



Paweł Żmudzki

Institute of History, University of Warsaw

## NEW VERSIONS OF THE TALES OF GALLUS ANONYMUS IN THE CHRONICLE OF MASTER VINCENTIUS

### Abstract

Using chosen examples, the author analyses the meaning of the changes made by Vincent (Wincenty) Kadłubek also known as Master Vincentius, to the tales found in the chronicle of Gallus Anonymus. Nothing much can be said of the literary or oral sources which may have served as a basis for Vincentius's reworking of these stories. A detailed comparison of the corresponding fragments in both chronicles leads us to an understanding of how Vincent understood Gallus's text. Vincent reinforced some meanings gleaned from Gallus, and eliminated others. However, even when building an alternate tale of the childhood of Kazimierz Odnowiciel (Casimir I the Restorer), Vincent always respects the structure of Gallus's account.

**Keywords:** Chronicle of Master Vincentius; Chronicle of Gallus Anonymus; Boleslaus I the Brave; Boleslaus II the Generous; Casimir I the Restorer Odnowiciel

Historians have long treated the adaptations of Gallus's tales found in Master Vincentius's chronicle quite one-sidedly. Above all, they focused on one question: does the appearance of details unknown to Gallus demonstrate that Vincent knew more about the events and could relate them with greater freedom? The most famous discussion among Polish medievalists has centred, for over two centuries now, on disputed interpretations of the *factum sancti Stanislai*.<sup>1</sup>

A fitting specific example, which could also serve as an introduction to the central topic of this article, would seem to be the rebellion of

---

<sup>1</sup> The history of this debate, initiated by Tadeusz Czacki's comparative analysis in 1803 of fragments of the works by Gallus (in the Sędziwój codex version) and Vincent, is discussed in Gerard Labuda, *Święty Stanisław biskup krakowski, patron Polski. Śladami zabójstwa – męczeństwa – kanonizacji*, (Poznań, 2000), 15–46; and in Marian Plezia, *Dookoła sprawy św. Stanisława. Studium źródłoznawcze* (Kraków, 2003), 15–32.

the slaves which, in Vincentius's narrative, forced Duke Boleslaus the Generous (Bolesław Szczodry) to return from his lengthy expedition to Ruthenia. Aleksander Skorski noticed in 1873 that this particular fragment of the tale by Master Vincentius was modelled after Gallus's presentation of the tragic occurrences that took place after Mieszko II Lambert's death and the expulsion of Casimir (later Casimir I the Restorer).<sup>2</sup> The following passage in Gallus:

Nam in dominos servi, contra nobiles liberati se ipsos in dominium extulerunt, aliis in servicio versa vice detentis, aliis peremptis, uxores eorum incestuose honoresque scelaratissime rapuerunt<sup>3</sup>,

corresponds to the following fragment in Vincentius:

Rege siquidem perditissime nunc Ruthenicis nunc pene transparthanis inmorante regionibus, uxores et filias dominorum serui ad sua uota inflectunt, quasdam expectatione maritorum fessas, alias desperatione deceptas, ui nonnullas ad seruiles amplexus pertractas. Dominicis occupant lares, firmant municipia, dominos non solum arcent reuersuros, set et reuersis bellum infligunt.<sup>4</sup>

Noting that Vincent transposed Gallus's story of the revolt of the slaves, from the time of Casimir's exile to the reign of Boleslaus the Generous, Skorski concluded:

Gallus's reference to the martyred death of Polish bishops during the unrest at the time, led Vincent to the idea of transposing these troubles, in a somewhat different form, to the time of Boleslaus the Generous and to make Stanislaus their innocent victim, so as to wash this stain, which Gallus did not refrain from exhibiting, from the character of the murdered bishop of Krakow and for the sake of future generations.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Aleksander Skorski, 'Gallus i Kadłubek o Świętym Stanisławie. Studium historyczno-krytyczne', *Tygodnik Wielkopolski*, iii (1873), no. 9, pp. 101–3; no. 10, pp. 113–15; no. 11, pp. 121–3; no. 12, pp. 133–5.

<sup>3</sup> *Galli Anonymi Cronica et gesta ducum sive principum Polonorum*, ed. Kazimierz Maleczyński (Monumenta Poloniae Historica [hereinafter: MPH], S.N., 2 (Kraków, 1952), I, 19, p. 42 [hereinafter: *Galli Anonymi Cronica*].

<sup>4</sup> *Magistri Vincentii dicti Kadłubek Chronica Polonorum*, ed. Marian Plezia (MPH, S.N., 11, (Kraków, 1994), II, 18, p. 55 [hereinafter: *Vincent, Chronica*].

<sup>5</sup> Skorski, 'Gallus i Kadłubek', 122.

The conclusions and interpretations proposed by Skorski were severely criticised by Gerard Labuda: “The absurdity of this reasoning is plain for all to see: different times, situations and victims in each case.”<sup>6</sup> As a result, Labuda assumed the historicity of the slaves’ rebellion during Boleslaus II’s Ruthenian campaign.

