

## To Read Rilke: The Literary Taste in Contemporary Lithuanian Poetry

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**Abstract:** This text investigates the relations between the literary taste and the reception of Rainer Maria Rilke (1875–1926) in Lithuania. Rilke’s reception extends to a century or even more, even if the exact date remains the cause of academic debates<sup>1</sup>. It is natural that over the years the attitude toward Rilke changed, as the generations of poets had changed too. They comprise admirers of Rilke’s works to (post)modern experimenters and sceptics.

The question of “literary taste” is to be considered as analogous to the question of the “readers’ taste”. These readers are also the poets. Therefore, the more correct question to orientate this text would be *how do they read?* The central focus is the reading experience, the circulation, and the articulation of the Rilke’s texts read within the last three decades (1990–2020).

The text is divided into two sections. The first section deals with those aspects of the reception of Rilke that are the most important and guiding in the present Lithuanian literary tradition. It elucidates why Rilke is so important a poet for Lithuanian authors, the impact of Heidegger’s text *Wozu Dichter?*, and the perspectives of literary taste. In the second section, examples from poems are presented and interpreted in order to accentuate the diversity of the literary taste of a certain Lithuanian poet.

**Keywords:** Rilke; literary taste; reception; reading; Lithuania

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### Rilke of “Ours”: From Cult to Irony

What is particular for the reception of Rilke in the countries of Central and East Europe is the author’s adoration in an almost sacred manner. And Lithuania is

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1 The obituary of Rilke by writer Vincas Mykolaitis-Putinas was published in 1927. However, a review of *The Book of Images* was written by Jurgis Baltrušaitis in 1904.

no exception. This so-called “Cult of Rilke” is in part the consequence of the text *Wozu Dichter?* (1946) written by the famous German philosopher Martin Heidegger. It explicates the essence of poetry as the poetical self-reflection and self-contemplation where Rilke, the apologist of an epoch of *Weltnacht*, is represented as such poet but only after his predecessor, the *Vor-gänger* Hölderlin (Heidegger, 1977, 320). Despite the fact that there is no translation of this text in the Lithuanian language, its tone is well-known to literary scientists, philosophers and others in the field. Moreover, this text seems to be the axis of the *academic* reception of Rilke<sup>2</sup>. According to the Lithuanian literary scientist Rita Tūtlytė, “[t]here is still strong attention to R. M. Rilke in the whole field of humanities; those philosophers (A. Šliogeris) as well as literary scientists (V. Daujotytė), thinking within the limits of the field of the phenomenological-existential ideas by Martin Heidegger and his article “Wozu Dichter?”, turn to Rilke as a rule” (Tūtlytė, 2006, 27)<sup>3</sup>. On the other hand, sometimes the researchers themselves follow the opinion declared by the poet, for example, when the early poetic period of Rilke’s works is considered. It is publicly known that Rilke had underestimated his early collections. The Lithuanian philosopher A. Šliogeris makes the following statement in his book *Daiktas ir menas (The Thing and the Art)*, 2017, 68): “We all, the admirers of Rilke, are too familiar what Rilke, the poet, began with and how he estimated his works of youth till ‘The Book of Hours’. This judgement is clearly more than skeptical: on the whole, Rilke tended to brush off the lyric of his early period. If the first two collections had never been published, it would have been easier for him to live and respect himself as a poet”. It must be taken into consideration whether scientists and readers do not tend to apply this retrospective self-opinion *incorrectly*, as though it contains the status of an axiom.

This type of mystification is also reinforced by the very construction of his biography: Rilke is represented too one-sidedly as the “poet-prophet” or

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2 More on the reception of Rilke in Lithuania: Bajarūnienė J. (2012). Zur Rezeption des Schaffens von Rainer Maria Rilke in Litauen (von 1927 bis 1990), in: *Triangulum. Germanistisches Jahrbuch 2011 für Estland, Lettland und Litauen*. Kaunas, Ryga, Tallinn; Jakaitė D. (2007). Šiuolaikinės religinės lietuvių patirties dialogas su Raineriu Maria Rilke: Donaldo Kajoko, Leonardo Gutausko, Antano Gailiaus ir Aido Marčėno poezija, in: *Colloquia*, 19.

