

INTRODUCTION

German poet and translator Hermann Buddensieg¹ called the epoch of Kristijonas Donelaitis (1714-1780) “a very busy time of change”, when “profound changes were taking place in all fields of life” and which was an “especially fruitful global moment depending on the activity of a surprising amount of very gifted and impressive personalities”². The impetus was provided by the 18th c. European Enlightenment whose visual vision was most illustratively rendered by the 18th c. German artist Daniel Chodowiecki in a copper engraving *Education*: “the morning sun rising from behind a distant mountain range”, with the concept of *light* in that century “acquiring a new and important meaning [...], and the light being mentioned every time when reason or freedom were discussed [...]”³.

The Age of Enlightenment placed emphasis on man’s versatile education and his natural rights, social changes in different fields, religious tolerance, and critical and free speech. The prospering and the dissemination of those ideas made a great impact on the transformation of self-awareness of the population of Prussian (Minor) Lithuania, East Prussia, and the whole Kingdom of Prussia, the changes in its mentality, and the development of the relationships between the people and the government and the people and the Church, and formed the expression of ideas of thinkers and creators.

Whenever we talk about the historical context of Prussian Lithuania in the 18th c., we traditionally call that period the epoch of Donelaitis. To quote literary scholar Leonas Gineitis, in the analysis of the literary work of Donelaitis and his historical-cultural environment, every factual detail is significant which “unexpectedly illuminates and shows different than the expected traits of the analyzed object, [and] the details [...] pulsate with life – the spirit of time”⁴. It reflects the reality of the general European context and is marked by multi-faceted signs of cultural modernization inspired by the Enlightenment ideology that can be recognized both in the environment of Königsberg University in Donelaitis’ epoch and in Donelaitis’ literary works.

The 300th birth anniversary of Evangelical Lutheran priest and Lithuanian author Kristijonas Donelaitis to be celebrated on 1 January 2014 makes us remember different aspects of his life and literary work by perceiving them as integral part of the storyline of the Prussian state development which reveals the turning points and transformations of social and cultural life in East Prussia and Prussian Lithuania that also affected the mental changes of the Lithuanian, “Boerish”, area and matured Donelaitis’ creative powers in the native Lithuanian language.

Volume XXVI of *Acta Historica Universitatis Klaipedensis, Cultural Innovations of the Epoch of Kristijonas Donelaitis*, publishes the presentations given in an international conference in Klaipėda⁵ held by the Institute of the Baltic Region History and Archaeology, Klaipėda University, in 2011. Scholars from Lithuania, Germany, Poland, and Russia (Kaliningrad Region) presented the basic trends of Donelaitis’ epoch, discussed the historical, cultural, and musicological aspects of the Church history, and analyzed the reception of Donelaitis’ literary works from the 19th c. to

¹ Hermann Buddensieg (1893–1976) – German poet and translator who made a new translation of *The Seasons* by Kristijonas Donelaitis in 1966.

² BUDDENSIEGAS, H. Kristijono Donelaičio gyvenimas ir veikalas laiko fone. In *Iš vokiškųjų raštų apie Kristijoną Donelaitį*. Parengė Leonas GINEITIS. Vilnius, 2002, p. 186–187.

³ IM HOF, U. *Švietimo epochos Europa*. Vilnius, 1996, p. 11.

⁴ GINEITIS, L. *Kristijono Donelaičio aplinka*. Vilnius, 1998, p. 7.

⁵ The conference was held as an event of the national programme devoted to the 300th birth anniversary of Kristijonas Donelaitis implemented by the *Commission for the Preservation of Lithuanistic Traditions and Heritage* and was partly funded by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania.

present. An international team of the presenters in the conference and of the authors of the present volume witness the significance of the activity of Kristijonas Donelaitis, author and priest, and the circumstances of his epoch not only to Lithuanian, but also to foreign researchers who actualize the activity and the literary work of a priest of a remote Lutheran parish of Tolminkiemis (German *Tollmingkehmen*, presently, Čistyje Prudy in Kaliningrad Region) in the European space.

