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Old Polish Stemmata and “Proto-emblems” Prior to the Publishing of *Emblematum Liber* by Alciatus (1531)

The beginnings of emblematics are usually associated with the Milan jurist Andreas Alciatus and the publishing of his *Emblematum liber* collection in 1531,¹ traditionally considered to be the first book of emblems to have ever been printed and one that initiated a rich tradition of producing similar publications. Alciatus himself was dubbed by scholars the “emblematum pater et princeps” as early as in the seventeenth century,² which undoubtedly reinforced his legend as the inventor of the genre enjoying such wide popularity in early modernity.³ The general perception of Alciatus’ pivotal role has persisted despite some doubts about who should actually be credited with coming up with the idea of combining ekphrastic epigrams with allegorical illustrations and despite the fact that similar compositions can be found in publications prior to 1531.⁴ What, however, cannot be disputed is that the great popularity of his collection sparked an emblem fashion

¹ For more on the first edition of *Emblematum liber*, see e.g. B.F. Scholz, “The 1531 Augsburg Edition of Alciato’s *Emblemata*: A Survey of Research,” *Emblematica*, 5 (1995), pp. 213–254.

² See e.g. B. Balbín, *Verisimilia humaniorum disciplinarum, seu Judicium privatum de omni literarum (quas humaniores appellant) artificio...* (Lipsiae: apud Jacobum Gerdes et Johann Christian Laurer, 1687), p.232.

³ The popularity of this phenomenon is attested by the bibliographical data collected by Peter Maurice Daly. According to the scholar, more than 3000 books of emblems by around 700 authors appeared in print across Europe between 1531 and 1700. See P.M. Daly, *Literature in the Light of the Emblem* (Toronto, 1976), p. 106. The collection by Andreas Alciatus had the astounding number of 171 editions until the end of the 17th century; lists of the editions can be found i.a. in H. Green, *Andrea Alciati and His Books of Emblems: A Biographical and Bibliographical Study* (London, 1872); M. Praz, *Studies in the Seventeenth-Century Imagery* (Rome, 1964), pp. 248–252.

⁴ The issue of compositions that could qualify as emblems predating 1531 has recently been raised in S. Plotke, “Pre-Alciato Emblems? Daniel Agricola’s *Vita Beati* from the Year 1511,” in S. McKeown (ed.), *The International Emblem: From Incunabula to the Internet. Selected Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference of the Society for Emblem Studies, 28th July–1st August, 2008, Winchester College* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 69–81.

that spread across Europe like wildfire and captivated the readers' interest for a long time. The *Emblematum liber* became a model whose structure was faithfully reproduced and, with the passage of time, complemented with other elements such as commentaries or various appendices, like a selection of reproductions of Roman coins added by Sambucus.⁵ Thus the title accorded to Alciatus does seem to be fully justified regardless of whether he is indeed the author of the first emblem ever or not.

Theoretical discussions about the origins of the emblem have usually omitted the existence of earlier compositions of visual and textual elements whose structure closely resembles, or is identical to, the one known from the *Emblematum liber*. The decisive factor here might be that they are mostly singular occurrences, so they were not grouped into any cycle or collection that one could call a book of emblems. Nevertheless, there are some examples that do, in fact, fulfill that condition, too.⁶ One of them, as has been pointed out by Seraina Plotke, is *Vita Beati*, a life of St Beatus written by the Minorite Daniel Agricola and published by Adam Petri in 1511.⁷ The story of the Saint's life is divided into fifteen chapters. Each of them is preceded by a woodcut with an inscription. Both the cuts and texts tackle selected episodes from the Saint's life in an allegorical way, focusing on the universal moral message to be found in them. Not without reason, Plotke sees a clear connection with Alciatus' pieces here, and she speaks quite openly about the emblematic quality of the compositions that the *Vita Beati* contains. So the fact that the book by Agricola was published twenty years before the *Emblematum liber* takes on a special importance. Thus, the Swiss scholar undermines the opinion that the collection by Alciatus is really the first book of emblems to have ever been published. Yet it needs to be stressed that the example provided by Plotke is by no means the earliest. As far as chronology is concerned, this title could go to other authors as well. So, for instance, the form of *Grammatica figurata* by Matthias Ringmann closely resembles that of the *Vita Beati* as well as *Emblematum liber*.⁸ This peculiar discourse on Donatus' grammar explains particular grammar rules

⁵ M. R.-Alföldi, "Zu den frühen Illustrationen numismatischer Werke. Die *Emblemata* des Johannes Sambucus, 1531–1584," in R. Albert and R. Cunz (eds), *Wissenschaftsgeschichte der Numismatik. Beiträge zum 17. deutschen Numismatikertag 3.–5. März 1995 in Hannover* (Speyer, 1995), pp. 71–95; A.S.Q. Visser, *Joannes Sambucus and the Learned Image. The Use of the Emblem in Late-Renaissance Humanism* (Leiden, 2005), pp. 44–46.

⁶ See Plotke, "Pre-Alciato Emblems."

⁷ D. Agricola, *Almi confessoris et anachorete Beati, Helveciorum primi evangelistae et apostoli, a sancto Petro missi vita, iam pridem exarata* (Basileae: ex officina ... Adae Petri de Langedorff, 1511).

⁸ M. Ringmann, *Grammatica Figurata. Octo partes orationis secundum Donati editionem et regulam Remigii ... expressae ...* (Saint-Dié: Gauthier Lud, 1509). See also a facsimile edition with an introduction: *Die Grammatica figurata des Mathias Ringmann (Philesius Vogesigena) in Faksimiledruck Herausgegeben mit einer Einleitung von Fr. R. v. Wieser*, (Strassburg, 1905).

through various allegories.⁹ The most significant concepts are also presented in para-emblematic compositions consisting of an allegorical woodcut and a piece of verse placed on both sides of the representation that it is meant to explain. Thus, for instance, verb is represented as king, which refers to its ruling function in the sentence (see e.g. the term *verbum regens*). And this is how the verse added to the woodcut conveys it:

Rex verbum designat agens patiensque inimicos,
Nonnunquam neutrum pace vigente gerens.¹⁰

