

NIKOLAUS THURN

Christian Schesaeus and Heinrich Porsius The Classical and Vernacular Background

Abstract: Neo-Latin poetry of the 16th century is generally open to each of its regional, vernaculare literatures. The paper illustrates this fact by two epic poems: Christian Schesaeus' *Ruinae Pannonicae* and Heinrich Porsius' *Iter Byzantinum*. It argues that they cannot fully be understood without considering their relationship to the Hungarian poems of Sebastian Tinodi and the German tradition of "Neue Zeyttungen".

Key words: Christian Schesaeus, Heinrich Porsius, István Tinodi, Neue Zeyttung, Michael Eyzinger



To the researcher of neolatin-poetry, whose intellectual background and stylistic taste is usually formed by the study of classical Latin literature of the Augustan age, it is always puzzling to encounter a poetic text of the early modern age which seems to be standing in the tradition of Virgil and Horace and is, at the same time, obviously deficient in fulfilling its supposedly self-chosen goals: this leads to the impression of neo-latin literature as an often uninspired and always epigonal imitation of the classics. Far too often we forget that poems, like any other human artistic expression, are products of the entire social and historical background of their creators, and that neo-latin poetry cannot be read exclusively as a conversation between the classics and their early modern imitator, but must be regarded as a product of the whole cultural background of their poets and public, as well. By observing this very obvious, but far too often neglected fact, not only the poem as a stylistic piece of art changes its appearance, but also its contents and intended message may change dramatically: a rude imitation of a certain poem of Horace will turn out, in one of the following cases, to be an extremely efficient work of propaganda which, by referring to Horace, distinguishes itself from other, less cultivated kinds of propaganda; by imitating Virgil my other

case will turn out to be only one of the means for adapting vernacular historical-songs to the taste of the cultivated, contemporary public.

As the title of my paper already indicates I am speaking of the *Ruinae Pannonicae libri* of Christian Schesaeus in the tradition of Virgil's *Aeneis* and of Heinrich Porsius' *Itineris Byzantini libri* as in the tradition of Horace's *Iter Brundisinum*. Concerning the social and historical background I will focus exclusively on the vernacular poetic culture.

Christian Schesaeus

Christian Schesaeus was born in 1534 in Siebenbürgen/Erdély, studied 1555–1556 at Wittenberg, became first diacon of Klausenburg/Kolosvár and then priest of Tobsdorf/Táblás (Dupus); perhaps in 1571 he gained the title of 'poeta laureatus' given to him by Stephan Báthory and he died in 1578.¹ Parts of his *Ruinae Pannonicae libri*, which are known to us as an epic of 12 books, were published 1571 at Wittenberg under the title *Ruinae Pannonicae libri IV*. This publication contains four books about the events of the years 1540 to 1552 and three other books mainly about the siege of Szigetvár in 1566. The work is dedicated to the Voivod of Transsilvania, István Báthory, and proclaims the intention of the author to inform a European public of the Hungarian struggle against the Turks.²

While the modern edition of Csonka complements the seven books of this edition with five other books found only in manuscripts so as to create a twelve book composition comparable to Virgil's *Aeneid*, the original printed version has no such compositorial plan: the three books on the Szigetvár events are isolated from the first four books, which gave the edition its title.³ These four books are divided into: events from the death of János Szapolyai to the turkish occupation of Buda in 1541 in the first; the abdication of queen Isabella, occupation of Lippa and death of the so-called 'frater Georgius' in

¹ *Schriftsteller-Lexikon der Siebenbürger Deutschen: Bio-bibliographisches Handbuch für Wissenschaft, Dichtung und Publizistik*. Begr. Joseph TRAUSCH, fortgef. Friedrich SCHULLER – Hermann Adolf HIENZ. Köln – Weimar – Wien, 1983ff., vol. 3, p. 168–175; Christian SCHESAEUS: *Opera quae supersunt omnia*. Ed. Franciscus CSONKA. Budapest, 1979. (hereafter: CSONKA 1979) here: p. 11–17.

