LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

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RESPONSE TO URSZULA AUGUSTYNIAK'S REVIEW OF MY BOOK *SARMATISMUS. DIE POLITISCHE IDEOLOGIE DES POLNISCHEN ADELS IM 16. UND 17. JAHRHUNDERT (SARMATISM: THE POLITICAL IDEOLOGY OF THE POLISH NOBILITY IN THE 16TH AND 17TH CENTURIES)* IN APH 121/2020

The main allegation in Urszula Augustyniak's crushing review of my book on Sarmatian ideology is that everything I wrote is essentially already common knowledge to Polish historians and that at best some German readers might learn something new from it. This judgment came as a great surprise to me, because I had had contact with her on several occasions in the course of my research, and she knew exactly what my subject was, but she never suggested to me either that I was wasting my time or that in granting me a scholarship to write the work the rector of the University of Poznań was squandering public money. Indeed, many Polish historians I met encouraged me to do it, opining that a monograph on Sarmatian ideology was a desideratum. None of them, moreover, suggested to me that this was a subject so "thematically and methodologically complex"[1] (despite Polish historiography allegedly already having written everything about it) that few scholars would be equal to it, as Augustyniak now asserts in order to explain why to date there is in fact no monograph on Sarmatian ideology.

Augustyniak does not inform the reader where precisely Polish historians have made the same statements as I have made in my book, although, otherwise, her review is full of annotations and cross-references to other titles. In one place, she claims that my remarks are based "on the now-classical studies by Władysław Konopczyński and Władysław Czapliński … as well as those of Adam Kersten" (they are not), without mentioning which pages of which books she has in mind. None of those historians ever wrote a text

[1] Urszula Augustyniak, 'Review of Martin Faber, *Sarmatismus. Die politische Ideologie des polnischen Adels in der frühen Neuzeit* (Wiesbaden, 2018)', *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 121 (2020), 286–95 (here 287).

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about Sarmatism. Augustyniak herself admits that during a 1994 debate among Polish humanists on the subjects of Sarmatism and the Baroque,[2] "the attempt at (re)arranging the notions and ideas constituent of Sarmatism … was to no avail".[3] If Polish historians could not even agree on the very definition of Sarmatism then, how can it be that Konopczyński, Czapliński, Kersten, and others already knew everything about it long before them, and why, if that was the case, did Augustyniak, who was herself present at that debate, not intervene and tell her colleagues about it? And of course, if all I wrote is already common knowledge in Polish historiography, or if I really am guilty of "reluctance … to unambiguous formulation of [my] own opinions",[4] then why does Augustyniak constantly criticize my statements? They may be banal, or they may be wrong, but surely they cannot be both at the same time.

Then she even introduces a German author, Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, who has allegedly "presented the issue of Sarmatism in a broader East-Central European historical and historiographical context". This he apparently did in his book *Frühneuzeitliche Nationen im östlichen Europa*. Augustyniak has obviously never even glanced at this book, for if she had, she would have realized that the subject of Sarmatism is addressed in it only in a ten-page digression at the very end.[5] Moreover, in this digression, Bömelburg proposes the thesis that Sarmatism only existed from the second half of the eighteenth(!) century. I can hardly imagine that Augustyniak would share this view! Besides, she states that my only references to Bömelburg's texts are in my footnotes, and never in the core text. In fact, however, I do make such references in the core text – three times: on pages 14, 266, and 399. This not only attests to the superficiality of Augustyniak's reading (which is also obvious on other occasions, which I shall pass over here for lack of space and in order to spare her), but it is also strikingly suspicious that exactly the same, evidently false, accusation was made by Jūratė Kiaupienė in her review of my book.[6]

And then, how are her reproaches of too little dispute with the opinions of other authors ("Other works on Sarmatism are treated in much the same manner – referred to, or even extensively cited, in notes.") to be reconciled with sentences like this: "This is typical of the monograph indeed: rather than formulating his own substantive opinions, Faber makes critically[!]

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[2] 'Sarmatyzm a barok – porządkowanie pojęć. Dyskusja. Podała do druku Małgorzata Elżanowska', *Ogród. Kwartalnik*, vii, 4 (1994), 48–107.

[3] Augustyniak, 'Review', 286 f.

[4] Augustyniak, 'Review', 295.

[5] Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, *Frühneuzeitliche Nationen im östlichen Europa. Das polnische Geschichtsdenken und die Reichweite einer humanistischen Nationalgeschichte (1500–1700)* (Wiesbaden, 2006), 409–18.

