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## WOJTYŁA'S *DAVID*: LOST OR FOUND? Contextual Clues Toward Possible Solution of a Literary Mystery

*The contents of Wojtyła's "Psalter of David" would appear to be remarkably similar to his description of "David" as mixed in form, prose and verse, including sonnets. Is it possible that the ostensible "drama" "David" is essentially the same work as the "dramatic poem" sonnets of the "Psalter of David"?*

Scripture tells us that the prophet Samuel found David tending sheep and anointed him as the Lord's chosen servant and king of Israel (see 1 Sm 16:1–13; Ps 78:70–72). It is well known that Michelangelo's *David* sculpture, chiseled from Carrara marble, resides within the Galleria dell'Accademia in Florence. What has apparently remained unknown is which alcove might serve as the hidden home of Wojtyła's *David* drama, handwritten on paper as an expression of the sincere soul of its young author.

The consensus among scholars appears to be that this early literary work of Wojtyła has been lost to history. Bolesław Taborski, translator of Wojtyła's extant plays, was apparently among the first to write of this drama and its loss: "In December 1939, at the age of nineteen, he wrote his first play, *David*."<sup>1</sup> The footnote to this statement reads as follows: "The text of *David* has not been preserved, but we know of it from Wojtyła's letter to Mieczysław Kotlarczyk, dated 28 December 1939, which mentions the play as already written and describes it briefly as a dramatic poem, or drama, partly biblical, partly rooted in Polish history. Wojtyła adds that he has revealed there many things dormant in his soul."<sup>2</sup> George Weigel, Wojtyła's official biographer, relying partially on Taborski, noted that in late 1939 "Karol wrote his first play, *David*, which has been lost."<sup>3</sup> Jacek Popiel, editor of the recent Polish critical edition

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<sup>1</sup> Bolesław T a b o r s k i, "Introduction," in Karol Wojtyła, *The Collected Plays and Writings on Theater*, trans. Bolesław Taborski (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1987), 3.

<sup>2</sup> T a b o r s k i, "Introduction," 3–4, footnote 1.

<sup>3</sup> George W e i g e l, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1999), 62 and 870.

of Wojtyła's early literary works, referred to such a drama from the German occupation period entitled *David* (1939) and also indicated that the text has not yet been found.<sup>4</sup>

As a psychology professor with an emphasis on the personalist psychology of Karol Wojtyła—John Paul II, within the context of his contributions to Polish faith and culture, I have long been fascinated with the literary mystery surrounding this text. I have wondered aloud with my students regarding what might have become of it. Was it lost in the chaos of the German occupation of Poland, as were some other texts of significance? Was it preserved in a secure niche within the home of a friend or safeguarded within a vault of the archdiocesan archives? Has it been successfully concealed waiting to be discovered at some future date? Has it been truly lost? Or—perhaps most intriguingly—might it have been hidden in plain sight and already revealed in an unexpected manner?<sup>5</sup> Although I pose the latter question here, I readily defer to the expertise of scholars more knowledgeable in Polish literature and the writings of Wojtyła.

The most reliable early source of information regarding Wojtyła's *David* (referenced by all three scholars noted above) is the letter from Wojtyła to his previous theater teacher and mentor, later drama colleague and friend, Mieczysław Kotlarczyk, dated to December 28, 1939. At that time, Wojtyła was living in the Dębniki neighborhood of Kraków, and Kotlarczyk was still living in Wojtyła's hometown of Wadowice. The most relevant excerpt is presented here:

First and foremost, I must tell you that I am keeping very busy. Some people are currently dying of boredom, but not I. I have surrounded myself with books, dug in

<sup>4</sup> See Jacek Popiel, "Wprowadzenie," in Karol Wojtyła (Jan Paweł II), *Dzieła literackie i teatralne*, vol. 1, *Juwenilia (1938–1946)*, ed. Jacek Popiel (Kraków: Instytut Dialogu Międzykulturowego im. Jana Pawła II w Krakowie and Wydawnictwo Znak, 2019), 10.

Please note that due to the present author's limited proficiency in the Polish language, initial access to the key text of this Polish critical edition was via Google Translate (Google Lens feature), refined by use of the *PWN Oxford Wielki słownik polsko-angielski / Polish–English Dictionary* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN and Oxford University Press, 2004). Great care was subsequently taken to ensure accuracy of understanding and precision in translation that would stand up to scholarly scrutiny. The author is grateful to Marta Burghardt, editorial team member for this Polish critical edition from the John Paul II Institute of Intercultural Dialogue in Cracow, for her valued review and feedback on this article to ensure accurate historical and linguistic understanding. The author is also grateful to Judyta Mielnicka, native Polish speaker, for her valued assistance in Polish–English translation of any words, phrases, and brief passages from this volume presented or referenced within this article. Any limitations of this article remain the responsibility of the present author.

<sup>5</sup> For a brief preliminary presentation of this question, see Keith A. Houde, "Man Creates Culture, Culture Creates Man: The Reciprocal Relationship Between Humanity and Culture in the Life and Thought of Saint John Paul II," *Roczniki Kulturoznawcze* 15, no. 3 (2024): 32–33.

with Arts and Sciences. I am working. Would you believe that I am virtually running out of time! I read, I write, I study, I think, I pray, I struggle with myself. At times I feel great oppression, depression, despair, evil. At other times, as if I were seeing the dawn, the aurora, a great light. I wrote a drama or, more precisely, a dramatic poem, entitled *David*, in which he wears biblical robes and a linen shirt from the time of Piast and a crimson cloak of a Polish nobleman. In it I have bared many things, many matters of my soul. I am very curious what you would say about it. I have already sent you these sonnets. I'm wondering how you find them. In any case, *David* is not one form; it is in prose and in verse, both bland and rhymed—sincere.<sup>6</sup>

An analysis of this letter, along with other available contextual and textual data, may provide us with some clues regarding the mystery of this literary work. Specifically, this letter would appear to offer criteria for identification of Wojtyła's *David* in terms of its context, content, title, genre, form, history, provenance, style, themes, and meaning. Depending upon what we find, this would then raise a most interesting question: Might an available text be identified that meets these criteria?

#### CONTEXT AND CONTENT

In terms of *context*, nearly four months into the German occupation of Poland, even after his collegiate studies in Polish language and literature had been brutally terminated by closure of the Jagiellonian University and deportation of his professors, Wojtyła continued to be diligently engaged in spiritual and scholarly pursuits. During this time, he reportedly experienced an interior spiritual and emotional struggle between darkness ("oppression, depression, despair, evil") and light ("the dawn, the aurora, a great light").<sup>7</sup> Although many around him had become bored with inactivity, he was cultivating the interior life, as later reflected within poetic verses regarding his forced labor within a stone quarry: "The greatness of work is inside man."<sup>8</sup>

In terms of *content*, Wojtyła indicated that this literary work portrays David, the biblical shepherd and king, within which "he wears biblical robes and

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Adam Boniecki, *The Making of the Pope of the Millennium: Kalendarium of the Life of Karol Wojtyła*, ed. Kazimierz Chwalek, trans. Irena and Thaddeus Mirecki, et al. (Stockbridge, Massachusetts: Marian Press, 2000), 64–65. For the original Polish version of this letter, see Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 353–54. Although the English translation cited here renders the Polish word "białego" as "bland," it would appear to be more appropriately rendered as "blank," as in blank or unrhymed verse in contrast to rhymed verse.

