

Summary

The metaphor of the workshop chosen for the title of this monograph points to the main theoretical approach of the research: the sociology of culture, which treats the literary canon as a complex socio-cultural process. The actors of the literary field (individuals, groups or institutions) compete with each other for a dominant position in the field and for the right to establish the criteria for determining literary value. Thus, the attitude chosen as the theoretical starting point is that the canonical position of a literary work or its author in the canon is determined not only by its internal qualities, but also by the power relations in the literary field of the particular time and by the concept of literary value.

Although there are quite a few definitions of the literary canon, all of them relate, in one way or another, to the literary evaluation and selection. Based on the theoretical assumption that the value of a literary work is assigned by the perceiver on the basis of certain evaluation criteria, literary canon studies raise the question of who and on what criteria established, upheld, or denied the canonical value of a particular piece of literature in a given period and culture.

While canon scholars acknowledge that there are certain characteristics of a literary text that have at all times potentially increased the likelihood of a particular work being included in the canon, these studies focus on the intermediaries of the literary work – the institutions involved in the process of selecting and passing on the canonical texts to the next generations. It is from

the institutional perspective that the authors of this book analyse the establishment and evolution of the Lithuanian literary canon. They focused on the formulation of criteria of literary value, and hence canonicity, in writers' and critics' epistolary writing, criticism, recommended bibliography, publishing, literary historiography, school curricula, and in the regulations of awarding literary prizes. Each of these institutions in the literary field is like a separate workshop where the process of canon building takes place.

Although the issue of the canon appeared, in one way or another, in various works of twentieth-century Lithuanian literary historiography, purposeful investigation of the literary canon began in the early twenty-first century. The long-term research programme 'The Literary Canon of Modern Lithuania' (2017–2021), which was launched at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore in 2017, gave a new focus to the research into the Lithuanian literary canon. This collective monograph was also prepared as part of the above-mentioned programme. The conception of this work was determined by the idea that detailed empirical research is needed to understand the general processes of canon formation, which was recurrent in theoretical reflections on the canon from the end of the twentieth century. As far as the history of the establishment and evolution of the Lithuanian literary canon is concerned, it must be admitted that today we are only able to draw the most important lines and trace the trends, but there is a lack of accurate empirical research to reconstruct the whole process in a consistent way. The co-authors of this monograph attempt to fill this gap, at least to some extent, by analysing the canon-forming practices of various institutions in the literary field.

Although publishing of books in Lithuanian began in as early as the sixteenth century, the Lithuanian literary field began to take shape with the appearance of the first Lithuanian newspapers and the growth of the Lithuanian-language reading community, the emergence of networks of writers and critics writing in Lith-

uanian, appearance of specialised periodicals and of Lithuanian bookstores, libraries, and literary salons. As Aistė Kučinskienė's study on literary epistolary writing in this book shows, in the late nineteenth-the early twentieth century, the Lithuanian literary field was gradually becoming more autonomous by breaking away from the subordination of the field of power: writers and critics declared, more and more explicitly, the priority of the criterion of the aesthetic value of the literary work over the ideological, ethical, and other functions of a literary work.

In the chapter 'Negotiations on the Lithuanian Literary Canon in the Epistolary Writing of the Late Nineteenth-Early Twentieth Century', Kučinskienė discusses epistolary debates among Lithuanian writers and critics that influenced the formation of the Lithuanian national literary canon. In their letters, the litterateurs not only discussed the selection of texts for publication but also created the definitions of literature and shaped the aesthetic preferences of writers, critics, and publishers. If at the end of the nineteenth century, letters were mainly used to bring collaborators for cultural activities together, at the beginning of the twentieth century there was a shift towards specific agreements on literature, publishing, and criticism. The letters of the 1900s show a tendency towards the professionalisation of literature and an attempt to separate the literary life from the political life by elevating the aesthetic criterion. In general, epistolary writing is much less marked by political tensions between left-wing and right-wing authors than the press of the time. Also, the letters vividly show the considerable contribution of the authoritative editors of the periodical press, such as Juozas Tumas-Vaižgantas, Aleksandras Dambrauskas-Adomas Jakštas, Liudas Gira, and Povilas Višinskis, to the professionalisation of literature in the late nineteenth-early twentieth century.