The collection of articles is opened by the insights of Nijolė Strakauskaitė (Klaipėda) into Prussian Lithuania against the background of the contrasts of the history of Prussia. The author believes that, in order to perceive the meaning of the literary works of Kristijonas Donelaitis, it is relevant to study in-depth the modern interpretations of the history of the Prussian state and the stereotypical interpretations of some of the aspects of the history of Prussian Lithuania in Lithuanian historiography standing out in that context. On the basis of the phenomenon of Prussian contrasts, N. Strakauskaite highlights the plots of the history of Prussian Lithuania in the 18th c. which accelerated the process of aculturation and intensified the problem of bilingualism and presents a critical view of the stereotype prevailing in historiography about the intentions of the Prussian state to *Germanize* Prussian Lithuania at that time.

The texts of Alina Kuzborska (Olsztyn, Poland) and Žavinta Sidabraitė (Klaipėda) are devoted to the analysis of the literary environment of *The Seasons* by Donelaitis. A. Kuzborska looks into *The Seasons* as a modernized realistic idyll written after an example of didactic works of the Antiquity and revealing a new conception that transcended the boundaries of the 18th c. As argued by the author, *The Seasons*, based on the Western European literary tradition, actualized by the images of the time and the environment, and being meant for a specific addressee, a Lithuanian Boer, belonged to the genre of the didactic idyll. The didactic theme of *The Seasons* is further developed by Ž. Sidabraitė who discloses the symbiotic relationship of Donelaitis as a priest and a poet and presents his literary work as a field of expression of beliefs and the perceived duty. In the author's opinion, the choice of the conservative addressee of the poem, a Lithuanian peasant, paradoxically predetermined the modernity of Donelaitis' work in the context of the European poetry of the period.

K. Donelaitis' personality and his activity are inseparable from Königsberg University where Donelaitis completed theological studies and whose intellectual environment formed the views of the prospective priest and poet. Arūnas Baublys (Klaipėda) reviews the general political and spiritual characteristics of Donelaitis' epoch and brings out the significance of the reforms of that century for the promotion of national languages, including Lithuanian, via the Church and educational institutions. Kęstutis Daugirdas (Mainz, Germany) discusses the impact of the East Prussian educational reform on the structure of the Faculty of Theology of Königsberg University and the composition of its staff between the 20s and 30s of the 18th c. and analyzes the theological and philosophical views of the professors that shaped Donelaitis' world outlook and theological attitudes characterized by increasingly *pietist* trends. The discussion of the intellectual environment of Donelaitis' studies is continued by Axel E. Walter (Osnabrück, Germany; Klaipėda). He analyzes the environment of Königsberg libraries as communication space where student Donelaitis was able to find the necessary literature. The author reveals an intellectual biography of the poet and priest and argues that the that time public libraries and private collections in Königsberg created conditions for Donelaitis' education and formed the world of his readings, while the prospective priest provided literature with the religious and moral aspects of education and later, in the years of his activity as a spiritual leader, used it for the said aim.

There is no doubt that Lutheran hymnals made an important part of Donelaitis' religious reading matter. Guido Michelini (Parma, Italy) analyzes the impact of the Lithuanian hymnal texts on Donelaitis' poetry and emphasizes the fact that his literary style and national character were affected not only by Lithuanian folklore, but also by the language of church hymns whose stylistic innovations were first featured in J. Berentas' hymnal of 1732. Donelaitis' creative activity included both poetry texts and musical compositions. Daiva Kšaniienė (Klaipėda) discusses different manifestations of musical life in East Prussia in the 18th c. (Protestant hymns, church music, and secular instrumental music making) as resulting from impetuous creative search and innovative artistic discoveries originating from the ideas of Enlightenment. Donelaitis, who composed Protestant hymns, cantatas, and oratorios and who played the organ in the church, was closely related to them.

The epoch of Donelaitis is also inseparable from the already chrestomatic images of the history of Prussia: the colonization after the Great Plague (1709–1711) and the Seven Years' War (1757-1763). In the context of colonization, the most prominent representatives of the new settlers in Prussian Lithuania are thought to have been Salzburger; the historiography of the historical circumstances of their arrival and accommodation, as well as their religious and cultural impact on local residents, is not particularly abundant. Therefore, the article of Bernhart Jähnig (Berlin, Germany) on the exile of Evangelicals from Salzburg and their acceptance and accommodation in Prussia undoubtedly presents new facts related to the said historical process and analyzes a case of Salzburger's settling down in Tolminkiemis parish.