² CSONKA 1979. Intr. 2,19: "Idque eo fine factum, ut et aliae exterae nationes, ab hac illuvie Mahometica immunes et liberae, gemitus et planctus compeditorum, sedentium in tenebris et in umbra mortis exaudiant, et ad commiserationem excitentur."

³ *Ruinae Pannonicae libri XII.*, Wittenberg, 1571. A list of later editions and manuscripts in CSONKA 1979. p. 20–24. I'm dealing here exclusively with the 1571 edition and its presumed intents; the fact that there were indeed later printings of at least parts of the work (and that it obviously gained some european interest) has – as in Porsius' work – nothing to do with my opinion that its principal goal was to reach a more restrained, transilvanian public.

the second book; the siege and taking of Temesvár in book three and the defense of Eger in book four. In this form the poem greatly differs not only from its supposed model, the *Aeneid*, but also from neo-latin epic poems of some fame as the *Africa* of Petrarch or the *Hesperis* of Basinio da Parma: it has no protagonist, nor does it have an artificial, literary construction. It appears at first sight to be a simple verse chronicle. But, on the other hand, the imitation of classical epic style is not to be neglected: Schesaeus makes extensive use of epic comparisons, vivid speech, battle descriptions and, for example, references to Virgil's Dido every time he speaks of queen Isabella.

Both the chronicle style and vivid description can be found together in the battle-songs of Sebastian Tinódi too, even if the classical background and epic comparisons are missing. Connections to Tinódi are well known already, but in fact he is usually considered to be Schesaeus' main source for his first books rather than to have influenced his style.⁴ Tinódi was edited by Johannes Sambucus in 1554 at Klausenburg, where Schesaeus had been deacon, after 1556. While being a Transylvanian Saxon, he obviously did appreciate Hungarian 'folk-songs' as well, as it is shown in his twelfth and unedited book (12,549–550) which ends with the people singing: *Ungarica funebria cantica lingua / Moesta canens*.⁵

The idea that Schesaeus not only knew the works of Tinódi but that they served him as an additional, poetical model, is supported by the fact that

⁴ See e.g.: István HEGEDÜS: *Schesaeus' Ruinae Pannonicae című épikus költeménye* [Ruinae Pannonicae: an epic poem by Christian Schesaeus]. Budapest, 1916. p. 18–20 (he already mentions structural correspondances between Tinódi and Schesaeus); Gergely CSIFFÁRY: *Christian Schesaeus' irodalmi munkásságának egeri vonatkozásai* [The work of Ch. Schesaeus and its relationship to Eger]. In: *Magyarországi végoárak a XVI–XVII. században*. Eger, 1983. p. 154–164 (with other possible sources; but Csiffáry's knowledge of Latin is – to me – not beyond all suspects, and so his suggestions need to be read with care).

⁵ Indeed the end of the siege of Egervár could refer to a "siralmas ének" too: When Schesaeus is speaking of Hungary as between Germans and Turks (RP 4,715–719: "*Arcigeri teneant Euxini littora Thraces, / Militet ad Rhenum laxis gens Teutona braccis, / Nos inter qorum saevissima bella manemus / Ceu manus imposita incudi, cui desuper ingens / Malleus incumbit, pressamque gravi obterit ictu*"), he may refer to Peter Bornemisza, *Siralmas Énnéköm* (vv. 1–9): *Siralmas énnéköm tetűled megváltom, / Áldott Magyarország tőled eltávoznom, / Valjon s mikor leszen jó Budában lakásom? // Az földöldet bírák az kevély nímötök, / Szerémséget bírák az fene törökök. / Valjon s mikor leszön jó Budában lakásom? // Engömet kergetnek az kevély nímötök / Engöm környülvettek az pogán törökök, / Valjon s minkor leszen jó Budában lakásom? (...)*". Cited from: Balassi Bálint és a 16. század költői [Bálint Balassi and the poets of the 16th century]. I–II. Budapest, 1979. here: I. p. 741, note 186. Bornemisza's song is dating from 1557, but it remained unprinted; Schesaeus must have heard it either sung, or the idea appeared as a common-place in other mourning-songs too. One wonders how a German public would have reacted to those, anti-german verses; and this is another argument in favour of a more restrained (principal) public.

