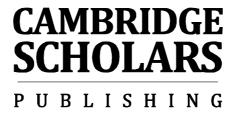
The Polish Swan Triumphant

The Polish Swan Triumphant: Essays on Polish and Comparative Literature from Kochanowski to Norwid

By

George Gömöri



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CHAPTER ONE

'THE DISMISSAL OF THE GREEK ENVOYS' AND BORNEMISZA'S 'MAGYAR ELEKTRA'

A comparative study of Polish and Hungarian literature could bring to light hitherto unnoticed affinities between these two literatures: while in spite of close dynastic and cultural contacts, there have been comparatively few direct literary influences, we can often establish similar trends and draw significant parallels. Péter Bornemisza's *Electra* (or as it is often called, "Hungarian" or *Magyar Elektra*) and *Jan* Kochanowski's *Odprawa posłów greckich* (The Dismissal of the Grecian Envoys) is a case in point – they are the first genuine examples of a play written in Hungarian and Polish respectively. Both plays entail a message relevant to the given political and social situation; both, in the guise of a tale borrowed from ancient Greek/Hellenic history, raise problems of great importance for the future of the communities which they represent.

Though the subject-matter of both plays is historical (that is, historical in a semi-mythological fashion), the revenge of Orestes upon his father's murderers and the ominous dismissal of the Grecian envoys from Troy are seen by the authors through the prism of Erasmian (or in the case of Humanist Bornemisza. Protestant) ideals Both dramas commissioned and written (or in the case of Odprawa touched up and completed) for a specific occasion. Bornemisza wrote his *Electra* in 1558 to entertain his Hungarian fellow-students in Vienna and also to provide them with a play which could easily be staged. As for Odprawa posłów greckich, it was Jan Kochanowski's special gift to Jan Zamoyski for the Chancellor's 1578 wedding, although it had probably been written much earlier; according to one view, still in the poet's courtly period. It was performed (as far as we know) only once in front of the distinguished guests, and it was followed by an additional piece of Latin verse (Orpheus Sarmaticus) which reflected upon the political situation; likely a war with Muscovy. Although both the Polish and the Hungarian plays were written

.

¹ Cf. T. Ulewicz's introduction to *Odprawa posłów greckich, Biblioteka narodowa,* Warsaw, 1962, *XLVI*.

for an élite audience, their respective styles correspond to different models of taste and are geared to different levels of expectation. Bornemisza's creative adaptation of Sophocles' *Electra* is in prose, though he uses a rich, expressive language which abounds in rhetorical structures and dramatic metaphors; he also increased the length of the original substantially, from 1510 to 2050 lines. Kochanowski's *Odprawa*, on the other hand, is a fairly short play (all in all 606 lines) in blank verse, the lines varying in length from eleven to twelve and thirteen syllables and including a striking metric experiment in the Third Chorus. Metric variety mitigates and partly offsets the uniformity lent to the play by its elegant rhetoric; it also helps in the individuation of particular characters through defining their specific mode of speech. (For instance, the fast-moving exchange between Antenor and Alexander is in the eleven-syllable verse, but the same Antenor speaks in the more dignified thirteen-syllable verse when addressing Priam.)

Péter Bornemisza's main source was Sophocles' *Electra*, which he learned to appreciate through Georg Tanner's lectures on the Greek playwright in Vienna. As Bornemisza put it in his Latin afterword to the Hungarian text of the play, he had found the reading of Sophocles fruitful "both from a moral and a political point of view". At the time, Sophocles was being discovered all over Europe: Tanner, for example, was familiar with Melanchton's commentaries on *Electra* and knew such adaptations of the play as those of Lazare de Baïf in French (1537) and Vitus Winshemius' in German (1546). Sophocles was not unknown in Poland either: suffice to mention Stanisław Grepski's inaugural lectures devoted to him at Cracow University in 1565 and Walenty Jan Jakubowski's now lost poem on Antigone, written not much later.

As for Kochanowski, he seems to have been more impressed by Euripides and Seneca than Sophocles; he translated a fragment of Euripides' *Alcestis* and the influence of Seneca on *Odprawa* has also been established. Bornemisza, although he clearly admires Sophocles, chose to reinterpret him in several ways. Broadly speaking, the original text

² István Borzsák, *Az antikvitás XVI, századi képe*, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1960, 16.

³ "O białoskrzydła morska pławaczko..." Jan Kochanowski, *Dziela polskie*, wyd. 5, Warsaw, 1967, vol. 2, 103-04. This experiment was apparently influenced by lines 752-75 of Euripides' drama *Hippolytus*; see *Poems by J. Kochanowski*, ed. by George Napall Noyes, Berkeley, 1928, 13.

⁴ Borzsák, op. cit. 81.

⁵ Ulewicz, op.cit., XVI.

⁶ Wiktor Weintraub, Rzecz czarnoleska, Cracow, 1977, 285.

underwent three kinds of change in his hands – he Christianised, modernised, and also "nationalised" it, i.e. applied the text to specific local conditions. Something similar happened to the Homeric episode of the visit and dismissal of the envoys in Kochanowski's treatment. The "national" interpretation of the theme corresponded (in both cases) to the social and political situation of the two countries in question, which differed markedly from each other. The situation in a loosely centralised Poland, subject to the centrifugal pull of powerful magnates and strong regional interests, yet run on the basis of the "noblemen's democracy", and in a Hungary torn by wars for a quarter of a century, and by 1551 *de facto* divided into three different parts ruled by different rulers, was quite dissimilar.

