

ASTROLOGY IN JANUS PANNONIUS'S POEMS OF PRAISE

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How frequently the stars appear in an astrological¹ context is conspicuous in the poetry of Janus Pannonius (1434–72), the most renowned humanist of Hungary.² This aspect of Janus's oeuvre has been recognized by previous scholars (József Huszti, Lajos Bartha, Éva Kocziszky, János Bollók) and to a certain extent discussed in their studies,³ but there is still much to be clarified by careful analyses. Since Janus was in many respects a typical representative of fifteenth-century humanism, these investigations may pertain not only to one particular person's thought or rhetorical habits, but also some important aspects of Latin humanist poetry, or analogical thinking in the Renaissance in general.

¹ Henceforth I will use the term "astrology" basically in its modern sense. The medieval mind considered the science of the heavenly bodies as one discipline. One could differentiate between two complementary aspects of this discipline, which can be called astronomy and astrology. Based upon the authoritative texts of Ptolemy (whose *Almagest* and *Tetrabiblos* can be considered as works on astronomy and astrology, respectively) or that of Isidore of Seville (*Etymologiae*, III, 27), the difference can be summarized as: Astronomy investigates the motions and positions of the heavenly bodies, while astrology deals with their effects on the sublunar world. However, the two notions were often used interchangeably in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance and one always has to keep in mind that the sharp differentiation only exists in our modern minds.

² This article is based on a section of my MA thesis: "The Role of Astrology in the Poetry of Janus Pannonius" (Central European University, 2012).

³ József Huszti was the first to realize the importance of astrology in Janus' poetry; he wrote a short study in 1927 ("Janus Pannonius asztrológiai álláspontja" [Janus Pannonius's attitude toward astrology], *Minerva* 6 [1927]: 43–58), which in fact did not go beyond a superficial overview of the relevant poems, although he made the first important observations which undermined an earlier image of the "enlightened" Janus. In later generations of scholars only two short studies analyzed certain poems with astrological references (Lajos Bartha, Jr., "Janus Pannonius két csillagászati verse" [Two astronomical poems by Janus Pannonius], *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 82 (1978): 340–345; Éva Kocziszky, "A csillaghit Janus költészetében. (Előtanulmány)." [Astral belief in the poetry of Janus (Preliminary Study)] *Collectanea Tiburtiana. Tanulmányok Klaniczay Tibor tiszteletére* [Collectanea Tiburtiana. Studies in honor of Tibor Klaniczay], ed. Géza Galavics et al. (Szeged: József Attila Tudományegyetem, 1990). The only general analysis of the issue has been provided by János Bollók, *Asztrális misztika és asztrológia Janus Pannonius költészetében* [Astral mysticism and astrology in the poetry of Janus Pannonius] (Budapest: Argumentum, 2003).

Among Janus's works containing astrological references, the poems in which the author most willingly goes into technical horoscope details are some of his praise poems: each addresses a man who is of high rank and is important for Janus. This study will explore the nature of astrological ideas in these works and the possible reasons and motives behind the use of these ideas.

The very presence of astrological expressions in Janus' poetry is not surprising at all. The period when Janus worked can be considered the beginning of the heyday of European astrology:⁴ Ideas about the effects of the stars appeared in various aspects of culture – science, philosophy, the arts, literature, and daily life – and humanists took part in the spread of these ideas in many ways.⁵ Astrology was "a completely international spiritual fluid"⁶ in the Renaissance, but even beyond the general fashion, the places where Janus stayed for most of his life (Ferrara, Padua, later Matthias Corvinus' Buda court) were among the main centers of European astrology in that period. In Ferrara, where Janus was educated, astronomy-astrology was supported continuously by the Este rulers; Matthias Corvinus (king of Hungary 1459–90), in whose Buda court Janus spent most of his time in Hungary, had a great predilection for horoscopes (see below).

⁴ The golden age of European astrology can be dated between about 1450 and 1650, see W. Knappich, *Geschichte der Astrologie* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1988), ch. 7.

⁵ Italian humanists propagated, rediscovered, and translated into Latin literary, philosophical, and hermetic texts which had a world view based on analogical thinking. Astrology could be combined with Neoplatonism, magic or any other set of ideas which were based on the correspondence between microcosm and macrocosm, a commonplace in the Renaissance. Astrological texts were also translated, primarily the *Tetrabiblos*, ancient works were rediscovered, like the *Astronomicum*, a long didactic poem by Manilius (first century AD), which was found in 1417 by Poggio Bracciolini and became a model for astrological poetry in the Renaissance.

⁶ Franz Boll, *Stern Glaube und Sterndeutung: Die Geschichte und das Wesen der Astrologie* (Leipzig: Teubner 1926), 41.

⁷ The successive Ferrarese princes collected more and more "celestial" books in their library (works by Pietro d'Abano, Bonincontri, Lunardi, and so on; the most famous is the *Sphaera* of De Predis). Giovanni Bianchini, the renowned mathematician-astronomer-astrologer of the University of Ferrara, was made Principal under Niccolò III (1393–1441). The color of the clothes in which Leonello (1441–1450) appeared in public reportedly harmonized with the color of the planet that ruled that day of the week (Janus also visited banquets organized by him.) The range of interests of the next princes – Borso (1450–1471) and Ercole I (1471–1505) – also included astrology. For more details see, e.g., Stefano Caroti, *L'astrologia in Italia* (Rome: Newton Compton, 1983) or Cesare Vasoli, "L'astrologia a Ferrara tra la metà del Quattrocento e la metà del Cinquecento," in *Il Rinascimento nelle corti padane*, ed. Paolo Rossi et al. (Bari: De Donato, 1977).

