

KRISTIJONAS DONELAITIS AND GOTTHARD FRIEDRICH STENDER: RETHINKING PARALLELS BETWEEN ENLIGHTENMENT WRITING IN EAST PRUSSIA AND COURLAND

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The parallels between Kristijonas Donelaitis (1714–1780) and Gotthard Friedrich Stender (1714–1796) have been analysed in the article by turning attention to similar trends in Enlightenment writing in Protestant regions of Courland and Eastern Prussia. The context of popular Enlightenment has been described by exploring similar and different themes in the works by K. Donelaitis and G. F. Stender as well as the 18th century ‘discovery of people’ as an European phenomenon. The article consists of four parts, shedding light on the following matters: 1) ethnic and social origins and their role in the reception and heritage of both writers, 2) the significance of printed versus oral communication in the dissemination of popular Enlightenment ideas; 3) ideological key topics in the works by both writers including the critique of the fashion of foreign trends and different approaches to the past and collective memory; 4) the ideological agenda of Enlightenment works including loyalty to one’s social standing as well as synonymous use of ethnic and social denominations in the 18th century. It has been argued in the article that despite the different ways each of the authors carried out their work, parallels between their pioneering activities with regard to Latvian / Lithuanian ‘discovery’ uncovers similar Enlightenment agenda inspired by the interest in the ‘common people’ characteristic of the Zeitgeist.

KEY WORDS: *Gotthard Friedrich Stender, comparative literature, popular enlightenment, Latvian cultural history, discovery of people.*

In the field of the 18th century studies, the Latvian literature has been most often compared to the Estonian literature due to similar historical and cultural conditions in the Protestant provinces of Courland, Livonia and Estland. The Lithuanian perspective, however, is lacking in such comparative studies, and although there is a number of reasons that explain this asymmetry (ban on printing in Lithuania, Catholic dominance of the intellectual life, differences in the development of secularization, Polish, rather than German-oriented upper class, to name a few), no comprehensive overview of the Enlightenment in Latvia could be conducted without the Lithuanian comparison.

Most of the parallels in this regard are connected with the work of Kristijonas Donelaitis, and the aim of our article is to explore common and different features in the works of K. Donelaitis and his counterpart in Courland, Gotthard Friedrich Stender. By exploring the parallels and differences between both writers, we are going to pose several questions about the Enlightenment period writings in Courland and East Prussia in general, as well as to reflect upon how and to what extent the work of K. Donelaitis can help to better understand the work of Stender and vice versa. This article is a part of wider research project which attempts to situate the place of Gotthard Friedrich Stender within the context of Baltic as well as German 18th century literary and cultural landscape.

INTRODUCTION: 'LITHUANIAN' DONELAITIS VERSUS 'GERMAN' STENDER?

The main point of reference of this article is a statement of exiled Latvian literary critic Jānis Rudzītis, one of the foremost authorities in Latvian literary scholarship in the Western world during the period after World War II. In 1949 he wrote: "*Neither by his blood, nor his education and mentality could old Stender [...] be regarded a Latvian. He wrote in Latvian, though, but he was and remained a stranger. Donelaitis, on the other hand, was a Lithuanian by birth, who knew the soul and life of his ethnic people. Donelaitis remained a Lithuanian even though his education and prevailing ideas of his time might have suggested otherwise, that is, withdrawing from his Lithuanness. But the most important difference between the two men of letters is as follows: Stender was a man of letters who created his poems and stories in the spirit of rationalism, and they have only historic, not artistic significance today. Donelaitis, on the other hand, was a poet with enviable talent, and his main work – the poem *Seasons* – is not only the most significant work in Lithuanian literature, but also one of the most important works given by the 18th century to the European literature.*"¹

This comparison, abrupt as it is, clearly situates Donelaitis and Stender each on his own pole on the scale between the “ours” and the “other”. Apparently, the case of Donelaitis helps Rudzītis to put Stender’s heritage into a wider context and to solve the problem of difference between immediate and permanent success by using the argument of ethnicity. This approach contrasts with Stender’s attempts to identify himself with Latvians (the most radical extreme was Stender’s wish to engrave the word “Latwis” (a Latvian) on his gravestone, which was fulfilled after his death²) and with later attempts made by the late 19th century and early 20th century literary historians to characterize Stender as Latvian friend.³ It should be noted that similar identity struggles were characteristic of Donelaitis’s reception after the publishing of “The Seasons”.⁴ However, it is remarkable that Rudzītis pointed out several features characteristic for the understanding of the age – education, social class, ethnicity among others – by putting them into the context of ‘going away’ versus implied ‘approaching’ ethnicity. Such a viewpoint opens a wider discussion about the role ethnicity and education played in social identity in the 18th century, and as the case of Stender shows, those discussions can help to uncover inner paradoxes in the identity construction during the Enlightenment age.

