

Mythical Images in *The Seasons* by Kristijonas Donelaitis

Note in the Margins

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Summary

This work focuses on mythical images in the narrative poem *Metai* (*The Seasons*) by the classic of Lithuanian literature Kristijonas Donelaitis (Christ. Donaleitis, Donalitus, etc., 1714–1780). Here, mythical images amount not only to prominent mythological figures, gods, demons and the like, but to mythical pictures, themes, and manifestations of the mythical worldview in general. First of all, it is Lithuanian mythology that is borne in mind. We learn about it from written historical sources and from the folklore of the recent time. Yet the mythological traditions of other Balts – the old Prussians and the Latvians – are also considered. Of special importance is the tradition of the old Prussians, the traces of which in Lithuania Minor, the land of Donelaitis, must have still been abundant in his times, although our knowledge of it is incomparably poorer. Other traditions, both close (such as Slavic or Germanic) and more distant but kindred (ancient Indian, for example) have been addressed for the sake of comparison.

Since Donelaitis was a pastor, it is natural that his work contains reflections of the Christian world outlook. As he was an enlightened person of the eighteenth century with excellent education from the University of Königsberg – the same where Immanuel Kant taught – it is understandable that he was heavily influenced by Classical literature and the classics of antiquity. This aspect of Donelaitis' creative work was emphasised by Dalia Dilytė in her recent book *Kristijonas Donelaitis ir Antika* ('Kristijonas Donelaitis and Antiquity', see Bibliography). Donelaitis' work with regard to Lithuanian folklore has already been researched, and first of all mention should be made of such well-known Lithuanian folklorists as Zenonas Slaviūnas, Ambraziejus Jonynas and Stasys Skrodenis. These and some other authors are recurrently mentioned in this work. And still, an exhaustive and systemic examination of

Donelaitis' *The Seasons* from this particular point of view has not been carried out yet. This work is an attempt at it.

Donelaitis' *The Seasons* has been read consistently from the beginning to the end, stopping at each passage, phrase, or word that triggers a suspicion of a reference to one mythical image or another. Sometimes the author took the liberty at associations that could have hardly arisen for Donelaitis, because they were simply impossible in eighteenth-century Europe (an example of such could be associations with ancient Indian "Rigveda"). Since some of them turned out to be quite eloquent and instructive typologically or at least heuristically, they were not passed over. Hence the subtitle of the work, 'Notes in the Margins'.

Sixty-three themes of varying prominence singled out in this work are analysed in 63 chapters of varying length. In this summary they will be enumerated and briefly introduced.

§ 1. Sun the Awakener. In the very first line of Donelaitis' *The Seasons* the sun *budino svietaq* 'was awakening the world'. The image is well known in Lithuanian folk songs; in a nineteenth-century riddle the sun is referred to simply as *budintoja*, 'the awakener', while a goddess *Budintaia* (= *Budintoja*) is known in sixteenth-century mythology. The image of the awakening sun is also known in original twentieth-century Lithuanian poetry.

§ 2. The seasons – parts of the day – stages of life. In the first twelve lines of *The Seasons*, the terms of three different planes are recurrently mixed and joined: the seasons, the parts of the day, and the stages of human life. It is entirely characteristic of the folk tradition and mythical worldview in which spring = morning = childhood, summer = day = youth and vitality, autumn = evening = maturity and old age, and winter = night = death. Respective homologies have been found by other authors in the structure of this poem. In the traditional mythical worldview (and in the Lithuanian tradition, too), they are associated with the notion of reincarnation, which leaves a big question in the case of pastor Donelaitis. Still, hints about rebirth and the adverb *vel*, 'again', recur amply at the end of the poem.

§ 3. Laughter of the Sun. In the first two lines of the poem the sun not only awakens the world but also laughs, which means it is at least partially personified. Although there is not much mythology in this, the mythical roots are obvious because both the laughter and smiles of the sun as such, and the relation between the laughter of the sun and that of the human, are evident and abundantly verified in the tradition.