As might be expected, adverb (*adverbium*) is represented as queen, the king’s companion.¹¹ Ringmann’s textbook contains eight such text-and-visual compositions in total (the ones referring to grammatical concepts are: verb as king, noun as priest, adverb as queen, conjunction as cup-bearer, exclamation as jester, preposition as bell-ringer, and participle as monk). Had it been published after 1531, it would surely be regarded as an emblem book. Contemporary scholars have noted the symbolic potential of the text-and-visual representations found in the book, even though they have not been ready to characterize them as emblems.¹² An argument in favor of applying the concept of emblem to Ringmann’s work could also be the fact that it concludes with an emblematic printer’s device, a form rarely encountered. The visual part of the device depicts an angel holding two heraldic shields. And two distichs placed below inform about the place and the individual responsible for the printing:

Est locus in Vogeso iam notus ubique per orbem,
A Deodate tuo nomine nomen habens.¹³
Hic Gualtherus Lud necnon Philesius¹⁴ ipse
Presserunt miris haec elementa typis.¹⁵

The piece of verse is a nice touch that adds to the attractiveness of the traditional printer’s device. Moreover, the way it is phrased attests to the typographer’s knowledge of humanist culture. Similar compositions can be found in other prints of the period.¹⁶ Let us, for example, take a look at the astrological

⁹ For more on the symbolism employed in the text, see J.-C. Margolin, “Le symbolisme dans la *Grammatica figurata* de Mathias Ringmann (1509),” *Bulletin de l’Association Guillaume Budé*, 1 (1979), pp. 72–87.

¹⁰ Ringmann, *Grammatica Figurata*, f. 19r.

¹¹ Ringmann, *Grammatica Figurata*, f. 23r.

¹² J.-C. Margolin, “Mathias Ringmann’s *Grammatica Figurata*, or, Grammar as a Card Game,” *Yale French Studies*, 47 (1972), pp. 33–46.

¹³ The verse refers to Sainte-Dié-des-Vosges in Lorraine as the place where *Grammatica figurata* was published.

¹⁴ Philesius is the author’s pseudonym that appears in the *Grammatica figurata*.

¹⁵ Ringmann, *Grammatica Figurata*, f. 32r.

¹⁶ e.g. emblematic devices are mentioned in J. Kiliańczyk-Zięba, *Sygnety drukarskie w Rzeczypospolitej XVI wieku. Źródła ikonograficzne i treści ideowe* (Kraków, 2015), pp. 142–150.

discourse *De diebus* by Agostino Nifo, as published by Alessandro Calcedonio and Giacomo Panzio in Venice in 1504. As was the practice, beneath the figure of an angel there is a distich carrying a distinctly moralizing message. Interestingly enough, the verse is in fact an almost verbatim quote from Martial (*Epigrammata* 1.40):

Qui ducis vultus et non vides ista libenter,
Omnibus invidias, livide, nemo tibi.¹⁷

As a result, the device, in conjunction with the epigram, becomes a kind of verbal-and-visual equivalent of a poem to Zoilus, a malicious and biased critic.¹⁸ And let us just point out in passing that printer's devices supplied with epigrams are just another example of para-emblematic forms preceding the publication of *Emblematum liber*. As can be seen, they could simultaneously refer to other literary forms closely associated with the editorial frame of the early printed book.

A closer look at the compositions of word and image that are chronologically prior to the famous collection by Alciatus may shed some light on the birth of the emblem as a new genre, or medium, combining elements of literature and visual art. Usually, when trying to define the grounds on which Renaissance, and then Baroque, emblematics came to flourish, one draws the readers' attention to attempts of recreating the universal language.¹⁹ Almost all such accounts mention Horapollo's *Hieroglyphica*, a treatise that caught interest of scholars and the Neoplatonic thinkers of fifteenth-century Florence.²⁰ Another line of investigation focuses on Francesco Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, a tale interesting on many levels, published by Aldus Manutius.²¹ Whereas looking for connections with Antiquity, which exerted an enormous influence on Renaissance culture, one usually comes across the *Imagines* by Philostratus and the *Physiologus* by an unknown author. Yet another issue is that of the Greek Anthology, which Alciatus was keenly

¹⁷ A. Nifo, *De diebus criticis seu decretoriis aureus liber ...* (Venice: Alessandro Calcedonio and Giacomo Panzio, 1504), f. D4r.

¹⁸ On poems to Zoilus, see T. Mikulski, *Ród Zoilów, rzecz z dziejów staropolskiej krytyki literackiej* (Warszawa, 1933).

¹⁹ See R. Krzywy, "Wstęp," in A. Alciatus, *Emblematum libellus. Książeczka emblematów*, trans. by A. Dawidziuk, B. Dziadkiewicz, and E. Kustroń-Zaniewska under the supervision of M. Mejor (Warszawa, 2002), pp. XV–XX.

²⁰ On the ties between Horapollo's work and emblematics, see e.g. D.S. Russell, "Emblems and Hieroglyphics: Some Observations on the Beginnings and the Nature of Emblematic Forms," *Emblematica*, 1 (1986), pp. 227–243.

²¹ For more on this work, see e.g. H. Barolini, *Aldus and His Dream Book: An Illustrated Essay* (New York, 1992); L. de Girolami Cheney, "Francesco Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*: A Garden of Neoplatonic Love," in D. Mansueto and E.L. Calogero (eds), *The Italian Emblem: A Collection of Essays* (Glasgow, 2007).

interested in, and he translated some of its epigrams into Latin.²² All these texts certainly had a significant impact on his collection and its content, if not on the structure of the pieces that comprised it.²³

The aforementioned word-and-picture creations, mostly scattered in preliminaries of numerous books, can often be reasonably regarded as emblems. An example worthy of citing here in the first place is a composition by Willibald Pirckheimer added to the 1502 Nuremberg edition of *Amores* by Conradus Celtis. It plays a special role in the collection, as it marks the end of the book. The only thing that makes the work by Pirckheimer different from the emblems by Alciatus is the arrangement of its components. The German scholar places the title first, follows it with a Latin epigram, and the allegorical engraving comes last. As we know, in the classical arrangement of the emblem, the pictorial element occupies the space between the title and the verse. Were it not for this deviation, however, one would need to acknowledge that, as far as form is concerned, both phenomena are fully concordant with each other. The composition bearing the Greek title “ΔΑΦΝΙΦΙΛΟΙΣ” portrays Apollo being chased by Daphne and is meant by the author to be an allegory of a poet seeking fame, which is represented as a laurel wreath. The explanation, as dictated by emblematic convention, can be found in the epigram itself:

Per iuga, per scopulos perque alta cacumina silvae
Hic sequitur Lauram nudus Apollo suam.
Sic quicumque cupit lauri de fronde coronam
Dulcisonaeque suae tangere fila lyrae
Currat, sub placida tandem requiescat ut umbra,
Claudens felici tempora cuncta die.²⁴

It should be stressed that the piece had been created thirty years before the *Emblematum liber* was published. And as already mentioned, it is by no means a singular exception. Numerous other compositions of the kind appeared shortly before and after 1502. Even before that, in the period of incunabula,

²² His translations were published in the collection *Selecta epigrammata Graeca Latine versa, ex septem Epigrammatum Graecorum libris ...* (Basileae: ex aedibus Io. Bebelii, 1529). For more on the dependence of the *Emblematum liber* on the Greek Anthology, see e.g. A. Saunders, “Alciati and the Greek Anthology,” *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 12 (1982), pp. 1–18; M. Tung, “Revisiting Alciato and *The Greek Anthology*: A Documentary Note,” *Emblematica*, 13 (2001), pp. 327–348.