<sup>7</sup> Boniecki, *The Making of the Pope of the Millennium*, 65. See also Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 353.

<sup>8</sup> Karol Wojtyła, "The Quarry" (poem-cycle), in *The Place Within: The Poetry of Pope John Paul II*, trans. Jerzy Peterkiewicz (New York: Random House, 1982), 63.

a linen shirt from the time of Piast and a crimson cloak of a Polish nobleman.<sup>9</sup> Beginning with prince Mieszko in the tenth century, the Piast dynasty ruled Poland as kings until the fourteenth century.<sup>10</sup> Polish nobility of the seventeenth century were known for their characteristic style of dress.<sup>11</sup> Such biblical and cultural comparisons were not without precedent in Polish history, art, and literature, particularly regarding analogies between the figure of David and Polish royalty. Similar themes might be discerned in the poetry of Jan Kochanowski (*David's Psalter* [*Psalterz Davidów*], 1578) and Wespazjan Kochowski (*A Polish Psalmody* [*Psalmodia polska*], 1695).<sup>12</sup> A statue of David dating to the sixteenth century, crowned and apparently clothed in the attire of a Polish king or knight, appears within the “Lost Wawel” archaeological exhibit on Wawel Hill in Kraków.<sup>13</sup> Jan Matejko’s illustrations of *Costumes in Poland 1200–1795* (1860) include images of Polish royalty and nobility in crimson garments, among them the traditional Sarmatian smock and robe known as the *żupan* and *kontusz*, respectively.<sup>14</sup> Wyspiański’s drama *Acropolis* (1904) incorporates a statue of David the Harpist come to life, leaping from the choir loft and proclaiming: “I am king and monarch of my peoples, who once was but a simple shepherd. I clothe myself in scarlet, and wear the dearest robes of my nation.”<sup>15</sup> Within his own literary work on David, the young Wojtyła now discloses his own nascent sensitivity to historical, cultural, and religious comparisons that appear to set the stage for similar parallels within his subsequent early dramas. Wojtyła’s *Job* (1940)<sup>16</sup> compares the suffering of the title biblical figure to the suffering of Poland under German occupation. Wojtyła’s *Jeremiah* (1940)<sup>17</sup> parallels the warning of the title biblical prophet to Jehoiakim of Israel with the sixteenth century warning of Fr. Piotr Skarga to King Sigismund III Vasa of Poland.

<sup>9</sup> Boniecki, *The Making of the Pope of the Millennium*, 65. See also Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 353.

<sup>10</sup> See Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland*, vol. 1, *The Origins to 1795* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 52–85. See also Boniecki, *The Making of the Pope of the Millennium*, 65, footnote 5.

<sup>11</sup> See Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland*, vol. 1, 191.

<sup>12</sup> See Czesław Miłosz, *The History of Polish Literature* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1983), 63–64 and 143.

<sup>13</sup> The exhibit placard reads: “King David statue from the elevation of the Sigismund Chapel workshop of Bartolommeo Berrecci, ca. 1530.”

<sup>14</sup> See Luba Ristujczina, *Jan Matejko: Malarz polskich dziejów* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo SPM, 2021), 60–61; Davies, *God's Playground*, vol. 1, 191.

<sup>15</sup> Stanisław Wyspiański, *Acropolis: The Wawel Plays*, trans. Charles S. Kraszewski (London: Glagoslav Publications, 2017), act 4, scene 1, Kindle.

<sup>16</sup> Karol Wojtyła, “Job,” in Karol Wojtyła, *The Collected Plays and Writings on Theater*, 25–74.

<sup>17</sup> Karol Wojtyła, “Jeremiah,” in Karol Wojtyła, *The Collected Plays and Writings on Theater*, 93–145.

## TITLE, GENRE, AND FORM

Most intriguing—and perhaps telling—is Wojtyła's own description of the title, genre, and form of this work: "I wrote a drama or, more precisely, a dramatic poem, entitled *David*."<sup>18</sup> Here we begin to discern some potentially fascinating clues regarding the nature and identity of this literary work.

Regarding *David* as the *title* of this literary composition, it is interesting to note that the Polish critical edition of Wojtyła's juvenilia presents a collection of early poems which is sometimes referred to as the *Renaissance Psalter (Slavic Book)* but which is more commonly referred to as the *Psalter of David (Slavic Book)*.<sup>19</sup> What might be the relationship between Wojtyła's *David* and his *Psalter of David*?

Although Wojtyła's *David* text has often been referred to by scholars as a drama, an important question at hand is whether the *genre* of this work was truly a "drama" in the usual sense of the term (with acts and scenes), or whether it was more accurately and "more precisely" a "dramatic poem,"<sup>20</sup> as Wojtyła himself quite clearly indicated. In further support of the latter perspective, it appears that the young Wojtyła was around that time more comfortable with the genre of poetry than the genre of drama. In a previous and rather significant November 14, 1939, letter to Kotlarczyk presented within the Polish critical edition, Wojtyła apparently indicated that he had tried writing drama but was not satisfied with the results, seemingly at that phase of his literary development more at home with the flexibility and fragmentation of poetry than with the requisite continuity and concentration of drama.<sup>21</sup> Did Wojtyła actually complete a formal disciplined drama titled *David*, or did he set aside such a project in favor of free poetic expression through his *Psalter of David*?

Wojtyła described the structure of his literary work *David* as mixed in *form*: "*David* is not one form; it is in prose and in verse, both bland and rhymed."<sup>22</sup> He also specifically referred to it in terms of "these sonnets."<sup>23</sup> It

<sup>18</sup> Boniecki, *The Making of the Pope of the Millennium*, 65. See also Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 353.

<sup>19</sup> See Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 8. The Polish critical edition presents the original Polish titles as *Renesansowy Psalterz (Księga Słowiańska)* and *Psalterz Dawidów (Księga Słowiańska)*, respectively. The latter is translated here as *Psalter of David*, although it might also be translated as *Davidic Psalter*.

<sup>20</sup> Boniecki, *The Making of the Pope of the Millennium*, 65. See also Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 353.

<sup>21</sup> See Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 9 and 350–52.

<sup>22</sup> Boniecki, *The Making of the Pope of the Millennium*, 65. See also Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 353. See footnote 6.