The idea of triumph, central for humanist praise poems, was one of the basic ideas of the Renaissance and it could be made manifest in various – political, moral, philosophical – frameworks. Guarino himself (Janus' teacher) spread the frequently appearing thought of the humanists that humans are able to become *quasi in terris deus* (like a god on earth) through artistic creation, for example.⁸ It is perhaps natural that triumph came to be associated with the celestial sphere and the stars; there were at least two sets of ideas which could have provided frameworks for this association: astral mysticism and astrology.⁹ The planets themselves often appeared triumphantly, as on the walls of Johannes de Zredna's *Studio*.¹⁰ The patronage system in Europe resulted in the emergence of panegyrics and other genres of praise and the idea of triumph was quite suitable for these poems. Consequently, astral and astrological ideas can also be expected to occur in Renaissance eulogies.

The presence of astrology in some of Janus's panegyrics is mentioned by scholars, but they usually confine themselves to stating the purely rhetorical usage of astrology in the poems of praise.¹¹ This seems to be true, but the poems deserve a deeper analysis. Janus goes into technical details in them and important conclusions may be drawn about his knowledge and views on astrology. Particular horoscopes may have been related to the poems; in general, the motives for applying astrological terms have to be clarified as well as their possible relation to other conceptual frameworks.

⁸ István János, "Neoplatonista motívumok Janus Pannonius itáliai költeményeiben" [Neoplatonic motifs in the Italian poems of Janus Pannonius], *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 84, no. 1 (1980), 2.

⁹ Zoltán Nagy suggests implicitly that the appearance of the Renaissance idea of triumph, expressed through astral symbols, might have been disadvantageous to Christianity: "In line with the Renaissance idea of triumph... the use of *sidera*, *polus* and other words related to astronomy instead of *coelum* is dominant." Zoltán Nagy, "Vitéz János művészeti alkotásai Janus Pannonius műveiben" [The artworks of János Vitéz in the works of Janus Pannonius], in *Janus Pannonius. Tanulmányok* [Janus Pannonius. Studies], ed. Tibor Kardos, Sándor V. Kovács (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1975), 267.

¹⁰ The planet-trionfi on the walls of the *Studio* of Johannes de Zredna (János Vitéz, Archbishop of Esztergom, the uncle of Janus) followed Italian patterns. For instance, the *trionfi*-series in the Cappella di Zodiaco (Tempio Malatestiano, Rimini), the Ferrarese-Venetian *Tarocchi del Mantegna* and the Florentine *Pianeti* series show similar features, see: Nagy, "Vitéz," 273.

¹¹ Huszti, "Asztrológiai," 58; Kocziszky, "Csillaghit," 58; Bollók, *Asztrális*, 65.

a.) Italian Poems of Praise

Janus composed the *Carmen ad Ludovicum Gonzagam*¹² in 1450 or 1451¹³ and gave it to Lodovico II Gonzaga himself, who visited Ferrara; it is improbable that Guarino ordered Janus to do this.¹⁴ The style of the panegyric reminds one of Claudian¹⁵ (who had also applied astrology¹⁶), however, in shaping the structure Janus "followed the precepts of the rhetoricians."¹⁷ The explicit appearance of astrology near the end of the poem has some preliminaries not perceived before by scholars of Janus. Within the traditional praise of the father's *prudentia*, the ability to predict the future is highlighted,¹⁸ and later the poet praises the same ability in the son.¹⁹ In the transition to the battle, the war gods which helped Lodovico are associated with the stars.²⁰ In the end astrology appears explicitly. This part is well integrated in the rhetorical structure of the panegyric; it is among the final comparisons and the poet applies the figure of *rogatio*.²¹

¹² *Iani Pannonii Poemata quae usquam reperiri potuerunt omnia*, ed. Sámuel Teleki, Sándor Kovásznai (Utrecht: Wild, 1784) (henceforth: JP-Tel.), vol. 1, 238.

¹³ Pekka Tuomisto, "A Rhetorical Analysis of Janus Pannonius' *Carmen ad Ludovicum Gonzagam*," in *Humanista műveltség Pannóniában* [Humanist culture in Pannonia], ed. István Bartók, László Jankovits, Gábor Kecskeméti (Pécs: Művészetek háza, 2000), 47.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹⁵ József Huszti, *Janus Pannonius* (Pécs: Janus Pannonius Társaság, 1931), 80.

¹⁶ Tuomisto, "Rhetorical," 56.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 58.

¹⁸ *Carmen ad Ludovicum* 34–36: *Mirandum innotuit divinae mentis acumen / In genitore tuo; saepe ut ventura videre / Posset, et innumeris praediceret ante diebus...*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 185–8: *Quin de venturis aliquid praedocere rebus, / et secreta soles longe praenoscerere fata, / An cladem, an laetam portendant Numina palmam. / Vera cano...*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 139–140: *At cum pugna vocat, pro te vel sidera certant, / et tua descendens ad classica militat aether.* (Observed by Bollók, *Asztrális*, 65.)

²¹ Tuomisto, "Rhetorical," 50.

*Ergo ego dum tacitus tecum tua fata retracto,
Sum dubitus, quo te genitum sub sidere dicam,
Marsne ferax, mitisne Venus, facundus an Hermes,
Phoebeumne tuis natalibus arserit astrum?
Hoc iubet eximiae splendor me credere formae,
Hoc solers animi vigor, et doctrina, sagacis,
Hoc lepor, hoc studium Mavortis et ignea virtus.
Scorpion incurva minitantem praelia cauda,
Te roseus nascente dies, rapidumve leonem,
Clara vel Astraeae possedit Virginis ora;
Iustitiam quod amas, duris quod es acer in armis,
Iupiter ipse tuos per cetera vindicat ortus.²²*

At the end the poet opted for Jupiter, certainly because it gives royal virtues (and because it is the *fortuna maior* in astrology). Presenting the options, he enumerated four planets and three signs, and the signs are the domiciles of the planets, as Bollók observes²⁴ (Mars – Scorpio, Mercury – Virgo, Sun – Leo, only the domicile of Venus is missing). Bollók is not correct in saying that in defining the birth ruler Janus took into account the sign where the Sun is.²⁵ *Roseus dies* rather signifies the dawn, referring to the reddish Sun appearing on the horizon: this is the Ascendant of the horoscope, and, indeed, this was the basic method of defining the birth ruler in the Renaissance.

