

Renaissance humanism in the age of the Jagiellonian kings in Hungary (1490–1526)

Farkas Gábor Kiss* 

Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Received: January 9, 2022 • Accepted: February 28, 2022

Published online: October 18, 2022

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ABSTRACT

The present study offers a re-evaluation of literary production in Hungary under the Jagiellonian kings Wladislas II and Louis II. Traditionally, the literary works produced in this period have been contrasted to the blossoming of humanist literature under King Matthias, and disregarded in many respects. The aim of this study is to make a survey of the main authors and other agents of the literary culture of this period and to stress that this age experienced an unseen growth and expansion in late medieval and humanist scholarly and lay culture. While János Horváth called the authors of this period “humanists with party allegiances”, I argue that their stronger “party allegiance” is, in fact, the direct result of the steady growth in the number of intellectuals with a modern, humanistic educational outlook, and of a less centralized state.

KEYWORDS

King Wladislas II, King Louis II, Jagiellonian age, humanism in Hungary

Traditionally, literary and cultural life under the Jagiellonian kings Wladislas II and Louis II had been viewed with a certain suspicion in Hungarian historiography. Whereas the rule of King Matthias (1458–1490) has been regarded as the heyday of the medieval Hungarian kingdom, historians writing about the following decades often tended to take over word by word the moralizing chastisement of early 16th century humanists against the vices of the nobility and the clergy. József Fögel, author of two fundamental monographs on the courts of the two Jagiellonian kings, Wladislas II and Louis II, wrote in 1913: “Archbishop Bakócz or bishop Szathmári

* Corresponding author. E-mail: kiss.farkas@btk.elte.hu

acted as tyrannically as they wished. The higher aristocracy stripped the nobility of their rights by force or by trickery. They have squandered the income of the country without remorse. Profiteering, party strife, confusion and destruction appeared everywhere.”¹ This traditional, negative image of the cultural trends under the two Jagiellonian kings has been corrected in many respects in the recent years. The aim of this study is to present these findings and to provide a balanced summary of the cultural novelties of this period.

After the death of Matthias, many Italian humanists left the court for Italy (Taddeo Ugoletti, the librarian of the Corvinian library, the Dominican historiographer Pietro Ranzano, Bartolomeo Fonzio, Francesco Fontana, and probably Galeotto Marzio, as well),² but several decided to remain. Most important among them was Antonio Bonfini, who was entrusted by Matthias to compose a humanist history of the medieval kingdom of Hungary, and started his work in 1488.³ After the death of Matthias, Wladislas II urged him to finish his historiographical project, and he received financial support and a title of nobility in 1492 for his efforts.⁴ Although he returned to Ferrara in 1492–93 for a while,⁵ he continued his *Decades* until 1497, when he reached the events of July 1496, but suffered a stroke, and died in Hungary in the spring of 1502.⁶ Writing a humanist history of the kingdom was of central importance to the royal court, and therefore the text was presented in a parchment copy to the royal library even before the entire project could have been finished.⁷ The surviving fragments of the presentation copy (Budapest, Széchényi National Library, cod. lat. 434) are written in neat humanist minuscule letters, for which the scribe received the title of nobility, as well, which shows that the cultural ideals of the royal court did not change with the coming of a new king.

Beside Bonfini, Francesco Cinzio Benincasa, another humanist of the Marche region also remained in the royal court. Both have been praised because of their career in the Hungarian court in a poem by the celebrated philosopher and compatriot Lodovico Lazzarelli:

¹József Fögel, *II. Ulászló udvartartása* (Budapest, 1913), 9. This reticence on the cultural currents under the Jagiellonian kings is still perpetuated in several articles, e.g. Valery Rees, ‘Buda as a center of Renaissance and humanism’, in *Medieval Buda in context*, ed. Balázs Nagy (Leiden, 2016), 472–493. On the traditionally negative image of the Jagiellonian period in Hungarian historiography, see Stanka Kuzmová, ‘The memory of the Jagiellonians in the Kingdom of Hungary and in Hungarian and Slovak national narratives’, in: *Remembering the Jagiellonians*, ed. Natalia Nowakowska, (London, 2019), 71–100.

²Another major figure, Francesco Bandini probably died in Hungary soon after 1489. Paul Oskar Kristeller, ‘An Unpublished Description of Naples by Francesco Bandini’, in id., *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters* (Rome, 1956), vol. 1, 395–435, here 401, and id., ‘Francesco Bandini and his consolatory dialogue upon the death of Simone Gondi’, *ibid.*, 411–435, here 413. See also Rózsa Feuer-Tóth, *Art and humanism in Hungary in the Age of Matthias Corvinus* (Budapest, 1990), 58–59.

³Péter Kulcsár, ‘Bonfini-kéziratok’, *Magyar Könyvszemle* 111 (1995), 214–237, here 223.

⁴Ladislao Tóth, ‘Analecta Bonfiniana’, *Corvina* 9 (1929) 182–204; Giulio Amadio, *La vita e l’opera di Antonio Bonfini* (Montalto Marche, 1930); Gerhard Rill, ‘Antonio Bonfini’, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Rome, 1970), vol. 12, 28–30; Manuela Martellini (ed.), *Antonio Bonfini (1427–1502) umanista e storico dell’Ungheria e i Bonfini da Patrignone* (Montalto delle Marche, 2018).

