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On Some of the Consequences of the Intertextual Entanglements of the Polish Romance Writing in the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century. The Case of Wacław Potocki's *Syloret*

Romance literature of the pre-Enlightenment era could be compared in many respects to the modern adventure cinema. This concerns not only its popularity, in comparison to other genres, or the ability to attract audiences with a similar social-cultural profile, but also the remarkable potential to absorb and adapt pre-existent narrative structures, regardless of their original contexts. A skilled adaptor (a poet or writer), aiming to elicit a particular response, would be equally content borrowing from a biography and an account of some unusual incident, a chronicle and a folk tale, an itinerary and a myth, even a piece of purely sacral writing in the form of this or other book of the Old Testament. Whatever could be used to create a lively and exciting narrative, characterized by the magnetism unique to the genre, served as material reworked by the craftsman, aware of his audience, into a homogenous, or perhaps homogenizing, final product. Homogenizing—because the main plotline was not necessarily based on a single prototype, and its development was frequently determined by several, sometimes hardly distinguishable and definable, filiations. Treated somewhat unceremoniously, the source materials inevitably lost the qualities underscored by the original genre, and within the framework of the romance convention, became a part of the indispensable and pervasive "action," the genre's primary and fundamental attribute, which renders ill-fitting, or simply secondary, all other orders, including the didactic order that was primary for the literature of the pre-modern era.[1]

[1] Several recent works discuss the specificity of the Baroque romance, including I. Maciejewska, *Narracja w polskim romansie barokowym* (Olsztyn, 2001); P. Bohuszewicz, *Gramatyka romansu. Polski romans barokowy w perspektywie narratologicznej* (Toruń, 2009); P. Bohuszewicz, *Od "romansu" do powieści. Studia o polskiej literaturze narracyjnej (druga połowa XVII wieku – pierwsza*

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The consequences of such transposition are most evident in the cases where the genre—irregular par excellence, and usually viewed as inferior in the critical reflection on the period—begins to adapt elements derived from the forms found at the very top of the contemporary hierarchies and evoking specific existential senses. I am talking here, of course, about tragedy on the one hand, and the epic, on the other, in their most classical, that is, Antique, forms. Setting aside for now the associations of the Baroque romance writing with the epic, I would like to focus on a text whose reliance on a particular drama—even if noted before—has not been, to my assessment, sufficiently discussed, and its consequences appropriately appreciated. I am talking about Wacław Potocki's *Syloret albo prawdziwy abrys po ciężkim straconych synów żalu im niespodziewańszego, tym większego smutnego ojca wesela*.

In the context of the outlined issues, the choice of *Syloret* seems especially valid when we compare it to other similar works. When it is possible to discern in one of the domestic romances a more or less faithful reworking of a specific source text, the former is usually revealed as an adaptation of another romance, either an ancient one (such as Andrzej Zacharzewski's translation of Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*) or one that is contemporary (Marcin Siennik's *Historyja wdzięczna o szlachetnej a pięknej Meluzynie, Kleomira albo Igrzysko Fortuny* by Tomasz Walerian Aleksandrowicz, or the anonymous *Kolloander wierny Leonildzie*). A "romance adaptation" was far less frequent in the case of hagiographic texts (*Historyja o jedenastu tysiącach dziewic* by Kazimierz Auspurger) or biblical tales (*Tobijasz wyzwolony* by Stanisław Herakliusz Lubomirski). It would seem that only Potocki's text can be declared as directly and undoubtedly rooted in a particular dramatic work.

The author of *Ogród fraszek* does not hide his debt to the predecessors, but he also does not reveal the names of his creditors, opening a broad field for speculation with a vague formula found in *Syloret*'s subtitle. Even though the remark about "an old tale" from "various Greek and Latin writers, presented here in the Polish custom"[2] could as well be used as a neat cover hiding the author's own invention or a useful means to create the impression of erudition, it is surely not the case of the first two parts of the work, the ones where women-shy Daulet is caught in a love intrigue

połowa XIX wieku) (Toruń, 2016). However, the most comprehensive presentation of the genre's constitutive features can still be found in T. Michałowska, "Romans XVII i pierwszej połowy XVIII wieku. Analiza struktury gatunkowej," in J. Pelc (ed.), *Problemy literatury staropolskiej*, vol 1 (Wrocław, 1972), pp. 425–498.

