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When students at Warsaw University boycotted classes in March, 1829, in order to participate in a patriotic demonstration, Zygmunt Krasiński attended class alone. He did this at the behest of his father, a Polish general who wished to remain loyal to the Russian tsar. Faced with the resentment of his fellow students, the young Krasiński left Poland to continue his education in Switzerland. The Polish uprising of 1830–1831 erupted while Krasiński was studying at the University of Geneva. Once again, his father forbade him to take part in the struggle for independence, denouncing it as a social revolution motivated by class hatred. Krasiński was torn between loyalty to his father and Polish national patriotism, but again he acquiesced to the wishes of his father.

In the autumn of 1833, with the Polish uprising and the French revolution of 1830 still fresh in his memory, the young Krasiński completed his first drama, *Nie-Boska komedia* (*The Undivine Comedy*). An insightful and seemingly prophetic study of the class struggle, the play clearly reflects Krasiński's own divided loyalties in the Polish conflict, but the writer's guiding inspiration is the example of Jesus Christ, not the program of any political faction. The play is an indictment of violence and social injustice and a commentary on the Christian ends which poetry should serve in life. Published anonymously in Paris in 1835, *The Undivine Comedy* ranks alongside Mickiewicz's *Dziady* (*Forefathers' Eve*) and Słowacki's *Kordian* as one of the greatest dramatic works in Polish Romantic literature.

The central character, Count Henry (*hrabia Henryk*), is a poet, although his poetic activity never becomes the immediate object of portrayal. The play is comprised of four parts, each preceded

by a short prelude. Part One opens with Henry's guardian angel, who declares:

Peace to all men of good will. Blessed be he among created things who has a heart. He may yet be saved. O good and modest wife, come forth for him and may a child be born in your house.

[Pokój ludziom dobrej woli – błogosławiony pośród stworzeń, kto ma serce – on jeszcze zbawion być może. – Żono dobra i skromna, zjaw się dla niego – i dziecię niechaj się urodzi w domu waszym.]¹

The angel flies away, and a chorus of evil spirits appears as it perceived the evil spectre as an embodiment of divine beauty:

Onward, onward, phantoms, fly toward him! You in front, at the head of the others, shade of his concubine who died yesterday, shade freshened by the mist and decked in flowers, O maiden, mistress of the poet, forward!

Onward and you, too, fame, old eagle, stuffed in hell, taken down from the stake on which the hunter hung you in autumn, fly, spread wide your great wings, white from the sun, o'er the poet's head.

Come forth from our vaults, rotten picture of Eden, the work of Beelzebub. Let us fill your holes and cover them over with varnish, and then, o magic canvas, roll yourself into a cloud and fly to the poet. Swiftly unravel yourself around him, gird him with rocks and waters, night and day by turns. O Mother Nature, encircle the poet! (p. 180).

[W drogę, w drogę, widma, lećcie ku niemu! – Ty naprzód, ty na czele, cieniu nałożnicy, umarłej wczoraj, odświeżony w mgłę i ubrany w kwiaty, dziewico, kochanko poety, naprzód.

W drogę i ty, sławo, stary orle wypchany w piekle, zdjęty z palu, kędy cię strzelec zawiesił w jesieni – leć i roztocz skrzydła, wielkie, białe od słońca, nad głową poety.

Z naszych sklepów wynidź, spróchniały obrazie Edenu, dzieło Belzebuba – dziury zalepiemy i rozwiędziemy pokostem – a potem, płótno czarodziejskie, zwiń się w chmurę i leć do poety – wnet się rozwiąż naokoło niego, opasz go skałami i wodami, na przemian nocą i dniem. – Matko naturo, otocz poetę! (p. 71)].

Then unfolds the personal drama of Count Henry, the central focus of this cosmic struggle between God and the Devil. The guardian angel provides Henry with a loving wife and child, while the satanic spirits conspire to lead him astray with their twofold temptation: carnal beauty and glory.