3 All translations from Lithuanian into English were done by the author of this paper, including the literal, nonpoetical translations.

“poet-genius”. An effort is to be made to broaden this view so as to bring Rilke into the more “human” light. In other words, it would be necessary to be more receptive to such details of his biography which testify to his somewhat bothersome temper. For example, Rilke complained about money at times: “I have already written 11 or 12 books and got almost nothing for this; I was only paid for 4 of these. The publishers (e. g. Insel and also Juncker) had taken my books without any payment”<sup>4</sup> (Rilke & Key, 1993, 25). By the way, it was not spontaneous enthusiasm but a long methodical process of writing, editing, and working out the final format of some poem collections and prose works, e.g., *The Book of Images* or *The Lay of the Love and Death of Cornet Christopher Rilke*<sup>5</sup>.

There might be an answer, maybe a naïve one, to “the cult of Rilke” in the background of the experience of history (the Soviet occupation) and collective psychology as well as in the position of an individual and their literary aspirations. In the closing text to a translation of Rilke, *Keli žodžiai apie alchemiko auksą* (*A few words on the alchemist’s gold*), written by the book’s translator A. Gailius, it is said that “[e]ven the very surname of the author was own and familiar for many of us years ago. [...] it was the way how the part of society, that more sensible, open to the essential problems of human existence, had been defending itself from the dead, cold, with ostensible humanist declarations but simply hedonism-bound historical reality. [...] Does Rainer Maria Rilke not speak about *us* [*italics – J. J.*]?” (Gailius, 1997, 179). The answer is stuck between two poles: the “more sensible” nature of *ours* (the psychological-anthropological cause) and the defense in front of totalitarianism (the sociological cause).

In conclusion, it is necessary to ask if the signs of erosion, i.e., the doubts about the status of Rilke as “the poet-prophet-genius”, are already visible. These signs might potentially be the consequence of the growing poetical self-reflection and criticism as well as familiarization. The pretext of this diagnosis, functioning also as the breaking point in the Lithuanian reception of Rilke, is found in the

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4 “Ich habe 11 oder 12 Bücher geschrieben und habe fast nichts dafür bekommen; nur 4 davon sind überhaupt bezahlt worden. Die übrigen Verleger (die Insel und auch Juncker zu B.) haben meine Bücher genommen *ohne* zu zahlen.” (This translation from German into English is mine, J. J.)

5 The first edition of *The Book of Images* was published with all capital letters in the text in 1902. “Cornet” was edited three times – 1899, 1904, and 1906 – until the last edition became a bestseller.

article by Sigitas Geda *Meilės ir mirties, egzistencijos poetas (The Poet of Love, Death and Existence, 1996)*: “something seems too bittersweet, sentimental, exaggerated, too beautiful and too harmonious” (Geda, 1996, 397). Perhaps this “bittersweet” quality must be understood as an appellation to the change of “our” literary taste, namely the literary taste of the readers of Rilke’s works.

## The Poetic Codes of Rilke’s Works in the Context of Literary Taste

From a wide range of Lithuanian authors who could be relevant to studies of the reception of Rilke, five poets were selected for this paper: Kornelijus Platelis (born 1951), Donaldas Kajokas (born 1953), Aidas Marčėnas (born 1960), Kęstutis Navakas (1964–2020), and Jurga Ivanauskaitė (1961–2007)<sup>6</sup>. They all began their literary path with its limitations and restrictions as well as with their personal forms of “rebellion” in the Soviet period<sup>7</sup>. They had to balance