The rhetorical use of astrology is clear, but what could have motivated the poet to use such expressions so abundantly? The passage reveals the humanist's basic astrological knowledge, however, the Italian epigrams mocking astrology, which he wrote around the same time,²⁶ make it improbable that Janus' knowledge came from an enthusiasm for horoscopes. Furthermore, Janus does not seem to

So, as I silently think over your deeds, I wonder which star I should say you were born under? Was it the fierce Mars, the mild Venus, the eloquent Hermes, or the star of Phoebus which shone upon your birth? The one is strongly suggested by your pleasant and excellent form, the other by your soul's vivid ingenuity, another by your charm, still another by the ambition and the fiery strength of Mars. When you were born, was the rosy day in the Scorpio that threatens war with its curly tail, or in the seizing Leo, or in Virgo Astraea with a bright face? But since you love justice and are valiant in the battle, and in all other respects, it is Jupiter himself who vindicates your birth.²³

²² *Carmen ad Ludovicum*, 207–218.

²³ The English translations of the primary sources of this article are mine.

²⁴ Bollók, *Arztrális*, 65.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Iani Pannonii Opera Quae Manserunt Omnia. Vol. I. Epigrammata.*, ed. Gyula Mayer et al. (Budapest: Balassi, 2006) (henceforth: JP-Mayer), Ep. 22, 194, 269.

have followed any poetic pattern in this passage. Such astrological enumerations are foreign to Classical poetry and I have not found parallels in contemporary Neo-Latin poetry either. It was a literary commonplace that the Classical gods gave all the good properties to the eulogized person at his birth and the gods sometimes fused with the planets (see Landini²⁷ or Corsini²⁸). Sometimes the birth of the ruler is accompanied by celestial signs,²⁹ but such an explicit description as that of Janus is peculiar in this genre. Was it motivated by the Gonzaga ruler's well-known predilection for the stars?³⁰

Tuomisto assumes that “Janus may exactly have known Ludovico's sign, the Lion.”³¹ The marquis' Ascendant is known: “Your birth was on the day [for which] you had Leo as Ascendant and the sun was your signifier...,”³² an astrologer, Giovanni Cattani, said to Lodovico. He was reportedly born on 5 June 1412, 13 hours and 13 minutes after sunset (around 8:45 in the morning), which date indeed gives a horoscope with Leo as the Ascendant.³³ A number of data support that Lodovico always kept Leo in mind and also used it for representative purposes.³⁴ If Janus had known about Leo Ascendant, he would certainly have highlighted it in his poem. In contrast, among the descriptions of the signs, that of Leo is the shortest (*rapidumve leonem*). He rather seems to have drawn on Manilius in finding poetic expressions for the signs.³⁵ It is understandable that

²⁷ Carm. 8. 61–68 (*Christophori Landini carmina omnia*, ed. A. Perosa (Florence: Olschki, 1939))

²⁸ Amerigo Corsini, *Compendium in vitam Cosmi Medicis*, I, 39–69 (*Compendium in vitam Cosmi Medicis ad Laurentium Medicem*, ed. László Juhász [Leipzig: Teubner, 1934]).

²⁹ Tito Strozzi, *Borsias*, III. 202–4.

³⁰ For the Mantuan rulers' predilection for the stars, see: Ernesto Milano, “The Success of Astrology in Northern Italy,” in *Astrologia: arte e cultura in età rinascimentale, Art and Culture in the Renaissance*, ed. D. Bini et al [Modena: Il bulino, 1996]. As Milano puts it, “the Ambassadors of the Gonzagas collected and sent off to Mantua as many prognostications and horoscopes as they could find.” (p. 38)

³¹ Tuomisto, “Rhetorical,” 56.

³² Quoted by Joanna Woods-Marsden, *The Gonzaga of Mantua and Pisanello's Arthurian Frescoes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 45, note 86.

³³ Checked with the computer program called “ZET 8 Astrology.”

³⁴ In 1461 Bartolomeo Manfredi sent him “a little gold lion to wear ‘next to his skin’ at dawn on the nineteenth of July, when ‘the sun is ascending in Leo on the eastern horizon...’” (Woods-Marsden, *Gonzaga*, 46). Leo appears in some frescoes, like in Pisanello's painting from the 1440s. Lodovico also used the sun (the Lion's ruler) as his symbol, for instance, on a medal made by Pisanello in 1447, cited in Tuomisto, “Rhetorical,” 56.

³⁵ In line 214, *Scorpion... cauda* is in the same metrical position as in Manilius' *Astronomicon* IV. 218, and in Manilius' description of Leo (IV. 176–189) expressions deriving from *rapio* (to seize and carry off) are frequent, which probably explain Janus' adjective, *rapidus*.

Janus did not know about Lodovico's favorite sign, since the Mantuan ruler had only come to Ferrara just before Janus gave him the panegyric. However, Janus could have known about Lodovico's predilection for astrology in general, since the content of the panegyric reveals that he was informed about Lodovico's basic biographical circumstances. Among all the addressees of Janus' panegyrics, the Gonzaga marquis was the most renowned for his predilection for the stars; it is certainly not by chance that the most detailed horoscope-astrological passage in Janus' oeuvre can be found in the *Carmen ad Gonzagam*. The planet symbolism in the epigram on Matthias and Frederick III (see below) was certainly motivated by similar reasons.