¹ English text: H. B. Segel, *Polish Romantic Drama. Three Plays in English Translation*, Ithaca–London 1977, p. 180. Polish text: Z. Krasiniński, *Nie-Boska komedia*, ed. S. Treugutt, Warszawa 1974, p. 71. All further quotations come from these editions.

Part One deals primarily with the first temptation. The ghost of the prostitute repeatedly appears before Henry, causing him to lose interest in his wife and eventually enticing him away into the mountains on the day of his son's christening. But when they reach a cliff overlooking the sea, the ghost reveals herself to Henry in her true, corpse-like form. The flowers fall from her hair and crawl away like snakes and lizards. The wind tears her dress away, revealing her bare skeleton. Henry realizes that he has mistakenly perceived the evil spectre as an embodiment of divine beauty:

O God, do you damn me because I believed that Your Beauty surpasses the beauty of this earth by a whole heaven? Because I went in pursuit of it and wearied myself for it, only to become an amusement for devils? (p. 188).

[Boże, czy Ty mnie za to potępisz, że uwierzyłem, iż Twoja piękność przynosi o całe niebo piękność tej ziemi – za to, że ścigałem za nią i męczyłem się dla niej, ażem stał się igrzyskiem szatanów? (p. 83)].

In despair and about to jump over the precipice, he exclaims:

It is vain to struggle. The charm of the abyss tempts me. My soul is giddy. O God, your enemy conquers! (*l.c.*).

[Na próżno walczyć – rozkosz otchłani mnie porywa – zawrót w duszy mojej – Boże – wróg Twój zwycięża! (*l.c.*).

But the guardian angel intercedes:

Peace unto you, waves, be calm. At this moment, the holy water of baptism is being poured upon your baby's head. Return home and sin no more! Return home and love your child! (*l.c.*).

Pokój wam, bałwany, uciszcie się!

W tej chwili na głowę dziecięcia twego zlewa się woda święta.

Wracaj do domu i nie grzesz więcej.

Wracaj do domu i kochaj dziecię twoje (*l.c.*).

Thus, Henry's own sins are symbolically cleansed by his son's christening. When he returns home, he finds his wife in the madhouse, driven insane by his desertion of her. She tells Henry that the spirit of poetry has descended upon her:

From the time I lost you, a change came over me. "Lord God," I said, and beat my breast, and held a taper to my chest, and did penance—"Send down the spirit of poetry unto me"—and on the morning of the third day I became a poet (p. 190).

Od kiedym cię straciła, zaszła odmiana we mnie – „Panie Boże”, mówiłam i biłam się w piersi, i gromnicę przystawiałam do piersi, i pokutowałam, „spuść na mnie ducha poezji”, i trzeciego dnia z rana stałam się poetką (p. 86)].

And she has bequeathed her poetic inspiration to their son:

At the christening the priest gave him first name the poet [Orpheus]. The others you know—George Stanislas. I arranged it that way. I blessed him and added a curse. He will be a poet. Ah, how I love you. Henry! (p. 191)².

[Na chrzcie ksiądz mu dał pierwsze imię – poeta – a następne znasz. Jerzy Stanisław. – Jam to sprawiła – błogosławiłam, dodałam przeklęstwo – on będzie poetą. – Ach, jakże cię kocham, Henryku! (p. 88)].

She dies in the madhouse as Part One ends. Henry's vision of carnal beauty has turned out to be an ugly phantom, while true poetic beauty is embodied in his wife and son, in the ties of Christian love which bind the family.

A number of years pass between Part One and Part Two, which focuses on Henry's son. The boy's nickname is Orcio, from Orfeusz (Orpheus). His mother communicates with him from beyond the grave, inspiring him with verses which he recites by heart. As noted above, Henry himself is a poet; Orcio is a symbol of Henry's own poetic gift. Near the beginning of Part Two, Henry encounters Mephistopheles in a mountain canyon, where they exchange only a few words before Mephistopheles disappears among the rocks. Then the second temptation prepared by the evil spirits, the eagle of glory, appears before Henry, distracting him from his thoughts of Orcio:

The poor child, for his father's faults and his mother's madness doomed to eternal blindness—incomplete, ardorless, living only by dreams, the shadow of a fleeting angel cast upon the earth and roaming in aimless transience. What a huge eagle soared above the place where this man disappeared! (p. 197).

