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*OPORINUS' DRAMATA SACRA ANTHOLOGY (BASEL, 1547):
A HISTORICAL AND EDUCATIONAL READING*

The article analyses the anthology *Dramata Sacra* (1547) published in Basel by the influential publisher Johannes Oporinus. The massive 2-volume collection includes the most renowned German and Dutch playwrights active in the field of Latin school drama. Even if not all authors were committed Protestants, the anthology offers a glance on the practices of school drama, especially in the reformed city of Augsburg, and is precious for a study on the main political and educational features of the texts. The themes of good Christian government, the permanence of social order and the duties of the ruling class were the themes preferred by the authors, which were faithful to the Humanist tradition of classical verse but did not refrain from elaborating heavily on the Biblical text in order to develop the pedagogical content of the plays. For this reason, the anthology is a valuable source not only for the history of German Latin drama but also for the history of 16th-century education.

Key words: German Latin drama, Protestant education, Johannes Oporinus, Gymnasium bei St. Anna, Hieronymus Ziegler, Sixt Birck, Cornelius Crocus

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**Антология *DRAMATA SACRA* (БАЗЕЛЬ, 1547) ОПОРИНА:
ИСТОРИКО-ПЕДАГОГИЧЕСКОЕ ПРОЧТЕНИЕ**

В статье анализируется антология *Dramata Sacra* (1547), опубликованная в Базеле влиятельным издателем Иоганном Опоринем. Увесистое двухтомное собрание включает сочинения наиболее известных немецких и голландских драматургов, работавших в сфере театра латинской школы. Хотя не все авторы были приверженцами протестантизма, данная антология предлагает взглянуть на практики школьного театра, особенно в реформированном городе Аугсбурге, и представляет ценность для изучения основных политических и образовательных особенностей рассматриваемых текстов. Темы благого христианского правления, стабильности общественного порядка и обязанностей правящего класса были теми темами, к которым предпочитали обращаться авторы, верные гуманистической традиции классической поэзии, однако они не отказывались и от глубокой проработки библейского текста для развития педагогической составляющей спектаклей. По этой причине антология является ценным источником не только для истории немецкого латинского театра, но и для истории образования в XVI в.

Ключевые слова: немецкий латинский театр, протестантское образование, Иоганн Опорин, гимназия Св. Анны, Иероним Циглер, Сикст Бирк, Корнелий Крок

OVERVIEW

Among the literary genres cultivated by the Humanists and developed in the early German Reformation, religious theatre was perhaps the one which had a stronger impact on educational practices and the higher potentialities for the diffusion of the new faith.

Tragediae and *comoediae* in Latin were composed both as a tribute to classical authors and as a didactic tool; soon the tradition of German popular theatre and of Carnival plays (*Fastnachtspiele*) started exchanging themes and images with the cultivated *comoedia*. Johann Reuchlin's *Scaenica progymnasmata* (Basel, 1498) is one of the first examples of this interference: he followed Aristotelian structures to write in Latin a *Bauernkomodie*, a «comedy of peasants», which was translated in German by Hans Sachs (as *Henno*) and therefore entered the circle of popular theatre performed in the streets with openly satirical intent.

Thus the Reformation was able to build on this tradition and prepare one of its most powerful weapons, didactic theatre, in a variety of forms. The classical *tragoedia* adopts Biblical subjects and shapes itself around a set of preferred themes and situations, while the *comoedia* often incorporates the violence of popular mockery to address the Catholic church and its corrupted morals (for example in Naogeorgus' *Mercator*, 1540)¹. In the meanwhile, new *Fastnachtspiele* with a strong polemic content were written and printed; cities converted to the Reformation organized performances of such works in which all citizens were involved in order to enhance community building. The most renown example of such practice took place in the Swiss city of Bern thanks to the painter and playwright Niklas Manuel². Therefore, pedagogical aims became crucial in the development of 16th-century theatre in German-speaking countries and history of theatre cannot

¹ Washof W. Die Bibel auf der Bühne. Exempelfiguren und protestantische Theologie im lateinischen und deutschen Bibeldrama der Reformationszeit. Münster, 2007. See especially part A, chapter VI.

² The most comprehensive study on the subject is the one by: Ehrstine G. Theater, Culture, and Community in Reformation Bern: 1523–1555. Leiden; Boston; Köln, 2002.

be disconnected from history of religion, on one side, and history of education on the other.

This lively activity has left us an impressive quantity of sources, from which such theatrical texts can be analyzed, as it has been done by excellent scholarship from different disciplines. More difficult is to assess the actual impact of the dramas; while the existence of several printed editions of a single work can be considered a good indicator of success, it is difficult to ascertain their actual diffusion, especially in the field of Latin drama which was performed mainly in school or court contexts.