entire songs of Tinódi correspond to entire books of the *Ruina*: as Schesaeus' first book was entitled *Testamentum Johannis regis, Ferdinandi et reginae Isabellae dissidium de regno Ungariae, nec non Budae per Solimannum imperatorem Turcarum occupationem*, Tinódis first book of the *Erdéli História* begins with a summary:

János királ testamentoma: Szulimán császár indulása: királ fiát meglátása: kincses Budának elfoglalása (stb.)
(The testament of king John, the march of emperor Soliman, the visit to the kings son, the taking of dear Buda etc.)

The fifth and last book of his *História* contains the death of the so-called 'György Barát', which is the end of the second book of Schesaeus' *Ruina*, so the first two books of Schesaeus correspond with the five books of Tinódis *História*. The third book of the *Ruina* obviously corresponds to Tinódis' song of the siege of Temesvár, and the fourth to the two versions of Tinódis' description of the siege of Egervár. But we can go even further and suggest that there is a correspondance not only of individual books, but also of the entire construction of both works: a certain period is narrated in different books which must be considered as a whole: in this way the four books of the *Ruina Pannonica* correspond to the five books of the *Erdéli História* as does Schesaeus' three books of the siege of Szigethvár to Tinódis four books from the longer version of the siege of Egervár.

Of course, if one looks at the narration itself, there seems to be a large distance between the style of the Hungarian song and the Latin epic: obviously Schesaeus is imitating classical literature by using comparisons, speeches, ecphrasis and so on. But the difference between the neolatin epic and its classical model Virgil is at least as large as well. Let us take the dialogue between the captured Losonczy and his Turkish opponent in the *Ruina* 3,447–460; they are arguing about which of them is to be called a 'dog'. Ahmed Pasha calls Losonczy: *immunde canis*, he replies: *canis es!*

"Cur, immunde canis, diuturni tempore belli
 Ausus es invictis occurrere Caesaris armis
 Totque necare viros, quorum vel sanguine renum
 450 Armipotens potuit, non arx haec una, parari?"
 Cui dux intrepidus: "Canis es; tibi dextera fallax
 Mensque parum fidei memor est, non foedera Caesar,
 Nec pacta ulla colunt, quos vestit purpura, bassae.
 Ante id si scissem, longe sub Tartara plures
 455 Agmine de Scythico misissem vindice dextra.
 Bassa furens regerit: "Memori stat mente repostum,
 Sub iuramenti specie deceptus ut Ulman

Per vos Lippensi veniens ex arce dolose
 Fas et ius contra spoliatus adiverit Albam:
 460 Illa parit vobis ingens iniuria damnum.”⁶

I doubt very much if any other Latin hexametric poem has any such a conversation, but indeed we have a very similar dialog in Tinódi.

Nagy haragjában kezdé feddenie:
 Mire császárnak nem akart engednie?
 Erejét vélte semminek lennie.
 400 „Sok vitézét, eb, erüléd vesznie!”
 Eszt mongya úrfi: „Eb az ti hitetök,
 Császárral, basák, békök hitetlenök,
 Ha tuttam volna, oly ebek legyetök,
 Sokkal több lött volna itt elvesztetök.”
 405 No, basa szóla: „Hitetlenök ti vattok,
 Uluma béknek mind hitöt attatok,
 Másfelől utába rátámatatok,
 Itt azért ebek, kelle maradnotok.”⁷

Furthermore, both poets refer in their final speech of Ahmed Pasha to a preceding case of treason, that to Ulumán Beg, and in doing so they refer the reader back to episodes they have both treated in earlier books: Schesaeus in the second book of the *Ruina*, Tinódi in the forth of his *Erdéli História*. Schesaeus is therefore imitating the style of Tinódis historical-songs to the same extent as he is imitating classical, latin epic; his epic is something of a mixture of both, the latin tradition and the vernacular.