<sup>23</sup> Boniecki, *The Making of the Pope of the Millennium*, 65. See also Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 353.

is worth noting that, as presented in the Polish critical edition, the *Psalter of David* (dated to Spring, 1939) incorporates the following:<sup>24</sup> an untitled poetic invocation commemorating his mother (beginning with the words “Over Your White Grave”),<sup>25</sup> a poem-cycle titled “Sonnets—Outlines” consisting of seventeen sonnets in verse form,<sup>26</sup> a prose reflection on sonnets (titled “To the Sonnets!”),<sup>27</sup> a poem-cycle titled “Symphonies—Combinations” consisting of three poems (“Feast,” “Music,” and “Word”),<sup>28</sup> a poetic hymn titled “Magnificat,”<sup>29</sup> and an explanatory reflection titled “Footnotes to the Psalter (Slavic Book).”<sup>30</sup> The contents of Wojtyła’s *Psalter of David* would thus appear to be remarkably similar to his description of *David* as mixed in form, prose and verse, including sonnets.<sup>31</sup> Is it possible that the ostensible “drama” *David* is essentially the same work as the “dramatic poem” sonnets of the *Psalter of David*?

#### HISTORY AND PROVENANCE

Further insight might be obtained through consideration of what is known regarding the *literary history* of Wojtyła’s writings during this period of time. The poems of the *Psalter of David* were reportedly written by hand following Wojtyła’s move to Kraków in the summer of 1938 and were apparently completed in the spring (or early summer) of 1939.<sup>32</sup> Already, on October 15, 1938, he had recited some of his poetry as part of “an evening of literary readings” that took place in the “blue room” of the Catholic home (current Philharmonic

<sup>24</sup> See Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 540.

<sup>25</sup> Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 40–42. For an English translation of one version of this poem, see [Karol Wojtyła], “Over This Your White Grave,” in *The Place Within: The Poetry of Pope John Paul II*, ix.

<sup>26</sup> See Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 43–60.

<sup>27</sup> See Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 61–62.

<sup>28</sup> See Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 63–87.

<sup>29</sup> See Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 88–91. For this first substantive excerpt from *Renaissance Psalter* available in English, see [Karol Wojtyła], “Magnificat (Hymn),” in *The Place Within: The Poetry of Pope John Paul II*, 185–88.

<sup>30</sup> See Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 92–93.

<sup>31</sup> For further recognition of the rich variety of interacting forms within Wojtyła’s literary writings, see Marek Bernacki, “‘A More Spacious Form’ in the Poetic Art and Pastoral Teaching of Karol Wojtyła—John Paul II,” in *The Space of the Word*, ed. Zofia Zarebianka and Jan Machniak, trans. Piotr Mizia (Kraków: John Paul II Institute of Intercultural Dialogue, 2011), 93–94. Bernacki notes that Wojtyła’s poetry was characterized by “hymns, poems and lyrical songs,” “extended mystical poems,” “fragments of thought, meditations, stories and invocations,” and that even his plays incorporated “mysteries written in poetic prose.”

<sup>32</sup> See Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 8.

building) in Kraków.<sup>33</sup> The poem titled "Music" concludes with the notation that it was "inspired and written" on December 31, 1938.<sup>34</sup> The Polish critical edition dates the *Psalter of David* collection to the spring of 1939.<sup>35</sup> Within this volume, the seventeen sonnets begin with a notation of "Kraków, spring 1939" and end with the following notation: "I finished on Saint John ... 1939"<sup>36</sup> (presumably the midsummer feast of St. John the Baptist on June 24). Wojtyła apparently read some of these sonnets to a friend in June of 1939.<sup>37</sup> He may have participated in a poetry recitation associated with the "Days of Kraków" festival that same month (June 3–24, 1939).<sup>38</sup> In his November 14, 1939, letter to Kotlarczyk, Wojtyła indicated that he was sending his friend a few fragments from a collection entitled the *Slavic Book* that he described as poems (sonnets, symphonies, and hymns).<sup>39</sup> Note the remarkable similarity of this description to the contents of the *Psalter of David* presented above. Six weeks later, in the subsequent December 28, 1939, letter that referred to the "dramatic poem" titled *David*, he indicated that he had "already sent ... these sonnets"<sup>40</sup> to Kotlarczyk.

In a Lent (March), 1940, letter to Kotlarczyk, Wojtyła described a time of immersion in the Old Testament (Psalms, Job, Wisdom books, and Prophets) and indicated that he himself had written a "new drama" about suffering entitled *Job*.<sup>41</sup> In a subsequent April, 1940, letter to Kotlarczyk, Wojtyła stated:

<sup>33</sup> See B o n i e c k i, *The Making of the Pope of the Millennium*, 58. According to contemporaries, this recitation may have included work from a very early (but nonextant) collection of Wojtyła's poetry entitled *Ballady Beskidzkie (Beskidy Ballads)* after the beloved Beskidy hills of his native region (see W o j t y ł a, *Juwenilia (1938–1946)*, 7–8). One acquaintance described these "ballads" as quite traditional in form, "with themes drawn mostly from folklore and legend" along with some "Marian themes" (B o n i e c k i, *The Making of the Pope of the Millennium*, 58–59). Perhaps some of those earliest verses were subsequently incorporated within Wojtyła's *Psalter of David*, as these later sonnets and hymns seem to reflect very similar themes (e.g., reference to the Polish folk sculptor, Wowro; see B o n i e c k i, *The Making of the Pope of the Millennium*, 59, and Sonnet I).

<sup>34</sup> See W o j t y ł a, *Juwenilia (1938–1946)*, 78.

<sup>35</sup> See W o j t y ł a, *Juwenilia (1938–1946)*, 39.

<sup>36</sup> W o j t y ł a, *Juwenilia (1938–1946)*, 43, 60, 412. Wojtyła seems to distinctively refer to the separate "feast of St. John the Evangelist" (December 27) in his December 28, 1939, letter to Kotlarczyk (W o j t y ł a, *Juwenilia (1938–1946)*, 354).

<sup>37</sup> See B o n i e c k i, *The Making of the Pope of the Millennium*, 80; W o j t y ł a, *Juwenilia (1938–1946)*, 9, 350.

<sup>38</sup> See B o n i e c k i, *The Making of the Pope of the Millennium*, 59; Agata S t ę k o w s k a, "'Dni Krakowa' w latach 1936–1939" ("The Cracow Pageant' in the years 1936–1939") (master's thesis, Jagiellonian University, Institute of History, 2020), 20, 67–68, Jagiellonian University Repository, <https://ruj.uj.edu.pl/entities/publication/a7341fd9-8162-4494-9c4b-14e00b5e15c4>.