[Biedne dziecko, dla win ojca, dla szalu matki przeznaczone wiecznej ślepoty – nie dopełnione, bez namiętności, żyjące tylko marzeniem, cień przelatującego anioła rzucony o ziemię i błędzący w znikomości swojej. – Jakiż ogromny orzeł wzbil się nad miejscem, w którym ten człowiek zniknął! (pp. 97–98)].

The eagle is closely associated with Mephistopheles, appearing and disappearing on the spot where Mephistopheles disappeared from

² Segel renders *poeta* as a proper noun: "Poet". In other words, the boy's name, according to this reading, is Poet George Stanislas, which recalls the poet George Byron. Segel, along with Stefan Treugutt (Kraśniński, *op. cit.*, p. 47), interprets Orcio as a nickname formed from 'Jerzy' (George). I have interpreted *poeta* as an appositive of *imię*, referring to the poet whose first name the child bears. Though the full form of the name is never stated, I have interpreted *Orcio* as a nickname from *Orfeusz* (Orpheus). Orpheus is a Christ symbol in *Irydion*.

view. It is a stuffed bird, as stated in Part One. Possibly it is manipulated by Mephistopheles, who has just told Henry that he is a ventriloquist. The eagle invokes Henry to fight for the honor of his aristocratic ancestors. Henry eagerly vows to fight for honor and glory, trusting the stuffed bird of the Devil.

It is significant that the eagle distracts Henry from his compassionate thoughts about his son. Immediately before Mephistopheles appears, Henry's guardian angel tells him:

Love the sick, the hungry, the despairing, love your neighbors, your poor neighbors, and you will be saved (*l.c.*).

[Schorzałych, zgłodniałych, rozpaczających pokochaj bliźnich twoich, biednych bliźnich twoich, a zbawion będziesz (*l.c.*)].

In following the eagle of glory, Henry is turning once again from the path of Christian love prescribed by the guardian angel. As it hovers by the cliffs, the eagle of glory "sucks the pupils" of Henry's eyes with its "rattlesnake gaze" (*wzrokiem węża grzechotnika*), blinding him to Christian duty.

When Henry returns from the mountains, he finds that Orcio has gone completely blind. At times the boy sees before his eyes a tiny snake (*cieniutkiego węża*) that is clearly related to the blinding "rattlesnake's gaze" which Henry faced. Orcio's blindness symbolizes the stifling of Henry's own creative gift. True Christian poetry falls victim to Henry's romantic, egotistical pursuit of glory. At the end of Part Two, Henry laments his son's plight:

May my blessing rest upon you. I can give you nothing more, neither happiness, nor light, nor fame. And the hour is at hand when I must fight, act with a handful of people against hordes. Where will you go, all alone among a hundred abysses, a blind, weak child and poet all in one, a poor singer without an audience living by the spirit beyond the confines of the earth, and chained to the earth by your body. O you unhappy, unhappiest of angels, O my son! (p. 202).

[Niech moje błogosławieństwo spoczywa na tobie – nic ci więcej dać nie mogę, ni szczęścia, ni światła, ni sławy – a dobiega godzina, w której będę musiał walczyć, działać z kilkoma ludźmi przeciwko wielu ludziom. – Gdzie się ty podziejesz, sam jeden i wśród stu przepaści, ślepy, bezsilny, dziecię i poeta zarazem, biedny śpiewaku bez słuchaczy, żyjący duszą za obrębami ziemi, a ciałem przykuty do ziemi – o ty nieszczęśliwy, najnieszczęśliwszy z aniołów, o ty mój synu! (p. 104)].

In turning away from his son for the pursuit of glory, Henry is symbolically forsaking true poetry, his own poetic gift.