Is it therefore true what Schesaeus declaires in his introduction to István Báthory, that he intends to inform a European public about Hungarian affairs? I have my doubts. On some occasions Schesaeus translates hungarian names into latin: Bornemisza is twice (4,125–126; 4,645) explained – indirectly – as *a-bort-nem-isza*, – *he-who-drinks-no-wine* – this gives us the impression that Schesaeus does indeed intend to help the non-hungarian public in understanding foreign names. And in one of the supporting epigrams at the end of the edition the lector is asked not to be upset with the usage of barbarian, that is Hungarian, names.⁸ But in 3,726 Schesaeus mentions a certain *Matthias Ordeg* and explains his name: *Cui ferale datum scelerato a daimone nomen.*

⁶ SCHESAEUS, *Ruinae Pannonicae* 3,447–460.

⁷ Sebestyén TINÓDI: *Krónika*. Ed. Ferenc Szakály. Budapest, 1984. An online version in: <http://mek.oszk.hu/01100/01100/index.phtml>; Tinódi writes (*III. Temesvár vv.* 397–408).

⁸ See edition CSONKA 1979. Appendix, 3. Franciscus Valentinianus Mediensis, v. 17–22: “*Id saltem petimus: Veniam dabis, optime Lector, / Mixta quod Ausoniis barbara verba legis. / Causa subest: pauci celebrarunt carmine vates / Bella Saracenum Panmonicumue ducum. / Necdum trita via est flectendi nomina Thracum, / Mollibus ut constent barbara quaeque sonis. etc’*”.

Mátyás Ördög is the name Tinódi uses as well, but in fact he was called Erasmus Teufel and Ördög is only the Hungarian translation of his name. Why should a German speaker like Schesaeus in an epic printed in Germany and destined to a non-Hungarian public avoid the German form of the name, choose the Hungarian form and explain this horrible name at all?⁹ Moreover, why does Schesaeus call the traitor of Egervár István Hegedűs Stephan Citharaedus? Is it to obscure his Hungarian roots? Is he speaking of Mecskesy István, when he cryptically mentions a (4,295) *dux, cui dederat 'vigilantia' nomen*? If he is doing so, – who in Germany could know that 'méc's' is the Hungarian word for an 'oil-lamp'? In German, mainly Lutheran neo-Latin poetry, it is a custom to translate German names into Latin or Greek, but this is for the German speaker fond of a poetic Latinisation of his barbaric tongue. Why shouldn't the same be true for the Hungarian Protestant?

The supporters of the *Ruina*, as they can be identified from the various poems in praise of the edition at its end, were all Transsilvanians from Medyes/Mediasch, on the border of the Saxon/Hungarian inhabited part of the country and only 15 km from Tobsdorf (and Schesaeus signed as 'Mediensis', too). This leads me to the conclusion that the *Ruina Pannonica* edition of 1571 served mainly two objectives: firstly, it presents a *cronica* in the commonly appreciated style of the Hungarian *historiás énekek* to the Transilvanian educated public;¹⁰ secondly, it contains Lutheran propaganda destined to readers of all faiths, including namely the Catholic Voivod of Transsilvania, the humanistically educated Stephan Báthory.¹¹ Only in a very, very limited dimension was its goal to imitate the classics; on the contrary: imitating the classics was the mean for its goal to present vernacular culture to an educated public.

Heinrich Porsius

The case will be different with Heinrich Porsius or Porsch, a Humanist of the Catholic belief who nonetheless had studied at the Lutheran universities of Marburg and Wittenberg, but changed later for Italy and finally became

⁹ Tinódi himself mentions his German name in: V. Ördög *Mátyás Veszödelme*, vv. 1-2: *Már halljátok vesztét az Ördög Mátyásnak, / Más nyelven Taifelnak nevezik és mongyák*. So, if Schesaeus knew his songs, he deliberately chose the Hungarian form.

