

Passing through the filter: Literary translation from Spanish in Lithuania under Soviet censorship

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ABSTRACT

This article presents the translations of Spanish and Latin American authors into Lithuanian during the 50 years of Soviet occupation (1940–1990). The purpose of this research is to explore the legacy of these translations within the context of preventive censorship practiced in the Soviet Union. Preventive censorship involves selectively filtering books and authors for inclusion or exclusion from publication due to ideological or political considerations (cf. Leonardi 2008). The article addresses three main questions: (1) What was the volume of Spanish-language literature in the overall corpus of translations in Soviet Lithuania? (2) Which Spanish-language authors were accessible to Lithuanian readers during the period under consideration? And (3) What factors might have influenced their selection for publication in Lithuanian translation? An attempt is made to describe the corpus of translations from Spanish into Lithuanian, with a particular focus on the selection criteria to be met for inclusion of these literary works in the Soviet canon of foreign literature.

Keywords: Soviet Lithuania, Spanish literature, Latin American literature, translation from Spanish, censorship, paratext

Ozek filter: literarni prevodi iz španščine v Litvi pod sovjetsko cenzuro

IZVLEČEK

V prispevku so predstavljeni prevodi španskih in latinskoameriških avtorjev v litovščino v času petdesetletne sovjetske okupacije (1940–1990). Namen študije je raziskati dediščino teh prevodov v kontekstu preventivne cenzure v Sovjetski zvezi. Preventivna cenzura pomeni selektivni izbor in izločanje knjig in avtorjev na osnovi ideoloških in političnih kriterijev (gl. Leonardi 2008). V prispevku so obravnavana tri poglobljena vprašanja: (1) Kolikšen delež so predstavljali prevodi literature iz španskega jezika v celotnem korpusu prevodov v sovjetski Litvi? (2) Kateri avtorji, ki so pisali v španskem jeziku, so bili dostopni litovskim bralcem v analiziranem obdobju? In (3) Kateri dejavniki so utegnili vplivati na izbor objav v litovskem jeziku? Predstavljen je poskus opisa korpusa prevodov iz španščine v litovščino, s posebnim poudarkom na kriterijih za izbor literarnih del, ki so postala del sovjetskega kanona tuje literature.

Ključne besede: sovjetska Litva, španska književnost, latinskoameriška književnost, prevajanje iz španščine, cenzura, paratekst

1. Introduction

Over the last two decades, there has been a notable surge in academic research and scholarly works focusing on the publishing history of foreign literary translations in the former USSR (Witt 2011; Baer 2011; Monticelli and Lange 2014; Sherry 2015; Lygo 2016; Rudnytska 2022, to mention but a few) and in Lithuania in particular (Streikus 2008, 2018; Repšienė 2012; Sėdaitytė 2017; Valentinavičienė 2022; Subačius 2023). This particular focus arises from the understanding that the publishing policies during that time were intricately entwined with the ideological agenda of the Soviet system, exercised mainly through control over all cultural production and consumption (see for example Bljum 2005; Zalambani 2009; Streikus 2018).

In the field of translation, this control primarily manifests itself as a form of censorship that can occur before and after publication (Leonardi 2008; Merkle 2010). In this article, we use the term “preventive censorship”, which occurs before a book is approved for publication and, in this context, means a ban on a cultural product’s appearance in the target culture. The term has traditionally been used not only in the field of translation studies (Leonardi 2008; Monticelli and Lange 2014) but also by scholars who have examined preventive censorship and its implications from legal, philosophical, and historical perspectives (Orwell 1946; Fish 1994; Lewis 2007, and many others). The aspect of preventive censorship that involves rewriting or manipulation of the text before its release to the public (Charnow 2005) is beyond the scope of this paper.

The aim of this article is to describe the legacy of translations from Spanish into Lithuanian during the 50 years of Soviet occupation,¹ specifically focusing on those authors who became part of the “domestic world literature canon” (Rudnytska 2022, 40), having passed through the net of preventive censorship. Translation from Spanish was chosen for several reasons. Firstly, Spanish-language authors can be categorized into two distinct groups: authors from continental Spain and Latin American writers, very different groups from the viewpoint of the political agenda of the USSR (Filatov 2017; Prizel 1990; Lavery 2021), and thus an interesting case for considering their inclusion into the Soviet canon of world literature. Secondly, in Lithuania Spanish was known by only a relatively small group of people,² and the number of translators available to work on original Spanish texts was limited. Under such circumstances,

1 The article draws upon the ongoing research project “Translation and censorship under Soviet ideology in Lithuania (1940–1990)”, funded by the Research Council of Lithuania.

2 In Soviet Lithuania translators were not trained at Lithuanian higher education establishments, and Spanish as a foreign language was taught only sporadically as a second foreign language for students majoring in French in the Department of French Philology of Vilnius University.

one could expect fewer translations from the original than from an intermediary Russian language. Finally, other researchers (see Caro 2007; 2017) have noted a lack of research on Spanish translations into Lithuanian compared to other language pairs.³ This article aims to partially address this gap in the literature.