On this side, a precious document is represented by the anthology *Dramata sacra* compiled by the printer Johannes Oporinus and published in Basel in 1547³. The document is very interesting for an analysis focusing on pedagogy. First of all, its educational intent is clearly stated in the frontispiece («ut... iuventuti Christianae proponi utilius possit») and the volume is dedicated to two «learned adolescents», the sons of Hieronymus Sailerus (Sailer), a literate from Augsburg in the circle of Bullinger, mentioned in several 1547 letters, including one to Bullinger by Francisco de Enzinas (Franciscus Dryander)⁴. Moreover, the anthology offers a direct representation of the dramatic production of the Gymnasium bei St. Anna in Augsburg, directed by the protestant playwright Sixt Birck (Xystus Betuleius), one of the more flourishing centers of didactic theatre in the early Reformation: as we will see later, the majority of the dramas contained in the anthology are directly connected with St. Anna.

Even if we do not have found direct evidence of the diffusion of the anthology itself, the one-volume format was clearly more practical and less expensive for classroom use than buying all the texts in separate editions (which, for some of the texts, were produced only after the anthology publication). An additional factor is the role of Oporinus as a crossroads of Protestant culture in a crucial publishing center such as Basel. Even if the choice of texts could have

³ *Dramata Sacra. Comoediae atque tragoediae aliquot e Veteri Testamento desumptae, quibus praecipue ipsius historiae ita eleganter in scenam producuntur, ut vix quicquam in hoc argumenti genere, iuventuti Christianae proponi utilius possit: magna parte nunc primum in lucem editae.* Basel, 1547.

⁴ *Epistolario* / Ed. by I. J. Garcia Pinilla. Genève, 1995. P. 177.

been influenced by a multiplicity of factors, including practical ones, the anthology can be considered a valuable insight on the reality of didactic theatre in an early Reformed urban centre.

AT AUGSBURG AND BEYOND:
THE STRUCTURE OF THE ANTHOLOGY

The anthology, in two volumes, contains sixteen plays, both already in print and published for the first time in this occasion. Here we transcribe the authors and titles of the plays:

I

Hieronymus Ziegler: *Protoplastus, sive de creatione hominis*, comicotragoedia

Sixt Birck: *Eva, Mythologia Philippi Melanchthonis redacta in Actionem ludicram*

Hieronymus Ziegler: *Isaaci immolatio*, comoedia

Cornelius Crocus: *Ioseph*, comoedia

Andreas Diether: *Ioseph*, comoedia

Hieronymus Ziegler: *Nomothesia*, tragicocomoedia

Hieronymus Ziegler: *Samson*, tragoedia

Jacobus Zovitius Driescharus: *Ruth*, comoedia

Hieronymus Ziegler: *Heli, sive Paedonothia*, tragoedia

II

Sixt Birck: *Sapientia Salomonis*, drama comicotragicum

Johannes Lorichius Hadamarius: *Iobus*, comoedia

Thomas Naogeorg: *Hamanus*, tragoedia

Sixt Birck: *Iudith*, comicotragoedia

Sixt Birck: *Susanna*, comicotragoedia

Sixt Birck: *Beel*, tragoedia

Sixt Birck: *Zorobabel*, comoedia

As it can be seen immediately, the most represented authors are by far Sixt Birck (six plays) and Hieronymus Ziegler (five plays), while all the other authors are represented by a single play.

As such, the anthology gives a comprehensive outline of the theatrical activity at the Gymnasium bei St. Anna, founded in Augsburg in 1531 as a Protestant educational standpoint, directed from 1536 to 1551 by the playwright Sixt Birck, and where Hieronymus Ziegler taught from 1535 to 1548 in the same role (he signs himself as *Augustae at D. Annam ludimagister* in several editions of his plays, including the 1545 edition of the *Protoplastus*). In the year of the anthology, 1547, over ten years of Birck's direction had clearly established St. Anna as one of the most relevant greenhouses of Biblical protestant drama in Germany; even if Ziegler was, according to Cora Dietl, Roman Catholic, he followed the dramatic tradition of St. Anna thoroughly, and his techniques and themes are very similar to Birck's ones⁵.

Another of the authors represented in the anthology, Andreas Diether, was a teacher at St. Anna, and in this function he reworked Cornelius' Crocus *Ioseph*, first printed at Antwerp in 1536 and included in the anthology, expanding the plot to a lengthy reenactment of the whole life of the hero, with a clear pedagogical focus. The other authors do not have a direct connection with St. Anna, and therefore are added for the interest in their dramas or because of their established pedagogical role.