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6 These poets are also translators, essayists, novelists, and literary critics. Kornelijus Platelis was Vice-Minister of Culture from 1991 to 1993. The aesthetics of Neoclassicism and contexts of Classical Antiquity distinguish his poetic corpus amongst others. Platelis has also translated works by Seamus Heaney, Ezra Pound, and Thomas Stearns Eliot into Lithuanian. The poetry of Donaldas Kajokas is always conceived in relation to the philosophical systems and the literary contexts of the East. It also displays a variety of elements from Western Culture. Aidas Marčėnas came as an amateur, i.e., a nonprofessional poet, into the literary field of Lithuania. Today he is praised for his intensive application of the means and codes of literary postmodernism. Jurga Ivanauskaitė was once a controversial writer, traveler, painter, and symbolic ambassador of Buddhism in Lithuania. Her early novel *Ragana ir lietus (The Witch and the Rain, 1993)* raised a wave of outrage and curiosity when it was first published. In addition, she was also an eager reader of Rilke who “had created her own vision of Rilke” (Baranova, 2014, 100). Kęstutis Navakas had an exceptional character as a poet and an aesthete in spirit, who “writes poetry with inspiration, as though words, verses, metaphors unconsciously come from the beyond” (Cibarauskė, 2019, 8).

7 The reception of Rilke was complicated enough in Lithuanian literature of the Soviet period. At first, from the late 1940s to the early 1950s, Rilke’s significance was denied, as his works were considered to be politically, morally, and aesthetically incorrect according to the norms of Socialist Realism. These reproaches had an ideological background against both “the improper art of the imperialistic West” and the literary traditions inherited from the past. This negative recommendation also had a didactic nature, compelling authors to direct their attention to new tendencies, i.e., the socialist reality, a new type of human being as conditioned by communism, etc. In spite of this suppression, Rilke was to be declared a constant source of poetic inspiration for a majority of poets. *Poezija (Poetry)*, Rilke’s first book containing a number of selected poems was published in Lithuania in 1975.

between the positions conditioned by the official norms of the dominant literary field and their own aesthetic preferences. The situation changed since Lithuania regained its Independence in 1990. Now it was without “a watchman”, i.e., without its ideological censorship, and the authors found themselves in new, freer literary reality. In brief, today they all are recognised as acclaimed authors and have received the National Culture and Art Prize, the most significant award that artists may receive in Lithuania. However, in this article, it is important to present the diverse forms of the reception of Rilke found in their poems. Thus, the reading of Rilke’s works will open horizons of the literary taste.

We may begin with a quotation of the poem “Tigrė narvė” (“The Tigress in the Cage”) by Kornelijus Platelis:

The worldview is lined up  
in strict squares,  
thoughts are like bars of cold metal,  
and passion frozen into the steel. I watch  
them both – the tigress and the cage,  
pain in her yellow eyes  
and sorrow of heavy metal,  
her light paces  
and the almost invisible vibration of the steel,  
tiredness of each other,  
captivity of both.

Years following years<sup>8</sup> (Platelis, 2010, 120).

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8 Pasaulėvaizdis suliniuotas  
tiksliais stačiakampiais,  
mintys – šalto metalo virbai,  
aistra sustingus į plieną. Stebiu  
abu juos – tigrę ir narvą,  
skausmą jos gelsvose akyse  
ir sunkų metalo liūdesį,  
grakščius jos žingsnius  
ir vos matomą plieno virpesį,  
vieno ir kito nuovargį,  
vieno ir kito nelaisvę.

Metai iš metų.

This poem possesses an exceptional status in the Lithuanian reception of Rilke. As a whole, from the poem's title to its last line, it may be treated as a paraphrase of Rilke's "The Panther". The specific aim of such a decision – whether it is a conscious poetic attempt to invent an even better variant of the same motif or more of a coincidence – does not necessarily concern its reading. "The Panther" as whole creative unit becomes an integral part of poetic craftsmanship and plays a role in the poetic model. In other words, the author does not simply borrow from Rilke, the exemplary author of the (global) literary canon, but exploits Rilke's poetic motifs and means.