[6] In *Lithuanian Historical Studies*, 23 (2019), 172–7.

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references to the literature".[7] Did I argue too much or too little with other historians? Does my book abound in critical references to the existing literature or does it only "form a review of facts-based findings of Polish historians"?[8] It seems that Augustyniak is simply looking for arguments to criticize my work, regardless of their logical compatibility. Many of her summaries of the content of my chapters are also thoroughly inadequate.

Another important thrust of Augustyniak's criticism has likewise already been raised by Kiaupienė, namely that I portrayed Sarmatian ideology as a phenomenon that was consistent throughout the Commonwealth, and did not consider regional differences, above all between Poland and Lithuania. However, neither Augustyniak nor Kiaupienė addressed the fact that I mentioned, and even quoted,[9] statements by Lithuanian historians who, like me, hold the view that Sarmatian ideology was common to the Polish and Lithuanian nobility.[10] In that case, do not these Lithuanian historians deserve even more criticism than me, and why is it not levelled at them? And with regard

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[7] Augustyniak, 'Review', 288, 293.

[8] Augustyniak, 'Review', 295. By the way: The same contradiction occurs in Wojciech Kriegseisen's review of my book in *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 127 (2020), 4 (English-language edition), 159–63 (here: 161).

[9] Faber, *Sarmatismus*, 107, fn. 173.

[10] As the informants of her statement that "the hierarchy of ideological values of the two nations of the Commonwealth was different" (p. 291), Augustyniak names, among others, Artūras Vasiliauskas, 'Antika ir Sarmatizmas', in Vytautas Ališauskas, Liudas Jovaiša, Mindaugas Paknys, Rimvidas Petrauskas, and Eligijus Raila (eds), *Lietuvos didžiosios kunigaikštijos kultura. Tyrinejimai ir vaizdai* (Vilnius, 2001), 13–31. It seems that Augustyniak does not even know that there is a Polish translation of this book, in which Vasiliauskas wrote the following: "Ostatecznie sarmatyzm okazał się ideologią uzasadniającą zachowywanie status quo i politycznego konserwatyzmu. Wiara w doskonałość porządku politycznego i absolutyzacja 'złotej wolności' umacniały poczucie wyjątkowości i ksenofobiczną mentalność szlachty. Szlachta Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego, która na równych ze szlachtą polską prawach uczestniczyła w życiu politycznym Rzeczypospolitej, wraz z nią walczyła o przywileje. Unię Lubelską uważała za świętą i nierozerwalną, a zarazem pielęgnowała państwowość Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego – nie formułowała jednak lokalnej ideologii, alternatywnej wobec sarmatyzmu" (Artūras Vasiliauskas, 'Antyk i sarmatyzm', in Vytautas Ališauskas, Liudas Jovaiša, Mindaugas Paknys, Rimvidas Petrauskas, and Eligijus Raila [eds], *Kultura Wielkiego Ksiestwa Litewskiego. Analizy i obrazy* [Kraków, 2006], 1–21 [here 17]; emphasis mine). This means that even if Augustyniak is aware of the Lithuanian text of Vasiliauskas, she has obviously never read it. Moreover, Jan Jurkiewicz, whom Augustyniak now also cites as reinforcement for her opinion that the values systems in Poland and Lithuania differed, once told me personally that in his view, there was no difference between the Sarmatian ideology in Poland and that in Lithuania.

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to Augustyniak, it was more than astonishing to read this allegation from a person who only recently published the following sentence: "The common axiological system of the multiconfessional, multiethnic, and multicultural noble estate of the Commonwealth was built around the integrating Sarmatian political and social ideology".[11] Indeed, during my work on this project, it has frequently been my experience that historians have suddenly criticized me for holding views which they themselves had previously expressed in publications of their own, or which they had not criticized when they were uttered by other historians. One wonders why that is so. Of course, every scientist has the right to change their mind, but if they do so, they must be expected to do it openly and honestly, to give their reasons, and to deal first with their own previous errors and correct them before censuring others.

Incidentally, in the sentence quoted above, Augustyniak used the term "Sarmatian ideology" unreservedly (as she has done so on many occasions), while in the review of my book she now manifests a tendency to write the word "Sarmatian" in brackets and quotation marks, as follows: "the nobility's political ('Sarmatian') ideology" – though not consistently, and without giving a reason for doing so. On two occasions, she seems to draw a distinction between a "liberation ideology" or "ideology of freedom", and a "Sarmatian ideology",[12] but with no explanation.

