

LU Literatūras, folkloras un mākslas institūts

LETONICA

HUMANITĀRO ZINĀTNU ŽURNĀLS
30 • 2015 • *The Riga Humanists
and Beyond*

Izdevējs · Publisher

LATVIJAS UNIVERSITĀTES LITERATŪRAS, FOLKLORAS UN MĀKSLAS INSTITŪTS
THE INSTITUTE OF LITERATURE, FOLKLORE AND ART OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LATVIA
Izdevniecības vadītāja · Publishing director ANITA ROŽKALNE

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Journal *Letonica* is included in the EBSCO's database

Articles appearing in this journal are peer-reviewed

Redakcijas adrese · Address of the editorial office:

Mūkusalas ielā 3, Riga, LV-1423, Latvija

Tālrunis · Phone +371 67357912

Žurnāls izdots ar Valsts kultūrkapitāla fonda atbalstu

Žurnāls izdots Valsts pētījumu programmas "Letonica" ietvaros



LETONIKA

VALSTS PĒTĪJUMU PROGRAMMA

The assistance and support of the Academic Library of the University of Latvia in research of visual sources is gratefully appreciated

Galvenais redaktors · Editor-in-chief PAULS DAIJA

pauls.daija@lulfmi.lv

Numura redaktori · Issue editors OJĀRS LĀMS and PAULS DAIJA

Vāka mākslinieks · Cover design by KRIŠS SALMANIS

Literārā redaktore un tulkotāja · Proof reader, translator LAINE KRISTBERGA

Maketētāja · Layout by BAIBA DŪDIŅA

Iespīsts SIA "Jelgavas tipogrāfija"

ISSN 1407-3110

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Magnus Frisch

Daniel Hermann—a Well-Travelled Prussian Humanist and His Poetic Work in Riga

Keywords: Daniel Hermann; Neo-Latin literature; Neo-Latin poetry; humanism; Riga humanists; Renaissance

1. Introduction

Daniel Hermann is an important Neo-Latin poet not only because of the extent of his oeuvre but also because of the poetical value of his poems.¹ Jozef IJsewijn refers to the posthumously published collection of his works (Riga 1614–1615) as “one of the most important Neo-Latin publications to come from the Riga press.”² Daniel Hermann is mentioned in many sources dedicated to the history of Baltic, Polish or Neo-Latin literature.³ Unfortunately, however, he has been nearly neglected in the academic research until very recently.⁴ The aim of this paper is to provide a detailed overview of Daniel Hermann’s life and his works with a focus on the poems written in Riga, and to provide a short summary of the research on Daniel Hermann.

2. Biography

The main sources about Daniel Hermann’s life are the booklet by Georg Christoph Pisanski, the lexicon articles of Friederich Konrad Gadebusch, Johann Friedrich von Recke and Karl Eduard Napiersky, and Theodor Schiemann⁵ as well as more detailed papers by Theodor Schiemann, Herta von Ramm-Helsing, and Kurt Forstreuter.⁶ Of course, there are pieces of information about his life scattered across numerous occasional poems written by him and also in the preface of his collected poems. It seems that most of the information in the articles and papers about Daniel Hermann has been derived from these sources.⁷ However, it must be emphasised that Schiemann, von Ramm-Helsing, and Forstreuter had access to the sources, which were lost after World War II, for example, the *Acta Internuntiorum* of the *Stadtarchiv Danzig*.⁸

Probably the most coherent source about Daniel Hermann’s life is the epitaph composed by the poet himself. It is no longer legible on his tomb in the Riga Cathedral, yet it has been published in the collection of his poems and is often cited in papers.⁹

Autortiesību ierobežojumu dēļ
attēls nav pieejams.