[2] All citations from *Syloret* are based on the first edition of the work: W. Potocki, *Syloret albo prawdziwy obraz nieosłabionego … męstwa* (Sandomierz[?], 1764). The Roman numeral denotes the part of the work from which the passage was taken, the following one refers to the number of the octet, and the final number denotes the number of the line in the octet. A modern version of the work's introductory part (relevant for this discussion) was published by Leszek Kukulski: W. Potocki, *Syloret* in *Dzieła*, ed. L. Kukulski, intr. by B. Otwinowska, vol 2 (Warszawa, 1987), pp. 125–204.

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while young Ksyfil becomes a victim of a wicked scheme by Arsyna and her lackey. Naturally, adventures of a neglected wife falling passionately for her misogynistic stepson could be viewed as an archetypal plotline known all over the world, one whose origins can be traced to both the biblical and the mythological tradition. Several signals scattered throughout Potocki's work allow to identify clearly, among the numerous literary variations on this eternal theme, Seneca's *Phaedra* as the source of the plot, and to reveal the preceptor of Nero and master of Roman stoicism, to be one of the "Latin writers" mentioned in the subtitle.[3]

Such diagnosis seems indisputable inasmuch as the mutual affinities between the works can be confirmed by several components of the source text, from the way the key characters are presented to the course of action itself. For instance, in the Euripidean *Hippolytus*, the two protagonists never meet and it is not from the Troezen queen herself that the former learns about her incestuous affection. The confession is made by a reckless nurse, and not openly but in the privacy of the palace chamber. So instead of a perfect dramatic opportunity to present a direct confrontation between two potential lovers, we witness an emotional tirade of a seething youth, followed by him storming out, cursing the entire female race. What Phaedra herself has to say about this is revealed in a letter, which becomes the reason for Theseus' tragic curse cast upon his son. It is only in Seneca's version of the drama that the events are arranged in the way they appear also in Potocki: we have a confession made to a confidante, the latter's mediation in the name of the heroine, her meeting with the stepson and his rejection of her, finally, the sudden exit of the outraged youth. The plot outline of *Syloret*'s early parts corresponds to Seneca's work; however, many details reveal Potocki's emulative attitude toward the Latin source. For instance, instead of one confidante (Nutrix), somewhat natural in the case of a Greek aristocrat, we have two characters sharing the nurse's function: a woman who listens to the confession and provides a form of psychological support and a man attempting to influence Daulet's relentless attitude—who can fraternize with the latter more than any woman could, especially as the conversation turns to male–female relationships.

[3] The connections between *Syloret* and Seneca's tragedy were mentioned already, among others, by Aleksander Brückner, "Dawne powieści i romanse polskie. Szkic literacki," *Biblioteka Warszawska* 2 (1901), pp. 506–544, and Bronisław Gubrynowicz, "Powieść do połowy XVIII stulecia" in S. Tarnowski et al. (eds), *Dzieje literatury pięknej w Polsce*, vol. 2 (Kraków, 1918), as well as "Rozwój powieści w Polsce: powieść epoki baroku i czasów saskich" in S. Tarnowski et al. (eds), *Dzieje literatury pięknej w Polsce*, vol. 2, (Kraków, 1936), pp. 527–558. However, the scholarship seems to emphasize and usually point to its connections to strictly narrative works such as Apuleius' *Metamorphoses,* Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*, even the life of St Eustace from *Golden Legend* and *Gesta romanorum*. See J. Dürr-Durski, foreword to W. Potocki, *Pisma wybrane*, vol. 1 (Warszawa, 1953), pp. 84–85; Michałowska, "Romans XVII i pierwszej połowy XVIII wieku," pp. 450–451.