In the 18th century, ethnic and social identity were hard to divide, and that can explain not only Stender’s vague identity as “Latvian writer” versus “Baltic German writer publishing in Latvian”, but Donelaitis’s situation as well. We should keep in mind such remarks as Helmut Motekat’s conclusion that Donelaitis “identified himself fully as a Prussian, not a Lithuanian [Nationalitauer]”.⁵ Leonas Ginaitis suggests that apparently, the lack of connection with Lithuanians across the



Gotthard Friedrich Stender (1704–1796)

1 RUDZĪTIS, Jānis. *Raksti: Vērtējumi un apceres par latviešu literatūru*. Vasteras, 1977, p. 125.

2 FRĪDE, Zigrīda. *Latvis: Gothards Frīdrihs Stenders*. Rīga, 2003.

3 LEJNIEKS, Kārlis. Vecā Stendera dzīve un darbi. In STENDERS, G. F. *Dzīve un darbi*. Rīga,

1939, p. 9–78.

4 MOTEKAT, Helmut. *Ostpreussische Literaturgeschichte, mit Danzig und Westpreussen*. München, 1977, p. 116.

5 Ibidem.

border of East Prussia is meant here, but at the same time Donelaitis was certain that the Lithuanian language is a prerequisite for the survival of the nation.⁶ The educated social status, i.e. belonging to the circles of educated elite marked the difference and was common to both Stender and Donelaitis just as much as ethnic origins, and that played an important role in the communication with the common people, discussed in more detail below. Of no lesser importance was the German dominance in both East Prussia and Courland, which put local languages and peasant cultures under pressure.

Therefore, it might be useful to follow Vasilijus Safronovas's suggestion that Donelaitis's reception can be approached from different and even contradictory viewpoints.⁷ For a long time celebrated as regional, i.e. Prussian or even German poet, Donelaitis only gradually became incorporated into the canon of Lithuanian national literature. According to Safronovas, it was partly motivated by prevailing trend in Prussia to orientate itself toward German culture, which made it possible to evaluate Donelaitis in a similar fashion as the first poet of ethnic Latvian origin, Apriķu Indriķis – an unexpected phenomenon grown out of the boorish peasant environment. Remarks by different 19th century critics about Donelaitis turning attention to a small number of ethnic Lithuanians who have read his work or attempts to “Germanize” Donelaitis' work mirrors similar mixed features in Stender's reception. As it turns out, it was impossible to incorporate both writers in a single national literary or cultural identity. In a way, it illustrates double identity of Enlightenment authors who dealt with border crossing between high and low cultures. The border crossing was demonstrated later in the late 19th century when attempts to “nationalize” Donelaitis took place contrary to previous Germanizing trends.⁸ The discussions on Donelaitis's place in different canons has been reviewed in detail in the article by Leonas Gineitis, quoted above.

There is obvious ground for comparing Stender and Donelaitis, as both writers share a similarly significant place in their respective national literatures, as well as belong to the same generation. Both were Lutheran pastors; both can be described as the men of Enlightenment in regard of their wide scope of interests and their striving to expand the borders of pastor's work, in their literary ambitions, most of all – ambitions to expand writing praxis from religious writing to secular one.⁹ Both of them guided their literary efforts in two directions: popular and elitist (although in each case one of the directions outweighed the other); both of them considered peasant life an important theme in literature and made a choice to write in peasants' language. Furthermore, both of them contributed to a shift from peasant discourse to Latvian or Lithuanian discourse respectively.

We have no knowledge of possible personal contacts between Donelaitis and Stender, but it might be pointed out that both of them have translated the same texts – fables. This episode in Latvian/Lithuanian comparative literary studies lies behind the scope of the current article, but has been analyzed in more detail by Justyna Prusinowska.¹⁰ Here it would be necessary to add that by comparing fables translated by both authors, many more similarities can be found than by comparing their creative work as a whole. Unfortunately, a limited number of surviving Donelaitis's fables do not allow to draw substantial conclusions.

POPULAR ENLIGHTENMENT: PUBLISHED AND UNPUBLISHED

Contrary to Donelaitis, Stender sought the support of benefactors in order to get his Latvian books published and got substantial support of the Duke of Courland – the fact was lamented by less lucky pastors in Livonia. By the time when Stender published his first secular book “Jaukas passakas in stahsti” [Nice Fairy Tales and Stories] (1766), neither established tradition of secular writing in Latvian and for Latvians, nor the Latvian secular reading public existed. The task Stender undertook was a pioneering one, and he obviously felt it was necessary to explain his intentions in the German foreword of the book. “The preachers of the God’s words are especially asked to mould the souls entrusted to them as similar to the God as possible. In our homeland the biggest part of them are the poor Latvians”, he wrote. “They have been created from the same substance and for the same aim. Don’t we need to love them as brothers and aren’t we supposed to ardently take them out of the darkness to the light of the God? To this aim our efforts are directed, and our reward was a higher degree in the future Enlightenment.”¹¹ The book consisted of fables and short stories, narrated in prose and apparently translated from several German sources. In the first part of the book, animal fables were collected; in the second, short didactic stories and parables followed.