§ 4. The froth of snow. In the fourth line of the poem, the snow of the ending winter and the coming spring is 'in froth'. It would be an ordinary mundane image were it not for the traditional riddles where water white with foam is hinted as the 'summer snow'. That the image is mundane does not

mean that it is not part of mythology: everything that in the mythopoetic tradition is imparted with meaning belongs to mythology.

§ 5. What lies in sleep beneath the winter's ice. In lines 10–12 of the first part of *The Seasons* (that is, lines 1.10–12), there is a mention of some creature that 'lays in sleep beneath the winter's ice' of a lake and then 'crept out in joyous throngs to hail the smiling spring'. A natural question arises: which of the living creatures acts like this? However, the only available answer to this question is supernatural: in Lithuanian folklore, just like in that of other neighbouring peoples, it is the swallow that does that.

§ 6. Labours of spiders. In Donelaitis' poem (1.12–24), spiders *spin* their *threads* and *knit* their nets. These three technological acts of the human are used in various traditions to describe the activity of spiders. Moreover, in many of the Indo-European languages these activities lie at the basis of the names of spiders.

§ 7. The winged winds. Twice in *The Seasons* – in 1.52–53 and in 3.5–6 – *Vėjai su sparnais*, 'the winds with wings', are mentioned. The image of a winged wind is known in the Bible and in antiquity, as well as in Indian, Old Germanic, Slavic, and other mythical traditions. Yet probably the most prominent it is in Lithuania: according to *interpretation christiana*, several sixteenth-seventeenth-century written sources of Lithuanian mythology describe the god of winds as an 'angel' with large wings. Mattheus Praetorius went farther and named him *Wejopattis*, 'the Lord of Wind(s)', *Wejdievs*, 'the Wind-god' and left a drawing of his winged image to us. The wind is often winged in contemporary Lithuanian poetry, too.

§ 8. The props of wings. In lines 1.52–53, the *sparai* – 'joist, rafter, prop' – of a house are compared to the *sparnai*, 'wings', of the wind. The words are glaringly similar and possibly even related etymologically (if *sparnas*, 'a wing', is understood as *pa-spara*, 'support' into the air). Although modern etymology does not provide a simple answer to the connection between these two words, their comparison in Donelaitis' *The Seasons* can be presumed as 'poetic etymology', that is, the assumed association between the words raised by poetical means.

§ 9. Miracles of God. Another likely 'poetical etymology': line 1.87 features the words *Dievas* 'god' and *dyvins* 'wonderful' that derives from the noun *dyvas* 'a wonder, wonderwork, miracle'. Although the latter two – the noun *dyvas* and the adjective *dyvin(a)s* – are considered as words of Slavic origin by contemporary linguists, it is also recognised that the equivalents of Slavic languages are directly related to the Lithuanian word *dievas* 'god'. After all, one can produce arguments to the effect that *dyvas* (and, consequently, the adjective *dyvinas*) might not be a borrowing but an own word of the same root. However, we are not entitled to impose the arguments and methods

of contemporary linguistics on Donelaitis. We can and must appreciate his hunches and guesses in the discipline that was just budding in Europe at that time.

§ 10. **The violin.** In lines 1.106–108, 3.191–192, and 3.218–221, which are pronounced ethnographical contexts, the word *smuikas* ‘violin’ occurs. According to the musicologist Evaldas Vyčinas, it is the first and the oldest mention of the violin in Lithuanian writings.

§ 11. **Imitations of birds’ voices.** In lines 1.107–108 and 1.142–144, Donelaitis uses traditional imitations of the nightingale, and in lines 2.309–310 – those of the quail.

§ 12. **The nightingale and its songs.** In a number of passages Donelaitis mentions a nightingale. Its main features in *The Seasons* – where it is compared with a sparrow, where boor Krizas is also compared with a nightingale and also with a sparrow, where the trills of the nightingale are compared to songs with which just like other birds it praises God, etc. – are seen in both in sung and verbal folklore. In the latter, there are tales about a beautifully-singing person (a young man or a girl) who turned into a nightingale, just like in Classical mythology.

