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## La réception de la littérature française en Lituanie dans le contexte de l'identité nationale

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## Summary

The introduction of French literature to Lithuania occurred in different periods of its history. After analysing several cases, we can draw the conclusion that the culture and literature of Western Europe have always been present and well received in Lithuania. French literature represented the ideal to follow, the model to imitate. As it has been one of the world's great literatures for centuries, it has greatly influenced Lithuanian culture and literature.

This thesis covers the most important periods of Lithuanian history: the Renaissance, the Republic of the two Nations (Poland and Lithuania), the occupation by Czarist Russia, Independence in the period between the two world wars, the Soviet occupation and the restoration of Independence in 1990. The first case study addresses the analysis of the reception of Rabelais in Lithuania which is important because it traverses all the above mentioned periods. By presenting the historical context, we describe the reception of Rabelais by giving a comprehensive and complete picture.

The second case study is the introduction of Montaigne and his philosophy in Lithuania during the Soviet period: we see that it played a symbolic role in the formation of national identity in the three Baltic countries: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The translations of *Essays* during the Soviet period enabled the free expression of thought in the face of censorship.

The traces left by the novella *Lokis* of Prosper Mérimée in Lithuania are remarkable. The publication of this work in the mid-nineteenth century under the Russian occupation, during the dark period when Lithuania had disappeared from the world's maps, was a very important event for the Lithuanians. The Lithuanian translations of this novel have led them through different periods and their difficulties, such as, for example, the publication of the first Lithuanian translations of *Lokis* in other countries at a time when it was impossible to do so in Lithuania.

The repression of revolts against the Tsar of Russia and numerous exiles, especially to France, characterised the second half of the nineteenth century. The case of Lelewel, a professor at the University of Vilnius, revealed the very intense relations Lithuanian intellectuals had with French intellectuals, and their main interests and activities in exile. Politics played a very important role: there were disputes between monarchists and republicans. This case also presents us the patriotism of exiles in France.

The difficulties of the initial acceptance of Baudelaire and, subsequently, his enormous influence on Lithuanian poets, show us Lithuania in transition. Religious literature tries to get rid of stereotypes, to look for other forms, other ideas. During the Czarist occupation, the literary works rather passed through the intermediaries: the Russians, the Poles. During the independence in the interbellum between the two world wars, as in the period of the Renaissance, Western ideas were received directly. Travel, study in Western universities, learning foreign languages, all these phenomena brought Lithuanian society closer to the culture and literature of Western Europe.

This transition, which began at the end of the nineteenth century and lasted until the inter-war period, is also reflected in translations of literary works at the time. This period presents the first translations of French works in Lithuanian. Translations of works on the French Revolution reveal the Lithuanian struggle for independence - Lamennais's works plays a patriotic role. The period between the wars was characterised by a French enthusiasm, especially in Kaunas, the provisional capital of Lithuania when Vilnius was under Polish occupation. The intellectuals of this new state are seeking works in world literature, especially French, which could serve as educational examples for Lithuanian society during that period. The translations of Anatole France and Guy de Maupassant reveal the problems of alcoholism, the discussions between believers and atheists, political intrigues, and other interesting aspects.

The last case analysed in this work was the reception of Romain Gary, a very popular writer currently in Lithuania. His recognition is directly related to the national identity, because his birth in Vilnius plays a crucial role for its readers. After analysing the writer's presentations in the media, we analysed the stereotypes and myths about his biography and his works, especially *Promise at Dawn*.