

EDITOR'S PREFACE

In preparing an edition of Janus Pannonius's works that might best introduce his writings to a non-Hungarian readership, the choice of the epigrams is an easy and obvious one. In the course of his brief poetic career Janus wrote a wide variety of compositions, including translations from the Greek, but concentrated on three major *genres*—elegies, panegyrics and epigrams; of these it is the epigram that has over the years remained the most popular, and understandably so, since the form offers scope for an almost unlimited range of themes through which Janus could illumine his life and times and exercise his broad sweep of talents, topics ranging from light-hearted buffoonery to speculation about man's position in the universe. A precise definition of the 'epigram' is almost impossible. Beginning in archaic Greece as a sepulchral inscription it became by the end of the Classical period a short poem, usually, but not necessarily, in elegiac couplets, generally expressing with economy and emphasis the poet's reaction to a specific set of circumstances. Under the Romans in particular the epigram became associated also with brief and pointed witticism, where the full effect was often not achieved until the reader had reached the end of the last line and encountered the 'sting in the tail'. The master of this type of composition was, of course, Martial, to whom Janus is thoroughly indebted, sometimes in the borrowing of specific phrases and motifs, almost invariably in general tone and spirit.

While the choice of the epigrams was an easy one, it was much more difficult to decide which poems to include. There is no established corpus of Janus's work, and far more pieces have come down to us, both in manuscripts and printed books, than can safely be attributed to him. It would of course be useful to publish everything and to allow the scholar to decide which to accept. But the criteria for authenticity are far from clear-cut, so that such a process could be misleading to anyone other than the very small band of Janus specialists and would also have resulted in a volume far larger than is desired by the publisher. This edition contains those poems that might reasonably be assumed to have constituted

the earliest collection of Janus's epigrams. On the death of the poet in 1472, King Matthias Corvinus entrusted Péter Várady, archbishop of Kalocsa, with the task of assembling the dispersed poems for inclusion in the famous Bibliotheca Corviniana. The collection was undertaken in the late 1470s and 1480s, but, as we know from a letter of Várady, it had perished by 1496. Before its destruction, however, it was quite likely the source for the most important manuscript of Janus's works, the *Codex Vindobonensis* 3274 in Vienna (*V*), copied near the end of the fifteenth century and taken to Vienna in 1666. It is noteworthy that *V* (unlike the second major manuscript, the *Codex Vaticanus* 2847 in Rome [*R*]), begins with the poems that glorify Matthias Corvinus, not Janus's best efforts, but appropriately arranged for a collection undertaken under Matthias's sponsorship. The present volume contains the epigrams assembled in the *Codex Vindobonensis*, with the exception of simple translations from the Greek, recognizable as such from their subject matter or the survival of the originals. The codex may well contain some spurious poems, and omits some fine pieces that might safely be attributed to Janus (especially some of those collected by J. Ábel, *Analecta ad historiam resurgentium in Hungaria litterarum spectantia*, Budapest 1880), but of the collections at our disposal it is undoubtedly the most reliable.

The most important printed edition of Janus's works was published in 1784 by Sámuel Teleki, *Iani Pannonii Poemata and Iani Pannonii Opusculorum pars altera* (Utrecht) (*Tel.*). The debt of this present volume to Teleki's work will be obvious. But while his edition was excellent for its time, it suffers from a number of deficiencies. He was over-reliant on *V*, to the exclusion of *R*; a striking consequence of this is that some of the erotic poems transcribed in code by *V* are printed thus by Teleki, even though *R* provides the key. *R* was clearly written in Italy, as evidenced by the unfamiliarity of the copyist with Hungarian proper names, and is likely to be interpolated with works by contemporary humanists, but is still of much value and can be used in places to correct *V*. Teleki also refused to take seriously an edition produced in 1559 by Sambucus (János Zsámboky) (*Samb.*). Sambucus's claim to have published the poems without anyone having tampered with them should not be taken too seriously; moreover, during his exhaustive travels in Italy and Hungary he may well have unconsciously added spurious mate-

rial to his text. Yet he seems to have had access to sources independent of *V*, and Teleki's charges that Sambucus was merely careless in copying out *V* are not tenable. Thus any text of Janus's epigrams should take into account the readings of *R* and of Sambucus. Other manuscripts and early printed editions are of limited assistance to a volume restricted to the Várady collection, or at least to the epigrams contained in *V*, since only a handful of the epigrams in question appear outside these main sources; for a complete list, see L. Juhász, *Quaestiones Criticae de Epigrammatibus Iani Pannonii* (Rome 1929), to which must be added two recently discovered codices in the Capitular y Colombina library, Seville. (*Sev. I, II*).

