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## **Latvian Literature in Ukraine: a Brief Overview of its Perception and Interpretation During the Last Hundred Years**

### **Latviešu literatūra Ukrainā: īss pārskats par tās percepciju un interpretāciju pēdējo simts gadu laikā**

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#### **Atslēgvārdi:**

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## Summary

Latvian and Ukrainian literary relations are primarily characterized by a history of translations and encyclopedic information about writers and their work. The first renderings of Latvian literature into Ukrainian were published in the early 1920s. Most Ukrainian versions of Latvian prose and poetry were created in the Soviet period, starting from the 1950s; much less of them appeared in independent Ukraine. Ukrainian readers have the opportunity to get acquainted with the works of Vizma Belševica, Aleksandrs Čaks, Regīna Ezera, Nora Ikstena, Vilis Lācis, Linards Laicens, Rainis, Zigmunds Skujiņš, Andrejs Upīts, Ojārs Vācietis, Imants Ziedonis and others. Among the translators are Hryhorii Kochur, Konstiantyn Overchenko, Yurii Zavorodnii, Yurii Sadlovskiy and others. These translators can be divided into three groups. The first group includes those who were fluent in the Latvian language and translated from the original. The second group includes those who had an idea of the grammatical and lexical features of the Latvian language and mainly used the original Latvian text for translation. The third group translated from the available Russian translations of the Latvian texts. In Ukraine the information about Latvian writers can be found in various encyclopedias, mainly in the *Ukrainska literaturna entsyklopediia* (Encyclopedia of Ukrainian Literature) (1988, 1990, 1995) and the *Shevchenkivska entsyklopediia* (Shevchenko Encyclopedia) (2012–2015), as well as in internet resources in Ukrainian. The objects of the research are only texts published in the Ukrainian language.

## Kopsavilkums

Latviešu un ukraiņu literāros sakarus raksturo tulkojumu vēsture un enciklopēdiska informācija par rakstniekiem un viņu darbiem. Pirmie latviešu literatūras tulkojumi ukraiņu valodā tika publicēti 20. gs. 20. gadu sākumā. Lielākā daļa latviešu prozas un dzejas ukraiņu versiju ir iznākušas padomju laikā, sākot no 20. gs. 50. gadiem; daudz mazāk to parādījās neatkarīgajā Ukrainā. Ukraiņu lasītājiem tādējādi ir zināmi vai pieejami Vizma Belševica, Aleksandrs Čaks, Regīna Ezera, Nora Ikstena, Vilis Lācis, Linards Laicens, Rainis, Zigmunds Skujiņš, Andrejs Upīts, Ojārs Vācietis, Imants Ziedonis un vēl aptuveni 180 autori. Tulkotāju vidū ir Hrīgorijs Kočurs, Konstantīns Overčenko, Jurijs Zavorodnijs, Jurijs Sadlovskis un citi. Tulkotājus var iedalīt trīs grupās. Pirmajā ietilpst tie, kas ir brīvi pārvaldījuši latviešu valodu un tulkojuši no oriģināla. Otrajā grupā ietilpst tie, kuriem ir bijis priekšstats par latviešu valodas gramatiskajām un leksiskajām iezīmēm, bet kuri tulkošanai arī lielā mērā izmantojuši latviešu valodas oriģināltekstu. Trešā grupa latviešu tekstus tulkoja, izmantojot esošos krievu valodas tulkojumus. Ukrainā informācija par latviešu rakstniekiem ir pieejama dažādās enciklopēdijās, galvenokārt *Ukrainska literaturna entsyklopediia* (Ukraiņu literatūras enciklopēdija) (1988, 1990, 1995) un *Shevchenkivska entsyklopediia* (Ševčenko enciklopēdija) (2012–2015), kā arī interneta resursos ukraiņu valodā. Pētījuma objekti ir tikai teksti ukraiņu valodā.

## Introduction

In the 1920s, the first Ukrainian-language information about Latvian literature, mainly translations and literary critical articles, began to appear. Thus the history of Ukrainian perception and interpretation of Latvian literature is almost a century long. During that time, there were periods when many translated works and data about writers appeared, but there were also periods of complete silence. This was due to both national or political and also personal human factors. Of course, sometimes the development of literary relations between Latvians and Ukrainians was stimulated and supported by state institutions. However, a significant role was always played by individual people who single-handedly tried to popularize Latvian literature in Ukraine. Among these individual as well as state-level recent popularizers we can certainly note *Raul Chilachava*<sup>1</sup>. With his assistance, new Ukrainian-language editions of the works by Aspazija and Rainis (Aspazija, Rainis 2007), Ojārs Vācietis (Vācietis 2008) and Aleksandrs Čaks (Čaks 2008) came out. The compiler and partly also the translator of these three books was R. Chilachava himself.

## History of Latvian literature: an encyclopedic image

In the Ukrainian-speaking space, the general history of Latvian literature is represented only by short, one- or two-page-long entries in the *Ukrainska radianska entsyklopediia* (Ukrainian Soviet Encyclopedia)<sup>2</sup>, *Ukrainska literaturna entsyklopediia* (Ukrainian Literary Encyclopedia)<sup>3</sup>, *Entsyklopediia Suchasnoi Ukrainy* (Encyclopedia of Modern Ukraine)<sup>4</sup> and several internet resources (*Wikipedia*<sup>5</sup>, *slovník.mi*<sup>6</sup>, *wiki.uk-ua*<sup>7</sup> and others).

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1 R. Chilachava (1940) is a doctor of philology, professor, famous translator from Georgian into Ukrainian and vice versa, and writer. From 2005 to 2010 he was the ambassador of Ukraine to Latvia.

2 *The Ukrainian Soviet Encyclopedia* was published twice: the first time in 17 volumes (1959–1965), the second time in 12 volumes (1977–1985). The editor-in-chief of both editions was a famous Ukrainian writer Mykola Bazhan (1904–1983).

3 *The Ukrainian Literary Encyclopedia* was the first edition that comprehensively covered the history of Ukrainian and world literature. Of the planned five volumes, only three were published (up to the letter N). The first volume was published in 1988, the second in 1990, and the third in 1995.

4 *Entsyklopediia Suchasnoi Ukrainy* is a multi-volume scientific encyclopedic publication by the Institute of Encyclopedic Research of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. Since 2001, 24 volumes (from the letter A to O) have been published. It also has a multimedia version. Materials of all volumes are available at: <https://esu.com.ua/>. [Accessed 15.07.2023].

5 Available at: [https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Лотиська\\_література](https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Лотиська_література) [Accessed 15.07.2023].

6 Available at: [https://slovník.me/dict/literary\\_encyclopedia](https://slovník.me/dict/literary_encyclopedia). [Accessed 15.07.2023].

7 Available at: <https://www.wiki.uk-ua.nina.az>. [Accessed 15.07.2023].

In the 6th volume of *Ukrainian Soviet Encyclopedia* (Bazhan 1981) there is an entry of 5 pages about Soviet Latvia<sup>8</sup>, a part of which is devoted to the history of Latvian literature. It is obvious that in a Soviet encyclopedia the image of the literatures of the Soviet republics, like all the other material, had to be presented entirely within the framework of Soviet ideology. This is perfectly demonstrated by the politically charged text by *Biruta Zvaigzne*<sup>9</sup>. Her entry, which takes up one column of a page, starts as follows: "The development of national Latvian literature began in the 19th century and is connected with the formation of the Latvian bourgeois nation and the national liberation movement"<sup>10</sup> (Zvaigzne 1981: 75). "*Latvju dainas*" (Krišjānis Barons), "ballad" (Vilis Plūdonis), "the first playwright" (Ādolfs Alunāns), "the ideas of national liberation movement"<sup>11</sup> (Auseklis, Andrejs Pumpurs), "realism" (Reinis Kaudzīte, Matīss Kaudzīte, Rūdolfs Blaumanis, Eduards Veidenbaums, Aspazija, Andrejs Upīts, Ernests Bīrznieks-Upītis, Jānis Jaunsudrabiņš) were the main key-words in the descriptions of Latvian national literature. She noted that the realist movement in Latvian literature spread in the last quarter of the 19th century and later was associated with the activities of the *Jaunā strāva* (The New Current) movement. All that was said about Rainis was that he entered literature on the eve of the revolution of 1905–1907, was a revolutionary writer, and that his works have also been translated into Ukrainian.