Both authors were well-travelled, with shorter or longer periods of study abroad: Bornemisza may have studied in Padua, was a student in Vienna and Wittenberg; Kochanowski had been to Königsberg before Padua, and after Padua visited Paris. In fact, as far as we know, both of them could have been in Padua in 1557, and if so, they could have met; after all it was at that university⁷ that Kochanowski befriended the learned Humanist clergyman András Dudith, and in all probability made the acquaintance of another Hungarian humanist. János Zsámboki-Sambucus. Kochanowski's ties with Padua and with Italian humanism in general were, of course, much closer than Bornemisza's and there is reason to believe that his erudition and familiarity with Greek and Latin writers was also deeper than that of the author of Magyar Elektra who, when quoting such authorities, often used second-hand sources or commentaries rather than the original text.⁸ This is not to question Bornemisza's mastery of Greek; we can be reasonably sure that he used Sophocles and not some Latin translation of the original; on the other hand Magyar Elektra was his sole undertaking as translator-adaptor, whereas Kochanowski proved his erudite skill not only on Euripides but also on Homer (he translated the Third Canto of the Iliad) and the lesser-known Alexandrian Greek poet, Aratos (author of *Phainomena*).

In his play the Polish poet adhered to the rules handed down to posterity by Aristotle – he preserved the three unities discarded by Bornemisza. In avoiding the representation of direct action on stage Kochanowski was keeping to the spirit of Renaissance drama which, on the whole, preferred to operate with 'set speeches', i.e. reported action.

⁹ Between Acts I and II of *Magyar Electra* twenty years have passed.

⁷ See his two Latin poems to Dudith in Jan Kochanowski, *Elegiarum Libri IIII*, eusdem *Foricoenia*, Cracow, 1584, 94-97 and 149-50.

⁸ Borzsák, op. cit., 303.

Bornemisza, on his part, was not concerned with this particular convention and showed, for example, the murder of Aegisthus by Orestes on stage.

The framework of Greek mythology and religion proved to be too constricting for both authors. Although in certain passages of Odprawa posłów greckich we find invocations of Apollo and Venus, the Chorus at its first appearance addresses only one God ('O Boże na wielkim niebie!'), also Helen's Old Lady and Antenor speak of 'God' in the singular, which implies a Christian rather than pagan deity. This 'Christianization' of the immortals is even more apparent in Bornemisza's Magyar Elektra where for instance Orestes's prayer (Act III, Scene 2) sounds not only Christian but positively Protestant in its phrasings: "Oh eternal, almighty Lord, whose merciful eyes are upon all those in misery... I beseech Thee, my dear God, if it pleases you, take me to my land in peace and demonstrate it through my hand that you are a God that avenges sin..." Clytaemnestra also refers to 'God the Lord (úristen)' and her Sophoclean prayer to Apollo (Act III, Scene 1) is changed by the Hungarian poet into a prayer to a Christian God. The only lapse in Bornemisza's otherwise consistent elimination of Greek gods occurs in the same scene, where Electra, during her argument with her mother, advises her to consult 'Diana', in order to find out from the goddess why Iphigenia was really sacrificed. 11 (In the Greek original she is, of course, Artemis not Diana, but most Hungarians knew the Latin equivalent goddess rather than the Greek one). From Clytaemnestra's reply Bornemisza deletes the name of the goddess altogether but makes an oblique reference to her which could also be construed in a Christian way: 'So should the Holy Woman (Szent Asszony) help me, you'll pay for this, once Aegisthus returns!'12 Perhaps in Bornemisza's case this thorough Christianisation was necessary in order to create an illusion of immediacy for the audience, reminding them that while this tale was about a Greek royal family, the same things could happen anywhere at any time; that the tale had wider moral implications. This impression is reinforced by the language of the play. While they often use religious rhetoric or express themselves in slightly elevated language, Bornemisza's characters basically speak the vernacular in the same way as it was spoken in Hungarian castles and country houses at the time. In other words, the language is plastic, vivid, often racy; it includes popular axioms, proverbs and colloquialisms. Even the Queen herself, Clytaemnestra, sounds remarkably outspoken in her first monologue: 'Let God be thanked that I managed to get rid of my husband, this old hound

¹⁰ Péter Bornemisza, Válogatott írások, Budapest, 1955, 46.

¹¹ ibid., 56.

¹² ibid., 58.

Agamemnon, who had wanted to keep me on a tight rein...'13 (This particular monologue is Bornemisza's invention.) Equally outspoken and direct is Electra in her speech, and also the Chorus which sometimes appears to be just one person but at other times is a group of young girls.

As for Kochanowski's language in *Odprawa*, it is not nearly as direct as Bornemisza's, though its general rhetorical stylization still leaves room for individualised speech. Antenor's statesmanlike observations differ in tone from the more emotional speeches of Alexander (Paris) and Helena, just as Priam's peroration is much more restrained than the passionate condemnation of Troy by Ulysses or Cassandra's visionary utterings about the destruction of her native city. Even the longest set speech in the play, the Messenger's account of the Senate's deliberations about the fate of Helena is varied enough to hold our attention: his report mimics different speeches made at the meetings, amongst them one by a certain Iketaon. This speech is crucial for the further course of events. It is short-tempered and emotional, but at the same time colourful and vivid – other arguments look anaemic in comparison.¹⁴ In vividness Iketaon comes closest to Bornemisza's dramatic heroes which include a character, unknown to Sophocles but well-known to sixteenth-century Europe, called 'Parasitus'. He is a cynical courtier, first playing into the hands of Aegisthus, but in the final scene of the play actually helping Orestes to kill his former royal master. Iketaon may not be a turncoat, but he is a skilful, and hence dangerous, demagogue. In Odprawa his impetuous directness is the exception rather than the rule, the unifying element being a dignified fluency. Kochanowski's state (though corrupt inside) is upheld by rank, pride and dignity; Bornemisza's by passion, pomp and power.

My parallel rests, to a large extent, on the political didactic function of both plays. Power, when used irrationally and immorally, destroys itself; not immediately, but in due course. Péter Bornemisza actually states this in his Hungarian introduction to Magyar Elektra: 'Consider this play, my lords, to be such an entertainment in which... human life is put right, in which you shall see how terribly the powerful King and Queen of Greece have to pay for their heinous crimes, from which all kings, lords, great ones as well as small ones can take a lesson and a great example that God has the power to avenge...'15 The same thing is repeated in the Latin afterword, the motto of which could be a line quoted by Bornemisza: 'Discite iustitiam moniti et non spernere divos' (Learn justice from admonitions and do not despise the gods). Despising, or rather ignoring,

¹³ ibid., 36.