To achieve this goal, the article addresses three main questions: (1) What is the volume of Spanish-language literature in the overall corpus of translations in Soviet Lithuania? (2) Which Spanish-language authors were available in Lithuanian during the period under consideration? And (3) What factors might have influenced their selection from the rich Spanish literary tradition or that of Latin American countries? These questions shape the structure of the article. After discussing methodological aspects and sources, the context of publishing in Soviet Lithuania is briefly introduced. We then examine the volume of Spanish translations during different periods of Soviet rule, and insights from paratextual analysis regarding authors and their works meeting the Soviet control requirements. The final section evaluates the criteria for author selection and draws general conclusions from the selected corpus of publications.

2. Sources and methodology

The data on translated Spanish literature published in Soviet Lithuania were collected from several sources, including *Bibliografijos žinios* [*Bibliographical News*], *Lietuvos TSR knyga* [*The Book of Lithuanian SSR*], *Knygų metraštis* [*Book Annals*], as well as *Spaudos metraštis* [*Press Annals*]. These sources are all archived in the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania and chronicle all the materials published in Soviet Lithuania. They were issued by the Chamber of Books of the LSSR, a bibliographic information and book promotion institution, also known as the State Centre for Bibliography and Press Statistics. The Chamber was established in 1945 and operated in Vilnius until its reorganization in 1992. The publications issued by this institution have served as the primary source of statistical information for researchers studying the publishing policies of the Soviet period in Lithuania.

During our work with this archival material, we observed that despite the efforts put into compiling the annals the information was often incomplete. For instance, the source of the translation might be missing. Consequently, the chronicles primarily served

3 Whitfield (2013, 118) also stressed that most studies on the “translation practices in and between the countries of the former Soviet bloc and the West” are done “with the predominant focus on translation of Anglo-American texts into Russian or East European languages”.

as a reference source for identifying publications. We then verified the information provided in the chronicles by examining physical copies of the books, which were also photographed for documentation purposes. Furthermore, information from in-depth interviews conducted with translators and editors who worked during the period in question in the VAGA, the only publishing house specializing in publishing fiction in Soviet Lithuania, was occasionally consulted or referenced.⁴

The data analysis employed both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative approach aimed to determine the volume of works translated from Spanish into Lithuanian over a 50-year period, assessing the accessibility of Spanish-language authors in Soviet Lithuania through print runs, without considering how readers accessed these books, be it through libraries, bookstores, or universities. The qualitative investigation aimed to identify the translated authors and explore the reasons behind their selection, specifically focusing on the production side and not the reception aspect (a contrary approach is taken by Sicari (2020, 354) in her study of paratexts).

3. The context of publishing in Soviet Lithuania

The Baltic States were the last additions to the Soviet Union, and as such they were incorporated into an already existing ideological, political and cultural system, dominated by Soviet ideology and the Russian language, isolating Lithuanian culture as well as that of Latvia and Estonia from the Western world (Venclova 1979; Veisbergs 2020, 116; Monticelli and Lange 2014; Streikus 2008; 2018). Contrary to other Soviet Republics, which in 1940 had already passed through several stages and shifts of ideological control (Kalnychenko and Kolomiyets 2022), the societies of the Baltic States, which had been strongly influenced by modern nationalism during the inter-war period, were confronted with a Soviet understanding of the world that was imposed on them by force (Streikus 2018, 12; Satkauskytė 2022, 937). An attempt was made to Sovietize these states as quickly as possible (Streikus 2018, 47). About six weeks after Lithuania lost independence, a resolution was passed by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Lithuania concerning establishment of one of the most essential censorship structures, *Glavlit*,⁵ which was authorized to “control

4 These interviews (16 all in all) have been anonymized and are used only for the purposes of this research. Furthermore, we have collected testimony of translators, editors and other agents concerned from secondary sources such as published interviews and memoirs. These testimonies and secondary sources are also used to support the statements made in the article.

5 *Glavnoe upravlenie po delam literatury i izdatel'stv* [the Main Administration of Literature and Publishing]

the content of all published material” (Minutes of the meeting of 11 September 1940 in Streikus 2018, 47), and all forms of censorship were introduced right away.

Rapid changes took place in the field of publishing. In 1940 more than 40 private and state-owned publishing houses were nationalized, and they were replaced by the single State Publishing House, which was reorganized into four entities after World War II. One of these entities became the State Publishing House of Fiction (*Valstybinė grožinės literatūros leidykla*, VGLL). In 1965 VGLL was renamed VAGA, and it remained the sole publisher of fiction until Lithuania regained independence in 1990. One of the divisions of VAGA was dedicated to the translation of foreign literature.

Besides ideological censorship, the effects of the planned economy and quotas that determined the proportion of translations from Russian and from all other languages (Venclova 1979; Streikus 2008; see also Monticelli and Lange 2014, 99) have to be considered. Many of the interviewed translators emphasized that books were included in the plans for translation into Lithuanian only after they had been translated into Russian. This fact suggests that the selection process was primarily conducted in Moscow, with preventive censorship being implemented from the very beginning of the publishing process. There were a few exceptions when a book was first translated into Lithuanian, but such cases were rare. For instance, Julio Cortázar’s most well-known novel *Rayuela* [*Hopscotch*] was published in Lithuanian translation as *Žaidžiame klases* in 1978, eight years before its Russian version.