⁵Giovanni Mercati, ‘Attorno a Marco Antonio Sabellico. I. Di una corrispondenza fra Antonio Bonfini e il Sabellico e di una dimora del Bonfini in Ferrara’, in id., *Ultimi contributi alla storia degli umanisti*. Fasc. 2., (Vatican, 1939), 1–9.

⁶Péter Kulcsár, ‘Bonfini-kéziratok’, *Magyar Könyvszemle* 111 (1995) 214–237, here 222.

⁷Katalin Fülep, ‘Bonfini Rerum Ungaricarum Decades c. művének harmadik töredéke’, *Magyar Könyvszemle* 100 (1984) 340–348.



His possem, Antoni, te iungere, te quoque Cynthi,

At vos nunc vates Pannonis ora tenet.

Inclyta Mathiae refovent vos atria regis,

Solus hic Aonides [-is] nos fovet hospitio.⁸

To these, I would add you, Antonio [Bonfini], and Cinzio, you, as well, but both of you are held by the Pannonian land as poets. The court of King Matthias supports you now, and only he assists us with the hospitality of the Muse.⁹

Nevertheless, his only activity recorded in Hungary during the reign of King Wladislas II was the construction of a ship under the castle of Nándorfehérvár (Belgrade) in 1494.¹⁰ Another Italian humanist, who was already in the service of King Matthias, but decided to remain was Iulius Caesar de Milio (Giulio Cesare de Milio), a physician of Piacenza, who resided in Hungary at least from 1489 until 1501, and became a royal physician of King Matthias, and remained in this function also under Wladislas II.¹¹ Unlike Bonfini or Benincasa, he took up contacts with the new Moravian and Austrian humanist circles around Wladislas II, and his only surviving epigram written in praise of Conrad Celtis in the *Episodia sodalitates litterariae Danubianae* (Vienna, 1497) reveals that he was a member of the freshly founded Celtis' Danubian society of humanists.¹²

Just like his Italian peers, the Dalmatian Felix Petancius Ragusinus (Feliks Petančić of Dubrovnik) arrived in Buda in the last years of Matthias' reign, and he started to work as a scribe and a miniaturist in the royal court. After the death of Matthias, he left for his native Dubrovnik, but soon after, he returned to Hungarian services as the chancellor of the castle of Senj on the Adriatic coast. He served Wladislas II both as a diplomat in various missions to France, Rhodes and Venice, and as an intellectual who dedicated several works to the king on Ottoman history and the possible ways of countering the threat posed by the Turkish advances.¹³ In 1501 and

⁸Angela Fritsen, 'Ludovico Lazzarelli's Fasti Christianae religionis. Recipient and context of an Ovidian poem', in Dirk Sacré, Gilbert Tournoy (eds.), *Myrica. Essays on neo-Latin literature in memory of Jozef Ijsewijn*. (Leuven, 2000), 123.

⁹From the dedicatory references in Lazzarelli's work it is clear that he intended to send his *Fasti Christianae religionis* to King Matthias. See Fritsen, 'Lazzarelli', 129.

¹⁰Jenő Ábel, *Magyarországi humanisták és a dunai tudós társaság* (Budapest, 1880), 12; Florio Banfi, 'Cinzio Francesco Benincasa, umanista-diplomatico anconetano in Ungheria', *L'Europa Orientale* n. s. 18 (1938) 166-178; Florio Banfi, 'Ancora Cinzio Francesco Benincasa', *L'Europa Orientale* n. s. 18 (1938) 426-430; Ronald W. Lightbown, 'Francesco Cinzio Benincasa', *Italian Studies* 19 (1964) 28-55.

¹¹Ábel, *Magyarországi*, 76-79; Attilio Rapetti, 'Un medico piacentino alla corte d'Ungheria nel '400: il dottor Giulio Cesare De Milio', *Bollettino storico piacentino* 40 (1945) 26-29; Conrad Celtis, *Opuscula*, ed. Kurt Adel (Leipzig, 1966), 7.

¹²Giulio Cesare de Milio appears as the royal physician of Matthias in a letter of the king asking for a church benefice in favour of Giulio's brother, Xenophon, from Lodovico Moro in 1489 (*Mátyás király levelei. Külügyi osztály*, ed. Vilmos Fraknói, Budapest, 1895, vol. 2., 363). In 1493, Lodovico Moro gave permission to his brother to study in Ferrara because of the merits of Giulio as a royal physician (Rapetti, 'Un medico', 27) and in 1501, he had himself painted as 'Regis Vngariae phisicus' by a Lombardian painter (attributed to Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio or Bernardino de' Conti, Pavia, Pinacoteca Malaspina, P6). For a survey of the question of Celtis' sodalitates, see Áron Orbán, *Born for Phoebus. Solar-astral Symbolism and Poetical Self-Representation in Conrad Celtis and his Humanists Circles* (Vienna: Praesens, 2018), 19-25.

¹³Florio Banfi, *Felix Ragusinus* (Rome, 1947); Dragutin Kniewald, *Feliks Petančić i njegova djela* (Belgrade, 1961); Luka Špoljarčić, 'Feliks Petančić', in D. Thomas, J. Chesworth (eds.), *Christian-Muslim relations: A bibliographical history*, vol. 7 (Leiden, 2015), 50-57.



