



Jan Kollár

SLÁVA'S
DAUGHTER

Translated by Charles S. Kraszewski

G L A G O S L A V P U B L I C A T I O N S

SLÁVA'S DAUGHTER

Slovak
Literary
Centre

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of the SLOLIA Board, Slovak Literary Centre

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Oh Why Bother.

On Jan Kollár's *Sláva's Daughter*

Charles S. Kraszewski

According to Martin C. Putna, the Czech literary historian who in 2014 brought out the latest Czech edition of Jan Kollár's *Slávy dcera* [Sláva's Daughter],¹ the Czechoslovak poet's masterwork is 'the deadest of all works that have ever been written in Czech'.² If this is anything more than a *bon mot*, it is probably not because the book is uninteresting. An epic poem in five cantos, made up of 645 sonnets that seek to wed Petrarch's *Il Canzoniere* and Dante's *Divina Commedia* with Slavic history, it cannot fail to pique the interest of the intelligent reader. Rather, if Czechs ignore *Sláva's Daughter* today, it is probably due to its Pan-Slavic ideology, the assertion that all Slavic nations are kindred and ought to unite, both culturally and politically, in one great whole. In the nineteenth century, some western Slavs, Czechs and Slovaks amongst them, looked longingly to the one 'independent' Slavic nation in Europe — Russia — as a potential liberator from German and Magyar domination, and leader of a new, united, Slavdom. The Poles, who knew far better what submission to the Russian tsar was like, would have no part of that.³ The Czechs and Slovaks, for much of their existence under

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¹ Jan Kollár, Martin C. Putna (ed). *Slávy dcera: Báseň lyricko-epická v pěti zpěvích. Překlad a výklad Slávy dcery z panslavistického mýtu do kulturní historie* [Sláva's Daughter: a Lyrical-Epic Poem in Five Cantos. An Explanatory Translation from Pan-Slavic Myth to Cultural History] (Praha: Akademie, 2014). Here 'translation' is used not in the usual sense of bringing information from one language into another, but explaining in modern terms an old work in one's own language, from a modern cultural perspective.

² *Nejmrtnější ze všech děl, která byla v češtině napsána*. Cited by Eva Stehlíková in her 2014 review of Putna's book posted online at the *iliteratura.cz* website: <https://www.iliteratura.cz/clanek/33547-kollar-jan-slavy-dcera>, accessed 2 February 2026.

³ Pan-Slavism became ever less popular in Poland following the third partition of Poland in 1795, which wiped the country from the map, and especially after the ever more strict attempts at Russification of the Russian Partition following the 1830 November Uprising. Still, in his discussion of the 'pan-Slavic movement' (which he calls the *hnutí všeslovanské*), Jaroslav Bidlo points out that 'Polish thinkers were the first to reveal pan-Slavic interests'. He points to both Jan Potocki's 1793 *Chroniques, Mémoires et*

the benign (if ‘German’) sceptre of the Habsburgs, might be excused for their naïveté. But they would learn all about the Russians in 1848, 1948, and again in 1968. In this last year, when the Soviet Union, terrified at the prospect of the Communist government losing its grip on Czechoslovakia due to the Dubček reforms, invaded the country at the head of other eastern-bloc armies⁴ and bloodily suppressed the ‘Prague Spring’, they spoke of the invasion as ‘fraternal aid’. Czechs, and Slovaks, finally got their fill of such ‘fraternity’. No wonder *Sláva’s Daughter* has so little relevance to the average person in Prague or Bratislava today. With its myth-based pipe-dreams of Slavic purity and goodness, it seems like something from another world, or at least, another, distant and completely foreign, time. Russians? Our brothers? With friends like these...

JAN (JÁN) KOLLÁR AND THE NATIONAL REVIVAL (WHICH ONE?)