The incipient similarity between "The Tigress in the Cage" and "The Panther" (Rilke, 2011, 63–65) could be traced back to their titles. The title given by Rilke consists of one word – *The Panther* (in German *Der Panther*) in accordance with the conceptions of *das sachliche Sagen* ("thinglike-saying") and *neues Sehen* ("new vision") or *Anschauen* ("looking"). The intention was to see the things anew and describe their essence by the exact poetic language. The content of both poems is very similar: the predator in the cage-bars-eyes and paces-captivity and uniformity of the time. The units of these poems are also analogous: "the tigress" / "the panther" (the big wild cat in captivity); "eyes" ("yellow eyes" / "the curtain in his eyes"); "the cage" / "bars"; "the worldview is lined up" / "beyond a thousand bars no world"; "passion" / "a danced strength"; "the almost invisible vibration" / "inaudibly" (in German, an even more powerful "lautlos auf" – seeing in the first place, or the visual dimension of sound); "tiredness, captivity" / "the quiet". The main difference that takes place in Platelis' poem is the observer, who decides that the same existential captivity and tiredness are essential not only to the tigress but also to the cage itself. As a result, the poem mutates into an "implement" of one's poetic craftsmanship according to the preferences of the literary taste of a person.

There are obvious imprints from Rilke's works, for example, the imagery of roses and angels, in the poetry of another Lithuanian author Donaldas Kajokas. The range of the reception of Rilke includes the reading experience from "You, neighbor God" ("Du, Nachbar Gott") up to "Rose, O pure contradiction, delight" ("Rose, oh reiner Widerspuch, Lust"), from the earliest collections up to the latest uncollected poems. In this sense, a poem like "lengvas lūpų išlinkimas" ("the light curve of lips", Kajokas, 2017, 25) may be compared with

the corpus of Rilkean angels and the conception of “intransitive love”<sup>9</sup>.

These are the final lines of the poem “Nunc et in hora mortis nostrae”,

and the disastrous rumor of Rainer Maria Rilke

– now and at the hour of the rose sleepy –<sup>10</sup> (Kajokas, 2017, 297).

The key to decipher them lies in the semantic ambiguity of the word “rumor” (in Lithuanian “gandas”), the first meaning of which is “rumor” and the second is “news”. There is something negative in the news sent from Rilke as well as in the “rumor” of his poetry. The very last line still claims life to live and death to come. The same intention unifies the notable epitaph, “Rose, oh pure contradiction, delight / in being no one’s sleep under so many / eyelids”<sup>11</sup> (Rilke, 2011, 262–263) and the prayer “The Hail Mary”: “Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death”.

The case of poetic self-reflection, when one is asking about the role and function of a poet and the value of poetry, is evident in Kajokas’s poem “Vaje, vaje” (“Oh dear, oh dear”, 2015, 27). It also serves as a medium to contradict the image of an uncritical admirer and follower of Rilke. The poetic *alter ego* of Kajokas does not propose to renounce early works, but honestly admits the role of free circulation to them. It is the most interesting that these poems of youth, “who knows / where they are roaming now”, are described as “those, anti-Rilkean, those harder ones / of a work with an axe”. The new category “anti-Rilkean” suggests that its antipode “Rilkean”, as it could be guessed from the context, possesses harmony. Then, the “anti-Rilkean” poem is an example of spontaneous, harsher poetry, as if it were created by the strike of an axe. On the other hand, the category “anti-Rilkean” exists only as the other aesthetic side of the same power of poetic craftsmanship.

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9 The concept of “intransitive love” appeals to the form of love directed to the artistic creation as opposed to intimate relationships or marriage. According to Judith Ryan, “the idea of intransitive love has been traced to a biographical origin, Rilke’s problematic relationship with women and in particular with his wife, Clara” (Ryan, 2004, 140).