1502, he dedicated three works to King Wladislas II: the *Historia Turcica* (Turkish history) is a short history of the Ottoman empire, based on Niccolo Sagundino's *De familia Otthomanorum*. The *Genealogia Turcorum imperatorum* (Genealogy of the Turkish emperors) contained a brief summary of Ottoman history, followed by a detailed description of the administrative and military structure, and the material resources of the empire. His third work, *Quibus itineribus Turci sint aggrediendi* (On the best way of attacking the Turks) or *De itineribus in Turciam* (Ways to Turkey) is an exhortation addressed to Wladislas II arguing in favour of an offensive war and citing John Hunyadi as a model. Although the text includes fresh and first-hand information about the roads leading to Constantinople and the possible methods of attacking the Turks, in fact it was almost entirely plagiarized from *Quos terrarum limites* by Martin Segon, with only the names replaced in the dedication.¹⁴

The influx of Italian humanists to the Hungarian royal court stopped during the reign of Wladislas II. Instead, some new scholars joined members of the higher clergy and the nobility. The young Ippolito d'Este, archbishop of Esztergom (1487–97) and bishop of Eger (1497–1520), nephew to Queen Beatrix, the widow of King Matthias, attracted a number of distinguished scholars in his Italian retinue. Francesco Negri (Franciscus Niger), the widely known Venetian grammar teacher whose *Modus epistolandi* (1488) reached Europe-wide fame and was published in 43 editions until 1501, was called to Esztergom by Ercole d'Este and Beatrix to educate the child archbishop. Soon afterwards, Niger was recruited by Miklós Báthory, bishop of Vác and friend of Marsilio Ficino, to teach at the local 'gymnasium' [secondary grammar school – translator's note], and he served as a teacher there some time between 1497 and 1503.¹⁵ Celio Calcagnini was similarly an internationally appreciated humanist,¹⁶ who spent one and a half years in 1517–19 in the retinue of Ippolito d'Este, and composed some shorter tracts in Eger on astronomy (including perhaps also the proto-Copernican *Quod coelum stet et terra moveatur*) and politics (*De concordia*, arguing for unity in the anti-Ottoman fights), but returned to Italy as soon as his patron left for home.¹⁷ Just like Calcagnini, Giovanni Manardi, the humanist doctor from Ferrara who revolutionized scholarly communication in medicine by introducing the genre of medical letters,¹⁸ left Hungary (where he had been living for five years) soon after the death of his patron, King Wladislas II.¹⁹

¹⁴See the parallel edition in Agostino Pertusi, *Martino Segono di Novo Brdo, vescovo di Dulcigno* (Rome, 1981), 77–117.

¹⁵Giovanni Mercati, 'Francesco Pescennio Negro Veneto protonotario Apostolico', in id., *Ultimi contributi alla storia degli umanisti* (Vatican, 1939), vol. 3., 24–109, *1–*75; Olja Perić, 'Franjo Niger i njegov milanski kodeks', *Latina et Graeca* (Zagrebensia) 22(1983), 159–164; 23(1984), 133–142; 24(1984), 118–125; Farkas Gábor Kiss, 'Franciscus Pescennius Niger Báthory Miklós váci püspök udvarában és a Scholasticum Orosianae iuventutis dramma', *Magyar Könyvszemle* 129 (2013) 265–281.

¹⁶On Calcagnini's fame, see Danilo Aguzzi-Barbagli, 'Celio Calcagnini', in Peter Bietenholz, Thomas Deutscher (ed.), *Contemporaries of Erasmus* (Toronto, 1985), vol. 1., 242–243; Nicola Gardini, 'Shadows, Memory, and Self-Improvement: The Renaissance in Celio Calcagnini's *De Profectu*', in Martin McLaughlin et al. (eds.), *Authority, Innovation and Early Modern Epistemology. Essays in Honor of Hilary Gatti* (Cambridge, 2015), 37–55.

¹⁷József Huszti, 'Celio Calcagnini in Ungheria', *Corvina* 3 (1922) 57–71; 6, 1923, 60–69; István Bitskey, 'Ein Kapitel aus dem Nachleben des corvinianischen Humanismus: C. Calcagnini in Ungarn', in Attila Bárány, Attila Györkös (eds.), *Matthias and his Legacy* (Debrecen, 2009), 265–274.

¹⁸Ian Maclean, *Learning and the market place: Essays in the history of the early modern book* (Leiden, 2009), 59–86.

¹⁹Árpád Herczeg, 'Johannes Manardus Hofarzt in Ungarn und Ferrara im Zeitalter der Renaissance', *Janus* 33 (1929) 52–78, 85–130; D. Mugnai Carrara, 'Mainardi, Giovanni', in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Rome, 2006), vol. 67, 561–564.



With the departure of the most prominent Italian humanists, scholars started to arrive in Buda from new directions, most importantly from Bohemia, Moravia and Vienna. Bohuslaus Lobkovic (Lobkowitz) of Hasištejn/Hassenstein was a Czech aristocrat and already a member of the royal court during the time when Wladislas ruled only Bohemia. After becoming a doctor of canonical and civil law in Bologna, he served as the royal secretary to Wladislas in Bohemia. Returning from a long pilgrimage to the Holy Land, he joined the new royal court of Wladislas II in Buda in 1491. Although he moved back to his properties in Bohemia soon afterwards, he remained in close relationship with the king, which often resembled a friendship, until his death in 1510.²⁰ He composed humanist verses not only on the death of the young Queen Anne, which caused great grief to the aging Wladislas (*Elegia consolatoria in funere Annae reginae*, published in 1508 and dedicated to Augustinus Moravus), but also on the king's toothache. Still, he does not seem to have had any contacts to the Hungarian aristocracy or humanists.

