

Horizons of the Miracle.

Šiluva and its Legend in Lithuanian Literature

Summary

In the Catholic tradition Šiluva has long been a sacred place and a centre of pilgrimage. The two main objects that attract pilgrims are the stone on which, as legend has it, Virgin Mary appeared to some shepherds in 1608, and the painting *Virgin Mary with Her Child* that is said to be miraculous. The biggest gathering of pilgrims in Šiluva takes place during the church festival of the Birth of Virgin Mary called Šilinės. The apparition of Virgin Mary, the stone on which she appeared, the miraculous painting, the story of its origin, the festival of Šilinės and other realities of Šiluva are all surrounded by legends, tales and interpretations which have been studied by historians, art experts and theologians.

Between the nineteenth century and the present day many works of fiction have been written on the subject of Šiluva and the various aspects of its religious phenomenon. They fall into numerous genres and their artistic level varies. The present monograph builds on the assumption that works of literature about Šiluva are not just 'passive' descriptions or 'reflections' of the phenomenon, but also a way of maintaining, creating, recreating and modifying its significant religious, cultural and social-psychological meanings. They connect the phenomenon to a specific geographical location. The main goal is to analyze the evolution and distribution of the religious phenomenon of Šiluva in literature, as well as the development of historical, geographical and other works of literature related to the realities of Šiluva.

The process of accomplishing the said goal includes not only the analysis of various works of fiction and semi-fiction (like ethnographic fiction, publicist fiction and religious fiction), but also research into studies on Šiluva conducted by academics from various disciplines. Mariological literature and literary studies related to the theme, materials in question, and various aspects of analysis, as well as publications on the subject of Šiluva (educational, informative or advertising articles, periodical publications, hymnals, prayer books, religious brochures, books, etc.) were also examined.

Both the goal of the monograph and the object in question determine the interdisciplinary nature of analysis and the application of a number of different methods. Therefore, in this book various means of literary analysis are integrated with the methodological approaches suggested by other disciplines (history, culture studies, theology, ethnography, etc). The paradigm of *literary geography* becomes the methodological paradigm that centralizes the study and penetrates many other methodological decisions. As the theme of the book is very definitive, one of the main connections it examines is the relation and mutual influence between a specific location and works of literature linked to it in various ways. The location 'dictates' the texts, while the latter modify the way the location is perceived and how it functions in cultural and other spheres. As a result, some chapters of the book contain direct methodological associations with the so called *local studies*.

Various works of literature on the subject of Šiluva expand and expose or, conversely, complicate and give new meanings to religious, cultural, ethnographic, historical, geo-poetical and other aspects of Šiluva. They explore both Šiluva as a discourse and the discourses of the religious stories of Šiluva in a fairly organic manner. It sometimes seems that the core of the religious phenomenon of Šiluva is grasped by broadening the horizons of the miracle, and the works of literature unfold like such horizons. The works of literature originate first of all from the two pieces of evidence that establish Šiluva as miraculous place: the legend of Virgin Mary's apparition and the magical painting (to explore historical or theological authenticity of which is not the objective of this monograph).

The first object of analysis is the earliest known testimony of the manifestation of the Virgin Mary recorded in 1661, probably by the priest Mikalojus Sviechauskas (Nicolaus Swiechowski), but only copies of the testimony made in the second half of the eighteenth century have survived. This testimony is seen as a result of the ideological battle between the Reformation and Counter-Reformation (also known as the Catholic Revival).

Literature analysis begins with the short story 'Mielaširdinga ponis' (The Kindhearted Lady) by the Samogitian bishop Motiejus Valančius in 1868. In it, the graces granted by Virgin Mary are revealed through the Catholic perception of material things and the metamorphosis of the cross as a symbol and as an object. The relationship between the material and the sacred, and the tension between them are used to analyze works of ethnographic literature or their fragments written between the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. These works and their

fragments – ‘Jonas Išmisločius’, (1860) by Mikalojus Akelaitis, the short story ‘Vargdieniai’, (The Miserables, 1895) by Aleksandras Fromas-Gužutis, and the fictional sketch ‘Kelionė į Šidlavą’ (Journey to Šidlava, 1907) by Žemaitė and others – depict church festivals and market-place scenes in Šiluva.

Virgin Mary of Šiluva is seen as a patron of the Lithuanian nation and the state in the literary legend ‘A Legend of One Forest’ (1948) by Nelė Mazalaitė-Kruminienė, hymns by Stasys Yla, Boleslovas Pacevičius and others, poems by Janina Pakštienė-Narūnė, Alfonsas Šešplaukis-Tyruolis and others. The Catholic portrait of Mary as the Queen of heaven and earth was seen in a patriotic, nationalistic light. Within the thematic field of Šiluva, two other forms of Saint Mary are created by use of detailed literary imagery: The Blessed Virgin Mary as an embodiment of absolute beauty and innocence in Jonas Grinius’ drama ‘Stella Maris’ (1947) and the Mother of God as the patron of all mothers and motherhood in Liudas Dovydėnas’ story ‘Per Klausučių ūlytėlę’ (Down Klausučių Street, 1952).

In many works of poetry, the tendencies of poetizing of Šiluva and veneration of Virgin Mary of Šiluva acquire strong geo-poetical traits and develop in two trends: 1) through the variations on the theme of the mythologem of Lithuania as the land of Mary the literary map of Lithuania is drawn with a special emphasis on the importance of Šiluva in mariological geography (it is as significant as Aušros Vartai and the Samogitian Calvary); 2) a local poetic space-time is created by emphasizing the main centres of the history and landscapes of Šiluva, which are permeated with the poetized divine miracle. After seeking out the origins of these trends in the religious writings of Šiluva, and their literary beginnings in the works of Maironis, poems, essays and fragments of literary tales by Kotryna Grigaitytė, Elena Tumienė, Juozas Kruminas, Anatolijus Kairys, Balys Gaidžiūnas, Antanas Sležauskas, Algimantas Jesiulionis, Vynmedžio Šakelė (A Vine’s Branch, real name Ona Galdikaitė), Janina Irena Survilaitė, Juozas Nekrošius, Vytenis Grabauskas, Leonardas Gutauskas, Ričardas Mikutavičius and others are analyzed.

Three literary attempts to describe the apparition of Virgin Mary in Šiluva that followed the principle of reporting the event ‘as it really was’ are presented individually. Following this principle, Mykolas Linkevičius in his play ‘Marijos šventovė’ (Mary’s Shrine, 1934), Nelė Mazalaitė in her unfinished and unpublished novel ‘Anuo metu’ (In Those Times, 1953), and Juozas Kavaliauskas in his short poem ‘Švč. Mergelės Marijos apsireiškimas Šiluvoje’ (The Apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Šiluva, 1984) gave or tried to give their versions of the apparition. Not only did these authors intend to restore the apparition as such in detail, or at least in more detail, but also

to present the relevant historical events of sixteenth-century – seventeenth-century Šiluva: the prehistory, the circumstances and the consequences of the apparition.

The closing chapter offers a detailed analysis of the poems by Kazys Bradūnas that relate to the theme of Šiluva: ‘Šiluva’ (1958), ‘Šventoji kelionė’ (The Sacred Journey, 1964) and ‘Vakaras prie Šiluvos’ (An Evening near Šiluva, 1987). They are seen as the most conceptual and artistic of all the works of literature about the religious phenomenon of Šiluva.

This book consistently reveals how Lithuanian literature *localizes* the Blessed Virgin Mary in Šiluva through poetic means, and how Šiluva with its sacred aspect, history and landscape are made part of text and literature.

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