Two other poems with astrological passages survive from the Ferrarese period; these passages are more peripheral than those in the Gonzaga panegyric. It seems that astrology was on the way to being incorporated into Janus' poetic arsenal and that there was no special external reason for its use in these two poems. In January 1453, Janus composed an *epithalamium* on the occasion of the marriage of Paula Barbaro and Giacomo Balbi.³⁶ The *epithalamium* was a favored genre in the fifteenth century and traditionally contained praise of the bride's or bridegroom's father, but in this particular poem, Janus' praise of the father is so dominant that in fact the work becomes a panegyric. Janus wanted to introduce himself and find favor with Francesco Barbaro, the famous humanist patrician of Venice.³⁷ The astrological passage again appears in the figure of a *rogatio*:

*Non ego Franciscum caelesti e semine cretum
mentiar, hoc unum dubito, quod in axe superno
affirmem regnasse iubar, quae sidera dicam
concordes iunxisse globos, qua venit in auras.
Ille die miro caelum properasse rotatum
certa fides, ac signa novum servasse tenorem.*³⁸

I won't lie that Franciscus is a divine offspring, I am just wondering which light I should declare to have ruled in the uppermost sky,³⁹ which globes should I mention as harmoniously joining the stars, when he came forth to the world? It is sure that the sky moved forward in a miraculous rotation on that day [?], and the signs kept this new course.

³⁶ *Adalékok a humanismus történetéhez Magyarországon – Analecta ad historiam renascentium in Hungaria litterarum spectantia*, ed. Jenő Ábel (Budapest-Leipzig: Akadémiai-Brockhaus, 1880) (henceforth: AH-Ábel), 108–119, *Epithalamium ad Franciscum Barbarum*.

³⁷ Huszti, Janus, 98.

³⁸ AH-Ábel, *Epithal. ad Franc. Barb.* 185–190.

³⁹ *Axis* can refer both to the sky itself and the axis of *medium caeli* in a horoscope.

The waves of praise ran high here, and this resulted in a series of strange ideas, some of them with dubious meanings (moreover, the last lines seem to have been corrupted).⁴⁰ According to the most probable interpretation of the text, the poet takes into account the MC axis (*axe superno*) in defining the birth ruler⁴¹ (a rare method in the Renaissance), perhaps because a constellation in the highest heavens is more spectacular than the Ascendant. *Concordes iunxisse globos* can mean at least two things: the planets are in their domiciles or have a favorable aspect with each other; both signify fortune in general in astrology. The last sentence of the passage, which clearly presents an absurdity,⁴² shows most definitively how far Janus was from taking astrology seriously. A “believer” poet would have praised the patron with more real expressions, even in a highly rhetorical genre, see Cortesi's or Naldi's panegyrics to Matthias Corvinus.⁴³

The Guarino panegyric,⁴⁴ an often interpreted Janus poem, finished probably in 1454,⁴⁵ does contain an astrological idea, though it is so peripheral that the previous scholarship has not detected it. The ideas and images which show a Renaissance Neoplatonic influence – for example, the sun as spiritual symbol⁴⁶ or the stars providing a home for the soul – do not mix with astrology; the signs appear best in playful images: “Scorpio draws back its tail” when the soul approaches the celestial spheres.⁴⁷ However, the poet's propensity for exaggerating and magnifying the mythical figures into cosmic dimensions had the result that astral mysticism changed over to astrology for a moment:

⁴⁰ The sentence would make sense if *illo* or *illa* stood for *ille*; *illa/illo die* would mean “on that day.” (Although the ablatives *illa/illo* were pronounced with a long *a* and *o* in Classical Latin, which would not fit the metric pattern.)

⁴¹ Bollók, *Asztrális*, 65.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ A. Cortesi, *Laudes Bellicae Matthiae Corvini Hungariae regis*, lines 198–200, in *Olaszországi XV. századbeli írónak Mátyás királyt dicsőítő művei* [Fifteenth-century Italian literary works praising Matthias Corvinus], ed. Jenő Ábel (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1890), 307 (henceforth: Olaszországi-Ábel); Naldo Naldi: *De Laudibus Augustae Bibliothecae libri quatuor ad Matthiam Corvinum Pannoniae Regem Serenissimum*, ll. 105–118, in Olaszországi-Ábel, p. 273.

⁴⁴ I used the latest edition, Ian Thomson, *Humanist Pietas. The Panegyric of Janus Pannonius on Guarinus Veronensis* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

⁴⁵ Thomson, *Guarino*, 57.

⁴⁶ István János, “Neoplatonista motívumok Janus Pannonius itáliai költeményeiben” [Neoplatonic Motifs in the Italian Poems of Janus Pannonius], *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 84, no. 1 (1980), 7.

⁴⁷ Thomson, *Guarino*, praef. 31–2: *alta manet meriti te regia caeli / Contrahit et caudam Scorpios ecce tibi.*

*Nonne vides eadem totus portendat ut aether,
Urania numeris sibi respondentia faustis?
Quam bene fatorum concordant sidera pensis!*⁴⁸

Can't you see that the whole ether
is predicting the same events, which
correspond to the favorable numbers of
Urania? How well the stars harmonize
with the decision of the fates!

The “theme of restoration after a period of ruin”⁴⁹ was a basic idea of panegyrics in general; here it is Guarino’s birth, supported by the heavens, which will bring a new golden age for the world. In a type of general astrology, great historical events were often linked to peculiar planetary positions, *coniunctiones*, and Janus seems to have drawn on this type of astrology in order to express the celestial justification of the new golden age. The rhetorical usage is the same as in the previous examples; what makes the passage interesting is how different ideas – the divine support of Urania, the descent of the soul from the stars, and the restoration of the golden age, which all have different conceptual frameworks – Greek mythology, Neoplatonic astral mysticism, and history – meet in astrological synthesis, in an idea which shares the common conceptual framework of astrology.

Other works by Janus may have been colored by astrological features among the lost poems of praise. Janus composed, for instance, a long *epithalamium* praising Leonello,⁵⁰ which may have contained such ideas, taking into account Leonello’s enthusiasm for the stars. In Hungary, Janus turned away from the panegyric-like genres, nevertheless, praise of Matthias Corvinus – and mockery of his enemies – could also be expressed in epigrams; one of these applied astrological symbolism. This epigram deserves a deeper analysis. While the above passages seem to be based on Janus’ own thoughts, the Hungarian epigram arose organically from the astrological culture at Matthias’ court.

b. An Epigram on Frederick III (and Matthias Corvinus)

The court of Matthias Corvinus was one of the European political centers where the science of the stars played a prominent role. Poetic and prose narrative sources, material sources, surviving documents of astrological practice (horoscopes, *judicia*) all attest the great significance of astrology, mainly natal and catarchic⁵¹ astrology,

⁴⁸ Ibid., lines 1033–5.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 54

⁵⁰ Huszti, *Janus*, 95.