10 ir rainerio marijos rilkės gando negandą  
– dabar ir rožės miego valandą –

11 Rose, oh reiner Widerspruch, Lust,  
Niemandes Schlaf zu sein unter so viel  
Lidern.

The path of Kajokas' poetry goes along the processes of interpretation and transformation of the motifs and elements borrowed from Rilke. Some poems witness the figure of Rilke considered as not only the canonical but also the familiar "persona", literary authority, and "perhaps the lips of God himself" (Kajokas, 1997, 368). It means to follow the tone of Heidegger's *Wozu Dichter?* and the still earlier "theological" title given by Marie von Turn und Taxis, "Dottor Serafico", in the interpretation of Rilke as the communication canal of God.

German or Lithuanian, I'd rather  
say *secondhand* – it is it  
what is of no value to them – it is

this Gianfranco Cornel jacket  
exactly for you, and for me –  
Celan or Rilke, Pound<sup>12</sup> (Marčėnas, 2006, 365)

Above is a fragment from Aidas Mačėnas's poem *Maxima*, which serves as one of the characteristic examples of literary taste. Two systems, elite culture and popular (mass) culture, confront each other. *Maxima* is a chain of retail stores in Lithuania and the projection of a shopping center in general. The sale is the culmination of shopping mechanisms functioning in the circle of prices, discounts, quantities, and offers. The first part of "Maxima" presents how the sale works, then the second one introduces a *second hand* store. The social gap between these two is not big but subtle: there are new garments sold in "Maxima" and somebody's used ones in the secondhand store. According to the author, one can find *houte couture* brands in these secondhand shops, like Gianfranco [Ferre] or Versace. The "Maxima" stores, on the contrary, sell only mass-produced garments. Both sorts of garments are relatively cheap, although

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12 vokiškai ar lietuviškai, geriau,  
sakau, *second hand*'as – tai tai,  
ko jiems nebereikia – tasai

Gianfranco Cornelio švarkelis,  
gulantis kaip tik tau, o ir man –  
Celas arba Rilke, Poundas



the symbolic value of these clothes differs. In spite of the names of *houte couture*, the real differentiation emerges in the sphere of literature and visual arts. The male “I” of the poem declares to his voiceless female counterpart: he would rather buy an item from the *second hand* store than “Maxima”. Why? Though the things are used, they are still full of their primary value and aura, their meaning and long-term recognition. The proper literary taste is represented by writers and artists like Dante, Pound, Eliot, Hölderlin, Celan, Rilke, Giotto, Botticelli, and their Lithuanian “colleague” Baranauskas. Rilke’s worth is not questioned: “The song of songs! (It is Rilke worthy to be quoted!)”<sup>13</sup> (Marčėnas, 2006, 172). This ironic line indicates much more: to read Rilke is also “fashionable”.

plant beside the poetry – for it should catch  
into the consciousness again

with a Rilkean moustache<sup>14</sup> (Marčėnas, 2019, 112)

Another poem by Marčėnas, “Sodink” (“Plant”) visualises the detail of Rilke’s appearance – a moustache. The Rilkean moustache, not Rilke’s moustache, functions as metonymy that unifies the modes of depersonalization (nothing more just the moustache as tentacles) and concretization (Rilkean moustache as a peculiar sort of moustache) at the same time. The synthesis between biography and works of a person may be diagnosed especially when the strict borderlines vanish.<sup>15</sup>

The next poem discussed in this paper is Jurga Ivanauskaitė’s “Vasara” (“The Summer”). This poem reveals itself to be the invariant of “Put out my eyes: I see you still” (“Lösch mir die Augen aus: ich kann dich sehn”), one of the most famous poems by Rilke, published in *The Book of Hours*. Intended as

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13 Dainų daina! (Cituoti Rilke verta!).

14 sodink prie poezijos – kad ši į sąmonę  
vėl įsitvertų

rilkiškais ūsais.