Labuda’s critique of Skorski’s views is based upon the *a priori* assumption that Master Vincentius acted like a modern researcher, attempting to reconstruct the course of past events. But Skorski also made *a priori* assumptions: in his opinion, Vincent committed a ‘deliberate falsification’, an ‘ignoble plagiarism’, a ‘biased lie’.<sup>7</sup> Thus, similarly to Labuda, Skorski considered that Vincentius the chronicler knew well what happened, yet deliberately concealed his knowledge and deceitfully offered a doctored version of events to his readers. To attribute to Master Vincentius the technical abilities of a modern historian, or a calculating falsifier of history, is a hypothesis built on a similar sort of reasoning, and both unverifiable and highly implausible. But Skorski was right in one regard. Vincent, writing of the unrest in Poland in the absence of Boleslaus the Generous, used the very same details Gallus Anonymus did to construct his tale of the social upheaval after the expulsion of Casimir the Restorer. The motif of slaves taking the places of their masters and subverting the bonds of marriage was used by Vincent in violation of the structure of Gallus’s narrative. Yet it seems implausible that this was done either to relate actual events, or to falsify historical truth.<sup>8</sup>

When attempting to understand the way in which Vincent used the work of his predecessor, it is worth noting the theses once proposed by Krzysztof Pomian. Pomian analysed the concept of history, as it appears within Western European annalistic sources, from Jordanes’s *Getica* to the ‘Renaissance’ works of the twelfth century. In his view, historians in the Early Middle Ages believed that the reality of past events was strictly and inextricably linked to the testimonies available to them, in other words, it remained ‘inside’ the text used (or another type

---

<sup>6</sup> Labuda, Święty Stanisław, 81.

<sup>7</sup> Skorski, ‘Gallus i Kadłubek’, 122, 132.

<sup>8</sup> For more on the fictional and cultural context of the ‘rebellion of the slaves’ and the ‘infidelity of the wives’, see Paweł Żmudzki, ‘Mieszko I i Amazonki. Wspólnoty wojownicze i normy życia rodzinnego w relacji Ibrahima ibn Jakuba’, in Barbara Trelińska (ed.), *Tekst źródła, krytyka, interpretacja* (Warszawa, 2005), 105–112.

of source). Therefore, the medieval method for verifying information was based on the reputation of the author, rather than an attempt to reconstruct facts located ‘outside’ (and therefore independently) of the source of information. If chroniclers did adapt earlier texts, they did so in accordance with the prevalent opinions on human affairs.<sup>9</sup>

The goal of this article is to attempt to clarify the position formulated by Krzysztof Pomian. For it would seem that Master Vincentius altered the structure of Gallus’s tales when he could tell that specific story better, or more clearly. In other words, when he was better able to imbue it with stereotypical medieval narration practices.

Let us consider our first example: the difference between the Gallus (I, 10) and Vincent (II, 12) versions of the anecdote about King Boleslaus the Brave’s (Bolesław Chrobry) second expedition to Ruthenia. In Gallus, the story of the battlefield clash is preceded by a statement from the author, intended to set the moral course of the story. Above all, it was meant to demonstrate the superiority of the humility of the Pole over the pride of the Ruthenian (“quoddam euis prelium novitate facti satis memorabile referamus, ex cuius rei consideracione humilitatem superbie preferamus”).<sup>10</sup> The rest of Gallus’s narration presents the events and the words of the two enemies in detail. When Boleslaus arrives at the river on the border<sup>11</sup>, it transpires that the enemy’s army is on the opposite bank and preparing to attack Poland. The ‘king’ of the Ruthenians sends the following message to the Polish ruler:

Noverit se Boleslausus tamquam suem in volutabro canibus meis et venatoribus circumclusum.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Krzysztof Pomian, *Przeszłość jako przedmiot wiary. Historia i filozofia w myśli średniowiecza* (Warszawa, 1968), 77–8, 141–7.

<sup>10</sup> *Galli Anonymi Cronica*, B. I, chap. 10, 28.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, Gallus uses the verb *transeo* (“Bolezlauum ultra iam fluvium transivisse”) which suggests that Boleslaus crossed the river. However, the subsequent story implies that the Poles and the Ruthenians faced each other on opposite sides of the river. Due to this, Przemysław Wiszewski assumed that the king of the Ruthenians had crossed the river as well (which Gallus never mentions) and so each adversary was on the other’s territory; cf. Przemysław Wiszewski, “Domus Bolezlai”. *Values and social identity in dynastic traditions of medieval Poland* (c. 966–1138), (Leiden and Boston, 2010), 202.

<sup>12</sup> *Galli Anonymi Cronica*, I, 10, p. 28.

To which Boleslaus responds:

Bene, inquam, suem in volutabro nominasti, quia in sanguine venatoris canumque tuorum, id est ducum et militum, pedes equorum meorum inficiam et terram tuam et civitates ceu ferus singularis depascam.<sup>13</sup>

The hunting metaphor used by the Ruthenian ruler clearly shows his pride and self-assurance.<sup>14</sup> However, Boleslaus's terrifying reply is hard to reconcile with the humility ascribed to the ruler at the beginning of the chapter.<sup>15</sup> Boleslaus promised that his horses would wade through the blood of 'dogs' and 'hunters'— the enemy warriors and dukes. Furthermore, the Polish king threatened to devour the lands and towns of Rus. This brutal declaration fits the 'sus in volutabro' well, which in the words of the Ruthenian 'king' functions as an insult and is meant to portray the alleged helplessness of the enemy: like a wild animal, surrounded during the hunt. In Boleslaus's reply, the metaphor becomes an act of self-creation, amplifying the fearsome promise of the Polish ruler.<sup>16</sup> In another part of his work, Gallus uses the same metaphor in an identical context: in Book II, Svatopluk, the

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>14</sup> See Marek Cetwiński, "“Rex insulsus” i “parasitis exercitus”, czyli pycha Rusina ukarana (Gallus, I, 10; Kađubek, II, 12)", in Jarosław Dudek, Daria Janiszewska, and Urszula Świdorska-Włodarczyk (eds.), *Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia. Ideologia, historia a społeczeństwo. Księga poświęcona pamięci Profesora Wojciecha Peltza* (Zielona Góra, 2005), 327; Paweł Żmudzki, 'Opisy bitew ukazujące wojowników gotowych przyjąć swój los (przykłady słowiańskie XI-XIII w.)', in Aneta Pieniądz-Skrzypczak and Jerzy Pysiak (eds.), *Sacrum. Obraz i funkcja w społeczeństwie średniowiecznym* (Warszawa, 2005), 153–4.