Next, B. Zvaigzne gives a description of Latvian Soviet literature "which was born after the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution and the establishment of Soviet power in Latvia (the works of A. Upīts, A. Arājs-Bērce, E. Eferts-Klusais)" (Zvaigzne 1981: 75). The titles of those works are not specified. Then B. Zvaigzne claims that in the 1920s and 1930s revolutionary writers (L. Laicens, Leons Paegle, Rainis, A. Upīts, A. Čaks, Jānis Grots and others) advocated the restoration of Soviet

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8 The title of the entry is "Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic". Latvia was occupied twice by the Soviet Union (1940–1941, 1944–1991). In official Soviet sources Latvia, being a member of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, was called the "Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic" or "Latvian SSR". The names "Latvia SSR" or "Soviet Socialist Republic of Latvia" were also used.

9 B. Zvaigzne (1931–2016) was a Latvian literary scholar. Her Russian-language dissertation is about Latvian-Ukrainian literary relations (Zvaigzne 1971), and she is the author of information about Latvian literature in some Ukrainian encyclopedic editions, including the second edition of *Ukrainian Soviet Encyclopedia* (1977–1985), *Shevchenko Dictionary* (1976–1978), and *Shevchenko Encyclopedia* (2012–2015). Her articles on Latvian-Ukrainian literary contacts have been published in Ukrainian magazines and anthologies.

10 Here and henceforth in this article, all translations of quotes from Ukrainian into English were made by the author of the article.

11 Here the author meant the movement of cultural and national revival of 1850–1880, which is known as *Pirmā atmoda* (the First [Latvian National] Awakening).

power in Latvia while some writers, such as Sudrabu Edžus and Roberts Eidemanis, continued to create Soviet Latvian literature outside Latvia, in the territory of the Soviet Union. According to her, a new period in the development of Soviet Latvian literature began in 1940, and its representatives were: the writers who wrote patriotic texts during the Great Patriotic War<sup>12</sup> (Arvīds Grigulis, Valdis Lukss, Jūlijs Vanags); the post-war writers (V. Lācis, Anna Sakse, Mirdza Ķempe); the authors whose writing career began in the 1950s and 1960s (O. Vācietis, Egons Līvs, Pauls Putniņš) and later. In total, 55 surnames were mentioned in this respect.

B. Zvaigzne's interpretation of the history of Latvian literature is an example of the Soviet-style historiographical writing. She wrote about realism, the Great October Socialist Revolution, revolutionary writers, Great Patriotic War (not World War II) and other topics that were allowed and recommended by the official historical and ideological directives in the Soviet Union. This led to the silencing or Sovietization of the facts, which distanced the presented image of Latvian literature from the true state of affairs.

In 1995, readers in already independent Ukraine had an opportunity to get acquainted with the entry *Latviiska literatura* (Latvian Literature) written by Mirdza Ābola<sup>13</sup> for the third volume of the *Ukrainian Literary Encyclopedia* (Ābola 1995). This was the first Ukrainian-language information about the history of the Latvian literary process which already mentioned religious texts, Romanticism, works describing the struggle for Latvian independence, and everything else that was once prohibited by Soviet censorship. Since M. Ābola was writing for a specialized literary encyclopedia, not for a general one (like her predecessor B. Zvaigzne did), she had the opportunity to list not only the names of writers, but also the titles of their works. However, M. Ābola's interpretation of the historical development of Latvian literature does not claim to be an exhaustive and completely unbiased review.

Thus, this historical conspectus begins with the fact that the first books in the Latvian language appeared in the 16th century and were of a religious nature. Further, it is reported that the first works of Latvian secular literature are the handwritten songs by Ķikuļu Jēkabs (1777); that the first national collection of poems is *Dziesmiņas, latviešu valodai pārtulkotas* (Songs Translated for the Latvian Language) (1856) by Juris Alunāns, and that the first and most complete edition of Latvian folk songs is *Latvju dainas* (1894–1915), compiled by K. Barons. The following paragraphs

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12 "The Great Patriotic War" was a term used in the Soviet Union to describe the war during the period from 22 June 1941 to 9 May 1945, representing it as the most important part of World War II (1939–1945).

13 M. Ābola (1923–2007) was a Latvian literary scholar, as well as a linguist and an expert of Belarusian language.

of M. Ābola's text highlight the main (although not all) literary movements, topics, names, titles and dates: period from the 1870s to 1905 encompasses Romanticism (Auseklis, A. Pumpurs and his *Lāčplēsis* (Bearslayer) (1888), Jānis Poruks) and realism (the brothers Kaudzītes, Apsīšu Jēkabs), the first Latvian plays (Ā. Alunāns), Aspazija, R. Blaumanis and others. The focus is on Russian influence: "The first samples of Latvian prose – the Kaudzītes brothers' *Mērnīeku laiki* (Times of Land Surveyors) (1879), Apsīšu Jēkabs's *Pie pagasta tiesas* (At the Parish Court) (1885), *Bagātīe radi* (Rich Relatives) (1886) about the life in the Latvian countryside – show the influence of Russian realism" (Ābola 1995). German, Swedish and other impacts are not mentioned, although the "accumulation of knowledge of foreign literature became an essential component in the formation of Latvian literary identity in the second half of the nineteenth century [...] including influences of various national literatures" (Burima 2012: 65).

M. Ābola points out that the Russian revolution of 1905 became a tangible impulse in the development of Latvian literature. As an example, works such as *Uguns un nakts* (Fire and Night) (1905) by Rainis are mentioned. She emphasizes that the philosophical poetry and drama by Rainis enriched Latvian literature ideologically and thematically. E. Birznieks-Upītis, Sudrabu Edžus, Anna Brigadere are listed as representatives of Latvian critical realism in the 1920s. M. Ābola also writes that "in the 1920s and 1930s, the Latvian literature developed in the difficult conditions of the formation of independent Latvia. This was reflected in the works of J. Rainis, A. Čaks, L. Laicens, L. Paegle, J. Grots and others" (Ābola 1995).

The encyclopedic article by M. Ābola highlights the names of various writers (representing different times and literary movements) whose literary activity was aimed at affirming the statehood and national culture of Latvia (Edvarts Virza, Eriks Ādamsons, Veronika Strēlerte and others). There were some brief descriptions of Latvian literature which was formed during the independent Latvia, World War II and Soviet occupation. There is a short list of children's writers (Anna Sakse, Jāzeps Osmanis, I. Ziedonis and others). M. Ābola also gives examples of various genres – e.g., historical, biographical, psychological, etc. novels. Some of them, such as the historical novel *Rīga* (Riga) (1910–1911, 1920) by Augusts Deglavs, were now mentioned for the first time in the Ukrainian-language text space. This adds to the value and significance of this encyclopedia entry.