Stender’s book turned out to be of groundbreaking importance: it inspired further activities in Latvian secular fiction by Baltic German pastors, was translated

6 GINEITIS, Leonas. *Kristijono Donelaičio aplinka*. Vilnius, 1998, p. 53.

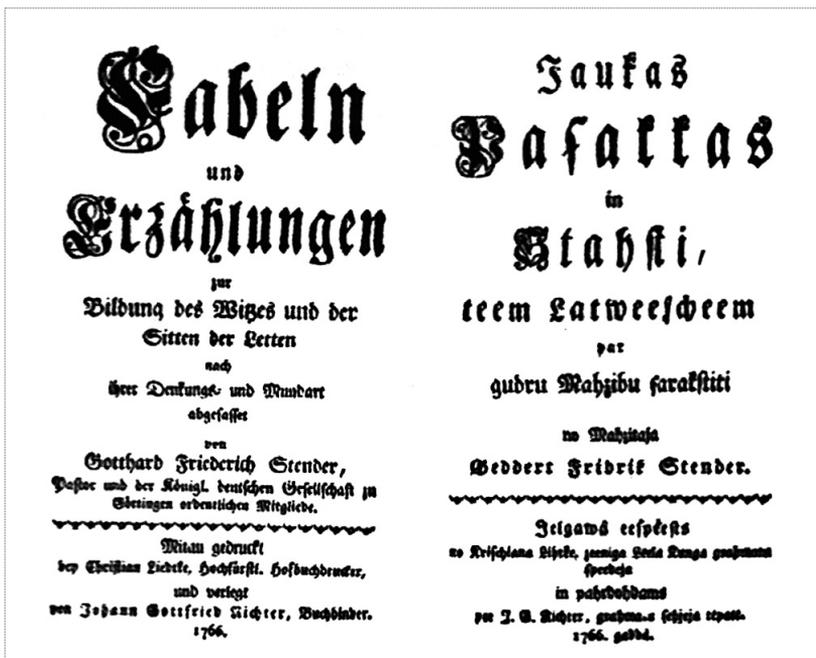
7 Here and further: SAFRONOVAS, Vasilijus. Tarp konflikto ir suartėjimo: Donelaičio simbolio aktualizavimas XIX a. pabaigoje–XX a. pabaigoje Prūsijos Lietuvoje ir Klaipėdos krašte. In *Kristijono Donelaičio epochos kultūrinės inovacijos*. Klaipėda, 2013, p. 148–165.

8 Ibidem.

9 GABRYS, Juozas. *Lietuvių literatūros apžvalga*. Klaipėda, 1924, p. 129.

10 PRUSINOWSKA, Justine. Wisdom of Three Men. Stender, Donelaitis, Krasicki. In *International Workshop: Gotthard Friedrich Stender (1714–1796) and the Enlightenment in the Baltics in European Contexts: Abstracts*. Riga, 2014, p. 47.

11 STENDER, Gotthard Friedrich. *Jaukas passakas in stahsti*. Mitau, 1766, unpag.



The title page of G. F. Stender's book "Jaukas Pasakkas in Stahsti" (Nice Fairy Tales and Stories). Jelgawa, 1766

into Estonian and the second, revisited edition was published still during Stender's lifetime in 1789. Six of Stender's fables are to be found in Donelaitis's Lithuanian translation, as well, although no direct link between Stender's collection and Donelaitis's translations has been found as yet.

The main reason for the significance of Stender's book was that it was intended for Latvian peasant readers. A string of secular texts written in Latvian existed before Stender, but they were addressed to Latvian speaking Baltic Germans instead of Latvian peasant readers, and the Latvian language there had more exotic than communicative functions (for instance, devotional poetry which was meant to be used exclusively in the circles of the upper class).¹² By speaking directly to peasants in his book and enjoying success later and inspiring several generations of followers, Stender was the first to change the literary communication system, to create preconditions for the emergence of secular reading public and thereby the first generation of Latvian peasant intelligentsia at the beginning of the 19th century.

The main impulse of secular writings by Stender was the movement of Volk-saufklärung (Popular Enlightenment) in Germany.¹³ It originated in physiocratic

doctrines about the importance of the peasant class and it developed a popularization of Enlightenment ideas through educational literature oriented to un-enlightened peasants. While the general attitude towards peasants in early 18th century was still quite similar to that toward indigenous slaves in the Third World (on the rhetorical level; and even Denis Diderot in his “Encyclopaedia” admitted that “many people saw little difference between this class of men and the animals they use to farm our lands”¹⁴), the *Volksaufklärung*, as recent studies by Reinhart Siegert and Holger Boening have shown,¹⁵ was of great emancipative importance.

Communication through the printed media was crucial for the *Volksaufklärung*, therefore it would not be possible to include Donelaitis in the Baltic *Volksaufklärung* canon. However, similarities in themes and key questions exist that allow to explore the parallels.