<sup>15</sup> For a different position, see Cetwiński, "“Rex insulsus”", 328.

<sup>16</sup> For more on the opposition: bloody, savage *sus* versus domesticated *porcus* in Indo-European languages, see Émile Benveniste, *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes*, i: *Économie, parenté, société* (Paris, 2003), 27–36. Let us underline that Gallus Anonymus only employs a simile for boar (*sus*) and a 'single wild beast/boar' (*ferus singularis*). No reference to swine or hog, however. Cf. the Indo-European mythological context of the boar simile – Georges Dumézil, *Heur et malheur du guerrier. Aspects mythiques de la fonction guerrière chez les Indo-Européens* (12th edn., Paris, 1996), 205–7. Thietmar refers to a similar symbolism when presenting the beliefs of the inhabitants of Radogoszcz (*Rethra*). When faced with a long and fierce rebellion, a great wild boar would emerge from the lake, with froth on its tusks, and roll in the mud with pleasure; cf. *Thietmari Merseburgensis Episcopi Chronicon*, ed. Robert Holtzmann (MGH, N.S, IX, Berlin, 1935), VI, 24 (17), pp. 304–5.

Moravian prince, is compared to a boar when killing and disembowelling Poles who had been raiding Moravia.<sup>17</sup> The analogy between these similes is even fuller, since Gallus gave the roles of hounds and hunter, encircling the boar, to Svatopluk's Polish adversaries, who had shamefully been robbing and destroying the attacked country during the Holy Week.

Boleslaus the Brave transformed the epithet 'sus in volutabro' into an extremely menacing metaphor. This menace is then reinforced by another epithet, when the Polish ruler compares himself to a *ferus singularis*. Marek Cetwiński found a very apt biblical analogy for this description. Boleslaus' words, "terram tuam et civitates ceu ferus singularis depascam"<sup>18</sup> refer to Psalm 79: "exterminavit eam aper de silva et singularis ferus depastus est eam."<sup>19</sup> The object of the extermination referred to in that psalm is the Vineyard of the Lord, identified with the Chosen People. Cetwiński is right in stating that the boar in Psalm 79 has a clear diabolical connotation.<sup>20</sup> In Gallus's version, Boleslaus appeared before the Ruthenians as the most obstinate enemy of humankind. Within this demonic context, the horrific promise of wading through the blood of Ruthenian warriors and devouring the conquered lands and towns, becomes comprehensible.

Everything would indicate that this is how Master Vincentius understood the above passage. His version foregoes an initial statement of the moral superiority of the 'humble' Boleslaus over the prideful Ruthenian. Perhaps as a consequence, Vincent also sharpened Gallus's wording, giving Boleslaus's statement a markedly cannibalistic and vampiric dimension. Vincent's Boleslaus, identifying with the *singularis ferus*, threatened to devour the king of the Ruthenians himself, and suck the blood out of his hounds-warriors.<sup>21</sup> Vincent probably removed the discrepancy in the Gallus tale on purpose, and creating his own, added details to reinforce Gallus's portrayal of Boleslaus: as a bloodthirsty, frenzied and terrifying warrior.

Let us now compare the Gallus and Vincent anecdotes concerning the cunning Bohemians who manage to outsmart Boleslaus the

---

<sup>17</sup> *Galli Anonymi Cronica*, B. II, chap. 25, 92.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, B. I, chap. 10, 28.

<sup>19</sup> *Psalmi iuxta LXX*, 79, 14.

<sup>20</sup> Cetwiński, "Rex insulsus", 328.

<sup>21</sup> *Vincent, Chronica*, B. II, chap. 12, 43.

Generous. According to Gallus, a Bohemian prince 'once' burst through the forest brush and entered Poland. While the Bohemians were camped in a clearing, Boleslaus cut off their retreat with his troops:

Et quia plurima pars diei preterierat, suosque properando fatigaverat, sequenti die se venturum ad prelium per legatos Bohemis intimavit, eosque ibidem residere, nec se diucius fatigare, magnis precibus exoravit. Antea quidem exeuntes, inquit, de silva sicut lupi capta preda famelici, silvarum latebras absente pastore inpune solebatis penetrare, modo vero presente cum venabulis venatore, canibusque post vestigia dissolutis, non fuga nec insidiis, sed virtute poteritis extensa retiacula devitare.<sup>22</sup>

The Bohemian prince cunningly (*versuta calliditate*) replied to Boleslaus:

indignum esse tantum regem ad inferiorem declinare, sed die crastina, si filius est Kazimiri, sit paratus ibidem Bohemorum servitium expectare. Bolezlauus vero, ut se filium ostenderet Kazimiri, ibi stando Bohemorum fallacie satisfacit.<sup>23</sup>

Meanwhile, the Bohemians fled under the cover of night. Boleslaus was troubled by this turn of events and angry at himself for having been fooled. He immediately set off after his enemies, killing many of them.

