

SUMMARY

The focus of this book is on the ambiguous status of Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855) in the Lithuanian literary canon at the end of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. The works of the Polish Romantic, who hailed from the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, shaped the patriotic attitudes and aesthetic values of Lithuanian intellectuals of the end of the nineteenth century. During the period of national revival, these intellectuals were entrusted with the task of defining Lithuanian national culture. Here, they faced the dilemma of whether the works by Mickiewicz and other Polish writers born in Lithuania should be treated as own cultural heritage or that of the ‘other’. The aim of this study was to determine the arguments, assumptions, and cultural practices that were invoked by Lithuanian literati, literary historians and critics, designers of school and university syllabi, and authors of textbooks to justify the inclusion of Mickiewicz’s works in Lithuanian literature or exclusion from it. As the Lithuanian intelligentsia discussed this issue intensively from the appearance of the Lithuanian language newspaper *Auszra* (1883; The Dawn) through the entire period of the First Republic of Lithuania’s existence (1918–1940), this study covers the chronological boundaries from the end of the nineteenth century until the first Soviet occupation (1940). This threshold of historical geopolitical cataclysms marked a new approach to Lithuanian national culture (and thus of Mickiewicz’s work).

The attitude of Lithuanian society to Mickiewicz’s work can be studied from two perspectives: as part of a more general issue of the

concept of national literature and as part of the reception of this poet and his work in modern Lithuania. In this study, I attempted to cover both aspects, moreover so that they are intertwined and difficult to separate in the sources analysed. The variety of source types is quite representative: it includes literary historiography, school and university syllabi of Lithuanian literature, textbooks, chrestomathies, analytical, commemorative, and other kinds of publications about Mickiewicz or his works in Lithuanian periodicals, translations of the poet's texts into Lithuanian, literary dedications and staging of the poet's works, projects of his memorialisation, and others. Applying the method of descriptive canon research, which is closely related to the theoretical field of cultural sociology, I will analyse the status of Mickiewicz and his work in the modern Lithuanian literary canon.

The literary canon is not a collection of individual authors and texts: the structure of the canon is based on a system of aesthetic, ethical, ideological values, and a model of collective self-awareness established by the cultural elite and adopted by the community. The formation of the Lithuanian literary canon at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century was one of the most important means for the young nation to define its collective identity. Therefore, throughout this period, disputes about Mickiewicz's (non)belonging to the national literature and its canon were closely linked to the emerging collective identity.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Lithuanians, like other non-dominant ethnic groups of the Central European empires, sought to establish their legitimacy as an independent national group. In this region, language was considered the key marker of ethnic identity. It was language and ethnic culture that the ideologues of the Lithuanian national movement chose as the basis for modern Lithuanian identity. From the ethnolinguistic point of view, Mickiewicz was foreign to modern Lithuanians. However, in any community undergoing transition from pre-modern to modern nationhood, there are

specific variants of the continuation, transformation, and adaptation of the previous identity. The name of Lithuania, which at the end of the eighteenth century disappeared from the political map of Europe, survived in the Polish literature of the region's nobility and thus continued the historical narrative of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Republic of the Two Nations. At the turn of the twentieth century, however, the Lithuanian national movement rejected the idea of a common political nation of Lithuanians and Poles and proclaimed its ambition to create a national Lithuanian state. As this was unacceptable to the majority of the Polish-speaking Lithuanian nobility, they opted for Polish nationalism (the Second Polish Republic), which declared itself the successor of the Republic of the Two Nations. However, some of the Lithuanian nobility, as well as the Catholic clergy and intellectuals strongly influenced by Polish culture joined the Lithuanian national movement. This group of the intelligentsia was looking for ways to connect modern Lithuania with the region's multilingual cultural tradition of the earlier centuries.

