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Roberto Peressin
Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, Warsaw

From Jupiter's Rod to the School Mace

The Origin of a Symbol of Power and Authority in a Greek Poem by Michael Retell

ABSTRACT: The article presents an edition, prose translation, and commentary concerning a Humanist Greek poem composed by Michael Retell and published in Danzig in 1571. The poem is dedicated to the origin of the academic mace as a symbol of authority and power within the Danzig academic school (Gymnasium Dantiscanum). Through an analysis of this text, the study aims to shed light on some organisational aspects of the renowned Reformed school during its formative period and to highlight the contributions of a talented yet lesser-known Hellenist of the Polish Renaissance.

KEYWORDS: Gymnasium Dantiscanum, Michael Retellius, Michael Retell, Humanist Greek, academic mace, rod of correction, Protestant education, Polish Renaissance

1. Introduction

The commitment to organising school life exhibited by Reformed communities from the mid-16th century onwards is widely known. Thanks to the theoretical contribution of Renaissance educators such as Erasmus, Philip Melanchthon and Johannes Sturm, numerous *gymnasia*, preparatory schools for university studies emphasising the importance

of the teaching of sacred languages, developed north of the Alps. The purpose of these hubs was to train not only a new ruling class but, above all, new Christians capable of reading and interpreting the Scriptures, a fundamental tenet of the Lutheran doctrine being *sola Scriptura*. This renewed focus on classicism significantly revitalised the teaching of the Greek language which was reintroduced into schools with more philologically accurate tools and printed texts. In academic centres dominated by Reformed humanism, it also became customary to compose verse and prose in classical Greek.[1]

The thematic range of this diversified literature spanned from paratexts (introductions, eulogies, dedications) to sermons, occasional poetry, biographies, paraphrases of the New Testament, and doctrinal treatises. Translations of Latin and vernacular texts into Greek, prepared mainly for students' use, were also part of this output. The predilection for Homer's language, primarily until the 1600s,[2] coincided with new principles of the Reformation. As is well known, Lutheran humanism accorded the Greek New Testament, and the Pauline Letters in particular, the role of direct sources for the true Christian doctrine. Moreover, Greek was not only the language of the revelation. Its task in the educational curriculum was in fact to enhance and complete the study of Latin, due to the laudability and respectability of Greek civilisation's contribution.[3] These beliefs were summarised in the famous definition *docta et eloquens pietas,* by which classical culture and models were to clothe the word of God with beauty and gracefulness.[4]

The grammar school of Danzig (Gdańsk), from its very founding in 1558, exemplified this kind of Lutheran-inspired education,[5]

[1] Remarkable research on the subject of Humanist Greek has been carried out in the last two decades; for a brief survey – also on the different denominations of this recent branch of studies (Neualtgriechisch, New Ancient Greek) – see e.g. Weise 2017: 7–11; Korhonen 2022: 1–20; Ciccolella 2022.

[2] Discussion on these temporal frameworks in Ben-Tov 2009: 14–19.

[3] Ben-Tov 2009: 20.

[4] Weise 2020: 379–408, 396.

[5] The ideas of the Reformation quickly spread in the first half of the 16th century and were soon implemented in the educational institutions of Royal Prussia (Thorn, Danzig, Elbing), see e.g. Mokrzecki 1997: 291–302; Friedrich 2000: 72–80. More specifically on the Danzig Gymnasium in the 16th century see Budzyński 2008: 7–43.

characterised by a curriculum designed to revive classical languages in conjunction with the trivium disciplines. The school was described as *studium particulare* (later, from 1568, as *gymnasium*, and from 1643 it was awarded the title of *Gymnasium Academicum sive Illustre*[6]) and was meant to fulfil the Baltic city's request to train an emerging ruling class in the spirit of the Reformation and new ideas of the Renaissance.[7] Its launch was, therefore, a significant event that mobilised the city's gentry in the pursuit of qualified teachers and in the organisation of a scholarly hub that could meet the increasing demand for professionals.

The newly founded institution also required the creation of laws, statutes, and certainly textbooks. As it follows, the latter would often serve the dual purpose of accompanying students in learning the languages of Virgil and Homer as well as praising and dignifying the school whose purpose was the establishment of classical learning in the city.[8] The first official curriculum was introduced decades later,[9] but records detailing the management of the Danzig school, including the first official statute from 1568 by Rector Andreas Franckenberger (see *infra*), were developed during the initial years. While relevant

[6] Budzyński 2008: 26, 38.

[7] The urban center of Danzig – part of the Kingdom of Poland with a significant degree of autonomy – witnessed a surge in commercial prosperity beginning in the mid-15th century, attributable to its strategic location as the principal hub connecting the Vistula river to the Baltic Sea. See Cieślak, Biernat 1995: 105–120. It is worth pointing out that the organisational forerunner of the Danzig Gymnasium was *Schola Dantiscana*, which the Lutheran scholar Andreas Aurifaber (Goldschmid) ran between 1539 and 1540, providing a humanistic curriculum. See Tupacki 1959: 2–26.

[8] Other concurrent reformed schools, however, were already drawing students to that region: to Elbing (since 1535), in Royal Prussia, and to Königsberg, in Ducal Prussia, where in 1544 Duke Albert founded a renown academy. A grammar school in Thorn was established later, in 1568 (Budzyński 2008: 7–8, 17–20).

[9] Although curricula were likely printed regularly as early as the first half of the 17th century, the earliest one currently available dates from 1641 (*Syllabus Operarum Scholasticarum*, see Budzyński 2008: 42). Additionally, the 1628 *Memorial* (*Denkschrift*) by Rector Jakob Fabricius provides valuable insights into the schooling structure of the period (Mokrzecki 2008: 15).

documents[10] concerning the beginning of the *studium* have already been edited and made available to scholars, some materials are still unpublished, mainly due to their particular status of occasional literature or – perhaps chiefly – on account of their being written in Greek. Nevertheless, they deserve special attention since they deal with the first period of the Danzig grammar school and can therefore be considered foundational.

One of these texts[11] is included in an anthology of Greek compositions written by the scholar Michael Retell[12] and elucidates through verse the origin of the academic mace. To the present day, it remains, often in union with other emblems, the official coat of arms of many universities and academies. Although the anthology was printed in Danzig in 1571, the poem was likely composed a few years earlier, around the time when the *studium* was established, between 1558 and 1568 (see *infra*). This contribution, therefore, aims not only to give a commented edition and translation of a 16th century Greek poem composed within the borders of Poland-Lithuania but also to engage with the debate carried out so far on the activity of the renowned Gymnasium Dantiscanum.

The poem is written in hexameters – a metre that, as rightly pointed out,[13] served as a vector for spreading ancient Greek poetry through

[10] Edited historical documents related to the Danzig Gymnasium are available in Mokrzecki 2008.

[11] This paper is part of a series of contributions I intend to dedicate to the exploration of Humanist Greek literature as cultivated at the Danzig Gymnasium and, more broadly, within the environs of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

[12] On Michael Retell (his second name appears also as Retellius, Rettel, Retellus, Rettelius, Rettelus) from Zittau (1530–1576), one of the most considerable Hellenists in the Polish Renaissance, see an account and most recent references in Veteikis 2021 and Peressin 2023. Born in Zittau, he pursued his education in Frankfurt an der Oder, where he earned his baccalaureate in 1554 and his magister degree in 1556. In 1558, he came to Danzig at the invitation of Rector Johann Hoppe to teach rhetoric and poetry. The poem is in Retellius 1571: 86v–89r, kept at the National Library of Poland in Warsaw (call number SD XVI.O.711).

[13] Amid German education centers in the early Renaissance, those of Wittenberg and Ilfeld witness to the relevant success of epic poetry, as evidenced by the oeuvre of renowned Humanists such as Lorenz Rhodomann and Martin Crusius. The students' enthusiasm for heroic verse was nurtured through the composition of hexameters from the earliest years of their educational path. See Gärtner 2020: 217–243. The cultural and doctrinal connection of Wittenberg and Frankfurt was consolidated through exchanges

Reformation schools, particularly around the University of Wittenberg. In the span of 126 verses, the author traces back the ancient origins of the academic staff – not only to reveal and celebrate its illustrious past wielders but also to assert the rightful ownership and usage of this instrument within the school. Historical and mythical facts overlap among classical, biblical, and Christian sources, resulting in a mixture characteristic of Renaissance scholarly literature.[14] On the one hand, the formative intent of this work is made clear in its expositive tone and is further underscored by the metre employed in the poem, which aligns it to the traditional genre of didactic poetry, mainly represented by Hesiod in Greece, and by Lucretius and Virgil in Rome. On the other hand, due to its quest for archetypes behind the wand of command, the text also belongs to the strand of the aetiological elegy of Hellenistic derivation. The purpose of this genre was to describe an institution, a ritual, or an object that exists in the present and connect it to a legendary past so as to give it a historical, albeit mythical, dimension. This poetic tradition was initiated by the Alexandrian poets Callimachus and Philetas and was later brought to Rome, where it flourished in the Augustan age, notably through the elegies of Propertius and the eposes of Virgil, Ovid, and Lucan.[15] The genres of didactic poetry as well as that of the aetiological elegy experienced a revival between the 15th and 18th centuries, often intersecting. The subject matter was very diverse, ranging from mythology to contemporary history, encompassing moral customs, natural science, and local traditions.[16] Presented here is the poem accompanied by my critical apparatus and translation.