Daniel Hermann's epitaph (transcribed by Johann Christoph Brotze). Academic Library of the University of Latvia, Department of Manuscripts and Rare Books, Brotze Monumente. R4964

2.1. *Origin, family, and childhood*

According to the oldest reports,¹⁰ Daniel Hermann was probably born in 1543 in Neidenburg (East Prussia). Nearly all later biographers have accepted this date. Forstreuter, however, doubts this information. He argues that nobody would have expected a fourteen or fifteen year old boy to travel alone from Neidenburg to Konigsberg in 1557 and later to Strasbourg in 1558; he further argues that Herta von Ramm-Helsing tells us that Hermann died in 1601 at the age of 62.¹¹ Thus, Forstreuter suspects that most likely Hermann was born in 1540.¹²

Hermann was the youngest of four sons of Andreas Hermann, the mayor of Neidenburg, and had two sisters, too. His father was a Lutheran and had helped to establish the Reformation in Neidenburg. He seems to have been wealthy and enabled his sons to receive a good education.¹³

2.2. *Studies*

In 1557 Daniel Hermann went to the University of Konigsberg, but in 1558 he moved to Strasbourg where he studied at the Protestant Gymnasium, which had been established by Johannes Sturm in 1538. This school and its students had a great influence on the European humanism.¹⁴ There Hermann seems to have attracted the attention of the school leader Johannes Sturm by his abilities and his achievements. Strasbourg had no university at that time, so a few years later Hermann went back to Konigsberg, with stops at different universities according to von Recke and Napiersky, for instance, Heidelberg.¹⁵ Yet he returned to Strasbourg for further studies immediately when Sturm's Gymnasium was raised to the rank of an Academy by Emperor Maximilian II in 1566.¹⁶ On request of Johannes Sturm, Hermann even composed and recited a poem about the foundation of the *Academia Argentinensis*, as the Strasbourg Academy was called, at the official foundation ceremony, which was proceeded on 1 May 1567.¹⁷

During the years 1568 to 1569 he continued his studies in Basel. The information about the following time is contradictory. Either he fought against the Turks as a soldier¹⁸ or he studied in Ingolstadt. In 1569 or in 1571 he registered at the University of Wittenberg.¹⁹ While he had studied languages, law, and philosophy until then, at Wittenberg he started studying natural sciences, too, especially geology.²⁰

Hermann's studies were financially supported not only by Hermann's family but also by a grant from Duke Albrecht of Prussia, at least in 1566 as historical documents prove.²¹ However, it seems he never graduated, although sometimes he is called Dr Daniel Hermann.²²

2.3. *At the Imperial Court at Vienna*

In 1572 or 1573 Hermann moved to Vienna. There he first worked for the Imperial Councillor Kaspar von Minkwitz, who had also studied at Wittenberg and was a friend of

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“De Monstroso” by Daniel Hermann. Academic Library of the University of Latvia, Department of Manuscripts and Rare Books. R3506/9

his.²³ Later he became a secretary at the Imperial Court. After the death of Emperor Maximilian II in 1576, however, most of his Protestant friends left the Imperial Court. Hermann himself remained there. However, when the city of Danzig offered him a position as a secretary in 1579, he was pleased to accept this offer.²⁴

2.4. In the Service of the City of Danzig and at the Court of the Polish King Stephan Báthory

Hermann’s new employer, the city of Danzig, had been besieged, because it had refused to accept the new Polish king Stephan Báthory as a ruler, and had had to accept him and to pay tribute to him at the end.²⁵ Therefore, it was necessary to arrange the diplomatic relations and the payments to the king. Consequently, Hermann became a permanent ambassador of the city of Danzig at the Royal Polish Court, which was an army camp at that time due to the Polish-Russian War. Apparently he was also involved – at least as a correspondent – in the peace negotiations in 1581–1582, as a result of which Livonia became incorporated in Poland. From Vilnius, where the peace treaty was symbolically celebrated during a catholic mass in the presence of King Stephan, he hurried to Riga ahead of the king. On 1 March 1582 Hermann arrived in Riga.²⁶