There are several problems with interpretation of the Gallus text. Let me start with the strongly depicted difference in attitudes between the Polish and Bohemian rulers. Boleslaus the Generous reached the invaders by creeping up on them from behind. Ergo, he behaved exactly like his opponents. However, instead of attacking them straight away, the Polish king summoned them to combat in a specific time and place. Arranging for a battle places Boleslaus on a higher level, showing him to be morally superior to his opponent. In his speech, Boleslaus compares the Bohemians to ravenous wolves, snatching their prey and avoiding contact with the shepherd, while their cunning is contrasted with bravery. There is no doubt that a great king ought to fight bravely and openly, shunning the trickery attributed to the 'Bohemian ransackers'. The two differing attitudes to warfare form the basic subject matter of the tale of Boleslaus' encounter with the Bohemians. Vincent emphasises this perfectly by composing the same episode anew. When the Polish king surprised his enemies, sneaking

<sup>22</sup> *Galli Anonymi Cronica*, I, 24, p. 49.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, 49–50.

up on them from behind, “incautos occupare potuisset. Absit, ait, ne nostre titulus uictorie quodam latrocinio insidiarum furnescat.”<sup>24</sup> Taking advantage of the situation and ambushing the enemy would lessen the glory of victory, which is what the great monarch desired the most. Such a portrayal of the monarch is reminiscent of the tradition generated around Alexander the Great. In the life of Alexander, as recorded by Plutarch, the Macedonian king scornfully rejects Parmenion’s offer to suddenly attack the Persian camp the night before the battle of Gaugamela. Victory achieved this way would have been ‘stolen’, the biographer makes Alexander say.<sup>25</sup>

A second level of interpretation for Gallus’s tale concerns the chronicler’s opinion of Boleslaus II. Numerous historians have believed that the chronicler’s attitude toward the king was favourable.<sup>26</sup> In fact, Gallus treated him with unfeigned ambivalence, as a somewhat unlucky ruler<sup>27</sup>; therefore, in the episode of the pursuit of the Bohemians, he shows that Boleslaus has not yet matured into

<sup>24</sup> Vincent, *Chronica*, II, 18, p. 54. Similar rules for constructing narratives can be found in other fragments of Vincent’s chronicle; see B. Kürbis, ‘*Pollexianorum cervicosa feritas*. Dzikość i barbarzyństwo w opinii Mistrza Wincentego’, in Jerzy Ochmański (ed.), *Słowianie w dziejach Europy. Studia historyczne ku uczczeniu 75. rocznicy urodzin i 50-lecia pracy naukowej profesora Henryka Łowmiańskiego* (Poznań, 1974), 135.

<sup>25</sup> *Plutarchi Vitae*; ed. Theodor Doehner, 2 vols. (Paris, 1857–62), ii, 815.

<sup>26</sup> For instance, see, e.g., Marian Plezia, *Kronika Galla na tle historiografii XII wieku* (PAU – Rozprawy Wydziału Historyczno-Filozoficznego, ser. ii, xlvii (71), no. 3, Kraków, 1947), 66–7, 199; Tadeusz Grudziński, ‘Ze studiów nad Kroniką Galla. Rozbiór krytyczny pierwszej księgi’, pt. 1, *Zapiski Towarzystwa Naukowego w Toruniu*, xvii, 3–4 (1952), 79, esp. n. 26; Jan Adamus, *O monarchii Gallowej* (Warszawa, 1952), 25–6, 132–4.

<sup>27</sup> This was already noted by Stanisław Zakrzewski, ‘Bolesław Szczodry. Próba portretu’, in *Księga Pamiątkowa ku uczczeniu 250-tej rocznicy założenia Uniwersytetu Lwowskiego przez króla Jana Kazimierza r. 1661*, 2 vols. (Lwów, 1912), ii, 3, 22–7. Also, Janusz Bieniak, ‘Polska elita polityczna XII wieku’, pt. 2 ‘Wróżda i zgoda’, in Stefan K. Kuczyński (ed.), *Spółeczeństwo Polski średniowiecznej: zbiór studiów*, iii (Warszawa, 1985), 27–8. Gallus’s reluctance toward Boleslaus the Generous is discussed in more fully in Edward Skibiński, *Biskup i monarcha*, in Krzysztof Kaczmarek and Jarosław Nikodem (eds.), *Docendo Discimus. Studia historyczne ofiarowane Profesorowi Zbigniewowi Wielgoszowi w siedemdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin* (Poznań, 2000), 99–109; Krzysztof Skwierczyński, *Recepcja idei gregoriańskich w Polsce do początku XIII wieku* (Wrocław, 2005), 127–130; Krzysztof Benyskiewicz, *Mieszko Bolesławowic 1069-1089. Źródła i tradycja historiograficzna* (Kraków, 2005), 21.

the role he is supposed to play. Boleslaus refrained from attacking the enemy immediately, not out of a desire for truly royal glory (as in Vincent), but because the hour was late and his men were tired. A hunting metaphor appears in his message to the Bohemians. The king compares himself to a hunter who has surrounded the prey with hounds and spears. As already noted, Gallus (I, 10) places the same metaphor in the mouth of the Ruthenian king. For this reason alone, attributing the auto-creation of the image as hunter and prey to the ruler is deprecating in itself. A character speaking in this manner displays pride and self-assurance, in the face of an enemy who has not yet been vanquished.<sup>28</sup> Yet the most disparaging characteristics attributed to Boleslaus were his gullibility, naivety and sensitivity to flattery. Moreover, the Bohemians cunningly tricked him into following their plan, suggesting he would be a bastard to do otherwise. In Gallus's tale, Boleslaus allows himself to be demeaned by attempting to prove he is his father's son.<sup>29</sup>