²³ The ease with which the emblem draws from other genres is one of its distinctive features in later times as well, most notably in the 17th century. See e.g. M.K. Górska, “Ut pictura emblemata? Teoria i praktyka,” in A. Bielak (ed.), *Ut pictura poesis/Ut poesis pictura. O związkach literatury i sztuk wizualnych od XVI do XVIII wieku* (Warszawa, 2013), pp. 31–46; M.K. Górska, “Hieroglifik w teorii Rzeczypospolitej (XVII–XVIII w.). Zarys problematyki,” *Terminus*, 25 (2012), pp. 15–46.

²⁴ C. Celtes, *Quattuor libri Amorum secundum quattuor latera Germanie* (Noribergae: sub privilegio Sodalitatis Celticae, 1502), f. 122r.

we encounter “icons,” poems referring to the portrait of an author or person of stature, placed on the title page. An example of that can be found in the 1497 edition of *Opuscula et tractatus* by Felix Hemmerlin, where right below the author’s portrait there is a piece of verse that refers to it.²⁵ Such compositions were mostly meant to encourage the reader to read on, and they filled up the free space of the recently invented title page, which contained no information except a succinct title and, therefore, had a lot of room to spare.²⁶ To fill it, printers started printing woodcuts or various poems below the title. Sometimes they printed both an illustration and a piece of verse, thus creating peculiar word-and-picture compositions that could resemble the emblem. The practice gained even more popularity at the outset of the sixteenth century. For instance, let us take a look at Thomas Murner’s *Ludus studentium Friburgensium*, a book discussing mnemonic methods relying on card games. Its 1512 edition has the title page that features an engraving picturing two people playing cards, and above the picture, there is a piece of verse announcing the book’s topic:

Ingeniosa cohors, ludas paradigmate miro,
 Quod tibi Murnerius condidit ecce Thomas.
 Quo bene si ludis, caute quoque ludere noscis,
 Concito quanta foret, syllaba quaeque scies.²⁷

The relationship between the two elements is rather loose in this case. One could even argue that the cut is but a liberal illustration of the epigram. This is also evinced by the fact that both elements were printed separately in other editions of the text. The title page featured the woodcut only, and the verse was placed at the back of it. It would, therefore, be a stretch to talk about the emblematic quality of this particular decoration, even though, on the first blush, its 1512 version does indeed closely resemble the compositions by Alciatus. Another similar example can be found on the title page of a mathematical treatise by Johannes de Sacro Bosco, *Algorithmus linealis*. The composition consists of a poem and a schematic abacus.²⁸ Here, too, the verse may have functioned on its own, since the illustration is just a graphic addition to it.

The printing practice of complementing the title page with a para-emblematic composition could be encountered in Poland as well. It needs to be noted, however, that it became widespread a little later than in German

²⁵ F. Hemmerlin, *Opuscula et tractatus* [Strassbourg: Drucker des Iordanus, 1497], f. [1]r.

²⁶ For more on the development of the title page in the early years of print, see M.M. Smith, *The Title-Page: Its Early Development, 1460–1510* (London, 2000).

²⁷ T. Murner, *Ludus studentium Friburgensium cum prophetia mirabilis in fine* (Frankfurt, 1512), f. A1r.

²⁸ J. de Sacro Bosco, *Algorithmus linealis cum pulchris conditionibus regule detri ...* (Lipczk: per Melchior Lotter, 1509), f. A1r.

countries or Southern Europe. We can find it in the 1511 edition of *Computus Chirometralis* by Jan of Głogów, published by Jan Haller (see fig. 1). The book produced by the Cracow printer is adorned with a woodcut depicting a personification of astronomy and a distich that stresses out that the discipline is one of the four arts that need to be practiced by learned priests:

Clerus in Ecclesia quattuor sciat esse tenenda:
Grammaticam, musicam, ius canonum atque kalendas.²⁹

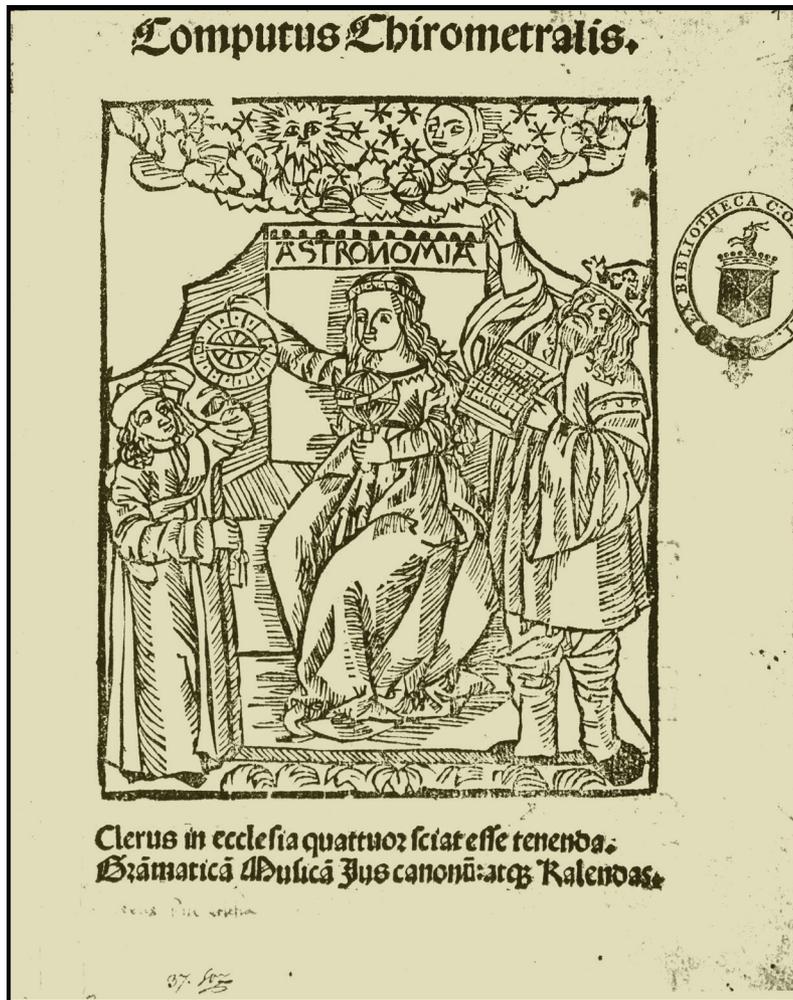


Fig. 1. Jan of Głogów, *Computus Chirometralis* (Cracoviae: expensis Johannis Haller, 1511), f. A1r.

