

Branko Reisp, *Korespondence Janeza Vajkarda Valvasorja z Royal Society. The Correspondence of Janez Vajkard Valvasor with the Royal Society*. Ljubljana: Slovenska Akademija Znanosti in Umetnosti, 1987 [= SAZU, Razred za filološke in literarne vede, Korespondence pomembnih Slovencev, 8]. 115 pp.

Janez Vajkard Valvasor's monumental work *Die Ehre des Herzogtums Krain*, published in Ljubljana in 1689, is of unique value in Slovene historiography. Its 3,532 pages, bound in four folio volumes and containing 528 illustrations, provide a comprehensive and detailed picture of the greater part of Slovenia in the seventeenth century, teeming with ethnographic and topographical data. Few European nations possess such vivid and accurate accounts of their lands and peoples in the seventeenth century. *Die Ehre des Herzogtums Krain* is Valvasor's masterpiece, but he is also the author of some eight other books, and of two articles published in English in the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*. His connection with the Royal Society (which had received its Charter from King Charles in 1662) is of particular interest, and the initiative in publishing Valvasor's correspondence with that body is most welcome.

Valvasor was born in Ljubljana in 1641 and christened in the Cathedral on 28 May that year. His father's family came from Northern Italy and had been ennobled at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The young Janez Vajkard (in German, Johann Weikhard; in the baptismal record Johannes Waichardus) attended the Jesuits' grammar school in Ljubljana and then served in the army. He saw action against the Turks in 1663 and 1664. After this he traveled in Germany, England, Denmark, France, Spain, Italy, Holland, Switzerland, and North Africa, returning to Carniola in 1672, where he married and settled down in his castle at Bogenšperk (German Wagensberg). He now began to develop his scholarly interests, which were concentrated above all in the study of his native land. He built up a huge library and collections of prints, curiosities and technical equipment. Naturally, his scientific and publishing activities were expensive. He employed master craftsmen and artists to prepare the etchings with which his books are so liberally illustrated. Eventually his fortunes began to dwindle. He sold one property after another until in 1693, ruined by the cost of producing *Die Ehre des Herzogtums Krain*, he bought a house at Krško (Gurkfeld) with what remained of his fortune. It was here in September or October that year that he died.

The correspondence with the Royal Society consists of eight letters. Six are from Valvasor to Thomas Gale, Secretary to the Society, and two are from Gale to Valvasor. From the letters' contents it is possible to deduce that three further letters once existed—two from Valvasor and one from Gale—but are now lost. The correspondence was conducted in Latin and is produced in Professor Reisp's book in the original, accompanied by a translation into modern Slovene. Both the transcription and the translation are the work of Professor Primož Simoniti, who also supplies an analysis of Valvasor's Latin, which is quite different from that of Gale. The introduction and commentary by Reisp are in Slovene with full English translations. The title-page, too, is bilingual.

Valvasor was first moved to write to Gale by an account of Lake Cerknica that he had read in the Society's *Philosophical Transactions*. (The author was Dr. Edward Brown, who in 1668-73 at the request of the Society had undertaken a tour of Europe and written a book about his experiences.) In his letter, dated 3 December 1685 (New Style), Valvasor told Gale of his surprise at reading the account, said that he would be glad to write his own circumstantial report on the marvels of the lake, and enquired whether the Society would be prepared to accept him as a member. By 6 March of the following year Valvasor had

still not received a reply and sent another letter of similar content, believing his first letter to have gone astray. That it had not done so, however, is evident from his next letter (dated 15 April 1686) which noted the recent receipt of Gale's letter of 1 January (Old Style, presumably). Gale had evidently asked Valvasor to forward some of his topographies to John Hopkins, the King's representative in Venice, for onward transmission to London. The intention was probably to provide the Society with a means of assessing the merits of Valvasor's application for membership. In his letter of 15 April Valvasor enumerated thirteen items which he had already dispatched to Hopkins: three of these were copies of Valvasor's books; the remainder appear to have been prints or maps. They included a picture of the brass statue of the Virgin Mary which had been cast in Ljubljana in December 1681 and still stands near St. James' Church. Valvasor had devised a new technique which was employed in the casting of this statue and in his letter he offered to send details of his method. He also told Gale of an unusual nut-tree in the village of Lokev which would stay bare until midsummer, when it would suddenly put forth leaves and bear nuts at the same time as other trees.

Gale's reply, sent at the end of May, thanked Valvasor effusively for the many interesting things he had brought to the Society's notice, and for his gifts. He invited him to send his reports on casting statues, and on the peculiarities of Lake Cerknica, so that they might be published in the *Philosophical Transactions*. Gale also commended to Valvasor the principle of distinguishing strictly between that which one observes oneself and that which is known only from report. This was a principle that Valvasor was to repeat several times in his *Ehre des Herzogtums Krain*. Finally, the letter informed Valvasor of some abnormal English trees (this information too was used in *Die Ehre*.)