15 It must be mentioned that the appearance of Rilke was problematic. Contemporary opinions were ambiguous enough to pose questions: (a) what did Rilke look like? And (b) was Rilke really feminine? In a memoir by Claire Goll, it is stated that Rilke had a fragile, boyish body, bright blue eyes, hay-colored hair, and a seal-like moustache; he could not reconcile with his appearance and hoped that poetry should make up for his thin muscles (Goll & Hahn, 2010, 78).

part of the monk's monologue, it displays a variety of interpretations: from the radicalism of negative theology to the love confession to Lou Andreas-Salomé. "But despite appearances, Rilke's God here is not the God of Christianity; he replaces transcendence with inwardness and immanence, the notion of a supreme *being* with that of a force of becoming, seeing God as an expression of a Nietzschean elemental power suffusing the whole of life [...]" (Vilain, 2011, xviii). The lyrical "I", their feelings, and the peculiar pantheistic form of the fullness of life thrive in the summer landscape. As the "I" of "Put out my eyes" apparently confesses the infinite love of God, so the "I" in "The Summer" is dependent on the summer as the symbol of vitality, life, and love. Only the structural units of the poem by Ivanauskaitė will be quoted instead of all eight stanzas in order to demonstrate the level of resemblance.

I will recognize / with my eyes blocked  
 with my tongue torn out / scents will last  
 with my nostrils clogged / cuckoo will tell the day of June  
 with wax in my ears poured/ my fingers will touch the summer  
 with my arms broken / I will go barefoot on the grass  
 with my feet cut off / I will fall prostrate into the moss  
 and in the sarcophagus of lead / I will absorb with the sixth sense  
 and even turned into the dust / I will still know<sup>16</sup> (Ivanauskaitė, 2007, 15–16)

And here is Rilke's "Put out my eyes":

Put out my eyes: I see you still the same;  
 deaden my ears: I cannot help but hear you;  
 without my feet still I can walk toward you;  
 without my mouth still I evoke your name.

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16 atpažinčiau/ užrištomis akimis  
 jei išrautų liežuvį/ man užtektų kvapų  
 jei užkimštų šnerves/ birželio dieną praneštų... kukavimas  
 jei vašku užpiltų ausis/ liesčiau vasarą pirštais  
 jei nutrauktų rankas/, eičiau basa per žolę  
 ir ir kojas nukirstų/ krisčiau kniūbsčia į samanais  
 ir švino sarkofage/ siurbčiau šeštuoju pojūčiu  
 net virtusi dulkėmis/ vis vien žinočiau

Break both my arms, and I will hold you fast;  
my stronger heart will grasp you like a hand;  
arrest my heart: my brain will throb its beat;  
ignite my brain with firebrand,  
then I will bear you in my blood's heat<sup>17</sup> (Rilke, 2011, 15–17)

There are a few different approaches to stating the similarity in both poems. First, at the level of physical units, e.g., eyes-mouth / tongue, nostrils-ears-feet-arms-brain and heart / the sixth sense-dust / blood. Second, the situation of the poems is analogous to the logical implication “if..., then”. The first part of the poems always begins with the possibility of a destructive action, while the second eliminates the jeopardy and offers a solution. If the lyrical “I” loses the mouth or the tongue, it is compensated for the next organ or sense. The chain of the destruction culminates in a detachment-free physical piece of a human being, who may be alive only as the dust or blood but can still swear love or knowledge. What is more, this constant destruction is only in the face of the omnipotent “You”. It is probably just the fantasy, the possibility, or the potentiality of the lyrical “I”: for self-destruction, together with eagerness, create a new type of fidelity, love, and a higher degree of knowledge embracing the “Self”. Although it seems that the ultimate part of the poems is occupied by death, indeed it is life, love, hope, and faith at their center. The Oneness of Blood and Dust, God (Deity) and Nature, (irrational) Love and (rational) Knowledge triumphs in both poems.