<sup>39</sup> See W o j t y ł a, *Juwenilia (1938–1946)*, 9, 350–52. See also B o n i e c k i, *The Making of the Pope of the Millennium*, 80.

<sup>40</sup> B o n i e c k i, *The Making of the Pope of the Millennium*, 65. See also, W o j t y ł a, *Juwenilia (1938–1946)*, 10, 353–54.

<sup>41</sup> See B o n i e c k i, *The Making of the Pope of the Millennium*, 71. See also W o j t y ł a, *Juwenilia (1938–1946)*, 10, 355–56.

Regarding myself, I have two dramas: the first one—*Job*—a drama in Greek form.... It grabs you by the heart, it is eloquent, it is very dramatic and theatrical and quite concise (it is, after all, my debut). My next accomplishment is a drama entitled *Jeremiah*.... It was created very rapidly, as a revelation during the reading of the Book of Jeremiah.<sup>42</sup>

Although he initially indicated that he had written a “new drama,” perhaps this might best be understood in context as an original drama (rather than an additional drama), since he subsequently emphasized personal authorship of “two dramas”: *Job* and *Jeremiah*. He specifically referred to *Job* as an actual “debut” and to *Jeremiah* as his “next accomplishment.”<sup>43</sup> It is noteworthy that within this source, Wojtyła himself does not acknowledge authorship of any previous drama entitled *David*. By this time, however, Wojtyła has apparently overcome any initial reticence as a playwright and has certainly found his voice in the writing of drama with the rather prolific and consecutive composition of *Job* and *Jeremiah* in early 1940.

Regarding the *provenance* of the *Psalter of David* text, it appears that various versions of this work were preserved within at least one private collection and within ecclesiastical archives. We have already noted that Wojtyła sent some fragments of poetry from his *Slavic Book* to Mieczysław Kotlarczyk for review in November, 1939, which he subsequently referenced as his “dramatic poem” entitled *David* in the letter of December, 1939.<sup>44</sup> In his own words, “I am very curious what you would say about it. I have already sent you these sonnets. I’m wondering how you find them.”<sup>45</sup> It appears that the writings that Wojtyła sent to Kotlarczyk consisted of a portion of the *Psalter of David (Renaissance Psalter)*—specifically the cycle of seventeen handwritten sonnets and the poetic hymn “Magnificat”—and that these writings were preserved and subsequently disclosed by the Kotlarczyk family.<sup>46</sup> When German escalation in August of 1944 necessitated Wojtyła’s relocation from his Dębniaki apartment to the archbishop’s residence for continuation of his clandestine seminary formation, it would seem likely that Wojtyła would have either taken with him

<sup>42</sup> Quoted in Boniecki, *The Making of the Pope of the Millennium*, 71–72. See also Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 357–58.

<sup>43</sup> Further review of the original Polish text of Wojtyła’s April, 1940, letter to Kotlarczyk confirms that Wojtyła does indeed speak of the authorship and existence of “two dramas” and does refer to *Job* as an actual “debut.” Although the Polish text does numerically list *Job* as the first of these, it does not linguistically state in absolute and definite terms that *Job* is “the first one” as indicated within the English translation of Boniecki’s work.

<sup>44</sup> See Boniecki, *The Making of the Pope of the Millennium*, 65, 80. See also Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 9–10, and 350–54.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Boniecki, *The Making of the Pope of the Millennium*, 65. See also Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 353.

<sup>46</sup> See Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 18–20 and 407–9.

or subsequently retrieved any of his original literary manuscripts.<sup>47</sup> It does in actuality appear that a more complete handwritten manuscript of all of the writings comprising the *Psalter of David* (along with two later typescript versions) was collected and preserved within the archdiocesan archives.<sup>48</sup>

Although preserved, it appears that Wojtyła's early poetry collection known as the *Psalter of David* (*Renaissance Psalter*) was not formally published until after he became Pope John Paul II in 1978. The first portions published in Polish in 1979 included only the poetic invocation "Over Your White Grave" and the hymn "Magnificat."<sup>49</sup> The seventeen sonnets were initially published in Poland only much later in 1995,<sup>50</sup> with the rest of the work published the following year in 1996.<sup>51</sup> It is significant to note that most of Wojtyła's *Psalter of David* as a collection of poetry was thus not yet published or widely available at the time that Taborski in 1987 identified Wojtyła's literary work *David* as a drama lost to history.<sup>52</sup> It is also noteworthy that the definitive Polish critical edition of this work (based primarily upon the archdiocesan manuscript) was not available to scholars until 2019.<sup>53</sup> The diligent work in this regard by researchers associated with the John Paul II Institute of Intercultural Dialogue in Kraków is thus a most commendable contribution.<sup>54</sup> Despite the advances in Polish scholarship related to Wojtyła's *Psalter of David*, the greater part of this work has apparently and unfortunately not yet been translated into English.

Although there is an evident custodial trail of the poetic manuscripts of the *Psalter of David*, it is curious that there is no similar formal record or careful preservation of any separate drama entitled *David*, either within the Kotlarczyk

<sup>47</sup> See Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 71–72. Regarding the apparent desire and eagerness of the youthful Wojtyła to share and preserve his early literary works, see Marta Burghardt, "Poezje młodzieńcze Karola Wojtyły: Analiza tekstologiczna," in *Hermeneutvka nauczania Jana Pawła II*, ed. Anna Węgrzyniak and Leszek Łysień (Bielsko-Biała: Instytut Teologiczny im. św. Jana Kantego and Wydawnictwo Scriptum, 2006), 77–78.

<sup>48</sup> See Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 12–13, 20–21, and 407–9.

<sup>49</sup> See Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 410, 441. These same portions were apparently also first translated into English in 1979 and first published in English in 1982. See Wojtyła, *The Place Within: The Poetry of Pope John Paul II*, ix and 185–88. For further information on publication history, see Marta Burghardt, "The History of the Publication of Karol Wojtyła's Juvenile Poems," in *The Space of the Word*, 57–66.

<sup>50</sup> See Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 412.

<sup>51</sup> See Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 428, 430, 434–35, 437, and 444.

<sup>52</sup> See Taborski, "Introduction," 3–4, footnote 1. It is worth noting, however, that Taborski apparently did have access to the collection of relevant letters from Wojtyła to Kotlarczyk. See Bolesław Taborski, "Acknowledgements," in Karol Wojtyła, *The Collected Plays and Writings on Theater*, vii; Taborski, "Introduction," 3–5.

<sup>53</sup> See Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 20–22, and 407–9.

<sup>54</sup> See Instytut Dialogu Międzykulturowego im. Jana Pawła II w Krakowie (John Paul II Institute of Intercultural Dialogue in Krakow), <https://idmjp2.pl/>.

family collection or within the archdiocesan archives. Since Wojtyła entrusted other works near to his heart with his closest friends and associates, would it not be logical to assume that he would have done the same with any other play that he had written? Even if initially contemplated by Wojtyła, perhaps such a drama was never fully formulated within the mind of the young author, or even if fairly formulated, perhaps never fully committed from pen to paper in a form sufficient to leave the desk of his Dębniaki apartment for the hands and eyes of prospective eager readers then and now.