4. Volume of Spanish translations in Soviet Lithuania

In the *Press Annals* it is indicated that from 1940–1987⁶ there were 16,728 books translated into Lithuanian. Among these, 13,309 titles were translations from Russian and 749 titles comprise translations of authors from other Soviet republics (Latvia, for example; see Veisbergs 2018). Only 2,670 of the total volume of translations were from all other languages. Among these, 105 books (0.62% of all translations, or 3.93% of all translated foreign literature⁷) were translations of authors who wrote in Spanish, either originating from Spain or countries in Latin America. Since we analysed the overall corpus until the end of 1990, the total number of Spanish translations increased to 111 books, as an additional six translations were published before that date. The number of Spanish-language authors included in the corpus was higher, though, primarily

6 This is the last year of the Soviet occupation that the *Press Annals* covers.

7 All numbers except those particularly relating to Spanish literature are from *Press Annals*, where the category of “foreign languages” encompassed all languages other than those spoken in the Soviet republics.

due to a few collections containing a significant number of authors. For instance, an anthology of *Spanish Short Stories* [*Ispanų novelės*] (1984) includes 54 authors, and an anthology of *Latin American Short Stories* [*Lotynų Amerikos novelės*] (1982) contains 34 authors (we will get back to these collections in section 4.2). As a result, the total number of authors whose literary works reached the Lithuanian reading public through translations amounts to 72 from Spain and 78 from Latin America, totalling 150 names. We considered all of these authors, even if there was just a single piece of their works published. However, translations in literary journals were not considered.

The total print run of Spanish translations published in Soviet Lithuania was 2,131,000 copies, averaging around 19,000 copies per book. Notably, children's literature had the highest print runs, such as Felipe Nersy's story *Román Elé* (1985; 80,000 copies), fairy tales *Lágrimas de cocodrilo* by Juan Antonio de Laiglesia (1978; 75,000 copies), and *El cocodrilo de remanso de Guam* by the Cuban writer Onelio Jorge Cardoso (1980; 50,000 copies). Conversely, poetry books had the smallest print runs – typically around 3,000 to 5,000 copies – as demand among the reading public was always lower for these.

4.1 Translations from Spanish into Lithuanian in different periods of Soviet occupation

The analysis of the collected bibliography of the Soviet-era translations shows that the publishing policy was not the same throughout the entire period. The severity of translation censorship varied, oscillating between looser and stricter measures that aligned with the dominant power's tendencies, typically associated with the leaders of the Communist Party of the USSR (Rudnytska 2022; Kalėda et al. 2019; Monticelli and Lange 2014, 100). Traditionally the history of Soviet Baltic Republics is divided into four periods: the Stalinist period, including the first occupation in 1940 and the second after World War II (1940–1952); the Khrushchevian Thaw (1953–1964); the Brezhnevian Stagnation (1965–1984); and the period of Perestroika (1985–1990) (Kalėda et al. 2019).

4.1.1 *The Stalinist years*

Scholars emphasize that the peak of censorship of all types in Soviet Lithuania occurred during Stalin's regime, which in the Baltic States corresponded with the period of "late Stalinism" in the Soviet Union (Kalėda et al. 2019; Rudnytska 2022; cf. also Sherry 2015, 47). This period is widely regarded as the most oppressive stage in the Baltic countries in all spheres of life, while the "publishing sector experienced a significant

pressure to shape the tastes and habits of the reading public”⁸ (Streikus 2018, 59–61). Consequently, very few titles of foreign literature were translated into Lithuanian, among these only three translations from Spanish were released over nearly a decade: an anonymous picaresque novel, *Lazarillo de Tormes*, was published in two volumes in 1940 and likely translated during the time of independent Lithuania; a two-volume reprint of *Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes (1950); and *30 días con los guerrilleros de Levante* by Jesús Izcaray (1951), a small booklet of ideologically acceptable content (given that the guerrillas were a group of fighters against the Franco regime in the Spanish Civil War, and thus supported by the USSR). The translator of this booklet, Valdas Audronaša, was a Communist Party activist himself. The book’s source language is unspecified, but it is likely that it was translated from Russian.

The selection of the few books to be published during the Stalinist years, even though only three titles, seems rather odd, yet it speaks for itself considering the political pressure in Lithuania and the atmosphere of arrests and deportations.⁹ First, under conditions of strict censorial control, especially at the very beginning of the Soviet occupation, when the “rules of the game” (Monticelli and Lange 2014) were not yet known, to stick to the works considered classics seemed to be both important in the eyes of the readers and politically safe. This approach explains why *Don Quixote* was among the first foreign books to be published in Soviet Lithuania (in 1950). Actually, it was a reprint of the translation published in Lithuania during the war years (1942). Its translator, Pulgis Andriušis, started work on it even earlier, in independent Lithuania. This publication marked a milestone in the history of Lithuanian translation (Caro 2007, 257), and so it is not surprising that it was republished several times (in 1950, 1959 and 1971). Additionally it was published as a collection of extracts for schools in 1958 (*Don Kichotas (ištraukos)* [*Don Quixote (extracts)*]). It is worth noting, however, that the translator’s name was only specified in the wartime (1942) publication of the novel. Later editions of 1950, 1959 and 1971 contain only the name of the editor (“edited by Aleksys Churginas”). The translator was never mentioned, because in 1944 he fled Lithuania and, as a political emigrant, became a *persona non grata* in the country. In such cases the names of émigrés would disappear from any public discourse.