In this same episode, Vincent describes Boleslaus much more favourably<sup>30</sup> and removes all the negative aspects of his conduct. Both the 'pragmatic' reason for his abstention from immediate attack and the mention of Casimir the Restorer have disappeared. In Master Vincentius, Boleslaus abstains from cunning for the sake of glory. He then catches up with his fleeing enemies and captures or kills them all. As we can see, even the epilogue of the clash has been modified so as to give final victory to the Polish ruler. Boleslaus achieved it – in line with the general characteristics attributed to him by Vincent – in an extremely cruel manner: he killed and enslaved with no regard for age, birth or class<sup>31</sup>, although admittedly, through their deception, his enemies had enraged the king.<sup>32</sup>

Certain general conclusions can be drawn based on the above examples. Vincent eliminated the ambiguities and 'cracks' in Gallus's

---

<sup>28</sup> Cetwiński, "Rex insulsus", 325; Żmudzki, *Opisy bitew*, 153–4.

<sup>29</sup> Wiszewski, *Domus Bolezlai*, 229.

<sup>30</sup> Skibiński, *Biskup i monarcha*, 103; Skwierczyński, *Recepcja idei gregoriańskich w Polsce*, 191–2.

<sup>31</sup> Vincent, *Chronica*, II, 18, p. 54; Robert Urbański, 'Granice okrucieństwa. O zagadkowej zbieżności stylistycznej w relacjach o najeździe mongolskim', *Studia Źródłoznawcze*, xliv (2006), 45–6.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Leszek Wojciechowski, 'Wyprawy łupieskie w Słowiańszczyźnie Zachodniej w X–XII w.', *Roczniki Humanistyczne*, 31 (1983), 2, 45.

tales, since he was interested in their general meaning rather than in reproducing the entire set and the precise arrangement of details his predecessor had used to weave his narrative. Individual elements of the narrative could be altered, reduced, or made redundant, but in spite of this – or rather, because of this – we can determine the way in which Vincent read and interpreted the ideas and meanings present in Gallus's stories. Vincent reinforced those elements found in Gallus which he needed for his own narrative purposes, while muting or eliminating others. He would use Gallus's sense of narrative even when he created an apparently autonomous story. The most intriguing case would seem to be Vincent's alternate story of the childhood and youth of Casimir the Restorer. However, let us start with Gallus's version.

Mortuo igitur Meschone, qui post obitum regis Bolezlai parum vixit, Kazimirus cum matre imperiali puer parvulus remansit. Que cum libere filium educaret et pro modo femineo regnum honorifice gubernaret, traditores eam de regno propter invidiam eiecerunt, puerumque suum secum in regno quasi deceptionis obrumbraculum tenuerunt. Qui cum esset adultus etate et regnare cepisset, maliciosi veriti, ne matris iniuriam vindicaret, in eum insurrexerunt, eumque in Vngariam secedere coegerunt.<sup>33</sup>

In Hungary, the duke was imprisoned by Stephen I, who sought to ingratiate himself with the Bohemians. Stephen eventually died and his successor, Peter the Venetian, graciously released Boleslaus. The exile then travelled to the Roman Empire, to join his mother. Once there, and in rather vague circumstances, he covered himself in glory on the battlefield. At this point, Gallus interrupts his account of Casimir's adventures to report on the tragic events in Poland: the invasions of neighbouring rulers, the already-mentioned revolt of the slaves and freedmen combined with the rape of their former masters' wives, the abandoning of the Christian faith and the killing of priests and bishops, the Bohemian attack on the Polish capital. After a passage illustrating the fall and devastation of the kingdom deprived of a ruler, Gallus resumes the tale of Casimir. The exiled duke refused his mother and the emperor's wishes, who wanted him to stay in the Empire. Instead, he resolved to return to Poland, where only one stronghold remained in the hands of his supporters. Casimir

---

<sup>33</sup> *Galli Anonymi Cronica*, I, 18, p. 41.

took command of the fortress and with the help of Hungarian and German warriors, retook nearly the entire kingdom.<sup>34</sup>

Let us examine the structure of Gallus's account. The central character, as a *puer parvulus*, was orphaned by his father. Danuta Borawska once drew far-reaching conclusions from the epithet describing Casimir's age. Based on the date of the duke's birth as recorded in the *Annals of the Krakow Chapter* (25 July 1016<sup>35</sup>), she assumed that Gallus erroneously attributed facts – the regency and banishment of Richeza – which apparently took place in 1031, to after the death of Mieszko II (1034).<sup>36</sup> Borawska's reasoning is the result of a nearly textbook decontextualisation of the Gallus fragment. The motif of the 'tiny boy Casimir' in the chronicler's reasoning can only be understood in conjunction with the demise of his father, and with it portrays a hero faced with extraordinary adversity since the very beginning of his life. A half-orphan who is the plaything of powerful, evil men is the ideal candidate (in terms of literary credibility) for a great hero. In Gallus's tale, once Mieszko is dead, wicked traitors (*maliciosi, traditores*) came and vilely banished Casimir's noble mother, leaving the boy-duke on the throne for the sake of appearances. When Casimir grew up and commenced his reign, these same evil-doers forced him to flee to Hungary. Stephen I of Hungary appears to be a similar figure to these *maliciosi/traditores*. Although Gallus mentions his historical achievements in the Christianisation of Hungary, from the point of view of the Casimir tale he functions as the opponent,<sup>37</sup> the reason for his undeserved imprisonment, a man subservient to the Bohemians – the fiercest enemies of the duke-in-exile.<sup>38</sup> Later on, the narrative features Casimir's helpers: Peter the Venetian,<sup>39</sup> his mother, and the Roman Emperor. Casimir's arrival in the Empire is equivalent to finding a safe haven, far from

---

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, I, 18–19, pp. 41–4.