One might legitimately wonder if John Paul II—in the intervening years between scholarly characterizations of this composition as a drama and the conclusion of his papacy (1987–2005)—ever clarified whether this work was a completed but lost drama called *David* or a dramatic poem presented as the *Psalter of David*.<sup>55</sup> There are indications that he himself did not pay much attention to his earlier literary works, and that he had even forgotten some of what he had written, including the poetic hymn “Magnificat” as a part of his *Psalter of David*.<sup>56</sup> Was he aware of the question? Did anyone ask him? Would that they had! Perhaps someone who was close to him might still be able to help piece together this literary puzzle.<sup>57</sup>

#### STYLE AND THEMES

One might wonder whether Wojtyła simply incorporated earlier themes, fragments, or passages from a completed yet lost drama entitled *David* (or even from an incomplete work) within the later dramatic poetry of his *Psalter of David*.<sup>58</sup> Such a question is difficult to answer in the absence of an extant earlier text. The best that one might do is to compare Wojtyła’s description of the work with an analysis of the existing text that is available.

<sup>55</sup> See Taborski, “Introduction,” 3–4; Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 62. The author is grateful to Roger Nutt, Provost and Professor of Theology at Ave Maria University, for raising this intriguing question.

<sup>56</sup> See Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 19–20. This source notes a February 14, 1994 letter from papal secretary (now Cardinal) Stanisław Dziwisz quoting John Paul II in this regard.

<sup>57</sup> Per personal communication via his office regarding this question, Cardinal Stanisław Dziwisz reportedly indicated that John Paul II did not provide any clarification regarding his dramatic poem titled *David* (email message to author, February 19, 2025). Per personal communication, papal biographer George Weigel indicated that he did not ask John Paul II this question (email message to author, April 10, 2025).

<sup>58</sup> We have already noted that some of the themes of his earliest poetry (*Beskydy Ballads*) may be echoed within his *Psalter of David* (see footnote 33). The author is grateful to Fr. Michael Sherwin, Professor of Fundamental Moral Theology and Director of the Institute of Spirituality at the Pontifical University of Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum), for raising this insightful question.

In consideration of *style* and *themes* of the literary work under consideration, we have already noted Wojtyła's description of "a dramatic poem, entitled *David*, in which he wears biblical robes and a linen shirt from the time of Piast and a crimson cloak of a Polish nobleman."<sup>59</sup> This portrayal presents an interesting juxtaposition of historical eras and contemporaneous apparel between King David wearing "biblical robes," a Piast ruler wearing a "linen shirt," and a Polish nobleman wearing a "crimson cloak." One might thus expect to find within such a work stylistic elements and allusions relevant to primeval, medieval, and Renaissance Poland, along with potential references to later literary interpretations within Polish Romanticism and realism. A preliminary analysis of the text of the *Psalter of David* suggests that this expectation is borne out. Although the biblical figure David is not directly mentioned by name within the body of work designated as the *Psalter of David*, it appears that—consistent with the aforementioned precedents in Polish literature—he is present by analogy in the guise of the Polish Piast and nobleman, notably narrated in the voice of the poet as psalmist. This is further elaborated below.

Within the initial seventeen "Sonnets," there are repeated references to the "Slavic soul" (Sonnets VIII, IX, and X).<sup>60</sup> There are specific references to "Piast's heart" (Sonnet V) and "hospitable Piasts" (Sonnet VIII).<sup>61</sup> There are descriptions of Gothic and Renaissance architecture, including apparent references to the sanctuaries of Wawel and Mariacki (Wawel Cathedral and St. Mary's Basilica; Sonnets X, XV).<sup>62</sup> There is direct mention of "psalms of Love" in relation to a "Renaissance psalter" (Sonnet XI).<sup>63</sup>

The specific poem entitled "Feast" does offer a veritable feast, a rich banquet of imagery and prosody related to themes of the Polish Piast and the Polish nobleman.<sup>64</sup> The poet speaks of himself in the first person as a "linen Piast" (line 37).<sup>65</sup> He describes himself as a "song lord" and as a constant "royal crimson" (lines 35–36 and 63–64).<sup>66</sup> It is fascinating and instructive to note that the Polish word *karmazyn* (line 36) is formally defined both as "crimson" (in

<sup>59</sup> Quoted in Boniecki, *The Making of the Pope of the Millennium*, 65. See also Wojtyła, *Juwenilia (1938–1946)*, 353.

<sup>60</sup> See Wojtyła, *Juwenilia (1938–1946)*, 51–53.

<sup>61</sup> Wojtyła, *Juwenilia (1938–1946)*, 48 and 51.

<sup>62</sup> See Wojtyła, *Juwenilia (1938–1946)*, 53 and 58.

<sup>63</sup> Wojtyła, *Juwenilia (1938–1946)*, 54.

<sup>64</sup> It is interesting to note that an alternate Polish title to the poem *Biesiada* ("Feast") is *Uczta czarnoleska* ("Czarnolas Feast"), an apparent allusion to the "Blackwood" country estate of Jan Kochanowski, preeminent Polish Renaissance poet, whose works notably included *Psalterz Davidów* (*David's Psalter*, 1578). See Wojtyła, *Juwenilia (1938–1946)*, 63–70 and 430; Miłosz, *History of Polish Literature*, 60–61 and 63.

<sup>65</sup> Wojtyła, *Juwenilia (1938–1946)*, 64.

<sup>66</sup> Wojtyła, *Juwenilia (1938–1946)*, 64–65.

terms of color or cloth) and as “a Polish nobleman of ancient lineage entitled to wear crimson dress.”<sup>67</sup> The poet further describes himself as “one of those rulers who dressed nobly, in smocks, in robes” (lines 45–46), referring specifically to the Sarmatian *żupan* and *kontusz* (line 46) worn by Polish noblemen.<sup>68</sup> He professes that in Christ he is righteous again, “both Piast and crimson” (line 113), identifying both as medieval Piast and Renaissance nobleman.<sup>69</sup> In parallel fashion, he then invokes the divinity addressed similarly as both “Renaissance and Gothic God!” (line 121).<sup>70</sup> He again remarks on Slavic and Piast hospitality (line 181).<sup>71</sup> He expresses his desire that his youth be interwoven with “crimson chant,” within “Slavic sonnets” and “Slavic psalms” (lines 187–188).<sup>72</sup> Toward the conclusion of the poem, the poet eloquently describes himself as “a Slavic crimson” with trust in “Love, Freedom and Beauty” (lines 203–204).<sup>73</sup> The remarkable connection here between Wojtyła’s description of his dramatic poem—regarding David as a Piast in linen and as a Polish nobleman in crimson—and the actual text of the poetry itself—in terms such as “linen Piast” and “crimson” nobleman—could seemingly not be more direct.

