1. Introduction: European reception of Goslicius’ treatise

Of all the early Polish literary works which developed a readership in England, Goslicius’ treatise *De Optimo Senatore* (editio princeps Venice, 1568) enjoys a singular position in terms both of the length of time for which it has been present in the awareness of English-speaking readers as well as in the speed with which it reached them. It was translated and published in England as *The Counsellor* in 1598. But documentary evidence as well as the text of the translation itself shows it was in circulation in England well before that date, both in the original Latin and in translation. The indications are that it was read and used by specific social groups: university professors and students, the legal profession, politicians, courtiers, churchmen and controversialist writers – before it reached the hands of Shakespeare.

The two crucial factors that endowed the book with a cosmopolitan appeal and facilitated its way to English readers were its Latinity and its Venetian publishing house. Writing on the status and duties of the Senator or Counsellor, in other words the key non-monarchical political personage in the early modern state, Goslicius addressed the current political issues of his native land, but did so in a language and style that found a ready response in many other European countries. If he had not put his ideas into Latin, his treatise would never have been read by Englishmen first-hand, nor translated for the benefit of a wider group not proficient enough to read it in Latin. By publishing in the Venetian intellectual emporium he put his treatise directly onto the international market for the exchange of political ideas, making it noticeable and accessible to the itinerant English scholars, merchants, and noblemen who visited Venice and
the nearby University of Padua, where he had himself spent a few years enjoying and contributing to its international atmosphere of scholarship (Bałuk-Ulewiczowa 2009: 11, 15–16, 69, 84, 104–5, 131–2).

A third important factor that conditioned the alacrity with which De Optimo Senatore attracted the attention of English recipients was its subject-matter. What Goslicius wrote and prescribed was of topical interest not only for his countrymen in the Poland-Lithuania of the late 1560s, but in a curious twist of circumstances its content would soon be relevant to problems with which servants of the Elizabethan state were becoming more and more preoccupied as of the 1570s.

2. English 16th-century manuscript translations of Goslicius’ treatise

Today we have two English translations of De Optimo Senatore extant in manuscript copies, both preceding the 1598 edition by well over a decade. The text of one of them eventually found its way to the printing-press in 1598. This version, the translation of both books of the original treatise, is preserved in the Ogden Manuscript (No. 14 of the Ogden Collection now housed in the Special Collections of University College Library, London). The copyist recorded the dates – 9th April and 23rd May 1584 respectively – when he finished inscribing the text of the two books in a fine secretary hand into a handsome volume now bound in red leather. The copy was in the Duke of Northumberland’s collection before its purchase by the well-known linguist and psychologist C.K. Ogden, and the physical appearance of the copybook suggests it was made on commission for a wealthy, probably aristocratic individual (Scott 1961: 18, 40; Bałuk-Ulewiczowa 2009: 139–40). The dates (notwithstanding the year 1587 on the title page and in other parts of the copybook) indicate that the translation was completed no later than by the spring of 1584. The second translation, only of Goslicius’ Book One, is contemporaneous and was done by one Robert Chester, most probably the son of gentlefolk of Royston in Cambridgeshire and a Cambridge law student aged 19 at the time. Although the manuscript, now preserved in the British Library, is undated, the dedication to Justice Thomas Meade of Elmdon in Essex, a member of the Middle Temple who sat on the bench of the Court of Common Pleas from 1577 until his death in 1585, dates Chester’s translation to 1584–1585 (Foss 1870: 442; Hutchinson 1902: 161; Williamson 1937: 74; Bałuk-Ulewiczowa 2009: 16, 132–8). The material evidence provided by the two manuscripts shows that Goslicius was a fairly well-known author in England by the early 1580s, arousing the interest of readers ranging from financially resourceful lords to humble undergraduates, amateur transla-
tors. In addition, the identification of Robert Chester as the Cambridge undergraduate (not the poet of Love’s Martyr or Rosalins Complaint: cf. Grosart’s Introduction VIII in Chester 1878; Brown 1914: XLVII–LII; Bałuk-Ulewiczowa 2009: 134–5) serves as the first pointer to the legal circle at the University of Cambridge as a group of readers interested in Goslicius’ discourse (Venn and Venn 1922–58: online; 1913: 146).