Stender attempted to write so called high literature in Latvian, as well, including odes, but apparently lost his interest in this direction and eventually gave all his effort to popular writings.¹⁶ There is no information that Stender would have tried to write in hexameters. Being aware very well that he had to adapt his way of expression to peasants’ understanding, Stender tried to write in simple language, and what is more important, he chose the form very similar to folktales in order to create concurrence to oral folk tales. Practical assumptions won over his artistic ambitions. But it would be an oversimplification to look at his work in such perspective only. Writing in hexameters would have no place in peasant enlightenment project at the early stage; it was important to make peasant reading public ready to high literature – it was of great significance to change peasants’ reading habits at the first place. It must be pointed out, as well, that despite the use of hexameters, Donelaitis included elements of peasants’ everyday speech in his poem, so the border between levels of language used by Stender and Donelaitis should not be drawn clearly. For instance, critical remarks that Donelaitis “excessively speckles his language with German, Polish and Russian words”, lowers his aesthetic

12 GRUDULE, Māra. 17. gadsimta veltījuma dzeja latviešu valodā. In *Aktuālas problēmas literatūras zinātnē*. Liepāja, 2008, p. 7.–21.

13 RUPPERT, Wolfgang. *Volksaufklärung* in späten 18. Jahrhundert. In *Deutsche Aufklärung bis zur Französischen Revolution: 1680–1789*. München, 1980, p. 341–361.

14 WEBER, Eugene. *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France. 1870–1914*.

Stanford, 1976, p. 6.

15 BOENING, Holger; SIEGERT, Reinhart. *Volksaufklärung: biobibliographisches Handbuch zur Popularisierung aufklärerischen Denkens im deutschen Sprachraum von den Anfängen bis 1850*. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1990–2001.

16 STENDERS, Gothards Frīdrihs. *Augstas gudribas grāmata no pasaules un dabas: 1796. gada izdevuma teksts ar komentāriem*. Rīga, 1988.

criteria to peasants' level,¹⁷ remind that peasant topics were not separable from peasant language despite the aesthetic form.

Hexameters, on the other hand, became popular in Latvian literature, during the second generation of *Volksaufklärung*, at the beginning of the 19th century thanks to translations of Friedrich Schillers "Ode to Joy" by Karl Gustav Elferfeld (1804) and Alexander Johann Stender (1805); similar writings reappeared later by such authors as Jakob Florentin Lundberg and Karl Hugenberger who tended to turn away from peasant enlightenment and to explore the inner possibilities of Latvian language as *Dichtungssprache* – it was quite a fashionable trend among the Baltic Germans during the years after abolition of serfdom (Livonia 1817, Courland 1819).¹⁸ The trend was promoted by Latvian Literary Society, founded in 1824. Since 1827, the Society published its periodical "Magazin" where Latvian language studies and experimental translations of poetry (including Weimar classicism), targeted at the educated German audience, were published. Even if those translations touched peasant topics, as, for instance, Johann Gottfried Ageluth's translation of Joahim Heinrich Voss's "Die Freigelassenen" in hexameters,¹⁹ they were not primarily addressed towards peasant reading public but served as proof of particular translator's language skills.

However, it was the same decade when the translation of Donelaitis "Seasons" appeared in the first Latvian newspaper "Latweeschu Awises" (Latvian Newspaper, founded in 1822) and was addressed to Latvian readers.

It should be noted that the unpublished state of Donelaitis' work shouldn't be overemphasized, especially within the comparison of Stender's public success. Assuming that those historians, who express the opinion that Donelaitis used his fairy tales in lessons or the excerpts from "The Seasons" during the public worship, were right,²⁰ it can be claimed that the text and its ideological basis without being massively distributed, fulfilled the functions that the author had, possibly, hoped for. Namely, the sermon as a direct and active means of addressing the audience, which usually included not only quoting of some particular text, but also explanations provided by the priest, could function as a much more effective force of the ideological polyphony contained in Donelaitis' texts when addressing the audience. It could ensure not only delivering the message to Lithuanian peasants under the circumstances, when the German education system was of a poor quality or undesirable in relation to the preservation of "Lithuanianness", but it could also create conditions for a better understanding of Donelaitis' ideas, because the lessons were given by the author himself. One of the productive directions of research in this field could be connected with the contrast between written and oral communication praxis in disseminating the popular enlightenment project.

Use of familiar situations, persons and images could make the God's word more understandable to peasants (it is assumed that the characters in Donelaitis' poems have real-life prototypes that actually lived in Tolminkiemis).²¹ However, the same can be stated about the fact that the use of excerpts from "The Seasons" during public worship would also mean readings in hexameter. On the one hand, it could be unfamiliar and unknown to Lithuanian peasants, but, on the other hand, perhaps, functioned similarly to rhetoric in the antiquity, which was an integral part of the political and civic life. Besides, taking into account the fact that a sermon as a part of worship is "spacious", as it often includes not only a discussion of some excerpts from the Scriptures, but also prayers, descriptions of particular images or saints from the Bible, powerful didactics and moral norms, when we look at "The Seasons", it can be stated that the text is appropriate for becoming an active form of communication in the church and being preached from the pulpit.

Also, "The Seasons" correspond to the scheme of speeches traditionally applied by the Greeks, namely, after a general introduction a summary is provided, which is usually biased and one-sided (descriptions of nature, the life of peasants in the context with other processes in the world), then argumentation follows (a convincing argument, why, for example, Lithuanians should not try to resemble other ethnic groups), where skillfully found examples from the life of peasants are presented (for example, carefree treatment of fire endangering the house) and evidence provided by witnesses (other peasants), who attest the truth of the words expressed by the speaker (in most cases the elderly of the village – Pričkus) and who try to cause sympathy in the listener (for example, the master, who had all his property lost in fire, must be helped, as it can happen to anyone).