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The evident similarities between the texts can be also found on the more basic level of the evoked topics. We are presented with an extensive praise of modest life away from civilization, as well as with allusions to the myth of the four ages of man, a warning of the consequences that the refusal to procreate has for the biological existence of the entire humanity, and even mythologisms used as arguments supporting the thesis about Amor's omnipotence—here supplemented creatively with analogous exempla from the Judeo-Christian tradition (all the more surprising as the plot takes place during the rule of Antiochus III). Consequently, the lustful ancient gods, Jupiter and Nereus, are joined by the biblical Lot and Judas. The remark uttered by nurse Cytyssa acknowledging this attempt at self-justification is quite symptomatic: "Enough with the tales / These are pure inventions of frivolous poets" (*Syloret,* I 74, lines 1–2) corresponding, *mutatis mutandis,* to the words uttered in similar circumstances: "Deum esse amorem turpis et vitio favens / finxit libido" (lines 195–196).[4] In fact, many more lexical filiations can be located in the texts, including the declaration about the need to go with the flow of the river when faced with the powerlessness of repeated resistance, or Arsyna's refusal to be called a mother, or the fateful "o silvae, o ferae!" (line 718)—originally Hippolytus' *ultima verba*, here—an ordinary *actus iaculatoriae* in an elaborate apologia of wild nature ("Oh, holy forests! Oh, happy wilderness!" *Syloret*, I 100, line 8).

An interesting use of Seneca's stylistic ideas can be found in a passage where Cytyssa warns her lady against a hasty submission to the budding passion. The reference to the flames of Etna is an all too clear allusion to a passage in *Phaedra* ("et ardet intus dualis Aetnaeo vapor / exundat antro": lines 102–103), significant as it is the beginning of the heroine's emotional vivisection, which in addition attributes a genital origin to her tormenting feelings.[5] This comparison, however, takes a significantly different form in Potocki. This is how the worried nurse describes the ominous consequences of giving in to the wicked affection:

> Niechaj ta sroga na dom twój kometa
> Z ciebie nie wschodzi, która już ponuro,
> Wziąwszy płomienia piekielnego z grzbieta –
> Cytyssa mówi – zaraźliwej Etny,
> Wyciąga, na świat cały, ogon szpetny.[6]
>
> (*Syloret*, I 64, lines 4–8)

[4] All quotations from Seneca from: idem, *Tragediae* (Lugdum Batavorum: I.F. Gronovius recensuit, 1661).

[5] More on that in C. Segal, *Language and Desire in Seneca's* Phaedra (Princeton, 1986), pp. 34–35.

[6] „Do not let this fierce comet rise / from you on your house, says Cytyssa, / having grimly grabbed the infernal flame / off the crest of pestilent Etna it now drags / its disgusting tail into the light of day."

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The Baroque poet is satisfied neither with the curtness of the original formulation nor with the condensed style of the Roman playwright. Searching for an appropriate dose of expression he comes up with a hazardous association of the subterraneous fire (the volcanic lava) and a heavenly one (the comet) with Arsyna and her house—revealed to be her own body—further increasing this visual chaos with several suggestive and horrifying epithets. This example shows the extent of pressure—stylistic in this case—applied to the classical model transported into the realm of a new genre, governed by different laws.

The emerging relation between the story of Daulet and Arsyna, on the one hand, and Hippolytus and Phaedra on the other, is revealed by Potocki's heroine herself (as if other signals of it were insufficient) when she compares her fascination with Syloret to the impression Theseus made on both daughters of Minos while on Crete, and later when she lists her beloved among other mythical youths,

> Bo aczbym inszych mogła mieć dziesięci,
> W tym jednym wszytkie mych afektów składy:
> Gaśnie i Parys, i Adonis przy tem,
> I Bellerofon gaśnie z Hippolitem.[7]
>
> (*Syloret*, I 29, lines 58)

The appearance of Paris and Adonis is caused by their ephebic beauty but also by their particular relationship with Venera and her laws (in a sense, they both stand for what Daulet could become). Bellerophon and Hippolytus were of course both young men unsuccessfully harassed by sexually aroused married women (in other words, they represent Syloret's firstborn as he is now).[8]

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[7] "For I could have ten others but / it is in this one that my affection gathers: / Paris and Adonis wane when next to him, / so do Bellerophon and Hippolytus."