¹⁰ Indeed the location of the printing, Wittenberg, does not signify the intention of divulgation to a European public, as it seems at first sight. The alternative, Kolozsvár/Klausenburg, was not a place for the Lutheran press and was dominated by Calvinistic printers up to 1571.

¹¹ By inserting two poems about the reformation in Transsilvania at the end of book one, Schesaeus is making propaganda for the Lutheran cause; his dedicatee, nonetheless, was of the Catholic faith, so the two poems appear more or less hidden in the middle of the text.

professor of poetry at the university of Vienna. He was secretary of the emperor from 1585, 'Kammerrat' of Hungary and envoy to different courts; born at Friedberg/Wittenau in 1556 he died at Vienna 1610. His *Itineris Byzantini libri tres* appeared as part of a collection at Frankfurt a. Main in 1583 and were promoted by no other than Johannes Sambucus in an introductory poem.¹² In his preface Porsius states that he wants to describe places and people he met on the diplomatic mission to the Sublime Porte in 1579, but that much of his material was added after his return. He concludes that one could call his work more a historical poem than a *hodoeporicon*.¹³ In fact, Porsius not only adds much historical information about the places he travelled through, he is, by doing so, totally neglecting his duties as a writer of an *iter* to the extent that the specialist in humanistic *hodoeporica* and collector of most of them, Hermann Wiegand, complains: "daß dieses Gedicht ebensogut in der Gelehrtenstube ohne persönliche Teilnahme an der Gesandtschaftsreise hätte entstehen können."¹⁴

This is most true in the first book of the *Iter Byzantinum*: Only by using the famous map of Hungary from Ortelius, based on the help of Sambucus, could Porsius have composed three quarters of his travel to Istanbul, and by using Ortelius' entire work he could have spared himself the unpleasant trouble of travelling at all. His technique is simply to mention in one or two verses the departure from a certain place and the arrival in another; only the marginal notes inform us of the date of the departure and make us sure that such a journey had been undertaken in reality. In the whole first book there are only two descriptions which really tell us that something happened: the Austrian diplomats met the officials at Buda, returned directly to the ports and stayed there for some time – as the margin informs us: three days; and

¹² Henrici PORSII: *Itineris Byzantini Libri 3, Carminum Libri 2, Epigrammatum 2. Poeta, & historia belli Persici, gesti inter Murathem III. Turcarum & Mehemetem Hodabende, Persarum regem, breviter ac verè conscripta*. Frankfurt a. Main, 1583; digital copy to be found in the online-collection 'camena' under: <http://www.uni-mannheim.de/mateo/camena/AUTBIO/porsius.html>

¹³ PORSIUS, *Iter* fol. 7: "Itaque peregrinationem meam, maritimam et terrestrem tam in via, quam in succisiois quibusdam horis (ne et tempus et sumptus perderem) breviter exaratam in tres libros (sive potius libellos) redegi, in quibus praecipua, perque illud iter memoratu digniora attigi, numerisque sum complexus: neque solum praesentem cuiusque loci aut populi faciem statumve, sed praeteritum quoque notavi, atque ita insigniores Regni Hungarici, Turcici atque Graeci res ac mutationes ex variis historiis collectas inserui, idque succinctissime neque (ut opinor) prorsus ieiune: ut opusculum hoc non tam hodoeporicum, quam historicum videri possit." Porsius' *iter* is very different of what he declares in his introduction and the description of his travel is written 'prorsus ieiune', but the following epigrams etc. do indeed tell something of the 'populi faciem' and may vindicate his proposition.