From the complimentary tone of Gale's letter Valvasor erroneously perceived himself to have been elected to the fellowship of the Society, and expressed his gratitude for this imagined honor in his letter of 29 August 1686, which also gave details of his technique for casting metal statues. The casting method was discussed at the Society's meeting of 1 December that year, and Gale's English translation of Valvasor's Latin account of his technique was published in the *Philosophical Transactions* the following year. Whether the Society reacted to Valvasor's belief that he was now a fellow is not recorded. A further letter from him, now lost, was discussed at a meeting on 16 February 1687. An undated letter from Gale is thought to have been written shortly after this date, but it apparently never reached Valvasor, judging by the latter's next letter to Gale, dated 7/17 November 1687, which makes no mention of it. This last-named letter was accompanied by a full description of Lake Cerknica and four etched copper plates to illustrate it. To his signature Valvasor added the words "Tanquam indignus regiae Societatis socius" ["as an utterly unworthy fellow of the Royal Society"]. The Society decided that this letter and the account of Lake Cerknica would be read at the meeting of 14 December 1687, on which date Edmund Halley, using basins and pipes, conducted an experiment illustrating the draining and filling of the lake as described by Valvasor. At this meeting, too, the Society regularized Valvasor's status by electing him fellow.

Whether by design or accident, Valvasor, who in any case already believed himself to be a fellow, never received notification of his election. His last known letter to the Society (5/15 November 1688) said that he had received no reply to his letters of 7/17 November 1687 and 19 March 1688 (the latter is lost). He was clearly unaware of the fact that his description of Lake Cerknica had been published in the *Philosophical Transactions* in December 1687. One final echo of his contact with the Royal Society (or, rather, of his lack of contact) is found in a letter written to the Society from Vienna in 1691 by George

Ashe, the tutor and life-long friend of Jonathan Swift. Ashe wrote, "I have begun a Correspondence with the Baron Valvasor, who is a fellow of the Society and formerly communicated the Description of the Lake of Czircnietz, which is printed in the Transactions, he Complains that having writt Several Letters three or four Years agoe to Dr. Gale and others he could procure no Answer." By this time, of course, *Die Ehre des Herzogtums Krain* had been published, a fact of which Ashe notified the Society in the same letter.

A growing interest in Valvasor's exploits coincided with the two-hundredth anniversary of his death and led to the appearance of Peter von Radics's comprehensive biography *Johann Weikhard Freiherr von Valvasor (geb. 1641, gest. 1693)* (Laibach/Ljubljana, 1910). This was recently complemented by Branko Reisp's *Kranjski polihistor Janez Vajkard Valvasor* (Ljubljana, 1983); and now Professor Reisp has further illuminated Valvasor's life by publishing this correspondence in the series *Korespondence pomembnih Slovencev*. It is surprising that Reisp feels it necessary to adduce special grounds for including Valvasor in the series (p. 17). This arises from his opinion that "Valvasor was not Slovene by birth" (p. 15). The criteria, it is true, are uncertain, but there are surely grounds for saying that Valvasor *was* Slovene, not just "in the figurative sense" (*ibid.*). He was born in Ljubljana and there is ample evidence that he spoke Slovene (mainly in *Die Ehre des Herzogtums Krain*, but also in these letters now published.) He often uses the phrase "in patria mea" with reference to Carniola or, even more specifically, "in patria mea, scilicet in Carniola." Reisp himself draws attention to the following sentence in the description of Lake Cerknica: "Hic lacus antiquis erat authoribus Lugea palus, modernis Lacus Lugeus, hodiernis vero Latinis lacus est Cirknicensis, Germanis vero Zircknizer See, et nobis Carniolis est Zirknisko<sup>1</sup> jeser" ["To the ancient authors this lake was Lugea palus, to recent authors it was Lacus Lugeus, but to Latinists today it is Lacus Cirknicensis, to the German Zircknizer See, and to us Carniolans it is Cerknisko jezero"]. Even more persuasive is the following from the letter dated 5 March 1686: "Habemus animalia certa, quae vocantur germanice bilch et in lingua nostra carniolica pouche . . ." ["We have certain animals which in German are called Bilch and in our Carniolan language polhi . . ."], i.e., dormice. Finally, Valvasor's Latin is capable of betraying his Slovene thoughts, as in "qui mihi solus narravit" ["who told me himself": "who alone told me" would not make sense] in his letter of 15 April 1686. A German-speaker, unless influenced by a Slavic language (where the morpheme *sam* has both meanings), would not confuse Latin *solus* and *ipse*, as he would not confuse *alein* and *selbst* in his German.

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#### NOTE

1. *Zirknisko* is spelled with a "long s" in the original.

Slodnjak, Anton & Janko Kos. *Pisma Matija Čopa. I - II*. Ljubljana: Slovenska Akademija Znanosti in Umetnosti, 1986. [= SAZU, Razred za filološke in literarne vede, Korespondence pomembnih Slovencev 6/I, 6/II]. (Volume I = *Pisma Matija Čopa*; Volume II = *Literatura Slovencev*. Ed. and transl. Anton Slodnjak; introduction and annotations by Janko Kos). Pp. 364 + 181.

Matija Čop (1797-1835), a close friend and aesthetic mentor to Francè Prešeren (1800-49), has finally received his due from Slovene literary historians: a model edition of his complete letters, prepared by two authorities specializing in Prešeren, his poetry and his