[8] It should be added that (as far as we accept the current assumptions about the time of *Syloret*'s creation between 1674 and 1691) Potocki's importation of Seneca's model precedes the publication of *Phaedra*'s first Polish translations by Jan Alan Bardziński (in L.A. Seneka, *Smutne starożytności teatrum*, [Toruń, 1696]) and Stanisław Morsztyn (in "*Psyche" z Lucyjana, Apulejusza, Marina, "Cyd albo Roderyk," komedyja hiszpańska, "Hippolit," jedna z tragedyj Seneki, "Andromacha," tragedyja z francuskiego przetłumaczona*, s.l., s.d.), even though we know that the tragedy was used, for instance, by Jan Kochanowski in one of his elegies, see: W. Strzelecki, "Przyczynki do wpływu tragedii Seneki na Jana Kochanowskiego," *Eos,* 2 (1959/60), pp. 173–176; R. Rusnak, "Seneka–Kochanowski, Kochanowski–Seneka," *Pamiętnik Literacki,* 99/3 (2008), pp. 37–39; M. Bajer and R. Rusnak, "Wprowadzenie do lektury," in S. Morsztyn*, Hippolit… Andromacha,* ed. M. Bajer and R. Rusnak (Warszawa, 2016), p. 4. The fact that Potocki knew the Roman philosopher not only through translation is confirmed by the presence of Seneca's maxims in his other works—as noted also by Eustachiewicz—for instance in *Wojna chocimska* as well as in the individual poems from *Ogród fraszek*. One of them is in fact entitled "Na radę Seneki" [To Seneca's advice], see: T. Eustachiewicz, "Dzieje sentencyj Seneki w porenesansowej literaturze polskiej," *Pamiętnik Literacki* 22/23 (1925/26), p. 374.

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Potocki's openness about these clear analogies, actually his repeated acknowledgment thereof (another example, perhaps the most evident one, will be analyzed in the following paragraphs), proves that he was aware of his work's intertextual nature, and he indicated this rather convincingly already in the subtitle. Intertextuality is a typical feature of the romance genre in general, especially of the form it took toward the end of the Old Polish period. Romances of that era often reused solutions developed by earlier texts and emerged from a juxtaposition of quite repetitive components taken from already successful narratives. Emphasizing his entanglement with the literary tradition already at the beginning of his tale, the author on the one hand invites a search for other numerous references to this tradition in *Syloret*'s other parts, and, on the other hand, encourages a closer look at the game he begins to play with the renowned source. And there is no doubt that this game is played deliberately, and the individual *similia* are aimed to distract from the fundamental discrepancy between Potocki's and Seneca's versions of the myth. The nature of this deviation from the classical model is related largely to the transfer of the tragic narrative into the framework of a modern romance (which is also the key thesis I would like to formulate in this essay). The following paragraphs will concentrate primarily on the manifestations of Potocki's intertextual game resulting from this transposition.

A clear and practically inviolable assignment of individual characters to specific axiological categories is without a doubt an important feature of the Baroque romance; consequently, nuanced presentations of the psychological and characterological spheres, characteristic for the tragedy, and for Seneca's work in particular, find no worthy appreciation in Potocki. A similar fate awaits the multidimensional and largely ambiguous character of Seneca's Phaedra, who in Potocki turns into the depraved Arsyna, an undeniable villain from the very start. This effect is further enhanced by Potocki's clear didactic purpose, declared in the opening stanzas of his work, and it is in this context that we should consider his positioning of the female character.