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of scholars between the two universities, notably including the physician and Latinist Jodocus Willich (1501–1552), who taught Retell in Frankfurt, and the poet Georg Sabinus (1508–1560), Melanchthon's son-in-law. See Brodnicki 2012: 121–140.

[14] It should be clarified that the early modern man viewed all of antiquity as a combination of Greco-Roman history, mythology and biblical account. Furthermore, Melanchthon believed the religion of the Greeks, especially as depicted by Homer, to be appropriate for his time in history. He observed a portrayal of gods that suited his principles, since deities in the epic poems display the ability to administer justice by punishing the wicked and rewarding the virtuous. See Ben-Tov 2009: 22–23, 59–60.

[15] Walter 2019: 609–640.

[16] Ijsewijn, Sacré 1998: 38–42. Of course, for our purposes, the Neo-Latin output described needs to be expanded to include Humanist Greek literature.

2. Text and translation

Η ΡΑΒΔΟΣ ΣΚΗΠΤΡΟΝ ΤΩΝ ΣΧΟΛΩΝ[17]
Πρῶτος ἄναξ ἐφόρει Κρονίδης πάλαι εὐρύοπα Ζεὺς
σκῆπτρον τῷ δὲ θεοῖς χρυσόθρονος Ἶφι ἄνασσε·
εἶτα διοτρεφέες βασιλεῖς γῆς εὐρυαγυίας,
οἷς φίλον ἐστὶ θεῶν μιμεῖσθαι πᾶν κράτος ἠὺ
(5) πτόρθον ἔχεσκον, ὅπως διέπωσι χέρεσσιν ἀάπτοις.
Οὕτω ῥάβδος ἐγὼ θεοῦ ὄζος ἔην κλυτὸς Ἑρμοῦ,

[17] Punctuation and capitalisation have been changed to ensure consistency throughout the text. Spirits and accents have been corrected where necessary.

Metr. In many cases (vv. 8, 12, 16, 21, 26, 28, 47, 57, 101, 114, 119) initial σ + plosive (κ, χ, φ) is scanned as syllable-releasing (cf. Hom. Σκάμανδρος, σκέπαρνον); this happens also with ζ (v. 120), and even with ξ (v. 123). Correption is not observed at vv. 19, 38.

Crit. 3 εὐρυαγυίας correxi: ἐυρυαγείας ed. ‖ 23 ἀπώμνυ correxi: ἀπόμνυ ed. ‖ 38 καταζῆσ᾽ scripsi: κατὰ ζῆσ᾽ ed. ‖ 40 ὅσχῳ correxi: ἴσχῳ ed. ‖ 51 ἐυήθε᾽ scripsi metri gratia: ἐυήθ᾽ ed. ‖ 53 πλήξασ᾽ conieci: πλήξεσ᾽ ed. ‖ 68 ποίμηνε scripsi: ποίμῃνε ed. more temporis cum iota subscripto ‖ 74 ὄκνον scripsi: ὀκνὴν ed. ‖ 77 ἔφθορε conieci: ἔφθαρε ed. | σμῶδιξ correxi: σμώδηξ ed. ‖ 80 Σειραχίδης scripsi: σειρακίδης ed. (Σει- metri gratia pro Σι-) ‖ 94 κἀγὼ correxi: κᾄγω ed. more temporis cum iota subscripto ‖ 99 πραΰνων correxi: πραΐνων ed. ‖ 101 κάρον conieci: κάρος ed. ‖ 104 παθῶν (vel πάθος) correxi: πάθων ed. ‖ 116 ὔμμες conieci: ἄμμες ed. ‖ 113 pro σκίπωνα ? ‖ 119 Ἀντισθένεος correxi: Αντισθένεως ed. ‖ 120 τλᾶθι correxi: τλᾶθε ed. ‖ 125 οἰμωγὴ correxi: ὑιμωγὴ ed. ‖ 126 fortasse παλαιὰ ?

Sim.: 1 Hom. *Il*. V 265; VIII 442 etc.; *Od*. XI 436 etc. ‖ 2 Hom. *Od*. XI 284; XVII 443 ‖ 3 διοτρεφέες βασιλεῖς Hom. *Il*. II 98; XIV 27 etc.; εὐρυαγυίας cf. Hom. *Il*. II 12; XIV 88 ‖ 7 cf. Hom. *Od*. V 87; *Hymn. Hom. Merc*. 539 ‖ 17 μετὰ χερσὶν ἔχοντες cf. Hom. *Od*. VII 101 etc. ‖ 18 ἀγορήσατο καὶ μετέειπεν cf. Hom. *Il*. I 253; *Od*. VII 158 etc. ‖ 19 Hom. *Od*. II 37 σκῆπτρον δέ οἱ ἔμβαλε χειρὶ κῆρυξ ‖ 23 cf. Hom. *Il*. I 234 ναὶ μὰ τόδε σκῆπτρον ‖ 23–24 μέγαν ὅρκον ἀπώμνυ Hom. *Il*. I 234; *Od*. II 378 ‖ 27 cf. Ap. Rh. II 788 κτεατίσσατο γαίῃ ‖ 33 cf. Verg. *Aen*. VI 136 sq. ‖ 34 cf. Hom. *Il*. III 33 παλίνορσος ἀπέστη ‖ 36 cf. Hes. *Th*. 377 ἰδμοσυνῇσι ‖ 40 cf. Gal. *De diff. resp*. 7, 947,11 τόνδε τὸν τρόπον ἀρχόμενος ‖ 43 θαμβός· ἐκπλαγείς Eust. 906, 53 ‖ 44–46 cf. Hom. *Il*. III 26 θαλεροί τ᾽ αἰζηοί; XIV 4; *Od*. XVII 337 ἐναλίγκιος ἠδὲ γέροντι; *Od*. XIII 429 δέρμα […] παλαιοῦ θῆκε γέροντος ‖ 47 Sapph. 130, 2 Ἔρος […] γλυκύπικρον ‖ 48 Hom. *Od*. VII 125–126 πάροιθε δέ τ᾽ ὄμφακές εἰσιν ἄνθος ἀφιεῖσαι, ἔτεραι δ᾽ ὑποπερκάζουσιν ‖ 54–55 cf. LXX Ex. 14,16–21; Hom. *Il*. XXI 1–8 διατμήξας […] βαθύρροον; Ap. Rh. I 1203 ἀνέμοιο κατάιξ; III 343 διέτμαγεν ‖ 57 cf. Ἥρη δὲ μάστιγι θοῶς ἐπεμαίετ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἵππους Hom. *Il*. V 478; σκληροτραχήλων LXX Ex. 33, 3; NT Act. 7, 51 ‖

ὃς λόγον ἡδυεπὴς χρυσόρραπις ἔνθεν ἐλέχθη.
Νῦν γενόμην σκήπων θαλερός, κλὼν δῆτα σχολαρχῶν,
ἶσον ἔχω γὰρ ἄναξι βίας μένος εὐρυμέδουσι,
(10) τὰς κτῶμαι δὲ λαχοῦσ᾽ ἀρετὰς σκήπτρου βασιλήων,
ὅττι κέν ἐστιν ἄναξ καθ᾽ ἑὴν κρατερὸς βασιλείαν.
Τοῦτο πέλω μὲν ἐγὼ δυνάμει κατὰ δῶμα σχολείου
πρῶτ᾽ ἄρα πως σημεῖον ἀνακτορίης τι τέτυγμαι,
ἡνίκα δ᾽ Ἀργείοις ἐπετείλαθ᾽ ἑάς ποτ᾽ ἐφετμὰς
(15) αὐτοκράτωρ πτόρθον πάρος ἔλλαβε χέρσ᾽ Ἀγαμέμνων.
Τὸν τρόπον οἵ γε σχολῶν ἡγήτορες ἠδὲ μέδοντες
ῥάβδον ἐμὲ κρατέουσ᾽ ἐσαεὶ μετὰ χερσὶν ἔχοντες,
ὣς καὶ ἔταις Ἰθάκης ἀγορήσατο καὶ μετέειπεν
Τηλέμαχος, σκῆπτρον κῆρυξ οἱ ἔμβαλε χειρί.
(20) Οὕτω ἐφέζεθ᾽ ὅταν καθέδρης, τὰ δίδαξε μαθητὰς
δόγματα σκηπτοῦχος παιδευτὴς ῥήτορος ὀμφῇ·
ὥς ποτε χώσατο δ᾽ Ἀτρεΐδῃ πολέμαρχος Ἀχιλλεύς,
«μὰ σκῆπτρον» μέγαν ὅρκον ἀπώμνυ, καὶ ποτὶ γαίῃ
τοῦτο βάλ᾽, ἦν δὲ δικαιοσύνης ἐναγὲς τό γε τέκμωρ.
(25) Τὸν τρόπον ἐστὶ δικασπολίας σημεῖον ἐφ᾽ ἕδρας
δῆτα σχολῶν, ἔρκος τ᾽ ἀγαθῶν, νέμεσίς τε πονηρῶν.
Πετρογενὲς τό γε κλῆμ᾽ ἀρετὰς κτεατίσσατο κ᾽ ἄλλας