In *Encyclopedia of Modern Ukraine* (2016), *Anatolii Shpytal*<sup>14</sup> wrote an entry about

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14 A. Shpytal (1950) is the main expert of Latvian literature in Ukraine at the present time. In the late 1970s, he was a postgraduate student in Latvia where he was writing his PhD thesis *Problemni formuvannia moralnoho svitu suchasnyka v radianskii literaturi (dosvid porivnialno-typolohichnoho analizu na materialy ukraïnskoi i latyskoi prozy 1960–1970-kh rokiv)* (Problematic Formations of the Contemporary Moral World in Soviet Literature (the Experience of Comparative and Typological

Latvian literature where M. Ābola's encyclopedic text was slightly edited and supplemented, mainly with the works banned by the Soviet authorities, information about the writers of diaspora, and the development of Latvian literature from the 1990s to 2005 (Shpytal 2016). While M. Ābola only noted that there was a ban on some books during the Soviet occupation in Latvia, A. Shpytal identified several banned literary works which were reprinted in the 1990s in independent Latvia. For example, "the historical poem *Indriķa Latvieša piezīmes uz Livonijas hronikas malām* (The Notes by Indriķis the Latvian on the Margins of the Chronicle of Livonia) by V. Belševica, where the Teutonic story of the 13th century correlates with the occupation of Latvia in 1940" (Shpytal 2016). Writing about diaspora literature, he again focused on those authors whose works were republished in Latvia in the 1990s: "prose-writer D. Sodums (USA), the author of more than 50 short stories and novels; A. Eglītis (USA), who is considered a Latvian classic; T. Ķiļauka (Canada), an author of surrealist novels" (Shpytal 2016). Knuts Skujenieks's *Sēkla sniegā* (A Seed in the Snow) (1990), Anita Liepa's *Ekshumācija* (Exhumation) (1990), V. Belševica's *Bille. Trilōģija* (Bille. Trilogy) (1992–1999), Alberts Bels's *Latviešu labirints* (Latvian Labyrinth) (1998) and many other titles of texts and names of their authors (both known and unknown to the Ukrainian-speaking readers) were listed in A. Shpytal's review of Latvian literature. Here, for the first time in Ukraine, the literary process of independent modern Latvia (after 1990) was briefly systematized by characterizing its prose, poetry, and drama. The greatest attention was paid to prose which, according to the right observation of the researcher, had been recently enriched by various types of novels – a postmodern novel (Aivars Ozoliņš's *Dukts* (Dukts) (1990), a feminist novel (N. Ikstena's *Dzīves svinēšana* (Celebration of Life) (1998) and *Jaunavas mācība* (The Virgin's Lesson) (2001), an alternate history novel (Ainārs Zelčs's *1945 Rīga* (1945 Riga) (2001), etc. A. Shpytal also briefly assessed the style of Guntars Godiņš, Amanda Aizpuriete, Anna Rancāne and other modern Latvian poets. Only Māra Zālīte's *Zemes nodoklis* (The Land Tax) (2003) was cited as an example of modern drama. At the same time, A. Shpytal had not only listed the literary works by style, genres and themes, but in some cases also explained their essence with the help of biographical data of the writer or comparative typological comparisons. For example, A. Shpytal wrote that "Jānis Einfelds showed

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Analysis of the Material of Ukrainian and Latvian Prose of the 1960s and 1970s), which he later successfully defended. In 1989, partly based on the thesis, his monograph *Problema vyboru v suchasni prozi* (The Problem of Choice in Modern Prose) was published. It described the typological commonalities and differences between Ukrainian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian prose of the 1960s and 1970s (Shpytal 1989). He is the author of many encyclopedic articles about Latvian writers, as well as a translator of their works. Since 1981, he has been working at the Taras Shevchenko Institute of Literature of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine.

the Soviet reality of Latvia at that time, especially the service in the army, the militaristic essence of the USSR, authoritarianism and despotism on the part of the metropolis in his novel *Cūku grāmata* (The Book of Pigs) (1996), a paraphrase of George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945)" (Shpytal 2016).

It is obvious that M. Ābola and A. Shpytal, unlike B. Zvaigzne, were free in their presentation of Latvian literature. A limitation that all three shared was the precisely defined size of the encyclopedia entry in which they had to compress the key features of Latvian literature. It was not easy, but their interpretations more or less reflected the literary life of Latvia. Ukrainian-centrism was also characteristic of all three encyclopedias, so B. Zvaigzne's, M. Ābola's and A. Shpytal's reviews all contained a section devoted to Ukrainian-Latvian relations. It is worth pointing out that A. Shpytal's encyclopedic article is the main source used by various Ukrainian internet resources that inform about Latvian literature.

## Ukrainian-Latvian literary relations: researchers, topics, publications

Ukrainian-Latvian literary contacts were comprehensively discussed for the first time in B. Zvaigzne's article *Latviisko-ukrainiski literaturni zviazky* (Latvian and Ukrainian Literary Relations)<sup>15</sup> published in the yearbook *Suziria* (Constellation) (1971), and then in B. Zvaigzne's (1981), M. Ābola's (1995), A. Shpytal's (2016) encyclopedic texts mentioned above. Traditionally, the emphasis was on translations, translators, artistic events, as well as relevant topics of the texts. For example, the sources informed that the works of Taras Shevchenko, Ivan Franko, Lesia Ukrainka, Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky and Pavlo Tychyna were translated into Latvian, and those by R. Blaumanis, A. Upīts, V. Lācis and M. Ķempe – into Ukrainian; that various literary evenings dedicated to the celebration of the 100th anniversary of T. Shevchenko had taken place in Latvia in 1914; that I. Ziedonis<sup>16</sup> and V. Belševica<sup>17</sup> had written poems dedicated to Ukraine, and so on.

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15 The article was based on the text of her Russian-language dissertation about Latvian-Ukrainian literary relations (Zvaigzne 1971). It investigated the introduction of Ukrainian literature into Latvia and Latvian literature into Ukraine from the second half of the 19th century until the end of the 1960s. Various contacts between writers of both nations were recorded (meetings, interest in each others' works, translation studies, etc.). Special emphasis was placed on the translations and creative works by Latvian writers who lived on the territory of Ukraine.

16 *Uz Ševčenko pieminekļa kāpnēm* (On the Steps of the Shevchenko Monument) is a poem from I. Ziedonis's poetry collection *Es ieeju sevī* (I Enter Myself) (1968).

17 *Ukrainas motīvs: Ševčenko sirds* (Ukrainian Motif: Shevchenko's Heart) is a poem from V. Belševica's poetry collection *Gadu gredzeni* (Rings of the Years) (1969).



The appearance of the first translations is an important moment in the interaction between nations. T. Shevchenko's poem *Kateryna*<sup>18</sup> (Kateryna) (1838), translated by Līgotņu Jēkabs in 1900, is the first Latvian publication of Ukrainian belles-lettres. Later, more works by T. Shevchenko were translated into Latvian, various articles about him were written, Latvian poets have dedicated their poems to him, etc. Undoubtedly, in the both countries the topic "Taras Shevchenko and Latvia" is the most developed in the studies of Ukrainian-Latvian literary contacts.

During 1976–1978, Taras Shevchenko Institute of Literature of the National Academy of Sciences prepared and published *Shevchenkivskiy slovnyk* (Shevchenko Dictionary) in two volumes. The part devoted to the Latvian connection with Shevchenko was written by B. Zvaigzne. It included her article *Latyska literatura i T. H. Shevchenko* (Latvian Literature and T. H. Shevchenko) and brief data on Latvian literary figures pertaining to the context of this topic (Āronu Matīss, Fricis Adamovičs, Rainis, Līgotņu Jēkabs, A. Upīts, Valts Dāvids, Paulīne Bārda, Valdis Grēviņš, J. Grots, Ēvalds Sokols, M. Ķempe, Jūlijs Vanags, Jānis Plaudis, Kārlis Krauliņš, Andrejs Balodis, Mirdza Bendrupe, Jānis Sudrabkalns, Andris Vējāns, Jāzepe Osmanis).