In Part Three, Henry visits the camp of the rebels as they prepare

to storm the last stronghold of the aristocracy, the Castle of the Holy Trinity. The revolutionary army is composed of workers, peasants and idlers. It is a drunken, bloodthirsty mob led by Pankracy, a virtual Antichrist whose only god is Reason. But Part Three also exposes the corruption of the aristocracy and the abuses of power which have fired the hatred of the workers and peasants. Neither side is shown in a very good light. Pankracy tries to bargain with Henry, promising him safety if he remains on his ancestral estate and does not join the aristocrats in the Castle of the Holy Trinity. But Henry refuses.

Part Four portrays the aristocrats' last stand. Before the final battle, Orcio leads his father down into the fortress dungeon to a "terrible judgment" (*straszny sąd*) which the boy hears every night. The voices of those who have been tortured and victimized by the ruling class condemn Count Henry:

Because you have loved nothing, honored nothing save yourself, save yourself and your own thoughts, you are damned, damned for all eternity (p. 238).

[Za to, żeś nic nie kochał, nic nie czcił prócz siebie, prócz siebie i myśli twych, potępion jesteś – potępion na wieki (p. 152)].

When the rebels' final assault begins, Orcio pleads with his father:

Take me and don't let me go. Don't let me go. I'll draw you after me (p. 242).

[Weź mnie i nie puszczaj – nie puszczaj – ja cię pociągnę za sobą (p. 157)].

Orcio means that he will pull his father into heaven. That is, Henry can still save his soul by staying at his son's side, showing compassion and love. But Henry replies:

Our paths are different. You will forget me among angelic choirs. You will never cast a single drop of dew on me from above. O George, George, my son! (*l.c.*).

[Różne drogi nasze – ty zapomnisz o mnie wśród chórów anielskich, ty kropli rosy nie rzucisz mi z góry. – O Jerzy – Jerzy! – O synu mój! (*l.c.*)].

In his last words to Orcio, he repeats his resolve to continue his vain pursuit of glory:

With this embrace I would unite with you for all eternity, but I must go in another direction (*l.c.*).

[Tym uściskiem chciałabym się z tobą połączyć na wieki – ale trza mi w inną stronę (*l.c.*)].

Then Orcio is felled by an enemy bullet. Symbolically, Henry has deserted true, Christian poetry once again.

When Pankracy's mob captures the fortress, Henry leaps to his death. Pankracy then looks up and sees a vision of Christ "leaning on his cross like an avenger on his sword" in the sky. Pankracy falls dead, crying, "Galilae, vicisti!" ("Galilean, you have conquered!").

Although the title of the play is a variation on Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Krasinski chose this title only after completing the drama, which he had formerly intended to call *Mąż (Husband or Man of the Nation)*³. The chief literary prototype for *The Undivine Comedy* is actually Goethe's *Faust*. Goethe's influence is discernible in the general structure of *The Undivine Comedy* as well as in numerous details and motifs. Comparison of the Polish play with its German model helps to understand how the plan for a drama of such broad thematic dimensions was conceived and realized by the twenty-one-year-old Krasinski.

Thematically, *The Undivine Comedy* consists of two main parts corresponding to the two temptations—carnal beauty and glory—prepared by the evil spirits. The first part focuses on a personal, family conflict: Henry's relationship with his wife and son. The second part portrays Henry's role in a revolutionary struggle. This two-part structure is patterned after Goethe's drama, which focuses first on Faust's relationship with Margaret and Helen, then on his role in quelling an armed rebellion.

Count Henry is patterned to a certain extent after Faust, whose first name is also Henry in Goethe's drama. Like Faust, Count Henry has supposedly reached the ultimate limit of all rational knowledge, but finds himself deeply dissatisfied:

I have labored for many years to discover the final end of all knowledge, pleasure, and thought, and I have discovered a gravelike emptiness in my heart. I know every feeling by name, but there is no desire, no faith, and no love inside me. Only a few forebodings haunt that desert—that my son will go blind, that the society in which I grew up will dissolve—and I suffer, as God is happy, alone within myself, for myself alone (p. 197).