Despite her claim that Sarmatism was not consistent even within the Commonwealth, Augustyniak avers "that doubts have long been expressed with respect to the uniqueness of Sarmatism as a Polish nobility-specific aesthetic and cultural phenomenon". She claims that the Hungarian art historian Endre Angyal "not only indicated a community of aesthetic tastes and customs but also [of] the ideology of the East Central European nobility, with regards to mores and morals as well as 'purely' ideological aspects". Once again, Augustyniak is referring to a book that she has obviously never read (or if she has, so much the worse). Angyal's text, in fact, leaves the reader in no doubt that he regards Sarmatism as a specifically and purely Polish phenomenon, only certain cultural aspects of which influenced other Slav nations.[13] And there is no mention at all in his book of any noble ideology, be it Polish or broader East Central European. Furthermore, in the places indicated by Augustyniak, Janusz Tazbir by no means claims that Sarmatism existed outside Poland.[14]

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[11] Urszula Augustyniak, *History of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. State – Society – Culture* (Frankfurt am Main, 2015), 342. "The far-reaching integration of the noble estate led to a unification of Sarmatian mentality, ideology, and lifestyle" (*ibid*., 341).

[12] Augustyniak, 'Review', 291, 292.

[13] Cf. e.g. Andreas Angyal, *Die slawische Barockwelt* (Leipzig, 1961), 26, 202, 210.

[14] Janusz Tazbir, 'Synkretyzm a kultura sarmacka', *Teksty*, 4 (1974), 43–57, deals with the influence of foreign (especially oriental) cultures on Polish Sarmatism (and

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Augustyniak then rebukes me for using the term 'Poland-Lithuania' for the Commonwealth – at least adding that there are other West European historians, such as Robert Frost, who do the same.[15] Obviously, she did not understand that at the very point to which she was referring,[16] I was justifying, with reference specifically to her, the use of the term "Poland", which I also used in most instances in the book (there are other places where Augustyniak has apparently not understood what I wrote). And she has clearly not noticed that besides Frost, there is also, for example, Bömelburg, whom she so praises, who long ago acquired the habit of consistently using "Polen-Litauen". Indeed, she seems even to have forgotten that her own book, *Historia Polski 1572–1795*, in its partial English translation, bears the title *History of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth*.

At least Augustyniak concedes to me the merit of having found and showcased source texts which express the Sarmatian ideology. Nonetheless, she regards these sources as insufficient, expressing her opinion that in addition to printed texts, I should have included more texts from manuscripts and from dietine records. On the other hand, she laments the 526 pages of "dense text" that the book already numbers (Bömelburg's book is 560 pages long).[17] I shall not dwell on the fact that I once uncomplainingly reviewed a book of hers with 1006 pages, all of which I had scrupulously read from beginning to end. But I remember very well my lecture on this project at the Institute of History at the University of Warsaw on 23 March 2006, when, in the presence of Augustyniak, I asked the audience if they were aware of any important source texts on Sarmatian ideology. Augustyniak remained silent. Nevertheless, I in fact noted in my book that analysis of dietine records might have provided more insight into the microhistory of Sarmatism.[18] Yet I am confident that my own insight into those records is already sufficiently profound that even a more extensive investigation of those records will not substantially alter the general picture of Sarmatian ideology as presented by me. If Augustyniak thinks it will, it is up to her to prove it.

And that brings me to my last point. The vast contradictions within her review lead me to suspect that there are other intentions behind it than simply a factual dispute on the subject of Sarmatism, in which I would be happy

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not vice versa) and on p. 56 has a subheading "Sarmatyzm zawsze polski", while in *id.*, *Kultura szlachecka w Polsce. Rozkwit – upadek – relikty* (Warszawa, 1983), 12, Sarmatism is not mentioned at all. This text deals only with noble culture, and even of this it states: "sądzimy więc, iż da się wyróżnić polską kulturę szlachecką jako osobną formację".

[15] Augustyniak, 'Review', 290.

[16] Faber, *Sarmatismus*, 11, fn. 15.

[17] Augustyniak, 'Review', 288, 289, 291.

[18] Faber, *Sarmatismus*, 171.

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to engage. Yet if Augustyniak really does aspire to such a dispute, I would propose that she write a text of her own on the subject in which she could clarify her authentic opinion on Sarmatian ideology and specify exactly which texts by Konopczyński, Czapliński, Kersten, and others she bases it on. That would form the basis for a fair discussion, into which I would be prepared to enter at any time. And there might also be others who would join us.[19]

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[19] Cf. the review of my book by Andrzej Borowski in *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce*, lxiv (2020), 256–65.

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