²⁹ Jan of Głogów, *Computus Chirometralis* (Cracoviae: expensis Johannis Haller, 1511), f. A1r.

The connection between the two elements seems very close. It is noteworthy that the verse is located below the woodcut, which is in line with the model in general use later on. On the other hand, however, the composition lacks a title that would resemble a motto. We also need to emphasize that the woodcut depicting astronomy was used by Haller in other situations as well, where it was not accompanied by the epigram. So the illustration was chosen by chance, just for the publishing of Jan of Głogów's work.

In 1512 *Somnia Danielis* published by Florian Ungler appeared. In this case, a composition resembling an emblem was utilized as well. Yet the arrangement of the components is reversed, which is consistent with the prevalent practice of the era: the verse comes first, and the illustration is placed below it.³⁰ It depicts the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar bowing before the prophet Daniel who has just explained the mysterious dreams of the monarch. The verse printed above was composed by the Bavaria-born Rudolph Agricola, who probably wrote it in 1511, before he left Cracow for Buda. The poem, titled "Ad Lectorem," is meant to lure the reader into reading the whole book. By creating an aura of mystery and posing questions about the meanings of various visions, the poet probably wanted to spur interest of the potential buyer of the book. Setting the verse side by side with the biblical scene corresponding to it reinforced the persuasive qualities of the epigram. Other printers used similar solutions. Hieronymus Vietor was especially keen on using picture-and-text compositions when he ran his print office in Vienna. He did not abandon the practice when he moved back to Cracow; one example of it is the title page of *Conservatio sanitatis* by Maciej of Miechów (see fig. 2). Below the title, there is a woodcut depicting twin patron saints of medicine, St Cosmas and St Damian. Below the picture there is a succinct note about the publisher, and yet farther down the page there is a three-distich elegiac epigram.³¹ Its content is in line with the convention of poems addressed to the reader: the piece urges to read on, points out the merits of the book and praises the author. The title of the work, "Conservatio sanitatis," corresponds with the way Alciatus formulated his lemmas later on. The pair of saint medicine men can easily be said to be an allegory of the practices meant to preserve health, just as the depiction of Asclepius in the *Emblematum liber*.³² So the element least consistent with the emblematic convention is the epigram.

³⁰ *Somnia Danielis* [Cracoviae: Florian Ungler, 1512], f. A1r.

³¹ Maciej of Miechów, *Conservatio sanitatis* ... (Cracoviae: per Hieronymum Vietorem, IX 1522), f. A1r.

³² See the "Salus Publica" emblem.

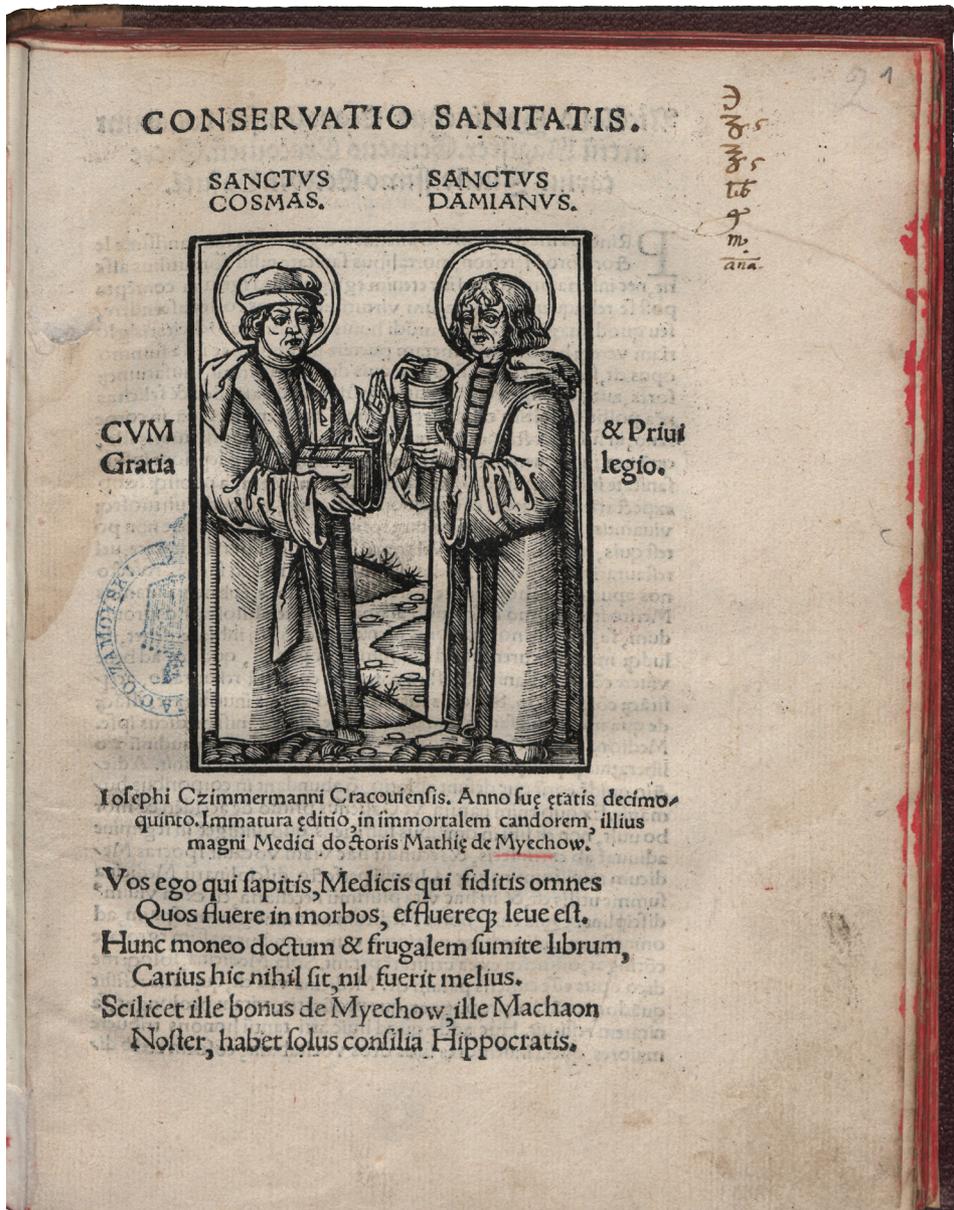


Fig. 2. Maciej of Miechów, *Conservatio sanitatis* ...
(Cracoviae: per Hieronymum Vietorem, IX 1522), f. A1r.