The last poem is Kęstutis Navakas's “Svaigulys” (“Dizziness”) from the book *Iš gyvenimo garstyčių bei krienų (From the Mustard and Horseradish Concerning Human Life, 2007)*. The taste is immediately here: mustard is spicy, horseradish is bitter. “Svaigulys” in between of them might be considered as the outcome of an excess or, on the contrary, of a lacking.

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17 Lösch mir die Augen aus: ich kann dich sehn,  
wirf mir die Ohren zu: ich kann dich hören,  
und ohne Füße kann ich zu dir gehn,  
und ohne Mund noch kann ich dich beschwören.  
Brich mir die Arme ab, ich fasse dich  
mit meinem Herzen wie mit einer Hand,  
halt mir das Herz zu, und mein Hirn wird schlagen,  
und wirfst du in mein Hirn den Brand,  
so werd ich dich auf meinem Blute tragen.

I say in library: Rilke, Šulcaitė!  
There's no Rilke, Šulcaitė.  
The letters fall out of the bookstands  
And shout into my ear: *ura!*<sup>18</sup> (Navakas, 2007, 34)

Perhaps the library is not empty, but there is neither the “canonical” Rilke nor the “national” Šulcaitė<sup>19</sup>. The comparison between Rilke and Šulcaitė is unexpected: the former is a worldwide famous poet, when the latter is, at best, a nationally recognised author. It is highly likely that an ordinary Lithuanian reader will at least have heard something about the “foreigner” Rilke, while perhaps he has nothing to say about “their own” Šulcaitė. In fact, this interplay of the inversion is dubious: even if they are far from each other, these two types of “classics”, in the point of view of a contemporary reader, are too close because of the banality of the reading experience.

There is no champagne, wine or snacks in the café, neither theatre nor cinema. The fragmentary letters are left almost meaningless except the “*ura*”, the Russian form of “hurray”, which vibrates the ears of the lyric “I”. Maybe it witnesses the relief experienced by the reader who is now *officially* allowed not to read Rilke. This circumstance impels to remember the category “bittersweet” when Rilke, “a writer poised between patronage and the market” (Ryan, 2004, 7), is mentioned in an ironic tone, the intonation of a poet reminiscent of how a reader imitates a poem. No matter whether Rilke is a canonical author or not, he is to be read by those with a “bad” literary taste.

This overview has shown how different the reception of Rilke in Lithuania really is. The stress on particular texts, motifs, and units revealed that part of the literary material that is mostly questioned and interpreted and, on the other hand, the other part, which is usually concealed. As a result, literary taste is combined with various experiences and practices intertwined with reading and creation.

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18 Sakau bibliotekoje: Rilkės, Šulcaitės!  
O Rilkės, Šulcaitės nėra.  
Po to iš lentynų iškrinta raidės  
Ir rėkia ausin: *ura!*

19 Vilija Šulcaitė (1929–1992) was a Lithuanian poet who mostly wrote about nature, love, and friendship.

## Conclusions

To sum up, the category of the taste “bittersweet” explains a decisive turning point of the reception of Rilke in Lithuania. It underwent a truly liberating process in the past decades: from the object of mere admiration up to the *material* for (post)modern experiments. It includes the literary corpus of Rilke and Rilke as a real historical person.

Rilke essentially belongs to the literary taste in a variety of forms. First, his most famous poems serve as a creative material to the original texts of Lithuanian poets. Second, one of the functions into which Rilke is included is the poetic self-reflection and self-estimation. Third, Rilke’s works, and less the image of his, are an integral part of poetic craftsmanship. Besides, the literary taste could be split into two groups: the *good / proper / correct* literary taste and the *bad / banal / popular* literary taste.

The latter distinction appeals to the situation when Rilke and his works are intensively re-considered, re-interpreted, constructed and deconstructed in Lithuanian literature. In that case, it challenges the readers to identify and join the poetic play of texts and contexts. The scale of the literary taste also encompasses the categories as follows: *worth, bitter, spicy, fashionable, macabre, romantic, banal, second hand* etc.

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