The priority of the aesthetic value is related to the position of the professional writer, which emerged in the 1900s and the 1910s. It was relevant both in terms of the authorial self-awareness (au-

thors begin to treat themselves as professional writers, for example, Jonas Biliūnas and Vaižgantas) and in choosing literature as their main professional activity (for example, Kazys Puida, Gira). As a prerequisite for the consolidation of the literary field, the letter writers emphasise the originality of the creative work, which is understood both as a contrast to translations and imitations and as an original autonomous voice of the author. In addition, from the 1900s, the opposition between professional and popular literature was reconsidered in epistolary writing, focusing on the side of professional literature associated with the intelligentsia. Maironis dominates the list of all contemporaries discussed in the letters and is firmly established as the main canonical figure; Kudirka and Žemaitė are also accepted into the emerging literary canon. From the earlier literary tradition, literary prestige is unequivocally given to Kristijonas Donelaitis and Antanas Baranauskas.

It is generally considered in the history of literature that the modernist aesthetics took root in Lithuanian literature in the 1910s, but the analysis of the letters shows that the treatment of literature in the perspective of Realism, and especially the realistic criterion of verisimilitude of literary works, is usually considered the most adequate. The notion of the inspired author, which shows that the Romantic conception of literature is also relevant in certain respects, is quite frequent. Linked to the Romantic worldview is the idea that literature must be a concern of society as a whole and that literary works must conform to the principle of national adequacy.

The idea of a dearth of literature, which is sought to be filled by publishing anthologies, almanacs, and similar publications, thus consolidating the early corpus of recognised authors and works, also recurs in the letters. However, the number of figures active in the cultural field was small, so sometimes the selection for publications was based not even on personal aesthetic preferences but on the small number of publishable texts. Thus, some of the authors

who, as we can see from the letters, had the support of authoritative editors and whose work often appeared in the publications of the time, such as Mykolas Vaitkus, Motiejus Gustaitis, Jonas Krikščiūnas-Jovaras, Jakštas, and Gira, were eventually left out of the canon due to the lesser aesthetic value of their works.

With the imposed hierarchical principle of the political field weakening, the ideological polarisation of the literary field diminished. As can be seen from Dalia Pauliukevičiūtė's study into recommendatory bibliography, at the beginning of the twentieth century, different ideological groups of the Lithuanian cultural elite competed with each other for the right to shape and control the worldview of what Martyn Lyons refers as the 'new readers'. In the 1910s, a search for a universal model of self-education encompassing a wide range of worldviews began.

The first Lithuanian recommendatory bibliographies, which appeared at the beginning of the twentieth century and were used for self-education purposes, represented a new shift in the modernisation of culture that was advancing in at least two directions. Texts pertaining to natural and social sciences and humanities, all of different significance and complexity, were being integrated into the local culture via translations and adaptations. Moreover, with the goal to promote science, local publications were being prepared on the basis of already existing writings. At the same time, there were attempts to systemise and select original texts from different fields that represented relevant strategies of self-education.

The main strategies of self-education can be seen in the catalogues (*katalogai*) by Kazimieras Šleivys (1906), which offered a Catholic self-development programme, in *Lavinimosi knygnėlis* (1907; A Self-Development Reading List) by Stasys Matulaitis, which represented a social democratic self-development programme, and in *Skaitymo vadovėlis* (1911; A Textbook of Reading), which promoted the vision of universal self-education. The characteristics of all three recommendatory bibliographies reso-