¹⁴ Weintraub, op.cit.,146.

¹⁵ Bornemisza, op.cit., 33.

the gods is here equivalent to the transgression of natural laws – the murder of close blood-relations and the usurpation of royal power certainly belong in this category. Bornemisza lays special stress on the general moral message, too, by claiming that one of his aims was to show 'the godless and the Epicureans', that, however long we have to wait for God's punishment, one day it will unfailingly arrive.

Moreover, Aegisthus in *Magyar Elektra* is not only a usurper but also a tyrant, insecure in his position. When he hears of Orestes' alleged death, he is beside himself with joy: now at last he can breathe freely, for now he can smash whatever is left of 'the party of Orestes'. 'What I want is to have no greater master in the land than myself' (Azt akarom, ez országba több úr nálamnál ne legyen) – says Aegisthus. A comparison with Sophocles reveals that Bornemisza considerably amplified Aegisthus' relief over the death of Orestes and added to the Greek text specific elements of sixteenth-century Hungarian life. This Central European Aegisthus wants 'to gather a new court' (majd újudvart tétetek) and punish those foolish enough to resist: 'I shall give presents to all those on my side, but those who still cause trouble I shall have cut down'. 16 This was a practice fairly common in medieval Europe as well as in fifteenthsixteenth century Hungary: in fact, it can be read as a commentary on the Hungarian-Transvlvanian situation after 1526 with two crowned kings fighting for the throne, their influential supporters changing sides several times, destroying or taking over the estates of their less Machiavellian neighbours in the process. During this period, assassinations of important political figures or army commanders who had amassed too much power in their hands was not a rare event in those parts (e.g. Gritti's assassination in 1534, György 'Fráter' Martinuzzi's in 1551). One of Bornemisza's critics suggests that when he condemns 'tyranny' he has in mind Turkish rule, which was branded as 'tyrannical' in the anti-Turkish Humanist literature of the period. 17 Nevertheless, it is clear even to the same critic that when Bornemisza condemns 'usurping princes' he also passes judgement upon those 'Athenian' (in fact, Hungarian) magnates who behave like Aegisthus. Considering the further course of Bornemisza's life (around 1561 or 1562 he became a Lutheran minister, later publishing a collection of his homilies some of which were strongly critical of the immoral, dissolute way of life of certain magnates), as well as his clashes with powerful feudal lords who enforced jurisdiction on their own lands, one can see that his ideas about tyrannicide, as put forward in Magyar Elektra, were less ambiguous and more widely applicable than those of

¹⁶ ibid., 95.

¹⁷ Borzsák, op.cit., 95.

Sophocles. Also, in contrast to the Greek dramatist, Bornemisza adds a monologue to the plot, an epilogue discussing the double murder committed by Orestes. It is spoken by the Master, Orestes' tutor, who tells the audience that while 'it is a mighty wondrous thing that a son should murder his own mother' (though this was but a link in the chain of murders perpetrated by the descendants of Pelops), he hopes that Orestes – aided by good advice – will not come to the same sad end: 'He should be pious and pure in his life, he should live truthfully and mercifully lest he should come to the same end as his forbears.' Though there is a curse on the family, piety and the exercise of virtue might save Orestes.

In his monologue the Master refers to mother-killer Orestes as 'this poor orphan'; earlier, Orestes in his prayer to God contrasts himself ('your small servant') with that 'conceited, powerful king' whom he can destroy only thanks to God's power vested in him. It has been suggested that Bornemisza, when attacking 'tyranny', thought of the anti-Protestant Habsburg rule, that Aegisthus stands for the Emperor Ferdinand and that Orestes triumphs not only as a liberator from tyranny but as a restorer of the laws of Protestant morality. ¹⁹ This argument rests more on conjecture than on facts; what *is* certain is that *Magyar Elektra* condemns greed, hunger for power and lechery – crimes that lead to the downfall of the royal couple who share between them the responsibility for Agamemnon's death twenty years earlier.

It has to be stressed that *Odprawa posłów greckich* is not a drama 'with a key' either. It cannot be linked with any specific event in sixteenth-century Polish history, although Kochanowski 'Polonized' his Troy to some extent – its political system resembles the Polish democracy of the nobility. ²⁰ It is a system fraught with grave dangers. From the Messenger's account it is clear that in the Senate, matters are not decided upon their merits by sober and rational arguments, but by opportunism (some of the senators were bribed by Aleksander) and by emotional 'gut arguments' of the kind marshalled by Iketaon. Demagogy is a constant threat to any democracy; in Troy's case its skilful application leads to the ruin of the state. In the second choral ode Kochanowski hammers out a moral of universal validity: 'The crimes of the rulers caused the ruin of cities/And led to the devastation of large empires' (*Przełożonych występy miasta zgubily / I szerokie do gruntu carstwa zniszczyty*). ²¹ As this warning is not heeded by the Trojans, a further dramatic warning is pronounced by

¹⁸ Bornemisza, op.cit., 99.

¹⁹ József Szigeti, *A Balassi-Comoedia és szerzője*, Budapest, 1967, 162.

²⁰ Janina Abramowska, *Ład i fortuna*, Warsaw, 1974, 47.

²¹ Kochanowski, *Dzieła polskie*, vol. 2, 96.

Cassandra who can foresee the whole sequence of events culminating in the sack of Troy. She is not listened to either: she is a woman 'possessed by the spirit of Apollo', that is both inspired and deranged. As for the third 'warning speech' – the one by Ulysses beginning with the words 'O state disorderly and near to ruin...' (*O nierządne królestwo i zginienia bliskie...*)²² – it is uttered by an envoy of the enemy, that is, by an outsider, and though it contains much bitter truth, it also could be disqualified and ignored. At the end of the play, however, when it is reported that hostilities have broken out, Antenor (hitherto a spokesman of the anti-war faction) makes a surprising turnabout and suggests an attack on the Greeks. Most critics put this change down to Antenor's statesmanship or else they suggest that the last lines of the play were 'concocted' by Kochanowski to make the transition to *Orpheus Sarmaticus* less abrupt. This problem arises because *Odprawa* is basically a drama of responsibility; it is based on rational, humanistic premises with strong pacifist undertones.