<sup>35</sup> See, Kazimierz Jasiński, *Rodowód pierwszych Piastów* (Warszawa and Wrocław, 1993), 130.

<sup>36</sup> Danuta Borawska, *Kryzys monarchii wczesnopiastowskiej w latach trzydziestych XI w. Studia* (Warszawa, 1964), 38–9.

<sup>37</sup> Vladimir Propp, *Morphologie du conte*, trans. Marguerite Derrida, Tzvetan Todorov, and Claude Kahn (Paris, 1970), 38, 96.

<sup>38</sup> Tomasz Jasiński, *O pochodzeniu Galla Anonima* (Kraków, 2008), 21.

<sup>39</sup> Daniel Bagi, *Królowie węgierscy w "Kronice" Galla Anonima* (Kraków, 2008) 129–141.

a Poland engulfed in chaos. The structure of this tale can therefore be described as follows: (i) the main hero, a *puer parvulus*, becomes half-orphaned; (ii) the opponents (traitors, Bohemians, Stephen I) cause Casimir to part with his mother, use him like a puppet, and finally cause his expulsion and imprisonment; (iii) the hero is freed thanks to his helpers, receives armed support, rejoins his mother and takes refuge in the Empire; (iv) Casimir's first knightly deeds, his heroic decision to go back to Poland and finally, the 'return of the king' to his homeland.

Let us now consider the Vincent version. "Hic igitur ex imperiali Ottonis tertii sorore insignem genuit Kazimirum, de quo diuerso modo series textitur historie."<sup>40</sup> As is apparent, Vincent announces at the very start that his reasoning on Casimir the Restorer will be lacking in consistency. First of all, we find a modification of a fragment of the chronicle of Gallus Anonymus (I, 18):

Dicunt enim quidam quod post Mesconis decessum uxor eius filio adhuc immaturo regnum credere non ausa, regni suscepit gubernacula. Que quia equo uiolentior est uisa, immo quia patrie indigentibus quantumlibet primis quoslibet inquilinos et suorum lixas Teutarum preponere cepit, a ciuibus profligata in exilio consenuit, paruulo Kazimiro sub fideli procerum tutela reseruato. Qui dum in uirile pene robur euaserat, inmerita exheredationis pena multatur. Timentes enim proceres ne maternas in eis persequantur iniurias, ipsum quoque non dispari ratione propulsant.<sup>41</sup>

Vincentius has changed the significance of Gallus's account markedly. The somewhat unclear phrase used by Gallus, "pro modo femineo regnum honorifice gubernaret,"<sup>42</sup> has been interpreted in the spirit of traditional concepts, both ancient and medieval, of female rule.<sup>43</sup> In Master Vincent's version, Mieszko II's widow wielded her authority too hastily and strove to overturn the reigning social order. Through her decisions, even the most eminent locals were replaced by foreigners. Worse, by foreign henchmen and worse still, in Vincent's view, by Germans. This mention of this last set of the evil

<sup>40</sup> Vincent, *Chronica*, II, 14, p. 45.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>42</sup> *Galli Anonymi Cronica*, I, 18, p. 41.

<sup>43</sup> Pierre Vidal-Naquet, 'Slavery and the Rule of Women in Tradition, Myth, and Utopia', in *idem*, *The Black Hunter. Forms of Thought and Forms of Society in the Greek World*, trans. Andrew Szegedy-Maszak (Baltimore and London, 1986), 205–23.

queen's unworthy associates introduces another theme, added to the tale in opposition to Gallus. According to Vincent, the *soror imperialis* was a German, which the chronicler no doubt believed implied her wickedness even more.<sup>44</sup> This redefinition of Casimir's mother's character led to a different valuation of other characters, whom Gallus negatively called *maliciosi/traditores*. Under Vincent's pen, they are transformed into noble *cives*, who rightly remove the evil German regent from the country, and what is more, they become the *proceres* faithfully protecting Casimir.<sup>45</sup> It is only the banishment of the duke that Vincent sees as unjust, unfair and done without distinguishing the situation of the mother, an evil foreign regent, and the rights of the son, the legal ruler.

These modifications made, Vincent completely ignores Casimir's adventures in Hungary and within the Holy Roman Empire. They are replaced by an alternate tale of the duke's childhood, introduced by the phrase "Aliis aliter visum est."<sup>46</sup> In this way, the chronicler again signifies the duality of his narration of the beginning of Casimir's rule. In this version, independent of Gallus, Casimir's mother died in childbirth. The hero, compared by Vincent to Hercules, had to fight intrigues initiated by his stepmother practically since birth. His father loved his son very much. Looking at the child's face, he recalled his deceased wife with affection. This is exactly the word (*uxor*) used to describe Casimir's mother. Two sentences further however, Vincent calls the hero's mother a concubine (*pellex*).<sup>47</sup> Brygida Kürbis attempted to resolve the issue of the contradictory status of Casimir's mother, somewhat inadequately translating the word *pellex* as 'rival' (in the sense of rival to Casimir's stepmother).<sup>48</sup> However, it might be that Vincent, creating a version of the tale that

---

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Małgorzata Delimata, 'Królowa Rycheza w opinii kronikarzy i w polskiej historiografii', in Jerzy Strzelczyk and Józef Dobosz (eds.), "Nihil superfluum esse". *Prace z dziejów średniowiecza ofiarowane Profesor Jadwidze Krzyżaniakowej* (Poznań, 2000), 128.