Irrespective of the content of worship at times, when other priests were preaching in a crippled Lithuanian language, which in most cases was a vivid side-effect of Protestantism's intention to evangelize in "local languages", the priest, of course, had a symptomatic role as a native speaker of Lithuanian. The fact that it was not indifferent to Donelaitis, is approved by his request to his fellow priests to not forget the native tongue and roots, as well as praising of those peasants in "The

17 ZANAVYKAS, Stanislavas. *Apsakymai apie Lietuvos praeigą*. Tilžė, 1891, p. 180; GABRYS, Juozas. *Lietuvių literatūros apžvalga*, p. 129.

18 See further: FRĪDE, Zigrīda. Latviešu literatūras sākotne. In *Latviešu literatūras vēsture*. Vol. 1. Rīga, 1998, p. 79–84.

19 DAIJA, Pauls. Mālpils mācītājs Johans Gotfrīds Ageluts latviešu laicīgās literatūras vēsturē. In print:

Mālpils novada kultūrvēstures jautājumi. Rīga, 2015.

20 GINEITIS, Leonas. *Kristijonas Donelaitis ir jo epocha*. Vilnius: Valstybinės ir mokslinės literatūros leidykla, 1964, p. 205; ULČINAITĖ, Eugenija; JOVAIŠAS, Albinas. *Lietuvių literatūros istorija, XIII–XVIII amžiai*. Vilnius, 2003, p. 437.

21 GINEITIS, Leonas. *Kristijono Donelaičio aplinka*, p. 115–116, 119.

Seasons” who “speak only Lithuanian when serve their stewards”.²² Another significant fact is, of course, the hexameter that Donelaitis created especially for the Lithuanian language and that had not been used by anyone either before the poet, or in his lifetime. Furthermore, while Stender’s writings can be acknowledged as part of his social program of peasants’ upbringing (by implementing reforms on the individual level or educational praxis as a prerequisite for social reforms), it should be reminded that Donelaitis in contrast took an active part in implementing social reforms of separation in East Prussia by translating legislative treatise into Lithuanian.²³

IMITATION OF FOREIGNERS AND THE ROLE OF THE MYTHOLOGIZED PAST

It should be stressed that Lithuanians depicted by Donelaitis in “The Seasons” were confronted with other ethnic groups; the same pattern, though in different form, was characteristic to Stender. Donelaitis’ viewpoint of Lithuanians and contemplations on their life in the past (which to a certain degree can be considered as construction of Lithuanian collective memory in closed space – Prussia), was heightened by the language that the author used to describe other nations. Namely, any person, who was not of Lithuanian origin, without any justified grounds was classified as an embodiment of sin (the French or the Swiss lead Lithuanians astray, the Germans can only curse, cheat and steal with no shame, because it’s hereditary, the Polish are deceptive and looking for an opportunity to deceive and pinch something, the Swedish and Russians and Jews are not a tiny bit better and deceive people not worse than the French do, etc). As it can be concluded from the abovementioned, in the world pictured by Donelaitis a true comfort zone of Lithuanians, referring to the moral strength (which, according to the priest’s ideas, was the cornerstone of a valuable and harmonious life), was restricted in the understanding closely related to mythology illustrating the lifestyle of Lithuanian ancestors. In other words, Donelaitis both in life and in “The Seasons”, where most likely the historical atmosphere of the time was rather authentically pictured, tried to create a microcosm that was based on a tradition and the foundations of all that was Lithuanian and where there was no place for the “chaos” caused by other nations.

It seems to us that it is rather possible not to talk about portrayal of the stereotyped “evil” Germans (or other ethnic groups that can “bring oneself to wrong ways”²⁴), but rather about attempts to show a mirror to Lithuanians in order to convince readers that the imitation of foreign examples leads to destruction. In other

words, fashion for the foreign was represented as a “forbidden fruit”, enjoyment of which meant to be expelled from paradise – “golden age” of ancient Lithuanians when “Lithuanians were adorned by a virtue”.²⁵ Besides, such a scenario of mixing and further interblending meant for Donelaitis an undesirable chaos. That would be the reason why “further in future nothing better can be expected and people blindfolded day by day more and more will hurry to hell”.²⁶ Similar trends were of crucial importance for Stender, albeit for completely different reasons. As ethnic diversity in Courland was determined by strong class borders, the main danger for Stender as well as other moderate enlighteners was Latvians’ striving to germanize themselves. Assimilation could take several forms beside the language – clothing and some everyday praxis were as important and, consequently, as dangerous for stable social order. Instead of religious arguments, Stender attempted to convince his readers by glorifying the agricultural labor and ridiculing one’s wish to change one’s identity (especially in fables). Until the abolishment of serfdom knowledge of German language was not welcome among Latvian peasants.²⁷ Contemplating on „unnecessary festivities of the world” that „draw some people in misfortune”, Stender in one of his poems dedicated some ironic lines to those who tend to Germanize themselves: „Some take honourable last names, / who, no wonder, / do not know an honourable work, / But sure know how to leave. / Such honourable buffoon is a jeer, / a younker made from a plough.”²⁸ It is possible to connect Germanization with „disdain shown to Latvians by German nobility and clergy”²⁹ – already during the first half of the 18th century the concept of „German Latvian” had derived.