In other words Kochanowski could not have written his play when Zamovski commissioned it – it was only completed and perhaps altered in some parts for the occasion of the Chancellor's wedding. In 1577, a war with Muscovy was almost a foregone conclusion and no poet with such experience in court and in the world as Kochanowski would have written such a play under the circumstances. After all, in line 577 Antenor still condemns Aleksander in strong words – he is the root of all this trouble! Although in the last lines of the play he takes up the challenge of war, Kochanowski obviously felt that this was not quite enough to dispel doubts about his 'message' - hence his epilogue, Orpheus Sarmaticus, a call to arms to face the outside threat: 'Poles... this is no time for idleness, sleep: not for festivities...'23 This message is for the political moment; as for the play, its message is a moral-political one, and as such, it is above transitory exigencies. It blames the way in which the state of Troy functions: there is also a kind of tyranny here. While the citizens are free to listen to any argument, they are vulnerable to the more subtle tyranny of demagogy and that of private interest which in the end will bring about the decline of the polity and the ruin of the state.

Two recent studies on *Odprawa* and *Magyar Elektra* respectively discussed the influence of Aeschylus. In the case of *Odprawa* similarities have been claimed between Kochanowski's plays and Aeschylus' *The Persians*, notably the lack of a single individual hero and the report of the

²² ibid., 102

²³ Tr. by Cz. Miłosz, quoted in David Welsh, *Jan Kochanowski*. Boston. 1974, 75.

Messenger as the real culmination point of both plays.²⁴ Kochanowski certainly read Aeschylus, who was not unknown to Bornemisza either: in fact he mentions one of Aeschylus' plays in the Latin foreword to *Magyar Elektra*.²⁵ This play is *Agamemnon*, a certain aspect of which is also reflected in Bornemisza drama: namely, the idea of resistance to tyranny. After the murder of their lawful king, several old men in the Chorus of Aeschylus call upon the people to resist the usurper and one of them declares: 'It is not to be endured. To die is better. / Death is more comfortable than tyranny.²⁶ Electra in Bornemisza's play is in complete agreement with this view and it is stressed that Orestes has to kill Aegisthus not only to avenge his father's death but also to deliver his 'miserable people' from slavery.

Finally, neither in Magyar Elektra, nor in Odprawa is fatum a dominant factor. It is not the will of the gods or a consequence of an ancient curse that Greek-Trojan negotiations break down in *Odprawa*; it is the humans who decide about war and peace, men of opposing viewpoints and interests. War is not ordained by gods – it is the result of human greed, obstinacy and stupidity. While the protagonists of Magyar Elektra inherited the curse on the house of Pelops, it is not God's will that this chain of crimes should go on forever. The determination of good men may defeat the genetic programming of Evil. For all their numerous differences, both plays discussed above are typical products of their period, the late Renaissance, with its glaring conflicts between virtue and vice, with its emphasis on human choice and on individual responsibility for the consequences. Both have a didactic bent: they sound warnings about the uses and abuses of power, and are less interested in the extremes of human love and passion than in the peace and well-being of their respective communities.

²⁴ Zofia Głombiowska in *Pamiętnik Literacki*. LXX, 4, Warsaw, Cracow, Gdańsk, 1979, 193-209.

²⁵ Bornemisza, op.cit.,101.

²⁶ The Agamemnon of Aeschylus, trans. by Louis MacNeice, London, 1972, 60.

CHAPTER TWO

COCHANOVIANA IN FOREIGN LIBRARIES

1.

Occasionally new pieces of evidence turn up in libraries outside Poland which demonstrate Jan Kochanowski's enduring popularity throughout the seventeenth and early eighteenth century. Recently I have come across two such inscriptions, the authorship of one can be identified, while the other one poses interesting questions to be answered.

Let us begin with the second inscription which is in a sixteenth-century book. It stands at the end of the 1584 (first) edition of Kochanowski's Elegiarum libri IV, euisdem Foricoenia sive epigrammatum libellus now in the Cambridge University Library. The Polish poet's Latin poems are bound together with a poem by the Transylvanian Saxon poet Leonard Uncius mourning the death of Prince Kristóf Báthori of Transylvania (Elegia de Morte illustrissimi Principis Christophori Bathori de Somlo, Cracoviae, 1584). The only thing that connects the two pieces is the place of publication, which is Cracow in both cases. Kochanowski's Latin collection consisting of elegies and epigrams is 169 pages long and it is to the last page, after the epigram "Ad And(ream) Patricium" that an unidentified hand added in light brown ink an "Epitaphium" on Jan Kochanowski by Andrzej Trzecieski, the Younger. This epitaph was first published in Sebastian Klonowic's funerary anthology Zale nagrobne na... Jana Kochanowskiego (Kraków, 1585), soon after Kochanowski's death; in the same collection Andrzei Trzeciewski, a close friend of the deceased poet, also published a long "Trenodia" in Latin.² The inscription in the Cambridge copy of Elegiarum libri IV only slightly differs from Klonowic's original text, though the information given under the title of the poem could be significant:

¹ Under signature Y.9.10 (2).

² Cochanoviana II. Materialy do dziejów twórczości Jana Kochanowskiego z lat 1551-1625, wyd. I, opracowal Miroslaw Korolko, Wrocław,etc., WPAN, 1986, 110.

EPITAPHIUM

Joannis Kochanowii Tribuni Sendomiriensis Qui obiit Lublini Die 22 Augusti Anno 1584

Ereptum terries properata morte Joannem
Tota Cohanovium Sarmatis ora dolet.
Non fuit hoc similes Lachorum ex sanguina vates
Arte et divini dotibus ingenii.
At vitam moresq(ue) videns illius, ad unguem
Perfectum dicet quisque fuisse virum,
Andreas Tricesius. S.