¹⁴ Hermann WIEGAND: *Hodoeporica: Studien zur neulateinischen Reisedichtung d. deutschen Kulturraums im 16. Jh.* Baden-Baden, 1984. (hereafter: WIEGAND 1984) here: p. 173–176.

later the legation could not enter the city of Sofia because of the plague. There is no description of the ruins of Buda, nor any description of the effects of the plague. If one compares this naked *iter* with its direct models, the *Iter Brundisinum* of Horace and the *Iter Byzantinum* of Favolius,¹⁵ one wonders how it could gain the attention of a Humanist and insider like Johannes Sambucus and, even more amazingly, how it could be printed again by Reusner in his second edition of collections of *hodoeporica*.

Was this due to its narrative quality in recounting the historical events concerning the cities or countries visited? That this, much more extended portion of the poem, informs the reader also of nothing more than merely the facts, can be easily seen by comparing the fate of the German besiegers of Buda in 1541, who were overcome by the Turks:

185 “Pars aliqua est servata fuga, pars maior ab hoste
 Capta dedit saevae spectacula turpia mortis.
 Miles erat grandi ante alios miraque statura, (in marg.) foede spectaculum
 Vix genua aequanti qui nano forte dabatur
 Mactandus: stricto puerili hic circuit harpo,
 190 Ingeminansque ictus vix tandem sternit, agensque
 Ludibrium, vitam laceratis artubus aufert.”¹⁶

Porsius not only lacks the vitality of Schesaeus' version,¹⁷ but also cuts out most of the vivid description of his presumed source, Paolo Giovio.¹⁸ Even when Porsius deals with pathetic situations such as the German giant dying by the hand of a Turkish gnome, what remains is nothing but a dry recounting of the facts. And, of course, this is only one example: you can find in Porsius' history neither speeches nor comparisons, you will not even find battle-scenes or geographical excursions.

¹⁵ On the later (Hugo Favolius, 1523–1585, *Hodoeporicum Byzantium*), see WIEGAND 1984 p. 150–173.

¹⁶ PORSIUS, *Iter* 1,185–191 (fol. A5r). This is, by the way, one of the most (!) vivid descriptions in the first book of the *Iter*.

¹⁷ SCHESAEUS, *Ruina* 1,182–187. “Pars gladio perit, pars gurgite mersa profundo / Dum superare studet vicini littora Pesthi, / Sed potior numerus, flexis post terga lacertis, / Vincula crudelis subit imperiosa tyranni, / Quem tandem adveniens fera per ludibria Caesar / Ante oculos gladio iussit mactare cruento.” For a comparison of the passages it should not be forgotten that this is the description of what Porsius gives only in his first two lines; Schesaeus does not know the story of the Turkish gnome (nor does Tinódi).

¹⁸ Paolo GIOVIO, *Historiarum sui temporis* (Paris, 1533) lb. 30, 255F: “Eminebat inter captivos excelsae proceritatis Noricus miles: hunc in contemptum Germanicae gentis pomilioni, qui erat in delitiis filiorum, capite praealta captivi genua vix adaequanti, occidendum tradidit, ita ut indignae necis iniuriam crudeli contumelia cumlaret, cum diu incurvo puerili acinace, per lusum risumque caesis cruribus prostratus vir ingens iugularetur a nano, qui inter adhortationum ludibria repetitis ictibus, dum aegre perfoderet, eo spectaculo principum oculos satiarat.”