Almost 40 years later, the holistic view of Latvian literature through the prism of Shevchenko studies was presented again in another significant publication by Taras Shevchenko Institute of Literature. It was a six-volume *Shevchenkivska entsyklopediia* (Shevchenko Encyclopedia) (2012–2015). It contains A. Shpytal's detailed article about Latvian Shevchenko studies and various brief articles on Latvian literary figures who had translated or written about T. Shevchenko. In addition to the names listed in the previous paragraph, three more were added (Eduards Rudzītis, I. Ziedonis, B. Zvaigzne). Actually, the articles of *Shevchenkivskiy slovnyk* (1976, 1978) were revised and edited in accordance with the new editorial policy. Firstly, Soviet ideological vocabulary ("Soviet Latvian poet", "Soviet Latvian literature critic", "member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union", "laureate of State awards of the Soviet Union", etc.) was removed. Secondly, unlike the *Shevchenkivskiy slovnyk* which only contained information of Shevchenko-related nature, more bibliographic data (place of birth and death, education, titles of works, etc.) were added in *Shevchenkivska entsyklopediia*. Thirdly, the information about Latvian relations and contacts with T. Shevchenko had been clarified and was more detailed.

For the sake of illustration, let us compare the entry about J. Plaudis in these two books. *Shevchenkivskiy slovnyk*: "Yanis Yuriiovych PLAUDIS (October 28, 1903 – December 31, 1952) is a Soviet Latvian poet and translator. His works of the 1920s are imbued with romantic sentiments and protest against the existing system. The

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18 It was published in the magazine *Austrums* (East) (1900).

poetry collection *Laika lielums* (Greatness of Time) (1948) is dedicated to the building of Socialism and friendship of the Soviet peoples. He has masterfully translated Taras Shevchenko's poem *Haidamaky* (printed in collections of Shevchenko's works in 1951 and 1954 and in a separate edition in 1964)" (Kyrlyuk 1978). This text was written by B. Zvaigzne.

*Shevchenkivska entsyklopediia*: "Jānis Plaudis (28.10.1903 Kurzeme, now Latvia – 31.12.1952 Riga) is a Latvian writer and translator. He studied at the Faculty of Economics of the University of Latvia. He is the author of poetry collections *Fatamorgāna* (Fata Morgana) (1928), *Putnu ceļš* (Birds' Way) (1938), novel *Ģimnāzisti* (Gymnasium Students) (1936) and others. He has translated Taras Shevchenko's poem *Haidamaky*, which was included in the Latvian edition of Taras Shevchenko's works (Riga 1951, 1954). The translation by J. Plaudis was published in a separate book in 1964. The translation is noted for its perfection, it successfully conveys the rhythm and melody of the original and its historical realities" (Zhulynskyi 2015). This text was written by A. Shpytal.

Most of the "Latvian" entries in the *Shevchenkivska entsyklopediia* were written by A. Shpytal, but several were authored by B. Zvaigzne and Alla Kalynchuk (she is an expert in Shevchenko studies, not Latvian literature). The largest of these entries (and the only ones with photo portraits) are the texts devoted to Rainis and A. Upīts. These iconic and internationally-famous Latvian writers certainly played a significant role in popularizing T. Shevchenko in Latvia. It is known that Rainis admired T. Shevchenko's talent and wanted to translate his poetry. A. Upīts wrote an article *Tarass Grigorjevičs Ševčenko* (Taras Hryhorovych Shevchenko) (1914) for the 4th issue of the magazine *Domās* (Thoughts), and later wrote about him in his 4-volume *Pasaules rakstniecības vēsture* (History of World Literature) (1930–1934), where he also translated (on the assumption of A. Shpytal) an excerpt from T. Shevchenko's poem *I mertvym, i zhyvym, i nenarodzhenym zemliakam moim v Ukraini i ne v Ukraini moie druzhnieie poslaniie* (To My Fellow-countrymen, in Ukraine and not in Ukraine, Living, Dead and as yet Unborn [...]) (1845).

There was also interest in the topic "Rainis and Ukraine". Ukrainian and Latvian literary critics tried to draw parallels between Rainis and Ukrainian writers. B. Zvaigzne compared Rainis with I. Franko (1856–1916) in 1956, and with P. Tychyna (1891–1967) in 1971 (Shpytal 1990). *Yurii Sadlovskyi*<sup>19</sup> pointed out some similarities

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19 Y. Sadlovskyi (1970–2018) was a Ukrainian poet, translator from Latvian to Ukrainian, literary critic, compiler of the first Ukrainian-Latvian phrasebook, popularizer of Ukrainian culture in Latvia and Latvian culture in Ukraine. From 1988 to 2009, he lived and worked in Riga. He studied at the Faculty of Philology of the University of Latvia. Among the authors whose works he translated into Ukrainian are Rainis, A. Čaks, K. Skujenieks and others.



dedicated to writers who lived and worked in Soviet Latvia. Therefore, these entries always consist of a brief overview of the writer's works and a full list of his Soviet titles and awards. The mandatory social and political labels were "Soviet writer", "member of the Communist Party", "participant in the Great Patriotic War", "*Latvijas PSR Tautas rakstnieks* (Latvian SSR People's Writer), "Laureate of the State Prize of the Soviet Union", including a list of the received Soviet orders and medals (such as *Order of the Red Banner of Labor*, *Order of the Red Star*, etc.). For example, E. Birznieks-Upītis (1871–1960) was presented as a Soviet Latvian writer and Latvian SSR People's Writer; J. Vanags (1903–1986) – as a Soviet Latvian writer and a member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union since 1963; Žanis Grīva (1910–1982) – as a participant in the Great Patriotic War, awarded with two *Orders of the Red Banner of Labor*.

Moreover, a characteristic feature of these encyclopedic articles was an emphasis on works related to Realism or Socialist Realism. For instance, "During 1859–1961, he published a three-volume collection of popular science articles *Sēta, Daba, Pasaule* (Homestead, Nature, World) directed against the '*popivshchyna*' (the priests) and the German feudal lords" (Bazhan 1977: 145) is one of six sentences describing J. Alunāns (1832–1864). R. Blaumanis (1863–1908) is characterized as a Latvian realist writer who "revealed the social contradictions of the Latvian countryside and showed the spiritual beauty of the working-class man" (Bazhan 1977: 490). Among all the listed titles of J. Vanags's books, only one work related to Socialist Realism is briefly described as follows: "*Dzīlais arums* (The Deep Furrows) (1950) is about collectivization in a Latvian village" (Bazhan 1978: 118). When citing the titles of Ž. Grīva's works, the thematic emphasis is placed on his literature about the Spanish people's struggle against fascism (*Stāsti par Spāniju* (Stories about Spain)) (1950)), and about the people of Soviet Latvia (*Vai tu esi cilvēks?* (Are You a Human?)) (1958)).

In addition, the *Ukrainian Soviet Encyclopedia* pays attention to the works of Latvian writers about Ukraine and their Latvian translations of the works of Ukrainian writers. For instance, the entry about J. Vanags informs: "He dedicated his poem *Kahovka* (Kakhovka) to Ukraine. He has published articles about T. Shevchenko and Lesia Ukrainka. He has translated works by T. Shevchenko, L. Ukrainka and O. Honchar" (Bazhan 1978: 118). A bibliography of Ukrainian translations of Latvian literature is also attached. The *Ukrainian Soviet Encyclopedia* is the first edition where the Ukrainian parts of the biographies of many Latvian writers were recorded. Nowadays the main value of these encyclopedic portraits lies precisely in the Ukrainian material.