nate with identical processes of reading culture that from the middle of the nineteenth century had also been taking place in other countries, i.e., the selection of publications was based on their ideological impact and potential to inform their readers about the changing world or provide them with a pleasant leisure activity. Furthermore, the impact of each bibliography depended on the social capital of its compilers, e.g., the ability to utilise the emerging networks of the first libraries and reading rooms and to ensure institutional support. In this regard, the context of the first Lithuanian recommendatory bibliographies was highly affected by the activities of Kazimieras Šleivys and Stasys Matulaitis as these two representatives of different ideological directions were quite well aware of their target audiences. In addition, they contributed to the formation of the self-education canon and attempted to establish their own versions of the said canon among novice readers. Meanwhile, *Skaitymo vadovėlis*, which was published in 1911, demonstrated a pursuit to gradually disassociate self-education from ideological trends of the time and instead transferred self-education guidelines presented therein through the institutional power its creators gained after the First World War.

While analysing the similarities of the first recommendatory bibliographies from the standpoint of their potential readers, it is evident that, first and foremost, the publications sought to catch readers' interest by presenting certain topics and occasionally by offering attractive prices, whereas the popularity of authors or the cultural impact was perceived as less significant. In the area of self-education, fiction had a very limited function: it was used to acquaint novice readers with reading and then encourage them to move on to more complex reading materials that had more significant practical benefits. Due to this, the repertoire of the promoted prose translations consisted of books that resonated with already existing preferences of readers, corresponded with the ideological interests of those who created the book lists or belonged to the

more familiar Russian and Polish literary traditions. Even though the disputes over the status of some Lithuanian prose writers and poets had become only episodic, there were efforts to present the local canon of fiction by taking the critically acclaimed authors into account.

The list of recommended folklore and poetry books with related commentary prepared by Sofija Čiurlionienė-Kymantaitė is the main recommendatory bibliography text that conveys the modernising attitude to literary criticism in terms of poetry and its readers alike. In the said text, the intertwined threads of different forms of contemporary poetic culture are drawn, the main reference points are identified, and, by providing laconic assessments, a sufficiently cohesive account and future changes of the situation in the canon of Lithuanian poetry of that time is offered to the readers.

In this monograph, Nida Gaidauskienė analyses the dynamics of the appropriation and canonisation of Kristijonas Donelaitis in Lithuania, which was part of the Russian Empire at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. The scholar captures certain sluggishness in the reflection on the writer's legacy on the one hand, the links of this reflection with the ideological needs and symbolism of the national movement on the other. Interpreting the establishment of the literary canon as one of the cultural tools of self-creation of modern Lithuanian community, Gaidauskienė analyses how the mediators of Donelaitis's work homogenised the heterodoxies of the biography and the oeuvre of the East Prussian Lutheran priest, which were inconsistent with the paradigm of values of modern Lithuania.

Throughout most of the nineteenth century, academic dissemination of Donelaitis's writings and his biographical research was carried out by German-speaking scholars. At the end of the nineteenth century, with the emergence of the Lithuanian national movement, the task of re-actualisation of the poet's creative legacy arose, because poets were of particular importance to national

canons. Such efforts were undertaken by Lithuanian publishers operating in Germany and the USA: Martynas Jankus, who published 'Joys of Spring', one of the parts of the narrative poem *Metai* (*The Seasons*) in Tilžė (East Prussia) in 1891, formulated in the preface of this edition the significance of Donelaitis for his own culture more clearly than the expatriate Roman Catholic priests Antanas Milukas and Aleksandras Burba in the foreword to their publication of *Kristijono Donelaiczio raszta* (*Works of Kristijonas Donelaitis*) published in Schenandoah (USA) in 1897. Initiated by the Lithuanians, this first edition of the poet's writings had a fairly large print run, but it was little sought after in Lithuania Minor due to inter-confessional tensions.