Other articles in the collection are related to the post-Donelaitis historical period and the reception of his ideas and activity in later centuries. Liucija Citavičiūtė (Vilnius) discusses the first programme of publication of Lithuanian belles-lettres whose author and implementor in the early 19th c. was professor Martin Ludwig Rhesa from Königsberg University. L. Citavičiūtė presents the first Lithuanian edition of *The Seasons* by Donelaitis and draws readers' attention to its academic mechanism: Rhesa's article-study, a literary analysis of the poem, and scholarly comments on the text.

The academic environment of Königsberg University at the turn on the 19th c. is presented in the article of Ruth Leiserowitz (Warsaw, Poland) that focussed on Polish students who studied in Königsberg in 1770-1825 as actors of cultural communication. As revealed by the author, in the period from the mid-18th c. to its end, the University was the only academic educational institution on the eastern Baltic coast and covered a large area of Prussia, Pomerania, Silesia, Courland, Livonia, Poland, Lithuania, and Russia. The education reforms implemented in the Russian Empire in the early 19th c. narrowed the students' area, and the University turned into an local Prussian educational institution. As argued by R. Leiserowitz, in the early 19th c., a significant shift of the university space centres in the Baltic Region was observed, and university studies in Europe, and especially in the eastern part of Central Europe, had become a special project at the dawn of the industrial revolution. Based on the example of the Polish students, the phenomenon of cultural communication marked by the sign of an European dimension is analyzed. A religious environment in the Polish area of the state of Prussia in the 18th to the 19th c. is analyzed in the article of Grzegorz Jasiński (Olsztyn, Poland) on the differentiation of Lutheranism in East Prussia. The author looks into the reasons of the formation of the "Saints" group, the predecessors of the *surinkimai* (prayer hours held in private homes by lay preachers) movement whose emergence was affected by pietism; he reconstructs the essential provisions and postulates of the activity of the group, its relationships with the Church, and compares the causes and circumstances of the appearance of the *surinkimai* movement in the Lithuanian and Polish areas. The study of Vasilijus Saffronovas (Klaipėda) is

devoted to the subject of cultural memory which reveals the change in the interpretation of Donelaitis as a symbol from the late 19th to the late 20th c. in Prussian Lithuania and Klaipėda Region. The author presents three meaningful contexts in which Donelaitis was granted the meanings of the regional patriotism of Prussian Lithuania, of a national symbol of Lithuanian culture, as well as a “Sovietised” interpretation, and comes to the conclusion that the figure of Donelaitis and the assessment of his activity and creative work promoted not only the rapprochement of cultures, but also their conflict.

The chapter of scholarly articles is concluded by philosophical reflections of Wladimir Gilmanov (Kaliningrad, Russia) on the actualization of Donelaitis’ phenomenon in modern times, as, despite different social and historically preconditioned economic circumstances, both in Donelaitis’ life time and presently, infinite human responsibility from the universalist viewpoint is of huge significance. The author presents the anthropology of responsibility in Donelaitis’ literary work and life via the prism of “survival lessons” and emphasizes the importance of Donelaitis’ *genius loci* in the contemporary anthropological situation of Kaliningrad Region.

In the chapter of sources, a unique and important document of the time of Donelaitis – a fragment of the diary of F. Pastenazzi, preacher of Gumbine Old People’s Home Church (1757) – stored in the Department of Manuscripts of the Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences is presented in Lithuanian for the first time. In accordance with its explorer Darius Barasa, the historical document is a valuable source of the local history which reveals a small episode on the Seven Years’ War and witnesses the dramatic character of the life in Eastern Prussia in the mid-18th c.

The volume ends with the traditional rubrics of book reviews and information about the research events.

The texts presented for readers’ attention enable them to view the epoch of Donelaitis, the cultural manifestations that promoted his literary activity, and the atmosphere of the daily routine from different angles and also reveal new layers of the Age of Enlightenment. The authors and the compilers of the volume trust that it will become an appropriate contribution to the studies of Donelaitis and will receive the attention and assessment not only of the researcher community, but also of the general public.

The year 2014 in Lithuania is dedicated to Kristijonas Donelaitis, and UNESCO included the 300th birthday anniversary of the priest and poet in the UNESCO list of celebrations in 2014. The facts witness that the humanistic values advocated by Donelaitis were important for his epoch and remained relevant in the contemporary context of Lithuania and the world.

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