Within the “Magnificat” hymn, the poet refers to himself as a “Slavic troubadour” (line 51).<sup>74</sup> He also glorifies God who “threw velvet” and “imperious satin” on his shoulders (line 58).<sup>75</sup> Once again, we hear prosody of a Polish psalmist, and we see imagery related to royal attire.

Some of the previous observations are amplified within the “Footnotes to the Psalter.” Within the context of contemplating the completeness and fullness of the Polish national soul, Wojtyła presents a litany of historical characters including Polish kings and nobles (some of whom would figure into his subsequent drama, *Jeremiah*). He appeared to acknowledge the varied contributions of Polish Piast royalty (Mieszko, Bolesław the Bold and Generous), Polish nobility and military leaders (Samuel Zborowski, Stanisław Żółkiewski), Polish romantic poets (Adam [Mickiewicz], Juliusz [Słowacki]), as well as Polish saints and martyrs (Stanisław [Szczepanowski], Andrzej [Bobola]).<sup>76</sup> As his *Psalter of David* set out to be a poetic meditation on both medieval Piast and Renaissance noble, Wojtyła here continues to ponder the richness wrought

<sup>67</sup> See Wojtyła, *Juwenilia (1938–1946)*, 64. See also *PWN Oxford Wielki słownik polsko-angielski / Polish-English Dictionary*, under “karmazyn,” 344.

<sup>68</sup> Wojtyła, *Juwenilia (1938–1946)*, 64.

<sup>69</sup> Wojtyła, *Juwenilia (1938–1946)*, 67.

<sup>70</sup> Wojtyła, *Juwenilia (1938–1946)*, 67.

<sup>71</sup> See Wojtyła, *Juwenilia (1938–1946)*, 69.

<sup>72</sup> Wojtyła, *Juwenilia (1938–1946)*, 69.

<sup>73</sup> Wojtyła, *Juwenilia (1938–1946)*, 70.

<sup>74</sup> Wojtyła, *Juwenilia (1938–1946)*, 91; [Wojtyła], “Magnificat (Hymn),” 187.

<sup>75</sup> Wojtyła, *Juwenilia (1938–1946)*, 91; [Wojtyła], “Magnificat (Hymn),” 188.

<sup>76</sup> See Wojtyła, *Juwenilia (1938–1946)*, 93.

from the historical union within Polish Catholicism between the Gothic vertical relationship with God and the Renaissance horizontal relationship with man, bringing before our eyes an image of the cross: "Gothic road up, Renaissance [road] across. Paths cross. The most wonderful shape of all. I say this—I am a Christian, and I am a Pole" (lines 47–49).<sup>77</sup>

Although not properly part of the *Psalter of David*, another poetry collection within Wojtyła's juvenilia conventionally titled *Autumn Poetry* (apparently written in autumn of 1939, around the eve or beginning of the war) includes two works—"Morning Song" along with "And When David Came to His Motherland"—which clearly incorporate themes related to David and Poland.<sup>78</sup> Considering that these works were written nearly contemporaneously, perhaps they might plausibly be regarded as an extension of his *Psalter of David*.<sup>79</sup> Here we do have explicit reference to the biblical character of David. The poetic psalm called "Morning Song" is specifically described as the "morning song" of "David—the Shepherd" (lines 17–18).<sup>80</sup> The protagonist of the poem speaks in the first-person as David, "son of Jesse" and "son of Piast" (lines 1–2).<sup>81</sup> David here identifies himself as shepherd and sings a song imploring the Lord to "have mercy on Piast" (lines 9–11).<sup>82</sup> Within the poem intriguingly titled "And When David Came to His Motherland,"<sup>83</sup> the protagonist discovered the "Slavic secret" in the truth and melody of the Lord (lines 30–32) and revealed a "Slavic storm" of pain (line 47).<sup>84</sup> This "son of Piasts" and "David of Israel" resonated with the sacred pastoral song and dreamed that the Lord's anointing would be placed on his forehead (lines 33–36).<sup>85</sup> Within these poem

<sup>77</sup> Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 93.

<sup>78</sup> See Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 108–110, 446, 447, 451, and 453.

<sup>79</sup> Marta Burghardt, noted scholar of Wojtyła's juvenilia, has suggested that the two works of poetry considered here ("Morning Song," "And When David Came to His Motherland") may represent preserved fragments of Wojtyła's completed but lost drama or dramatic poem entitled *David*, since they do not differ much in style from his two preserved dramas of *Job* and *Jeremiah*. See Marta Burghardt, "Domniemane datowanie niedatowanych utworów Karola Wojtyły: Dzieła literackie i teatralne, juvenilia (1938–1946)," special issue, *Roczniki Humanistyczne* 68, no. 1 (2020): 107–108. The present author is grateful to Marta Burghardt for providing this insightful perspective via personal communication (email messages to author, August 23, 2024; October 23, 2024; October 25, 2024).

<sup>80</sup> Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 108 and 451.

<sup>81</sup> Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 108. For further analysis of this poem suggesting identification of Wojtyła as poet with David as psalmist, and incorporation of Piast-Slavic tradition within Judeo-Christian tradition, see Marek Bernacki, "Słowiańska Pieśń miłości – o funkcji poety i poezji w *Sonetach–Zarysach* Karola Wojtyły," in *Karol Wojtyła – poeta*, ed. Jacek Głazewski and Witold Sadowski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2006), 172–73.

<sup>82</sup> Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 108.

<sup>83</sup> Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 109–10 and 453.

<sup>84</sup> Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 110.

<sup>85</sup> Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 110.

verses, it appears that we once again find the shepherd David being anointed as the Lord's chosen servant for Israel and for Poland. Although both of these poems directly speak of David personified as a Polish Piast, it is interesting to note that they do not here appear to directly speak of David wearing "biblical robes" or "a linen shirt from the time of Piast" or "a crimson cloak of a Polish nobleman."<sup>86</sup> The conspicuous absence of such apparel here in contrast to its presence within the *Psalter of David* proper would seem to further strengthen the case for possible primary identification of Wojtyła's literary work *David* with his *Psalter of David*.