In the historiography of literature compiled by the Lithuanians themselves, from Jonas Šliūpas in 1890 to Jonas Mačiulis-Maironis in 1906, the concept of Donelaitis's legacy was mainly based on the summary of August Schleicher's text in *Litauische Dichtungen* (1865) prepared by Jonas Koncevičius and published in the newspaper *Auszra* in 1883. This edition of Donelaitis's works was the most consistently used by the Lithuanian intelligentsia, although the value accents of the poem *Metai* important for Lithuanians had already been formulated by Martin Ludwig Rhesa in 1818. A much more detailed bibliography was used by the pastor Vilnius Gaigalaitis, a cultural figure of Lithuania Minor, and Juozas Gabrys-Paršaitis, who was the secretary of the League of Nations (*Union des Nationalites*) in Paris, in their respective versions of the history of literature. In their versions of historiographical outlines they emphasised that Donelaitis was the first poet who wrote in his mother tongue, who portrayed the rural everyday life and festivals of local populace, and who encouraged them not to lose their tradition-based identity. The main objective of the descriptive texts was educational: to acquaint the public with the writer's personality and his life, on the grounds that the nation knew next to nothing about the author; there was little interpretation of his

work. Although the value of the poet's writings was acknowledged by non-nationals, repeated hints were made on the harshness of his expressions that was not particularly appreciated and complicating the positive self-image of the nation.

It was not until the 200th anniversary of the poet's birth that the intelligentsia in Lithuania, which was under the rule of the Russian Empire, became more interested in Donelaitis. Jurgis Šlapelis was the only one who systematically prepared for this anniversary in advance. He published the first accented collection of sources in this region, *Kristijono Duonelaičio Raštai* (1914; Works of Kristijonas Donelaitis), but did not produce a significant introductory text. Thanks to the mediation of the periodical press, the news of the anniversary came from Lithuania Minor. Encouraged by the wave of erection of monuments in Germany, Prussian Lithuanians for the first time clearly demonstrated their will to memorialise Donelaitis with a physical monument. In 1913, the initiative of the monument was taken over by the political elite (Vilius Steputaitis, Gaigalaitis) associated with the conservative programme of the region, and they failed both in attracting weightier support of the compatriots in Lithuania or the United States and rallying the intelligentsia of a more liberal orientation in their own land. After the German-speaking members of the Lithuanian Literary Society (*Litauische litterarische Gesellschaft*) in Tilžė were eliminated from the initiative, the idea lost some of its supporters. Professor Adalbert Bezenberger's harsh criticism, to the effect that the writings of Donelaitis alone were worth more than the whole literature of the nation of that time, but that the Lithuanians did not pay any attention to him, stirred the ambitions of the Lithuanian intelligentsia.

In Lithuania, the anniversary presentations and publications devoted to the poet's personality and work were delayed, and the focus was not on physical memorialisation but on learning about his legacy. At the general meeting of the Lithuanian Scientific So-

ciety, three papers dedicated to the poet read in July 1914 did not reach a large part of the public for another year. The summaries of the papers by Petras Leonas, Mykolas Biržiška, and Ignas Jurkūnas-Šeinius, which appeared in the *Lietuvos žinios* and *Viltis*, were brief. Despite that, they motivated Pranas Dovydaitis to produce the most ambitious work in terms of the study of sources in Lithuania at the time, which was published in August. It was the first time that a representative of Christian Democrats showed deep attention to a poet of Protestant culture. Appreciating the work of others, Dovydaitis saw gaps in academic interpretation in his own culture and intended to fill them. Like Maironis, he considered the ‘artless’ episodes of the language to be tasteless; he was more reserved in his assessment of *Metai* as a ‘national poem’ but agreed that the poet was thinking ‘like a lover of the Lithuanians’. Before Dovydaitis, it was the left-wing democrats in Lithuania who showed more interest in Donelaitis.

Biržiška and Šeinius published full texts of the presentations in the almanac *Pirmasai baras* (1915) and attempted to actualise Donelaitis’s legacy. Biržiška did this by expanding the boundaries of the concept of historical Lithuanian culture by introducing the Lithuanian reader to the development of society and the little-known socio-political background of eighteenth-century East Prussia. Šeinius brought Donelaitis closer to the reader by using the aesthetic values of early modernism, albeit not always adequately. The outbreak of the First World War meant that the work of many of these authors could not be sustained. The exception is Biržiška, whose rising role in Lithuanian education policy meant that his pre-war research became part of the first school textbook devoted to the poet’s biography and commentaries on his writings. In it, Donelaitis’s place not only in the Lithuanian but also in the wider literary canon is formulated in the clearest way. Several generations of Lithuanians were educated on the propositions of these textbooks.