2.5. Riga

In Riga it was hard for Hermann to find an accommodation because of the quartering of Polish troops and guests who wanted to see the king. Only by intercession of Councillor Andres Coye, Hermann found a room at the house of Coye's sister-in-law, a young widow Ursula Kröger. Hermann fell in love with Ursula Kröger and wrote to Danzig on 3 April 1582 that he was going to get engaged, followed by a letter on 9 April 1582 that he was already engaged to her. He became a citizen of Riga, married Ursula Kröger, and after uncertain negotiations about his possibilities of future service for Danzig he finally terminated his employment. He became the Secretary of the Royal Polish governor, Cardinal Georg Prince Radziwil (Polish: Jerzy Radziwiłł, Lithuanian: Jurgis Radvila). Later he became the Secretary of Georg Fahrensbach (today better known as Jürgen von Fahrensbach; also in the variations of spelling as "Farensbach", "Fahrenbach", "Farenbach" or "Fehrenbach"), a Polish-Livonian general and voivode. As Schiemann writes, Hermann always represented the interests of Riga, as far as it was possible for him.²⁷ Hermann seems to have been involved in all political decisions and in the intellectual life of Riga.²⁸ After some years, possibly around the turn of the year 1599 to 1600, he left his service to dedicate himself only to poetry.²⁹

3. Works

3.1. Synopsis

Daniel Hermann's oeuvre is quite extensive and diverse. He was a creative poet with an ability to compose ambitious poems even about minor events.³⁰

Most of his oeuvre consists of occasional poems of varied length: on academic occasions as the founding of the Academy of Strasbourg or the University of Zamość as well as on the promotion of fellow students or their parting from the university; *epithalamia* on the weddings of friends and colleagues as well as of respected individuals and princes; on the occasion of the death of relatives, friends, and other individuals and even kings; letters to friends and other individuals in a poetic form and poets on occasion of the coronation of sovereigns. There are also longer poems on theological, philosophical, even scientific, and political subjects. He even composed an epic on the Polish king Stephan Báthory which remained unfinished. The earliest poems known date back to 1566, when he studied in Konigsberg and later in Strasbourg, whereas the latest poems were written in 1601, the year of his death. Apparently, he composed poems throughout his entire lifetime and in every situation, even when he was ill. Most of his poems have been collected and edited posthumously by his widow. The first volume contains poems written during his studies, the second one – poems he wrote during his time at the Imperial Court of Vienna, and the third one – poems written during his time at the Royal Polish Court and in Riga. (See the list of editions of Hermann's works in 5)

3.2. Works Written and Published in Riga

Nearly all poems written by Hermann in Riga are included in the third volume of the collection published by his widow.³¹ During this time he composed poems on topics referring to Riga, Livonia and Poland.³² The first works of Hermann published in Riga are the first two books of his *Stephaneis*, which he must have written during his time at the Royal Polish Court during the Polish-Prussian War. Even after the publication of these two books in 1582 he continued writing this epic. In the third volume of Hermann 1614–15 not only the first two completed books are included, but also some fragments of the third one, which had never been finished.

In 1583 he published a philosophical or rather scientific essay *De rana et lacerta succino prussiaco insitis* (“On a toad and a lizard encased in Prussian amber”) written in verses, which also contained geological considerations about the causes of the salt deposits in the mines of Krakow.

After the death of King Stephan Báthory in 1586 he wrote a grief poem,³³ as well as a poem on the coronation of Stephan’s successor Sigismund III in 1588.³⁴ For the next few years Hermann seems to have been kept from poetry by his official obligations or maybe by serious health problems. The next poem was published in 1594 and dealt with the foundation of the University of Zamoćz.³⁵ In 1596 Hermann discussed the ethical, physical and historical aspects of the birth of a deformed baby in Ascheraden/Aizkraukle and the miracles, which were reportedly linked to this monstrosity in the poem *De monstrō partu*.³⁶

There was also a poem *De certamine inter ursum et aprum, in quo aper victus occubuit anno 1592 mense Decembri* (“About a fight of a bear and a boar in which the boar died in December 1592”), which seems to have been written several years later, as it was printed after the poem on the monstrosity in the collection.³⁷ It was followed in 1595 by a poem of gratitude to god for all the physical and mental benefits *Gratiarum actio ad Deum omnem potentem*.³⁸ In 1599 Hermann published a biographical poem about his employer Georg von Fahrensbach (see above 2.4) in German.

