

Foreword

The 29th issue of *Colloquia* rather spontaneously took shape as a coherent body of material – one in which coincidences turned out to be inevitable, and inevitabilities became signs, so that the publications contained here now appear naturally connected.

The issue opens with two articles dealing with the literature, and phenomenon itself, of the city of Kaunas during the period of the first independent Republic of Lithuania (1918–1940). Drawing on Vladimir Toporov's mythopoetic studies of cities, Viktorija Šeina demonstrates how the oppressive spiritual climate of inter-war Kaunas is revealed in Vincas Mykolaitis-Putinas's classic novel *Altorių šešėly* (*In the Shadow of the Altars*). Akvilė Grigoravičiūtė, who is practically the only scholar currently examining inter-war Kaunas Yiddish literature, presents hitherto neglected (in Lithuanian literary studies) scholarly material about the situation and growth of Jewish literature outside of the Vilnius Region: a qualitative analysis of the rise and modernization of Yiddish literature in Kaunas during the 1930s.

Four articles offer new analytical perspectives on the work of Soviet-era writers, reevaluating and contributing to the understanding of important authors and titles in Lithuanian literature. Elena Baliutytė analyzes Lenin prize winner and poet laureate Eduardas Mieželaitis's different versions of the conception of man (Gnostic, Christian and chthonic). The author draws the conclusion that the hero of the epic poem *Žmogus (Man)*, who was revered during Soviet times for his promethean qualities, is a Prometheus-conqueror: he lacks a revolutionary program and becomes a sated, banal bourgeois. Jūratė Čerškutė contributes the innovative approach of applying the cinematographic Rashomon narrative structure, never before used in literary analysis, to Ričardas Gavelis's 1989 novel *Vilniaus Pokeris* (*Vilnius Poker*; transl. 2009). Ramutė Rachlevičiūtė also contributes to Soviet-era studies with her inter-object analysis of the subtle eroticism and surrealism of Vytautas Kalinauskas's neglected 1960s paintings. While Kalinauskas illustrated books and created theatre sets, the literary connections in his works, which Rachlevičiūtė describes, extend to André Breton, the father of Surrealism, and can be related to Imelda Vedrickaitė's analysis of Surrealist elements in the writing of Saulius Tomas Kondrotas.

Focusing on the manipulative nature of the discourse of power, Vedrickaitė examines how the author deconstructs instances of power in his prose. These four articles clearly reveal the many creative ways that dominating ideological and aesthetic limits were stretched during the Soviet period.

Two articles examine contemporary literature. One of them tackles Lithuanian cinema, the other – the effect of market forces in the cultural sphere. In her article “Vanda Juknaitė’s *Stiklo šalis*: Narrative Structures in Literature and Film”, Gitana Vanagaitė is concerned with the ways that the same story is told in different media. The author concludes that the writer and the director (Janina Lapinskaitė, who directed the film of the same name) use specific means to create narratives, which in turn generate two different stories. Nerijus Brazauskas analyzes divergences between the mainstream as opposed to popular Lithuanian novel, and draws attention to the rise and mechanisms of popular literature within the literary field.

The reviews in this issue examine three important collections of criticism. Gintaras Lazdynas reviews *XX amžiaus literatūros teorijos: Konceptualioji kritika* (*Twentieth Century Literary Theories: Conceptual Criticism*), a tome which bears witness to the variety of methodologies used by Lithuanian scholars, and rhetorically asks, “are fruits ripened in foreign lands and those born of own consciousness of equal value?” and whether these kinds of critical texts can harmoniously combine theoretical competencies and their practical manifestations. The reviewer questions the effectiveness of applying certain methodologies, and draws attention to the mechanical, as opposed to organic, nature of their application. Inesa Szulska examines what a collection of fifteen articles by Lithuanian literary critics, *Laiko sužeisti: Šiuolaikinė lietuvių literatūra* (*Wounded by Time: Contemporary Lithuanian Literature*), published in Warsaw, says about its intended Polish readers; the collection offers analyses of poetry, prose, drama, nonfiction, and essays, and explores issues of national identity in Lithuanian literature of the end of the twentieth and first decade of the twenty-first centuries. Loreta Jakonytė reviews the monograph collection *Antanas Škėma ir slinktytys lietuvių literatūroje* (*Antanas Škėma and Directions in Lithuanian Literature*) and concludes that it marks a new and important stage in studies about this writer.

A discussion about issues in academic publishing was held with representatives of the main publishing houses and qualified textual analysts, and highlighted the most urgent issues related to the complexity of preparing

such publications, as well as the role of non-mainstream classical texts. As the discussants noted, a qualified and hard-working editor who has devoted several years to the preparation of a substantial classical tome will not receive the same attention as a young lady who travels to London and writes an essay. But the steady and quiet issuing of important texts must continue, because academic studies and the publishing of national heritage works are instrumental in forming the country's national philological culture and therefore have a general impact on the society's cultural development.

Natalija Ivanova, a scholar of Russian literature, is interviewed by Donata Mitaitė about the relationship between literary studies and criticism. Ivanova points out that “literary studies provide criticism with something that people who work in film call ‘depth of field.’” The editorial staff hopes that there is sufficient “depth of field” in all of the publications presented here.

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