§ 13. **King of birds.** Another characteristic motif of ‘bird mythology’ in *The Seasons* is the election of the ruler of birds. In folklore, two main variants of the motif for an election of the king of birds are known: the election of the king of birds in which the eagle has to be elected but a tiny bird, a kinglet, surpasses the eagle in guile, and the election of the ruler of birds, usually storks, prior to their autumnal migration. Both these motives intertwine in *The Seasons* (lines 1.155–182 and elsewhere).

§ 14. **Which ‘birds’ are fed by God?** In lines 1.173–185, Donelaitis didactically reminds that birds sing carelessly and God feeds them. Very likely it is a hint to the Bible (for instance, Mt 6:26). A similar motif, although in different versions, is known in Lithuanian sung folklore.

§ 15. **The ocean of space and winged swimmers.** In lines 1.177–1.178, air space is compared to the ocean and birds to ‘heavenly fishes’ that swim in that ocean by propelling themselves with wings, just like fishes propel themselves with fins. The metaphor is widely known in numerous traditions, and the Lithuanian tradition is among them. It is still established in such modern terms as *aeronaut*, *pilot*, *spaceship*, and the like. Also, there is a tale about the avian origin of the fish, and in Lithuanian the word *sparnas* ‘wing’ can mean ‘fin, flipper’.

§ 16. **The crow and the magpie.** In lines 1.198–201, the magpie is called a crow’s friend. Putting the magpie and the crow side by side and comparing them, and at times even putting the equation sign between them are characteristic of Lithuanian mythology.

§ 17. **Curses.** Lines 1.205–217 and 2.96–127 refer to a cursing nobleman. Devils and Perkūnas appear in curses, and it is said that the earth shakes and falls through and hell opens. All these images are traditional and are found in popular beliefs and curses, and are directly based on respective mythological notions.

§ 18. **Syveida and sturlukas.** Two ‘strange’ words – *syveida* and *sturlukas* – unknown in the literary language are mentioned in the above lines of *The Seasons* (in 2.105–107, to be precise), and they deserve to be discussed. Traditional Lithuanian riddles, where *syveida* refers to the fox and *sturluk(a)s* to the hare, help us find the meaning of Donelaitis’ ‘riddle’. Incidentally, the riddles were first recorded in 1745, in Lithuania Minor.

§ 19. **Quicksilver.** Line 1.295 speaks of quicksilver that ‘jumps in a glass’ and which is compared to a young person. It is well known that Donelaitis took interest in technical things of his time and made barometers and thermometers. It is very likely that he was acquainted with some texts of alchemy in which quicksilver is personified by Mercury. This offers an explanation to the fact that the said line of *The Seasons* is almost a precise paraphrase of one sentence from the international fairy-tale ATU 331. It was heavily influenced by alchemy images and in its German version from the collection of the Grimm Brothers Mercury is ‘jumping’ in a glass bottle in an identical manner. What should not be overlooked is that the Grimm Brothers had not been born yet when Donelaitis wrote *The Seasons*.

§ 20. **Remestas.** A curious detail: in line 1.333 Donelaitis uses the archaic Baltic word *remestas* ‘trade, craft’, which has been expelled from modern Lithuanian due to hypercorrection (mistakenly seeing it as Slavicism) and replaced by the Germanic *amatas* (from the German *Amt*).

§ 21. **The Good Sun.** The famous Lithuanian folklorist and mythologist Norbertas Vėlius pointed to the virtual personification of the Sun in lines 1.400–403, which is very close to folk songs.

§ 22. **Fairy-tales told while spinning in winter evenings.** Lines 1.612–618 mention the custom of telling fairy-tales while spinning in winter evenings. It is a custom that goes back to the archaic existence of the tradition and a way of passing it on. It was known across Europe, and in Germany it was even thought of as *Rockenphilosophie*, or the spinning-wheel philosophy.