8 All translations into English are done by the authors of the article.

9 The first editor-in-chief of the State Publishing House of Fiction, Valys Drazdauskas, was arrested in 1949 and sentenced to 10 years imprisonment. One of the incriminating accusations against him was that “he was trying to publish more translations of Western literature that had no thematic relevance.” (Lithuanian special archive of KGB, in Streikus 2018, 61). Six more editors were also arrested and tried.

The translated picaresque novel of anonymous authorship from the same distant historical period as *Don Quixote* may be treated as both a canonical Spanish text and as entertainment literature (Petrauskas 1999, 568). Judging by the popularity of Ilf and Petrov's novels *The Twelve Chairs* (1928) and *The Golden Calf* (1931) in pre-war USSR, the rogue, the hero of the type depicted in *Lazarillo de Tormes* and other picaresque stories originating in 16th century Spain, was "very much still needed in Russian language Soviet literature" (Oliveira 2023, 4), while the story itself with its criticism of the values of the feudal society and strong anticlericalism (Petrauskas 1999, 561) was within the acceptable themes of the Soviet censors.

4.1.2 *The Khrushchevian Thaw*

The arrival of the "Thaw" during Khrushchev's rule, a period of relative liberalization and cultural openness (Zalambani 2009), "brought an end to the cultural isolation of the preceding decade and publishing houses soon flooded bookstores with an unprecedented quantity and variety of foreign literary works in translation" (Lavery 2021, 14). There was an increase in the publication of translations of the Spanish-language authors in Lithuania as well. From 1956 to 1968, 21 titles were translated from the Spanish language, a notable surge compared to the previous decade.

Besides this increase, a few more aspects attract attention in the bibliography of translations of this period. Firstly, it is evident that not only foreign classics but also prominent contemporary authors were translated and published (Streikus 2008, 9). This trend continued well into the following period. Secondly, out of the 21 translations of Spanish-language authors, two thirds of the titles are attributed to Latin American authors (13), clearly in response to the Latin American Boom which began in the 1960s (Petrauskas 1986, 158) after the success of the revolution in Cuba in 1959. At that time "the entire continent seemed to brim with revolutionary potential" (Lavery 2021, 18). Since then, Latin American authors had been a welcome addition to the publishing plans of publishing houses across the USSR, and Lithuania was no exception.

However, the quotas for the Lithuanian publisher existed as before and it was impossible to catch up with the same amount of titles released in Russian. Therefore many of the books published in Moscow in the 1960s appeared in Lithuanian with a certain delay, of some five to ten years. This period was also marked by a large number of translations through the intermediary Russian language. On the whole, the examination of the physical copies of the books has shown that over these 50 years the majority of books (77 titles) were translated directly from the original source in the Spanish language. Approximately a quarter of all publications (27 titles) were

translated through the intermediary Russian language, while seven books did not have any indication regarding the source language of translation. It is also evident that translations from the intermediary Russian language were primarily conducted until the mid-1970s. In later years, translations were predominantly done directly from the original sources.

Finally, an important organizational change took place during the Thaw – the censorial control was transferred from *Glavlit* to editors and editorial boards of state publishers (Bljum 2005, 46–51; Sherry 2015, 47; Zalambani 2009), and the role of senior editors or heads of an editorial office became even more important because they had to select not only books for translation, but also their translators and authors of paratexts (Sherry 2015, 54). Consequently, the responsibility of VAGA also increased.

4.1.3 The Brezhnevian stagnation

The subsequent period (1969–1987), known as the Era of Stagnation under Brezhnev's leadership of the country, was the longest in Soviet history. Its beginning coincided with the so-called “golden age” (1966–1970) for translation in Lithuania, with no less than 175 Western authors (219 books) translated into Lithuanian.¹⁰ Among these there were a few Spanish-language authors who enjoyed a special status in the USSR and had several works translated into Lithuanian as well. For instance, the foreign literature canon in Lithuania was broadened by three novels by Miguel de Unamuno, namely *Niebla* (1975), *Tres novelas ejemplares y un prólogo* (1975) and *Abel Sánchez: Una historia de passion* (1977); five books of Pablo Neruda's poetry; four novels by Miguel Ángel Asturias (*El señor Presidente* (1969), *Viento fuerte* (1982), *El papá verde* (1983) and *Los ojos de los enterrados* (1985)). Gabriel García Márquez had two novels – *Cien años de soledad* (1972) and *El otoño del patriarca* (1980) – translated as separate books, while two of his short stories came out in the anthology of *Latin American Short Stories* in 1982. Federico García Lorca's poetry book entitled *Kryžkelė [The Crossroads]* was published in 1966, and seven other poems were added when the collection was reprinted under the title *Pamiršti negaliu [I Can't Forget]* in 1988.

After 1970, however, “the mechanism of ‘blacklisting’ began to work more intensively” [...] and “gradually but decisively we returned to publication allocations and trends of the Stalin epoch” (Venclova 1979). But even under stricter censorial control, three or four Spanish translations were published each year. This conclusion supports the finding of Emily Lygo (2016) that stagnation did not affect the translation sector in the USSR.

10 *Lietuvos TSR spaudos statistika 1966–1970 m.* [Publishing Statistics of Lithuanian SSR, 1966–1970]. Vilnius, 1972.