Ramunė Bleizgienė's research on the early canonisation of Žemaitė shows that through the efforts of her contemporaries literary critics, this declassed noblewoman was transformed into an emblematic 'peasant writer'. Her canonical position was based on the fact that her intimate knowledge of the rural way of life and the resulting realistic depiction of it enabled her to convey, more accurately than any other contemporary, the authentic spirit of the nation preserved in the collective consciousness of this social group.

In the chapter 'Canonisation of Žemaitė: Criticism, Education, and Publication of her "Works"', Bleizgienė presents Žemaitė's early reception: from the first mention of her work in 1895 to the establishment of the independent state of Lithuania in 1918. The research on the early reception of Žemaitė consists of three parts. The first part addresses evaluations of Žemaitė's work in the emerging Lithuanian literary criticism. From the very beginning of her reception, critics had no doubt that rural people were the target audience of this writer's work. Her canonisation is therefore associated with a phenomenon relevant to the budding Lithuanian society of the time: emancipation of the peasants and the emergence of a new audience of readers. Between 1895 and 1918, about twenty publications devoted to introducing Žemaitė's specific works appeared in the press. As the early critical writings show, Žemaitė's most trusted stories were those in which she depicted rural people, their everyday life, environment, and their interpersonal relations. They were considered the most artistic. The works describing priests and individuals associated with the Church were supposedly the furthest removed from reality, considered inferior, and therefore left outside the canon. Those texts, mostly criticised by the right-wing Catholics, were considered not only useless but also dangerous to the new readers. Thus, early criticism not only sorted Žemaitė's works but also performed another movement: in assessing her work, the life of rural people not only became visible; it was recognised as a credible presence of realistic prose.

The second part discusses the dissemination of Žemaitė's work in the emerging Lithuanian education system between 1904 and 1915. As can be seen from the curricula of the Lithuanian language developed at the time, they included Žemaitė as the author of the reading primer *Rinkinėlis vaikams* (1904; A Collection for Children). Generally, Žemaitė's work in these curricula was not given any more attention than other late-nineteenth-early-twentieth-century writers. Most often, she was included in the curricula as part of a quartet of women writers, together with Šatrijos Ragana, Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė and Lazdynų Pelėda. Mention should be made of the reader *Lietuva pavasari, vasarą, rudenį ir žiemą* (1912; Lithuania in Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter) compiled by Liudas Gira, as it contains the largest number of excerpts from Žemaitė's works. This reader shows that Žemaitė was included in the canon of Lithuanian literature at the beginning of the twentieth century as an author that depicts rural people and Lithuanian nature.

The third part addresses the peculiarities of the publication of the first edition of Žemaitė's *Raštai* (Works) in 1913–1914. They stand out in the context of the preparation of selected works of that time because the author herself initiated their publication in order to maintain control over the publishing process and to receive financial remuneration. *Raštai* was published in two formats: eight small books, each containing a few short stories, and one separate volume containing about half of Žemaitė's short stories. The latter volume also included an autobiography, so it was broadly in line with the publishing canon of selected works established at the time. The former format was intended for the peasants, who were not yet proficient readers, and the latter for the intelligentsia. As shown by their reception, Jablonskis's editorial work, which allowed Žemaitė's texts to be treated as an example of the Lithuanian standard language, was a major contribution to the positive assessment of *Raštai*.

Žemaitė's canonisation, which proceeded through three main channels – Lithuanian literary criticism, the emerging Lithuanian education system, and the publication of the first *Raštai* – consolidated her image as a peasant writer. Her work was introduced as a representative of Lithuanian reality, and the language of her works was perceived as an example of the standard Lithuanian language.