§ 23. **A Lithuanian – a serf.** In lines 2.6–9, Donelaitis identifies everyone who esteems Lithuania and speak Lithuanian – in other words, the Lithuanians – with serfs, the lowest social estate. He points to the already existing ethnic, and not political, notion of Lithuania, which embraced the Lithuanian residents of both Lithuania Proper and Lithuania Minor. It also shows that this Lithuanian Lithuania, which late in the nineteenth–early in the twentieth century ‘resurrected from the dead’ had always been alive in the social ‘underground’.

§ 24. **The pied world.** The phraseological unit *margas svietas* ‘pied world’ in line 2.1 has numerous references both in other writings of Lithuania Minor and later in folklore. There exist serious arguments that *margas* here is not simply ‘motley, varied’, but specifically ‘mixed’ of white and black and thus possesses a mythical cosmological meaning: it means the middle world between the ‘white’ sky and the ‘black’ earth and the underground.

§ 25. **The wheel of the Sun.** Lines 2.49–51 and then 3.1–2 mention *saulės ratas* ‘the wheel of the Sun’, or ‘sun-wheel’ that the personified Sun rolls across the sky. The image is strongly traditional and archaic, and occurs amply in a great number of mythical traditions from times immemorial.

§ 26. **Games of the Sun.** At its highest point, at midsummer, the Sun is sitting on the sky and *žaidžia*, ‘playing’ (2.49–53). As a rule, in such a case the Lithuanian tradition uses the word *šoka* ‘dances’ or ‘leaps’, *puošiasi* ‘pranks, prinks’, *žydi* ‘blossoms’ but not ‘plays’. This verb is used by the Latvians and the Slavs. For this reason, this ‘game’ of the Sun raises questions and is begging for a deeper investigation.

§ 27. **The sitting Sun.** It should be noted that the Sun ‘is playing’ *ant dangaus sėdėdama* ‘while sitting on the sky’ or on ‘welkin’ (2.51). Indeed, when the sun sets down, it is said that *saulė sėda*, that is, ‘sits down’. There even are ancient temples called ‘the throne of the Sun’ or ‘Sun-throne’. There exist information that the sky or the dome can be understood as ‘the throne of the Sun’ and therefore the mythical Sun sits ‘on the sky’. It means that here we really have a traditional mythical image.

§ 28. **The glitter of the Sun.** Further on (2.52–2.53) the sun is called *žiburys* ‘glitter, light’. It matches the phraseological unit *Dievo žiburys* ‘God’s glitter’, which was recorded in Lithuania in later times.

§ 29. **Blossoming of the human.** In 2.73–76 and 2.94–95, a human is compared to herbage, and human life to the life of a plant: a bud, blossoming, fruit, and withering. The metaphor is very well known in the Bible, in the Lithuanian tradition (riddles, songs, customs, phraseology, and original poetry), and around the whole world.

§ 30. **The Reaper with a scythe.** The metaphor of the human-grass or plant is the direct base for the image of personified death with a scythe, which in Lithuanian is called *Giltinė*. Donelaitis mentions it in lines 2.88–91 and 2.440–447, making use of folklore collocations. Some scholars have argued that this image came to Lithuania with Christianity from the West, yet this claim is neither proven nor has any foundation whatsoever.

§ 31. **Harvest time – war.** This is confirmed by another metaphor of the harvest time-war, which is widely spread and known in Lithuania since old times. Donelaitis used it in lines 2.434–443. The metaphor is bilateral, because the harvest time is compared to war (the harvested crops to the enemy’s

troops), and war to the harvest time. The metaphor has a historical realisation: the Lithuanian peasants who took part in the 1863 uprising against the tsarist Russia made their weapons from scythes.

§ 32. **The beard of meadows.** Grass or plants resemble the human in yet another respect: a bilateral metaphor relates both the crops and meadows to the beard, and harvesting to shaving. These traditional images were not overlooked by Donelaitis (2.442–447).