4.1.4 *Perestroika*

During the subsequent Era of Perestroika, which was marked by significant political and economic reforms from 1985 on, the average number of Spanish titles published remained practically unchanged, and fluctuated between three and four. “The sphere of literary translation only saw any real changes in 1988 when previously prohibited works were authorized, Soviet editorial canons were dismantled and the de-Sovietization of the images of foreign authors began” (Rudnytska 2022, 61). There was not much change with regard to Spanish translations either in the number of titles translated or in the selection of the authors: only three of 18 translated titles originated from Spain (Federico García Lorca’s *De profundis and other poems* (1988), Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio’s *El Jarama* (1989) and a collection of poetry by Juan Ramón Jiménez (1988)), and all the others were by Latin American writers.

4.2 Spanish classical works and anthologies of short stories in Lithuanian

Besides the publishing of *Don Quixote* discussed above, three more distinguished Baroque authors of the Spanish Golden Age (Petrauskas 1999, 554) were translated into Lithuanian during the Soviet period: Francisco de Quevedo, Pedro Calderón and Lope de Vega. Francisco de Quevedo became known in Soviet Lithuania through the translation of his picaresque novel *La vida del buscón, llamado don Pablos* [*The Life and Adventures of Buscon the Witty Spaniard*] (1626), translated into Lithuanian as *Perėjūno dono Pablo gyvenimo istorija* in 1983 (Caro 2017). Pedro Calderón’s comedy *La dama duende* [*The Phantom Lady*] (1636) was published in a book form as *Dama vaiduoklė* in 1959 (most probably from the pre-war translation of 1935), but staged only in 1973. Another comedy, *No hay burlas con el amor* [*Love Is No Laughing Matter*] was staged in Lithuania in 1951 and 1960, but it was not included in any collection of plays or published as a separate book. Neither were the plays of Lope de Vega, whose *El maestro de danzar* [*The Dancing Master*] (1593) was staged in 1951, 1959 and 1978, or *El perro del hortelano* [*The Dog in the Manger*], staged in Lithuanian translation as *Šuo ant šieno* in 1950.

Special mention should be made of two anthologies of short stories – *Spanish Short Stories* (1984) and *Latin American Short Stories* (1982). Regarding these books in the context of Spanish translations, two key points are worth noting. First, the selection of Spanish short stories aimed to address the long neglect of many Spanish writers and offer a more comprehensive overview of 20th-century Spanish literary history. This anthology includes 54 authors, most of whom had never been translated before. It spans from Miguel de Unamuno (b. 1864) to Mary Carmen de Celis (b. 1947), the youngest among the included authors. Secondly, all the stories are translated directly

from the original sources, and it is notable that the story selection process took place in Vilnius, not in Moscow. A comparison with the Russian collection *Sovremennaja ispanskaja novella* [*Contemporary Spanish Short Stories*] (1971), compiled by Vadim Jasnyj, reveals that only seven out of 29 authors translated into Russian are also represented in the Lithuanian anthology, and none of the titles are the same. This supports the testimony of one interviewee that the selection was predominantly carried out by the anthology's compiler, Bronius Dovydaitis, from the original sources, with Dovydaitis himself translating 32 of the 54 stories included.

The anthology of *Latin American Short Stories* provided VAGA translators with an opportunity to introduce Lithuanian readers to a wider array of Latin American authors, encompassing both established figures like Julio Cortázar and Gabriel García Márquez, as well as lesser-known writers. Noting that a *cuento* is considered the newest literary genre in Latin America (Petrauskas 1982, 491), the compiler, Valdas Petrauskas, offers an extensive overview of its evolution from the late 19th century through the 20th century. All the stories in the anthology were translated from their original Spanish and Portuguese sources, and the selection of authors was based on the principles of political and thematic suitability described below.

5. Politically acceptable authors

The final question in this analysis concerns the reasoning behind the selection of the authors to be translated. It seems that with preventive censorship having occurred centrally, the local publishers could only make a choice from the pool of available authors and their works. But what factors supported the selection of these particular authors in the first place?

Scholars have emphasized the author's political leanings as a primary reason for acceptance into the Soviet canon of world literature (Venclova 1979, Rudnytska 2022; Valentinavičienė 2023). It is essential to stress that relations between the USSR and Spain were far from amicable for most of the USSR's history. After the Spanish Civil War, the rule of Francisco Franco transformed the two states into ideological and political opponents (Filatov 2017, 20–21). The situation reached its lowest point during WWII when Spain joined Germany by forming the so-called Blue Division (*División Azul*) and participating in the attack against the Soviet Union in 1941 (Juliá 2017, 193–94). It took years to improve relations between the two countries (Filatov 2017, 21).

In contrast, most Latin American countries “fell into the Soviet political orbit at the beginning of the Cold War and were considered by Stalin as ‘most promising’ for

the retransmission of communist values” (Bujnova 2021, 164). Many authors from these countries were treated as friends of the USSR, with favourites including Pablo Neruda, Jorge Amado, Alfonso Gravina, Nicanor Parra, Nicolas Guillen, and a few others (Bujnova 2021, 164). Such friends of the USSR received many privileges in the country, while their books enjoyed excessively high print runs. This policy was initiated from the highest level of political power, and in February 1960 the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR criticized the publishing houses for printing too few translations of Latin American literature, which should be increased in order “to satisfy the interest of Soviet readers in the lives of the peoples fighting the heroic struggle for national independence” (Afanas’eva et al. 1998, 232).