58 Hom. *Od*. X 338 σῦς μὲν ἔθηκας ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν ἑταίρους ‖ 61 cf. περιμήκει ῥάβδῳ Hom. *Od*. X 293 ‖ 64 Hom. *Od.* X 282 χώρου ἄϊδρις ἐών ‖ 67 cf. Hom. *Il*. II 46 εἵλετο δὲ σκῆπτρον ‖ 76–77 cf. Ap. Rh. II 196–200 […] βάκτρῳ σκηπτόμενος ῥικνοῖς ποσὶν ᾗε θύραζε, τοίχους ἀμφαφόων· τρέμε δ᾽ ἄψεα νισσομένοιο ἀδρανίῃ γήραι τε· […] χρὼς ἐσκλήκει ‖ 77 cf. Hom. *Il*. II 265–267 σκήπτρῳ […] πλῆξεν ὃ δ᾽ ἰδνώθη, […] σμῶδιξ δ᾽ αἱματόεσσα μεταφρένου ἐξυπανέστη ‖ 79 LXX Sir. 9, 4; 12, 3 ‖ 89 Hes. *Op.* 58 τοῖς δ᾽ ἐγὼ ἀντὶ πυρὸς δώσω κακόν, ᾧ κεν ἅπαντες τέρπωνται κατὰ θυμὸν ἑὸν κακὸν ἀμφαγαπῶντες | πευστός· ὑπήκοος Hsch. π 1236, 12 Schmidt ‖ 92–93 cf. Hom. *Od.* IV 221–222 νηπενθές τ᾽ ἄχολόν τε, κακῶν ἐπίληθον ἁπάντων. ὃς τὸ καταβρόξειεν, ἐπὴν κρητῆρι μιγείη ‖ 94 Hom. *Od.* XV 234 δασπλῆτις Ἐρινύς ‖ 95 Hom. *Il*. XXIV 772; *Od.* XI 203 ἀγανοφροσύνη | cf. *Od.* VIII 430 τόδ᾽ ἄλεισον ἐμὸν περικαλλὲς ὀπάσσω ‖ 97 cf. Hom. *Od.* IX 96–97 βούλοντο […] λωτὸν ἐρεπτόμενοι μενέμεν νόστου τε λαθέσθαι ‖ 98 Hom. *Od.* X 302–305 πόρε φάρμακον […] μῶλυ ‖ 118 φιλόπευστος Suda ε 402 Adler ‖ 113–114 cf. Strab. 14, 633 βασιλεῖς ἔχοντες […] σκίπωνα ἀντὶ σκήπτρου ‖ 118–119 cf. Diog. Laert. VI 21 | cf. Hsch. δ 2629 δύσοπον· δύσφωνον, δυσόρατον Latte ‖ 124 cf. NT Io. 2, 9 τὸ ὕδωρ οἶνον γεγενημένον ‖ 124–125 cf. Chrys. *Ad pop. Ant*. 49, 155, 18 ὅπου θρῆνος, καὶ δάκρυα, καὶ οἰμωγαὶ, καὶ ὀδύνη ‖ 126 cf. Hdt. I 207, 6 Τὰ δέ μοι παθήματα ἐόντα ἀχάριτα μαθήματα γέγονε.

τῷ ψυχὰς ἐξεῖλκε Στυγὸς Κυλλήνιος Ἑρμῆς
ἐξ ὀρφνῶν Ἐρέβευς, ἐκ τοῦ Φλεγέθοντος ὀμίχλης.
(30) Τῷ ῥαβδιζόμενος μάθε παῖς φρονέειν μετὰ ποινήν,
ᾧτιν᾽ ἄφαρ πέσ᾽ ἀπ᾽ ὀφθαλμῶν σκότος ἀφροσυνάων
τῶν διδαχῶν σέλας, ἀργὸς ἐών, περικαλλὲς ὄπωπε.
Αἰνείας κλάδον ἱρὸν ἀφ᾽ Ἥρας ἥρπασε δένδρου,
οἷο βίῃ καταβὰς πρὸς Ἄιδου παλίνορσος ἀνῆλθε,
(35) τῷ γ᾽ ἐπερειδόμενος βάκτρῳ νέος εἰς λαβύρινθον
ᾤχετο ἰδμοσυνῶν κρύφιον, κ᾽ ἐπανῆκε μάλ᾽ ἡσθείς·
δάφνινον ὃς πάλ᾽ ἐνήνοχε χερσὶ διαμπερὲς ὄζον
ἀσφαλέως καταζῆσ᾽ ἰοῦ, ἐνέδρης ἀμέλησε
δυσμενέων, οὐκ ἀστεροπῆς πεφόβητο κεραύνῳ.
(40) Τὸν τρόπον ἀρχόμενος τῷ γ᾽ ὄσχῳ ἐλεύθερος ἔζη
σφάλματος, αἱρέσεώς τε σοφιστῶν οὐδὲ πεποιθὼς
μαιάνδροις, φρονίμως τερατώδεις ἔκφυγε γρίφους.
Οὔ ποτε θαμβὸς ἔγεντ᾽ ἀΐων μεγαληγοριάων·
Παλλάδος ἡ ῥαπὶς ὄντ᾽ Ὀδυσῆα γέροντα μάλ᾽ ὦκα
(45) αἰζηῷ θαλερῷ ἐναλίγκιον ἔμμεν᾽ ἔθηκε,
τοὔμπαλι καὶ νέον ὄντα ἐοικότ᾽ ἔοργε γέροντι.
Οὕτω δῆτα σχολῶν σκήπων, βοτάνη γλυκύπικρος
παίσ᾽ ὑποπερκάζει, κλὼν ἀνθεμόεις ἀρετάων
ἤνυε τόνδ᾽ ἀμαθῆ σεσοφισμένον ἄνδρα γενέσθαι·
(50) ἐκ στελέχου λεπτὸν κλῆμα πλάσ᾽, ἄγαλμα δὲ κωφὸν
ἄνθρωπον θῆκεν λογικὸν κ᾽ εὐήθε᾽, ἔσεσθαι
πρόφρονα, τοὺς ἀφυεῖς δὲ φύσιν πάλιν ἠδὲ κακούργους
ἡ Φοίβου μᾶλλον ῥαπὶς ἔφθορε πλήξασ᾽ ἀνοίας.
Μωσεὺς τῷ νάρθηκι βαθύρροον οἶδμα θαλάσσης
(55) τῦψε, διέτμαγεν ὕδατ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἡ πόντοιο καταΐξ.
Οὕτω παιδευτὴς ἐπεμαίετο ῥᾳστα μαθητὰς
[88r] αὐθάδεις μάστιγι, δαμὼν φρένα σκληροτραχήλων.
Κίρκη σῦς μὲν ἔθηχ᾽ ἑτάρους Ὀδυσῆος, ἔπληξε
ὡς ῥάβδῳ τούς, εἶτα κατὰ συφεοῖσιν ἐέργνυ,
(60) ἔδμεναι οἷς ἀκυλόν, καρπὸν καὶ ἔδωκε κρανείης·
βάκτρῳ πεπληγυῖα πάλιν περιμήκεϊ, δρᾶσε
ὡς πάρος ἦσαν ἐκείνους ἀνέρας αἶψα γενέσθαι.
Πρῶτα νέους ὅ γ᾽ ἀτύζων ὄρπηξ θάμβος ἐνῆκε,