Ján Kollár (1793–1852) was born in the town of Mošovce, located in the central portion of today’s Republic of Slovakia, which at the time (until 1918, as a matter of fact) formed a part of the Kingdom of Hungary. He spent most of his adult life in what we today call Slovakia and Hungary, attending gymnasium and lyceum in Kremnica, Banská Bystrica, and Bratislava (1806–1815), and then, following two years of theological study at the University of Jena (1817–1819), took a post as pastor to the community of Slovak Lutherans in Budapest (1819–1848). Following this, in 1849 he commenced a brief career as Professor of Slavic Archeology at the University of Vienna, the final leg of his professional career. However, although born a Slovak and, in the fateful years of 1848–1849 serving the court in Vienna as an advisor who agitated for the autonomy of Slovakia within the Habsburg system, opposing the Magyarising tendencies of the government in Hungary, it was not Slovak that he promoted as the language of instruction for the future Slovak educational system, but Czech.

Slovak and Czech are extremely similar tongues. They share a common generation as well as a common history, and are so close, in fact, that passages

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Recherches pour servir à l’histoire de tous les peuples slaves [Chronicles, Memorable Points, and Studies to Serve a History of all Slavic Peoples] and the poem *Assarmot* by Jan Paweł Woronicz, whom he considers Kollár’s predecessor. What is more, he points to Stanisław Staszic’s surprising ‘attempt at protecting Poland within the framework of a Slavic federation under the leadership of Russia, at the very moment when Kościuszko was leading a hopeless battle for Polish autonomy’. Jaroslav Bidlo, *Dějiny Slovanstva* [The History of Slavdom] (Praha: Vesmír, 1927), p. 179.

⁴ The only armies from behind the Iron Curtain that did not participate in the invasion were those of Romania and Albania — neither of them Slavic nations — and that of East Germany, which was intentionally kept out of the fray for obvious reasons. To their shame, the Poles did.

in Czech quoted in a Slovak text are rarely translated, and vice versa.⁵ Still, they are different enough to stand on their own legs, not being entirely interchangeable, and the question of their relative identity with or distinction from one another was one of the burning questions of the national revival movement [Czech: *národní obrození*, Slovak: *národné obrodenie*].⁶ One group of Slovak ‘revivalists’, including Anton Bernolák, Ján Hollý, Ľudovít Štúr and Jozef Miloslav Hurban, sought to establish Slovak as a language in its own right, basing their codification of the same either on the western dialects (Bernolák and Hollý), or the dialects of central Slovakia (Štúr and Hurban), which position was eventually adopted. Another group of writers — and here Kollár predominates — pulled westward, seeking to set up Czech as the language of the educated classes of ‘Upper Hungary’ (Slovakia).

On the one hand, there was a confessional motivation for this. Unlike Poland, its neighbour to the north, Slovakia is not monolithically Catholic. The Protestant Reformation took deeper root in Slovakia, and the Society of Jesus did not succeed as well in re-converting the Lutheran (and Calvinist) communities in Slovakia, as they did in the kingdom to the north of the Tatras. What is more, even before Luther, a number of Hussites expelled from Bohemia following the condemnation of Jan Hus at the Council of Constance fled eastward and established themselves in Kollár’s homeland. As the Protestants used national languages, not Latin, in their church services and other activities such as translating the Bible out of Latin into the tongues of the people, and as Protestantism was spread in Slovakia by Czechs above all, it was Czech liturgical texts, and the Czech Bible, the Czech catechism, that were used in the religious life and education of Slovak Protestants; it was Czech that had a seminal influence on the development of Kollár’s mind.