In 1601, when the Polish-Swedish War and the Battle of Kokenhusen/Koknese had begun, he wrote *Livoniae afflictæ ... supplicatio* to the Polish king and Grand Duke of Lithuania Sigismund III on behalf of the city of Riga to express their loyalty to him.³⁹ At nearly the same time he wrote the poem *De Livoniae statu instabili, ex fundamentis philosophicis* about the uncertain political situation of Livonia,⁴⁰ a poem on the conquest of the city of Wolmar/Valmiera *De expugnata Wolmaria*⁴¹ and a consideration of a prudent and pious Christian soldier about the behaviour at war: *Meditatio militis christiani cordati et simul pii*, which was dedicated to King Sigismund III.⁴²

Hermann wrote a poem about the coat of arms of the family of Cardinal Radziwil, too,⁴³ as well as a poem about the white eagle as the heraldic animal of the Polish king.⁴⁴ There was also a short inscription composed for an aqueduct in Riga.⁴⁵

During his time in Riga, Hermann apparently wrote much less private poems than during his studies or his time in Vienna. We find only a few *epithalamia*: for Hieronymus Coler and Magdalena Mulich,⁴⁶ for Jacob Monaw and Susanne Vogt⁴⁷ and for Thomas Ramus and Anna Ekius.⁴⁸ The volume ends with the epitaph for Hermann that he had composed for himself in 1594, seven years prior to his death.⁴⁹

4. Research on Daniel Hermann

As already mentioned above, apart from some encyclopaedia articles and entries in books on literary history, there has been virtually no research on this really great and important Neo-Latin poet. The first writings dealing with Daniel Hermann were the report on his life and the overview of his works given by Pisanski (1758), as well as the shorter entries in the literary histories of Gadebusch, Pisanksi and von Recke and Napierksy, which seem to have been based on the readings of Hermann's works.⁵⁰ Those are followed by lexicon entries apparently only reproducing their information.⁵¹

The first author who dealt with Hermann and his works more intensively after a long time was the Prussian historian and archivist Theodor Schiemann.⁵² He studied Hermann's works as well as older sources on him and seems to have used the *Acta Internuntiorum* of the city of Danzig to obtain information about Hermann's role in the Polish-Russian War 1579–1581, which apparently are lost now.⁵³ He wrote a biographical paper on Hermann⁵⁴ and also an article on Hermann in the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*.⁵⁵

Furthermore, Herta von Ramm-Helsing studied Hermann's life and in 1942 wrote a paper on his engagement and marriage on the basis of Schiemann's paper and intensive individual studies of letters written by Hermann, which were still available at Danzig at that time.⁵⁶ This paper is very important because von Ramm-Helsing replicates some of the letters, which were written in German. She had also mentioned Hermann earlier, but only *en passant*, in her paper about David Hilchen.⁵⁷ Arnolds Spekke only mentions Hermann and his works in the introduction to his book about Basilius Plinius' *Encomium Rigaë*.⁵⁸

In the following period of time Hermann is almost only mentioned in lexica which apparently reproduce the information of the older lexica and of Schiemann's paper.⁵⁹ The sole exception among the lexicon articles is the entry in Starnawski's literary history,⁶⁰ because Starnawski himself had studied Hermann's poems dealing with the foundation of the University of Zamoć earlier.⁶¹

Another exception is the Prussian historian Kurt Forstreuter who had studied the historical sources on Hermann during his time as archivist at the Staatsarchiv of Königsberg from 1927 to 1945. Unfortunately his paper on Hermann⁶² was only printed in an anthology published as part of a series about the history of Prussia, so that the research on Hermann has apparently been ignored until now. Forstreuter obviously knew all the previous studies on Hermann including von Ramm-Helsing's papers and seems to have compared the information given in Hermann's poems and by Schiemann with historical

sources as well as archival documents in order to put them into a wider historical context. He also reproduced excerpts of letters written by Hermann to other historical figures in his environment. He had already mentioned Hermann in his book about the history of Prussia and Russia.⁶³

Hermann's poems have been scarcely studied up until now. There is Starnwaski's edition of the poems on the foundation of the University of Zamość with a short introduction,⁶⁴ as well as Czarski's edition and analysis of a letter to Friedrich von Nostitz.⁶⁵ Kristi Viiding (Tartu) studies Hermann's *Stephaneis* and the circumstances of the posthumously published collection of his works by his widow Ursula Kröger. In contrast the *album amicorum* of Daniel Hermann, which is in Lund (Sweden) now, is already well researched especially by Åke Davidsson and Christa Schwarz⁶⁶ as well as Johanna Svensson (Lund). It is now also available online at the National Swedish book catalogue LIBRIS.⁶⁷ Similarly well researched is Hermann's own library, which was later integrated into the municipal library of Riga.⁶⁸

5. Editions of Daniel Hermann's Works (in a Chronological Order)

[This list is compiled after comparison of the lists given by Gadebusch, Lilienthal and von Recke / Napierksky.⁶⁹ All lists presented in later literature seem to follow von Recke/Napierksky.]