⁵¹ Catarchic astrology (*electiones*) meant that the astrologer helped choose the date of an important undertaking (operation, battle, city foundation, etc.) by defining the moment when the positions of the stars were the most favorable.

and among the members of the court the king himself seems to have had the greatest predilection for the stars.⁵² It is not at all surprising that Janus, too, wrote astrology-related poems at the royal court.

The political context of the epigram in question⁵³ seems to have been the debate between Frederick III (Holy Roman Emperor 1452–1493) and Matthias Corvinus over the Hungarian crown.⁵⁴ When Matthias acceded to the Hungarian throne in 1458, he could not be crowned until 1463, because Frederick had previously seized the royal crown itself. Matthias greatly needed to legitimize his power with a traditional crowning ceremony, but he asked Frederick for the crown in vain and had to wait until the Wiener Neustadt contract about the conditions of the returning of the crown was signed⁵⁵ (this may be regarded as a *terminus ante quem* for the epigram). Janus, as a poet at Matthias’ side, gave voice to the royal claim in a witty epigram:

*Romula res olim Fabio cunctante revixit,
nunc, cunctante eadem te, Friderice, perit.
Nam tu continue consultas, nec facis umquam,
mallem aliquid faceres vel sine consilio
Quid tibi cum gelido Saturni sidere inertis?
Caesaribus mores Martis inesse decet.*

Long ago, the Roman state survived by
the tardiness of Fabius; now the same
[state] perishes by the tardiness of
yours, Frederick. For you are consulting
all the time, not doing anything; I would
rather you did something without any
advice. What have you got to do with
the icy star of the sluggish (or: cowardly)
Saturn? For an emperor, it comes to
have a Martial character.

⁵² Cf. the relevant section of my MA thesis (see note 2), “Judicial astrology at the court of Matthias Corvinus.”

⁵³ JP-Mayer, Ep. 384

⁵⁴ The notes of the 1972 jubilee edition (*Janus Pannonius összes munkái* [Complete works of Janus Pannonius], ed. Sándor V. Kovács, [Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1987], 683) put the epigram in this context and the new critical edition reinforces this by placing the poem chronologically just after the one which is undoubtedly about the crown issue (JP-Mayer, Ep. 383).

⁵⁵ The delegation of János Vitéz was unsuccessful in 1458; the pressure of the prince electors on the emperor was also in vain in 1461. In the next year, prompted by the request of Landus, the papal legate, he agreed to sell the crown for no less than eighty thousand gulden, but it was not until July, 1463, that the Wiener Neustadt contract was signed: Karl Nehring, *Matthias Corvinus, Kaiser Friedrich III. und das Reich* (Munich: R. Oldenburg, 1975), 14–18.

The expression with Saturn makes it clear that the epigram has an astrological meaning. To be more precise, it must be natal astrology, the branch of star beliefs according to which the character (*mores*), the permanent, substantial properties of a person are defined by the position of the stars at his birth. Why does Janus express himself through astrology? One of the reasons must have been Matthias' predilection for astrology. In addition, Frederick, the central figure of the poem, had a similar interest in astrology;⁵⁶ as Heinig says, Frederick III "subjected important decisions to the constellations of the stars and the advice of his astrologers."⁵⁷ Since astrology played a significant role in the courts of both rulers alluded to in the epigram, one can suspect that Janus's words on planetary influences may refer to particular astrological beliefs or opinions about the births of these rulers. Thus, the concrete astrological context of the epigram encourages further investigation.

János Bollók, after a thorough analysis of the epigram, arrives at the conclusion that the astrological references are based on "chronocrator-astrology."⁵⁸ He argues that while the day and month of Matthias' birth is certain, the exact year is debated in secondary literature, the two possibilities being 1440 and 1443, and the year 1440 has "more support" from the sources. The date 23 February 1443 falls on a Thursday, the day of Jupiter, while 23 February 1440 falls on a

⁵⁶ This fact was noted by some of the court historians of the Habsburgs (for example, Joseph Grünpeck, *Die Geschichte Friedrichs III. und Maximilians I.*, ed. and trans. Theodor Ilgen [Leipzig: Dyk, 1891], 20) and reinforced by modern scholars; the results have been summarized recently by D. C. Pangerl, "Sterndeutung als naturwissenschaftliche Methode und Politikberatung. Astronomie und Astrologie am Hof Kaiser Friedrichs III. (1440–1493)," *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 92 (2010): 309–327.

⁵⁷ Paul-Joachim Heinig, *Kaiser Friedrich III (1440–1493), Hof, Regierung und Politik*, vol. 1 (Cologne: Böhlau, 1997), 747, quoted in Pangerl, 311.

⁵⁸ Bollók, *Asztrális*, 56–59. This "chronocrator" must not be mistaken for the chronocrator in the more widespread meaning of "ruler of lifetime," as used by Ptolemy, Firmicus Maternus, and their followers. Instead, Bollók refers to the simplest branch of astrology, in which the planets (or the antique gods with the same names), were associated with the hours of the day as "rulers of time," and the planet of the hour of birth was supposed to have a definitive influence on the personality. Later, the planet (god) of the first hour of the day came to be associated with the day itself, and this system left its mark on the names of the days of the week in a number of European languages (in English: Saturday, Sunday, Monday). Furthermore, the first day of a month came to define the astrological nature of the whole month. Bonfini's *Decades* has a sentence which associates both the birth and death of Matthias with Mars, based on chronocrator-astrology: *Et, quemadmodum mense Martio natus erat, ita die et hora Martis vita decessit*, see: Antonio Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum decades*, ed. László Juhász et al. [Leipzig: Teubner, 1936–1976], vol. 4, ch. 8, line 200)

Tuesday, the day of Mars. The date of Frederick's birth is certain: 21 September 1415, which falls on a Saturday, the day of Saturn. According to Bollók, Janus knew 1440 as the birth year of Matthias and also knew Frederick's birthday, so he could make use of the different planetary influences (Mars and Saturn) in his poem.