[Pracowałem lat wiele na odkrycie ostatniego końca wszelkich wiadomości, rozkoszy i myśli, i odkryłem — próżnię grobową w sercu moim. — Znam wszystkie uczucia po imieniu, a żadnej żądzy, żadnej wiary, miłości nie ma we mnie —

³ See Z. Sudolski, *Zygmunt Krasinski*, Warszawa 1974, p. 137.

jedno kilka przeczuciów krąży w tej pustyni ... o synu moim, że oślepnie — o towarzystwie, w którym wzrosłem, że rozprzęgnie się — i cierpię tak, jak Bóg jest szczęśliwy, sam w sobie, sam dla siebie (pp. 96–97)].

Like Faust, who becomes Mephistopheles' companion and ally, Count Henry is actually joining with Mephistopheles when he vows to follow the eagle of glory.

Faust almost commits suicide near the beginning of Goethe's drama, but a chorus of angels breaks into song, saving him. It is Easter and the angels sing an Easter hymn with the promise of salvation from sin (*Faust*, 720–807)⁴. Similarly, in *The Undivine Comedy* Henry's guardian angel saves him from suicide, promising him that his sins have been cleansed by Orcio's christening.

Count Henry's wife Maria is a synthesis of Faust's Margaret and Helen. Faust abandons Margaret, going into the mountains on Walpurgis Night, where he dances with a lusty young witch. The song she sings links her with Eve and the Garden of Eden:

The little apples man entice
Since first they were in Paradise.
I feel myself with pleasure glow
That such within my garden grow.
(4132–4135)

Faust turns away from her in disgust when a red mouse springs from her lips as she sings. Then he returns to town, where he finds Margaret in prison. Faust's desertion of Margaret and the remorse she feels for the death of her newborn baby have driven her insane. She is about to be executed at the end of Part One.

The ghost of the prostitute which Count Henry follows into the mountains was clearly inspired by Goethe's young witch. The transformation of the ghost's flowers into snakes and lizards is a variation on Goethe's red mouse. Like the witch in *Faust*, the ghost in *The Undivine Comedy* is associated with Eden, which the evil spirits evoke at the beginning of the play⁵. In both cases, extreme repulsiveness is shown to lie beneath the ephemeral beauty of carnal love.

⁴ All citations from *Faust* are taken from: J. W. von Goethe, *Faust, Parts One and Two*, ed. and transl. G. M. Priest, New York 1941, and referred to by line number in this edition.

⁵ Henry unjustly links Maria with Eve and the Garden of Eden immediately before he deserts her (Segel, p. 185; Krasiński, p. 78).

In both works, the hero's true lover goes insane after he deserts her. Margaret is taken to prison, Maria to an insane asylum. Both die. Maria recites verses in which she speaks of flying away as a bird:

Infinity surrounded me.
 And like a bird, with wings I cleave
 The azure of infinity.
 And flying, fade entirely;
 Black nothingness alone I leave (p. 190).
 [Nieskończoność mnie obleje
 I jak ptak w nieskończoności
 Błękit skrzydłami rozwieję
 I lecąc się rozemdleję
 W czarnej nicości (p. 87)].

This motif recalls song lines sung by Margaret in prison:

A forest bird fair I became that day;
 Fly away! Fly away!

(4419–4420)

Insane, Margaret hears voices from hell beneath the prison floor; beneath the floor of Maria's room in the insane asylum, a madman's voice echoes the ungodly views of Pankracy.

Maria also resembles Faust's Helen in that she is the mother of Henry's poet-son. Orcio is a variation on Euphorion, the son of Helen and Faust. Like Orcio, Euphorion is a symbol, or embodiment, of poetry. He plays the lyre, rejoicing in nature, and is reminiscent of Orpheus. As Goethe himself explained, he is also associated with George Byron, the quintessential Romantic poet who died in pursuit of heroic deeds⁶. In his euphoric urge to accomplish great deeds (a reflection of Faust himself as well as Byron) Euphorion imagines he has wings and dies as he crashes like Icarus on the cliffs:

Still must I!—See the wings
 That now unfold!
 Thither! I must! I must!
 Grudge not the flight!