Reinhard Lorich from Hadamar (Lorichius Hadamanus) studied in Koln and Wittenberg and taught at Marburg, where his *Iobus, patientiae spectaculum in comoediam et actum comicum redactus* had been previously published in 1543⁶. Jacobus Zovitius Drescharus was, like Crocus, a Dutch playwright, as it is clear from the title of the first edition of the drama present in the anthology, which

⁵ Dietl C. Neo-Latin Humanist and Protestant Drama in Germany // Neo-Latin Drama in Early Modern Europe / Ed. by J. Bloemendal, H. Norland. Leiden; Boston, 2013. P. 159–160.

⁶ The copy owned by the Bayerisches Staatsbibliothek shows heavy cancellations in black ink on all indications concerning the publisher both at the beginning and end of the book, and the city is hardly readable on the back of the frontispiece. The reason for the cancellations is unknown.

was already 14 years old at the time of the republishing, which looks a confirmation of the renown either of the drama or of its author⁷.

Thomas Naogeorg (Naogeorgus) is a different case in point. The author is one of the most interesting in the realm of Protestant theatre, because of his farcical Latin dramas indifferent to classical structures and full of harsh anti-Catholic satire, such as the *comoediae* Pammachius and Mercator. Nevertheless, he is underrepresented in the anthology because the collection aims at gathering only biblical dramas; moreover, Naogeorgus' aggressive style could be considered not appropriate in a pedagogical context.

Among Naogeorgus' much less renown Biblical plays, the anthology presents *Hamanus*, printed in Leipzig four years before, in 1543. The play looks remarkable in the anthology for the forceful presentation of the title role, «Hamanus hostis Iudaerum pessimus», with his court, and for the energetic rhythm of action, which distinguishes this drama from the others in the anthology, mainly built on heavily moralizing monologues. The presence of *Hamanus* in the collection looks like the acknowledgement of the importance of its author and simultaneously highlights the relative distance of Naogeorgus from the standards of didactic school plays.

The standard presented in the anthology — and presumably adopted by the teachers who adopted it as a textbook — relies on Ziegler's and Birck's production, providing also some clues to understand the evolution of both authors.

The anthology opens with Ziegler's *Protoplastus*, probably because the «drama comicotragicum» deals with the Genesis. The text was relatively new, having been published only two years before in Augsburg⁸. In the first edition it was dedicated to the city authorities of Rothenburg ob der Tauber, Ziegler's hometown, elaborating in a lengthy preface the cherished subject of the connection between the cultivation of *humanae litterae* and the good government of the *Respublica*. As for the other texts in the anthology, the prefaces to previous editions, when available, give useful

⁷ Jacobus Zovitius. Ruth. Authore Iacobo Zovitio Driescharo, ludi Hoochstratani hypodidascalo. Antwerpen, 1533.

⁸ Hieronymus Ziegler. Protoplastus: drama comicotragicum in memoriam humanae conditionis, & uitae nostrae miserrimae, nunc primum Augustae Vindelicorum editum apud Henrico Staynerum. Augsburg, 1545.

accounts on the cultural context and the aims of the dramas; in this case, the preface both sheds light on a core theme of the German biblical drama as a genre — community building and the education of a morally sound ruling class — and sets the tone for the whole collection, in which the political overtone runs as a *fil rouge*.

Other important themes are discussed in the preface to the 1543 edition of *Isaaci immolatio*, which also announces in the frontispiece that in the same year the drama was staged in Augsburg⁹. The book is dedicated to the nobleman Leonhard Bock von Bockenstein, and recalls the *topos* of *historia magistra vitae* to recall some classics of ancient history and biography, and praise Biblical history as the perfect guide. History is here presented not only in its political role, but also as a fundamental tool for personal development, according to the Humanist educational tradition.

Nomothesia and *Samson* are published for the first time in the anthology, that presents only the texts themselves; therefore, there is no additional information available for these two dramas.

The series of Ziegler's dramas end with *Heli sive Paedonothia*, the most pedagogically oriented piece of the collection. The drama takes the book of Samuel as its starting point, narrating the vicious life of the two sons of the high priest Heli, spoiled by a too lax education, and their inglorious death. The first edition was printed in Augsburg in 1543 and includes a lengthy preface¹⁰.

After a short poem, «Calumniatori bene agere», whose exact target is difficult to ascertain, the preface (dedicated to Martin Weiss, another nobleman from Augsburg) is a passionate praise of education, from the classical examples of Persia and the Greeks to the Bible. Education is both necessary (in absolute meaning) and useful to the State; the human soul takes its qualities only from education:

Nihil esse in universo rerum ordine, vel magis necessarium, ver rebus publicis utilius, Ornatissime vir, matura, sed bona hominis

⁹ Hieronymus Ziegler. *Comoedia Sacra: Ex Veteri testamento, quae inscribitur Immolatio Isaac, nunc primum Augustae Vindelicorum & edita, & acta.* Augsburg, 1543.