Looking at classical models would lead to the false conclusion of a poet not able to do his job. We have to look again at vernacular, this time German publications. In the very same year that Porsius' *iter* was printed at Frankfurt am Main, the first "Meßrelation" appeared on the fair of Frankfurt in 1583. It was compiled by the Austrian Humanist Michael Eyzinger,¹⁹ printed in Cologne, and contained the events of the previous year. Written in prose, the "Meßrelationen" or "relationes historicae" were to be published twice a year to the fairs of Frankfurt and Dresden from 1588.²⁰ They were developed on the tradition of the so-called "Neue Zeyttung", flyers produced since the end of the 15th-century originating in Germany and written in prose as well as in verse. The so-called "Zeitungslied" differed from the prose versions only in their poetic form. Both news in prose and in verse had in common a lack of rhetorical ornamentation, presenting only the bare facts. This does not signify that the "Neue Zeyttungen" were intended to be objective: quite the opposite, the fiction of presenting only facts was a means to influence the public, by selecting and inventing. Talking about the newest cruelties of the Turks or Spaniards, sourcerers, earth-quakes, inundations and comets was a means of propaganda. I mention two examples just to illustrate the similarities of Porsius' *iter* and the German flyers: in 1581 a flyer of 8 pages was dedicated to recently sighted comets; corresponding to their appearance it tells us of the historical events supposedly due to the comets; the description of what happened in the Turkish empire in 1578 is – in its naked form – similar to the style of Porsius.²¹ In 1590 – seven years after the *iter* but contemporary enough

¹⁹ Michael Eyzinger (Eiczing, Aitzing etc., 1530–1598) is the son of Christoph Freiherr v. Eyzing v. Schrättenthal (1501–1563), so at least: *Neue Deutsche Biographie* (Berlin, 1953) vol. 1, p. 119; his brothers, Wolfgang and Paul v. Aitzing (Austrian ambassador in Istanbul from 1583 to 1585), had been leaders of the diplomatic mission in 1579; so direct interferences between Porsius and him are very probable and the appearance of the *relatio historica* and the *Iter Byzantinum* in the same year might be something more than a mere coincidence. One has, however, to be aware of the fact that Christoph was of the Lutheran belief, Michael of the Catholic; Porsius' own position seems to be ambivalent.

²⁰ Cf.: Michael SCHILLING: *Bildpublizistik der frühen Neuzeit*. Tübingen, 1990; Karl SCHOTTENLOHE – Johannes BINKOWSKI: *Flugblatt und Zeitung, Ein Wegweiser durch das gedruckte Tagesschrifttum*. Bd. 1. Von den Anfängen bis zum Jahre 1848. München, 1985. (neu hg., eingel. u. ergänzt von Johannes BINKOWSKI, Erstdruck: Berlin 1922), here: p. 225–235.

²¹ 3. "Warhafftige Beschreibung / Was sich zugetragen hat / von Kriegen / Unglück / Wunderzeichen / zwischen der zeit / da der Comet / Anno 1577 erschienen / Und wie viel Cometen gestanden haben / Von der allgemeinen Suedfluth an / biß auff die jetzt zween brennenden Cometen / Anno. MDLXXX. (Bild: Comet) Diese zwei Cometen zeigen uns ahn / In diesem 1580 Jar / groß noth / truebsal / unnd Manche gefahr. // Gedruckt Anno 1581." Digital copy be found on: <http://digbijzcoll.library.uu.nl/collectie.php?lang=nl&collectie>. As an example cf. the newest events from the Ottoman empire: "[...] 6. Der Koenig in Persia-reiche / streit gegen den Tuercken mit macht / achtzig Tausendt Mann zugleiche / sind

to serve as an illustration – a flyer of 48 pages was printed three times, with some variations; it is ascribed to the German poet Georg Rollenhagen and bears the title of "Der Post-Reutter"; modern literary studies define this flyer as a *relatio historica* in the sense of Michael Eyzingers "Mess-Relationes".²² In a vivid dialogue the so-called "Hinkender Bote" or "lame messenger" tells the events of the year 1588, while the "Post-Reutter" tells of the events of 1589. Here we have – as in other, earlier relations in prose – the fiction that to tell of historical deeds it is necessary to have been there personally, while it is not necessary at all to describe the locations one is supposed to have visited.

It is obvious that Porsius is not writing in the genre of the *Neue Zeyttungen* nor the *relationes historicae*; his goal is not to inform the readership of recent events but, quite the opposite, of events of the past which led to the Turkish occupation of the places he visited.²³ So his public is not the man on the street hungry for the freshest events but the educated reader interested in far-away places and their history.