Manfredas Žvirgždas's study juxtaposes the practices of (self-) canonisation of three writers who adopted the position of the national bard in the 1920s: Maironis, Krėvė, and Vydūnas. Closely following the battles of literary criticism of this period, the scholar reveals the fragility of the emerging canon. On the one hand, in the absence of a long-term multi-generational system of literary values, one dares to question and criticise all writers, even those who are hailed as national bards. On the other hand, realising how easy it was for 'irresponsible' criticism to destroy the canon of national literature that had just been established, some of the literati of the time were cautious about putting up safeguards and establishing untouchable zones, i.e., the positions of the classics.

With the independent Republic of Lithuania emerging after the First World War, Jonas Mačiulis-Maironis, Vilhelmas Storosta-Vydūnas, and Vincas Mickevičius-Krėvė affirmed the legitimacy of the fledgling republic through their public statements; they did not demonstrate any revolutionary ambitions in their work, but they did influence their contemporaries, express the mood of the new era and of a turning point in the public consciousness. One of the most important institutions for assessing the canonisation of writers was the press of different ideological leanings and especially literary criticism, the polemical dialogue of which engaged intellectuals of different generations and viewpoints. Maironis, Vydūnas, and Krėvė were oriented towards the Western and Eastern classics and demonstrated their hostility to both avant-garde modernism and popular literature. The creation of literature of the Western aesthetic orientation and the formation of a critical reception re-

quired the financial support of state institutions, primarily of the Ministry of Education. The political strategy of nationalism was associated not with revolutionary radicalism but with conservatism and traditionalism. In certain periods, the writers discussed were actively involved in the political field: consciously (Krėvė), or reluctantly, perceiving politics as a mission to cultivate virtues of and educate their compatriots (Vydūnas), or by maintaining a balance between ecclesiastical and secular activities (Maironis).

The literary magazine *Skaitymai* (1920–1922), which was approved by the Ministry of Education, discussed the spirit of the nation, the national epic, and the national hero. The writers who were part of the canon often criticised political radicalism, aesthetic naturalism, and modernism and drew on the archaic heritage of folklore. Their criticism disproportionately expanded the boundaries of the definition of ‘romanticism’, the categories of the classicist and the romanticist were detached from the chronological frameworks characteristic of the history of Western European literature and art. The classics and their writings were actualised when the ruling elite needed to demonstrate what Lithuanian culture should be proud of. Maironis’s poetry mobilised the readership the most, Krėvė was popularised by the young intelligentsia, and Vydūnas remained the classic who was ‘known but not read’.

In the reflections of the modernist critics on relevant literature, Maironis was mentioned as a famous hero of the past, and, simultaneously, as a symbol of stagnation, anachronism, and of the past epoch. Vydūnas was seen only as a leader of the Lithuanian-speaking community, but he remained misunderstood as a playwright and was criticised by the confessional orthodoxy as a philosopher. He was consciously engaged in self-canonisation and took great care of his public image. In the early 1920s, Krėvė was mentioned in the press as the leader of the literary community. The politically engaged writer was first highlighted by the liberal nationalist press, because he stressed the necessity of constant attention to

history, exaggerated the egocentric rulers of a superhuman spirit, and seemingly endorsed the authoritarian cult of the ‘leader of the people’. Krėvė, who was the editor of *Skaitymai*, manifested himself as a figure that concentrated the power of decision and clearly formulated his position, although he was tolerant of dissent.

Gairės (1923–1924), *Baras* (1925) and *Pradai ir žygiai* (1926–1927) were short-lived magazines with a narrower focus; they were relevant to the writers, but lacked a more active dialogue with the readership. They played a legitimising role in the formation of the canon of literary classics, but they neither initiated radical changes nor questioned the established authorities. Krėvė and his thinkalikes demanded the democratisation of literature and art and defended the autonomy of the literary field both from political and confessional conjuncture and from language regulators. In the 1920s, Lithuanian writers tried out new public roles: they became the ‘voice of the nation’ at rallies, jubilee celebrations, and museum openings. The journalists of the Catholic press, who dominated the media, were most of all interested not in the value of the works, but rather in the worldview aspects. The press was not ashamed to moralise and expected ethical improvement from the writers, because they acted as role models for readers. By publishing the news about the lives of the canonised writers, the media sought contact with the cultural sphere, started internalising the philosophical, psychological, and theosophical argumentation that was uncharacteristic of the reporting style, and bridged the distance between the writer and the fast-growing dynamic readership.