Hieronymus Vietor was especially intent on decorating the editorial frame with stemmata, and it seems that other Cracow printers took to using this form more often following his suit. Franciszek Pilarczyk, a scholar studying poems on coats of arms, is of the opinion that stemmata started appearing in Polish prints in the 1520s.³³ In reality, however, they appeared earlier than that; some examples will be provided below. The Vienna typographer, fighting for his share of the Polish book market, often adorned his prints with various elements related to Poland or her monarchs. An example of that can be found in the 1512 edition of a panegyric on Giovanni Battista Guarini, an Italian diplomat, poet, and playwright. A stemma printed at the end bears evidence that some part of the edition was meant for the Polish market (see fig. 3). It should be noted that its structure resembles the arrangement we have already encountered: the epigram comes first, and the woodcut illustration is placed below. In this case, the poem is provided with a title indicating the literary situation that we are dealing with here: the phrase “Aquila loquitur” reveals that the Latin distich is spoken by the heraldic eagle:

Unguibus exagitat volucres Iovis alis acutis,
Ast ego Tartareum persequare usque genus.³⁴

The woodcut taking up almost the whole page features not only the heraldic emblem of the Kingdom of Poland, but also other heraldic signs associated with the Jagiellon dynasty: the coat of arms of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the so-called Pillars of Gediminas; the coat of arms of Cracow and the emblem of the Cracow Academy. None of these elements, however, has been referred to in the short epigram. It ought to be emphasized that the stemma resonated with the current affairs of the day, bearing testimony to the Vienna publisher’s quick response to the newest events unfolding in Poland and Lithuania. The epigram refers to the Battle of Łopuszno (April 28, 1512), where the joint forces of Poland and Lithuania defeated a twenty-five-thousand-horseman-strong raid of Crimean Tatars. The poem must have been received very well, because Vietor used it as a complement to another stemma in 1518, after he moved to Cracow. The poem is featured in the editorial frame of Justus Decius’ account of the wedding of Sigismund I the Old and Bona Sforza (see fig. 4). Accordingly, it has been coupled with

³³ F. Pilarczyk, *Stemmata w drukach polskich XVI wieku* (Zielona Góra, 1982), p. 24. Much attention to Old Polish stemmata is given in P. Buchwald-Pelcowa, “Na pograniczu emblematów i stemmatów,” in A. Morawińska (ed.), *Słowo i obraz* (Warszawa, 1982), pp. 73–95.

³⁴ J. Pannonius, *Panegyricus in laudem Baptistae Guarini Veronensis praeceptoris sui conditus* (Viennae Austriae: in aedibus Hieronymi Vietoris et Ioannis Singrenii, 1512), f. e4v.

a different woodcut that includes the coat of arms of the bride as well.³⁵ The second time around, however, the poem lost its original political and military context.

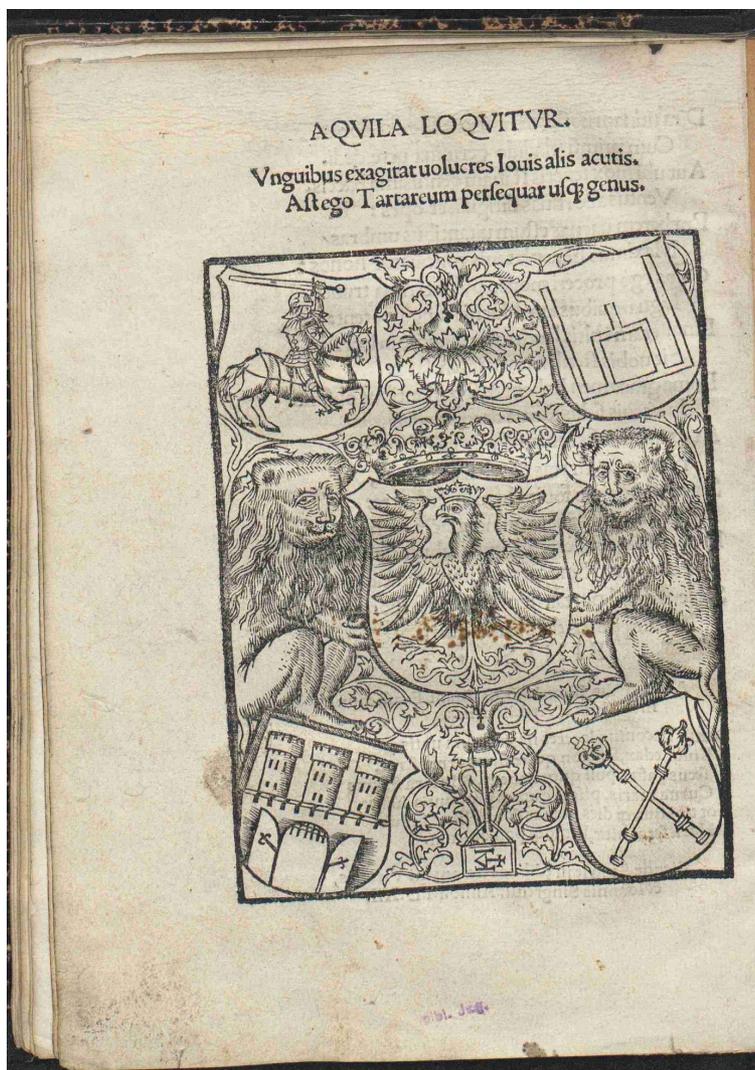


Fig. 3. J. Pannonius, *Panegyricus in laudem Baptistae Guarini Veronensis praeceptoris sui conditus* (Viennae Austriae: in aedibus Hieronymi Vietoris et Ioannis Singrenii, 1512), f. e4v.