ἤθεσι τοὺς ἀΐδρεις ἰκέλους τε σύεσσιν ὑπάρχειν
ἤλεγξεν, τάχ᾽ ἀτὰρ φρονίμοις νόον ἀνταπέδωκε·
αἴτιον οἱ τυφθέντες ἴδον πληγῶν πάχος ἄφρον.
Κοιρανίης σημεῖον ἐπίσκοπος εἵλετο βάκτρον,
μηλοβοτὴρ ὀΐων ῥάβδῳ ποίμνε τὸ πῶυ,
οὕτω ῥαβδοῦχος τε καθηγητὴς ἐὸν ἐσμὸν
εὐνομίαις διέπει, μὴ ὅπως πεπλανημένος οἰκτρῶς
εἰν ἀτραποῖσιν ἀτασθαλιῶν σκολιῇσιν ὄλοιτο.
Φασὶ μελαγχολάοντας ἢ οἴστρῳ αἰνὰ μανέντας,
ἢν μαστιγωσθῶσ᾽, ἀνὰ νοῦν λαβέειν φρονέειν τε·
οὕτως ἐξωθῶν πτόρθος νάρκην νοός, ὄκνον
λήθαργόν τε, φρενῶν δύναμιν κ᾽ ἀκμὴν διεγείρει,
ὀξὺ γὰρ ἀδρανίας κέντρον μώλωψ ὁ πελιδνός.
Ἔφθαρε μὲν χρόα λεπτότατον σμῶδιξ ἡ ὕφαιμος,
ἀλλὰ φρενῶν νεῦρον τείνει, τάρβος τε χαλέπτει.
Υἱὸν ἐὸν δ᾽ ἀγαπῶν τῷ πληγὰς ἐνδελεχίζει
Σειραχίδης καθάπερ συνετῶς ὑπέθηχ᾽ ὑποφήτης.
[88v] Ῥάβδος ἐγὼν ἀρετῶν τόσσῃσι κεκασμένη ἀλκαῖς
εἰμὶ ποῶν, δένδρων, κ᾽ ὀροδάμνων ἔξοχος ἄλλων.
Χρυσολαβὲς Ζεὺς σκῆπτρον ἔχεσκέ ποτ᾽ ὀβριμοεργός,
ἀλλὰ Πέλοψ ἐλεφαντόδετον, τό γ᾽ ἔται προπεσόντες
γουνάζοντο σέβοντες. Ἐγὼ προφερέστερος ὄζος,
ἄξιος ᾧ ἱκέται παῖδες κ᾽ ὀπὶ λιπαρέωσι,
ᾧ λείβωσι φίλημα, καθώς με τοκῆα φιλεῦντες.
Φειδόμενος δ᾽ ἀγαθῶν, νωθροὺς πρὸς ἅμιλλαν ὀτρύνω,
ἀμφαγαπῶ, σέβομαι κ᾽ αἰνῶ καλόν, ἔμφρονα, πευστόν·
μισῷ κ᾽ αἰσχύνω, παίω κακόν, ἄφρον᾽, ἀπειθῆ
νουθετέω, νεύω κ᾽ ὠθῶ, μεταπέμπομ᾽, ἀπειλῶ.
Δαινυμένους ἀχόλους ποιεῖ κ᾽ ὀδυνῶν ἐπιλήθους
νηπενθές, τό γ᾽ ἐπὴν τάχα που κρητῆρι μιγείη·
κἀγὼ τῆλε γόων ἐλάσας δασπλῆτιν Ἐρινὺν
ἄγνοιάν τ᾽ ἀγανοφροσύνης πλέον ὤπασ᾽ ἄλεισον.
Ἀλλοθρόους λωτὸς πάτρης τάχα δρᾷ λελαθέσθαι,
κἀγὼ νηπιέης λήθην ἐνίημι νέοισι.
Μῶλυ πόη τε μέθην, τὰ μόρου καὶ φάρμακ᾽ ἀπείργει
σκληροὺς πραΰνων, καὶ ἐγὼ τοὺς αὖθις ἔτευξα

(100) νηφαλίους, ῥύπος ἀτροπιῶν ὀλοὸν φυγαδεύων·
καὶ κάρον ἀφροσύνης ἰδὲ σφάλματ᾽, ἀπαίσιον αἶσχος,
ἦδος ἀγηλατέω, ψυλλῶν καὶ ζῴδι᾽ ἀπεχθῆ,
τοῦτ᾽ ἔστ᾽ ἐξωθῶ δόξας τερατώδεας ἔξω
καὶ λώβας στηθῶν, τὸ παθῶν τε πονηρὸν ἐέλδωρ,
[89r] (105) Κύπριδος οὐλομένης ξεστὸν καὶ κνησμὸν ἐέργω.
Τὴν ἁγίαν τε κόρην τύψαι μάστιξιν ἑαυτῆς
τὸν χρόα λεπτὸν ἑκάστοτε φασὶν Ἐλισσαβέτειαν,
πυρσὸν ἐρωμανίας αἷς κ᾽ ἔσβεσε σάρκας ἀσελγεῖς.
Τὰς ὅτι κτῶμ᾽ ἀρετὰς ἑκατὸν ῥάβδος Πανακείας,
(110) Παιῶνος κρείττων, τεχνῶν τε Μαχάονος εἰμί.
Ἶσον καὶ βασιλεῦσ᾽ ἔκιχον κράτος ἡγεμονεύειν·
ἔσκε Συρακουσῶν βασιλεὺς Διονύσιος, αὐλῆς
ἐκβληθείς, σκήπων᾽ ὀλέσας βασίλειον, ἐμάς περ
οἶδ᾽ ἀρετάς, κ᾽ ἀνέῳξε σχολήν, τῆς κ᾽ ἔλλαβε σκῆπτρον.
(115) Ἆρ᾽ τις ἄναξ ἔμεν αἰσχυνθῇ παιδῶν τε γενέσθαι;
Υ̓́μμες ἄρ᾽ οὖν, φίλα παιδία, τῆς ὑπακούετε ῥάβδου
νεύμασι πειθόμενοι, μὴ τῆς ποτε φεύγετ᾽ ἀπειλάς.
Καρτερικῶς καθὰ Διογένης φιλόπευστος ἀνέτλη
δὴν Ἀντισθένεος βάκτρον δυσόποιο σχολάρχου·
(120) οὕτω τλᾶθι ζυγόν μου ἑκοντὶ βαρὺν ταλαεργοί.
Πάσχετε δουλοσύνην, ὅθεν ἐυγενέες ποτ᾽ ἔσεσθε,
κάμψατε νῶτα τὸν ἱππῆες τρόπον οἱ δ᾽ ἀπέδειχθεν
στρεπτοφόροι, πρότερον δὲ ξίφει τύφθησαν ἄνακτος.
Ὑμείων θαλερόν ποτε δάκρυ γενήσεται οἶνος.
(125) Οἰμωγή, μέγα χάρμ᾽ ὀδύνη, φρενὸς ἡδυπάθεια·
ὔμμι παθήματα ταῦτα, πάλαι τε μαθήματ᾽ ἐσεῖται.

The Staff – Rod of Scholars[18]

The thundering Zeus, son of Cronos, first bore the staff a long time ago. Sat upon his golden throne, he used this artefact to reign over the

[18] In numerous passages of the poem, the perspective of the speaking subject switches between third-person and first-person narratives (the latter mostly gathered in the final part, vv. 8, 12, 17, 81, 85, 94, 109, 111), delineating the moments when the rod itself appears and utters direct speech. The portions of the text where the staff speaks in the first person have been italicised.

gods with firmness and strength. In their turn, the kings of the land with wide streets, nurtured of Zeus, who sought to emulate the gods' good power fully, wielded a rod as a way to rule over their lands with invisible hands.

[The rod speaks] *So I was the staff, the famous twig of Hermes "wand of gold", named so after of the god's sweet sounding. Now I have become a sturdy rod, a staff of scholarchs indeed, for I am endowed with a fierce potency equal to that of the rulers of broad lands and bestowed the virtues of the kings' staff, as long as the monarch is considered legitimate in his realm. Here I come with my might over the school premises. Originally, I was constructed as a symbol of lordship: upon giving orders to the Argives, the absolute master Agamemnon would first reach for his rod. Hence, by holding me, also master scholars retain power in their hands forevermore.*

In this way, Telemachus addressed his clansmen in Ithaca and spoke to them when a herald put a staff into his hands. And so, sat upon a chair, the staff-bearing master, gifted with an orator's voice, taught his disciples. Once, when Atreus's son angered the commander Achilles, the latter swore heartily «By this sceptre!» and flung the staff to the ground as a holy token of justice. Hence, the staff is a sign of the scholars' entitlement to bestow judgment, to protect the good and to punish the bad. This rock-born branch was endowed with other virtues, which helped Hermes from Cyllene rescue souls from the Styx, the darkness of Erebos, and Phlegethon's fog.

[About the school] Having endured the penalty of caning, a young man learned to be wise. The dark foolishness was lifted from his eyes. Upon overcoming his indolence, he could finally appreciate the beautiful brightness of wisdom.