Bollók's argument can be refuted by the fact that the debate around Matthias's birth has now been settled. Indeed, as early as 1943 Kálmán Guoth proved that Matthias was born in 1443,⁵⁹ and this has generally been accepted by later scholars.⁶⁰ Janus must have known the right birth year of his king, at least indirectly from János Vitéz, who had a close relationship to both the king and Janus, his nephew. Anyway, Frederick could still have been associated with "Saturday" in Matthias's court, but it is hardly possible that Janus mixed two different astrological systems while creating a clear opposition between the two figures of the epigram, chronocrator-astrology in the case of Frederick and some other system in the case of Matthias. Bollók's thoughts on the related horoscopes seem to have more utility. Although in the end he did not see much sense in using these horoscopes to interpret the poem, it now seems fruitful to rethink this issue.

While two codices give exactly the same nativity for Matthias (*Fig. 1*),⁶¹ a nativity for Frederick appears in a sixteenth-century printed book, Johannes Schöner's *Opera mathematica* (*Fig. 2*; the maker of the horoscope is unknown). From what point of view could Saturn be the birth ruler (the most important planet) in Frederick's horoscope and Mars the birth ruler in Matthias's chart? Bollók, after trying all the possibilities (the Ascendant, the Sun, the astrologically strongest planet, and the Medium Coelum as signifiers of the birth ruler) arrives at the correct conclusion that the only imaginable possibility for making Mars and Saturn respectively the dominant planets is by taking the Medium Coelum (MC) into consideration.⁶² The MC of Matthias's nativity is in Scorpio, ruled by Mars; Frederick's MC is in Aquarius, ruled by Saturn. The MC – explicitly identified by the maker of Frederick's nativity – and its adjacent house, the tenth house, was generally considered the house of honors, career, acts; this would also fit

⁵⁹ Kálmán Guoth, *Mikor született Mátyás király?* [When was King Matthias born?] (Kolozsvár: Nagy Jenő és fia, 1943).

⁶⁰ Guoth's argument can be summarized briefly: the year 1440 was only weakly supported by few foreign sources (Thomas, a Venetian legate; Enea Silvio Piccolomini), while a host of other primary sources – narrative ones, horoscopes and other documents – gave the year as 1443.

⁶¹ Bibliotheka Jagiellonska, cod. 3225; Cod. Vat. lat. 1208.

⁶² Bollók, *Asztrális*, 54–55.

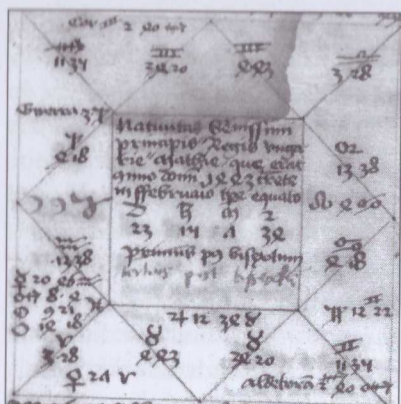


Fig. 1. The nativity of Matthias Corvinus (Bibliotheka Jagiellonska, cod. 3225)

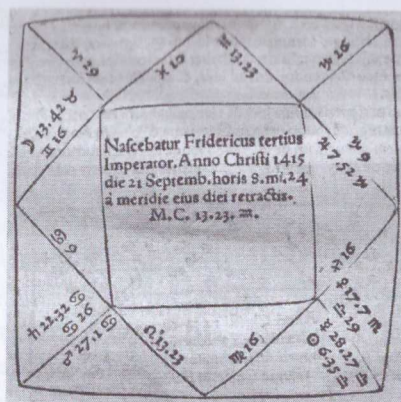


Fig. 2. The nativity of Frederick III (Johannes Schöner, Opera mathematica, Nürnberg 1561, LXVI/a. Library of Congress Digital Collection, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage>).

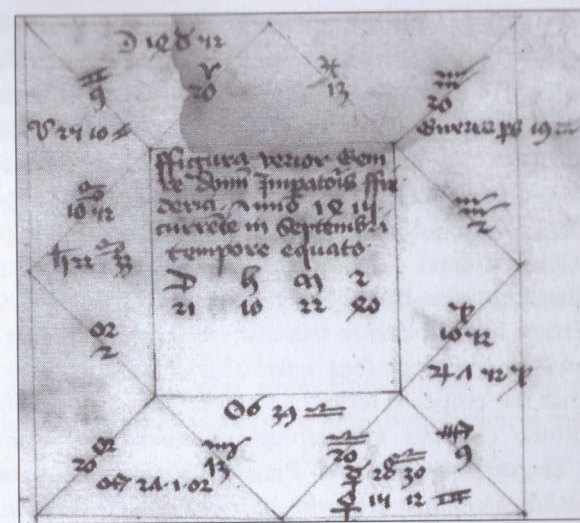


Fig. 3. The verior nativity of Frederick III (Bibliotheka Jagiellonska, cod. 3225)

the content of the epigram. However, Bollók was still not convinced that Janus had the MC and the birth rulers of the horoscopes in mind, and I do not think it probable either, though for other reasons.⁶³ First of all, when the birth ruler was defined indirectly in Renaissance astrology, it was not the MC but the Ascendant which was generally taken into consideration.⁶⁴ Furthermore, it is not at all certain that the nativity in Schöner's book was really in use in Frederick's time. In addition, while Janus could easily have found the details of Matthias's nativity, this was not the case with Frederick's birth charts, at least those made in Vienna.

There is one more version of Frederick's nativity: his "more true" (*verior*) geniture (Fig. 3); found among horoscopes of the Corvinus family, it must have been cast in Matthias's court.