But that’s not the entire story. Both Štúr and Hurban were Protestants, and they — like the Catholics Bernolák and Hollý — agitated for the elevation of Slovak in the life of the country. This they did for political reasons. It wasn’t just the Slavs who were seeking to assert their nationality in the context of multi-ethnic empires such as that of the Habsburgs, and defining their nationality, above all, on a linguistic basis. The ‘national revival’ period of the early- and mid-nineteenth century also saw the Magyar speakers of Hungary agitate for the imposition of their tongue on all citizens of the Hungarian kingdom, whether Magyar, Slovak, Croat, German, or Romanian, as a replacement for the heretofore administrative and judicial language of Latin. One of the legalistic strategies employed by the Magyars was to impose the following condition on the recognition of a language

⁵ As Antonín Měšťan points out, Kollár’s works from the start have been considered as Slovak, as well as Czech, literature, and a Slovak translation of *Slávy dcera* did not make its appearance until 1980. Měšťan, *Česká literatura 1785–1985* [Czech Literature 1785–1985] (Toronto: 68 Publishers, 1987), p. 38.

⁶ This was a movement that sought cultural, and later political, autonomy for the Slavic nations under Habsburg rule.

as official: it had to be 'native' to the region.⁷ If the language adhered to by the Slovaks was Czech, the Magyars would have an excuse to declare it a non-native import from Bohemia and Moravia, and thus impose Magyar upon the educational, governmental and judicial system of the Slovak regions. For this reason, the establishment of a native tongue distinct from its kindred Czech was not only important, but vital, to the Slovak revivalists.

However, as interested as Kollár was in upholding the rights, linguistic and otherwise, of his fellow Slovaks, this was not his primary concern. For Kollár was a Pan-Slavist, a believer in the dubitable thesis, again based on the close kinship of all the Slavic languages, that all the Slavs — Russians, Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Ukrainians, Belarussians, Croats, Serbs, Slovenians, Lusatian Sorbs, Kaszubs, Silesians, Bulgarians, etc. etc., — are all members of 'one' Slavic nation, merely divided into 'tribes', and the various languages they speak are not individual languages at all, just 'dialects' of one great 'Slavic' tongue. For this reason, Kollár was more interested in the continued use of Czech in Slovakia, and indeed, the ever more closer amalgamation of the two languages into one 'Czechoslovak' tongue.

And that, perhaps, would only be the beginning. It's only a short hop from there to the political union of all the Slavs, under the leadership of Russia (of course)... With that last premise in mind, it's not difficult to see why Pan-Slavism would be anathema to the governments in Budapest, Vienna, and Berlin, and consequently, why nearly all movements for Slavic cultural autonomy, even within the framework of a multi-ethnic empire, would be looked on with concern.

KOLLÁR'S WORKS

The literary compositions of Jan Kollár break down into verse and prose, the latter group made up almost entirely of homiletic, pedagogical, historical, and polemical writings. Like his verse, all his prose is written in Czech, although two of his texts were originally composed in German: *Etwas über die Magyarisierung der Slaven in Ungarn* [A Word on the Magyarisation of the Slavs in Hungary, 1821] and *Über die literarische Wechselseitigkeit zwischen den verschiedenen Stämmen und Mundarten der slawischen Nation* [Concerning Literary Reciprocity amongst the various Tribes and Dialects of the Slavic Nation, 1836]. The title of this latter work, one of his most familiar essays, offers direct evidence of the author's outlook described above: there is *one* 'Slavic nation' divided into 'tribes', and the various tongues that they speak are merely 'dialects' of the *one* 'Slavic language'.

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⁷ As with most political matters then and now, this sleight of hand is both cynical and deceptive. For the Magyar tongue arrived in the area known today as Hungary only in the ninth century, whereas an early form of Slovak was the language spoken by the population already settled there when the Magyar nomads arrived.

Closer to home, linguistically, the word *českoslvanský* [Czechoslovak] predominates in his writings concerning Bohemia/Moravia and Slovakia. His drive to consolidate the two tongues can be seen in one of his later works, the Czech-language *Hlasové o potřebě jednoty spisovného jazyka pro Čechy, Moravany a Slováky* [Voices Raised in the Matter of the Necessity of a Unified Written Language for Czechs, Moravians, and Slovaks, 1846]. That Czech predominates in his mind is witnessed by his pedagogical offerings, the *Šlabikář pro děti* [Spelling-Book for Children, 1826], written not in Slovak, but in Czech, and the *Čítanka anebo Kniha k čítání pro mládež ve školách slovanských v městech a v dědinách* [Readings, or a Reading-Book for Youth in Slavic Schools in City and Village, 1825] which, while not specified as particularly directed at schools in Slovakia, was intended for them as well, and uses the general term ‘Slavic’ rather than ‘Slovak’. Once more, it is made up of texts in Czech.