Aeneas grabbed the holy bough from Hera's tree, and through its potency he descended to Hades and returned to the world of the living.

[About the school] Leaning on the staff, the young man entered the secret labyrinth of knowledge and came out of it greatly delighted. Since throughout his journey he carried a laurel bough, he lived in safety, avoiding the poisonous deception of the wicked, with no fear of thunderbolts or lightning.

[About the school] Leading the good pupil from the very beginning, the wand allowed him to enjoy an error-free life by having him reject the sophists' heresy and stray far from its winding paths: the pupil sensibly escaped these dreadful entrapments. There was never astonishment at listening to the following outstanding accounts: Pallas's rod swiftly transformed old-looking Odysseus into a vigorous, awe-inducing warrior. And then, after his appearance had returned to its youthful state, the rod made him look old again. Thus, the school staff – bittersweet plant – began to bear fruit in the lads. A twig adorned with virtues led an unlearned man to knowledge and refinement, moulding a delicate branch out of a log. It transformed a dull ornament into a rational, honest, and good-hearted man.

Phoebus's rod crushed anew the foolish and the knavish, bringing an end to their follies.

Moses hit a deep-flowing wave with his cane, and a squall came from above, parting the sea waters. Likewise, a teacher most easily used the whip on his stubborn students, taming their obstinate spirits.

Circe turned Odysseus's fellows into swine by hitting them with a rod, and proceeded to shut them inside a sty. She fed them acorns and cornel tree fruits. And as Circe beat them once again with her very long rod, they quickly became the men they had been before.

At first the twig, a tool wielded to strike the youth, inspired awe and scolded ill-behaved children, likening them to swine. However, it was soon used also to reward the wise pupils. Those who were beaten could see the bruise as a reminder of their foolish behaviour, the very reason for their punishment.

The guardian retains a stick as a sign of power, and the shepherd wields a twig to drive his flock of sheep to the pasture. Likewise, the master scholar, holding a staff, watches over his flock with care so that the pupils do not go astray and perish piteously on the winding paths of arrogance. People affected by melancholy or overwhelming madness are said to come to their senses whenever they are whipped. So, the rod, expelling from the mind any numbness, idleness, and sleepiness, awakes strength and vigour within the soul, the black bruise being a severe chastisement for indolence. And although the dark, bloody weal

harms the fairest of skins, it also extends the boundaries of the spirit, abased by reverence.

The son of Sirach loves his own son and, therefore, spanks him, just as the sage wisely suggests.

[The rod speaks] *I am a twig notably endowed with so many powerful virtues; I stand out among the weeds, trees, and branches.*

Almighty Zeus's staff was adorned with a golden haft, while Pelops had his made of ivory, and the clansmen rushed to kneel before the artefact in adoration. [The rod speaks] *Since I am an unrivalled branch, I deserve to receive children's hearty prayers and kisses, just as a beloved parent.*

Sparing the good, I urge the idle to compete. I embrace, love and praise the honest, wise and obedient, whereas I despise, dishonour, and beat the evil, foolish, and disobedient. I admonish, beckon, cast out, summon, and threaten.

It (i.e. the rod) enlivens those feasting at a banquet, it causes them to forget all their sorrows as soon as it is mixed in a bowl (?).

[The rod speaks] *Warding off tears of sadness, pushing away the Erinyes and any ill will, I grant you a goblet full of mildness.*

The lotus swiftly leads foreigners to the oblivion of their homeland, just as I inspire the youth to relinquish their childishness.

The herb moly keeps inebriety and deadly poisons at bay while I, in turn, make the drunken sober again, banishing the harmful filth of dishonesty and the sleep of foolishness. I drive out the faults and desires – wicked shame – just as one would drive out fleas and other despicable pests. Thus, I cast out any monstrous thoughts that lead the heart to dishonour. I expel the evil desire of passion, the smooth tingles induced by the ruinous Cypris.

The virgin saint Elizabeth is said to relentlessly flog her own delicate skin with a whip to quench the fire of her mad love and her lascivious flesh.

[The rod speaks] *For I possess the hundred virtues as the staff of Panacea, I am more powerful than Paeon and Macaon's medical arts.*

I have achieved a strength that allows me to rule beside kings. Dionysius, the king of Syracuse, was expelled from his court and thus lost the royal staff. Yet he knew my very powers, and he later founded

a school and wielded the sceptre over it. Why would it be shameful to become a king of the youth? Therefore, my dear children, you should obey the rod by seeking its approval and never fleeing its threats.

[The rod speaks] *As the inquisitive Diogenes patiently suffered the rod of Antisthenes – harsh master – so you eagerly bear my heavy yoke*. Accept your burden, by which someday you will become high-minded. Bend your back in the way collar-wearing knights did before being appointed and touched by the king's sword. Your torrential tears shall someday turn into wine. Lamentation, but also great joy, pain and delight: these (old?) sufferings shall serve you as a lesson.

3. Commentary

The poem is largely reminiscent of epics, the descent (παράδοσις, Thuc. I 9) of the staff recalling specifically Hom. *Il.* II 101–107. According to Homer, Hephaestus forged "the ancestral sceptre, ever imperishable" and gave it to Zeus. The king of gods, in turn, gave it to Hermes, who then passed it on to Pelops. From Pelops, the sceptre was inherited by Atreus, then by Thyestes, who finally bequeathed it to Agamemnon (cf. Hom. *Il*. II 46). Therefore, as it can be expected, the very root of the staff is traced back to the father of the Olympian deities, who was its first owner. The staff gave Zeus (v. 1 reprised in v. 83) supreme command over the gods, and later, the same instrument, in the form of a rod, was passed on to the war chiefs. In fact, the sceptre, derived from the wooden mace, is by far one of the most widespread and recognisable symbols of power and authority, and still constitutes one of the *insignia regalia* held by leaders and conveyed to successors in command roles. In this transmission from one generation to the next, vertical symbolism legitimates a man's power as it is conferred on him from above.[19] Moreover, command is exercised within the defined

[19] The mace bestowed upon its possessor roles of defence, guidance, protection, support, sovereignty, and command, within both intellectual and spiritual categories. In the domain of education, for instance, ancient masters used to wield a wooden wand while expounding upon Homeric poems. See Chevalier, Gheerbrant 1969: 97, 682 (s.v. bâton, sceptre).

boundaries of a territory (v. 11), according to rituals and imagery developed since the early Middle Ages.[20] Through a relay race of legendary and historical figures, drawn not only from Greco-Roman legacy but also from the Old Testament and Christian moral literature, the wielded rod never ceases to perform wonders in the hands of its glorious possessors, saving the good from mortal danger and oppressing the evil. As a personification of the object of power, the wand acts akin to a stern preceptor, or rather, it is an extension of him. Therefore, he speaks, intimidates, chastises, and constantly exhorts school pupils to honest behaviour.

After Zeus, Hermes appears in the poem. The god exerts here his customary role – as the herald of the gods, who carries the Golden Bough and the caduceus (v. 6).[21] He also shows up in the role of Psychopomp (cf. *infra*), 'the guider of souls', bringing the souls of the dead to safety from the rivers of Hades by means of his staff.[22] Hermes received the rod from Apollo (mentioned at v. 53) in exchange for the lyre that he made from a turtle while being still in swaddling clothes (cf. *Hymn. Hom.* IV 529 ff.). The twig was to protect the baby god and give him special powers.

Afterwards, some prominent epic heroes come onto the scene. Agamemnon and Telemachus (vv. 14–19) could earn the respect of the assembly and deliver their sermons only by bearing their staffs[23] (Hom. *Il.* II 100 f.; *Od.* II 37), the former proposing the Greek army to return home, the latter demanding a decision to be made about his father's house, which was infested by suitors. And Achilles, shortly before that, vented the wrath that gave birth to the *Iliad* by throwing his rod to the ground in a solemn gesture (*Il.* I 245).

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[20] See e.g. Le Goff 1993: 1–39.

[21] The subject of the caduceus, esteemed among the intellectual circles of 15th and 16th centuries for embodying Hermetic philosophy, remains unexplored in this poem. See footnote 29 for a possible iconographic connection.

[22] The description of Mercury/Hermes's afterlife functions of this passage echoes Verg. *Aen*. VI 748 *Lethaeum ad fluvium deus evocat agmine magno*.

[23] In the Homeric world, to bear the staff of office during public and solemn speeches was an essential condition assuring the speakers (kings or heralds) the right to have the floor. See the examples gathered and commented by Combellack 1948: 209–217.

