

Krystyna Gawlikowska

"JOHN SOBIESKI ENTERING  
CRACOW BEFORE HIS CORONATION":  
Allegory of a Political Programme  
in the Etching of Romeyn de Hooghe

Among the graphic works that served to propagate John Sobieski's political programme, a special place is occupied by Romeyn de Hooghe's etching "John Sobieski Entering Cracow Before His Coronation" (Fig. 48). The main motif of this etching is the road covered by the victorious king from the *Templum virtutis* to the *Templum honoris*. The real route of the procession, which is shown in several stages of the coronation ceremony, has been given a symbolic meaning comprehensible to anyone who is familiar with the symbolism of the Baroque period. The triumphal procession of the victorious commander has been treated as the ancient triumph of the emperor, with the difference that the victor - shown amidst all attributes derived from classical heroic symbolism - does not drive a chariot but rides on horseback under a canopy carried by allegories of kingly virtues.

This triumphal scenery has in addition acquired the significance of an apotheosis, where the inscription "per ardua ad augusta" expresses the idea that the Herculean labours of the Polish hero and the heroic courage of John III have led him to the royal dignity: through virtue to honour, through difficulties to majesty.

The allegorical figures shown foreshadow the events that are to come: the driving out of the Turks from Europe, the return of the Ukraine to Poland and Sobieski's numerous victories over the enemies of his country. They also express expectations connected with the beginning of John III's reign: the return of the golden age and freedom and general prosperity under the sceptre of the new monarch.



48. Sobieski's arrival at the coronation ceremony in Cracow. Engraving by R. de Hooghe, 1675