But Porsius borrowed more from the *Neue Zeyttung* than the bare style of recounting history: in his 32 introductory verses he complains about, but still ultimately defends, the need of the Habsburg empire to pay tribute to the Sublime Porte, which was the actual reason for the legation. All his histories serve to the purpose of this defence: in his travel into the past Porsius fails to find any encouraging story of the fight against the Turks, not even the successful battle of János Hunyadi is praised as a sign of hope, and nearly at the end of the first book, telling of events from as far away as the year 1395 Porsius writes (1,341–342): *Cum mallem laeta referre, / nil nisi tristia cano*. So – bare historical facts, as in the *Neue Zeyttungen*, are only a means to influence

blieben in 3. schlacht / Ofen und Pest lied schaden / durch groß Erdbeben und Feuer / der Tuerck martert ohn gnaden / viel Christen fromm mit ungehewr."

²² To be found (like above) on: <http://digbijzcoll.library.uu.nl/collectie.php?lang=nl&collectie=10>. Cf.: Dietmar PEIL: Der Hinkende Both, der Post Both und der Post Reuter. Drei gereimte Flugschriften aus der Zeit um 1589 und die Probleme ihrer Edition. In: *Editionsdesiderate zur Frühen Neuzeit, Beiträge zur Tagung der Kommission für die Edition von Texten der Frühen Neuzeit*. Hrsg. Hans-Gert Roloff. (Chloe, Beihefte zum Daphnis, Bd. 24/1), Amsterdam – Atlanta, 1997. p. 209–230.

²³ Furthermore, for many locations he is talking of two different historical stories, of which only the last is necessarily connected with the Turks. By travelling east, these histories come from a more and more remote past. This is due not only to the subsequent Turkish conquests from east to west, but also to the authors selection, because he tells earlier stories from Buda of 1529, Belgrade 1439, Serbia 1395 and Bulgaria 1212 and in doing so, he maintains his journey into the past even there, where it is not necessary. So his voyage is not only one in space from the west to the east but one in time, too: from the 16th century to the 13th. And in the following two books, describing the city of Konstantinopel and the return of the legation to Italy, Porsius touches on stories of antiquity, too, going further and further back in time.

his public; his goal is to make propaganda for the politics of the court of Vienna; this explains the lack of vivid descriptions of the travel as well as the sober style in telling history. Everybody acquainted with the style of the *Neue Zeyttungen* would have understood that Porsius' *iter* was not written to be an artistic *hodoeporicon* like Horacens *Iter Brundisimum* nor a kind of epic like Favolius' *Iter Byzantinum*, but that it was a fine piece of propaganda serving Habsburg politic interests and therefore could justifiably be free of every rhetorical pomp or poetic ornamentation.

Conclusion

If it is true that neither Schesaeus nor Porsius could be fully understood without their regional roots in the vernacular culture, then their poems cannot be defined as European literature in opposition to regional, vernacular literature, but they must be seen as part of a regional, plurilingual literature. Every latin poem, which is inspired also by its regional, vernacular background, is indeed part of its regional, plurilingual literature. This does however not lead to the conclusion that neolatin poetry as a whole could be divided into regional, perhaps even national literatures. The cases of Schesaeus and Porsius are by no means exclusive exceptions: neo-latin poetry of the 16th-century is generally open to each of its regional, vernacular literatures. Italian latin poems are inspired by the sonetts of Petrarch, french poems by Ronsard, english by Chaucer and so on. This tendency defines neo-latin poetry of the 16th century as a supernational, european literature adapting each regional, vernacular particularities.

But it remains true that Schesaeus', Porsius' and in fact many others work was firstly written for a regional market of educated people and that their explicit intentions to be read by a european public are nothing but – propaganda. He who does not know the conventions of a foreign vernacular culture or language will not wholly understand their intentions and will notice the aberrations of classical models with horror, but without any explanation. Only by knowing that it is in fact the common custom of neolatin literature to absorb each different, regional culture will he be able to value the work he is reading as at the same time strange and familiar.