The wand, however, produces wonders not only when brandished by the most acclaimed male characters of myth, but also in the hands of female figures. The sorceress Circe (vv. 58–62) turns Odysseus's companions into swine (cf. *Od.* X 235–238), whereas Athena (vv. 44–46), the hero's faithful guardian, rescues him on his arrival in Ithaca, first making him an unrecognisable old man (*Od*. XIII 429–438), so that he can enter his house in disguise, and then rejuvenating him again (*Od.* XVI 172–176 and XXIII 153 f.). Retell draws a further passage from the *Odyssey* (X 305) to provide the Danzig school pupils with the *moly*, a magical herb renowned for its potent properties. As Odysseus was given this remedy by Hermes to thwart Circe's nefarious spells, so the moly is to safeguard students from the pitfalls of drunkenness and corrupt company.[24]

We find reference to another character of the Trojan cycle, Aeneas, who must obtain the sacred bough of gold (Verg. *Aen.* VI 136–147: *aureus* […] *ramus* […] *Iunoni infernae dictus sacer*) and give it to Proserpina (named in the poem Ἥρα, as in *Aen.* VI 138 *Iuno inferna*) to set foot in the Underworld and find the shade of his dead father (the passage seems to reprise the aforementioned topic of Hermes's underground journey as Psychopomp, vv. 28–29). Then, the Trojan hero's exploit is likened to the efforts of the pupil who, through the laurel branch, manages to navigate through the labyrinth of knowledge and emerge from it unharmed and wiser (vv. 35–39).

From pagan myth, the narration moves successively into the Old Testament. Of the great prodigies that the sceptre enumerates is Moses's parting of the Red Sea. With his God-given staff, the prophet opens the waters[25] (Exod. 4, 20; 17, 9) and enables the passage of his people through the sea, liberating them from Egyptian slavery. From the Book of Sirach (cf. Sir. 30, 1), on the other hand, comes the account

[24] The allegory of the *moly* herb is interestingly mirrored in the School Statute of the Danzig Gymnasium (*Constitutio Nova*) issued by Rector A. Franckenberger in 1568: *aures et animos obstruant ad eiusmodi cantum Sirenum Circesq[ue] veneficia, ac praemuniant sese herba moly, id est precationibus et temperantia tanquàm symbolo pietatis, caeterarumq[ue] virtutum.* See Głombiowska 2008a: 39.

[25] There might also be a reference to the episode of Moses striking a rock with the staff to bring water out of it (Exod. 17, 5–6).

of the painful, yet necessary, benefits of the rod's use on children's upbringing (vv. 79–80).

Then, the author turns once again to myth. Tantalus murdered his son Pelops and served his flesh to the gods assembled at a banquet. His left shoulder was accidentally devoured by Demeter (Stat. *Th.* IV 590; Verg. *Georg*. III 7), and according to the story (cf. Pind. *Ol*. I 26 ff.; Apollod. II 3; Hyg. 83), Zeus reintegrated it with a piece of ivory. However, in this account, Pelops possesses an ivory sceptre that incites respect and adoration in those who kneel before him (vv. 83–84). This element may refer to a later episode of the myth, when Pelops became a ruler of the Peloponnese (Thuc. I 9).

As observed above, elements from either pagan or biblical antiquity are often brought back to the reality of the Danzig schoolchildren as reliable *exempla*, mostly through the correlative formula 'as it was in the past, so you shall do now'. As it appears, the rod is in constant opposition to human weaknesses, and some of its frequent strikes target childish, thoughtless attitudes, and fearsome bodily passions, the latter being pruriently embodied by the graceful shapes of Aphrodite (v. 105). Carnal sinfulness is vividly depicted in temptations which haunted the virgin Elizabeth's mind. This character is to be identified with Elizabeth, a princess of Hungary and landgravine of Thuringia (1207–1231). A saint venerated by the Catholic Church, she is also remembered as a symbol of civic commitment to caring for the sick and the poor, for whom she built a hospital and worked as a servant.[26] The fact that, in the 16th century, the saint's memory and legend – as it turns out – were

[26] Some components of the account depend on standard biographical sources on St. Elizabeth of Hungary. See Jacobus a Voragine 1890: CLXVIII 756: *Saepe etiam per manos ancillarum faciebat se in cubiculo fortiter verberari, ut Salvatori flagellato vicem rependeret et carnem ab omni lascivia coerceret*. Along with *Libellus de dictis quatuor ancellarum*, a collection of testimonies from Elizabeth's handmaids, compiled to support the process of canonisation of the landgravine, which took place a few years after her death. They are assembled in Huyskens 1908. See p. 117: *surgens a viro in secreta camera fecit se fortiter verberari per manus ancillarum*; and p. 136: [scil. *Conradus*] *precepit* […] *ut bene verberaret illas* [scil. *Elizabeth and her companions*] *cum quadam virga grossa satis et longa*. Both hagiographic and historical literature on the character is extensive, see e.g. Sankt Elisabeth 1981. For some recurrent iconological aspects (virginity, ascetism, flagellation) see, for instance, Gerát 2020: 83–99.

still alive in Reformed communities[27] is certainly due to her significant following in Hesse three centuries earlier, especially in Marburg. It was there that she settled during her widowhood, dedicating herself wholly to charitable endeavours. Following Elizabeth's demise, her remains were interred in a church with great reverence, signifying the esteem in which she was held. The holy maid (ἁγία κόρη) is said in the poem (vv. 106–108) to dismiss temptations in a monitory manner, sparing her chastity at the cost of disfiguring her skin. In this instance, the emphasis was put on the saint's chastity and purity, rather than her charity. Despite being married to landgrave Louis IV, she pursued her strong vocation to remain chaste. She exhibited her piety through acts of ruthless asceticism, which included frequent flagellation with a rod administered by her spiritual master.

Similar healing virtues are described and praised in the following verses, where there is a further return to pagan themes. The staff claims to possess formidable medical qualities (vv. 109–110), superior not only to those of the siblings Panacea and Macaon, children of Asclepius, but also of Paeon himself, the physician of the gods (cf. Hom. *Il*. V 401).

Slightly farther along, the royal character of the school rod is taken up again with another historical figure (vv. 112–115). King Dionysius II of Syracuse (397–343 BC) inherited the throne of Sicily after his father Dionysius I. Having fallen into disgrace, the tyrant accepted exile to Corinth. Here, constrained by misery, he decided to wield the staff as a poor schoolmaster and teach youngsters philosophy, taking on a new role of 'the king of children'.[28] Contemporary pupils from Danzig are therefore exhorted to look at these accounts and endure the

[27] This interest could seem somewhat unexpected, when considering that, according to Luther's doctrine, the lives of the saints could obscure the authentic teaching of Christ by diverting attention from the Scripture and lessening the value of personal penance. Cf. Brooks 1984: 136–149. It must be pointed out that the cult of St. Elizabeth was, in any case, well established in the Polish religious culture as early as the 13th century. See Puchalska-Dąbrowska 2008: 179–193, especially 180.

[28] On the anecdote see Cic. *Fam*. IX 18, 1; *Tusc*. III 2; Val. Max. VI 9 ext. 5; Plut. *Tim*. 14; Demetr. *Eloc*. VIII, IX. Erasmus comments on the episode in *Ad*. 1, 1, 83. The phrase Διονύσιος ἐν Κορίνθῳ *Dionysius Corinthi* was commonly quoted to illustrate reversals of man's fortune, as was the case with the tyrant Dionysius II (Erasmus 2, 59).

physical exertion and effort that will lead them to achieve wisdom and self-discipline. An episode about the philosopher Diogenes of Sinope, the founder of Cynicism, is recounted to stress this last harsh precept (vv. 118–119). According to the anecdote, young Diogenes patiently suffered a hard apprenticeship under his master Antisthenes of Athens (Diog. Laert. VI 21).

In the temporal switch of vv. 122–123 a ceremony of investiture is depicted, which transfers the reader from antiquity into the midst of a medieval court ceremony. The sceptre undergoes a final transformation and becomes a sword with which the sovereign taps the candidate's shoulder and appoints him knight. This scene summarises and reaffirms the instrument's potency, at once divine and political.

The staff's long journey leads to its culminating stage, to dominate the building of the Danzig school, where it can be assumed to appear inside a coat of arms. Here, the scholarchs taking charge of the pupils' education brandish it inexorably (vv. 120–121), since they are proud of the glorious deeds of the past that make it shine, but at the same time, through it, they are legitimised in their sacred authority over the students.

Expanding the subject to the field of visual arts, a parallel may be pointed out between the symbolism expressed by the school mace and the representation of this instrument as depicted in the popular book *Emblematum liber* by Andrea Alciato, published in 1531. Among the gallery of symbolic pictures, an emblem in particular shows a sceptre shaped like a caduceus, featuring entwined snakes and flanked by two cornucopias. The motto reads *Virtuti fortuna comes*, while the commentary[29] beneath the engraving suggests that the instrument grants prosperity and power to those distinguished by intelligence and oratorical skills (cf. vv. 18–21).