<sup>45</sup> For Danuta Borawska, it was "merely a stylistic operation performed in the name of historical accuracy"; Borawska, *Kryzys monarchii*, 185.

<sup>46</sup> Vincent, *Chronica*, II, 14, p. 45.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 46. Borawska, *Kryzys monarchii*, 124–5. Contrary to Vincent, the author used the term *pellex* to refer to Casimir's stepmother.

<sup>48</sup> Mistrz Wincenty (tzw. Kadłubek), *Kronika polska*, ed. and trans. Brygida Kürbis (Wrocław, Warszawa, and Kraków, 1992), 63, and n. 86.

was independent of Gallus, let himself be influenced by the concept of heroic biography in which the hero should be a bastard, like Hercules, the fruit of love and passion and not that of a legal union.<sup>49</sup> The evil stepmother, seeing how much Casimir and his dead mother were loved by his father, decides to get rid of the boy once and for all and clear the path to the throne for her own offspring. She therefore asks a certain man for help, and with sweet words and gold, induces him to murder Casimir. However, he who was supposed to be a cold-blooded killer turns out to be a God-fearing citizen, full of compassion and caring for the fate of his homeland. Having deceived the queen, he abducts the boy and hides him in a monastery.<sup>50</sup> Casimir's father dies immediately afterwards, the stepmother is banished, the inhabitants rebel and the country is ravaged by its enemies. At this point, Vincent shortens Gallus's tale of the collapse of the kingdom considerably, to quickly return to Casimir's adventures. The lapsed murderer proclaims to those most concerned with Poland's fate that Providence has preserved the legitimate heir to the throne. At this moment, the Vincent's narrative returns once more to the course defined by Gallus. Casimir sets off back to his country – to the only town that is still in the hands of his supporters – and reclaims his dominion over the entire kingdom with their assistance.<sup>51</sup>

Historians, searching for attestations to historical facts in sources, employed shaky methods in interpreting the fable of Casimir the Restorer's evil stepmother. Twenty years ago, Tadeusz Wasilewski, in his article (with the ambitious subtitle 'O nie-Gallowe pojmowanie wczesnych dziejów Polski' [For a non-Gallus's understanding of the early history of Poland]), concluded: "We have not found any other trace of this version in Polish medieval historiography; it would seem the chronicle Master Vincentius used has been lost."<sup>52</sup> Wasilewski

---

<sup>49</sup> František Graus, *Lebendige Vergangenheit. Überlieferung im Mittelalter und in den Vorstellungen vom Mittelalter* (Köln and Wien, 1975), 231 (on Břetislav I in Cosmas's chronicle).

<sup>50</sup> Vincent, *Chronica*, II, 14, p. 46. For the origins of this detail and its development in the posterior legend concerning Casimir's monasticism – Klaudia Drózdź, 'O wykształceniu i rzekomym mnichostwie Kazimierza Odnowiciela', in *Średniowiecze polskie i powszechne*, i (1999), 64–74.

<sup>51</sup> Vincent, *Chronica*, II, 14, p. 46.

<sup>52</sup> Tadeusz Wasilewski, 'Zapomniane przekazy rocznikarskie o Bolesławie Mieszkowicu. O nie-Gallowe pojmowanie wczesnych dziejów Polski', *Przegląd Historyczny*, lxxxii, 2 (1989), 228.

was following in the steps of Danuta Borawska, who by comparing chosen details of Vincentius's narrative with the Brauweiler chronicle (the abbey was founded by Queen Richeza's parents<sup>53</sup>), reconstructed the 'true' image (allegedly 'falsified' by Gallus) of events. According to Borawska, Casimir's stepmother was a former concubine of Mieszko II. Having caused Richeza's exile, she replaced her at the king's side. With the stepson removed and her husband dead, Casimir's stepmother is said to have ruled the country in the name of her and Mieszko II's young son (Boleslaus the Forgotten).<sup>54</sup> The above reconstruction was done in breach of Vincentius's narrative. In Vincentius's tale, the stepmother only appears because Casimir's mother dies in childbirth. What is more, according to Vincent, Casimir's father loved his dead wife passionately and remembered her fondly. Furthermore, Vincent suggested that, if anyone was a concubine, then it was Casimir's mother and not his stepmother. Multiplying the number of lost "minor chronicles", explaining why Vincent transmitted "more reliable" information than Gallus, combined with a liberal juggling of details, abstracted from their narrative context, do not constitute satisfactory methods for interpreting medieval sources.

But let us return to the most important issues. Why did Master Vincentius abandon the whole range of 'historical' details concerning Casimir's banishment,<sup>55</sup> offered by Gallus? Why did he make his work internally dissonant, weaving together two completely different versions, in terms of details, of Casimir's childhood? A partial reply would be very easy to reach for. Since under Vincent's pen, Casimir's 'imperial' mother has been redefined as an 'evil German', the chronicler removed both the emperor and Richeza as helpers

---

<sup>53</sup> See more, Michał Tomaszek, *Klasztor i jego dobroczyńcy. Średniowieczna narracja o opactwie Brauweiler i rodzice królowej Ryczezy* (Kraków, 2007).