My aim has been to provide a reliable text rather than an exhaustive critical apparatus. Thus there are changes in punctuation (which in both *V* and Teleki is egregious), but they are so numerous that it would be tedious to record them. The same is true of minor orthographic changes and of corrections of those errors in Teleki's text that appear to be merely misprints. Also, where I have accepted an obviously correct emendation of Teleki, against the evidence of *V*, this is not recorded. The conventional titles of the poems have been supplied; although they have manuscript authority it must be stressed that there is no way of being sure which of them originated with Janus. Commentary on a number of the emendations offered in this text appear in *Florilegium* 4 (1982), pp. 228-35.

Needless to say, the translations that accompany the text do not aim to compete with the original poems. They are intended to be accurate, rather than creative, and to help those readers who have studied Latin but still find it difficult to read a Latin text unaided. The only licence that I have taken is in the translation of obscene words, where the literally rendered English equivalents would still today tend to have a shock value not present in the Latin original. Also, there is some inconsistency in the transmission of personal and place names. Generally the vernacular forms are used, but there are occasions when word-play, or simply the general tone of the poem, seems to make the use of Classical form preferable. The notes are intended primarily for convenience. Since this book may well be used by students of one of either the Classics or the Renaissance, and by those who have a general interest in Hungarian culture and would not consider themselves specialists in either aca-

demical discipline, some guide to historical and literary background might be of service.

The order of the poems does not follow Teleki's (although the concordance that has been provided should make cross-reference easy). The new arrangement is based on metrical considerations, which should assist those who cannot recognize the less familiar Classical metres at sight, and does have a precedent in the collection of one of Janus's models, Catullus. The metre most commonly associated with the epigram is the elegiac couplet, with its alternating arrangement of hexameter (or six feet) and pentameter (of five feet, or, more strictly, twice two and a half feet): — UU | — UU | — UU | — UU | — — || — UU | — UU | — | — UU | — UU | —. This scheme imposes a mechanical restriction on the poem, and also a stylistic one, since the poet's thoughts are arranged in couplets, the pentameter ideally emphasising or balancing the idea expressed in the hexameter. The elegiac couplet is Janus's preferred scheme in his epigrams, and all the poems from No. 47 to the end adhere to it. Poems 1 to 46 might be described as polymetric; variety in metrical schemes was well established in the collections of Catullus and Martial. The most common of Janus's *polymetra* is the hendecasyllable (so called because each line contains eleven syllables): U U | — UU — | U — U — —. A favourite of both Catullus and Martial also, it is used by Janus in Nos. 2, 4, 5, 7-13, 15-18, 20-27, 29-36, 38, 39, 42-46. Simple dactylic hexameters are used in Nos. 3, 40, 41; iambic trimeters U — U — | U — U — | U — U — (with numerous resolutions) in Nos. 1, 14; iambic trimeters and dimeters U — U — | U — U — | U — U — || U — U — | U — U — (with numerous resolutions) in No. 6; choliamb (as iambic trimeters, but last metron U — — —) in Nos. 19 and 28; first Asclepiad — — | — UU — | — UU — | U — in No. 37. Janus's use of these metres is polished and elegant, and he adheres generally to the rules of versification and prosody established in the Classical period.

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In common with most Classicists trained in the English-speaking world, my familiarity with Latin poetry has tended to be restricted to the writers of ancient Rome and, to a lesser extent, to those who

might be ranked as 'mainstream' poets of the Renaissance. It was quite by accident that a small selection of Janus Pannonius's works came into my hands, and I recognized at once that he was a poet of great accomplishment, who had written in an 'international' language but still shared the isolation that Hungarian culture has suffered because of the enormous barriers that her language imposes. Apart from brief selections he has never been translated into one of the more familiar modern languages. Indeed, obtaining the original poems was not an easy task. Despite extensive enquiries, my own University library was unable to secure Teleki's text through the interlibrary loan service (I was able to obtain a microfilm from the Bodleian Library, Oxford). *Janus Pannonius. Opera Latina et Hungarice*, edited by Sándor V. Kovács (Budapest 1972), which provides an almost complete edition of Janus's works, was soon out of print, and in any case reprints Teleki's text without emendation. Until 1981, and the publication of Marianna D. Birnbaum's invaluable *Janus Pannonius: Poet and Politician*, any information on Janus in English was unobtainable. I hope that my own volume might represent another stage in the process that she has initiated, of enhancing the awareness of Janus outside Hungary and Croatia. I owe a great debt to a number of people and institutions for their assistance in the preparation of this edition: to the librarians of the Austrian National Library in Vienna, of the Vatican Library in Rome, of the Bodleian Library in Oxford; to Professor George Cushing for encouragement at the outset, to my colleague Professor János Bak for guidance throughout and for the introductory chapter, to Professor Marianna D. Birnbaum for her advice on points of detail and her constructive ideas, to colleagues and students in the Department of Classics at the University of British Columbia, especially Vincent Martin and Iain Arthy, for patient help and suggestions, to Jaqueline Barrett for excellent secretarial aid, and to Karl Sándor for assistance with Hungarian material and for stimulating my interest in Janus at the outset.

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