A writer’s political views were thus a factor influencing the decision as to whether or not a certain author should be included in a publishing plan. For instance, authors like Gonzalo Torrente Ballester, Luis Romero, Rafael Sánchez Mazas, and Dionisio Ridruejo, among many others, were popular and critically acclaimed writers in Spain, but remained largely unknown in Lithuania. A common thread in their biographies is their active support of the Franco regime, their membership in the fascist Falange Party,¹¹ and their strong opposition to the USSR (e.g., Luis Romero fought against the USSR with *División Azul* (Gracia and Ródenas 2019, 443), Gonzalo Torrente Ballester, for his part, was an enthusiastic Falangist and Francoist ideologue (Jerez-Farran and Amago 2010, 15)). As a result, these right-wing authors could not find a place among Soviet readers, regardless of their literary merits. Conversely, proposals to translate works by prominent communist writers who openly supported the Soviet Union were far more likely to gain approval.

But there seems to have been exceptions. For instance, Camilo José Cela, one of Spain’s Nobel laureates, had two novels – *La familia de Pascual Duarte* [*The Family of Pascual Duarte*] and *La colmena* [*Hive*] – published in Russian (1970) and Lithuanian (1981). Some of his short stories were also included in the anthology of 1984. This is surprising because the author “willingly offered his services as an informer for Franco’s regime and moved voluntarily from Madrid to Galicia during the Civil War in order to join the rebel forces there. Cela later served proudly as an official censor during the dictatorship” (Jerez-Farran and Amago 2010, 15), and this history should have disqualified him from being published in the USSR. Furthermore, the published books predate Cela’s Nobel Prize in Literature (1989), so there is no reason to think that he was included for his literary fame. As such, in the context of preventive censorship, his case is worth exploring further.

11 Falange Española de las JONS.

6. Thematically acceptable works

More information on why certain authors were translated in this period can be found in the paratexts which, following Gerard Genette, include both *epitexts* (1997, 2–3), i.e. texts about the work and its author presented in different sources outside the book (e.g. critical articles in the press or scholarly articles) and *peritexts* (1997, 16), i.e. texts attached to the translations themselves, like forewords and afterwords. In our corpus of 111 books 15 contain a foreword and 69 have afterwords of varying length, and only 27 books are without paratexts.

Nearly 50 years ago, the Lithuanian dissident writer Tomas Venclova referred to these forewords and afterwords as “lightning rods”, and defined them as “Marxist or pseudo-Marxist essays on their work which include suitable criticism to pass the censor’s scrutiny” (Venclova 1979). It appears that, until the mid-1960s, forewords were the more favoured option. They were typically concise and often unsigned, providing only basic information on the author and/or book and some ideologically biased sentences. Exceptions are a few peritexts written by the authors themselves. These were much longer (up to 10 pages) and signed (Ciro Alegria’s “Foreword to the 10th Edition” of his novel *El mundo es ancho y ajeno* [*Broad and Alien is the World*], translated into Lithuanian as *Pasaulis platus ir svetimas* in 1980, can serve as an example).

The afterwords differ in nature, with some being short (about one page) and neutral in content, others taking the form of critical articles, providing a more thorough analysis of the book and its place in literary history. Typically, these afterwords were authored by specialists, including literature professors, literary critics, or the translators themselves. To placate censors, the peritexts contain a few sentences of the ideologically desirable content, e.g., biographical details about the author’s commitment to communist ideals, the moral superiority of the Soviet state over the “decaying West”,¹² or the advantages of living in a socialist system (cf. Sicari 2020, 357).

Having examined the peritexts and some available epitexts, we have identified certain recurring patterns that help answer the question of inclusion of some of the authors into the Soviet canon of foreign literature. These patterns extend beyond mere literary accomplishments of the authors and delve into their personal moral values, political stances, the ideological themes in their works, and the nature of their protagonists. We have classified the authors into five overarching groups as follows:

12 A saying that was often used in the press when writing about capitalist countries, particularly the USA (cf. Rudnytska 2023, 132).

Authors who held communist beliefs and idealized the USSR, Russian culture and literature

The priority candidates for being published in the Soviet Union were those authors who held communist beliefs and were admirers of the Soviet Union and its achievements (cf. Lavery 24–25). For instance, in the foreword to the translation of his book, Jesús Izcaray was introduced as a “communist, editor-in-chief of the party’s organ *Mundo obrero*, collaborator of the *Frente rocho* and other communist papers. He established his reputation as a journalist in 1936–1939 during the Spanish people’s fight against fascists and interventionists, participated in the defence of Madrid, spent many years in exile...”¹³ (J.I.,¹⁴ 3; see also Baez Ramos 1994).