<sup>54</sup> Danuta Borawska, 'Kryzys monarchii wczesnopiastowskiej', in Tadeusz Manteuffel (ed.), *Polska pierwszych Piastów. Państwo – społeczeństwo – kultura* (Konfrontacje historyczne, Warszawa, 1970), 163.

<sup>55</sup> I abstract from the discussion of the historicity of the events described by Gallus – cf. Stanisław Kętrzyński, *Kazimierz Odnowiciel (1034-1058)* (Kraków, 1899), 29–30; Janusz Bieniak, *Państwo Mieclawa. Studium analityczne* (Warszawa, 1963), 109–11, n. 277; Gerard Labuda, *Mieszko II król Polski (1025-1034). Czasy przełomu w dziejach państwa polskiego* (Kraków, 1992), 192–4. When using the term 'historical details', I mean a tale containing data such as names of kingdoms or monarchs, or their titles. In this respect, the Gallus narrative differs from Vincent's alternate tale.

of the hero, and the Empire, as the safe haven of the exile, from the tale. However, 'Germanophobia' is a rather less convincing explanation for the omission of the Hungarian part of Casimir's exile.

The conclusions which can be reached by observing the construction of Vincent's alternate tale would seem of greater importance and more complete. The 'heroic' arrangement of Casimir's adventures,<sup>56</sup> despite the discordant details, replicates the plan of Gallus's narrative. (i) The hero is orphaned by his mother at birth (who loses any of Richeza's traits); (ii) the stepmother-enemy arranges the murder of the boy;<sup>57</sup> (iii) the killer ('compassionate killer'<sup>58</sup>) turns out to be a 'helper', saves the hero, and hides him in the 'safe haven' of a cloister;<sup>59</sup> (iv) 'the king returns' to his chaos-filled country.<sup>60</sup>

Writing his alternate version of the tale, Vincent clearly neglected the historical realities described by Gallus. He nevertheless respected the structure of his predecessor's narrative, and what is more, attempted to order it. The motif of the little hero as orphan who loses his mother (rather than father, as in Gallus) is reinforced. Thanks to this, the stereotypical 'evil stepmother' becomes the nemesis of the little Casimir-Hercules.<sup>61</sup> She replaces the numerous adversaries of Casimir described by Gallus: 'traitors', Bohemians, Stephen I of Hungary. Vincent uses a similar procedure when defining the figure of the helper. The fake murderer has replaced three persons: Peter the Venetian, the Holy Roman Emperor, and Casimir's mother. Most importantly however, Vincent's alternate story fits perfectly within the broader framework already defined by Gallus. Master Vincent relates Casimir's return to Poland and the recovery of his kingdom faithfully compared to the Gallus version. The fable of a boy miraculously saved from the evil designs of his stepmother fits in with the rest of the story as well as Gallus's telling of Casimir's adventures in exile. With regard to constructing a heroic image of the duke, Vincent's

<sup>56</sup> Jacek Banaszkiewicz, *Polskie dzieje bajeczne* (2nd edn., Wrocław, 2002), 166.

<sup>57</sup> Propp, *Morphologie du conte*, 44: "Il donne l'ordre de tuer quelqu'un (A<sup>13</sup>). Cette forme est en fait une expulsion modifiée (renforcée)." It is the same in this case. In Vincent, the murderous plan devised by the stepmother corresponds to the banishment and imprisonment of Casimir in Gallus's account.

<sup>58</sup> Banaszkiewicz, *Polskie dzieje bajeczne*, 167; Drózdź, 'O wykształceniu', 69.

<sup>59</sup> Jacek Banaszkiewicz, *Polskie dzieje*, 167–8.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibidem*, 167.

alternate version clearly corresponds to Gallus'. Master Vincentius, by simplifying the tale and introducing stereotypical characters and situations, achieves the same goals previously defined by Gallus, but more efficiently.

trans. Michał Hamerski

#### SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Banaszkiewicz Jacek, *Podanie o Piaście i Popielu. Studium porównawcze nad wczesno-średniowiecznymi tradycjami dynastycznymi*, 2nd edn. (Warszawa, 2010).
- Banaszkiewicz Jacek, *Polskie dzieje bajeczne mistrza Wincentego Kadłubka*, 2nd edn. (Wrocław 2002).
- Kürbis Brygida, *Pollexianorum cervicosa feritas. Dzikość i barbarzyństwo w opinii Mistrza Wincentego*, in Jerzy Ochmański (ed.), *Słowianie w dziejach Europy. Studia historyczne ku uczczeniu 75 rocznicy urodzin i 50-lecia pracy naukowej profesora Henryka Łowmiańskiego* (Poznań, 1974), 131–8.
- Propp Władimir, *Morfologia bajki*, trans. Wiesława Wojtyga-Zagórska (Warszawa, 1976).
- Skibiński Edward, *Biskup i monarcha*, in Krzysztof Kaczmarek and Jarosław Nikodem (eds.), *Docendo discimus. Studia historyczne ofiarowane Profesorowi Zbigniewowi Wielgoszowi w siedemdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin* (Poznań, 2000), 99–109.
- Żmudzki Paweł, *Władca i wojownicy. Narracje o wodzach, drużynach i wojnach w najdawniejszej historiografii Polski i Rusi* (Wrocław, 2009).

**Paweł Żmudzki** – medieval history; assistant professor at the Institute of History, University of Warsaw; e-mail: p.zmudzki@uw.edu.pl