Abbreviations:

- s. l. *sine loco*
- s. d. *sine dato*

Epithalamion illustri principi ac domino, D. Gotthardo in Livonia Churlandiae et Semigalliae duci, S. R. M. Polonorum supremo terrarum Livoniae gubernatori et locum tenenti, sponso ac domino suo clementissimo: et illustrissimae principi ac dominae, dominae Annae, natae ex illustrissimorum ducum Megaloburgensium familia etc. sponsae ac dominae suaे clementissimae scriptum a Daniele Hermanno Neydenburgense, Borusso. Regiomonti Borussiae in officina Ioannis Daubmanni 1566.

Carmen de vita litterata. Regiomonti Borussiae 1575. [reprinted in Hermann 1614–1615 tom. I]

Danielis Hermanni Borussi Stephaneis moschovita, sive de occasione, causis, initis et progressibus belli, a serenissimo potentissimoque Polonorum rege magno duce Lithuaniae etc. Stephano primo contra Ioannem Basilium, Magnum Moschorum ducem, gesti et hoste represso fractoque ad aequas pacis conditiones feliciter deducti, libri duo priores. Excusae Gedani a Iacobo Rhodo 1582. [reprinted in Hermann 1614–1615 tom. III]

De rana et lacerta succino prussiaco insitis Danielis Hermanni discursus philosophicus; ex quo occasio sumi potest de causis salis fodinarum Cracoviensium naturalibus ratiocinandi. Cracoviae 1583. [3rd edition Rigae 1600; also reprinted in Hermann 1614–1615 tom. III]

Panegyris in coronationem serenissimi principis ac domini Sigismundi tertii Regis Poloniae et designati Sueciae, magni ducis Lithuaniae, Russiae, Prussiae, Masoviae, Samogitia, Kyouiae, Volhiniae, Podlachiae, Livoniae etc. principis. Scripta a Daniele Hermanno Prusso. Cracoviae 1588. [reprinted in Hermann 1614–1615 tom. II]

De Marte cum Musis in nova Academia Samosciana conjunctio, carmen. Rigae Livonum exc. Nicol. Mollinus 1594.

Gratiarum actio ad Deum omnipotentem pro omnibus corporis atque animae beneficiis. Rigae 1595. [Latin and German]

De monstro partu, die XVIII. Aug. 1595 in districtu Ascheradensi Livoniae ultradunensis in lucem edito; et de rebus, quae praeter naturae ordinem fiunt, discursus ethicus, physicus, historicus. Autore Daniele Hermanno Borusso, Rigae in officina Nicolai Mollini 1596. [reprinted in Hermann 1614–1615 tom. III]

Joanni Samoscio, Regni Poloniae Cancellario et exercituum regni praefecto generali, Trophaeum. Cracoviae typis Matthiae Wirzbietae [s. d.].

Livoniae afflictæ ad S. R. Majestatem et ordines reipublicae Poloniae magnique Ducatus Lithuaniae supplicatio. Rigae 1601. [reprinted in Hermann 1614–1615 tom. III]

Meditatio militis christiani cordati et simul pii. Rigae 1601.

De Livoniae statu instabili ex fundamentis philosophicis. [s. l., s. d.]