And so, taking into account the overall, general instruction presented at the beginning of the text—that there is no such turn of Fortune which could not be endured with one's head held high—Arsyna's scheme may be viewed as what it in fact is, namely, a side effect of chance taking aim at Daulet; a kind of baptism by fire at the threshold of adulthood, providing him a moment to shine through a display of his masculine, and until now only self-professed, iron will; it is a test similar to the one Josef in the Book of Genesis was subjected to before the promise which had been given to him could become fulfilled. With regard to the plot of the romance, to which the wondrously fickle Fortune serves as the most effective midwife, the feminine passion sending Daulet away from Rhodes is only meant to open doors to chance which can now claim dominion over the key male protagonists.

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One can hardly ignore the fact that the drama of the married woman's unfulfilled desire, central to the source text, is of secondary importance in Potocki's text.

In light of the instruction preceding Arsyna's almost immediately ensuing plotline ("Do not trust a woman unconditionally / especially when she uses her beauty to do wrong," *Syloret*, I 11, lines 4–5), the heroine becomes a striking exemplum of female flightiness and cunning, and the readers may learn to recognize the schemes plotted by similar, but real-life, shrews by following the fate of her prospective victim. This clearly negative presentation of the heroine's moral principles is reinforced in at least two more ways. Firstly, through the recollection of Syloret's previous relationship, the heroine is placed in the archetypal model of a prematurely deceased mother replaced by the ruthless stepmother. Secondly (revealing the radically pragmatic perspective of a landowner and the head of the household) she is criticized for her lower-class origins. The sad case of the Rhodian aristocrat simply proves that

> Mylą się, którzy tę kładą przyczynę,
> Do małżeńskiego wstępując zakonu,
> Że gdy sierotę, gdy weźmie chudzinę,
> Jak prędko nogę w dostatni dom wstawi,
> Powolnością swą posagu nadstawi.[9]
>
> (*Syloret*, I 18, w. 4–8)

Instead of "obedience," Syloret is faced with the licentiousness of a parvenu intoxicated by the new possibilities, and devoid of any morality or even simple decency, something presumably typical of the lower classes. It should be added that the deliberations on the choice of the right wife, the subject on which the author must have considered himself to be an expert, will be continued in a conversation between Daulet and Hirpin.

Considering Potocki's insistence on drawing an analogy between Arsyna and Seneca's Phaedra, expressed both implicitly and explicitly, it may be worth to investigate the Phaedra he has in mind, or rather, his interpretation of the character. A quite satisfactory answer to this enquiry may be found in the passage revealing the fate of the unfortunate Greek and, more importantly, an argument about her personal responsibility for the turn of events. Distressed by the behavior of her charge, Cytyssa aims to persuade Arsyna to abandon her plans, but the harshness of the nurse's judgement is still quite striking:

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[9] "Those men who wish to tie the holy knot, / Are thoroughly wrong in the argument / That any poor orphan or a starveling, / In exchange for shelter and prosperity, /Brings in her obedience instead of a dowry."

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Słyszysz, co czyni Fedra psów niesyta,
Macocha w czarne położona księgi?
Nie mógszy na złe przywieść Hippolita,
Żeby potargał przyrodzenia wstęgi,
Piekielnych, małpa, fortelów się chwyta,
Na zgubę domu rozpiąwszy popręgi:
Zgładzi pasierba, zruciwszy wstyd z twarzy,
Skoro niewinnie przed ojcem spotwarzy.

Był Bóg na niebie, był, i na te dziwy
Patrzył, gdy pasierb spotwarzony ginął;
Że go chce ociec zabić popędliwy,
Krwią swą od koni rozszarpany spłynął,
Które go zniosły na brzeg skały krzywy;
Aleć sąd za grzech obojga nie minął:
Swą ręką Fedra, a Tezeus, z góry
Spadszy, przed czasem płaci dług natury.[10]
(*Syloret*, I, 37–38)

A moment later Arsyna also hears: "may reason remove from your heart this spot / or you will get caught, just as Phaedra was," (*Syloret*, I 39, lines 7–8).