Such authors as Joaquín Gutiérrez and Pablo Neruda, Alfredo Varela and José Mancisidor, Benito Pérez Galdós and Miguel Ángel Asturias, as well as many others, were treated as friends of the USSR (Bujnova 2021, 164). Most of them were communists or at least supporters of socialist ideology. They visited the Soviet Union (Joaquín Gutiérrez spent five years in Moscow) and wrote numerous favourable articles about the country. Pablo Neruda, a celebrated poet, glorified the Soviet Union’s accomplishments, “addressed the Soviet people in a poem-letter, referring to the USSR as the holy and pure homeland” (P.N., 4). Benito Pérez Galdós acknowledged that he was influenced by the Russian novelist Ivan Turgenev and is quoted as having said that “genuine democracy could only be achieved within a socialist system” (B.P.G., 261). Ramón del Valle-Inclán, known for his sympathies toward the Soviet Union, was elected president of the Spanish Society of Friends of the USSR in 1933.

Authors critical of the United States and works that portray the Western world, capitalism, and the bourgeoisie in a negative light

Lavery (2021, 24–25) has pointed out that proposals for translation of Latin American writers, “who were talented but not necessarily leftist, were more likely to be accepted if critics emphasized a given work’s denunciation of US foreign policy or criticism of bourgeois”. This coincides with our finding that many of the published Latin American authors provided a powerful critique of American imperialism and capitalism. Carlos Luis Fallas’ novels, such as *Mamita Yunai* and *Marcos Ramírez*, translated as *Mamita Junai* (1955) and *Išdykėlis Markas* (1963), “vividly depict the exploitation and harsh working conditions imposed by American ‘civilizers’ in Costa Rica’s plantations” (C.L.F., 281). Álvaro Yunque himself wrote a foreword for his novel *Niños de hoy*

13 The quotes are from the peritexts of the published translations.

14 For the peritexts, included under Primary sources, only author initials are provided.

[*The Boys of the South*] translated as *Pietų berniukai* (1961). In this, he addresses Soviet children, highlighting their fortunate position in the USSR compared to poor Argentinian children living in a capitalist country. He portrays capitalism as a system characterized by egoism, injustice, and cruelty (Á.Y., 3). The story *Doña Bárbara* by Rómulo Gallegos focuses on the North American oil monopolies in Venezuela and “portrays the character of Donja Barbara as a symbol of capitalist evils” (R.G., 360). Ana María Matute’s *Los soldados lloran de noche* [*Soldiers Cry at Night*], translated as *Kareiviai verkia naktį* (1967), exposes the bourgeois world where everything is commodified, and calls for reforms to address these issues” (A.M.M., 222). Finally, Mario Vargas Llosa’s *La casa verde* [*The Green House*] “portrays America as a prison of time that crushes individuals’ hopes and leaves them empty-handed” (M.V.L., 366). In the figure of Miguel Ángel Asturias, who visited the Soviet Union in 1966 and received the esteemed Lenin Prize as a recognition of his literary achievements, “the Soviets found a harsh critic of the United States’ imperialistic demagoguery in Latin America and a passionate spokesperson for his down trodden national community” (Lavery 2021, 61).

Writers and works criticizing the Franco regime and Francoist Spain

Numerous writers and their works cast a critical light on the Franco regime and Francoist Spain. For instance, Federico García Lorca’s poetry emerged as a “potent weapon against the fascist system during the Spanish Civil War” (F.G.L., 146). Towards the end of the 1930s, this was particularly exploited in the US and UK (Walsh 2020, 6), and gained recognition in the USSR after his execution by Francoists in 1936. Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui’s novel *Esta oscura desbandada* [*Running in the Dark*] translated as *Bégimas tamsoje* (1970), exposed the prevalence of “scammers and fraudsters who flourished in Spain after Franco’s victory” (J.A.Z., 363). Miguel Delibes, through his novels *Cinco horas con Mario* [*Five Hours with Mario*] and *Las ratas* [*Rats*], published in one volume in 1979, “vividly portrayed the harsh and impoverished life experienced in Francoist Spain, insights into the social and economic challenges that marginalized communities in Spain faced during that period and a need for change” (M.D., 310).

Authors and works that expressed anti-religious sentiments

Several Spanish authors boldly expressed anti-religious sentiments, challenging the influence of the Catholic Church and critiquing religious dogma in different ways. For instance, in Benito Pérez Galdós’ novel *Doña Perfecta*, translated as *Donja Perfekta* as early as 1957, “the author took aim at feudal and Catholic Spain” (B.P.G., 260).

José Rubén Romero's *La vida inútil de Pito Pérez* [*The Useless Life of Pito Pérez*], translated into Lithuanian as *Niekam tikęs Pito Pereso gyvenimas* (1967), featured a protagonist who "ridiculed the Church, the clergy, authorities, provincial doctors and pharmacists, [] even God himself" (J.R.R., 158), reflecting a deep scepticism towards religious figures and institutions. Juan Valera, in *Pepita Jiménez*, published in 1970, challenged religious asceticism and advocated for embracing human nature in the earthly realm, drawing from his own decision to abandon the priesthood in rejection of mystical ideals (J.V., 191). Agustín Yañez, in his book *Al filo del agua* [*The Edge of the Storm*], translated as *Prieš audrą* (1987), highlighted the "clergy's sole purpose of keeping people subjugated" (A.Y., 373).