Leben Georg Fahrensbachs. In: Georg Ziegler's Weltspiegel. Riga 1599. [in German verses]

Danielis Hermanni Borussi secretarii regii *Poemata. Academica, aulica, bellica.* Rigae [postum] 1614–1615. [= Hermann 1614–15]

Notes

- ¹ Cf. Schiemann T. Daniel Hermann. Ein livländischer Humanist. *Riga'scher Almanach*. 1878. Nr. 21, S. 1–19. (Reprinted in: Schiemann T. *Historische Darstellungen und archivalische Studien. Beiträge zur baltischen Geschichte*. Hamburg/Mitau: Behre's Verlag, 1886. S. 51–74.); Forstreuter K. Daniel Hermann – Literat und Diplomat in Frieden und Krieg. In: Forstreuter K. *Wirkungen des Preußischen Landes. Vierzig Beiträge*. (Studien zur Geschichte Preußens; Band 33.) Köln/Berlin: G. Grothe'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1981. S. 9.
- ² IJsewijn J. *Companion to Neo-Latin Studies*. Amsterdam/New York/Oxford: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1977. P. 77.
- ³ Gadebusch F. K. *Livländische Bibliothek*. Band II. Riga: Johann Friedrich Hartknoch, 1777. S. 52–64; Pisanski G. C. *Entwurf der Preußischen Litterärgeschichte*. Königsberg: Hartungsche Buchhandlung, 1791. S. 366; Recke J. F., Napiersky K. E. *Allgemeines Schriftsteller- und Gelehrtenlexikon der Provinzen Livland, Estland und Kurland*. Band 2. Mitau: Johann Friedrich Steffenhagen und Sohn, 1829. S. 256–259; Wiszniewski M. *Historya literatury polskiej*. Vol. 6. Kraków: Giszkowski, 1844. S. 331–332; Estreicher K. J. T., Estreicher S. *Bibliografia polska*. Vol. 8. Kraków: Uniwersytet Jagielloński, 1882. S. 66; Lehnerdt J. M. Hermann, Daniel. In: Krollmann C. (Hg.). *Altpreußische Biographie*. Band 1: Abegg – Malten. Königsberg: Gräfe und Unzer Verlag, 1941. S. 270 (Reprinted: Lehnerdt J. M. Hermann, Daniel. In: Krollmann C. (Hg.). *Altpreußische Biographie*. Band 1: Abegg – Malten. Marburg: N. G. Elwert Verlag, 1974. S. 270; IJsewijn J. *Companion to Neo-Latin Studies* (see note 2). P. 176–177; Starnawski J. *Odrodzenie easy – ludzie – książki*. Łódź: Uniwersytet Łódzki, 1991. S. 395; Wilpert G. *Deutschbaltische Literaturgeschichte*, München: C. H. Beck, 2005. S. 79; Gottzmann, C. L., Hörner P. *Lexikon der deutschsprachigen Literatur des Baltikums und St. Petersburgs: Vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*. Band 2. Berlin, 2007. S. 570–572.
- ⁴ Cf. Forstreuter K. Daniel Hermann – Literat und Diplomat in Frieden und Krieg (see note 1). S. 9.
- ⁵ Pisanski G. C. *Nachricht von dem preußischen Dichter Daniel Hermann, theils aus den eigenen Schriften desselben theils aus anderen Quellen zusammengetragen*, Königsberg: [n.p.]: 1758. [Apparently only available now in the British Library in London]; Gadebusch F. K. *Livländische Bibliothek*. Riga: Hartknoch, 1777 (see note 3). S. 52–64; Recke J. F., Napiersky K. E. *Allgemeines Schriftsteller- und Gelehrtenlexikon*, S. 256–259 (see note 3); Schiemann T. Hermann, Daniel. *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*. Band 12. Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1880. S. 166–167.
- ⁶ Schiemann T. Daniel Hermann. Ein livländischer Humanist (see note 1); Ramm-Helsing H. Brautwerbung, Verlöbnis, Lebensgestaltung und Leichenbegängnis nach Rigaschem Recht und Brauch um 1582. *Niederdeutsche Zeitschrift für Volkskunde*, 1942. Nr. 20. S. 18–36; Forstreuter K. Daniel Hermann – Literat und Diplomat in Frieden und Krieg (see note 1).
- ⁷ Cf. Forstreuter K. Daniel Hermann – Literat und Diplomat in Frieden und Krieg (see note 1). S. 10, Anm. 2.
- ⁸ Cf. Ramm-Helsing H. Brautwerbung, Verlöbnis, Lebensgestaltung und Leichenbegängnis (see note 6), passim; Forstreuter K. Daniel Hermann – Literat und Diplomat in Frieden und Krieg (see note 1). S. 15.
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Magnuss Frišs