The heroine of the ancient tragedy is thus presented as someone governed not by reason but by passion, giving in to desire which, in turn, leads her to crime. Consequently, it comes hardly as a surprise that the nurse does not mince her words describing unnatural tendencies of her mistress and listing her so adamantly alongside those condemned to eternal disgrace. It is also relatively easy to predict the direction this interpretation will turn to (compared to the myth presented by the Roman author), as well as its consistent rejection of the somewhat mitigating circumstances which are difficult to overlook in the Latin text. Cytyssa ignores the burden of the curse placed by Venus on all descendants of Helios and felt also by Phaedra; she does not mention the queen's painful dilemmas and her internal struggle; she recalls (following Seneca) the lie uttered in the presence of the husband, but fails to mention that at the source of the intrigue directed against the stepson stands the far more level-headed Nutrix. We are also presented with a very specific interpretation of the

[10] "Do you know of Phaedra's whorish appetites, / Of the stepmother whose name is now spelled black in books? / Unable to deprave honest Hippolytus, / Unrelenting and true to the familial ties, / That malicious shrew turned to hellish wiles, / Spinning a vicious web of lies around her own house: / She will murder the stepchild, devoid of all shame, / besmearing before his father the innocent youth's name. // But there was God in heaven and He saw all that; / He witnessed the undoing of the slandered child, / Who in fear of father's impetuous wrath, / Died dragged to bloody death, body torn apart / by his own horses among the sharp rocks. / And the day of reckoning dawned early on both, / Pheadra by her own hand, Theseus through a fall, / For their sins paid the due price, and unavoidable."

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heroine's suicide. Although posthumously humiliated by Theseus' refusal to give her an appropriate burial, Phaedra dies with dignity, even somewhat heroically, accepting—unlike her demigod husband— full responsibility for the committed trespass. She becomes a kind of sacrifice on the altar of her own love and, departing prematurely from the world, still intends, in her insanity, to pursue her beloved Hippolytus through the fiery streams of hell ("per agnes igneos amens sequar," line 1180).[11] From the purely Christian, post-Augustinian perspective manifested by Cytyssa, taking one's own life is an act entirely devoid of nobility. The nurse views it instead as a rightful punishment imposed by God who consequently claims dominion over the whole Athenian royal family. And to completely satisfy the eternal order of things, in Potocki's interpretation of the tale, also Theseus has to pay for the death of his son, a fact unnoticed by the Roman author. In the end, the reality of Seneca's protagonists presented by the Polish poet is governed by the logic of morality play rather than by the logic of ancient tragedy: both sides of the equation become balanced, all plotlines entwined into a clear pattern, bright as an epiphany, and all unanswered existential questions are silenced by the majesty of the Divine Economy.

Cytyssa's speech, crucial for capturing the essence of Potocki's play with Seneca's text, shows that the former's goal is not to pay homage to the original heroine in all her complexity and ambiguity, but to present a rather dark pendant to the deeds of Arsyna who—despite the fervent interventions of the nurse—will choose a path similar to the one taken by her ancient predecessor. Characteristically, also in this case the plot—fueled by female passions—only pretends to follow the course set by the earlier tragedy and ultimately manages to avoid the catastrophe. Although Daulet retreats hastily from the unbridled female sexuality sneaking upon his virtue, the sea to which he entrusts his fate keeps in check all monsters slumbering under the surface. The blow directed against the unyielding young man hits little Ksyfil, Arsyna's biological son, whose childhood greed makes him taste the ginger-seasoned meal. However, this whim of fate is ultimately annulled (the innocent boy's death would be far more horrifying here!) and the incident itself is meant to highlight the criminal motives of the heroine and the sycophant Hirpin. According to the logic of the Divine Providence, explained at length in several holy tales, instead of harming a child of God, the villain becomes the victim of his or her own wickedness.