⁶³ Bollók's counter-argument (Bollók, *Asztrális*, 55.) seems problematic to me: "Though Saturn in Cancer is in exile – so his harmful effects are increased – but Mars, situated in Aquarius, between the confines of Saturn, is not able to exert his positive effect because of its position." Mars is not in Aquarius in Matthias's horoscope, but in Pisces; furthermore, the investigation of confines (*termini*) was rather peripheral among the methods of interpreting horoscopes in the Renaissance.

⁶⁴ See, for example, the case of Lodovico Gonzaga discussed above, or the case of Cosimo Medici, who also had representations of his Ascendant (Scorpio) and its ruler (Mars) (Enikő Békés, *Galeotto Marzio De doctrina promiscua című művének eszmetörténeti vizsgálata* [An intellectual historical analysis of *De doctrina promiscua* by Galeotto Marzio], PhD dissertation, University of Szeged, 2012), 75.

This *verior* nativity was made for a date two hours later than the Schöner version. Judging from a note under the horoscope, it was made after 1483, so Janus could not have known this exemplar, at best an earlier, preliminary version of it. Nor does the horoscope itself help in the interpretation of the epigram. Here the MC is not in Aquarius but in Pisces; and though Saturn "jumped" from the second to the first, most important, house, a parallel situation is not known for Matthias's nativity. Still, this horoscope provides some important information. One of the reasons for "deferring" Frederick's birth date may have been to find a more spectacular place for his Saturn in order to satisfy those in Matthias' court who wanted to see Frederick as a Saturnine figure.

Thus, there are no firm grounds for explaining that Janus, who was otherwise skeptical about the practice of astrology, would have looked into the naticities of the rulers himself (though this possibility cannot be excluded). Still, the current ideas in Matthias's court about the two rulers certainly lurk in the background of the astrological interest of the epigram. To apply such astrological terms, it was enough for Janus to know two things: first, Matthias was held to be a Martial personality in a positive sense, and Frederick a Saturnine personality, with the darker side of Saturn; second, these characterizations were based on concrete astrological facts, so the characteristics were – allegedly – defined by superior heavenly laws. There are strong reasons to think that this was the case at Matthias's court.

The association of Mars, the god (and planet) of war, with Matthias, part of Corvinian propaganda, is well known.⁶⁵ Janus himself, in a late epigram,⁶⁶ represents Mars as both a pagan god and a planet standing for Matthias, according to Birnbaum⁶⁷ and Pajorin.⁶⁸ It is natural that any astrological calculations which could connect Matthias to a favorable Mars would have been welcome at court. Bonfini referred to Mars as the royal chronocrator⁶⁹ and the conjunction of Mars and the Sun, the royal planet, in Matthias's nativity was probably exploited as well.

In contrast to Matthias's case, tendencies to connect Frederick to Saturn as a negative planet must also have been present at the Hungarian court. It was not difficult to create the association itself. If one tries to outline the character of Frederick based on different (not only "Corvinian") primary sources, one must conclude that the emperor really had several basic properties which were considered Saturnine qualities in astrology: misanthropy, avarice, slowness, indecisiveness.⁷⁰ The negative side of Frederick's character could be overtly expressed in Matthias's environment; the best example perhaps is provided by Bonfini's detailed comparison of the two rulers. I enumerate here the properties which are expressed by the statements of the comparison: Frederick is petty-minded, thrifty, greedy, a lover of peace and rest, negligent, sluggish, envious, a deviser of plots, inconsistent, self-restrained, solitary, misanthropic, headstrong,

⁶⁵ I just refer here to the study of Klára Pajorin, "Janus Pannonius és Mars Hungaricus" [Janus Pannonius and Mars Hungaricus], in *Klaniczay-emlékkönyv. Tanulmányok Klaniczay Tibor emlékezetére* [Klaniczay Festschrift. Studies in Memory of Tibor Klaniczay], ed. József Jankovics (Budapest: Balassi, 1994), 57–72. "Mars Hungaricus" was one of the current "epithets" of Matthias, used, for example, by Ugolino Verino in a poem which exhorts the Hungarian king against the Turks: *Hungarus Mavortius*, see: *Triumphus...* l. 79 in Ábel-Olaszországi.

⁶⁶ Mayer-Ep. 426

⁶⁷ Marianna Birnbaum, "Matthias, 'the Flagellum Dei' of the Renaissance," in M. Birnbaum, *The Orb and the Pen* (Budapest: Balassi, 1996), 125–6.

⁶⁸ Pajorin, "Janus," 67–69.

⁶⁹ *Decades* IV. 8. 200: *Et, quemadmodum mense Martio natus erat, ita die et hora Martis vita decessit.*

⁷⁰ For example, according to a contemporary document, *Dominus imperator tardus est admodum in [de]liberationibus suis et in eis presertim, in quibus pecuniam effundere oportet*: quoted in Huszti, Janus, 374, note 37. Even those in the service of the emperor sometimes referred to these qualities, like Enea in these lines of his exhortatory poem, *Ad Fridericum Caesarem*: *Otia te ignorent, convivium, balnea, somni / Et stimulus rapide si quis avaricie est. ... Cur tantum differs perituro consulere orbi / Et te principibus associare tuis?* see: *Enee Silvii Piccolomini ... Carmina*, ed. Adrianus Van Heck (Vatican: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1994), Ep. 38., v. 29–30, 37–38.

rigid, playing for time.⁷¹ Matthias represents just the opposite qualities.⁷² Bonfini's summary of Frederick's character reminds one of Saturn. One can compare it, for example, with the negative mental qualities given by Saturn, as enumerated by no less an authority than Ptolemy:

dictatorial, ready to punish, lovers of property, avaricious, violent, amassing treasures, and jealous... sordid, petty, mean-spirited, indifferent, mean-minded, malignant, cowardly, diffident, evil-speaker, solitary, tearful, shameless, superstitious, fond of toil, unfeeling, devisers of plots against their friends, gloomy, taking no care of the body.⁷³

It was not by chance that even Enea Silvio Piccolomini, Frederick's chancellor, selected Saturn to express the emperor's tardiness metaphorically:

Quid facis in patria Saturni tardior astro, What are you doing in your homeland,
*Dum ruit imperium, dum ruit ecclesia?*⁷⁴ slower than the star of Saturn, while the
empire, while the Church perishes?