#### MATTERS OF THE SOUL

By its very nature, poetry expresses the *meaning*, intentions, and inspirations of its author. Although Wojtyła initially shared portions of these verses with his closest friends, and perhaps to some extent within local poetry recitations, he may have never intended this work for a broader audience, and retrospectively may not have been particularly pleased with his youthful work.<sup>87</sup> Even so, we might here catch a glimpse into the soul of the youthful Wojtyła, and perhaps even a preliminary insight into the maturing soul of this future personalist philosopher and pastor of the person. As the later Pope John Paul II would notably remark to his biographer: "They try to understand me from outside. But I can only be understood from inside."<sup>88</sup>

As a final criterion for evaluating the potential significance of Wojtyła's "dramatic poem" entitled *Psalter of David*—and its potential identification as the ostensible "drama" entitled *David*—we have Wojtyła's own December 28, 1939, indication that this work represents a most personal disclosure of his innermost soul: "In it I have bared many things, many matters of my soul."<sup>89</sup> He described its prose and verse form as "sincere,"<sup>90</sup> suggesting that it is genuine and heartfelt. We have already noted Wojtyła's disclosure to his friend and mentor that during this time of his life (and hostile occupation of his country) he experienced an interior spiritual and emotional struggle between "oppres-

<sup>86</sup> See B o n i e c k i, *The Making of the Pope of the Millennium*, 65. See also W o j t y ł a, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 353.

<sup>87</sup> See W o j t y ł a, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 20.

<sup>88</sup> W e i g e l, *Witness to Hope*, 7 and 887.

<sup>89</sup> Quoted in B o n i e c k i, *The Making of the Pope of the Millennium*, 65. See also W o j t y ł a, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 353.

<sup>90</sup> Quoted in B o n i e c k i, *The Making of the Pope of the Millennium*, 65. See also W o j t y ł a, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 353.

sion, depression, despair, evil" and "the dawn, the aurora, a great light."<sup>91</sup> Within the previous November 14, 1939, letter to Kotlarczyk, he indicated that this work expressed and revealed the youthful and interior longings of his heart and soul:

I'm sending a written copy of this output of my spring longing, this cause dear to my heart and soul.... We must express this idea which dwells within us more precisely, we have to reveal this current which drives the stream of our youth, but which thus far could not be revealed. This current has a common source within us: a deep love—a Slavic and Sarmatian freedom, and not just a longing for beauty, but a demand for it.<sup>92</sup>

It is clear that Wojtyła's interior struggle and youthful longings do not reflect those of a self-absorbed soul, but rather those of a truly personal soul generously devoted to the struggle for the spiritual and cultural soul of his nation. We might thus expect to find within this manuscript examples of such personal self-disclosure regarding *matters of the soul*, along with expression of some of the aforementioned themes of freedom, love, and beauty related to the soul of the Polish people.

An overview of the *Psalter of David* suggests that this is, in fact, the case. Wojtyła's poetic invocation to his mother, "Over Your White Grave," is clearly a heartfelt expression of filial love and devotion.<sup>93</sup> Six of the seventeen sonnets (sonnets I, II, III, VII, XIII, and XVII) include the apparently personal notations of "letter to a friend" or "to friends."<sup>94</sup> Sonnet VII appears to speak of longings, desires, will, and unity of souls in service to a common redemptive work.<sup>95</sup> Sonnet VIII refers to longing Slavic souls.<sup>96</sup> Sonnet XI describes the growth of the soul through freedom amidst messianic psalms of love.<sup>97</sup> Sonnet XVI portrays the longings of humanity in relation to beauty and resurrection and springtime.<sup>98</sup> The prose reflection "To the Sonnets!" characterizes these sonnets as songs of spring and longing in the midst of the tragic and terrible

<sup>91</sup> Quoted in Boniecki, *The Making of the Pope of the Millennium*, 65. See also Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 353.

<sup>92</sup> Quoted in Boniecki, *The Making of the Pope of the Millennium*, 80. See also Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 9 and 350.

<sup>93</sup> See Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 40–42. See also [Wojtyła], "Over This Your White Grave," ix.

<sup>94</sup> Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 43, 45, 46, 50, 56, and 60.

<sup>95</sup> See Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 50.

<sup>96</sup> See Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 51.

<sup>97</sup> See Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 54.

<sup>98</sup> See Wojtyła, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 59.

year of the war.<sup>99</sup> It appears to describe a profound and painful inner battle within the soul of the author between the darkness of despair and doubt and the dawn of hope and faith, where confusion and suffering ultimately yield to truth and love. The poem titled “Feast” is specifically described as a “poem about myself.”<sup>100</sup> It describes the gift of self of a Slavic songster who is wise and sincere in heart, yet who needs opposition and will in order to mature in love and freedom.<sup>101</sup> The poetic hymn “Magnificat” similarly describes a “Slavic troubadour” whose youthful soul is characterized by “Gothic yearning,” and who has grown and been fortified from a “youth cradled in yearning and pain.”<sup>102</sup> Wojtyła’s *Psalter of David* certainly represents sincere disclosure of matters close to his personal and Polish soul, foreshadowing his later recognition that “in producing a work, artists express themselves to the point where their work becomes a unique disclosure of their own being.”<sup>103</sup>

#### LOST OR FOUND?

Has Karol Wojtyła’s literary work *David*, identified as a drama, been truly lost to history? Has it been preserved and concealed for future discovery? Or might it have been for some time hidden in plain sight and already revealed in a somewhat unexpected manner? What contextual clues might we find, particularly in Wojtyła’s correspondence with friends and within their memoirs and recollections of his life and work? What textual clues might we derive directly from any potentially relevant literary writings of Wojtyła?

Throughout our brief literary excursion, we have seen that Wojtyła’s correspondence with Kotlarczyk offered apparent criteria for identification of Wojtyła’s literary work entitled *David* in terms of its context, content, title, genre, form, history, provenance, style, themes, and meaning. To return to the question posed earlier: Might an available text be identified that meets these criteria?

In this regard, one potentially plausible work which appears to be most worthy of such consideration would be Wojtyła’s collection of poetry entitled

<sup>99</sup> See W o j t y ł a, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 61–62. Note the parallel to the November 14, 1939, letter cited above, in which Wojtyła described the verses sent to Kotlarczyk as the output of his “spring longing.”

<sup>100</sup> W o j t y ł a, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 63.

<sup>101</sup> See W o j t y ł a, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 63 and 66.

<sup>102</sup> [W o j t y ł a], “Magnificat (Hymn),” 185–88. See also W o j t y ł a, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 88–91.

<sup>103</sup> J o h n P a u l I I, “Letter to Artists” (1999), Section 2, The Holy See, [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1999/documents/hf\\_jpii\\_let\\_23041999\\_artists.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1999/documents/hf_jpii_let_23041999_artists.html).