As might be expected of a Slovak Protestant pastor, his two-volume *Nedělní, sváteční a příležitostné kázně a řeči* [Sermons and Orations for Sundays, Holidays and Special Occasions, 1831] are composed in Czech, but his generous, two-volume collection of Slovak folk-songs, the *Písně světské lidu slovenského v Uhřích* [Lay Folksongs of the Slovak People in Hungary, 1823, 1827], in Slovak, somewhat ironically aided interest in and development of the tongue he sought to consolidate with the Czech.⁸

That said, Kollár considered the Czechs, no less than the Slovaks, but one smaller ‘tribal’ portion of the greater ‘national’ whole of Slavdom. To give just two examples as additions to the *On Literary Reciprocity* listed above, we might point out one title that glances backward: the *Sláva bohyně a původ jména Slaviův čili Slavjanův* [Goddess Sláva and the Origin of the name of the Slavs or Slavi-ans, 1839], which traces the supposed generation of the Slavs from an original homeland in India and Hindu culture,⁹ and his *Staroitalia slavjanská* [Ancient Slavic Italy, 1853], based on two travel journeys to the Italian peninsula (1843, 1844), which asserts a Slavic presence in corners of Europe not immediately associated with them. Perhaps obliquely, this latter work looks toward the future, when all the Slavic lands, present and past (especially the Lusatian lands in eastern Germany) might be reunited politically.

Kollár’s *Díla básnická* [Collected Poetic Works] were brought out in two volumes in 1845. His poetic career, with which we are mainly concerned, begins

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⁸ See Měšťan, p. 40.

⁹ Kollár would perhaps be disappointed to learn that contemporary archeological studies have the Slavs entering Europe sometime in the third or second millennium BC... along with their German kinsmen. Skowronek, et al., inform us that they were part of ‘the youngest Indo-European group, certainly still sharing the same language, amongst whom we count the Germans, the Balts, and the Slavs’. Jerzy Skowronek, Mieczysław Tanty, Tadeusz Wasilewski. *Historia Słowian południowych i zachodnich* [The History of the Southern and Western Slavs] (Warszawa: Państwowy Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1988), p. 15.

in a large way with his first collection of poems, the *Básně Jana Kollára* [Poems of Jan Kollár]. Published in 1821, these poems, mainly Petrarchan sonnets inspired by his love for Friederika Schmidt, a young girl he met during his studies in Jena in 1817 (and married, at last, in 1835), were to become the core of *Slávy dcera* [Sláva's Daughter]. In this *chef d'oeuvre*, the particular, erotic theme centring on his love for Friederika expands into a consideration of Slavdom both in the present world and in the *Oltretomba*, where in Dantean fashion he visits Slavic Heaven and Hell to transmit his Pan-Slavic admonitions to his Slavic kinsmen.

SLÁVY DCERA: PUBLICATION HISTORY AND BREAKDOWN

Jan Kollár's *Slávy dcera* underwent four different printings in the first half of the nineteenth century. Five if we count *Básně* [Poems] from 1821, which contains among other lyrics eighty-six sonnets in the Petrarchan style. Most, if not all of these, were later incorporated into *Slávy dcera* proper. There might have been more. Jan Jakubec, whose 1903 edition of *Slávy dcera* was used for this translation, tells us that

The collection did not appear at all in the form that the poet himself gave it. Perhaps a quarter of the poems were not printed; Jungmann [to whom Kollár sent the manuscript] lacked the courage to submit the more boldly patriotic of the poems to the censor. But the censor did not even spare the erotic poems.¹⁰