Two different conceptions of national literature emerge in the early works of Lithuanian literary historiography at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. The first, ethnolinguistic, conception followed the tradition of bibliography of Lithuanian writings and was based, in principle, on the sole criterion of language. In Jonas Šliūpas and Maironis's historiographical works, Lithuanian literature is described as written in Lithuanian language, and the central position of the national literary canon was designated for Kristijonas Donelaitis, the founder of Lithuanian fiction. Secondly, Mykolas Biržiška's concept of multilingual national literature combined two criteria: ethnolinguistic (referring to Prussian Lithuanian writings) and political-territorial (referring to the written heritage of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania starting from chronicles written in the Ruthenian language, Baroque Latin poetry, to the modern literature in Polish and Lithuanian). According to Biržiška, Mickiewicz, the most internationally acclaimed poet of the former

Grand Duchy of Lithuania, occupied the central position in the multilingual national canon.

For the canonical position of a writer, who is established by the cultural elite, to become a universal norm in the culture of a given time, it is necessary to ensure the dissemination of the work by that particular writer. Although the first several translations of Mickiewicz into Lithuanian appeared while the poet was still alive, Lithuanians began to actively translate and publish the poet's works during the period of nationalist agitation (1883-1904). During this period, a purposeful ideological selection of translations became evident, which eventually determined the specificity of the interpretative canon of 'Lithuanian Mickiewicz'. Unlike in Poland, where the cult of Mickiewicz as a national bard (*wieszcz narodowy*) was based mainly on the third part of *Dziady* (1832; *Forefathers' Eve*) and *Pan Tadeusz* (1834), the Lithuanian reception of the poet was shaped by the works idealising medieval Grand Duchy of Lithuania (*Grażyna*, 1823, and *Konrad Wallenrod*, 1828), which were the most translated in the late nineteenth-the early twentieth century.

After the restoration of statehood of Lithuania in 1918, Mickiewicz's canonical position was established in the syllabi of Lithuanian gymnasiums (1923, 1929), in textbooks and readers. However, not all textbook writers and teachers attributed the poet to the Lithuanian literary tradition (in some Lithuanian gymnasiums, his works were not read at all), and when in 1936 the Ministry of Education updated school syllabi, it moved Mickiewicz's works from the course of Lithuanian literature to that of world literature. This shows that interwar Lithuanian society did not have a united position on the 'Mickiewicz issue'. Despite the efforts of Motiejus Gustaitis, Mykolas Biržiška, Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas, and Zigmantas Kuzmickis to link Mickiewicz's work to the cultural identity of the Lithuanians (by dissemination of translations, consolidation of the poet's position in the academic and school canon, commemorative publications in the press, and the (unimplemented) ideas of Mickiewicz's memorialisa-

tion), the interwar Lithuanian public showed only slight interest in it. Undoubtedly, the communication barrier was the language of the poet's work. Unlike the intelligentsia of the generation of the national movement, few of those who had graduated from gymnasiums in independent Lithuania could read Mickiewicz's works in Polish. And although all of his most important works had already been translated into Lithuanian before the Second World War, the poor quality of translations hindered the poet's rooting in national culture.

Another obstacle that prevented Lithuanians' identifying with the experiences and values conveyed in the poet's work was a different conception of Lithuanian-ness. Each time Mickiewicz was introduced to Lithuanian readers, the mediators of his work were forced to interpret his dual identity, which encompassed regional and national dimensions. At that time, not all Lithuanians were prepared to tolerate or justify earlier forms of Lithuanian-ness alternative to ethno-cultural identity. Mickiewicz, who prophesied the resurrection of three-nation Poland in his works of the emigration period, seemed unacceptable to a part of modern Lithuanian society or even a threat to Lithuanian sovereignty.

Because of the protracted geopolitical conflict between Lithuania and Poland over Vilnius, the interwar Lithuanians were suspicious of the attempts of Biržiška and other literati to turn Mickiewicz into a Lithuanian national poet. The external threat radicalises national movements and leads to a suspicious attitude towards 'the other'. To conceal Mickiewicz's 'otherness', the mediators of his work (translators, critics, literary scholars, textbook writers, and compilers of chrestomathies) resorted to various practices to Lithuanise him.