Between the text printed in Klonowic's anthology (also reprinted by Korolko) and the one found in the Cambridge copy there are only two small differences: in the third line we read 'Lachorum' instead of 'Lechorum' and 'ex sanguine' instead of 'e sanguine'. The capital 'S' after the author's name might stand for 'Sarmata' (a Pole). But while most historians of literature put Jan Kochanowski's day of death at August 20, 1584 and surmise that the funeral took place four days later, the date of Trzecieski's epitaph is August 22, which agrees with the text of the memorial plaque in the church of Policzna, now destroyed, but referred to by Jerzy Mankowski who believes that Andrzej Trzecieski the younger was the author of the Latin epitaph on the plaque.

The hand which inserted the Trzecieski epitaph into this copy of *Elegiarum libri IV* cannot be exactly identified, but it is unlikely to have belonged to a contemporary of Kochanowski. Cambridge received this book from the *munificentia regia* of 1715 and it was catalogued only by John Taylor who became librarian in 1732. Most of the books which came from the royal gift had belonged earlier to John Moore's library who, as Bishop of Norwich and later of Ely, was one of the great seventeenth-century collectors of rare books and manuscripts and it was the acquisition of his collection that 'thrust Cambridge University Library into international prominence'. As the colour of the ink of the Cambridge catalogue number on the front page of Kochanowski's *Elegiarum libri IV* resembles the ink of the "Tricesius" inscription, it could have been by the

⁷ ibid, 152.

³ The title of the poem inscribed in the Cambridge copy is "Euisdem auctoris".

⁴ Cochanoviana II., 112.

⁵ ibid.. 108

⁶ David McKitterick, Cambridge University Library. A History. The eighteenth and nineteenth century, Cambridge, 1986, 186.

hand of John Taylor. Could he locate a copy of Klonowic's funerary anthology somewhere in Britain or was there a helpful foreign scholar who sent him this epitaph in a letter?

2.

The second inscription is in a seventeenth-century album amicorum owned by Daniel Stolz von Stolzenberg, a German-speaking native of Prague, medical doctor and alchemist. This valuable manuscript is preserved in the Uppsala University Library.⁸ Stolz travelled all over Europe, also visiting England in the 1620s, meeting interesting people everywhere - these included Robert Fludd, an outstanding member of the Rosecrucian movement. Amongst the German, Czech and English inscribers in the album there are only two Poles - Jan Grzybowski is one of them. He matriculated at Basle on September 26, 1623, and entered his name in Stolz's album a few months later, on January 20, 1624. As the person matriculating before Grzybowski was a high ranking fellow-Pole. "Franciscus Krasna a Krasinsky, Palatinides Plocensis", it is likely that Grzybowski was connected with him either as a travel companion or a personal tutor. Franciszek Krasiński came from a Catholic family, his father Stanislaw being Wojewoda of Płock and his uncle Jan Andrzej Krasiński, a writer who produced a sixteenth-century encyclopaedia on Poland in Bologna, entitled *Polonia*. 9

While some of the Grzybowskis were Protestant, two of them with the first name 'Jan' even Calvinist ministers, ¹⁰ it is possible that the Grzybowski, who studied in Basle, came from a different, Catholic branch of the family. At any rate, when matriculating he signed his name as 'Johannes Grzybowski, nobilis Polonus, stud. phil.' ¹¹ so he was not a student of theology. In Stolz's album (fol.243) he left an inscription in three languages: Polish, Italian and Latin, throwing in a Greek phrase for good measure. As for the Polish text, Grzybowski quotes a short poem in a neat handwriting; these six lines immediately strike one as the work of a professional rather than an occasional poet:

⁸ Signature MS, Y 132/d.

⁹ *Polonia*, Bononiae, pr. Peregrinus Bonardus, 1574. According to Jerzy Starnawski, this work was specially written as a "guidebook" for Henri Valois, King of Poland, cf. Szymon Starowolski, *Setnik pisarzów polskich*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1970, 278.

¹⁰ Polski Slownik Biograficzny, Tom IX, Wrocław-Warsaw, 1960-61,

¹¹ Die Matrikel der Universitat Basel, III, 16 1/2-1665/6, Basel, 1962, 253.

Nie dar iaki kosztowny, ale co przemogę Damci, pare wierszikow, cny Stolczy na drogę. Boże daÿ bydz sie dobrze na wszÿstkim wodziło, Byś we zdrowiu oglądał na coć patrzac miło, Na mię bądź łaskaw iakos zawżdy okazował; Nie był ten łaskaw, kto do końca nie milował.

This is in fact a fraszka by Jan Kochanowski: Nr.45 in the first book of Fraszki (Facetious Verse), entitled "Do Mikolaja Mieleckiego". 12 It is almost a word-for-word reproduction of Kochanowski's epigram with one significant change: instead of 'Mielecki', to fit in the necessary syllables Grzybowski writes 'cny Stolczy' (virtuous Stolz). Either Jan Grzybowski knew this poem by heart or he carried with him an edition of Kochanowski's poems and copied the little farewell poem out of that. All the same, this is a very personal expression of the Polish student's feelings towards his exiled friend which he reinforces by adding an Italian saving to his Polish text: 'L'amicitia non si stende, verso molte personae, ma si ristringe all'amore d'un solo' (Friendship cannot be stretched to many people, but it sticks to the love of a single person). Finally, there is a Latin inscription at the bottom of the page in Stolz's album: 'Pauca hac Viro Clarissimo, commensali suavissimo, Dno M. Danieli Stolcio Med. C. tanguam amicitiae Ksykographa Basileae relig(ui)t Johannes Grzybowski d.m.' Commensalus I read as 'fellow student', though in fact Stolz von Stolzenberg did not spend much time in Basle, not even bothering to matriculate at the University. Still, Grzybowski's inscription in Stolz's album is a comparatively early manifestation of Jan Kochanowski's great popularity among educated Poles during the first decades of the seventeenth century.

¹² Jan Kochanowski, *Dzieła polskie, Vol.I.*, Warsaw, PIW, 1967, 183.