Unlike Bohuslaus Lobkovic, Augustinus Moravus of Olomouc, son of a German burgher of Olomouc, resided in Buda for a longer period as royal secretary in the Czech chancery after 1495, and served there until early 1511.²¹ He can be considered as the most important humanist figure in Buda in the 1490s, as he built up important ties to contemporary humanists in the region. He studied in Padua, where he was a student of Giovanni Calfurnio, and maintained contacts to Giorgio Valla, Filippo Beroaldo the Elder, and Cassandra Fedele. In this period, he showed serious interest in astronomy, as he published the *Tabulae astronomicae* of King Alphonse (Venice, 1492) and the *Tabulae caelestium motuum* of Giovanni Bianchini (Venice, 1495), and contributed to the publication of two calendars in 1491 and 1493. At the same time, philology and rhetoric also belonged to his central interests, publishing the textual emendations of Hieronymus Avantius to Catullus and the Priapic poems (1495), as well as a treatise with the title *De modo epistolandi* (1495) on writing humanist epistles, which included sample letters of his own. His most influential work was the *Defence of poetry* (*In defensionem poetices*, 1493),²² a dialogue within a Platonic setting, situated in Padua, the most important university town in Northern Italy. The text depicts a vivid discussion between Augustinus, the author's alterego; Laelius, a defender of medicine, and Bassareus, a comic doctor, on the merits of poetry as compared to the other arts and sciences, especially to medicine. Laelius even tries to persuade Augustinus to study medicine instead of poetry. Although many of the dialogue's arguments are

²⁰See esp. his poems addressed to Wladislas II in Bohuslaus Hassensteinius a Lobkowitz, *Opera poetica*, edidit Marta Vaculinova (Leipzig, 2006), and the catalogue of the incunable prints of his library: Kamil Boldan, Emma Urbánková (eds.), *Rekonstrukce knihovny Bohuslava Hasištejnského z Lobkovic* (Prague, 2010).

²¹On his life, see Ralf Georg Czapla, 'Augustinus Moravus', in Franz Josef Worstbrock (ed.), *Deutscher Humanismus 1480–1520. Verfasserlexikon* (Berlin–New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), Band. 1., Sp. 61–72; Péter Ekler, 'Adatok Augustinus Moravus Olomucensis életéhez I.', in Emőke Kötél, János Rainer M. (eds.), *Esemény és narrativa* (Budapest, 2014), 100–109; Péter Ekler, Farkas Gábor Kiss (eds.), *Augustinus Moravus Olomucensis. Proceedings of the international symposium to mark the 500th anniversary of his death* (Budapest, 2015). King Wladislas maintained a Czech chancery in the Buda court in order to manage the administration his Czech kingdom from there, from which several documents survive. Some of those written in Czech have been collected in István Kniezsa (ed.), *Stredoveké české listiny* (Budapest, 1952), 58–92.

²²Augustini Olomucensis *Dialogus in defensionem poetices*, ed. Karel Svoboda (Prague, 1948). A new critical edition is being prepared by Péter Ekler. On this work, see Farkas Gábor Kiss, 'Augustinus Moravus and the transmission of ancient wisdom in the context of poetry: In defensionem poetices', in *Augustinus Moravus Olomucensis*, 77–92.



unoriginal and can be retraced to ancient sources and earlier defenses of poetry,²³ Augustinus has significantly re-elaborated the subject in several of its aspects. First, the target audience of his dialogue was completely novel, as he addressed his dialogue to a Central European readership, and his text had a considerable reception in the circle of German humanists.²⁴ In his *In defensionem poetices*, the detailed comparison of poetry with medicine serves not only to demonstrate the inferiority of the medical use of language, as compared to the purity of Latin poetry, but it points also to the common root of poetry and medicine, their oracle-like character and their cosmic-astrological correspondence.

The most detailed account of Augustinus' humanist interests is offered in the *Panegyricus in laudem Augustini Moravi* (Cracow, 1513), written by young Bavarian humanist Valentinus Eck probably during his sojourn in Olomouc in 1511 as a guest of Augustinus. This panegyric of 285 lines praises the provost of Olomouc and his library, and gives a detailed account of the humanistic group that was formed around Augustinus after his return to Olomouc. Eck's description of Augustinus's library, which included a number of classical and post-classical authors (books of the Greek Stoa, the Old and the New Testament, Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Lucan, Statius, Silius Italicus, Ovid, Paulus Orosius, Florus, Fulgentius the Mythographer, Livy, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Isidore of Seville, Quintilian, Justinian; and his verses resemble Tibull's, Virgil's and Cicero's writings), is a particularly precious source, as it provides a telling proof of his cultural and literary preferences. After his return to Olomouc, he arranged for the publication of some unpublished works in Vienna in 1512 and 1513 (Guarino's and Poggio Bracciolini's *Antilogion*, Camillo Paleotti's *Sylva* and two works by Bessarion) with the aid of the young Swiss humanist Joachim Vadianus.