§ 33. **Laments.** In lines 2.217–241 (and later 4.500–509) Donelaitis paraphrases traditional laments known from sixteenth–seventeenth-century historical sources. In addition, in some linguistic aspects Donelaitis' text directly resembles the laments recorded from nineteenth-century folklore.

§ 34. **Fairies with horns.** In 2.252–258 Donelaitis speaks of *deivės* 'fairies' who have horns. In plural *deivės* are often referred to as *laumės* in Lithuanian folklore – it is a more usual name for fairies. However, Lithuanian fairies do not have horns. On the other hand, Lithuanian fairies are quite often confused with witches, *ragana* in singular, which can also be called *laumė ragana*. Meanwhile, *ragana* sometimes does have horns (Lith. sg. *ragas*), which provides the basis for one of the etymologies of the word *ragana*. Thus here Donelaitis did not accurately follow the tradition: he liberally paraphrased it as an expert who knew it well and manipulated it freely.

§ 35. **Benefit of manure.** Lines 2.267–268 mention *šūdas* 'shit' with emphasis on its benefit to the harvest; in lines 2.275–277 *mėšlas* 'manure, muck' is mentioned and compared to bliss and treasure. The attitude is too traditional and Donelaitis conveys it through folklore phraseological units.

§ 36. **We are bringing plonis!** In lines 2.507–512 Donelaitis hints at the customs of traditional end of harvesting. The word itself, *plonis*, is a Polonicism derived from the Polish *plon* 'harvesting, harvest' and 'the ritual sheaf decorated with flowers and given as a present to the owner of the field at the end of harvest'. It is the latter meaning that is actualised here.

§ 37. **Pagan gods made of stumps hung by strings on trees.** The strange lines 2.535–541 of *The Seasons* speak of some ancient Lithuanian 'gods made of stumps hung by strings on trees'. Such an image cannot be found in any source of ancient Lithuanian religion and mythology. One can only assume that through the lips of one of the characters of the poem, the zealous Christian Selmas, Donelaitis disrespectfully depicts the idols of three senior Prussian gods in a tree, retrospectively described by Simon Grunau in the sixteenth century. On the other hand, it can be a Protestant's revulsion at the Catholic custom to hang the figures of the crucifix and the saints in trees.

§ 38. **Pillars of the Sun.** *Saulės stulpai* 'the Sun pillars', traditionally also called *Saulabroliai* 'the Sun brothers' mentioned in lines 2.544–545 are part

of Lithuanian mythology, and used to be resorted to for weather forecasts as an atmospherical phenomenon.

§ 39. **The feast of Mikielė** (2.645–648) – traditional Michaelmas, in contemporary eastern Lithuanian *Mykolinės* (29 September). The Christian feast overlaps the ancient Lithuanian feast called *Dagos šventė* ‘the feast of Daga’. Donelaitis writes about some of the popular customs of this day.

§ 40. **God the Almighty, Visgal̃sis** (2.660). The unusual in contemporary Lithuanian epithet of God the Almighty was used in old church writings where it found its way from the old tradition. In the sixteenth century it was used as the eponym of the highest ancient Lithuanian god, Lith. *Dievas*.

§ 41. **A summer dream**. In lines 3.25–27 the elapsed summer is compared to a dream. However, as we have seen (§ 2), Donelaitis’ seasons of the year are consciously compared to the phases of human life, and here one can discern the idea of human life as a dream. The image is widely known around the world, starting from a simplest comparison and ending with sophisticated mystical teachings. It occurs in some Lithuanian cosmogonic tales, and as for Lithuanian poetry of later times, it is sometimes expressed as a direct paraphrase of Donelaitis.

§ 42. **A crown for girls, a cap for women**. Lines 3.105–108 mention women’s traditional head gear: *vainikas* ‘crown’ of unmarried girls, *kykas* ‘cap’ and *nuometas* ‘wimple’ of married women.

§ 43. **They garbino the cock, the goose, and the duck**. What does the verb *garbinti*, usually “worship”, might mean when applied to a cock, a goose, and a duck, as we see in 3.208–217? Analysis has shown that it has the meaning of ‘praise, flatter’, or simply ‘speak of’, cf. Old Prussian *gerbt* ‘speak’.