CHAPTER THREE

WHERE WAS ISTVÁN BÁTHORI EDUCATED? OR: THE GENESIS OF A LEGEND

The claim that István Báthori (in its Polonized form, Stefan Batory), king of Poland from 1576 to 1586, studied at the University of Padua in his youth is made regularly in Hungarian textbooks and occasionally (with a question mark) in Polish ones. The last king of Poland. Stanisław August Poniatowski, went as far as to erect a memorial in 1789 on the Prato della Vale in Padua which claims that "Stefan Batory" had studied at this famous university. As for the Hungarian Biographical Encyclopedia of 1967, it claims without any reservation that Báthori 'completed his studies at Padua University'² and the notes to a more recent publication, János Baranyai Decsi's Hungarian Chronicle (1982), make the even more dubious claim that the future king of Poland studied in Padua 'together with Farkas Kovacsóczy'. 3 Kovacsóczy, an astute Transylvanian politician and at one point Head of Báthori's Transylvanian Chancellery, did indeed study in Padua in 1569-70 - he was born in 1540 - whereas Báthori's presumed study there would have taken place in 1549-50. This raises the question as to whether there are, in fact, any firm data that support the hypothesis that István Báthori might have spent more than a few days or weeks of his life at the university frequented by many eminent Poles and Hungarians in the sixteenth century.

István Báthori of Somlyó was born in 1533, and as a young boy he was sent by his older brother András to Vienna, to be a page at the court of Ferdinand I, king of Hungary. In 1549 both he and his brother Miklós were included in the delegation that took Ferdinand's daughter Catherine to Italy where she was to marry the Prince of Mantua. They arrived at Mantua some time in the autumn of 1549, but it is not known at what time they returned to Vienna or to Transylvania. There is only one letter which

¹ Jerzy Besala, Stefan Batory, Warsaw, 1992, 493.

² Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon, Budapest, 1967, 138.

³ Baranyai Decsi János Magyar históriája (1592-1598), trans. Péter Kulcsár, Budapest, 1982, 401.

could serve as a slight basis to the hypothesis that István Báthori visited Padua at all: Lőrinc Révay, a young Hungarian aristocrat then studying in Padua writes to his father on November 12 1549: 'Invimus familiaritatem cum adolescentibus nobilissimis et optimis Nicolao Bathoreo, Stephano somiliai Bathoreo.' ⁴ The place where these young Hungarians met is not indicated. It could have been Padua, but in Veress's collection this particular letter is followed by several others written by the Révay brothers and their tutor, Sigismund Torda of Gyalu, informing Ferenc Révay about *their recent excursion to Mantua* where they met various people, including Ferdinand's son. ⁵ One could surmise, therefore, that the encounter with the Báthori brothers reported above took place in Mantua rather than in Padua itself.

This, of course, does not mean that István Báthori never set foot in this famous university. He could have made a short sight-seeing visit there and perhaps it was he who invited the Révays to come to Mantua where they had the opportunity of meeting some other members of the imperial delegation. While this is possible, it however, does not constitute proof of Báthori's Paduan studies. The Révay brothers stayed in Padua for a number of years, but they never again referred to István; neither is there any trace of this presence in the University's matricula. Much later, in 1607, a reference is made by J.A. Thuanus to a story which asserts that István Báthori and Andreas Dudith (or Dudycz) studied together in Padua. However, according to Jerzy Besala, author of a recent biography, the future king of Poland had already returned to Transylvania by early 1550 where a conflict was brewing between a party of Oueen Isabella and Governor György Fráter (Martinuzzi). Dudith, as Costil and other sources have it, left Verona for Padua only at the end of 1550, which means they could not have met there before that date. 8 Dudith himself, who later on as an imperial diplomat became Báthori's influential enemy, never referred to the fact that he knew the Polish king from Padua; nor did Chancellor Jan Zamovski, one of King's Stefan's main supporters, whose own Paduan studies were often extolled by contemporaries, make any reference to their

⁴ Quoted by Endre Veress, *Marticula et Acta Hungarorum in Universitate Patavina Studentium* (1264-1864), Fontes Rerum Hungaricarum I, Budapest, 1915, 42.

⁵ ibid., 43.

⁶ Quoted in Veress, 43, and by Pierre Costil, *André Dudith, Humaniste Hongrois* 1533-1589, Paris, 1935, 61-62.

⁷ Besala, 21.

⁸ Costil, 61.

mutual acquaintance in Padua. ⁹ The fact that many diplomats and officials (whether Polish or Hungarian) serving István Báthori studied in Padua provides no evidence to support the 'Paduan hypothesis' either: the king read many classical authors and spoke Latin well and, as with many other princes of contemporary Europe, was convinced of the high reputation of the University of Padua.

No panegyric about István Báthori, including orations mourning his death, claimed that he had attended the famous Italian university. Even the German humanist, Uldericus Schober, who called him 'a most learned King' and attributed the flourishing of neo-Latin poetry during his reign to his excellent knowledge of Latin, made no such claim. 10 In the eulogic lines of Robert Dow, an Englishman from Oxford, who in mourning the death of Sir Philip Sidney also mourns the death of the only person whom he could compare to Sidney – that is Báthori: 'rex Stephanus [...] unica regum / Gloria cunctorum, quos tempora nostra tulerunt, / Quem vidi, quo cum faelix ipse locutus' - makes no mention of István Báthori's presence there. 11 Dow, who must have known about Sidney's stay in Padua (this was often mentioned by the academic poets of the funerary anthologies that sprang up after Sidney's death), fails to refer to the one fact which might have 'connected' the poet and soldier Sidney with the Polish king. Krzysztof Warszewicki's very popular funerary oration about Báthori's deeds: Vita, Res Gestae et Obitus Stephani Regis Poloniae (also known as In obitum Stephani Primi oratio), refers only to the deceased king's visit to Italy in his youth: 'in Germania et Italia exercuit se adolescentia.'12 If Báthori learned 'elegant' Latin and was at home in the authors of antiquity, it was not the result of a university education, but due to his able private tutors or the time he spent in Vienna at the Court of Emperor Ferdinand

Warszewicki's oration was published many times – after the first Polish (Cracow and Poznań) editions of 1587, it appeared in three editions during the sixteenth century alone, in Basle (1588), in Cologne (1589), and – according to Jerzy Besala – even in 'faraway Argentina' in 1598. ¹³ (The latter is a bibliographical howler due to the fact that Strasburg's Latin name was 'Argentoratus' but the town was sometimes referred to as

11 Exequiae Illustrissimi Equitis D. Philippi Sidnaei, Oxford, 1587, D/2.

⁹ For example, Szymon Starowolski, *Setnik pisarzów polskich*, Cracow, 1970, 94.