¹⁰ Hieronymus Ziegler. *Tragedia nova, quae inscribitur Paedonothia, argumento ex veteri Testamenti sumpto, iam primum Augustae Vindelicorum edita.* Augsburg, 1543.

(cuiuscunque conditionis fuerit) educatione, omnes sapientes contestantur. Nam per se animus noster, ceu tabula rasa, in quam si quid boni pinxeris, tum demum perfectionem sui suscipit: quia antea plane vacua videbatur. Neque putemus tantam hominum infortunitatem esse, ut artes invenerimus, quibus nihil nobis ipsis prodesse possemus. In iis praesertim, quae virtutem concernunt. Ubi vero maior industriae, arti suae vis acquiritur, quam in his quae virtutum vestigia sequuntur: id quod sola educatio recta facit, & primas tenet.

A tree metaphor is used to express the idea of education being able to change human nature, improving even bad nature. This obviously implies the idea of bringing man at least partially out of his sinful state, and helping him in reaching salvation through faith. Of course, this aim can be reached at its best reading the Scriptures.

Quemadmodum arbor suapte natura nisi unicum fetum gignit, insitione eadem diversi generis fructibus oneratur: ita qui natura sequitur, semper idem est, qui arte ducitur sui dissimilis sit. Et primum quidem ingenium institutione ad bona frugem demutari potest. Nunc vero, cum de hoc genere informandae pueritiae non nihil agere decreveram, hoc argumentum sumpsi, quod patribus negligentioribus timorem incutere posset, & eosdem in via reduceret. Nec sunt aliae historiae magis vere quam illae, quae in sacris literis traduntur.

The connection between the Scriptures, education of the ruling class and government of the *res publica* is fully developed in Birck's dramas. Parliaments and city authorities have a role in almost all his plays, especially *Judith*, presented in the anthology, like in the first Latin edition (1543) with the subtitle *Reipublicae recte institutae exemplum*¹¹. The political dimension is fully developed in this play, in which Birck introduced a city council as the ultimate authority, for the reasons analyzed by Judith Pfeiffer and probably

¹¹ «Ezechias“ und „Zorobabel“ vollziehen sich ganz innerhalb einer Hofversammlung, eines „Barlaments“, und solche spielen auch im „Beel“ und „Joseph“ eine gewisse Rolle, in der „Judith“ tritt eine Rathsversammlung an die Stelle, in der „Susanna“ das Gericht; der Hofhalt wird genau gegliedert, die Verhandlung, Debatte, Abstimmung ausführlich mitgetheilt. Das öffentliche Leben und öffentliche Interesse leitet auch meist die Wahl des Stoffes». Scherer W. Birk, Sixt // Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie 2. 1875. S. 656 // URL: <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118859730.html#adbcontent> (дата обращения: 21.11.2019).

also projecting in Augsburg his previous experiences as a playwright in the Reformed city-states in Switzerland¹².

It is indeed noteworthy to know that almost all Birck's plays included in the anthology are Latin translations by the author or other writers of texts originally published in German. Both *Susanna* in 1532¹³ (later republished individually in Latin, Zürich 1538, with dedication to the «clarissimus Senatus Augustanus»¹⁴) and *Beel* in 1535¹⁵ were published and performed for the first time in the German version in Basel; *Iudith* in 1539¹⁶ and *Zorobabel* in 1538 were published and performed in the German version in Augsburg¹⁷. The German versions, for obvious reasons, were suitable for public performance also outside the school context and, therefore, were more effective in pursuing the author's aims of civic development. The first edition of *Susanna* is closed by a sort of signature declaring the aim of building a «laudable citizenship»:

Sixt Birck von Augspurg / zû der zyt
schülmeyster zû mindern Basel /

¹² Pfeiffer J. The Changing Function of Violence in Swiss Reformation Drama as Relates to Laughter and Mockery. Sixt Birck's German Judith and Niklaus Manuel's Der Ablasskrämer // Power and Violence in Medieval and Early Modern Theater / Ed. by C. Dietl, C. Schanze, G. Ehrstine. Göttingen, 2014. P. 169–194.

¹³ Sixt Birck. Die history von der frommen Gottsförchtigen frouwen Susanna, im M. CCCC. XXXII. Jar, öffentlich inn Mindren Basel durch die jungen Burger gehalten. Basel, 1532.

¹⁴ Sixt Birck. *Susanna comoedia tragica*. Tiguri, 1538.

¹⁵ Sixt Birck. Ein herliche Tragedi wider die Abgoettery (usz dem propheeten Daniel): darinn angetzeygt würt, durch was mittel eyn rechte Religion jnn eynem Regiment moeg angericht werden, zu Basel uff Sontag den neünden tag Meyens, im 1535 jor, durch eyn junge Burgerschafft daselbst, Gott zu lob und eer öffentlich gehalten. Basel, 1535.