Donelaitis, constituting the cycle of seasons with an already existing “Lithuanianness” in all its manifestations in the context with the life of peasants, connected the particular, poetic time with the mythical/sacred time and space, making a bridge between the Lithuanian “golden age” and the period of decay. Merging the terms of the past, the present and the future, Donelaitis tried to renovate an archetype of an ideal Lithuanian, as well as the formerly existent, yet accurately undefined time and space, where everything was rolling in accordance with the rules and law of nature and God. Therefore it can be stated that the temporal and

22 DONELAITIS, Kristiāns. *Gadalaiki*. Rīga, 2006, p. 71.

23 ULČINAITĒ, Eugenija; JOVAIŠAS, Albinas. *Lietuvių literatūros istorija, XIII–XVIII amžiai*, p. 438.

24 DONELAITIS, Kristiāns. *Gadalaiki*, p. 201.

25 Ibidem, p. 193.

26 Ibidem, p. 199.

27 JANSEN, Ea. Die nicht-deutsche Komponente. In SCHLAU, W. (Ed.) *Sozialgeschichte der baltischen Deutschen*. Köln, 2000, p. 234.

28 STENDERS, Gothards Frīdrihs. *Dzeja*. Rīga, 2001, p. 116–117.

29 BIRKERTS, Antons. *Latviešu inteliģence*. Rīga, 1927, p. 23.

spatial ideal of the Lithuanian was focused on the understanding of the present and completeness. Besides, such a cyclical course of life as a form of life and culture, essentially excluding a historical thinking paradigm (as it was closely fused with the historical truth), let the Lithuanian “golden age” reappear anew and repeat over and over again every year as if in the genesis of the world.

The endless circulation of perfectly constructed archetypes allowed hiding the undesirable in relation to the historical situation of Lithuanians, decline and gradual perishing, in order to affirm their existence. Namely, the provision of the desired reality was made through devotion and divine sacrifice to the earth (doing the agricultural work). Also, the primary state, the power of nature and its positive manifestation in the context of Lithuanian agency, which would have to be inherited from previous generations. Certain phenomena or characterization of human actions were juxtaposed to similar processes in nature and compared to the experience or traditions of Lithuanian ancestors.

Here it is possible to see some intriguing discontinuities with Stender’s work. Although Stender urged his Latvian readers not to imitate foreigners and to remain ‘pure’ Latvians, his point of reference differed entirely. While Donelaitis found his own version of Lithuanian ethnic identity partly in traditionalism,³⁰ Stender was more than skeptical towards traditions and ethnographic habits proposing a more cosmopolitan life model instead. For Stender’s vision, the past – either mythical, or historical – was to be abandoned, in order to create a new man, a new generation led by ethnically unspecified values. It was long after Garlieb Merkel’s idealization of Latvian past when themes touched by Donelaitis gained wider influence on Baltic German public discourse as far as Latvian peasants were concerned.

SOCIAL LOYALTY AND ETHNICITY AS PEASANTRY

The issue of serfdom should be taken into account in both Donelaitis’s and Stender’s interpretations, as noted already in the studies conducted about Donelaitis, although the nature of realistic depiction of serfdom might be a subject to discussion.³¹ As an evidence for the credibility of the mentioned sacrifice act can be deemed the death of Pričkus – the central character of “The Seasons” – during the winter shortly before the new year or the beginning of another cycle. The elder of the village after taking the money to the master was beaten to death so “he did not rise again and died on the third day, because it came to light that “one shilling was missing”.³² In the poem, Pričkus filled the role of the narrator, fact presenter, councilor, and, supposedly, the voice of the author, and – at the same time – the role of a mediator between Lithuanians and Germans or between the peasants

and the masters. Among more than forty characters, from which some were only mentioned by their names and referred to and characterized as peasants, Pričkus in “The Seasons” was more personalized and significant, and present in all four parts of the poem. Not only did he know in detail what was going on among the peasants, but he was also the “eyes and ears” of the manor, therefore he was leading a double life. Accompanying all processes and toil of peasants, Pričkus carried out the role of a narrator telling the reader about the everyday life of the masters, which was pictured in hyperbolized negative shades, trying to convince that the peasants must accept their status and conditions and that dressing like the master did not promise anything good in their lives.

Juxtaposing the lives of peasants and their masters, as well as accentuating the consequences that may be expected when trying to emulate other nations, Lithuanians and Germans merged into one whole. At the time, when distancing from the Lithuanian original roots was taking place, the conditions of abyss were created and the identity of an individual got lost, therefore the endless circuit could start again: “And so, another year has been lost, / Taking along the hardship which / We had to suffer from, often in tears.”³³ Because the creation of the archetypal space can be perceived as a natural process, it can be understandable why only a few lines are spared to reflect on Pričkus’ death, if compared to the death of the good master, whom Lithuanian peasants mourned over so much that they nearly cried their eyes out.