¹⁰ Poematum M. Huldrici Schoberi Libri III, Toruniae, 1592, H9.

¹² Christophorus Varsevicius, *Vita, Res Gestae et Obitus Stephani Regis Poloniae*, Poznań, 1587, p.19.

¹³ Teodor Wierzbowski, *Krzysztof Warszewicki 1543-1603, i jego dziela*, Warsaw, 1887, and Besala, p. 493.

'Argentina'.) Warszewicki's speech was also published in Melchior Junius's collection of orations produced by a Strasburg printer in 1598, which included such eloquent pieces as Sambucus's *oratio* over Maximilian II, and Cromer's *laudatio* of Sigismund August. Still, Krzysztof Warszewicki's efforts played an important role in the public relationship campaign to secure lasting fame for the one Polish king of Hungarian blood who defeated Muscovy in more than one campaign.

Yet there exists a rational explanation for Báthori's 'Paduan legend'. His nephew, István Báthori the younger, studied in Padua between 1571 and 1573 and probably learned better Italian than his distinguished uncle (who could read the language but could not speak it).

When a French envoy visited Transylvania in 1573, he was spoken to by the younger Báthori, then Captain of Szatmár, in Italian and the Frenchman recognized that they had studied together in Padua. Some years later when Sigismund Báthori decided to side with the Emperor, the 'pro-Turkish' younger István Báthori had to flee for his life, seeking refuge with his brother András, Bishop of Warmia, in the kingdom of Poland. Later he married a Polish woman, Zofia Kostka, and died in Poland in 1601. There is an entry in an album of matriculation, according to which he visited Padua once again shortly before his death. It is likely that the coincidence of these two names led some scholars to believe and maintain the legend that the István Báthori who studied at the University of Padua was no one else but the learned and valiant Hungarian-born king of Poland.

¹⁴ Melchior Junius, *Orationum ex historicis tam veteribus quam Recentionibus*, in *Eloquentia studiosorum gratiam*, Strasbourg, 1598.

K. Benda- L. Tardy, *Pierre Lescalopier utazása Erdélybe*, Budapest, 1982, 72.
 Veress. 43

CHAPTER FOUR

EULOGIES OF KOCHANOWSKI IN SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ENCYCLOPAEDIAS

In recent years and partly in commemoration of the 400th anniversary of Jan Kochanowski's death, much has been written about the reception of his work in foreign countries.¹ By now the influence of Kochanowski's poetry (especially his religious verse) on seventeenth-century German and other, mainly Slavonic, literatures has been fairly well documented. Nonetheless, researchers have failed to notice so far a very early sign of recognition coming, not from the poet's native land or from nearby countries, but from more distant Basle.

The publication which includes a short but enthusiastic eulogy of Kochanowski's is one of those gigantic scholarly compilations that today would be published under the name of an 'encyclopaedia of arts', or perhaps a dictionary of quotations. It is the *Theatrum humanae vitae* of 1586 (1587) printed by Eusebius Episcopus and edited by Theodor Zwinger. In fact, the book was originally compiled by Konrad Lycostenes: Zwinger merely edited and enlarged it. The first edition was published as early as 1565 in Basle under a slightly different title (Theatrum vitae humanae), then republished in Paris in 1571 in a considerably enlarged form. As for the 1586 (extending into 1587) third, Basle edition, it once again added much new information to the previous edition, the number of its pages growing from 3455 to 4373. This latter edition is divided into twenty-nine books and runs into four large folios. In sheer volume few other European publications could have competed with it at the time; it was also amazingly popular - in present-day Cambridge libraries alone I found nine copies of what must have been a very expensive book.²

¹ The fullest account is by Tadeusz Ulewicz, *Oddziaływanie europejskie Jana Kochanowskiego*, Wrocław, itd. Ossolineum, 1976 (Nauka dla wszystkich).

² H.M. Adams, Catalogue of Books Printed on the Continent of Europe 1501-1600 in Cambridge Libraries, Vol.II. Cambridge University Press, 1967, 359.

Jan Kochanowski is mentioned in Volume 4 of Book III, on page 1155, under the heading 'Characteris Poetae'. Here Zwinger enumerates a number of Greek and Latin poets and also lists some of their 'modern' rivals. This admittedly short list covers Italy, Spain, France, Germany and Poland, the most noteworthy poets of which are Dante Alighieri, Petrarch, Joannes de Mena, Clement Marot, Theodore Beza and a certain "Joannes Saxo". Of these the first two need no introduction. As for 'Joannes' or Juan de Mena (1412-1446), he was a Spanish poet who wrote lofty moralistic verse such as "El laberinto de fortuna" (also known as "Las trescientas"), in which he compares the ancients with the moderns to the detriment of the latter. He was widely read in the sixteenth century, 'almost alone among medieval Spanish poets'. Marot and Beza find a place on Zwinger's list both as Protestants and translators of the *Psalms of* David into French. As for 'Joannes Saxo', it must be the Latinized form of the German poet Hans Sachs (1494-1576) who, among other things, wrote a poem to Martin Luther hailing him as 'the nightingale of Wittenberg'. After mentioning these well-known poets of the recent past and his own age, Zwinger makes the following statement: 'At IOAN Cohanovvius ipsum Parnassum cum Musis in mediam Sarmatiam tanta cum felicitate et dexteritate traduxit, omni genere metri Davidicos hymnos sermone patrio (per)secutus, ut non magis vario vel in Italica, vel in Gallica lingua decantati potuerint' (But Jan Kochanowski transferred the Parnassus itself with the Muses to the very centre of Sarmatia with such a felicity and finesse by rendering in his native tongue David's hymns in all sorts of meters that they could have hardly been sung in a greater variety either in the Italian or in the French language.)