In the *Ukrainska literaturna entsyklopediia* (Ukrainian Literary Encyclopedia) (1988, 1990, 1995), a writer's connection with Ukraine was taken as the primary basis for including in the encyclopedia – it mostly informed about those writers whose works

were translated into Ukrainian, who had themselves translated Ukrainian literature or written about Ukraine, or had lived in Ukraine. In the case of Latvian writers, there was one exception – Aspazija (1865–1943). At that time (1988), her works had not yet been translated into Ukrainian and there was no Ukrainian context in the article about her in this encyclopedia. Perhaps her iconic role in Latvian literature and her family ties to Rainis were the reasons for including material about her in this encyclopedia. At any rate, she is presented here as a Latvian poet, playwright, and the wife of Rainis.

Traditionally, an encyclopedic portrait of a writer is structured according to a certain scheme, such as “basic biographical data + a list of iconic works”. A brief bibliography, a portrait and other illustrations may also be added. In the case of the *Ukrainska literaturna entsyklopediia*, just the key dates, events and works were recorded. Much more attention was paid to the creative activity of the writer. All or some Ukrainian translations, selected Russian translations, literary experts’ monographs and articles published in Ukrainian or Russian were always noted. Aspazija, Imants Auziņš, A. Balodis, R. Blaumanis, Lija Brīdaka, Ārija Elksne, A. Grigulis, J. Grots, A. Vējāns, E. Vēveris, I. Ziedonis and another 22 writers were the subject of this kind of encyclopedic description. These authors represented various historical periods and artistic trends in the development of Latvian literature. A few photos have also been added. Thus, the entry about Regīna Ezera (1930–2002) is accompanied by her photo and the cover of the Ukrainian edition of her novel *Aka* (The Well) (1972), which was given the title *Kolodiaz* in Ukrainian.

The group of authors who wrote these entries included M. Ābola, Oleksandr Astafiev, B. Zvaigzne, Nina Nikipielova, A. Shpytal, Halyna Vasylieva.

Ukrainian readers have also had an opportunity to get to know Latvian writers in a more complete and interesting way – by reading prefaces or afterwords to the published translations and other types of literary articles. Among their authors are Ivan Drach, Mykola Zhulynskyi, Ivan Le, Gaļina Kārkliņa, Dmytro Pavlychko, Ingrīda Sokolova, A. Shpytal and other Ukrainian and Latvian literary experts.

*Linards Laicēns* (1883–1937)<sup>20</sup> was one of the first Latvian writers who was written about and popularized in Ukraine. He had had a certain sympathy for the Soviet Union since its formation, and in 1928 wrote a report *69 dienas Sociālistisko Padomju Republiku Savienībā* (69 Days in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), where he described his impressions of the Soviet way of life quite positively. By the way, this book also contains descriptions of Ukraine (Donbass, Kharkiv). In 1932,

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20 During the Great Terror of the Soviet Union, as part of the “national operation” against Latvians, L. Laicēns was arrested and shot in 1937.



Figure 2. Illustrations of the entries about R. Ezera and I. Ziedonis in the *Ukrainska literatura entsyklopediia* (1990). Available at: <http://izbornyk.org.ua/ulencycl/u/e.htm> [Accessed 15.07.2023.]

L. Laicens with his family emigrated from Latvia to the Soviet Union and became a full-fledged Soviet writer. His wife later recalled that he did not want to go there, but had no choice (Tabūns 2001: 110). He lived in Moscow and wrote works criticizing the non-Soviet world, mainly Latvia. It is clear that he, as a proletarian émigré writer, a revolutionary and a former member of the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, was particularly suitable for propagating Soviet ideology. L. Laicens's works were actively translated into Russian and constantly published. Among the factors that influenced the appearance of Ukrainian translations of his texts, one can mention his direct contact with Ukraine. There are references to the fact that in 1905 L. Laicens translated I. Franko's short story *Lisy i pasovyiska* (Forests and Pastures) (1883)<sup>21</sup> into Latvian (but the publication was banned by censorship). In 1930 he held a speech about the friendship of the Latvian and Ukrainian peoples at the international Kharkiv conference of revolutionary writers.

Thus, in the 1930s three collections of stories by L. Laicens were published in Ukrainian translation. The first book was titled *Na Alzhyrskii katorzi* (Doing Forced Labor in Algeria) (1931), the second *Batkivshchyna. Opovidannia polonenohto* (Motherland. A Prisoner's Story) (1932), the third *Vysoki zbory* (High Fees) (1934). All books were printed in Kharkiv, in the publishing house *Literatura i Mystetstvo* (Literature and Art). In 1934, the 30th anniversary of his writing career was noted in the 5th issue

21 Most likely, he could use the already existing Russian version of this story from the book titled *V pot' lica. Ocherki iz zhizni rabochago l'juda* (By the Sweat of One's Brow. The Essays from the Life of Working People) (Franko 1902).

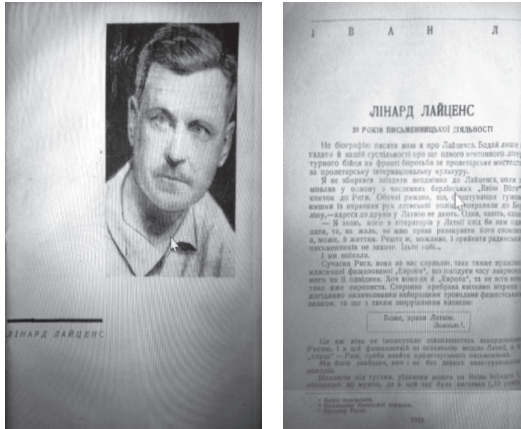


Figure 3. The photo of L. Laicens and the beginning of I. Le's article about him in *Chervonyi Shliakh* (1934, No. 5). Available at: <http://escriptorium.univer.kharkov.ua/handle/1237075002/4011?mode=full> [Accessed 15.07.2023.]

of *Chervonyi Shliakh* (Red Road)<sup>22</sup>, a quite popular magazine in Ukraine at that time. There, the Ukrainian writer *Ivan Le* (1895–1978) wrote an almost detective-storylike account about how he got acquainted with L. Laicens in Riga in 1928. Its title was *Linard Laicens. 30 rokiv pysmennytskoi diialnosti* (Linards Laicens. 30 Years of Writer's Activity).

According to I. Le, he did not intend to write a biography but only wanted to remind about “another tireless literary warrior at the front of the struggle for proletarian art, for proletarian international culture” (Le 1934: 170). Undoubtedly, he managed to create the image of a proletarian writer living in “Latvia which has acquired a fascist look according to the latest fashion” (Le 1934: 170). According to him, L. Laicens turned out to be simple in everyday life, a hard-working and responsible talented writer, repeatedly imprisoned because of his political position, a member of the Saeima beloved by Latvian workers. One can feel that I. Le treats him with sympathy and deep respect. In the same issue of *Chervonyi Shliakh* there is another post about L. Laicens. *Vi. Zedain's Tvorcha molodist* (Creative Youth of the Writer) is a completely academic article where his bibliography is described and his creativity is analyzed from the standpoint of Neo-romanticism and realism (Zedain 1934:175–177). In the same year (1934), translations of two L. Laicens's short stories – *Portfelis un valgs* (Briefcase and Rope) (1933)<sup>23</sup> and *Republikas padomnieks* (Councilor of the Republic) (1933)<sup>24</sup> – were published in the *Chervonyi Shliakh*.