Works portraying the lives of the proletariat and ordinary people from the countryside

The Soviet Union claimed to be a country of "workers and peasants", and therefore works that provided glimpses into the lives of the working class and rural communities were often deemed acceptable. These works not only emphasized the struggles and aspirations of the people, but also explored the broader social issues they faced throughout different historical periods. For instance, in his novel *Las ciegas hormigas* [*Blind Ants*], translated as *Aklos skruzdės* in 1977, Ramiro Pinilla offered "a poignant portrayal of the Basque community, [] evoking sympathy and empathy for the hard-working, strong-willed Basques, who toil like blind ants for their livelihood" (R.P., 239). Similarly, Luis Landínez's novel *Los hijos de Máximo Judas* [*The Children of Máximo Judas*], translated as *Maksimo Judo vaikai* in 1961, "depicted the prevalent issues in the Spanish countryside of that historical period, the villagers and their toil in the pastures, offering insights into the realities of rural life" (L.L., 273). Additionally, Ángel María de Lera's novel *Tierra para morir* [*The Land to Die*], translated as *Žemė gyventi – žemė mirti* (1974), "vividly illustrated the existence of a poor and isolated village, exploring the factors behind mass emigration from the Spanish countryside" (Á.M.L., 277).

Most of the books that had forewords and afterwords can be attributed to at least one of these categories or even two, as supporting communist ideas usually goes together with criticism of capitalist countries, or the Church, and other typical thematic choices. Moreover, since the cases are rather similar, here we provided only a few examples of the information stressed for each category. It is notable that these characteristics are consciously directed toward the tacit criteria of acceptability. Reading about the same authors or books in other sources, the emphasis is sometimes different. For instance, in many sources Carmen Laforet's novel *Nada* [Engl. *Andrea*] is described as a "novel

of female adolescent development” (Del Mastro 1997, 55) and is associated with such themes as existentialism and the adolescent search for identity. In the afterward to the Lithuanian translation, the topic of the book is said to be the “[d]ark and unsettling Spain in the aftermath of the Civil War” (C.L., 197). Most probably, this side of the story was presented in the paratext of the Lithuanian translation in order to let it pass censorial scrutiny, as existentialism was not a literary trend that was accepted in the Soviet Union because it was deemed to uphold too pessimistic views on the world and the future (Streikus 2018).

7. Conclusions

The analysis of Spanish-language literature publications in Soviet Lithuania over a period of 50 years, as presented in this article, has revealed fluctuations and shifts driven by the political climate and cultural policies of each period. During Stalin’s era, strict censorship led to only three titles from Spain being published in nearly a decade. Later the numbers increased slightly, yet still never exceeded three or four titles per year, regardless of whether a title was just a short story or a long, two-volume novel.

The collected bibliographic data reveal that at the beginning of the period concerned translations from Spain focused on classical novels from the Golden Age and the novels with thematically acceptable content. Latin American literature, on the other hand, exhibited more diversity, poetry comprising quite a significant portion. Statistically, Cuban authors formed the largest group (21) due to Cuba’s close ties with the USSR following the Cuban revolution. As literary critics of the time portrayed Latin American literature as the voice of the oppressed, the publication of translations by previously untranslated writers became possible (Lavery 2021, 18). Thus the number of translations of Latin American authors was increasing throughout the entire Soviet period, right up until Lithuania’s independence in 1990. For instance, during the period of *Perestroika* (1985–1990), out of 18 titles only three translations were of the works by Spanish authors.

Another distinctive feature of Lithuanian translations of literary works written in Spanish is a high number of Latin American authors connected to modernist trends in Western literature. The most famous representatives of the Latin American Boom – Carlos Fuentes, Mario Vargas Llosa, Julio Cortázar, and Gabriel García Márquez – who “internalized the techniques of Western modernism and applied them in their depictions of Latin American reality” (Lavery 2021, 19), became to a certain extent available in Lithuanian as well. The canon of Latin American literature that appeared in Lithuanian translation during Soviet times included at least the most important

works the world was speaking about. However, the Spanish authors selected for translation were mainly those who wrote in a classical, realistic manner. The statistical data amply support this conclusion.

Upon examining the paratextual information in the publications, clear trends of politically biased title and author selection for translation emerge, i.e., the author's political leanings were a primary reason for acceptance into or elimination from the Soviet canon of world literature. This suggests that preventive censorship persisted throughout the entire period, disregarding the literary merit or popularity of the authors in their home countries. For example, works by writers affiliated with Falange, the right-wing party supporting Franco and his regime, such as Gonzalo Torrente Ballester, Luis Romero, Rafael Sánchez Mazas, or Dionisio Ridruejo were never published in the USSR or Lithuania, despite their popularity in post-war Spain.

The findings of the analysis of paratextual elements allowed us to establish a link between the bibliographic data and preventive translation censorship. The pre-selection practices were confirmed by the analysis of forewords and afterwords of the translated Spanish-language fiction titles published in Soviet Lithuania. These paratexts often provide an indication of the thematic content of the books and the political stance of their authors in alignment with the dominant ideology. This demonstrated to both the world and Soviet readers that important authors were published in the USSR. The fact that most of them conveniently had leftist leanings served as an additional factor to prove the superiority of the Soviet system.

Furthermore, although translation and publication quotas were much smaller for the peripheral publishing houses in comparison to the central ones, and many more Russian authors were published than foreign ones, it seems that publishers in Lithuania did their utmost to publish the best authors available, often navigating between those they saw as safe and those they saw as valuable. Then, after the rules of the game had been learned, certain deviations from general Soviet practices were possible, an example being the anthology of *Spanish Short Stories*.

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