This is high praise indeed, and the first one that we find in print by a Western contemporary of Kochanowski. (While the German-Latin poet Paul Melissus thought highly of Kochanowski's poetry, he expressed his admiration only in a letter to J.M. Wacker). In Zwinger's opinion, Jan Kochanowski's paraphrases of the Psalms are in their form more ingenious and diversified than the Italian or French versions; in other words, they are probably superior to the versions by Clement Marot. *Psalterz Dawidów* was published in Cracow already in 1579, and by the early 1580s their translator's fame was already well established among educated Poles. All the same, it is pertinent to ask from where the Swiss editor of *Theatrum humanae vitae* got his information.

³ The Penguin Companion to Literature. European. Vol.2, Harmondsworth, 1969, 528.

⁴ Ulewicz, op.cit. 24.

Theodor Zwinger (1533-1588) was a well-educated and erudite man with the reputation of a polymath. Although he obtained a medical doctorate in Padua, he was also elected to Chair in Greek (1565) and Ethics (1571) at the University of Basle. During his career he encountered students from all parts of Europe and also happened to be the nephew of Oporinus, printer of most Polish publications that saw the light of the day in Basle.⁵ Zwinger's student years at Padua actually coincided with those of Jan Kochanowski's and it is possible that they knew one another personally. In Padua, though, Kochanowski was trying his hand at Latin verse at best; as for Polish, he began to write poetry in his native tongue somewhat later, either in 1557, or after his final return to Poland in 1559. On the other hand, from 1570 to 1585 the University of Basle was much frequented by Poles - we find there Andrzej Firlej, "palatinus Cracoviensis" and Jan Osmólski, the Gorajski brothers, Piotr and Adam, both ardent Protestants in 1579, and in 1581/82 Mikolaj Ostroróg and Krzysztof Lubieniecki, to mention only a few of the better known visitors.

The 1586 edition of *Theatrum humanae vitae* seems to confirm our suspicion about Zwinger's devotion to his Polish friends. There are two Poles amongst the people to whom individual books of the encyclopaedia are dedicated - Mikolaj Firlej and Jan Osmólski - as well as a 'resident in Poland', that is the Hungarian Humanist Andreas Dudith, ex-bishop and retired imperial diplomat who lived in Wrocław and was a friend of Kochanowski's. Jan Osmólski was also a personal friend of the author of *Psalterz Dawidów* and, indeed, some of Kochanowski's early poems survived only thanks to the famous *sylwa* owned by Jan Osmólski of Prawiedniki, which is today among the much-valued possessions of the National Library in Warsaw.⁶

In tracing Theodor Zwinger's most likely informant about Kochanowski's excellent versions of the Psalms, we should follow the lead given by Osmólski's biography. Jan Osmólski (about 1510-1593/4) was a Calvinist magnate and patron of scholars and writers. Apart from Kochanowski he maintained friendly relations with other poets such as Mikolaj Rej and Andrzej Trzecieski. In 1576 he suddenly left Poland and settled down in Basle where he bought a house and attended lectures at the university. As Stanislaw Kot pointed out, Osmólski cultivated the

⁵ Waldemar Voisé, *Europolonica*, Ossolineum, Wroclaw, etc. 1981, 66.

⁶ cf. J. Pelc, 'Wiersze Jana Kochanowskiego w rękopisie Osmolskiego' (Kochanowski's poems in the Osmólski Manuscript), *Miscellanea Staropolskie 4*, 1972, 40.

⁷ Stanislaw Kot, 'Basel und Polen', Zeitschrift für Schweizerische Geschichte 30, 1950, 88.

friendship of several Basle professors including J.J. Grynaeus and Theodor Zwinger. While the self-exiled Polish gentleman scholar returned for a short time to Poland in 1578, he went on living in Basle from that year to 1585. From these dates it transpires that he was in Switzerland at the time when Kochanowski's *Psalterz* left the printer in Poland and was in close contact with Zwinger throughout the whole period; moreover, he could probably read Italian and French well enough to draw a comparison between translations of the same text, in this case David's Psalms. On the basis of these facts we can safely surmise that Zwinger's appreciative passage about Jan Kochanowski was inspired by none other than Jan Osmólski.

Zwinger's short entry on Kochanowski in an encyclopaedia used throughout Europe continued to be an important source of information throughout the seventeenth century. In spite of the growing increase of interest in the vernacular in a number of European countries, the international language of scholars remained Latin, and encyclopaedias compiled in that language borrowed material from Zwinger's work without making proper attribution to Theatrum humanae vitae. Such an undertaking was Beyerlinck's Magnum theatrum vitae humanae first published in Cologne in seven volumes from 1621 to 1631. The editor. Laurentius Beyerlinck (1578-1627), was a Catholic, teaching theology at the Jesuit College in Antwerp. It is in Volume 6 of this vast, and in that age very popular, encyclopaedia that the names of a few Polish authors appear, for example that of Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł in the chapter on "Peregrinatio" (184-185), Marcin Cromer in connection with "Boleslaus Polonorum Dux" (201) and finally, Jan Kochanowski. On page 484 of Beverlinck's encyclopaedia, Zwinger's text on Kochanowski is repeated without any change, asserting how successfully and in what varied form the Polish poet translated David's Psalms into Polish. Nonetheless, neither Beyerlinck, nor his indexer (for the editor had died already in 1627) had the vaguest notion of European geography, for in the Index Generalis the following information is given: "Ioannes Cochanovvius Parnassum in Pannoniam (!) induxit".

Kochanowski's praise in Beyerlinck's encyclopaedia clearly escaped the attention of the editors of the two-volume collection *Jan Kochanowski*, 1584-1984, *Epoka-Twórczość-Recepcja*. This is surprising, for the book's 1631 edition is still extant in no less than seven Polish libraries and

⁸ Polski Słownik Biograficzny, XXIV.Ossolineum, Wrocław, etc., 1979, 372.

⁹ Laurentius Beyerlinck, *Magnum theatrum vitae humanae*, Antverp 1631, Vol.7, 339.

¹⁰ Wydawnictwo Lubelskie, 1989.