¹⁶ Sixt Birck. *Ivdith*. Ain Nutzliche History durch ain Herrliche Tragoedi in spißweiß für die augen gestalt, Dienlichen, Wie man in Kriegsleüffen besonders so man von der ehr Gotswegen angefochten wirt, vmb hilff zû Gott dem Herren flehend rüffen soll. Augsburg, 1539.

¹⁷ Sixt Birck. *Zorobabel*. Ain Herrliche Tragoedi auß dem dritten Buch Eßdre gezogen. In welligem on andere merckliche nutzbarkeit, sonderlich erlernt würt, wie fürstendig es sei, so dei fürsten und Oberen die verthädinger der Goettlichen warhait erhalten, un das ain Gottsaeliger nach Ehren und würdigkait stellen moege. Augsburg, 1539.

Einer löblichen Burgerschaft

zû ereren¹⁸.

When Birck's plays begin to be translated in Latin, by him or other poets, for use at the St. Anne-Gymnasiums in Augsburg, their strongly political-educational content had already been set and put into practice in the German versions, accessible to a larger audience.

Differently, the two plays *Eva* and *Sapientia Salomonis* have been published for the first time in this anthology and therefore their original language is Latin, even if it is not to be excluded that they were performed before in German remaining unpublished. *Eva* looks particularly remarkable, as we will see later in a more detailed analysis, because of being inspired by a Melanchthon's fable which basically narrates God's creation of social classes after the Fall. For this reason, this light-hearted text embeds a political content in deep connection with the Lutheran idea of social order as created by God.

THE EDUCATIONAL AND POLITICAL CONTENT OF THE PLAYS

In order to give account of the various pedagogical features of the plays included in the anthology, we will proceed with the analysis of a selection of passages drawn from some of the most representative texts and with a focus on the idea of «christiana Respublica». This analysis should not be considered a comprehensive review of all political and educational nuances expressed by the dramas, which would have clearly exceeded the limits of an article, but an exemplification intended to promote further research.

Our point of departure is the introduction to the anthology, in which the author addresses two «virtuous adolescents», as detailed at the beginning of this article. The most striking feature of this otherwise conventional homage is the force with which the citizen lacking proper education is represented, almost in the line of Luther's speeches, only attenuated by the solemnizing filter of Latin. Oporinus writes that the man that received a liberal education and knows philosophy (meaning moral philosophy,

¹⁸ Sixt Birck. Die history von der frommen... P. 87.

according to the *topos* recurring at least from the pseudo-Plutarchean *De liberis educandis*) lives with full dignity and is useful to the state. On the contrary, men which occupy positions in the administration and justice system and lack such education are as «dogs at the [thermal] baths», or worse, like «a stone sitting on another stone». While the first image is simply mocking, the second is quite strong and aims at functioning as a severe warning for the children of well-to-do families, for which civil appointments were common and therefore the risk to be inadequate was high, with dishonor of the family.

Studiosis adolescentibus, Antonio et Bartholomeo Saileris, clariss. viri domini Hieronymi Saileri filiis, Ioan. Oporinus S. D.

[...] sic etiam qui est liberali doctrina excultus, praeceptisque philosophiae mansuefactus, non modo ut in hac vitae consuetudine cum quadam suavitate ac dignitate inter homines vivere possit, magis erit accommodatus, sed etiam sibi & toti reipub. ingentes adferet utilitates. Nam qui gubernacula tenent reipub. homines ineruditi, quid aliud quaeso videri possint cum pro tribunali sedent iudicaturi de gravissimis controversiis, quam quod vulgo dici solet, canis in balneo? aut iuxta Aristippi quoque sententiam, lapis super lapidem¹⁹?

The solution proposed by Oporinus is obviously the careful reading of the anthology itself, not as a leisure but in the manner of a schoolbook, in order to learn the style of Biblical and religious drama in Latin and inspire the young readers to write dramas themselves:

Cum autem legetis argumenta sacra, latina oratione in scenam producta, videbitisque non pauca ex illis esse partim a studiosis adolescentibus vestrae civitatis, partim eruditibus viris, civibus quoque vestris composita: cogitate in animis vestris, vobis esse a me propositum exemplum, atque etiam calcar additum, ut vos quoque simili studio incensi, & honestissimo gloriae stimulo concitati, vel haec ipsa, vel ornatiora praestare aliquando contendatis²⁰.

The advice is not as rhetorical as it could seem at a first glance. Students enrolled in the higher education system at the time started learning Latin at a very early age from preceptors at home, and went

¹⁹ *Dramata Sacra* [Preface]. Vol. I. C. 2r–2v.