2.1. Association with the University of Cambridge

A Cambridge connection is confirmed by two further circumstances. The first is the similarity of certain aspects of the content of Goslicius’ treatise to that of De Republica Anglorum by the eminent English legal expert, Sir Thomas Smith, the University’s first Regius Professor of Civil Law (Venn and Venn 1922–58: online). Both works eulogize the legal and constitutional systems of their respective commonwealths and – more importantly – both dwell with special commendation on the concept of the Mixed State, composed of three constituents: King, Lords, and People, each of which made its own contribution to the governing of the state (Smith 1583: online; Bałuk-Ulewiczowa 2009: 69). The idea was by no means new: it went back to antiquity and the writings of the Greek and Roman philosophers and political theorists, most particularly to Polybius writing on the constitutional history of Rome. However, in the latter half of the 16th century and the rise of the absolute monarchies it was a controversial concept, challenged by authorities like Bodin. Yet in the realities of Poland-Lithuania and, imminently, England, by the late 1560s both with the prospect of the extinction of the ruling dynasty looming ahead, practical solutions had to be found. In the Polish-Lithuanian case, which had espoused the theory of elective monarchy well before that time (Sucheni-Grabowska 1988: 1–4; Bałuk-Ulewiczowa 2009: 71), it would be a question of putting theory into practice and building up a reputation as a truly “mixed commonwealth” or elective monarchy. As regards England, which was facing the same dilemma, it is not surprising that the Queen’s most powerful servants, her privy counsellors and legal advisers, were anxiously looking around for European models, even if on the quiet behind Her Majesty’s back and more prudently than the luckless Peter Wentworth who durst raise the issue of the succession in Parliament (Hasler 1981: online). It would not be far from the truth to say that the accession of James I was effected by means of a quasi-election accomplished by the chief ministers of a monarch who even on her deathbed had refused to indicate her successor (Croft 2002: online). Another biographical point shared by Smith and Goslicius was their academic sojourn in the University of Padua, the scholarly milieu where both penned their respective treatises.
The second Cambridge link is associated with the University’s legal circle as well, but also with the world of literature in its controversialist stream. It is Gabriel Harvey (Venn and Venn 1922–58: online), who mentioned Goslicius’ *De Optimo Senatore* in *Pierces Supererogation* (1593), apparently inciting his arch-antagonist Thomas Nashe to return the volley by making a satirical remark, possibly alluding to Goslicius, in *Have with You to Saffron Walden* (1596):

> They complaine of corruptions; and worthily, where corruptions encroche (I am no patron of corruptions): but what a surging sea of corruptions would overflow within few years, in case the sword of so great and ample autoritie, as that in Ierusalem most capitall, or this in Geneva most redoubted, were put into the hand of so little capacitie in government, so little Discretion in Discipline, so little judgement in causes, so little moderation in living, so little constancie in saying, or dooing, so little gravitie in behaviour, or so little whatsoever should procure reverence in a Magistrate, or establish good order in a Commonwealth. Travaile through ten thousand Parishes in England, and when you have taken a favourable vew of their substantiallest, and suffi cientest Aldermen, tell me in good sooth, what a comely showe they would make in a Consistorie; or with how solemne a presence they would furnish a Councell Table. I believe, Grimaldus did little thinke of any such Senatours, when he writ de Optimo Senatore; or did Doctour Bartholmew Philip in his Perfect Counsellor, ever dreame of any such Counsellours (Harvey 1593: 114; see Bałuk-Ulewiczowa 2009: 16‒17, 147),

... I answer nothing else but that he is idle and newfangled, beginning many new things but soon weary of them ere he be half entered, and that he hath too much acquaintance in London ever to do any good, being like a courtesan that can deny no man, or a grave commonwealth’s senator that thinks he is not born for himself alone, but, as old Laertes in Homer’s *Odyssea*, *Dum reliqua omnia curabat, seipsum negligebat*, caring for all other things else, sets his own estate at six and seven (Nashe 1596: 12; see Bałuk-Ulewiczowa 2009: 16‒17).