In this monograph, Viktorija Šeina analyses one of the greatest Lithuanian literary sensations of the 1940s: the success of the debut novel *Aukštųjų Šimonių likimas* (The Fate of the Šimonys from Aukštujai) by Ieva Simonaitytė, a writer from the Klaipėda region. All reference books on Lithuanian literature mention that this book, which was published in 1935, received the first National Book Prize in Lithuania. However, until now, relatively little is

known about the specific circumstances of the publication of Simonaitytė's novel and awarding the prize to it. Analysing unpublished archival documents, Šeina examines the role of Lithuanian state institutions and the geopolitical situation in the Klaipėda region in the process of editing *Aukštųjų Šimonių likimas*, its publishing, and awarding the prize to the book.

The study shows that the chances of Simonaitytė's debut novel to win the National Prize were determined not only by the qualities of the text, but also by the social circumstances of its emergence, dissemination, and evaluation. The Ministry of Education showed exceptional attention to *Aukštųjų Šimonių likimas*: having never before (or after) funded fiction by a beginning author, it not only financed the publication and dissemination of *Aukštųjų Šimonių likimas*, but also went to great lengths to ensure that it was recognised.

The sensational success of *Aukštųjų Šimonių likimas* was at least partly due to the changing rules of the literary field and the weakening of the most important of them – the autonomy of art. In the mid-1940s, even the staunchest defenders of the autonomy of art began to agitate for civically engaged art, because the geopolitical situation, which was threatening the nation and the state, demanded it. Vincas Mykolaitis-Putinas, who defended the concept of pure art in disputes with conservative critics in the 1920s, called on the literati to once again turn their art into a weapon in the fight against Lithuania's enemies in the mid-1930s. Thus, during the period discussed, the boundary between the fields of cultural production and power was gradually erased on both sides.

The act of awarding *Aukštųjų Šimonių likimas* reveals the *habitus* of the National Prize, i.e., a complex set of (un)conscious dispositions of evaluation and selection. The composition of the prize committee and the evaluation criteria reflected in the act of prize award show that the artistic weaknesses of Simonaitytė's novel were outweighed by its political and cultural relevance: to have

‘a chronicler of Lithuania Minor’, who had been missing from the literary map until then, was a desperate need. The fact that the writer from Klaipėda was a loyal supporter of the ‘One Lithuania’ ideology, i.e., represented the part of Prussian Lithuanians loyal to the Republic of Lithuania, was a gift of fate for the Lithuanian political elite.

The National Prize affected all stages of *Aukštųjų Šimonių likimas*: editing, public communication, dissemination, and canonisation. Traditionally, it is considered that literary prizes contribute to the professionalisation of the literary activity: firstly, the winners of the prize are ensured broader dissemination of their books and, therefore, their creative work generates a larger income; secondly, they are a symbolic recognition of professionalism, even if the writer may not be able to make a living out of his or her work as a novelist. In Simonaitytė’s case, the prize came with recognition and privileges, including a special pension, which ensured the necessary means of subsistence and allowed her to devote herself to literary work.

The studies in this collective monograph shed light on the multidimensional process of the formation of the Lithuanian literary canon in the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. However, in order to gain a more complete picture of this process, historical descriptive research on the canon must continue. For example, the evolution of the school literary canon, the role of specific authoritative figures or groups (editors of periodicals, publishers, critics, literary movements) in the negotiation of the canon, the performative practices of canonisation (theatrical literary trials, commemorations of anniversaries), the canon of genres, preparation of selected works by the classics (the funding of publishing, the principles of selection and editing of works), and other related themes have been little analysed so far.