²⁰ *Dramata Sacra* [Preface]. Vol. I. C. 6v–7r.

on with daily use of Latin, so that writing mediocre but functional Latin verses was probably commonplace for all students. The anthology presents both high-quality texts like Sixt Birck's and more conventional ones like Hadamanus', so that it was not impossible for the student aiming at imitation to find his own way, and be able to take profit of this useful didactic tool: not only writing, but also performing the plays in the school performances, which were part of the regular school life.

While the poetry techniques were not different from the ones taught before the Reformation on Humanist bases, the contents were of course in full renewal. The central role of the Scriptures revived the earlier tradition of Biblical drama, while the idea of «*respublica Christiana*» — a new political order able to overcome the tyrannical tradition of the alliance between Church and state and establish a «righteous» administration based on the Reformed religion and its values — made the authors either focus on the stories with a more marked political contents, or give a political overtone to Scripture passages which could be interpreted in many other ways.

A first example can be drawn from Ziegler's *Protoplastus*, a drama focusing on the creation of Adam and the subsequent Fall. Adam is appointed «administrator» of the earth by God, an image suggested by the Bible, but developed by the poet with a reference to the Medieval system of feudal structure. God is the *dominus* and Adam is the vassal, thus representing at the same time the necessary subjection to God of a Christian administrator and his relative freedom of action:

Quid porro opus mihi his, tuo quae nomini
 Subiecerim? vel quid vita indigeo tua?
 Quam tibi dedi, quamque aufero quando lubet.
 Nam gratia uteris mea gratis data.
 Nec posse te quicquam tuis ex viribus
 Confide, si me amas, manus opus es meae,
 Plasma es meum, Deus creator ego tuus.
 Tibi meam rem publicam communico.

Sub te domum hanc novam volo disponere.
 Habitaculum quoque ordinavi commodum
 Ut esset in mundo, vicem geres meam.
 Subiecta sunt tibi, quae vivunt, omnia.
 [...]
 Huc colloco te tamquam in arcem regiam,
 Provinciam hanc tibi administrandam dedi:
 Vasallus es mihi, dominus feudi sum ego.
 Et liberum est hinc egredi quando voles:
 Perambulare, ceteras terras licet,
 Spatiari in illa, cumque brutis laudere
 Tua voluntate, et nihil deerit tibi²¹.

The terminology chosen by Ziegler in representing God speaking to Adam («tibi meam rem publicam communico»; «provinciam hanc tibi administrandam dedi») transmits forcefully how the ruling-class pupil should be educated to be at the service of the state, and how this liberty must be limited by religion in order not to transcend in error. The Fall changes everything, limiting further the liberty of man, but does not change the fundamental mandate given by God for the correct administration of the mundane world.

The subject of mankind after the Fall is developed in Sixt Birck's *Eva*, based on a fable by Melanchthon, as we have already explained in the previous paragraph. Here, social inequalities (which seem to contradict the fundamental equality of all believers as stated by the early reformers) are explained through the different behavior of Adam's and Eve's sons, and address indirectly the complex issues of social mobility and struggling lower classes, so powerfully and tragically addressed by the Peasants' War twenty years before the publication of Oporinus' anthology. On this side, the plays are rather unproblematic. They state both the divine foundation of social order and the «natural» belonging of each individual

²¹ Hieronymus Ziegler. *Protoplastus* // *Dramata Sacra*. Vol. I. P. 13–14.

to a given class, reassuring the members of the privileged one that their role is fully legitimate because their issue from a «righteous» lineage. As explained in the *Argumentum*:

Haec disciplina arridet optime Deo.

Benedicit his Deus natis ex ordine:

Cain tamen maledicit, ob mores suos.

Servum facit, mulieri mandat cetera²².

In the play plot, God pays a visit to Eva's household in order to see how children are behaved and if they are orderly, clean and well-mannered with the prestigious guest. The sons which pass this (rather trivial) exam are blessed by God and given important appointments: Abel is made priest and Seth prince-warrior with the mandate to protect faith, while the poor Cain, because of his rude manners, is made ancestor of all servants. Thus social classes are made part of God's will and therefore unchangeable.

But the political message goes further, indicating the role of Eva as mother and educator «no small part of the [human] government» (*respublica*), with the duty of «correcting mores» and a lively encouragement to continue in the good path («macte gnaviter»).

Nunc Eva te de rebus istis alloquor.

Non parva reipublicae ista portio est,

Si liberi domi tenelli rectius

Tibi educantur, inde ab incunabulis.

Quapropter inter primas haec tibi cura sit,

Ut moribus regundis esse sedula

Pergas, ut incoepisti: macte gnaviter²³.