Frederick was certainly held to be a Saturnine personality, at least in Matthias's court, which is corroborated by Janus's epigram itself. It is also probable that, as in the case of Matthias, any astrological fact that supported such a characterization of the king's rival was demanded at court. Frederick's birth on a Saturday, his MC

⁷¹ See *Decades* IV, 4, 104ff.: ...*contra Fridericus imperator non modo parcus et frugi, sed avarus: et plus pecuniarum, quam honoris appetens... hic otii et quietis amator, quin et plus aequo negligens, desidiosus et tardus... hic invidus quandoque habitus, nobilia aliorum facinora interceptit, in pace bellum, in bello pacem optare solitus fuit, et nullam in utroque constantiam retinere... huic arte, consilio, calliditate, et pro iudicio cuncta suo genere placuit, et nihil consilii amicorum tribuere, demum ad utrumque difficilis... huius cultus modicus, continentissimus fuit animus, inimicus crapularum, quin et semper abstemius, hydropotesque perpetuus, solitudinis et contemplationis amator... hunc vita recondita, severus, tristis, et a suorum consuetudine admodum aliena... Imperator pertinacia omnia perpeti, et iacturam parvi facere, adversarium obstinatione defatigare, malle omnia perdere quam nummum ex arca promere, pecuniis potius quam sociis parcere, sperare cunctando instaurari omnia, et a rigiditate solitudineque sua non recedere.*

⁷² Interestingly, one of Matthias's good habits is *Mars apertus*, the meaning of which is clear from the context: "open, unconcealed military strategy," see: *Decades* IV, 4, 107: *hic invidus quandoque habitus, nobilia aliorum facinora interceptit, in pace bellum, in bello pacem optare solitus fuit, et nullam in utroque constantiam retinere... illi liberum ingenium, Mars apertus, animus ad pacem bellumque perfacilis...*

⁷³ Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* (In Greek and English), ed. G. P. Goold, trans. F. E. Robbin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), book 3. ch. 13, line 158.

⁷⁴ *Carmina*, Ep. 38, (the poem quoted above), ll. 5–6.

in Aquarius or his Saturn in the first house, the detrimental position of the planet in Cancer (in both nativities): any of these could have been taken into account.

Janus does not seem to have applied any of these astrological elements directly and systematically in contrasting the Martial and the Saturnine rulers, however. His opposition must have been based on a common courtly opinion (one could also say common prejudice or element of propaganda); Matthias's Martial and Frederick's Saturnine characters were (also) defined by heavenly constellations. It was enough for Janus to know that there were horoscopes which supported these characterizations. As Bollók already observed,⁷⁵ it is just the astrological interpretation of the poem which makes the punchline of the epigram powerful and Janus' irony devastating for the emperor. He calls upon Frederick to behave in a way he is not able to because he cannot change his personality defined by the stars.

Janus's oeuvre has many more astrological passages than the four texts quoted above, but these already demonstrate how many different factors could have contributed to the frequent application of astrological ideas in Janus' humanist poetry. Beyond the general fashion of astrology in the parts of Europe where Janus lived and worked, one should reckon with particular biographical, political, literary or cultural historical reasons behind the mentioning of planets, signs or other horoscope elements in an astrological context. Sometimes the addressee had a particular interest in the effect of the stars; the presence of "celestial" ideas – human triumph, astral mysticism – were natural in Renaissance panegyric-like genres; the rhetorical character of panegyrics supported the method of magnifying the topic into cosmic astral dimensions; astrological symbolism could easily be adjusted to various conceptual frameworks like Graeco-Roman mythology or Neoplatonism; all these factors facilitated the use of astrological ideas.

⁷⁵ Bollók, *Asztrális*, 58.

SOKOLLU MEHMED PASHA AND HIS CLAN: POLITICAL VISION AND ARTISTIC PATRONAGE

Uroš Dakić

With the rise of interest in social network theory in all branches of the social sciences, it is important to test the relevance of this theory for the study of the Ottoman Empire.¹ Recent literature increasingly views the Ottoman Empire as a complex system of patronage networks that, depending on the period of Ottoman history, managed to rival even that of the supreme patron in the system, the Ottoman sultan.² In the field of Ottoman studies, interest has long thrived in patronage networks in research on households, both the sultan's and those of various elites, including the *ulemâ* and the viziers.³ What these studies have revealed is that the mapping out of social networks along kinship or patronage lines reveals alternative workings of power within the society that challenges an image of Ottoman society that emerges from focusing solely on "classical" institutions.

The sultans' attempts to suppress alternative *loci* of power by appointing palace-school graduates, for example in the provinces, actually resulted in the creation of alternative *loci* of power. These palace-school graduates formed their own groups of protégés to whom, using their own powerful offices, they distributed lesser positions. In the middle of the sixteenth century, during the reign of Sultan Süleyman, with the synchronization of *shari'a* and *kânûn* the authority of

¹ This article is a part of my MA thesis, entitled "The Sokollu Family Clan and the Politics of Vizierial Households in the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century," (Central European University, 2012).

² See, for instance, Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference. The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 10. Also, although more implicitly, Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

³ The literature is abundant, but see especially Metin Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Political Government, 1550–1560* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); Leslie Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Jane Hathaway, *The Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt: The Rise of Qazdağlıs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Baki Tezcan, "The Ottoman Mevali as 'Lords of the Law,'" *Journal of Islamic Studies* 20, no. 3 (2009): 383–407; Rifaat Ali Abou-el-Haj, "The Ottoman Vezir and Paşa Households 1683–1703: A Preliminary Report," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 94, no. 4 (1974): 438–447.