(9897–9900)

Similarly, Count Henry's son is a poet named George (Jerzy), recalling George Byron⁷. The nickname Orcio evidently comes from

⁶ See Priest's commentary in Goethe, *op. cit.*, pp. 409–410.

⁷ See note 2.

Orpheus, and Henry refers to his son as a “singer” at the end of Part Two. Orcio’s guiding his father down into the castle dungeon (“the threshold of hell,” as Henry calls it) is reminiscent of Orpheus’ descent into the underworld. In his quest for Helen, Faust is guided into the underworld by the poet-seer Manto, who claims that she formerly guided Orpheus in his quest for Eurydice (*Faust*, 7489–7494).

In the madhouse, Henry’s wife tells him that she has “pinned wings” on Orcio:

I fastened on his wings and dispatched him among the worlds that he might imbibe everything that is lovely and terrible and lofty. One day he will return and will bring you joy (p. 191).

Jam mu skrzydła przypięła, posłała między światy, by się napoił wszystkim, co piękne i straszne, i wyniosłe. — On wróci kiedyś i uraduje ciebie (p. 88)].

This motif was probably inspired by the wings of Euphorion. In *Faust*, Euphorion’s voice is heard “from the depths” after he dies:

Leave me in realms of death,
Mother, not all alone!

(9905–9906)

Helen then follows him to the underworld. In *The Undivine Comedy* the sequence is reversed. Orcio’s mother (styled in part after Margaret) dies first, followed by her son. When he is killed, her voice is heard from heaven:

To me, to me, pure spirit! To me, my son! (p. 242).

[Do mnie, do mnie, duchu czysty — do mnie, synu mój! (p. 158)].

The uprising which Faust helps to quell is led by a foreign emperor who is joined by rebellious elements within the empire he invades. That is, it is both a rebellion and an invasion. The emperor whom Faust helps to defend is an inept bungler and hardly deserves to win. Aided by the magic of Mephistopheles, Faust is successful in defeating the rebels, unlike Count Henry, who has no chance against Pankracy’s revolutionary hordes. But the battle in *Faust* clearly inspired the corresponding episode in *The Undivine Comedy*. Count Henry’s league with “the past”, which he has vowed to defend, recalls Mephistopheles’ bolstering the emperor’s defences with the ghosts of knights from the past (see *Faust*, 10554–10570). Moreover, the setting for the final battle in *Faust* closely resembles that of

The Undivine Comedy. The rebels must storm rocky cliffs high in a mountain pass, where the defenders of the empire are entrenched. Krasiński doubtless associated the rebellion in *Faust* with the European revolutionary ferment of the 1830's, and in his drama the rebellion becomes a class struggle.

Both *Faust* and *The Undivine Comedy* portray a struggle between God and the Devil for the soul of the hero. *Faust* opens with a Prologue in Heaven, where Mephistopheles and God agree on the terms of the contest. At the beginning of *The Undivine Comedy*, the guardian angel and the evil spirits come forward as contestants for Henry's soul, setting the stage for the drama that subsequently unfolds. The ending of *Faust*, in which angels wrest the hero's soul from the Devil, probably influenced the finale of *The Undivine Comedy*, in which Pankracy, a virtual Antichrist, is vanquished by the vision of Christ.

However, the extent of Goethe's influence on the ending of *The Undivine Comedy* is difficult to measure because Krasiński left much unsaid. It is clear that neither the rebels nor the aristocrats are wholly on the side of Christian truth. But the question remains whether Henry's soul, in Krasiński's conception, goes to hell, as even Henry himself anticipates. Or has Christ in his infinite mercy spared Henry's soul, as in *Faust*?⁸