However, an overall conclusion concerning Potocki's adaptive or, in fact, pseudo-adaptive treatment of Seneca's text—pointing to its simplifying,

[11] W. Strzelecki, "Introduction," in Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *Fedra*, transl. A. Świderkówna, ed. W. Strzelecki (BN II 118), (Wrocław, 1957), passim.

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instrumental, and radically heterodox approach toward the model incorporated into the romance genre—does not invalidate other, more detailed observations. These allow us to ascertain that Potocki's text managed to retain more than the basic plotline of the ancient source. One could even venture to say that what animates *Syloret*'s conventionalized generic form is the speculative layer of Seneca's work. This is unsurprising inasmuch as the Roman author is known precisely for the expansive monologues, detailed descriptions of the characters' emotions, and a general rhetoricity of his texts.

Potocki transposes from *Phaedra* whole passages devoted to philosophical disputes, with proper argumentation. Among them is the issue of a solitary life away from civilization, which was naturally a thing of interest to the poet belonging to the second estate. Consequently, he adds to the plot an ideological layer (even though the romance typically avoided such ambitious aspirations). This is accompanied by the borrowing of several maxims, generously scattered across the original work, as well as persuasively useful suggestive imagery, such as the comparison of carefree, unrestrained days of youth to the lushly growing rye or to an "oak thicket" (*Syloret,* I 89, line 6). Even a cursory reading of Potocki's shorter works leaves no doubt that the gnomes, aiming to combine specific teachings, and the wide-ranging comparisons drawn with poetic gusto are the author's favorite ingredients in the construction of the argumentative layer of his works.

However, from the perspective of the romance as a genre, a much more important borrowing made by Potocki, as he tells the tale of Arsyna's immoral passion for Daulet, involves Seneca's specific portrayal of emotions. Putting it in most general terms, it contributes to a kind of absolutization of the drama's emotional sphere—all the more as it concerns only the female characters—and results in a strict subordination of the dramatic events to the dynamic of the characters' passions. Phaedra is one of those heroines whose internal landscape Seneca portrays with extraordinary attention through the use of appropriately suggestive images. Potocki's adoption—even if only to a limited degree—of this poetic reservoir allows him to leave behind one of the frequent qualities of the romance narratives, namely their clichéd character and the frequently accompanying inauthenticity. I have already referenced the characteristic passage about the flame coming from the depths of Etna. Potocki clearly appreciated also the purely somatic symptoms of the heroine's emotions, such as her beginning to do something and abandoning the idea after a moment, as presented by Seneca. He also further develops Seneca's connection between the spiritual state and disease, to the extent that he actually has Arsyna summon a doctor who diagnoses her and administers the necessary, though ultimately useless, medicine,

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Doktor przyczynę powiada z cholery,
Z którą się rzadka mieszka pituita,
Więc jej krew puszcza, więc robi klistery,
Plastrów i proszków zadaje dla potu,
Lecz jej nie może trafić antydotu.[12]

(*Syloret,* I 46, lines 4–8)

Also borrowed from the Latin original, complaints about the limitations of the human condition which restrict the freedom to follow one's passion seem truly authentic; Arsyna finds enviable the lives of animals who, although used for hard work, are allowed to follow their natural desires (*Syloret,* I 43).

Even presented as generally as they have been here, connections between *Syloret* and the ancient tragedy of Hippolytus and Phaedra run much deeper than it may have appeared at first glance. But while the similarities between the two works are important, what is even more noteworthy is the complicated intertextual game that they put into motion, one connecting two texts originating in two different registers and serving two entirely different purposes. This underscores even more evidently romance's tendency to unceremoniously re-appropriate older cultural narratives and to transplant them into their own specific realities.

Translated by Anna Warso

12 "The doctor pronounces: 'tis a malady / Brought by imbalanced humors and the phlegm, / He starts the bloodletting, concocts a mixture, / He prepares powders to release the sweat, / But all of it in vain, he cannot find a cure."

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