As it is oftentimes assumed, objects of command are commonly associated with violence and oppression. Although some of the author's

[29] *Anguibus implicitis geminis caducaeus alis,*
Inter Amalthaeae cornua rectus adest.
Pollentes sic mente viros, fandique peritos,
Indicat, ut rerum copia multa beet (Alciatus 1534: 22–23).
The book, following its first publication in Augsburg in 1531, enjoyed lasting success throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, with continual additions of illustrations and translations into various vernacular languages.

detailed descriptions of corporal punishment may seem complacent, they are nonetheless consistent with the ideas of early modern Western education, which was mainly derived from the Judeo-Hellenistic and Christian tradition. Such convictions are retrievable in the classical pedagogy. Plato (*Prot.* 325 c–d, 326 e) delineates the rearing of children, who were taught by parents at home with precepts and orders from a tender age, and those who did not conform were punished and moulded like crooked wood; such discipline was subsequently imparted by teachers at school. Additionally, Pseudo-Plutarch's enduring treatise (*De lib. educ.* 12 b–d) states that parents, particularly fathers, are given the authority to employ physical discipline in guiding their children away from negative tendencies from early adolescence.[30] Robust support to such severe methods was further provided by the Bible, primarily in the Old Testament,[31] epitomised by the infamous aphorism often misattributed to King Solomon: 'Save the rod, spoil the child' (cf. Prov. 13, 24 'He who spares his rod hates his son'). Several passages from the Old Testament concern the definition of 'the rod of correction' which aims to correct the foolishness of children and lead them to wisdom (see e.g. Prov. 19, 18 'Chasten your son while there is hope, And do not set your heart on his destruction'; 22, 15 'Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him'; and also 23, 13–14; 29, 15). The fundamental reason for physical punishment, both in school and in families, was the belief that man's nature, as a descendant of Adam, was intrinsically depraved and inclined towards evil. Children were believed to be malleable for a short period until around the age of twelve, after which their full reasoning capabilities would enable them to conspire against God, thus consigning their souls to damnation (cf. Gen. 8, 21 'Imagination of man's

[30] More specifically, the most common teaching method was always one of emulation. When this failed, the parent/instructor resorted to violence to overcome inability or insubordination. Collective memory remembers too well the multitudes of tutors wielding rods, immortalised in some literary scenes from Herondas and Horace. Such depictions of Greek and Roman education persisted consistently up until Montaigne. A well-known phrase encapsulating the concept of school was: *manum ferulae subducere*. Cf. Marrou 1948: 239–242, 397–399.

[31] On the biblical roots of physical punishment, see e.g. Greven 2010: 91–106.

heart is evil from his youth').[32] In this sense, chastisement inflicted by teachers was intended to 'straighten up' the natural tendencies of children, to reform their behaviour, and to warn them of the many dangers that Satan placed in the path of a good Christian.[33] To affirm this idea in the poem, Retell (vv. 79–80) gives voice to the author of the Book of Sirach, whose paternal affection towards his son was demonstrated through the constant use of the cane (cf. ἐνδελεχίζω 'persevere' in Sir. 30, 1; 30, 9 and in the poem at v. 79).

It should nonetheless be added that, during that time, complaints about the ineffectiveness and repetitiveness of teaching methods used by grammar teachers, as well as about frequent instances of physical violence and humiliation, were not uncommon. The school years of Erasmus in Deventer and of Luther in Mansfeld, both of whom endured a hard discipline, bear witness to tough conditions prevalent in many educational environments.[34] However, the high value assigned to chastisement in school should not always imply its indiscriminate application. Luther himself, based on his own family experiences of domestic abuse, questioned the benefits of punishment, referring, for example, to Ephes. 6, 4 ('And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath'). In addition, Melanchthon's statement *docere et castigare* emphasises the importance of balancing punishment and teaching: the educator's duty (*officia paedagogi*) was twofold, that is, to teach and to correct. Any excesses of zeal in correction were deemed cruel and ineffective (cf. CR 1855: XXV 22).

As previously underlined, the poetic tale of the school staff's origin often blends pagan and biblical elements. There are, moreover,

[32] All quoted English fragments of the Bible are from *The Holy Bible: New King James Version*.

[33] Hartfelder 1889: 406–413. Chapter 8, in particular, sheds light on the daily challenges faced by teachers, including their poor material conditions and the general atmosphere of disinterest and indiscipline that prevailed in the classrooms. This could partially justify the resort to corporal punishment in the eyes of a 16th century teacher. Despite all these obstacles, Hartfelder praises the educators' noble commitment, basing his arguments on passages from Melanchthon's *De miseriis paedagogorum* (1526) and *De laude vitae scholasticae* (1536). See also Ozment 1983:147–149.

[34] Massing 2018: 9–10, 48–49; see also Luther's first-hand testimony in Tappert 1967: 235, 457.

episodes that connect past events to modern times, proving their exemplary validity for 16th century audience. The narrated episodes are referred to contemporary times by the syntactical structure 'since (or as) this happened in the past, so you should behave now': the causal/comparative clause is to support the function of the historical *exemplum* in generating reverence in the eyes of the school's pupils. In this respect, the sceptre has been passed down from ancient times to the present day, with its emblematic meanings remaining intact. Notably, Retell remarks in the preface to *Epimythia*, a later anthology for students,[35] that prominent feats derived from pagan and sacred history convey paradigmatic and pragmatic values. This idea also resonates with the principles expressed a few years earlier by Andreas Franckenberger in the new School Statute (*Constitutio*)[36] of 1568. The scholar emphasises the importance of the subject, particularly through the works of Roman historians, since they not only extol the virtues of patriotism and defence of the homeland but also provide knowledge about achievements, institutions and customs of the past, which are especially useful as a basis of comparison for contemporary challenges.

Besides a wide array of topics, the poem also exhibits a linguistic variety that is typical of erudite humanist literature. This is evident not only in many learned references from Greek and Latin writers, but also in the extensive revision of specific passages which, though retaining the core of the source material, are rearranged in terms of style. In fact, the wording of such passages does not relate to their primary versions, either classical or biblical, but rather shows a new rephrasing. On the other hand, the epic vocabulary is still abundantly present and skilfully adapted to recompose other episodes. Let us take the passage about Moses parting the waters and leading his people across the Red Sea (v. 54–55). It appears that the verses do not linguistically correspond to the Book of Exodus, as one may expect, but instead show features from both the Ancient and Hellenistic epic, exploiting citations from Homer and Apollonius Rhodius. Moreover, the scene displaying the

[35] Retellius 1574: 2r–2v: *Historiarum et fabularum cognitionem valde necessariam esse nemo sanae mentis homo temere negabit* […] *ut exemplis his instructi homines imitari virtutes et declinare vitia discerent.*

[36] Głombiowska 2008a: 30, n. 20, 34. See also Mokrzecki 1992: 178–180.

speech of Agamemnon and Telemachus is reported by means of both Homeric formulae and post-classical terms. For instance, the particle δῆτα (vv. 8, 26, 47 'indeed') and noun κάρος (v. 101 'torpidity') or αὐτοκράτωρ as 'king', 'commander' (v. 15 – instead of e.g. ἄναξ referring to Agamemnon), are absent from Homeric poetry. The encounter between Circe and Odysseus, and the transformation of his companions into swine (vv. 58–62), contains epic elements from *Odyssey's* books IX and X, wittily rearranged. Furthermore, the same episode of Circe from book X can also be found through allusions in three other passages (vv. 61–64, 98). Verse 124, δάκρυ γενήσεται οἶνος 'your tears shall turn into wine', seems to allude to the renowned miracle of Jesus transforming water into wine during the wedding at Cana. As is well known, the episode is narrated in John's Gospel (2, 1–11) and carries profound symbology. However, in this context, water is replaced by tears changing into wine,[37] suggesting, as pointed out since the ancient exegesis (see e.g. Aug. *In Io. Ev. tr.* VIII 3), a transformative passage from blandness to flavourfulness, akin to the maturation process of grapes, where a tasteless beverage evolves into a delightful nectar. Thus, the pupils' transition from childish foolishness to mature responsibility, piety and self-possession is here allegorically evoked.

In this contextual framework, as it is commonly known, the discourse between classical, biblical and contemporary writers involves the notion of imitation, wherein the modern author engages in a dialectical exchange with their ancient predecessors, providing allusions to sources. Concurrently, the author issues a challenge to the reader, enticing them to discern nuanced references interwoven within their compositions, thus giving the reading experience a sense of playful erudition.