³⁵ J.L. Decius, *Diarii et earum quae memoratu digna in splendidissimis... Sigismundi Poloniae regis et ... Bonae Mediolani Bariq[ue] ducis principis Rossani nuptiis gesta ... descriptio* (Graccouiae: per Hieronymum Vietorem, 1518), f. h₆v.

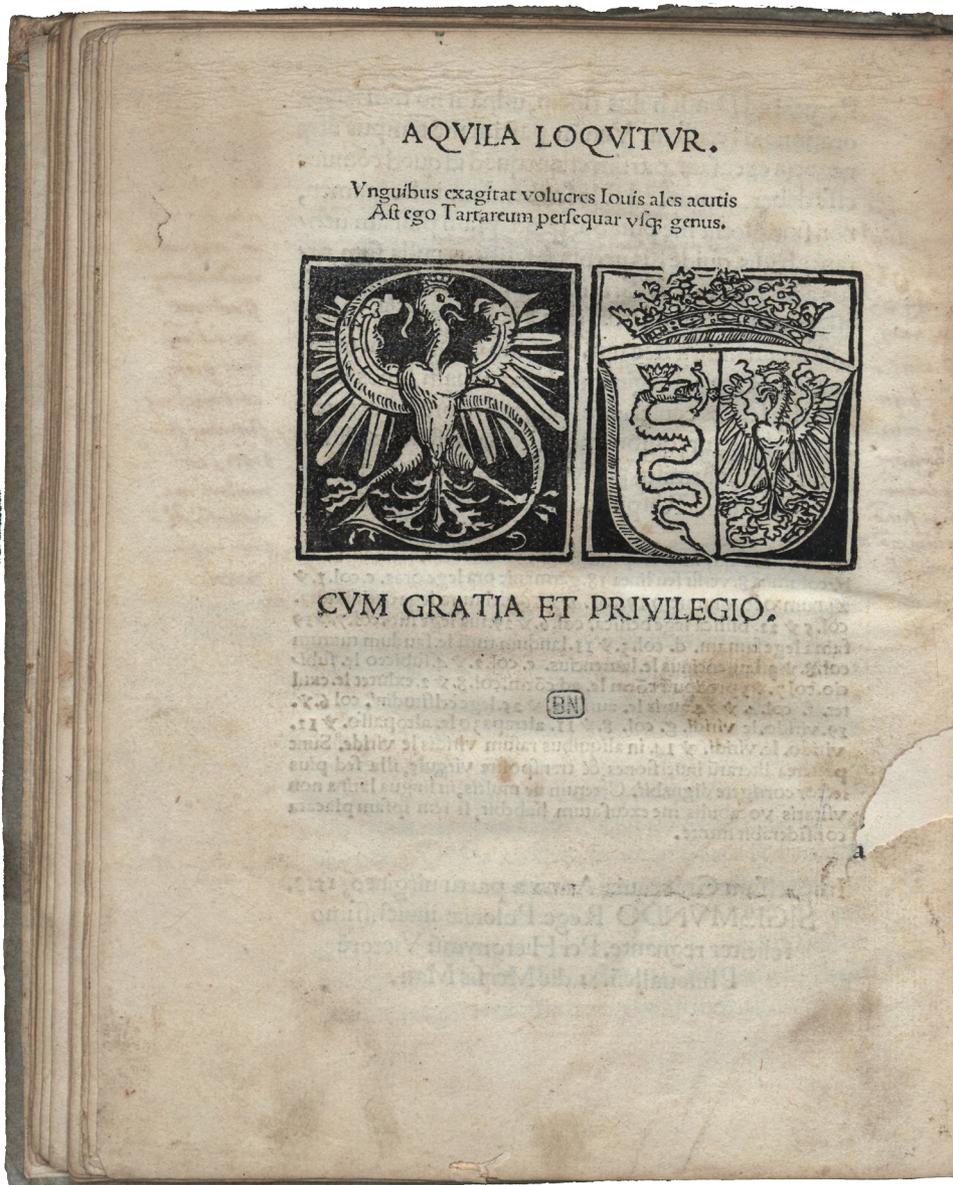


Fig. 4. J.L. Decius, *Diarii et earum quae memoratu digna in splendidissimis...
 Sigismundi Poloniae regis et ...
 Bonae Mediolani Bariq[ue] ducis principis Rossani nuptiis gesta ... descriptio*
 (Gracoviae: per Hieronymum Vietorem, 1518), f. h₆v.

An idea for a stemma referring to a military victory, possibly through Vietor’s example, was also used by Jan Haller in 1515. The composition was placed on the title page of the poetic letter written by Andrzej Krzycki to commemorate the Battle of Orsha (September 8, 1514) (see fig. 5). Since the poem, staying true to the convention established by Ovid in the *Heroides*, is addressed to Sigismund the Old by his wife, Barbara Zápolya, the stemma composition uses the queen’s coat of arms as well. Above the woodcut showing the Polish eagle and the wolf rampant, the printer placed an epigram making references to both coats of arms:

Ponite nunc miseri vestrum diadema leones,
Pannonio cessit gloria vestra lupo.
Nec tamen hoc satis est. Aquila duce fertur ad astra
Praebeat ut terris regia signa lupus.³⁶

In addition to the emblem of the Kingdom of Poland, which signifies Sigismund the Old in this case, and the wolf being a figura of Queen Barbara, the poem also mentions lions. They are a heraldic reference as well, though the pertinent coat of arms is not displayed in the woodcut. The lions are a figura of the Habsburgs vying for power against the House of Zápolya in Hungary. The Habsburgs—the poem suggests—should take the military victory of the Polish king as a warning and had better cease fighting for St Stephen’s crown. As we can see, the little text-and-picture composition is rich in content and echoes the political situation in the Central and Eastern Europe at the time. Thus, on the one hand, it refers to the Polish-Lithuanian military victory over the Muscovite invaders while, on the other hand, admonishing the political opponents in the South that pose a threat to the Hungarian allies of the Polish monarch. In that respect, it resembles some of the emblems composed by Alciatus some sixteen years later about Italian political affairs: “Foedera Italorum,” “Tumulus Ioannis Galeacii Vicecomitis primi ducis Mediolani,” or “Insignia Ducatus Mediolanensis” that focuses on a coat of arms as well.