22 *Chervonyi Shliakh* was a political, literary and scientific monthly magazine (1923–1936).

23 Ukrainian title: *Portfel i zashmorh* (Laicens 1934: 114–132).

24 Ukrainian title: *Doradnyk respubliky* (Laicens 1934: 72–77).

In 1987, *Gajina Inga Kārcliņa*<sup>25</sup> published a Ukrainian-language collection of literary and critical essays under the title *Vidlunnia blyzkykh i dalekykh dorih* (Echoes of Near and Far Roads). She remarked: "For the most part, these essays are based on dialogues between two or three writers or artists. The role of the author is sometimes reduced to the role of a commentator who seeks to direct the conversation in a certain direction, according to the main topic of the conversation" (Karklin 1987: 3). This book can be classified as a research in the field of comparative literature, as it contains facts about little-known and unknown connections between Ukrainian and Latvian writers, such as M. Ķempe (1907–1974), O. Vācietis (1933–1983) and Oles Honchar (1918–1995). By the way, the archive of G. I. Kārcliņa (1923–2004), which is now housed by the *Tsentrālnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv-muzei literatury i mystetstva Ukrainy* (Central State Literary and Art Museum-Archive of Ukraine), contains her articles (about K. Barons, J. Sudrabkalns, etc.), both published (in newspapers and magazines) and unpublished ones; various photos of Latvian and Ukrainian writers, a portrait of Rainis painted by I.G. Kārcliņa herself, etc. Some of her photos, pictures and documents are posted on the website of this museum-archive (Karklin [n.d.]).

In book prefaces, the literary portrait is partly the researcher's personal reflection on the writer and their work. The writer is also depicted in the context of style, poetics, themes, etc. A vivid example is the preface by *Mykola Zhulynskyi*<sup>26</sup> to the Ukrainian edition (Bels 1986) of A. Bels's two novels – *Būris* (Cage)<sup>27</sup> (1972) and *Izmeklētājs* (Investigator)<sup>28</sup> (1976). M. Zhulynskyi has created a kind of collage from his evaluations of the Latvian writer's prose. He begins his story about A. Bels (born in 1938) as the author of the story *Augstākā matemātika* (Higher Mathematics)<sup>29</sup> (1968) where the protagonist finally understands the elementary rules of the "higher mathematics" of life which were once taught to him by his now deceased teacher. Then the reviewer's attention turns to two collections of A. Bels's short stories. The first of them is *Spēles ar nāžiem* (Playing with Knives)<sup>30</sup> (1966), where the style of the

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25 G. I. Kārcliņa (1923–2004) was a Latvian and Ukrainian art critic, journalist and artist. She was born in Kyiv and lived in Ukraine for many years.

26 M. Zhulynskyi (1940) is a famous Ukrainian literary scholar, academic, and the director of the Taras Shevchenko Institute of Literature of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (from 1991 to the present).

27 Ukrainian title: *Klitka*.

28 Ukrainian title: *Slidchyj*.

29 Ukrainian title: *Vyshcha matematyka*.

30 Ukrainian title: *Ihry z nozhamy*.



then 27-year-old A. Bels is characterized as “thrifty, measured, associative thinking” (Zhulynskiy 1986: 3). The second collection of stories is “*Es pats” līdzenumā* (My Own Self in Lowlands)<sup>31</sup> (1968), where “the conceptuality of the stories has become clearer, the role of irony has increased [...] professional thoroughness in describing the reality” (Zhulynskiy 1986: 3). The literary critic also notes the key elements of the poetics of the novels *Cage*, *Investigator*, *Saknes* (Roots)<sup>32</sup> (1982) and others. In all of them, according to M. Zhulynskiy, “A. Bels so intensively rebels against the inertia of consciousness, so often and persistently urges not to be afraid of the appearance of the conscience-investigator” (Zhulynskiy 1986: 12). This text lacks biographical facts and only hints at the possible historical context. But by the means of such collage, M. Zhulynskiy manages to present A. Bels as an explorer of various character types of the modern Soviet person, as a writer who stimulates his protagonists and at the same time his readers to think and introspect.

In addition to similar forewords, articles of different types (such as journalistic essay, literary research, interview, review, memoir, etc.) about Latvian writers have appeared in various Ukrainian magazines, newspapers and websites. The oldest Ukrainian magazine on foreign literature, *Vsesvit* (Universe), which was founded in 1925, has rarely presented the literature of Latvia. Among its publications is A. Shpytal's *Pro 'Antolohiiu...' i ne tilky pro nei* (About 'Anthology...' and not only about it) (Shpytal 2010). It is a review of a collection of Latvian poetry translations by Y. Zavhorodnii, titled *Z latviiskoho bereha. Mala antolohiia latyskoi poezii u perekkladakh Yuriia Zavhorodnoho* (From the Latvian Shore: a Small Anthology of Latvian Poetry Translated by Yuriy Zavhorodnyi) (2007) in Ukrainian, and A. Shpytal briefly talks about V. Belševica (1931–2005), K. Skujenieks (1936–2022), O. Vācietis and others. From time to time *Literaturna Ukraina* (Literary Ukraine), the oldest Ukrainian literary and artistic newspaper which has been in print continuously since 1927, has published articles on Latvian literature. Among them are A. Shpytal's articles about O. Vācietis (*Za 'Pravopysom blyskavky'* (According to “The Spelling Rules of Lightning”) on December 9, 1982) and about I. Ziedonis (1933–2013) (*Shliakh do korinnia* (A Way to the Roots) on 12 May, 1983). In the magazine *Dnipro* (Dnipro), whose history also begins in 1927, there have also been publications about Latvian writers – for example, Serhii Hrechaniuk's two articles about I. Ziedonis (*Dim, yakyi buduie Imant* (The House that Imant is Building) in 1974, No. 8, and *Pry chesnomu khliboviin* (With Honest Bread) in 1985, No. 11).

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31 Ukrainian title: *Odyn na rivnyni*.

32 Ukrainian title: *Korinnia*.

## Translations and translators

According to the research by Lada Kolomiets, titled *Ukrainskyi khudozhnii pereklad ta perekladachi 1920–30-kh rokiv* (Ukrainian Artistic Translation and Translators of the 1920–1930s), M. Turkalo's translation of A. Upīts's story entitled *Sumlinnia* (Conscience) in Ukrainian was published in the pages of the magazine *Zhyttia i revoliutsyia* (Life and Revolution) in the second half of the 1920s (Kolomiets 2013). Currently, this is the first recorded Ukrainian translation of Latvian literature. In the first half of the 1930s, some of L. Laicens's works were translated (see above). The translators of his *Portfelis un valgs* and *Republikas padomnieks* were Vl. Zedain (?) and Ukrainian writer Volodymyr Svidzinskyi (1885–1941). In issue 5 of the magazine *Vsesvit* in 1934, a short story *Pid povitkoiu: opovidannia* (Under the Roof: Short Story) by A. Dzhuhas was published. At the end of the text, it is reported that the story has been translated from Latvian by Hilov (Dzhuhas 1934). The origin of this text and the identity of its author have not yet been definitively clarified, just like the whole history of Latvian-Ukrainian literary relations of the first half of the 20th century has not yet been fully explored. Nowadays, it is impossible to say with certainty how many Ukrainian translations of Latvian texts there have been, who translated them and what was their professional level, the authenticity of the translation, the role of propaganda and mystification, etc.