The fact that Goslicius’ treatise and ideas became accessible to rumbustious men of letters like Harvey and Nashe, who eventually had to be “tempered” with an injunction prohibiting them from fabricating further satires (Arber 1876: III. 677‒8), attests to the wide readership *De Optimo Senatore* had managed to win by the early 1590s.

Another attestation of readership in the literary milieu dates to 1587 and comes from the pen of the poet Maurice Kyffin, who was secretary to the alchemist John Dee and accompanied Dee on his continental travels, including the sojourn in Poland. Kyffin composed a poetic eulogy entitled *The Blessednes of Brytaine* to congratulate the Queen at the beginning of the thirtieth year of her reign (published November 1587). In one of his marginal notes he quotes a passage from Goslicius’ Latin treatise and gives a page reference, which means he must have had a copy at hand while composing the poem:

Kyffin may well have come across Goslicius’ book during his stay in Poland; his dedication of the poem to the Earl of Essex and the location of the quote – in the midst of citations from the Scriptures and the Classics – offers a further indication of the familiarity Goslicius must have been enjoying with English readers by the late 1580s. In 1592 Robert Beale, one of Walsingham’s assistants and a clerk to the Privy Council, put what was perhaps an oblique reference to Goslicius in his *Treatise on the Office of a Councellor and Principall Secretary to Her Majesty*, observing that others had already written “of such qualities as are fit to be in one that should be a Prince’s Secretarie or Councillor”:

*Imprimis, my meaning is not to speake anie thinge of such qualities as are fitt to be in one that should be a Prince’s Secretarie or Councillor. Th at argument hath been handled by others; and whom her Ma[jes]tie shall call to that place my simple Judg-ment must thinke suffi cientlie qualifi ed* (quoted after Read 1925: I, 423‒4).

2.2. The Ogden manuscript

So much for the citations and material evidence. A scrutiny of the text of the Ogden manuscript translation, juxtaposed with the dates, offers a fascinating speculation. The pivotal indication is the fact that the translation is a censored version of Goslicius’ original treatise. The Ogden manuscript version misses out two crucial passages: a short but cogent assertion of Goslicius’ preference for elective rather than for hereditary monarchy (Goslicius 1568: f.8r‒v), and a large section from a passage on religion (Goslicius 1568: f.53r‒55v), and it is this latter omission that supplies the essential clue. Curiously, though, out of 50 sentences in Goslicius’ original passage in Book 2 of the treatise, 29 were completely omitted from *The Counsellor*, 2 were omitted partially, and 1 paraphrased or mistranslated in both the manuscript copy and the printed edition. In this key component of the ideology of *De Optimo Senatore* Goslicius argued on behalf of the Roman Catholic bishops of Poland, defending their status as the principal senators of the realm, against a concerted attack by a largely Protestant Lower House intent on curbing their power in the secular business of the state, especially their jurisdictive prerogative to bring cases against Non-Catholics to the ecclesiastical courts (Sucheni-Grabowska 1988: 7‒11; Bałuk-Ulewiczowa 2009: 73). The cuts and changes in the translation are such that all direct reference to Rome, apostolic succession and Catholic dogma have been excised, as might be expected. But what has been left reads like a defence of an established Church, especially its hierarchy and its authority in the secu-
lar matters of the state. It is not difficult to reach a conclusion that this rump translation, set in the time-and-place context of Elizabethan England in the early 1580s, sounds like a refutation of the Presbyterian arguments against the authority of the Established Anglican Church. John Whitgift, the deeply committed leader of the Anglican apologetic campaign, was appointed to the See of Canterbury in August 1583 – a matter of months before the dates recorded in the Ogden manuscript – and significantly, he was yet another Cambridge man, having been Professor of Divinity as of 1563, Master of Pembroke Hall and later of Trinity, and Vice-Chancellor in 1570. He was also the Queen’s chaplain and a privy counsellor. And he was the first Archbishop of Canterbury to acquire the right to exercise censorship over all materials going to print (Venn and Venn 1922‒58: online; Strype 1822: online). Only a translator who was proficient in the theological debates of the time could have pre-censored the problematic sentences skilfully enough to obtain the expedient cut-out we get in the Ogden manuscript. Moreover, since Goslicius employed arguments borrowed directly from the documents of the Council of Trent (which had closed in 1563), it is inconceivable that anyone except a trusted Anglican apologist would have been allowed access to such materials. The conclusion which may be drawn is twofold: first, that the translation of De Optimo Senatore preserved in the Ogden manuscript and printed as The Counsellor nearly fifteen years later must have been done at least with the knowledge and consent, or more likely on commission from, Archbishop Whitgift. And secondly, that Goslicius’ treatise may have been deliberately selected for translation to serve as a refutation of Presbyterian assertions.