However, there are also single passages that display a fondness for specific erudite features. The form Ἐρέβευς is a Ionic genitive form from Ἔρεβος 'Erebos' (v. 29 – cf. e.g. Hom. *Il.* VIII 368), while gen. sing. νοός (v. 74) is a heteroclitic inflection of νόος (νοῦς) 'mind', particularly present in the Pauline Letters (cf. Rom. 12, 2; Eph. 4, 17). Rare lexemes are not lacking – let us take into account ἀπέδειχθεν (v. 122), a poetic aorist form (3rd pl., cf. ἔμιχθεν Hom. *Il.* III 209), or the

[37] The two terms of the metaphore might have been suggested by the pun between the German noun *Wein* 'wine' and the verb *weinen* 'to weep'.

compound πετρογενής ‘born from a rock’, describing the staff. A variant of πετρηγενής, this epithet pertains to the eastern god Mithras (Lyd. *Mens*. IV 30), who in mythological narratives emerged as a young boy from a rock (cf. Iust. *Dial*. 70). In the context provided, it emphasises the rod as being generated by the pure force of a stone. Ἀδρανία ‘weakness’ (v. 76) is less employed than its allotrope ἀδράνεια, and perhaps its use is motivated by the Ionic form ἀδρανίη in Apollonius Rhodius (II 200). The same goes for δικασπολία ‘justice’ (v. 25), which is interchanged with the more common synonym δικαιοσύνη, employed in the previous line (LSJ s.v.). The epithet χρυσόθρονος (v. 2) ‘throned in gold’ generally accompanies goddesses in epics (see e.g. Hera in *Il*. I 611, Artemis in *Il*. IX 533, Eos in *Od*. X 541), but never Zeus as is the case here. Likewise, ἡδυεπής ‘sweet-speaking’ (v. 7) refers in the poem to the god Hermes, whereas in Homer, it characterises old wise Nestor (cf. *Il.* I 248). It is also relevant to notice that Hesiod calls the Muses by this epithet (cf. *Th*. 965). Χρυσολαβές ‘gold-hafted’ (v. 83) describes the golden sceptre of Zeus. The compound is very scarcely attested (e.g. Men. 13, 1 fr. Gr. Meineke). I suppose the author is likely to have found it in a bilingual word-list or a lexicon, since the lexicographer Pollux mentions it relating to a sword, χρυσολαβὲς ξίφος (*Onom*. X 145). The same observation applies to the following φιλόπευστος ‘inquiring’ (v. 118), πευστός ‘obeying’ (v. 89), and the hapax δύσοπος ‘ill-sounding’, ‘harsh’ (v. 119). While the first is attested in the Suda, the latter two seem to come from Hesychius.

The term γρῖφος ‘net’, ‘trap’ (v. 42) could be an allusion to the intricate and obscure style associated with the medieval critical analysis developed by Scholastic thinkers, which was held responsible, by Renaissance scholars, for the moral decay of education. The reference would not sound unusual, given that the topic of humanist polemics is further developed by Retell in the introductory epistle,[38] where he com-

[38] See Retellius 1571: 74v–75r where he states: *Ideo olim Scholastici Doctores vt Scotistae et Thomistae se ridiculos exhibuerunt, qui dum intricatis rebus intenti, ijsque irretiti fuerunt, neglecta interim linguarum puritate, verbis dilucidis et perspicuis posthabitis, in tetros et horribiles errorum Labyrinthos summo cum detrimento ecclesiae Dei inciderunt.* And further: *nostri saeculi praeceptores [scil. linguam] ab infinitis mendis, monstrosis phrasibus, obsoletis et barbaris vocabulis* […] *vindicarunt*. As is well known, the topos was widespread by Italian Humanists in 15th century and soon

plains about the interpretative errors of the Scholastic method and the deplorable neglect of classical languages in schools. A concentration of terms pertaining to the medical vocabulary is found at vv. 76–78, 107. The words are carefully chosen to describe the damaging effects of the mace on the bodies of those who obstinately do not submit to it (μώλωψ 'bruise', πελιδνός 'livid', χρόα 'skin', σμῶδιξ 'weal', ὕφαιμος 'suffused with blood', φρενῶν νεῦρον 'sinew of the mind'). Regarding rhetorical aspects of the text, some figures should be examined. The anaphoric use of the suffixoid εὐρυ- 'wide' in εὐρύοπα / εὐρυαγυίας / εὐρυμέδουσι at vv. 1, 3, 9, which is stressed in the same metrical position (in the penultimate foot of the line), amplifies the breadth of Zeus's and his sons' kingdom; while a homoteleuton is observed at the end of vv. 16–17 (μέδοντες, ἔχοντες) and 66–67 (ἄφρον, βάκτρον).

Finally, upon tracing the history of the sceptre, the author makes use of a multitude of synonyms to indicate the object (39 occurrences, 15 synonyms), the choice of which is worth taking into consideration. If synonymy helps evade repetition and provides the text with elegant variations, it is noteworthy that some nouns are rarely found in literature (σκήπων, ὄσχος). This scarcity imbues them with a sense of uniqueness, giving the poem a refined tone. Here, they are ordered by frequency:

1. ῥάβδος 7x (vv. 6, 17, 59, 68, 81, 109, 116)
2. σκῆπτρον 6x (vv. 2, 10, 19, 23, 83, 114)
3. βάκτρον 4x (vv. 35, 61, 67, 119)
4. πτόρθος 3x (vv. 5, 15, 74)
5. ὄζος 3x (vv. 6, 37, 85)
6. σκήπων 3x (vv. 8, 47, 113)
7. κλών 2x (vv. 8, 48)
8. ῥαπίς 2x (vv. 44, 53)
9. μάστιξ 2x (vv. 57, 106)
10. κλῆμα 2x (vv. 27, 50)
11. νάρθηξ 1x (v. 54)
12. ὄρπηξ 1x (v. 63)
13. ὄσχος 1x (v. 40)
14. βοτάνη 1x (v. 47)
15. κλάδος 1x (v. 33)

became a stylistic trend all over Europe, particularly intensified within the Reformation (Ozment 1980: 309–317). Such recurring motifs also echo in Franckenberger's *Constitutio* (Głombiowska 2008a: 23–24).

4. Conclusions

In summary, thanks to the linguistic richness as well as the variety of themes and inspirations that the journey of the sceptre takes through different times and traditions, the text constitutes a commendable example of learned poetry in Humanistic Greek. The work, however, seems to fulfil additional functions beyond the literary, considering the context of its production and the author's mission. Due to the general lack of documentation on the very first period of the *studium Dantiscanum*, an attempt has been made to indicate the extent to which the study of a ceremonial and didactic poem can shed light on the school's functioning in its early years. It is possible to assert that there is a clear intention on the author's part to create a strong and solid symbology capable of conferring authority upon the newly founded institution and anchoring it to the ancient scholarly tradition. It is conceivable[39] that the staff was displayed in a coat of arms within the schoolhouse or that it was somehow exhibited for the students to see.

From a pedagogical perspective, it is clear that the *studium* did not differ fundamentally from other schools of the Reformation area, privileging hard work, personal effort, and self-denial towards perfection, not only intellectual but also moral, while relinquishing too specific content on theological matters.[40] The blend of sacred and pagan elements, evident in the choice of narratives as well as in the style and vocabulary, enables the author to reinforce the arguments, placing them in a broader and deeper historical perspective that encompasses ancient, biblical and Christian history. Furthermore, the references woven into the poem's verses to Franckenberger's statute, *Constitutio nova*, confirm Retell's ideological affinity with the Rector's vision. In both texts, the convergences on moral values, as well as on the selection of the literary *exempla* by which they are transmitted, are evident. Similarities

[39] Since the only coat of arms related to the Gymnasium Academicum Dantiscanum currently available is the medal forged for the school's bicentennial in 1758, which does not feature any academic mace, it is necessary to add that these conclusions are merely speculative. A print of the medal can be seen at http://polona.pl/item-view/457b99e6-b2d2-42a1-b689-884cc5a4f800/0/50d00626-7c75-4de3-a0d2-0622d0cba900.

[40] On these aspects, particularly concerning the role of Greek in the pedagogy of the Danzig Gymnasium, see also Peressin 2023.

with the Greek poem are also to be found in another foundational work for the school, a Latin poetic exhortation, *De formando artium liberalium studio carmen*, written and pronounced by Achatius Curaeus in 1560. The latter was one among the first teachers at the Gymnasium and a fellow of Retell's. The composition, as has been noted,[41] was written at that time to address the problematic absence of regulations intended to govern the life of the school founded two years earlier. It was meant to be delivered by the teacher himself on the occasion of a ceremony, with the purpose of encouraging pupils to put effort into their schoolwork and adhere to honest behavioural rules. This suggests that Retell's work may have emerged around the same time, serving a similar didactic and celebratory aim. If that were the case, it would have been intended to be read or recited during a particular occasion, such as an inauguration or a promotion, as was often the custom during academic events. However, for full confirmation, it will also be necessary to consider and compare other expressly programmatic texts such as the poem titled *School Laws* from the same anthology.[42]

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