From 1497 onwards, Renaissance humanism in Hungary had very close ties to Vienna and its university. The wandering humanist Girolamo Balbi, who was a professor at the university, befriended Johannes Vitéz ("Jr."), the bishop of Veszprém, and Michael Vitéz, and the company shared many adventures together, which were described in a chain of amorous epigrams, imitating the *Anthologia Graeca*.²⁵ After 1497, Balbi often visited Hungary, while occasionally also offering courses at the university of Vienna and Prague, and he took up several church functions in Hungary after 1501.²⁶ Augustinus exchanged several letters with Conrad Celtis (there are altogether twelve documents concerning him in the correspondence),²⁷ who

²³For a discussion of the sources, see Karel Svoboda, 'Augustina Olomouckého 'Dialog na obranu básnictví'', *Listy filologické* 69 (1942) 20–33 and Karel Svoboda, 'Il dialogo 'In difesa della poesia' di Agostino da Olomouc', *Lettere italiane* 8 (1956) 34–49.

²⁴See in *Apologia poetarum. Die Schwenter-Handschrift Ms. lat. fol. 335. der Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz zu Berlin mit den Illustrationen Peter Vischers des Jüngeren*, introd., ed. Franz Josef Worstbrock, Fedja Anzelewsky, 2 vols. (Wiesbaden, 1987).

²⁵For an edition, see Hieronymus Balbus, *Opera omnia*, Vols. 1–5, ed. Anton F. W. Sommer (Vienna, 1991–1996). On Johannes/János Vitéz ("Jr."), bishop of Veszprém, see Gergely Sonnevend, 'Ifjabb Vitéz János veszprémi püspök', in László Kilián, Pál Rainer (eds.), *Veszprém reneszánsza 2008* (Veszprém, 2008), 121–174.

²⁶Godelieve Tournoy-Thuen, 'Girolamo Balbi', in *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, vol. 1., 88–89. On his Hungarian presence, see Ábel, *Magyarországi*, 32–74 and Zsuzsanna Hermann, 'Egy humanista karrierje: Balbi Jeromos', *Az Egyetemi Könyvtár Évkönyvei* 2 (1964) 225–243.

²⁷Konrad Celtis, *Der Briefwechsel des Konrad Celtis*. Ed. Hans Rupprich (Munich, 1934), 301 (Nr. 180), 307–308 (Nr. 181), 311 (Nr. 184), 318 (Nr. 189), 322 (Nr. 192), 386–387 (Nr. 231), 566 (Nr. 313), 571–572 (Nr. 317), 575–576 (Nr. 320), 581–582 (Nr. 325), 582–583 (Nr. 326), 584–585. (Nr. 327).



considered him as one of his peers because of his extensive Italian studies and close relations to Venetian humanism, and this was probably the starting point of a closer contact on behalf of the Buda court with the leader of Viennese humanism.²⁸ Moreover, Jacobus Piso (ca. 1480–1527), a young Transylvanian Saxon, was one of his first students of Conrad Celtis in Vienna, and later on remained in Vienna to establish stronger contacts to the *Collegium poetarum et mathematicorum* of Celtis (1496–1501).²⁹

Soon, Piso became the most exquisite and elegant Latin poet of the Jagiellonian age in Hungary, but his poems were hardly known outside the private circulation among his close friends. In fact, many of them (including the most interesting ones) are only known because they were published in a small volume with the title *Schedia* (Impromptus) 27 years after his death in 1554 by Georg Werner, a Silesian-Hungarian humanist.³⁰ He spent a decade in Rome (1503–1513) in the retinue of Cardinal Pietro Isvalies, and became a member of the company of Janus Corycius (Johann Goritz), the organizer of the most important meeting point of Northern and Italian humanists in Rome at the time.³¹ It was during this period that he picked up the Catullian fashion of contemporary Neo-Latin poetry, and learnt to express himself in short, but incisive poems full of recondite Classical references. In 1515, at the congress of Vienna, he found new employment as the tutor of the future King Louis II and returned to Hungary where he had already held church benefices.

Piso's predilection for Catullian subjects and meters (Sapphic and hendecasyllabic poems) and his subversive attitude towards traditional forms of the patron-client relationship created a new poetic tone which could be considered novel not only in Hungary, but also in Neo-Latin poetry in general. His self-deprecatory humour (*Si quis habet nostrum cerdo, caupove libellum / Sic vendat patiar, ut neget esse meum* – “if any craftsman or shopkeeper sells our book, my only condition is that he should deny that it is mine.”) is coupled with a sincere openness about his constant complaint of poverty addressed to his most important patron, László Szalkay, bishop of Eger, whom he repeatedly asks for money to pay his debts (*Nunc quoque me fecit defecta crumena molestum, / Et sua non unus creditor aera petens* – “Also now my empty purse makes me molest you, and a couple of creditors who ask their own money back”). In his poetic world, it is the duty of the patron to pay for the poems dedicated to him.³²

²⁸About the false assumption of a ‘Hungarian Academy’ before 1497, see Farkas Gábor Kiss, ‘Konrad Celtis, King Matthias, and the academic movement in Hungary’, *Hungarian Studies* 32 (2018) 37–50. See also Tibor Klaniczay, *Alle origini del movimento accademico ungherese*, transl. Judit Papp, Orsolya Száraz (Alessandria, 2010).