In a letter to Delfina Potocka dated March 20, 1840, Krasiński

⁸ As W. Lednicki has noted, Krasiński was ignoring Catholic theology if he envisioned salvation for Henry after committing suicide ("The Undivine Comedy," [in:] *Zygmunt Krasiński. Romantic Universalist. An International Tribute*, ed. W. Lednicki, New York 1964, p. 82). But the defenders of the Holy Trinity Castle are nominally on the side of Christ (who is part of the past which they defend) and, in light of Faust's extraordinary salvation in Krasiński's main literary prototype, salvation for Henry cannot be ruled out. It is worth noting that Pankracy's vision of Christ is reminiscent of many icon depictions of Christ's "harrowing" of hell. See, for example, J. Beckwith, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art*, Middlesex 1979, pp. 220, 307, The Pelican History of Art. These icons show a determined, warrior-like Christ pulling a man out of hell by the arm. Christ is leaning on his cross as though it were a spear, much as he leans on his cross "like an avenger on his sword" in Pankracy's vision. It is also worth noting that Pankracy's words "Galilean, you have conquered!" are neatly paralleled by Henry's words spoken in Part One when he is about to commit suicide: "O God, Your enemy conquers!" ("Boże – wróg Twój zwycięża!"). This passage refers to the contest for Henry's soul.

described his plans for an expanded, three-part version of *The Undivine Comedy*, in which the drama written in 1833 was to comprise only the second part. (He worked on the first part between 1838 and 1852, but never began the third.) In summarizing the second part, he refers to the “apparent defeat” (*przegrana pozorna*) of the aristocratic forces. According to his plan for the third part, Henry was to be “resurrected”:

Henry’s death was illusory. He was saved by spirits of the Lord and removed from the clamor of the world until the storm should pass. [...]

Meanwhile, both the aristocrats and the democrats in the world exhausted themselves and people longed for peace and unity. They remembered that there once lived a youth who sang about the future but later fought for the past and perished. It was in this spirit that [they saw] the truth—in the reconciliation of the past and the present, both taken together. This is the state of the world when Henry comes back among people. They proclaim him their leader. He will turn the poetry of his youth into reality; he will raise, elevate and ennoble everyone. He will lower nobody. All will become equal, but on high [*na wysokości*], not on the mundane level [*na padole*]. [...] In this third part, everything must be transformed, elevated, reconciled: religion, political life, social life. The end should be, as in *Faust*, divine—superwordly—but wordly at the same time⁹.

But it remains open to debate whether Krasiński, writing under the influence of *Faust* in 1833, intended to imply salvation for Henry’s soul.

Faust’s development is more extensive and complex than that of Count Henry, who simply succumbs to two successive temptations before dying. In contrast, Faust, after aiding the emperor, goes on to build a utopia of his own on land reclaimed from the sea. In this respect he resembles Pankracy, who hopes to conquer nature and build a rational, utopian state. Faust’s attempt to conquer the sea seems to be reflected in Pankracy’s plans to reshape the land and waterways. In both cases, the end hardly justifies the means.

In the first edition of *The Undivine Comedy* (Paris, 1835), Part Two began with an epigraph from *Faust*: “Du gemisch von Koth und Feuer” (“You mixture of mud and fire”). This is actually an imprecise paraphrase of Faust’s line addressed to Mephistopheles in Martha’s garden: “*Du Spottgeburt von Dreck und Feuer*” (“You

⁹ Krasiński, *op. cit.*, pp. 178–180. English translation is my own. — Note the similarity between the mountain cave setting in this plan and the mountain cliff setting for the episode in *Faust* following Faust’s death. As it rises to heaven, Faust’s soul passes through mountain gorges where anchorites dwell in the cliffs.

monstrous progeny of fire and filth," 3536)¹⁰. The epigraph was deleted in the later editions.

The ending of *Irydion* (1836) also bears the imprint of *Faust*. Angels struggle with the Devil for the soul of Irydion, who tried in vain to mount a rebellion against Rome, seeking vengeance for his native Greece. Thanks to the prayers of the Christian Kornelia, who recalls Faust's Margaret, his soul is saved "because he loved Greece¹¹." Another vestige of *Faust* in *Irydion* is a singer named Euphorion who is adept at singing the songs of Homer. His name was probably inspired by that of the young Orpheus-like singer in *Faust*. Orpheus is mentioned in *Irydion* as a symbol of Christ found in the Roman catacombs. His playing on his lyre to the wild animals is compared with the gentleness of Christ. This recalls the Christ-like meekness of Orcio, the child poet of *The Undivine Comedy*¹².