Lithuanisation of the poet's personal name and origin. In the nineteenth-century Lithuanian press, the spelling of the poet's surname varied: both the original surname (*Mickiewiczzius*) and various adapted forms of the surname were used (*Mickevičius*, *Mickevyčia*, *Mickus*). As the principles of Lithuanian orthography and phonetic adaptation

of nouns of foreign origin gradually became established, the form Adomas Mickevičius was accepted at the beginning of the twentieth century. It has dominated Lithuanian public and academic discourse up until now. From the 1920s onwards, emphasis was increasingly placed on the poet's ethnic Lithuanian origins. Although the theory of Mickiewicz's descent from the Rimvydai family was put forward as early as 1886 in the biography of the poet by Piotr Chmielowski, it took quite some time to be accepted in Lithuania. Presumably, the first integrators of Mickiewicz into the canon of Lithuanian literature (Jonas Žilius-Jonila, Antanas Milukas, Mykolas Biržiška, Motiejus Gustaitis) did not consider the poet's ethnic origin to be of any significance whatsoever, because they based the poet's belonging to Lithuanian culture on political-territorial and patriotic arguments rather than on ethnic grounds. Meanwhile, Stasys Šalkauskis, an influential Lithuanian philosopher of the interwar period, explained the poet's Lithuanian-ness in terms of the race theory. From the mid-1920s, the myth of the poet's ethnic origins took root in Lithuania and became an integral part of his interpretation.

Ideological selection of translations and their de-Polonisation. Despite the fact that Mickiewicz's admirers and promoters in Lithuania acknowledged that his most valuable work is the poem *Pan Tadeusz*, which made him famous all over the world, it was not until the 1920s that the whole poem was translated into Lithuanian. Brimming with the sentiment for the Republic of the Two Nations, the epic about the life of Lithuanian provincial nobility in the early nineteenth century was hard to reconcile with the efforts of the modern Lithuanians to consolidate and defend Lithuanian sovereignty. Therefore, when a Lithuanian translation of *Pan Tadeusz* finally appeared in 1924, Biržiška adapted excerpts from the poem (and from the poet's other works) in his chrestomathy for schools (1927), eliminating any textual references to Poland or Polishness. Mickiewicz's works *Grażyna* and *Konrad Wallenrod*, depicting the battles of ancient Lithu-

anian against the Teutonic Knights, were much more in line with the Lithuanian self-perception and the historical narrative. The latter received considerable attention in interwar school textbooks, and Gražyna's story was the basis for the first professional Lithuanian national opera (*Gražina*, 1933, composer Jurgis Karnavičius, libretto by Kazys Inčiūra).

As we can see, in order to integrate Mickiewicz and his works into the Lithuanian literary canon, Lithuanian literati used various assimilation techniques, which made it possible to homogenise the heterodoxies of the poet's biography and his texts, which did not conform with the structure of the canon. Still, preserving Mickiewicz's position as a national poet in the canon of Lithuanian literature was possible only within the framework of the concept of multilingual Lithuanian literature. Despite Biržiška's efforts, this concept of national literature did not take root in interwar Lithuania. Although he taught Mickiewicz's works as part of his course on Lithuanian literature at the university, the poet's works were transferred from Lithuanian to world literature in school syllabi and textbooks after the 1936 education reform.

Lithuanian intellectuals returned to the 'Mickiewicz issue' at the end of the twentieth century, when, after Lithuania regained its independence, they revived the discussion about Lithuanian cultural identity and its boundaries. Contemporary historiography of Lithuanian literature generally agrees on the concept of the multilingual Lithuanian cultural tradition and on the attribution of Mickiewicz to Lithuanian literature.

Translated by DIANA BARNARD