Most translations of Latvian literature into Ukrainian appeared in the Soviet period after the 1950s. These were texts that did not contradict Soviet ideology. Sporadically, translations of Latvian poetry and prose have also been published during the time of independent Ukraine. These translations have been published both in separate books and in magazines and newspapers. On the whole, there have been about a 100 single-author publications of translations from Latvian. The record holder among these authors is Vilis Lācis (1904–1966). There are eight separate Ukrainian editions of his works published from 1952 to 1976. Semen Skliarenko translated his *Vētra* (Storm)<sup>33</sup> in 1952, *Zvejnieka dēls* (Fisherman's Son)<sup>34</sup> in 1954, etc. Next come A. Upīts and Rainis, each represented by six Ukrainian translations. Five separate books by O. Vācietis have been printed in Ukraine, and four – by Zigmunds Skujiņš. Five Latvian writers (R. Ezera, L. Laicens, A. Sakse, I. Ziedonis, A. Čaks) each have three books in Ukrainian, and seven authors (Miervaldis Birze, Zenta Ērgle, Ž. Grīva, Arturs Lielais, K. Skujenieks, J. Vanags, M. Zālīte) – two each. These editions have been produced in different formats – from multi-page books to small booklets of a few pages. (The latter are mainly children's literature, such as O. Vācietis's

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33 Ukrainian title: *Buria*.

34 Ukrainian title: *Syn rybalky*.

*Aritmētika* (Arithmetic)<sup>35</sup> (Vācietis 1990.) Sometimes there have been reprints. For example, V. Lācis's *Uz jauno krastu* (To the New Shore)<sup>36</sup> (by the way, the writer received the Stalin Prize for this novel in 1952) was published twice in Ukrainian translation (Lācis 1953; Lācis 1976).

Since the 1970s, multi-author collections of Latvian poetry and prose have also been published in Ukraine. The collection *Latyske radianske opovidannia* (Latvian Soviet Short Story)<sup>37</sup> came out in 1982 (Upīts et al. 1982). Its editor was Vera Vāvere<sup>38</sup>. This edition includes sixteen short stories by such authors as A. Upīts, V. Lācis, Ēvalds Vilks, Ž. Grīva, Marģeris Zariņš, M. Birze, R. Ezera, Jānis Kalniņš, Dagnija Zigmonte, Harijs Gāliņš, Z. Skujiņš, Aivars Kalve, V. Belševica, Andris Jakubāns, A. Bels, Ēriks Lanss. There are three more collections of Latvian prose<sup>39</sup> and four collections of Latvian poetry<sup>40</sup> translated into Ukrainian. The website *Literatura.lv*<sup>41</sup> has information about some of them.

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35 Ukrainian title: *Aryfmetryka*.

36 Ukrainian title: *Do novoho bereha*.

37 This collection is a part of the book series *Radianski opovidannia* (Soviet Short Stories), printed by the publishing house *Dnipro* (Dnipro) from 1974 to 1987. As part of the series, collections of short stories by the authors of all the USSR republics were published in Ukrainian translation. A total of 19 books came out, among them *Rosiiske radianske opovidannia* (Russian Soviet Short Stories) (1974, 1975), *Estonske radianske opovidannia* (Estonian Soviet Short Stories) (1982), *Virmenske radianske opovidannia* (Armenian Soviet Short Stories) (1987), etc.

38 V. Vāvere (1929) is a Latvian literary scholar.

39 Ukrainian titles: *Suchasna latyska povist* (Modern Latvian Story) (1984), *Zori nad Yurmaloiu: opovidannia molodykh latyskykh pismennykiv* (Stars over Jūrmala: Short Stories of Young Latvian Writers) (1987), *Suchasna prybaltiiska povist* (Modern Baltic Story) (1991).

40 Ukrainian titles: *Burshtynovi berehy: Moloda poeziiia Latvii* (Amber Shores: Young Poetry of Latvia) (1974), *Z latviiskoho bereha: mala latviiska antolohiia v perekladakh Yuriia Zavhorodnoho* (From the Latvian Shore: a Small Latvian Anthology Translated by Yuriy Zavhorodnyi) (1999), *Z Latviiskoho bereha: mala antolohiia latyskoi poezii* (From the Latvian Shore: a Small Anthology of Latvian Poetry) (2007), *Latviia poetychna: Poety Latvii v ukr. perekl. K. Overchenka* (Poetic Latvia: Poets of Latvia Translated into Ukrainian by K. Overchenko) (2007).

41 The digital resource *Literatura.lv*, as the manager of this project Eva Eglāja-Kristsons informs, "started in 2015 when the researchers from the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia (hereinafter, ILFA) began creating an informative online resource on Latvian literature in Latvia and abroad. The website tracks and records the development of Latvian literature and provides a reliable and comprehensive source of data, including an extensive and expertly created database of personalities connected to Latvian literature, literary works, awards, organizations, and mappings, which covers the period from the 16th century to the present day" (Eglāja-Kristsons 2023: 149).

From 1967 to the 1990s, new works by Soviet writers were published in their Ukrainian versions in the annual *Suziria*. Starting with its first issue, Latvian poems and short stories were also published there. From 1965 to 2000, the Kyiv publishing house *Molod* (Youth) printed an annual youth literary almanac *Vitryla* (Sails). It was a good platform for young translators, and a certain number of translations of Latvian literature also appeared here. Jānis Baltvilks's poems translated by the then student Y. Sadlovskyyi were included in the 1989 issue of this almanac. Translations were also published in *Vsesvit*, *Vitchyzna* (Homeland), *Zhovten* (October), *Prapor* (Flag) and other Ukrainian magazines and newspapers.

The cohort of Ukrainian translators of Latvian literature is quite large: Hennadii Brezhnov, R. Chilachava, Ivan Drach, Mykhailo Hryhoriv, Yuriy Hundych, Petro Doroshko, Hryhorii Kochur, Borys Komar, Zinaida Koval, Haina Kovalenko, Hryhorii Kuleba, Iryna Lypovetska, Lina Melnyk, Konstantyn Overchenko, Dmytro Pavlychko, S. Skliarenko, A. Shpytal, Valentyna Sylava, Mykola Vydysh, Volodymyr Zabashtanskyi, Oleksii Zacenko, Y. Zavhorodnii and others. They can be divided into three main groups.

The *first group* includes those who were fluent in the Latvian language and translated from the original. One of them is *Konstantyn Overchenko* (1920–2017). He came to Latvia during World War II and was a prisoner of the Salaspils concentration camp. After the war, he stayed in Latvia, married a Latvian woman, learned the language and lived in Jelgava for the rest of his life. There he worked in the city library for almost 50 years, from the head of the reading room to director. He translated Latvian poetry and prose, both children's and adult literature. Among his translations are Laimonis Vāczemnieks's *Līvsalas zēni* (Boys from Līvsala)<sup>42</sup> (1966) and Arturs Lielais's *Karavelas iziet okeānā* (Caravels Go out into the Ocean)<sup>43</sup> (1967). K. Overchenko was the laureate of Yevhen Malaniuk Regional Literary Award in 2008 for his book *Latviia poetychna: Poety Latvii v ukr. perekl.* (Poetic Latvia: Poets of Latvia in Ukrainian Translations) (2007) in the nomination "Translation (from Ukrainian into other languages, from other languages into Ukrainian)". This collection contained K. Overchenko's translations of about 50 Latvian poets' poems, on which he had worked for several decades.

One of the most famous translators and popularizers of Latvian literature was *Yurii Zavhorodnii* (1940–2012). He was also a Ukrainian poet and prose writer, and a member of the National Writers' Union of Ukraine. Latvian was the language of his Latvian mother, so he was fluent in it. Y. Zavhorodnii had also lived and worked in Riga for a long time. By education, he was a builder and a civil engineer, and had

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42 Ukrainian title: *Livsalski khlopchaky* (Vāczemnieks 1980).