²⁹László Jankovits, “Vir tississimus Iacobus Piso”: A Hungarian Humanist, Poet, and Diplomat in the Erasmian World’, in Rhoda Schnur (ed.), *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Budapestinensis* (Tempe, 2010), 327–336 and László Jankovits, ‘Jacobus Piso, a Hungarian Humanist in Rome’, in Péter Farbaky and Louis A. Waldman (eds.), *Italy and Hungary. Humanism and Art in the Early Renaissance*, (Florence, 2011), 217–226.

³⁰Jacobus Piso, *Schedia*, Vienna, 1554, edited by Georg Wernher. A single copy was known to survive from the Jagiellonian Library existing in Cracow (Cim. 5317.), until another one turned up at an auction in Hungary in 2014.

³¹László Jankovits, ‘Jacobus Piso kapcsolatterjesései a Lajtán innen és túl’, in Annamária Bíró, László Boka (eds.), *Értelmiségi karriertörténetek, kapcsolathálók, írőcsoportosulások* (Budapest–Nagyvárad, 2016), 27–36. See also Jan IJsewijn (ed.), *Coryciana* (Rome, 1997). A critical edition of Piso's works is being prepared by László Jankovits.

³²László Jankovits, ‘Jacobus Piso és Szalkai László’, in Tamás Fedeles (ed.), *Emlékkötet Szatmári György tiszteletére* (Budapest–Pécs, 2007), 69–80, here 75. My interpretation of these lines differs slightly from Jankovits's translation. See also László Jankovits, ‘Non est patria, quae mihi noverca. Jacobus Piso egy némely régióiban’, in Csilla Gábor et al. (ed.), *Nyelv, lelkeség, regionalitás a közép- és kora újkorban*, (Kolozsvár, 2013), 411–421.



*Emendare tamen nutu, Zalcane, vel uno,
Tot curas inter haec quoque damna potes,
Ut nihil antiqui sint iura, patrone, clientis,
Ut moveat meritum, cura, laborque nihil.*

Even among so many problems, with a single nod, my patron, you can correct these troubles, which bring along that the rights of an ancient client would be invalidated, and all my merits, care and work would be worth nothing.

The role that was played in the poetry of Janus Pannonius by a sense of barbaric environment and lack of poetic understanding, is here fulfilled by urging financial distress, which leads the author to question his bond to his country:

*Trux suos Pannon quoties levavit
Ultima fractos macie poetas?
Vix ferunt tandem vigilata siccum
Praelia panem.
Pauca debemus patriae, nec ullus
Est tholus nobis, ubi plectra fas sit
Tendere, excelsas canat infulatus
Praesul ad aras. (Ad Ladislaum Zalcanum)*

How often did the savage Pannonian support his poets, who were extremely hungry from starvation? The nights spent with poetic struggles bring only dry bread to our table. We owe little to our fatherland, and there is no roof above our head where we could twang the lyre, or a bishop adorned with an infula who would sing to the high altars.

Singing in an ironic, Catullian tone, poetry becomes a simple business affair. Those who do not pay, do not get any praise. If the country does not pay, it does not deserve a good word:

*Non est patria, quae mihi noverca est.
Nil largita mihi, nihil reposcat.*

It is not a fatherland that treats me as a stepmother. If it did never gave me a farthing, it should not request anything back.

Nevertheless, the sour self-irony of these statements is revealed in the bitterness with which Piso wanted to chase out not only his fatherland, but also Apollo himself from his household – which he did, ironically writing a poem dedicated to Apollo.

*Aut da Cynthie, quae petuntur, aurum,
Argentum, phialas, cyphos, patellas,
Berillos, adamantas, uniones,
Bissum, serica, purpuram, tapetes,*



Pulchras Asturas, impigros veredos...

Aut missum face me, tibi que habeto

Cortinas, tripodas, specus, recessus,

Cum lauruque lyras, et omne carmen,

Quae non unius aestimantur assis.

Either give me, Apollo, what I ask for: gold, silver, saucers, cups, pans, beryls, diamonds, pearls, sea silk, silk, purple garment, carpets, beautiful Asturian horses, tireless, fast steeds... Or let me go, and keep to yourself your cauldrons, tripods, caves, solitudes, all the lyres with laurel, and all the songs, which are not worth a farthing.

These poems by Piso offer an ironic miniature portrait of the patron-client relationship in Renaissance humanism which seems to be unique among his contemporaries, and can be likened to the struggle for intellectual freedom carried out by Erasmus, Piso's friend from Roman times. Nevertheless, the fate of Piso's poems, relinquished to an almost completely forgotten edition and known in only two copies, shows that this kind of poetry could have only a very limited, elite readership and perhaps was not even deemed acceptable for wider circulation.

The court remained the strongest supporter of literary and cultural efforts despite all the political and financial difficulties. Literature on political theory was slowly beginning to emerge: the treatise *On the education of the royal son* (written in the name of Queen Elizabeth, the widow of King Casimir IV) was composed in Poland by an anonymous author on the occasion of the firstborn son of Wladislas II and Anne de Foix in 1502 or 1503.³³ Isocrates' two political orations, the one addressed to Nicocles (*Ad Nicoclem*), and the other bearing the title *Nicocles* (*Symmachikos*, or *On the peace*), were translated into Latin by Mihály Keserű (Chesserius), a student in the school of Filippo Beroaldo Sr., in Bologna, and later bishop of Srem (Szerém), and he dedicated these texts to the king and bishop György Szatmári as political counsel for the administration of the country.³⁴ Two further texts were composed for the young King Louis, offering political guidance with moralizing principles: Josse Clichtove (Iodocus Clichtoveus) wrote a mirror of princes (*De regis officio*, *On the duty of the king*) for him in Paris in 1519, when the king was 13 years old.³⁵ Clichtove, as a professor of theology at the Sorbonne, based his argument on an analysis of royal virtues and vices which he illustrated by Biblical stories of good and bad kingship. On the other hand, the Czech humanist Johannes (Jan) Dubravius composed an animal fable in Latin with the title *Theribulia* (*Council of animals*, 1520) which was a Latin

³³Edited in *Traktat "De institutione regii pueri"*, ed. Christian Gastgeber, Piotr Oliński (Toruń: Towarzystwo Naukowe, 2016).