2.3. Historical circumstances delaying publication

The question arises, though, why The Counsellor was not published soon after the translation was completed, but languished in manuscript copy (or copies) until 1598. The answer is simple enough: the expediency of the lofty and cultivated style of an expurgated Goslicius was rendered null and void by the outbreak in 1588‒1589 of the Marprelate controversy, with the publication of eight samizdat tracts in a vitriolic Presbyterian campaign against the authority of the Anglican hierarchy. Goslicius’ civilized rhetoric was no longer the right material to answer Martin Marprelate’s rabid satire. The only question outstanding is why the Anglican apologists had delayed with publication, if the translation was good enough to be copied in an elaborate manuscript by the spring of 1584.
2.4. Publication in 1598

The corollary is why the translation was revitalized and published in 1598, going through the standard procedure for entry in the Stationers’ Register, that is clearance by the censorship authorities, in March 1598 (Arber 1876: III, 105). I answer this question in the context of the Działyński embassy of July – August 1597, and refer those interested to my 2009 book on Goslicius, where the Shakespeare connection is discussed at length (Bałuk-Ulewiczowa 2009: 152‒6, 167‒209).

There is, however, one point of interest in the Działyński episode which must be enumerated within the context of the prehistory of English-language publications of Goslicius. It is the remark made by Queen Elizabeth in her highly emotional impromptu response to the tone and content she had not expected in the Polish Ambassador’s oration. I quote the relevant passage in the original Latin and in my own translation into English, stressing the highly emotional and impromptu, unpremeditated character of the utterance:

Quod ad te attinet, tu mihi videris Libros multos perlegisse, Libros tamen Principum ne attigisse, sed prorsus ignorare quid inter Reges conveniat.

[As regards yourself, you seem to me to have read many books, but never to have come across the books of princes, and you are totally ignorant of how to behave when acting on behalf of kings before other kings.] (Mercurius Sarmaticus; Bałuk-Ulewiczowa 2009: 153)

3. Concluding remarks

The “books of princes” which Ambassador Działyński had allegedly never come across were the mirrors of princely behaviour, the de institutione principis class of works so popular with Renaissance readers, especially in England (as Ruth Kelso shows in her bibliography of these works, running to nearly a thousand items). But as a representative of Poland and on the principle of national stereotype he could have been expected to be familiar with the mirror of the ideal senator written by his fellow countryman. In her enraged retort Elizabeth more than suggested that she knew of Goslicius’ mirror-book, perhaps indeed that she knew it, and had read it.
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