With this text, family is confirmed as an important element in the educational path and its collaboration (including the female role, even if limited to the domestic sphere) is deemed essential for the accomplishment of divine rule in the political realm.

²² Sixt Birck. *Eva* // *Dramata Sacra*. Vol. I. P. 78.

²³ Sixt Birck. *Eva* // *Dramata Sacra*. Vol. I. P. 89.

The choice of a wife and the respect of nuptial knot is one of the most recurring themes in the dramas. The utter difference of family and reproductive rules between the societies depicted in the Old Testament and the context of 16th-century Europe is willingly overlooked by the authors, which do not lose any occasion to celebrate fidelity, express the contempt for sexual disorder and, more in general, affirm the danger posed to human fragility by female temptation and illicit sexual conduct, clearly going beyond the interest in this subject expressed by Biblical authors. So does *Joseph*, in Cornelius Crocus' drama, proclaims the principle of fidelity in marriage in repealing the advances of the «wicked» Putiphar's wife:

IO. At decet constantia. neque moribus
 Convenit, nec legibus Hebraeorum, ut alienum thorum
 Violent: sed prima tuendi pudoris cura est, integri
 Nuptiarum foedere iungantur sponsis ut integris.
 Ne tu igitur mihi, quem amare dicis, noceas: sed sine
 Quam tribuit deus sortem, tueri. SE. Imo, ita volo, respice
 Servitutem tuam. IO. Equidem corpore servus sum, non item
 Animo²⁴.

The hero Joseph celebrates marriage rules on three different plans: the respect of the Hebrew law; the integrity of marriage on the moral plan; and, after Putiphar's wife wants him to yield to her passion because of his inferior social status, on the plan of his own personal integrity («corpore servus sum, non item animo»). With this statement a further step is taken: moral and social laws do not only have a political value, but must be interiorised so that to become an inner necessity.

This step towards virtue finds the main obstacle in the sinful nature of man, and the woman is the first instrument of his damnation, like it had been for Eva at the origin of mankind. The invective contained in the less renown, but not despicable

²⁴ Cornelius Crocus. *Ioseph* // *Dramata Sacra*. Vol. I. P. 167–168.

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development of Crocus' *Ioseph* by Andreas Diether, is particularly heated on this subject, when Joseph deprecates his fate:

O foeminae scelus longe turpissimum,
 O foeminae libidinem effrenem nimis,
 Quae cupiit allicere ad nefandum me sui
 Amorem. et ni monitus fuisset saepius
 Parentibus meis, coepisset me suis
 Callida retibus, huiusmodi praecepta sunt
 Patris mei: Fili, cum praecordia licet
 Modici motus tangunt, in primo limine
 Pedem refer (dum tibi licet) mala opprime
 Semina, dum nova sunt. nam medicina saepius
 Sero paratur, praecipue cum per moras
 Longas malum convaluit. nam vires mora
 Dat, et teneras uvas coquit segnis mora.
 Et validas segetes, quod fuit gramen, facit²⁵.

The luxurious woman is the first cause of Joseph's misfortune, but it is interesting to highlight that he reminds a lesson of his father about prudence which made him able to refrain from sin: obedience to parental authority is therefore emphasized as an aid to the path to salvation, and the educational-hierarchical relation between father and son is often recalled as the model of the good administration of the city and state.

In Ziegler's *Samson*, the title role falls victim of his immoral sensual love («victo turpi amore»), and the only way to get out of his disgrace is his self-sacrifice to kill the enemies, as forcefully synthetized in the short *Periocha* (which we here transcribe in full):

Samson patri promissus ante filius,
 Adultus, Israelis iudex factus est.
 Maioribus votis Philistiim manu

²⁵ Andreas Diether. *Ioseph* // *Dramata Sacra*. Vol. I. P. 252.

Sua vir omnium vincit fortissimus.
 Ob hoc timor fit hostibus, quos et cupit
 Non voce tantum, sed factis ulciscier.
 Illi tamen referre par pari student.
 Victoque turpi amore, amica Dalila
 Dat verba, crines aufert intactos prius.
 Ex hoc inermis, captus, oculos perdidit.
 Is crine post dato, est iniuriae memor,
 Rapit domum, vertitque funditus. virum
 Electa turba concidit, cum feminis²⁶.

The cause-consequence scheme is made even clearer because of the shortness of this abstract of the drama, but in the play the issue of disobedience is perhaps the most developed. Samson's father insists at length that Samson gets a wife in his own community; but at the end he accepts his son's will («coacta connubia raro felicia»), inaugurating the theme of the father condemning the son for being too soft as far as rules are concerned, another key theme of the anthology.