As regards the positive example of the Lithuanian image, it cannot be left without any notice that a Lithuanian was characterized as a hardworking and dutiful worker, a decent and reliable master who held all moral principles, to whom “an ordinary table of peasants...seemed similar to a sacred altar”³⁴, who lived, worked, spoke and could manage all the troubles and lead a life of toil during each season equally to his ancestors. It closely tied Lithuanians with the idea of a peasant, assigning them with a double identity. This approach directly connects Stender and Donelaitis. In Stender’s work, Latvians were almost exclusively portrayed as peasants, thus following the 18th century Baltic German lexicon where Latvians and peasants were used synonymously.

In Latvian Lutheran regions this synonymous language gradually led to the construction of the myth of Latvians as a “peasant nation”, a construction that

30 VÖLPEL, Annegret. *Der Literarisierungsprozeß der Volksaufklärung des späten 18. und frühen 19. Jhs. Dargestellt anhand der Volksschriften von Schlosser, Rochow, Becker, Salzmann und Hebel*. Frankfurt am Main, 1996.

31 ŠLIŪPAS, Juonas. *Lietuviškieji raštai ir*

raštininkai. Tilžė, 1890, p. 22; GABRYS, Juozas. *Lietuvių literatūros apžvalga*, p. 128.

32 DONELAITIS, Kristiāns. *Gadalaiki*, p. 243.

33 Ibidem, p. 257.

34 Ibidem, p. 265.

reproduced physiocratic cognitions praising the nobility of the peasant in Livonia and Courland where being a peasant was not limited to social belonging. By regarding membership in the peasant class as the key to defining “Latvians”, the popular Enlightenment laid the foundation, at least in literature, for the idea subsequently sustained among Latvians themselves (to quote Jānis Krēsliņš) who “always talk about themselves as a peasant nation”.³⁵ In the Baltic context, this issue can be regarded as “proto-nationalism”.³⁶ Stender’s ideas about peasants were embedded in his writings. Author Matīss Kaudzīte laconically and precisely comments on Latvian self-perception during this time: „Until the middle of the last [19th] century, the Latvian did not regard himself nor call himself anything other than a peasant, because that is how he was called by all those who thought they were of a higher class or really were of a higher class. [...] If the word “Latvian” was used, its meaning was understood only in the sense of a peasant, since nobody thought of peasant and Latvian as two separate concepts.”³⁷ Historical sources, however, document the undeniable fact that as considerable numbers of Latvians attained education and as they migrated to cities, they left the lower class status behind. Nevertheless, as the Baltic German minister Christian August Berkholz stated, “it was not possible for them to remain Latvians”.³⁸ The question was not simply one of Germanizing, but also one about constructing identity: in the Baltic cultural space, at a time before Nationalism emerged, social and ethnic identities were indivisible. In this regard, Stender’s vision of Latvians helped to establish the Latvian ethnic identity as an agrarian one, leading to the *peasantization* of identity building. It included loyalty to one’s social class and paternalistic attitudes towards landlords; avoidance of imitating foreigners or merging with them; idealization of a life of toil and duty. One of the most striking differences between Stender and Donelaitis in this regard was the harsh critic to be found in Donelaitis’ writings (which can hypothetically explain the reason why the poem remained unpublished). The absence of such motives in Stender’s works shows his rather moderate and to a certain extent conformist position.

In a situation, when Lithuania Minor (Kleinlitauen) had become an arena for mass colonisation and a melting pot for various ethnic groups and when the German language was being introduced as the cornerstone of the national unity, the Lithuanian nation for Donelaitis could survive thanks to a myth.³⁹ To be more precise, there were attempts to create credibility for such an ideal type of a peasant in the 18th century, grounding his beliefs on archetypes and prototypes that were rarely experienced in real life. In a situation, when strengthening the faith in the nation’s future even in the most difficult moments is not only desirable, but necessary, on the one hand, the intention to make peasants want to be similar to

their ancestors can be understandable. On the other hand, it meant staying in one particular stage of development. This is highlighted by Donelaitis' explicit call to accept the existing God-determined conditions, as opposed to choosing the path of struggle and improvement. Although the strategies of Donelaitis and Stender differed, they overlapped in this regard.

