



This volume of *Deeds and Days*, though consisting of the usual parts – articles, a monograph section, and discoveries – has a strong *in memoriam* accent devoted to two illustrious members of the Vytautas Magnus University community: Professor Leonas Gudaitis, a scholar of literature and former editor of *Deeds and Days* who departed from us last summer, and Professor Leonidas Donskis, who passed away three years ago. Holding on to the tradition that originated in Lithuania of remembering Leonidas and his works in a conference or lecture, we contribute to it here with an article by Mykolas Drunga discussing Leonidas Donskis as a philosopher.

Leonas Gudaitis, his attitudes towards literature, and his editorship of *Deeds and Days* resuscitated along with Vytautas Magnus University, all deserve separate publications of their own. Here it's important to mention that he not only brought back to life a journal published from 1930 to 1940 and at that time edited by Professor Vincas Krėvė-Mickevičius but also preserved its orientation toward the humanities and in part its structure and numeration. Gudaitis considerably broadened the initial orientation of *Deeds and Days* towards the study of literature by bringing in studies of other disciplines in the humanities. From the first volume under his editorship Gudaitis sought to make sure that “the issues of *Deeds and Days* not become collections of accidentally assembled academic papers”; therefore he was always on the lookout for academic connections. The first issues of the renewed *Deeds and Days* (numbered doubly starting with Nr. 1 (10) and ending with Nr. 11 (20; later the numbering of volumes begun in 1930 is continued) and their sections are named after scholarly disciplines; then gradually there's a gradual shift to names of topics or problems together with those of disciplines; for example, *Linguistics. Language and Computers*; before finally only names of topics are left first for sections and then for entire volumes. The volumes named after topics (*Times and Customs*; *Lithuanian Postmodernism: Literature, Theater, Fine Arts*; *Press and Freedom*) reveal a true interdisciplinarity, which is still making its difficult way into

Lithuanian studies. This is also evident in the two systematic indices that Gudaitis prepared for *Deeds and Days* and that cover the periods from 1930 to 1999 and from 2000 to 2004. Noteworthy are also his prized categories or rubrics *From the Archives, Reviews, Humanities Scholars' Days (Facts, Events, Problems)*, which put together with the whole well thought out spectrum of 36 volumes give a revealing picture of Lithuanian humanities scholarship at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century – a work worth the entirety of a life. In this volume we show only a small portion of it: Aurelija Mykolaitytė, a scholar of literature, reviews the principles that guided Gudaitis's work as an editor, while Laima Bucevičiūtė, a historian, brings to light the correspondence that Gudaitis carried on with his colleague in the United States, Professor Rimvydas Šilbajoris. Their letters discuss Vytautas Magnus University, the journal *Deeds and Days*, and other pressing issues of that time.

The monograph section of this volume contains several papers read at a VMU conference entitled *Writer and Society in Modernizing Europe from Mid-19<sup>th</sup> to Mid-20<sup>th</sup> century* and devoted to the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of the Lithuanian writer Juozas Tumas-Vaižgantas (1869–1933). This priest, writer, literary historian, and active participant in the civic life of that era was chosen as a metonym suitable for discussing the relationship between writer and society in a much broader context. In 1932, when answering a question from the cultural journal *Naujoji Romuva*, Tumas-Vaižgantas said: “Thus I became the servant of my society of Lithuanians...” In this way the writer linked up his artistic creation with his social engagement.

Literature is a part of mental reality that often touches on a society's social, political, and ethical concerns. From the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> onwards it was the writer who generated ideas and formed the intellectual landscape as well as the emotional attitudes of society. Creations of literature revealed the complexity of life and opened up perspectives for the future: a book was capable of changing the world.

In his article “Underwater Stone Roads of Forbidden Feelings and the Sanctity of Swamp Islands” Gintautas Mažeikis spans a wide sociocultural field. He discusses the complexity of the human soul, the meaning of human choices, and phenomena of holiness as well as spiritual abysses in literary texts. His chosen metaphors of swamps, underwater stone roads, quagmires, and islands allow him to bring out the human quest to find an escape route from “attacking structures of meaning” in the direction of resisting the “lived-in world.” The starting position for philosophical reflections is Vaižgantas's story *The Mute*, in which the sense of swamps is contrasted with the “devil-possessed” antagonist who had chosen a morally objectionable path.

In analyzing the interactions between the world of art and the natural environment researchers highlight various aspects. The relationship between autobiography and fiction in the travel literature of Latvian women at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is analyzed by Zita Kārkle and Eva Eglāja-Kristšone. They bring out the social and cultural conditions that not only enabled more women to travel for their own satisfaction but also shaped the nature of the travel narrative. Malgorzata Litwinowicz, revealing the importance in a literary narrative of the world of things, originally explicates the way concrete life becomes valuable for aesthetic expression. Finally, Žygimantas Menčėnkovas, basing himself on Leonidas Dosnskis's insights, discusses (1) problematic cases of a creator finding himself between a representation of an aesthetic world and being of service to society; (2) difficulties of making a choice; and (3) issues of alienation. Thus in celebrating the year of Tumas-Vaižgantas both literary scholars and philosophers have the opportunity of once more deliberating on complex questions of the relationship between literature and the life of society.

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