Ziegler's *Heli sive Paenodothia* develops this subject, resulting at length a full celebration of parental authority and of a rigorous moral and religious education. The drama has so many recurrent pedagogical statements that it would be unproductive trying to track them all and quote them in this article. Here we can rely on a selection from a long dialogue between Ioseph and Eleazar:

IA. Boni parentes generant liberos bonos.
 Nam qualis est urbis rector, tales erunt
 Qui possident eam, imitators mali.
 Rex stultus omnes perdit subditos cito. [...]
 Etsi mihi longum, iubente te tamen
 Faciam brevi compendio, quantum potest.

²⁶ Hieronymus Ziegler. Samson // Dramata Sacra. VoI. I. P. 400.

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Paterni ubi animi iacta iam sunt semina,
 Instatque partus, non locus, tempus, dies,
 Vel astra sunt curanda tibi fatalia:
 Necessitant nunquam, sed inclinant frequens.
 Dein proxima est cura, ut pater natos regat,
 Ut esse genitos nemo non ex se sciat.
 Porro (quod aiunt) mox ab incunabulis
 Est pectus informandum rude pueri optimis,
 Quae post suo suppullulant in tempore.
 Nam quod semel erit imbutum, due manet,
 Et longum odorem servat testa tibi recens.
 Praeceptor insuper gnato quaerendus est
 Doctus, pius, non corruptus, sed integer,
 Longo gravis rerum usu, cui synceritas
 Vitae faciat autoritatis non parum²⁷.

This passage connects several *loci communes* of the Renaissance educational culture, putting all them under a political light through the initial comparison between the family and the city. Such as good fathers generate good children, so does the good governor of a city with his citizens, while a bad government makes its citizens «imitators of evil». After the generation of the child, the newborn is to be informed to the parent's will and «good rules» *ab incunabulis*, immediately, because they will remain at length, like the smell of what was contained in an earthenware pot (*testa*). An excellent preceptor is the next passage in this (rather pitiless) pedagogical fixed sequence, bringing the «good government» of the child's soul, seen as a city, from the domestic realm to the public arena. When this transition is complete, the child is ready to enter the *respublica Christiana* as an adult, and assume his responsibilities with adequate competence and sound morals.

²⁷ Hieronymus Ziegler. *Heli sive Paedonothia* // *Dramata Sacra*. Vol. I. P. 522–524.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Some conclusions can be drawn relying on the final verses of Sixt Birck's *Zorobabel*, which subtitle reads: *regni feliciter constituti typus*, thus summarizing the long original German subtitle (here quoted at note 17), therefore concluding the anthology with a marked educational-political flavor, and providing a self-declared «model» for a well-conceived government.

Fundamen illud virtus est heroica:

Dico fidem, qua consummantur omnia.

Numquid, domus ni fundamenta iacta sint,

Non tecta, non paries ponuntur solide.

Quare patres vos nunc rogamus optimi,

Res sita nunc vestram penes est custodiam:

Vos publicarum nunc rerum estis praesides,

Existimate vestros ecce liberos,

Nos, postmodum in vestros locos succedere,

Sic ut Deus commiserit quibuslibet,

Nos liberos putate praestantissimi

Vestros viri: nos non sues, nos non canes,

Nos publicae rei sed seminarium,

Animosa gentis totius spes, credite [...]

Rem publicam considerate rectius,

Hoc diligenter vos monemus, o viri.

In pace nunc abite, et hinc discedite²⁸.

Being a committed Protestant, Birck does not hesitate in setting the tone for his concluding scene in the play on the precept of *sola fide*, expressed with the metaphor of the foundations of the house. After that, the voice of the sons (the actors of the school play) addresses explicitly the noble parents (the spectators) in their role

²⁸ Sixt Birck. *Zorobabel* // *Dramata Sacra*. Vol. II. P. 541.

of city authorities («Vos publicarum nunc rerum estis praesides»), with an appeal to consider the sons their successors and therefore ask for appropriate education and full confidence in them. The students are described as «greenhouse of the state» and «neither dogs nor pigs», with an unusually strong metaphor that resonates with the image of «dogs at the baths» evoked in the preface; and the original German concluded the strophe with the intense statement (attenuated in the Latin rendition) «we are the hope of the whole country»²⁹.

Choosing *Zorobabel* to conclude the anthology, Oporinus looked aware on how this collection was part of a pedagogical context which gave, with unprecedented force, a key role to pupils and students in the building of the new reformed Europe. The authority and primacy of the adults was not put into doubt, but the school stage and its educational resources were making clear how much that historical conjuncture needed the energy of the young generation to promote the transition to a new (even if reassuring) social order.

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²⁹ «Denckend das wir seind ewre kind / Wir seind nit schwein — wir seind nit hünd / Wir seind die saat des gmainen stands / Die hofnung auch des gantzen lands». Sixt Birck. Zorobabel, Ain Herrliche... P. 46.

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