Concluding remarks

A shared interest in the common people could be the most important feature that connects Donelaitis and Stender. At the same time, the comparison uncovers different strategies in which such interest could take place in the 18th century – two contradictory trends that can be described as **pastoral** and **reformist**. It seems to be the most productive way of reflecting upon parallels between the Enlightenment writings in East Prussia and Courland as this perspective uncovers the structure of the Baltic Enlightenment. Two contradictory trends mentioned above could be further evolved as a dichotomy between emancipation of peasants (popular and reformist tradition of Stender) versus emancipation of peasants' language (expanding poetic borders of the Lithuanian language in the tradition of Donelaitis – as it was praised among the poem's first readers⁴⁰). This topic is of crucial importance in popular Enlightenment studies in the Baltic cultural history. Herder's *Fragmente zur Deutschen Literatur* (1767) could be worth recalling here, especially the thesis that "language can be observed not only as a tool of literature, but also as [its] container and personalization" expressed in it have to be marked, besides "therefore every nation talks as it thinks, and thinks as it talks".⁴¹

As the dichotomy proposed above should not be taken directly, the overlapping between the two trends represented by Donelaitis and Stender could serve as the ground for future research and discussion (including, for instance, pastoral themes in Stender's didactic agenda and didactics and moral instructions in the poem by Donelaitis). While analyzing – to a certain degree, of course – Donelaitis as an

35 KRĒSLIŅŠ, Jānis. Miti par latviešu un Latvijas vēsturi un piezīmes par tā dēvēto Latvijas tēla jautājumu. *Jaunā Gaita*, 1998, no. 213, p. 10.

36 HOBBSAWM, Erich. *Nationen und Nationalismus: Mythos und Realität seit 1780*. Aus dem Englischen von U. Rennert. Frankfurt; New York, 1991, p. 62.

37 KAUDZĪTE Matīss. *Atmiņas no tautiskā laikmeta*. Rīga, 1994, p. 25.

38 Quoted after: ĀRONU, Matīss. *Latviešu literā-*

riskā (latviešu draugu) biedrība savā simts gadu darbā: Ainas no vāciešu un latviešu attiecību vēstures. Rīga, 1929, p. 94.

39 GINEITIS, Leonas. *Kristijono Donelaičio aplinka*, p. 22–54.

40 *Trumpas pamokimas kalbos lituowyszkos arba žemaytyszkos*. Vilnae, 1829, p. IV.

41 HERDER, Johann Gottfried. *Sprachphilosophie: Ausgewählte Schriften*. Hamburg, 2005, p. 91, 100.

observer of peasant life and Stender as a reformer, it becomes clear that for both of them the discovery of the common people meant the discovery of an ethnic group or even national identity. It did not lead to Herderian vision of Volk immediately: rather Donelaitis and Stender represented a middle phase in this process – incomplete inasmuch as necessary. So it would be probably fruitful to look at Stender and Donelaitis as different sides of the same coin.

Both high and popular literary praxis were crucial in creating changes in both peasant mentality and public discourse, in opening doors to Europeanization of Latvian and Lithuanian literary culture. The main difference was not so much a difference between Donelaitis and Stender's artistic and conceptual choices: the main difference is to be found in the sequence of popular and elitist trends. Donelaitis and Stender were both border-crossers and both of them were outsiders in their own way. We suggest that it would be possible to observe the dialogue between Donelaitis and Stender works in the perspective of different possibilities that were present in the 18th century peasant Enlightenment. Both strategies were present in the 18th century, and various external factors contributed to different paths Latvian and Lithuanian literature took in the future.

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KRISTIJonas DONELAITIS IR GOTTHARDAS FRIEDRICHAS STENDERIS:
APMASTANT ŠVIETIMO EPOCHOS KŪRINIŲ PANAŠUMUS
RYTŲ PRŪSIJOJE IR KURŠE

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Santrauka

Straipsnyje nagrinėjamos paralelės tarp Kristijono Donelaičio (1714–1780) ir Gotthardo Friedricho Stenderio (1796), didžiausią dėmesį skiriant panašioms Apšvietos amžiaus rašymo tendencijoms Kuržemės ir Rytų Prūsijos protestantų regionuose. Paplitusios Apšvietos idėjos aprašomos aptariant panašias ir skirtingas temas K. Donelaičio ir G. F. Stenderio kūrinuose ir

XVIII amžiuje Europoje susiformavusį „paprastų žmonių atradimo“ reiškinį. Straipsnį sudaro keturios dalys, kuriose atitinkamai nagrinėjami šie klausimai: 1) etninės ir socialinės kilmės aspektai, nulėmę šių autorių palikimą ir požiūrį į juos; 2) spausdintinės komunikacijos, lyginant su verbaline komunikacija, svarba skleidžiant populiarias Apšvietos idėjas; 3) pagrindinės ideologinės temos abiejų autorių kūryboje, įskaitant ir kritiką madingų užsienio tendencijų atžvilgiu bei skirtingą požiūrį į praeitį ir kolektyvinę atmintį; 4) ideologinis Apšvietos amžiui būdingas mąstymas, įtraukiant ir lojalumą savo socialinės padėties atžvilgiu, ir sinonimišką etninių, socialinių denominacijų vartoseną XVIII amžiuje. Straipsnyje keliama hipotezė, kad, nepaisant abiem aptariamais autoriams būdingų skirtingų kūrybos metodų, novatoriškoje jų veikloje su Latvijos ir Lietuvos „žmonių atradimu“ susijusios paralelės atskleidžia panašią Apšvietos amžiaus pasaulėžiūrą, kurią suformavo laiko dvasią atspindintis domėjimasis „paprastais žmonėmis“.

Įteikta 2015 m. vasario 9 d.

Priimta 2015 m. kovo 27 d.