³⁴Gedeon Borsa, 'Bornemisza Pál megemlékezése Várdai Ferencről és a többi, Mohács előtti bolognai, magyar vonatkozású nyomtatvány', *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 87 (1983) 48–58, here 55. It should be mentioned here that *De regenda civitate* (*On ruling the city*) by Giovanni Garzoni, a Bolognese humanist with strong contacts to Hungary, was probably also sent to Wladislas II (see the author's letter to the king in Prague, National Library, ms. III. E. 27, 98r), although it was originally dedicated to Giovanni Bentivoglio, ruler of Bologna.

³⁵His work was instigated by János Gosztonyi, bishop of Győr. Iodocus Clichtoveus, *De regis officio* (Paris, 1519).



paraphrase of an earlier Czech text with a similar subject.³⁶ Exactly in the same year, the first open declarations of a civic political philosophy appear in a dialogue of Valentin Eck *On the administration of the state* (*De reipublicae administratione*, 1520).³⁷ Eck's work is an interesting mixture of legal precepts and of the cardinal virtues taken from Cicero, applied to the context of a civic community, hence the word *respublica* in the title could also be translated as *city*. Eck's work can no longer be categorised as purely rhetorical in purpose, as it contains explicit declarations concerning issues in which a local community could show serious interest: how to react to an unjust ruler, or to wrongful laws? Thus, it can be considered as the first representative of the political literature of civic humanism in the kingdom of Hungary.

Collecting the laws of the country and publishing them in print had become and increasingly pressing task in Jagiellonian Hungary. In October–November 1512, István Werbőczy (1458?–1541), a clerk and judge with a background in humanist education from Vienna, was asked by the nobility to collect the written law (*lex scripta*) of the country and create a compilation of royal decrees (*comportatio decretorum*). Although some preparatory work may have already been done on this work (Ádám Liskai, his boss and colleague, had already been asked to prepare a similar collection), Werbőczy managed to finish this task in a surprisingly short time, and presented his work to the Parliament of 1514. Although the new collection of laws was approved by the Parliament and by the king (decree LXIII of 1514), it was not sealed by Wladislas II due to the unrest which followed the peasant rebellion of the same year. Nevertheless, Werbőczy decided to publish it in Vienna in 1517. The *Tripartitum opus iuris consuetudinarii in clyti regni Hungariae* (*The three parts of the customary law of the very noble Kingdom of Hungary*) is constructed in the following manner: the first part deals with persons (freedoms of the nobility, acquisition of property and property rights, inheritance); the second with things (that is to say the legal procedures of the abovementioned matters), and the third with the system of appealing before the royal court. Alongside his legal training, Werbőczy had a marked interest in humanism. The Viennese publisher Singrenius dedicated an edition of Petronius' *Satyricon* to him in 1517; and his edition of the *Tripartitum* was surrounded by poems by Hungarian humanists like Benedictus Bekényi; also, he often quoted classical authors. His most important literary work, the *Booklet on the ten commandments* (*Decem praeceptorum divinatorum libellus*, 1524), is a commentary on the decalogue, which paralleled the Biblical text with the ten plagues of Egypt by opposing them to the seven deadly sins. The process of legal codification in Hungary and its connections to Renaissance humanism can be paralleled to the collection of Czech provincial law in the *O práviech, o súdiech io dskách země české knihy devatery* of Viktorin Kornel of Všehrd (1497–1507), who similarly dedicated his book to King Wladislas II, and was a strong supporter of Czech vernacular humanism and Classical translations.

The decade of the 1510s shows a proliferation of humanist cultural efforts and a faster spread of literacy both in Latin and in Hungarian. By this time, Renaissance humanism becomes less

³⁶Dubravivius' work was edited first in Nürnberg, 1520, and then in Cracow, 1521. See Johannes Dubravivius, *Theriobulia*, ed. Alexander Loose (Heidelberg, 2011) and Alexander Loose, 'Tierallegorie als ein Mittel der Fürstenerziehung. Die Theriobulia des böhmischen Humanisten Johannes Dubravivius', in Karl A. E. Enekel, Paul J. Smith (eds.), *Zoology in Early Modern Culture* (Leiden, 2014), 460–482.