43 Ukrainian title: *Karavely vykhodiat v okean* (Lielais 1971).

studied at the *Dnipropetrovskiy inzhenerno-budivelnyi instytut* (Dnipropetrovsk Engineering and Construction Institute). As a student, he began to publish his first poems. However, from 1969 (after his poems appeared in the almanac *Vitryla-69* (The Sails-69)) until 1989, Y. Zavorodnii's works were not accepted for publication in Ukraine due to the political censorship of the regime at that time. This became one of the reasons why he turned to translation. One of the first Latvian writers whom Y. Zavorodnii began to translate was Knuts Skujenieks (1936–2022), who was also forbidden to print his poetry but allowed to translate. By the way, K. Skujenieks knew the Ukrainian language well, and one of his first translations was L. Ukrainka's<sup>44</sup> poems in 1970. K. Skujenieks's poetry collection *Sēkla sniegā* (Seed in the Snow)<sup>45</sup>, translated by Y. Zavorodnii, was published in 1990. His greatest translation achievement, however, was the poetic anthology *Z Latviiskoho bereha* (From the Latvian Shore), on which he worked for more than 40 years. This anthology had two editions – the first one (1999) contains poetry of 50 poets, and the second edition (2007) – of 73 Latvian poets. Y. Zavorodnii's anthology also presented portraits of the authors, biographical information about them, and a brief overview of their creative achievements.

The *second group* of translators includes those who had some idea about the grammatical and lexical features of the Latvian language and mainly used the original Latvian text for translation. Here it is worth mentioning the internationally famous Ukrainian translator, polyglot, poet, literary critic and public figure *Hryhorii Kochur* (1908–1994). His translations cover 26 centuries: from ancient Greek poetry to the literature of the late 20th century. He knew about 30 languages, including Latvian to some extent. In 1943 he and his wife were arrested in Poltava for belonging to the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, accused of “Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism” and sentenced to 10 years (1943–1953) in prison. He learned the Latvian language in the Inta Gulag camp (Comi ASSR) with the help of Latvian political prisoners. Among his published translations from Latvian, though, are only five little poems by Rainis<sup>46</sup> and one poem by J. Sudrabkalns<sup>47</sup>.

*Lina Melnyk* (1983) is currently translating Latvian literature while simultaneously continuing to master the Latvian language. She is the translator of the latest

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44 L. Ukrainka (1871–1913) was a famous Ukrainian writer.

45 Ukrainian title: *Nasinnia v snihu* (Skujenieks 1994).

46 Ukrainian titles: *Skhodiachy na verkhivya*; *Moia radist*; *Samotnia khmara*; *Pytaliasia divchyna*; *Ruka z persnem* (Kochur 2000).

47 Ukrainian title: *Pamiaty Pavla Tychyny* (Kochur 2000).

Ukrainian editions of Latvian writers' fiction: Jānis Akuraters's *Degoša sala* (Burning Island)<sup>48</sup> (1912), Nora Ikstena's *Mātes piens* (Soviet Milk)<sup>49</sup> (2015), Māra Zālīte's *Pieci pirksti* (Five Fingers)<sup>50</sup> (2013) and others.

The *third group* of translators with zero level of knowledge of the Latvian language translated the Latvian texts via the available Russian translations. Sometimes the publishers explicitly informed that the translation was not done from the original and referred to a Russian-language source. There was a certain number of such interpretations. Thus, for example, the famous Ukrainian writer Semen Skliarenko (1901–1962) translated V. Lācis's *Pazudusī dzimtene* (The Lost Motherland)<sup>51</sup> (1941) in 1956. He used the text *Poteryannaya rodina* (The Lost Motherland) (translated from Latvian into Russian by Milda Mihaleva), which was printed in Riga in 1954.

## Conclusions

As we can see, during the last 100 years in Ukraine the image of Latvian literature as multi-genred, multi-thematic and multi-styled was formed gradually. Its perception was initially created on the basis of encyclopedic entries and translations published during the Soviet Union. B. Zvaigzne, M. Ābola and A. Shpytal played an important role in the interpretation of Latvian material in Ukrainian literature studies. Actually, the works of about 180 Latvian authors have been translated into Ukrainian by different translators – from those who knew the Latvian language well (for example, K. Overchenko, Y. Zavhorodnii and Y. Sadlovskiy who have created high-level translations) to those who did not know it at all. The latter (mostly famous Ukrainian writers of that time, such as S. Skliarenko and O. Honchar who translated V. Lācis's prose) used the Russian interpretations of these texts.

Unfortunately, the achievements of Latvian literary studies have been neglected in Ukraine. In the above-mentioned B. Zvaigzne's, M. Ābola's and A. Shpytal's encyclopedic entries about Latvian literature, some literary critics were also listed, including Kārlis Krauliņš (1904–1981), Voldemārs Melnis (1910–1997), Jānis Kalniņš (1922–2000), Vitolds Valeinis (1922–2001), Viktors Hausmanis (1931–2023), Ilgonis Bērsons (1931). But there was very little Ukrainian-language information about their investigations, even though this academic field in Latvia is well-developed,

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48 Ukrainian title: *Palaiuchy ostriv* (Akuraters 2018).

49 Ukrainian title: *Moloko materi* (Ikstena 2019).

50 Ukrainian title: *Piat paltsiv* (Zālīte 2019).

51 Ukrainian title: *Vtrachena batkivshchyna* (Lācis 1956).

multifaceted and innovative – both in the past and now. Currently, Inguna Daukste-Silasproģe, Eva Eglāja-Kristsone, Māra Grudule, Benedikts Kalnačs, Ieva Kalniņa, Edgars Lāms, Jānis Oga and other modern Latvian scholars are opening new facets of their national literature.<sup>52</sup>

Moreover, many aspects of Latvian-Ukrainian literary relations are still poorly studied – for example, the biographies of the first translators of Latvian literature, such as M. Turkalo and Vl. Zedain. There are many research perspectives, and I would like to believe that in the near future the history of Ukrainian-Latvian relations of the first half of the 20th century will become more transparent. New names of their compatriots will hopefully be added to the cohort of Latvian writers who are represented in the Ukrainian-speaking space. Future translations will be of high quality and performed without the mediation of Russian or other foreign translations. The fake Soviet stamps will be removed from Ukrainian literary portraits of Latvian writers (where it will be necessary) with the help of modern Latvian literary studies, and the modern comparativists will pay more attention to identical phenomena in Ukrainian and Latvian literature. And most importantly, the Ukrainian perception and interpretation of Latvian literature will carry on its history.

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52 Among the latest academic achievements we can mention: Inguna Daukste-Silasproģe's study of the history of translations of the 19th century (Daukste-Silasproģe 2022); M. Grudule's article about "the life, literary activities and translations of Latvian literature by four Baltic German women" – Hanny Brentano, Elisabeth Goercke, Elfriede Skalberg and Martha Grubbe (Grudule 2023); Benedikts Kalnačs's monograph about R. Blaumanis "who, finding himself in between two cultures, German and Latvian [...] takes on, develops and challenges the traditional stylistic patterns and genre models of European literature" (Kalnačs 2022: 375); E. Eglāja-Kristsone's *The Beginnings of Women's Agency in Latvian Foreign Affairs: an Autobiographical Approach* (Eglāja-Kristsone 2023); Jānis Oga's research about magical realism in Zigmunds Skujiņš's works (Oga 2023). In recent years, a lot of Latvian literary critics' works appear in English, which significantly expands the circle of their recipients, including Ukrainian ones.

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