It is the 1824 edition that first bears the title *Slávy dcera*. This collection contains 151 poems, and is the first to be divided into three portions, each bearing the title of a 'Slavic' river. Jakubec asserts that this was done under the influence of Lord Byron:

In the manner of Childe Harold, the poet sets off on a pilgrimage around lands that earlier had been Slavic, but now have been lost to the Slavs. Just as Byron weeps over the ruins of Greek and Roman glory and culture, So Kollár laments the vanished glory and might of the Slavs, heartbroken at the past sufferings of Slavdom, and not suppressing his anger at the damnable, vapid state of today.¹¹

To this version, Kollár also appends the introductory elegy, the 'Prelude' in blank verse, which will remain at the head of all subsequent editions. It is in

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¹⁰ Jan Jakubec, ed. *Slávy dcera, básně lyricko-epická v pěti zpěvích od Jana Kollára* (Prague: Nákladem J. Otty, 1903), p. 4.

¹¹ Jakubec, p. 7.

the 1824 version that Mína (Friederika) undergoes her spiritualisation. In the *Poems* from 1821, which are more or less clearly broken into two groups, sonnets and other lyrics, etc., Mína is the focus of the first, erotic cycle. In 1824 she expands — somewhat to her disadvantage — from appreciable, human lover into the aetherialised spirit of the Slavic nation, past, present, and future.

The form of a 'lyrical-epic poem in five cantos' with which we are familiar today first appeared in 1832 with the addition of a full 464 sonnets (of varying interest and quality), to raise the total count to 615. These are spread over five cantos, with two mythological rivers — Lethe and Acheron — added as Cantos IV and V to the earthly rivers mentioned heretofore. Despite his fondness for Kollár, Jan Jakubec comments upon the 1832 edition thus:

The significant increase in Kollár's poetic output [...] does not, however, mean a new expansion of his poetic power. [...] The majority of these poems are little better than prose: dry accounts from chronicles [...] supposedly ancient pagan ceremonies, superstitions and tales; anything that serves the poet's Slavic ideology.¹²

Antonín Měšťan concurs: "The 1832 issue [...] became something of a poetic encyclopaedia of Slavdom; meanwhile its poetic efficiency was greatly diminished".¹³ Questions of poetic quality set aside, with this edition, Kollár's new conception of *Sláva's Daughter* basically finds its final form. The last edition of the poem to be printed during his lifetime, that of 1845, added seven new sonnets to the cycle, and finally, the posthumous 1852 edition collected in the poet's *Díla básnická* [Poetic Works] contains twenty-three more sonnets composed between 1845 and 1851, appended to the final version.¹⁴ This would seem to suggest poems 90–113 of Canto V,¹⁵ but — according to the dating of the poems offered by Jakubec, following František Bačkovský's 1885 edition of the work,¹⁶ most if not all of those poems were written before 1832. Since the dating of the sonnets, which we reproduce in the translation, indicates the first printing of the sonnet in question, and since the entire number of sonnets dated with 1852 is exactly twenty-three, this leads us rather to conclude that the placement of these poems, appearing for the first time in the posthumous edition and sprinkled over three of the five cantos,¹⁷ was determined by someone other than the poet. How this was done — we assume thematically — and

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¹² Jakubec, p. 10.

¹³ Měšťan, p. 39.

¹⁴ Jakubec, p. 12.

¹⁵ Or poems 599–622 according to the numbering in the *Díla básnická*.

¹⁶ Jakubec, p. 13.

¹⁷ Poems marked 1852 are found in Cantos I (9), IV (6), and V (8).



CANTO I / SÁLA

1.

In Sála's regions, where her waters lave
the vales that spread their blooming kirtles wide,
which parted once before the mighty stride
of that great war-chief, Miliduch the brave,

hounded by bitter time and venomous knave,
Sláva, disgraced, on Heaven's mercy cried.
The gods who there in lofty peace reside
gathered to ponder how best her to save.