Krasiński's letters to Henry Reeve show that he had read all of *Faust* by April, 1833, not long before he began writing *The Undivine Comedy*. On April 4, he wrote: "The ending of *Faust* proves to me that Goethe was truly a great poet, greater than Byron himself..." Another letter to Reeve, dated April 9, begins with an allusion to *Faust*: „Today is Easter, the day of the long monolog which Faust recited when, in despair, he wanted to end it all. But the bells of the Resurrection made the cup of poison fall from his hand." Krasiński ends his description of Easter by referring to Faust once again: "Who would think of death on a day like this? There is no more death in the universe, and Faust was saved because he believed in this day. Near the end of the letter, he writes of the divine struggle between Good and Evil: "I understand this battle as well as Dante, as well as Goethe himself; but I cannot express it. However, someday I will express it, if I do not die beforehand¹³."

¹⁰ See the editor's note in: Krasiński, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

¹¹ Z. Krasiński, *Pisma. Wydanie jubileuszowe*, vol. 3, Kraków—Warszawa 1912, pp. 103—332.

¹² See *Correspondance de Sigismond Krasinski et de Henry Reeve*, ed. J. Kallenbach, vol. 2, Paris 1902, p. 27.

¹³ *Ibidem*, pp. 43, 48—50. All English translations of the Reeve correspondence are my own. See also pp. 17, 28, 29, 44, 56—59.

The influence of Dante's *Divine Comedy* is also discernible in Krasieński's drama, notably in the dungeon episode. Goethe, too, was influenced by Dante in his account of Faust's descent into the underworld. He makes the poet-seer Manto Faust's guide because Vergil, Dante's guide, comes from Mantua, which was founded by Manto, according to Dante's Vergil. Krasieński was aware of this textual relationship and he fashioned his dungeon motif after both Dante and Goethe. The role of Orcio—an Orpheus figure—as guide to the "underworld" appears to have been inspired by Manto's allusion to Orpheus in *Faust*. However, the poet Orcio's leading the poet Henry into the hellish dungeon recalls the poet Vergil's guiding the poet Dante through hell. Moreover, Orcio takes Henry to the dungeon because Maria came in the night from heaven and commanded him to do so, much as Dante's Beatrice descends from heaven to tell Vergil to accompany Dante. Both Maria and Beatrice function as guardian spirits at this point. Finally, Count Henry's witnessing the former tortures of the dungeon (a virtual hell on earth) recalls Dante's tour through the tortures of the inferno.

As the many textual parallels show, Goethe's deep influence on *The Undivine Comedy* is beyond question. However, the histories of Polish literature by Krzyżanowski, Kridl and Miłosz do not mention Goethe's *Faust* in the chapters devoted to *The Undivine Comedy*¹⁴. Stefan Treugutt, along with a number of other critics, notes the similarity in thematic scope between *Faust* and *The Undivine Comedy*, and he points out the parallel between the utopian aspirations of Faust and Pankracy¹⁵. Zbigniew Sudolski compares the passion for knowledge and the inner dissatisfaction which both Faust and Count Henry share. He also notes the similar two-theme structure of *Faust* and *The Undivine Comedy*¹⁶. But many of the formal parallels have gone unnoticed and the far-reaching role played by *Faust* in the genesis of *The Undivine Comedy* has not been understood.

¹⁴ J. Krzyżanowski, *A History of Polish Literature*, transl. D. Ronowicz, Warszawa 1978, pp. 287–290; M. Kridl, *A Survey of Polish Literature and Culture*, transl. O. Scherer-Virski, The Hague 1956, pp. 291–299; Cz. Miłosz, *The History of Polish Literature*, New York 1969, pp. 243–247.

¹⁵ Treugutt's introduction in: Krasieński, *Nie-Boska...*, pp. 5–65, esp. pp. 21, 22, 63.

¹⁶ Sudolski, *op. cit.*, p. 142.