

Foreword

This issue explores Lithuanian literature of the second half of the twentieth century (articles), heated debates about current topics in literary analysis (discussion, reviews), and the melancholy that has overcome the academic community (“Domino of Opinions”). The authors of six academic articles take various innovative approaches in analyzing literary texts (from classical works to amateur scribbling) and their cultural contexts. These new approaches and methods make it possible to offer original readings of already well-analyzed texts, and to draw new objects and phenomena into the field of literary study. Gintautė Žemaitytė’s choice of the concept of plastic semiotics to discuss the internal dynamism of Vytautas Mačernis’s poetic cycle “Vizijos” (“Visions”) allows her to find parallels between his writing and Lithuanian artworks (paintings, graphic art) of the 1920s and 1930s, and to identify stylistic commonalities in different art forms of the period. The linguist Skirmantas Valentas’s foray into literary analysis has once again resulted in daring and creative interpretations. This time the object of his poetic-linguistic investigation is the concept of the “linguistic miracle” and its manifestation in the work of the contemporary poet Vladas Braziūnas. In an almost algebraically laconic style, Valentas reveals the poet’s polylingualism – the deep synchronic coexistence of several languages within Braziūnas’s (Lithuanian) poems.

Colloquia has traditionally been committed to publishing articles that offer innovative interpretations of the Soviet period. This issue contains three different articles which are connected in their sociological approach or exploration of Soviet-era archives. Loreta Jakonytė’s article explores one of the early Soviet period’s ideological strategies – the shaping of the Soviet reader – and how government institutions, criticism, and cultural publications made specific efforts to influence and mould an addressee that would suit them. The author supports her analysis with concrete material – readers’ letters and survey results from the archives of the journal *Pergalė* and the cultural weekly *Literatūra ir menas* from the 1940s and 1950s. Taisija Laukkonen’s article “Between the Scylla of Censorship and the Charybdis of Oblivion: The Poet Jurij Dubasov’s Military Strategy” explores a topic from the marginalia of serious aesthetics, but not limited to the theme of Soviet-era graphomania – the cultural stance and contradictory

(and often comical) literary position of the Russian poet Jurij Dubasov, who lived in Lithuania. The free-thinking writer Ričardas Gavelis published his collection of stories *The Intruders* in 1982, during the destructive and deconstructive finale of the Soviet era. Focusing on the figure of the narrator, Jūrātė Čerškutė offers the first application of deconstructive techniques to these stories. The article's "Post scriptum" is especially intriguing, as it supplements the main analysis with a discussion of archival material, including Gavelis's letters, journals, and drawings. Aurelija Mykolaitytė draws a connection between the growing fragmentation experienced by writers in the twentieth century and their efforts to free themselves from traditional narrative techniques. Comparing the Lithuanian writer Jaroslavas Melnikas's and the Swiss author Peter Bichsel's short prose works, Mykolaitytė touches on the unpredictable expectations raised by this genre and its connections with other short forms (the miniature, the extended aphorism, the short essay, and the philosophical anecdote).

This issue's discussion is devoted to a series of seven academic monographs under the title "Ars critica", which has been published by the Lithuanian Literature and Folklore Institute since 2008. The participants conclude that the genre of the monograph is alive and well, and that a bright new generation of literary scholars is using new tools to probe literary depths: because they are flexible in drawing on various methods, their literary reflections are substantive, well-structured, functional, and interesting. The "Ars" in the series' title implies creativity, and the suggestion that literary analysis is an art in its own right. This discussion is in a sense continued in the "Reviews", which examine two monographs published in the series – by Laurynas Katkus (reviewed by Dalia Satkauskytė) and Manfredas Žvirgždas (reviewed by Imelda Vedrickaitė). In his discussion of professor Vytautas Martinkus's final opus *Estetinė literatūros gyvybė* (*The Aesthetic Life-Force of Literature*), the reviewer Algis Kalėda draws particular attention to the work's theoretical premises and values, and sees it as a fundamental program for literary study. Elena Baliutytė reviews a substantial collection of articles dedicated to the life and work of Sigitas Geda (1943–2008), and draws attention to certain polemical issues in interpretations of the poet's biography. Laura Laurušaitė discusses the academic Vigmantas Butkus's collection of original intellectual essays, *Šiaulių auto/topografija* (*Šiauliai: An Auto/Topography*), focusing on the book's exploration of cultural connections and bureaucratic dead ends. In the "Discussions" section Donata Mitaitė interviews

the Italian linguist, Baltic Studies professor, and translator of Lithuanian literature Pietro Umberto Dini.

The polemical text “Domino of Opinions” invites scholars to avoid splitting off into self-sufficient monads, and encourages them instead to take interest in their colleagues’ work – to look for connections, commonalities, and feedback.

JŪRATĖ SPRINDYTĖ