Long were the gods in heated council pent —
each offered for debate a remedy,
yet none carried the day: each vote, a draw

until Lada a virgin did present,
by Milek formed... Each ravished deity
gasped 'Aye!' in worship, of her charms in awe.

1822

2.

Many the tongues, my Sonnets sweet, that spurn
you like some ancient crones, who'll gripe and scold
their chirping prattle; for not being bold
enough to join their dancing, twirl and turn...

But limbs past middle-age — how should they churn
the sod with flashing feet? A crown that cold
white snow besprinkles yields no marigold
however hot the springtime sun may burn.

Let those judge you, who with impartial eye
discern unpassing from that bloomed to fade.
In your time you've made more than one love sigh!

Be true now to more stately measures. Stand
silent and wait — and watch, as through the glade
the Slavic graces trip close, hand in hand.

1824

3.

I covet no man's goods; debauchery
and drink have never held me in their thrall.
pastimes and games are much too trivial,
nor does the vain *haut monde* beguile me.

My eyes were never dazzled by money;
I've never thrilled to any bugle's call.
But should my gaze ever happen to fall
upon the fair sex — that's the end of me!

Before I'd ever heard of love, I'd start
thunderstruck. Whenever Kráska crossed my path
a warmth divine suffused my swelling heart.

Some sense a numen when the storm-winds race;
their blood will surge at thunder, battle's wrath;
I see God in each lovely woman's face.

1832

4.

Most beautiful of all the virtues is
that virtue that shrinks modestly from sight,
those eyes, that seek to dim their blazing light
in vain, behind their shyly drooping lids.

Heart, own her alone almighty — she who sheds
around her the sweet breath of paradise.
Seek such lips as express wholesome and wise
reason in melodious eloquence.

Reveal thyself, bright star! Where dost thou hide?
Dost thou truly exist, O priceless being?
Art thou the vain dream of an age of gold?

O no, she lives! She lives? Sing out, be bold
and rake in joy the lyre's trembling strings!
She lives! And only she shall be my bride!

1821

5.

In a green meadow stands an ancient lime,
 this land's most distant days remembering.
 Thither I'd gladly wend my way, when Spring
 lengthened the bright hours into summer-time.

And there I'd sigh in anguish, yearn, and pine;
 my secrets all to her in trust I'd bring.
 One day, my arms about her trunk twining
 I raised aloft these tear-filled eyes of mine

And cried: 'Ah you at least, my golden tree!
 Cast thy cool shade upon the shame and harms
 of my folk, who once held you a deity!'

The leaves then gently rustled overhead
 as with a living breath, and with shy tread,
 fair Sláva's daughter nestled in my arms.

1824

6.

Should I set out upon my lonely way
 into the world? Am I to stay, or go?
 How is this poor, tired mind of mine to know,
 which but grows murkier, day after day?

The rose that buds within my heart today
 soothes with its balm, but its thorns cause me woe.
 Am I to suffer this, and let it grow?
 Or root it from my breast, cast it away?

My eyes gush forth in tears, and suddenly —
 I'm laughing, overwhelmed with gaiety!
 I sob with grief — I'm dancing once again;

My friends, bear with me! That's all you can do.
 My scowling, bitter critics — as for you,
 just turn away. Leave me to my sweet pain...

1821

7.

The air's full of the blest clamour of bells.
In celebration of the parish feast,
the happy crowds throng all the bloom-strewn streets
and with theirs, my heart too rejoices, swells.

I press on to the little church as well;
My thrilling soul chivvies my laggard feet,
witless of Whom I was about to meet:
Mína. That joyous pealing was Fate's knell...

I'd barely entered, and my fleeting gaze
lit on a kneeling angel robed in white —
eyes fixed on book, intoning hymns of praise.

Then, when she raised her face — what did I see?
I tottered — in amazement or in fright — ?
The one I dreamed of at the linden tree!

1824

8.

Heracles, once, was met at a crossroads
by ladies twain: Luxury, fair of face,
and Labour, both of whom for pride of place
in his heart vied, striving to tempt him close.