§ 44. **An owl at a wedding**. In passage 3.232–256 an uninvited guest called Pelėda turns up at a wedding and is eventually forcefully kicked out. Scholars have observed that this situation is known in a humouristic folk song (with different versions) in which an uninvited *pelėda* ‘owl’ turns up at a sparrow’s wedding: the sparrow steps on its foot and finally throws the owl out.

§ 45. **A vomiting soul**. In lines 3.286–287, one of the characters says that his *dūšia* ‘soul’ started to vomit. It is the traditional use of this word meaning ‘stomach, belly’.

§ 46. **Perkūnas punishes the gluttons**. Pričkus, one of the characters of the poem, is watching the revelling landlords through a gap in the door and cursing them under his nose saying that Perkūnas might punish them for gluttony (3.317–321). Such a belief is indeed found in folklore. In addition, there exists a warning that one should not be eating during thunder, because Perkūnas might strike one.

§ 47. **God the giver**. Line 3.373 says that God is generous and gives all sorts of goodies to people. The image of a giving and offering God is universal

known. In some languages even the word denoting God is based on this quality (the Slavic *bog*, for example). The Baltic tradition (songs, sayings and the like) is not an exception, while the Latvian *Dievs* 'God' was even derived from *devis* 'has given'.

§ 48. **'Lithuanian times'**. Selmas, an especially pious character of the poem, praises the 'Lithuanian times' in lines 3.775–776 and 3.791–795 when people spoke Lithuanian, when there were no Germans in Prussia and Lithuania Minor, when nobody needed catechisms because people knew their prayers by heart and God was praised much more sincerely than 'at present'. Very likely these lines voice the attitude on religious continuity between the ancient spiritual tradition of the Balts and Christianity, of which some of the Protestant communities of Lithuania Minor had been aware right up until the first half of the twentieth century.

§ 49. **You cannot please everyone**. Lines 3.839–846 say that no matter what you do and how you behave, there will be somebody who will slate and condemn you. From the point of view of the form, the excerpt paraphrases respective folk songs and sayings.

§ 50. **The Devil tousles the forelock of the wicked** (3.867–868). First of all, folklore confirms that hair reflects the moral qualities of a person: the wicked usually have it dishevelled and tousled. Secondly, a person's hair is indeed sometimes tousled by the devil. Finally, the Lithuanian word *velnias* 'devil' is directly related, at least by consonance, with the verb *veltī* 'tousle, to make felt'.

§ 51. **The gaping abyss of hell**. Lines 3.869–870 warn that 'gaping abyss of hell' is awaiting the sinners. The image of hell gaping like jaws is archaic and universal. In this respect, notice should also be made of the image of hell as a gaping monster or a dragon. The Lithuanian tradition is not an exception, because even the word *pra-garas* 'hell, inferno' is of the same root as *gerti* with the archaic meaning 'to devour, swallow', and has the meaning 'glutton'.

§ 52. **The feast of St Martin**. Lines 3.893–894 mention the feast of St Martin from popular Christian calendar. It replaced the ancient traditional autumn feast and absorbed some of its customs.

§ 53. **Windows of lakes**. In lines 4.3–4 the ice that covers the lakes in winter is compared to windows or the windowpane. The comparison is characteristic of traditional riddles which from the seventeenth century were also recorded in Lithuania Minor.

§ 54. **Winter the harpy**. Personified winter is called *pikčiurna* 'harpy, termagant, curmudgeon' (4.29–30). Personification of winter and the image of furious winter or winter the witch is well known in folklore (proverbs, songs, and the like).

§ 55. **The burning cold**. Line 4.31 says that cold burns. The auto-antonym

cold-heat is widely known. It is also characteristic of the Lithuanian lexicon, phraseology, and, for instance, of the traditional interpretation of dreams.