³⁶ A. Krzycki, *Ad divum Sigismundum Poloniae regem et magnvm ducem Lithuaniae semper invictum post partam de Moskis victoriam ... carmen* (Cracovie: in aedibus Ioannis Haller, 1515), f. A₁r.

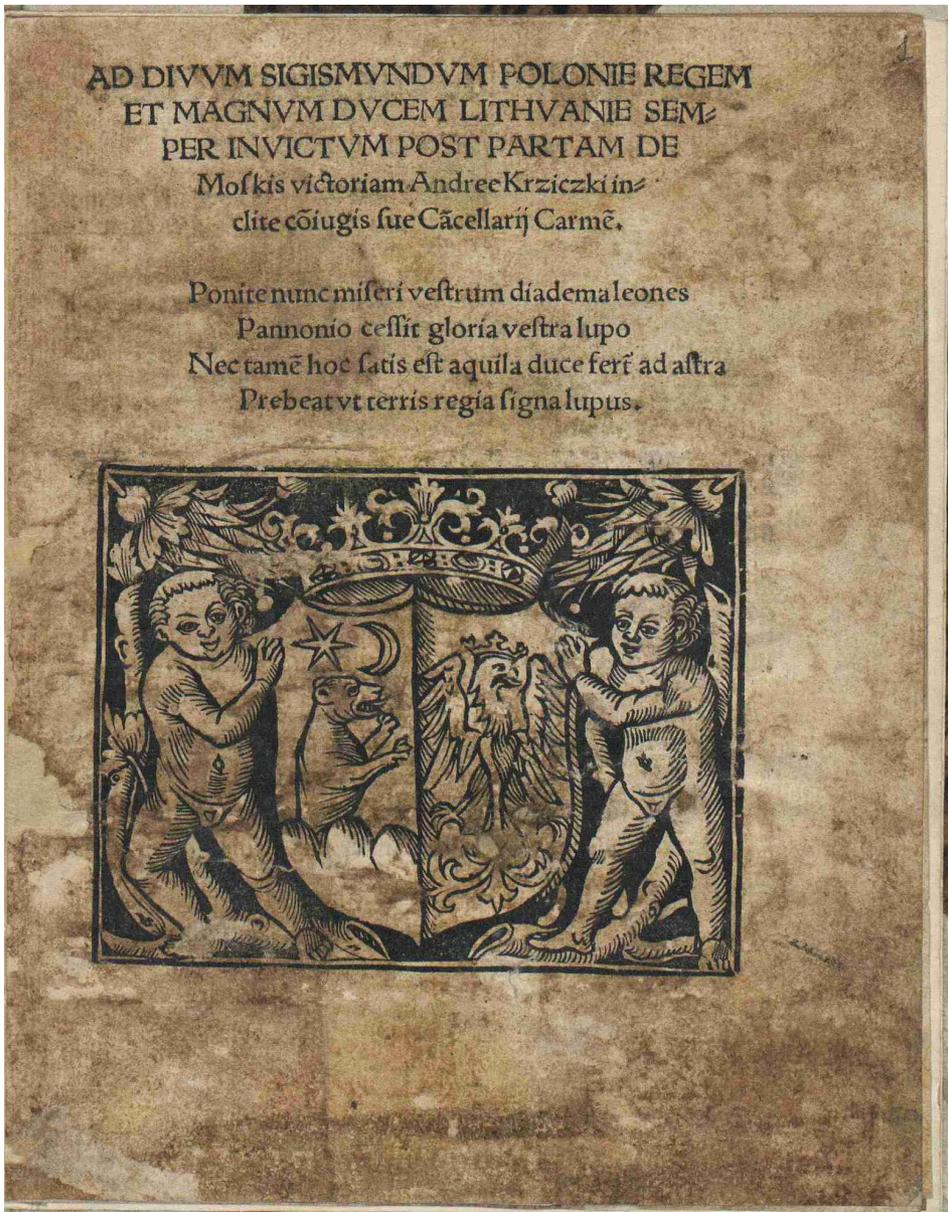


Fig. 5. A. Krzycki, *Ad divum Sigismundum Poloniae Regem et Magnum Ducem Lithuaniae semper invictum post partam de Moskis victoriam ... carmen* (Cracovie: in aedibus Ioannis Haller, 1515), f. A1r.

Books printed in the Vienna office of Vietor wound up on the Polish market, and the local printers certainly took notice: pretty soon they started adorning their books with poems on coats of arms as well. Just as with similar productions known from the German region, the form of the first Cracow stemmata is riddled with irregularities. One can easily notice that the arrangement of particular components varies from case to case. Additionally, the compositions of the kind were put in different places in the book: on the title page, at the back of the title page, or at the end of the book. Let us go back for a while to the wedding ceremonies of Sigismund the Old and Bona Sforza and a stemma based on their joined coats of arms that was placed on the title page of the *Epithalamion* by Krzycki.³⁷ In this case, the poem ended up below the heraldic display. A different arrangement was used in the *Epithalamion* by Wawrzyniec Korwin, published on the same occasion by Vietor. Here the verse was featured above the heraldic eagle.³⁸ As we can see, there was much leeway when it came to the arrangement of elements. Yet another case is when the coat of arms and the text were placed side by side. We can come across it in a print released by Florian Ungler: it is an edition of an oration that Jan Łaski delivered before Pope Leo X.³⁹ Interestingly, the textual component takes the lyrical form of Sapphic stanza (minor). Its content, however, bears no relation on the emblem; instead, it simply praises the archbishop of Gniezno. Due to the lack of links binding the content of the text and the picture, it would be an overstatement to call this composition “stemma” in the strict sense of the word.

Among the stemmata printed in Poland before the publishing of *Emblematum liber*, there are also those in which one heraldic woodcut is accompanied by two pieces of verse, one of which is usually positioned above and the other below the device. Such an arrangement can be found at the back of the title page in the collection of miscellaneous works by Valentin Eck, published by Vietor in 1520.⁴⁰ Interestingly enough, exactly the same composition with the device of Elek Turzó, to whom the edition is dedicated, is printed at the end of the book as well.⁴¹ Vietor used an analogous arrangement on the verso of the title page in *De statura, feritate ac venatione Bisontis* by Hussowski. This time two epigrams were added to Bona Sforza’s coat of arms.⁴² One of the poems alludes only to the serpent; the other one, however, refers to the Polish eagle as well.

³⁷ A. Krzycki, *Epithalamion cum aliis lectu non iniocundis* (Cracoviae: [Jan Haller], 1518), f. A1r.

