Literary Translation in Anglo-American and Lithuanian Contexts (1990-2008)

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Abstract. Translation of any country’s literature can be compared to a cultural export whose aim is to introduce a particular culture to foreign readers. With this idea in mind, the present paper discusses several related issues. First, it evaluates the current situation of literary translation in US and UK, the two dominant cultures and countries. Second, it surveys the development of literary translation in Lithuania with special reference to translations from and into English. Literary translation, as viewed in the paper, covers both prose and poetry translated from Lithuanian into English and published in anthologies or books. The theoretical background of the paper is largely based on the ideas of Lawrence Venuti (1995), who claims that in literary translation dominant cultures tend to shade minor ones. Among other things, this dominance can be manifested in the selection of books for translation and the visibility of a translator in the final product. The analysis of the data has revealed that Venuti’s (1995) claims to the effect that English and American publishers seem not to invest much into translating literature of other, especially minor, cultures were corroborated. Contrary to the situation regarding the dominant cultures, Lithuania as a small country is open for translations of literature coming from both dominant and minor cultures. However, the statistics show that the majority of translated books come from publishers in the US and UK. As for Lithuanian literary translations into other languages, translations of Lithuanian literature into English dominate although they are more oriented towards European rather than Anglo-American audiences. Books translated into English are often published by Lithuanian or foreign non-profit publishers.

Key words: Lithuanian literature, cultural translation, dominant/ minor country.