§ 56. **Master Pinewood.** In lines 4.40–45, pine trees and pinewoods are personified: they are described as ‘bearded’ and ‘curly’ and called masters who sob and bend when the wind is blowing. The metaphor of the tree-human is especially characteristic of the Lithuanian tradition, except that in Lithuanian *pušis* ‘pine’ is a feminine word.

§ 57. **Wind bellows, a snow sieve.** Donelaitis’ *Žiemys* ‘the northern wind’ blows the bellows and ‘sifts’ the snow through a sieve (4.47–48). The personified wind, the name of the northern wind, *Žiemys*, and the sifting of snow and rain through a sieve are well known in the tradition.

§ 58. **Making fire.** The collocation *daryti ugnį* ‘to make/produce fire’ in lines 4.211–212 is not characteristic of the Lithuanian language. The Lithuanians say *kurti ugnį* ‘to kindle fire’. However, the verb *kurti* has two meanings: one is ‘to kindle fire’, and the other is ‘to make, produce, create’. The etymology of the word depends on which of these meanings is seen as primary. The collocation *daryti ugnį* ‘to make fire’ seems to prioritize the meaning ‘to make, to create’, and to derive the meaning ‘to kindle fire’ from it. This conclusion is confirmed by the Vedic collocation *agnim kar* ‘to make fire’, in which the root *kar-* ‘to make, to create’ is validly related with the Lithuanian *kurti*.

§ 59. **God-given fire.** It is said in lines 4.216–219 that it was God who had given us the fire. It has already been mentioned in §47 that God in general brings various presents to the human, and fire is one of them. In the Lithuanian tradition, fire was given to the human by Perkūnas or by God himself, and is sometimes called *Perkūno duktelė* ‘Perkūnas’s daughter’ (in Lithuanian, *ugnis* is usually a feminine word), or *Dievaitis*, literally ‘God-son’ or ‘the son of God’ (when occasionally *ugnis* is understood as a masculine word). In general, the Sun is the heavenly fire and approaching Christmas is the best time to remember its birth.

§ 60. **Hunting for crows.** Hunting for crows mentioned in lines 4.342–357 and in 4.372–375 was described by ethnographers in Lithuania Minor before the first half of the twentieth century. Incidentally, long time ago it was known in Lithuania Proper, too.

§ 61. **You cannot puff against the wind.** Lines 4.402–410 paraphrase the traditional saying *Prieš vėją nepapūsi* (the equivalent of the English *puff not against the wind*) and several others of a similar meaning.

§ 62. **The *Bildukas* ‘Poltergeist’ pulls the chest of drawers full of treasure into chimney** (4.430–433). This is a highly mythological image. What is borne in mind here is *Aitvaras* ‘brownie, puck, kite’ who, it is assumed, sometimes steals wealth from some and takes it to others. As a rule, the wealth

is pulled through the chimney. In addition, he *bilda* ‘makes a knocking or tapping noise’ and is occasionally called *bildukas* ‘the knocker’ or ‘poltergeist’.

§ 63. The Heavenly Father. At the very end of *The Seasons* (4.666–682) Donelaitis writes that without God’s help, the human (a farmer) cannot hope for a harvest or success in various labours in the coming year, and he appeals for that help to God. The passage amounts to a paraphrase of the traditional tale (ATU 830A) that is well-known in Lithuania (83 variants recorded). Moreover, God is called the Heavenly Father, as he had been addressed in the oldest surviving sources of the Indo-European tradition (Vedic *Dyaus pitā*, Greek *Zeus patēr*, Latin *Diespiter*, *Diouis pater* > *Iup(p)iter* etc.). Donelaitis’ *tētutis*, the diminutive of *tētis* ‘dad, papa’, is known in folklore and in old historical sources of Lithuanian mythology and, in its turn, reminds of the Hittite *tatiš* ‘father’ in the compound *tatiš Tiwaz* ‘God the Father’.

It should be stressed that Donelaitis’ narrative poem opens with the cosmic images of the wheel of the sun and the awakening nature, and closes with God, which means that it possesses a unified soteriological structure.

Translated by Diana Bartkutė