly profiling persons engaged in the translation of works from Latvian and Lithuanian. The number of translations of Baltic literature is also increasing in other countries.

The growing international visibility of Baltic literature gives rise to the question of how translations of Lithuanian and Latvian literature are perceived, not only in an academic context, but also by a wider readership. Does the reception of translations of Lithuanian and Latvian fiction foster a better understanding of both countries' culture among foreign audiences? While these questions pertain to sociology of literature, the Institute of

Baltic Studies aims to facilitate discourse by providing a forum for contributions from the fields of literary and translation studies, as well as interdisciplinary and practice-oriented presentations related to Latvian and Lithuanian literature in translation into any target language. We particularly welcome papers addressing translations of Baltic literature from the following perspectives:

The history of the reception of translations of Lithuanian and Latvian literature abroad,
The significance of the target language for Latvian and Lithuanian national branding and the understanding of Baltic culture,
Translations of Lithuanian and Latvian literature produced before and after 1990: is there any continuity?
Popular Lithuanian and Latvian works versus "high" literature from the translator's perspective,
How Baltic literature is translated: "preserving original tone" or rather "technically"?
The role of literary translations in forming of stereotypes about Lithuanians and Latvians,
Possibilities and limits of qualitative reception research on translations from "small" literatures.

We kindly request that presenters submit their contribution proposals on the aforementioned or other thematically relevant aspects in a maximum of one page, along with a brief biography including their current position, postal and e-mail address to alina.baravykaite@uni-greifswald.de by 24 November 2024.

The conference proceedings are to be published in the digital repository of the Greifswald University Library. Subject to the availability of funding, a part of the travel and accommodation expenses for conference attendees will be covered.



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