³⁸ L. Corvinus, *Epithalamium ... in nuptiis sacra reggae maiestatis Poloniae ...* (Cracoviae: per Hieronymum Vietorem, 1518), f. A1r.

³⁹ J. Łaski, *Oratio ad Leonem X in obedientia nomine Sigismundi regis Poloniae ... habita 13 Iunii 1513* ([Kraków]: apud Florianum Unglerium, 1513), f. A1r.

⁴⁰ V. Eck, *De reipublicae administratione dialogus. Epistola consolatoria ... ob mortem ... Ioannis Thursonis. Epitaphia varia pro eodem ...* (Gracoviae: per Hieronymum Vietorem, 1520), f. A1v.

⁴¹ Eck, *De Reipublicae*, f. D4v.

⁴² M. Hussowski, *Carmen ... de statura, feritate ac venatione Bisontis* (Cracoviae: per Hieronymum Vietorem, 1523), f. A1v.

Stemmata quickly became familiar features of the editorial frame of Old Polish books.⁴³ Doubtless, the fact that similar compositions and proto-emblematic forms had appeared in European books and gained popularity can be said to have contributed to the phenomenon. That the poems on coats of arms quickly found their place on the Kingdom's literary scene can be attested by the fact that stemmata composed in Polish appeared relatively early on, and it is worth noting that it had happened before the famous collection by Alciatus was published (see fig. 6). A composition consisting of Krzysztof Szydłowiecki's coat of arms and a piece of verse "Pokora ku swoim" printed below can serve as an example. It was printed on the title page of the 1524 edition of an allegorical story, *Fortuny i Cnoty różność w historii o niektórym młodzieńcu ukazana*.⁴⁴ Credit for printing it also goes to Hieronymus Vietor, who in the preface to Szydłowiecki underscored his contribution to the development of the Polish language.

In view of the multitude and diversity of word-and-visual compositions that appeared in early printed books long before the *Emblematum liber* came about, it would be hard to exclude such phenomena from the list of possible, or even likely, inspirations that led to the emergence of the classical emblem. Interestingly enough, the stemmata appearing after 1531 do take on the form known from Alciatus' work. His arrangement now rules supreme, and, of all the variants, the only one allowed consists in the poem being placed below the illustration with the title above it. No earlier than in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries do exceptions to this scheme regain popularity, and it needs to be stressed that it was then a matter of breaking away from a convention undergoing petrification. The multitude of formal solutions appearing before 1531 corresponded with the lack of a model attractive enough to gain dominance, as the *Emblematum liber* came to dominate after the date. On the other hand, Alciatus' collection had probably been shaped under a strong influence of the numerous forms that emerged with the advent of the printed book. The woodcuts printed on the title page to complement text began appearing in the sixteenth century, and this is where the three-fold structure so characteristic for the emblem originated. The same structure can be found in the stemmata and icons that have been cited herein. The book of emblems, therefore, ought to be viewed as one of the most striking consequences of the invention of print and the corresponding development of the art of woodcutting. The conclusion lets us see the question of where the collection by Alciatus actually originated

⁴³ See e.g. B. Czarski, *Stemmata w staropolskich książkach, czyli rzecz o poezji heraldycznej* (Warszawa, 2012).

⁴⁴ *Fortuny i cnoty różność w historii o niektórym młodzieńcu ukazana* (Kraków: przez Jeronima Wijetora, 1524), f. A1r.

in a new light. Was it in his study, where he was composing his allegorical epigrams, or was it rather in the office of Heinrich Steyner, who was surely familiar with the various word-and-picture forms and compositions that were widely used by other printers?

Translated by Jan Hensel

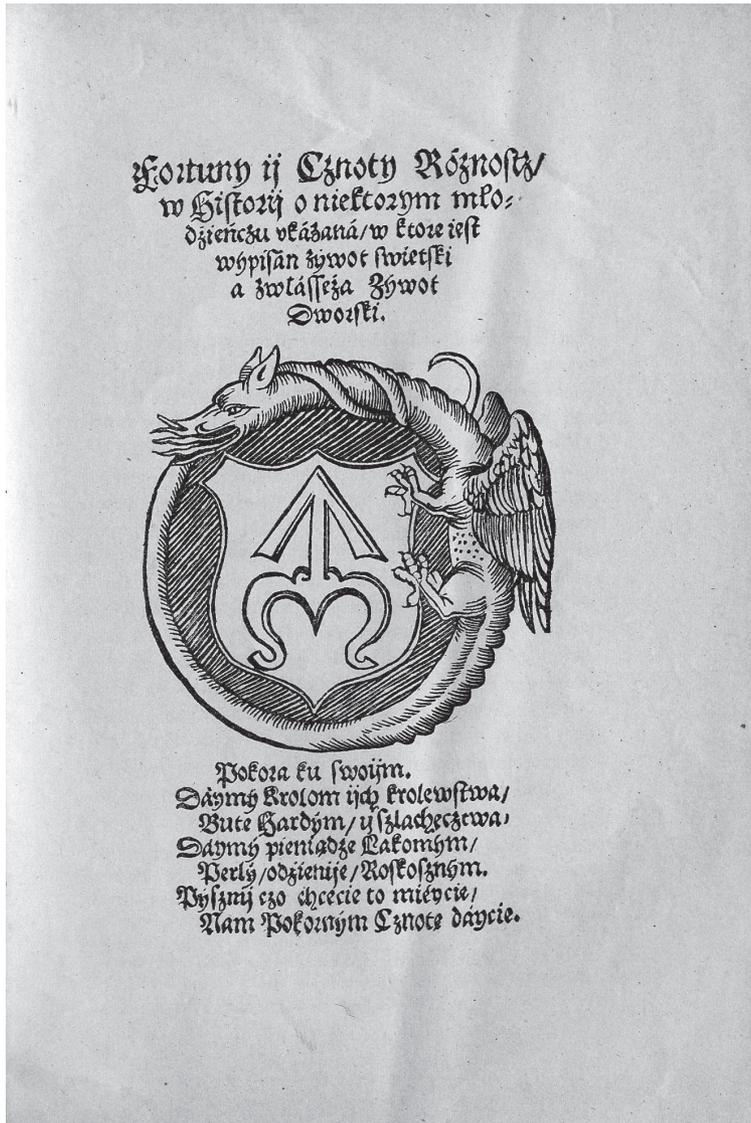


Fig. 6. *Fortuny i cnoty różność w historyi o niektórych młodzieńcu ukazana*
(Kraków: przez Jeronima Wijetora, 1524), f. A1r.