The first tried flattery. The other chose
to woo him with an honest, careworn face —
promising little. Poverty, not grace
he opted for — the olive, not the rose.

And now, the same with me! It seems I have a
similar dilemma: two ladies fair
confront me: Krása here, and there — Sláva.

To which of these should I submit my oath?
I'm like a hunter, who has flushed two hares.
I turn, and turn again — I want them both!

1827



About the Author

Jan Kollár (1793–1852), Lutheran pastor and poet, Kollár is one of the most important poets of the Romantic Period in Central Europe. Born in Slovakia, a tireless defender of the rights of Slovaks, Croats, and other peoples in the Hungarian Kingdom subject to increasing Magyarisation, Kollár was nonetheless a Pan-Slav. In his view, all Slavs — Poles, Czechs, Russians, etc. — are not separate nations, but ‘tribes’ of one great Slavic nation. His greatest work of poetry is *Slávy dcera* (1821 – 1852), which proclaims his ideal of the cultural and political integration of the Slavic peoples of Europe. In five Cantos named after rivers both real and mythological, *Sláva’s Daughter* combines both the style of Petrarch’s *Il Canzoniere* with the epic breadth and motivation of Dante’s *Divine Comedy*.



About the Translator

Charles S. Kraszewski (born 1962) is a poet and translator, creative in both English and Polish. He is the author of three volumes of original verse in English (*Diet of Nails; Beast; Chanameed*), and two in Polish (*Hallo, Sztokholm; Skowycik*). He has also authored two satirical novels *Accomplices, You Ask?* and *At the Tone* (both San Francisco: Montag, 2021, 2024). He translates from Polish, Czech and Slovak. He is a member of the Union of Polish Writers Abroad (London) and the Association of Polish Writers (SPP, Kraków). In 2022, he was awarded the Gloria Artis medal (III Class) by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Poland, and in 2023 the ZAiKS award for Translation into a Foreign Tongue, presented by the Polish Society of Authors (ZAiKS).

‘O fair Slavenka! / You sing no more,’ laments the twenty-four year old Jan Kollár, wandering the ancient forests of Germany where Slavs once lived: ‘Where once the marble walls / of Perun’s palace rose on high, the posts / — O, shameful mockery! — now prop a byre.’ Born in Mošovce, in the Turiec region of what at the time was the Kingdom of Hungary, the Slovak Kollár (1793–1852), was to become one of the great poets of the Romantic period. His masterpiece *Sláva’s Daughter* [*Slávy dcera*, 1821–1851] is an epic striking both in its breadth, and intent. For although composed during the Czech and Slovak *national revival* period, the ‘nation’ that Kollár bewails, praises, and serves in this poem is ‘Slavdom’.

Sláva’s Daughter is unique in its unrelentingly aspirational Pan-Slavism. Kollár was of the opinion that Czechs, Slovaks, Ukrainians, Poles, Croatians, Russians, and all the rest were merely ‘tribes’ of the one Slavic nation, and their languages ‘dialects’ of one great Slavic speech. A Pan-Slav, he worked for ever greater cultural reciprocity between the ‘sons of Sláva’, which hopefully would lead to their political unification. As poetry, Kollár’s masterpiece is a bold and singular work of literature, which combines the style of Petrarch’s *Il Canzoniere* with the prophetic grandeur of Dante Alighieri’s *Divine Comedy*.

The story it tells develops over the space of 645 sonnets arranged into five peripatetic cantos. Along with Kollár’s narrator, we follow his *donna ideale* Mína, and Milek, the Slavic Cupid, as they lead us along the banks of Slavic rivers (Sála, Vltava, Danube), and those of Slavic Heaven and Hell (Lethe, Acheron) towards the great dawn of Pan-Slavic triumph. *Sláva’s Daughter*, which Glagoslav presents unabridged and annotated in the English translation of Charles S. Kraszewski, is a must read for all those interested in the poetry and history of the European nineteenth century.

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