*Psalter of David* (*Slavic Book*), also known as *Renaissance Psalter* (*Slavic Book*). In terms of *context*, this work was written between late 1938 and spring or summer of 1939, and shared with friends in the summer and autumn of 1939, during a time of interior struggle for the author amidst the exterior struggle of impending and actual German occupation of his homeland. In *content*, it alludes to the biblical figure David and incorporates references to traditional Polish apparel. Its *title* literally invokes David, the psalmist. In *genre*, Wojtyła directly described his work *David* "more precisely" as a "dramatic poem" than as a "drama," and it was apparently composed during a time, albeit short-lived, when he expressed reticence to write drama.<sup>104</sup> The *Psalter of David* is mixed in *form*, both prose and verse, and prominently features sonnets.<sup>105</sup> In terms of *literary history*, it appears clear that the fragments of the literary work *David* that Wojtyła sent to Kotlarczyk consisted of the sonnets and a hymn from the *Psalter of David*.<sup>106</sup> As of spring 1940, Wojtyła described himself as the author of "two dramas," *Job* as a "debut" and then *Jeremiah*, with no mention then of a previously completed drama entitled *David*.<sup>107</sup> Regarding *provenance*, it was the *Psalter of David* (in various versions and portions) that was preserved both by the Kotlarczyk family and within the archdiocesan archives. The *style* of this work integrates historical allusions and artifacts relevant to biblical David, primeval/medieval Piast rulers, and Renaissance Polish noblemen. Its *themes* are accordingly replete with Gothic and Renaissance imagery and prosody. In terms of *meaning*, this collection of poetry certainly discloses both personal and Polish longings of the youthful soul of its author.

It thus appears possible that the assertion of Bolesław Taborski (and others after him)—that Wojtyła wrote an early play titled *David* that has been lost to history—may not be accurate.<sup>108</sup> This statement may have been based in part upon potential misinterpretation of Wojtyła's December 28, 1939 letter to Kotlarczyk, and potential mischaracterization of a poetic work as a dramatic work.<sup>109</sup> When Taborski reached this conclusion in 1987, he may not have fully attended to certain highly relevant clues within Wojtyła's other wartime correspondence with Kotlarczyk (particularly letters of November 14, 1939; Lent

<sup>104</sup> See B o n i e c k i, *The Making of the Pope of the Millennium*, 65. See also W o j t y ł a, *Juwenilia (1938–1946)*, 9 and 350–53.

<sup>105</sup> See B o n i e c k i, *The Making of the Pope of the Millennium*, 65. See also W o j t y ł a, *Juwenilia (1938–1946)*, 353.

<sup>106</sup> See B o n i e c k i, *The Making of the Pope of the Millennium*, 65, 80. See also W o j t y ł a, *Juwenilia (1938–1946)*, 9–10, 18–20, 350–54, and 407–9.

<sup>107</sup> See B o n i e c k i, *The Making of the Pope of the Millennium*, 71–72. See also W o j t y ł a, *Juwenilia (1938–1946)*, 10, and 355–58.

<sup>108</sup> See T a b o r s k i, "Introduction," 3–4, footnote 1.

<sup>109</sup> See B o n i e c k i, *The Making of the Pope of the Millennium*, 64–65. See also W o j t y ł a, *Juwenilia (1938–1946)*, 353–54.

[March], 1940; and April/Summer, 1940), which were apparently available to him.<sup>110</sup> Although he may have had access to some of Wojtyła's poetry, perhaps Taborski did not then have access for comparative purposes to the greater part of Wojtyła's poetry collection entitled *Psalter of David*, which was not initially published until some eight or nine years later.<sup>111</sup>

In view of the analysis presented above, might one reasonably conclude that Wojtyła never actually completed a full drama entitled *David*, but that he did, in fact, write a collection of dramatic poems entitled *Psalter of David*? Might the verses of the *Psalter of David* (perhaps augmented by the nearly contemporaneous "autumn poetry" prominently featuring David) represent the actual previous and still extant work *David* which reveals the youthful soul of Karol Wojtyła as "Slavic troubadour" confessing his heartfelt song for Poland? Perhaps what had been lost as a "drama" has been found as a "dramatic poem." The textual and contextual evidence seems compelling. Even so, definitive determination is deferred to experts in the field.

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<sup>110</sup> See B o n i e c k i, *The Making of the Pope of the Millennium*, 70–73 and 80. See also W o j t y ł a, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 350–52, 355–61, and 510–11; T a b o r s k i, "Acknowledgements," vii; T a b o r s k i, "Introduction," 3–5. Even so, Popiel indicates within the editorial notes of the Polish critical edition that the full Wojtyła–Kotlarczyk correspondence was not published until 2001.

<sup>111</sup> See W o j t y ł a, *Juvenilia (1938–1946)*, 410, 412, 428, 430, 434–35, 437, 441, and 444.

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## ABSTRACT / ABSTRAKT

Keith A. HOUDE, Wojtyła's *David*: Lost or Found? Contextual Clues Toward Possible Solution of a Literary Mystery

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Scholarly consensus suggests that Karol Wojtyła (the future Pope John Paul II) wrote an early drama entitled *David* that has been lost to history. The primary source of information regarding this literary work comes from Wojtyła's wartime correspondence with friend and mentor Mieczysław Kotlarczyk. Contextual clues, through closer reading of this correspondence, as well as textual clues, via study of an early collection of poetry by Wojtyła known as the *Psalter of David*, suggest an alternate interpretation. This literary mystery is explored through consideration of context, content, title, genre, form, history, provenance, style, themes, and meaning. Perhaps what had been lost as a drama has been found as a collection of dramatic poetry.

Keywords: Karol Wojtyła, John Paul II, *David* drama, *Psalter of David* poetry, literary mystery

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Keith A. HOUDE – *Dawid* Karola Wojtyły. Zaginiony czy odnaleziony? Kontekstualne tropy prowadzące ku możliwemu rozwiązaniu pewnej tajemnicy literackiej

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Rezultaty dociekań wskazują, że badacze zgodni są z sobą co faktu, że u początku swojej aktywności literackiej Karol Wojtyła napisał dramat zatytułowany *Dawid* i że tekst ten zaginął. Pierwsze źródło informacji o powstaniu dzieła stanowi pochodząca z okresu wojennego korespondencja Wojtyły z jego przyjacielem i mentorem Mieczysławem Kotlarczykiem. Wskazówki kontekstualne, jakich dostarcza bliższa lektura tej korespondencji, jak i te, które odczytać można poprzez analizę tekstów poetyckich Wojtyły zawartych w jego zbiorze *Psalterz Dawidów*, wskazują jednak na interpretację alternatywną. Tajemnica literacka, o której mowa, została przeanalizowana poprzez rozważenie kontekstu dzieła, jego treści, tytułu, gatunku literackiego, formy, historii, proveniencji, stylu, poruszanej w nim tematyki oraz jego wymowy. Być może coś, co zaginęło jako dramat, odnalazło się jako poetycki tom o charakterze dramatu.

Tłumaczenie Dorota Chabrajska

Słowa kluczowe: Karol Wojtyła, Jan Paweł II, dramat *Dawid*, *Psalterz Dawidów*, poezja, tajemnica literacka

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