Daniels Hermanis – daudzceļojis prūšu humānists un viņa daiļrade Rīgā

Kopsavilkums

Atslēgvārdi: Daniels Hermanis, neolatīniskā literature, neolatīniskā dzeja,
humanisms, Rīgas humānistī, renesanse

Prūšu protestants Daniels Hermanis ir nozīmīgs neolatīniskās dzejas pārstāvis, kura dzīves laiks ir no 1543. gada līdz 1601. gadam. Hermanis ir studējis Kēnigsbergā, Strasburgā, Bāzelē (iespējams, arī Ingolštatē un Heidelbergā) un Vitenbergā. Vēlāk viņš ir strādājis par sekretāru ķeizariskajā galmā Vīnē, pēc tam par Dancigas pilsētas sekretāru un par patstāvīgu vēstnieku Polijas karaļa galmā karu ar Krieviju laikā. Pēc kara viņš aprecējās un apmetās Rīgā, un kļuva par Polijas karaļa gubernatora kardināla Radzivila sekretāru, vēlāk strādādams pie ģenerāļa Georga Fārensbaha.

Dzīvodams Rīgā, Hermanis ir sacerējis lielu skaitu veltījuma dzejolus dažādos akadēmiskos, politiskos un privātos gadījumos, kā arī teoloģiskus, filosofiskus un politiskus darbus dzejā. Rakstā ir sniepts pārskats par Hermaņa dzīvi un daiļradi, īpašu uzmanību pievēršot darbiem, kas sacerēti un publicēti Rīgā, kā arī apkopojums par dzejnieka daiļrades izpēti.

Autori

- Bērziņa Gita (dz. 1974) – *Dr. philol.*, klasiskā filoloģe, LU HZF
Visvalža iela 4a, Rīga LV-1050, Latvija
gita.berzina@latnet.lv
- Cirule Brīgita (dz. 1954) – *Dr. philol.*, klasiskā filoloģe, LU HZF
Visvalža iela 4a, Rīga LV-1050, Latvija
brigita.cirule@lu.lv
- Frišs Magnuss (dz. 1980) – klasiskais filologs, Mārburgas Filipa Universitāte (Vācija)
Wilhelm-Röpke-Straße 6 D 35039 Marburg, Germany
magnus.frisch@staff.uni-marburg.de
- Grudule Māra (dz. 1963) – *Dr. philol.*, literatūrzinātniece, LU HZF, LU LFMI
Visvalža iela 4a, Rīga LV-1050, Latvija
mara.grudule@lu.lv
- Kalniņa Ieva (dz. 1956) – *Dr. philol.*, literatūrzinātniece, LU HZF
Visvalža iela 4a, Rīga LV-1050, Latvija
ieva.kalnina@lu.lv
- Laizāns Mārtiņš (dz. 1985) – *Mag. hum.*, klasiskais filologs, LU HZF
Visvalža iela 4a, Rīga LV-1050, Latvija
s40083@gmail.com
- Lāms Ojārs (dz. 1965) – *Dr. philol.*, klasiskais filologs, komparatīvists, LU HZF
Visvalža iela 4a, Rīga LV-1050, Latvija
ojars.lams@lu.lv
- Strockis Mindaugs (dz. 1969) – *Dr.*, klasiskais filologs, Vilņas Universitāte (Lietuva)
Universiteto g. 3, Vilnius 01513, Lietuva
mindaugas.strockis@flf.vu.lt
- Vīdinga Kristi (dz. 1972) – *Dr. phil.*, klasiskā filoloģe, Tartu Universitāte (Igaunija)
Ülikooli 18, 50090 Tartu, Igaunija
kristi.viiding@ut.ee

HZF – Humanitāro zinātņu fakultāte
LFMI – Literatūras, folkloras un mākslas institūts
LU – Latvijas Universitāte

LU Literatūras, folkloras un mākslas institūts

Latvijas Universitātes Literatūras, folkloras un mākslas institūts

Reģistrācijas apliecības nr. 90002118399

Mūkusalas iela 3, Rīga, LV-1423, Latvija

Tālr./fakss +371 67229017

<http://www.lulfmi.lv>

info@lulfmi.lv

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Langervaldes iela 1a, Jelgava, LV-3022