³⁷Valentin Eck, *De reipublicae administratione dialogus*, ed. Daniel Škoviera (Trnava, 2006); Daniel Škoviera, 'Valentin Ecchius, Valentinus (Valentin Eck) Ecchius: ex poeta vir politicus', in Astrid Steiner-Weber, Franz Römer (eds.), *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Vindobonensis* (Leiden, 2018), 667–677.



limited to the Buda court, and also extends to other cultural centers, bishopric seats and also to minor market towns. István Werbőczy, already in his function as the chief justice of Hungary—to quote just one, although a most trustworthy, witness — described the changes in the following words: “*From the earliest days of our nascent realm, our people were given over to warlike pursuits and had little care for other concerns. For the Hungarians descend and originate from the Scythian peoples, who left their native land and settled in upper Pannonia (which embraces both sides of the Danube) and under the leadership of Attila extended the bounds of their empire far and wide, carrying their victorious arms deep into Germany, Italy, and Spain. Eventually, by the command of the holy king Saint Stephen, as if a light from heaven, they, having dropped superstition and completely rejected paganism, accepted the doctrines of Catholic faith. Thereafter no country or people (I say ungrudgingly) guarded more determinedly or more constantly the protection and expansion of the Christian commonwealth than the Hungarians. Being well trained through many hard-fought battles against the barbarous Mohammedan pest, they have for more than a hundred and forty years (not counting earlier times) time and time again in attack and counterattack waged to their enormous credit the most bloody wars against the savage Turks. They kept the rest of Christendom safe and unharmed at the cost of their blood [...]. Not engaged in commercial or vulgar matters, the nobility was defined by fighting. Hence it came that little time or leisure remained to them for framing the laws with special care or reviewing them at length before promulgation.*”³⁸ Writing in 1517, István Werbőczy presented the widespread opinion about the relationship of the Hungarian nobility to written laws in general in the preface to his collection of the customary law of Hungary. As the Hungarian nobles always stood ready to fight, they cared little for trade or any of the arts, and had neglected to collect their laws in a single book. Not only was a book of laws beyond the scope of the bellicose Hungarians, but all cultural activities were neglected due to continuous warfare. As Benedek Bekényi, a client of Werbőczy, had written three years earlier in the dedicatory epistle of an edition of Janus Pannonius (1514), the most significant, and almost the only, Hungarian poet in the fifteenth century: “There would be no other country — except the virtuous Romans, whose deeds ascend to the highest point of the starry sky — that could compete with the striving virtues of our kind. What, then, could be more beautiful than for someone to make the excellent deeds of the fathers more influential and conspicuous by literary monuments, which are more lasting than hard bronze? The absence of sophisticated minds (*ingenio elucubratorum*) in our nation has given rise to an ominous silence, while the crazed envy of foreigners has neglected the most excellent deeds of our people, thus we have spent our days without celebrated memories, as if in stultifying silence, for long, long years. *It was not because our nation lacked the mental capacity, or the continuous majesty of generosity, that lead exclusively to the peaks of abundant sciences, nor did we lack the adorned nobility of the body that everyone knows is required for students. But the condition most harmful for studies was the continuous fighting in bloody wars.* This was what delighted the souls of our ancestors, and those who — led by some mad stubbornness of pride — fought against them, who came to know how much lamentable misery they were able to cause with the all-destructive war. *When, finally, the wealth of merciful peace bestowed splendid glory on both the fatherland and the nation, only then*

³⁸Stephen Werbőczy, *The Customary Law of the Renowned Kingdom of Hungary: A Work in Three Parts* (ed. and transl. János M. Bak, Péter Banyó and Marty Rady (Idyllwild CA–Budapest, 2005), 13.



did the sweet-talking grace of slowly fading Minerva begin to strengthen our men. The poet Janus Pannonius provides the clearest proof of how fast we advanced in the study of those things that make life honest, extend its glory, and finally amplify the honor of flowering virtue.”³⁹ From the words of Benedek Bekényi, Stephen Werbőczy and some of their contemporaries (such as Girolamo Balbi),⁴⁰ we might conclude that such statements are more than literary commonplaces, and that in the 1510s there was a generally growing sentiment among the intellectuals of the age in Hungary that a watershed had been reached in their cultural life.

The universities of Vienna and Cracow played an important role in spreading the new cultural ideals of Renaissance humanism (in Vienna with Conrad Celtis from 1497, in Cracow with Johann Sommerfeld/Aesticampianus and Paulus Crosnensis from the mid-1490s), as most Hungarian students who were not members of the higher aristocracy studied there.⁴¹ Perhaps no other example better illustrates the social penetration and spread of humanist ideals in the Jagiellonian age than the poems of Francis Ujhelyi Buzás, a student in Cracow and a minor poet. In 1518, he wrote the following words about his patron Imre Korláti, parish priest of his home town, Vágújhely (Nové Mesto nad Váhom, Slovakia), a minor market place in Upper Hungary:

*Cantet Io Corlatinus, charusque propinquus
Laetetur sorti foemina uirque tuae.[...]
Te circum saltent Satyri Faunique bicornes
Et te psalmidicis cantibus excipiant.[...]
Discat Pannonico vulgus certare Lyeo
Et laetus totos evacuae cyphos.*

³⁹Erit patria nulla, praeter animosos Ausonios, quorum facta stelligeri coeli petunt as[c]ensum, qua sudanti virtute nostratibus certet. Quid autem pulchrius fieri potuisset, quam [si] egregie gesta patrum monumento litterario aere obduro perenniori quispiam efficaciorum perspectabilioremque reddidisset? Penuria siquidem ingenio elucubradorum ex nostra gente taciturnitatem delitescentem genuit, exterorum vero vecors invidia pulcherrime factorum nostrorum non attendebat excellentiam, sic sub tam rigescenti silentio multa per tempora vitam sine celebri memoria duximus. Non quia defuit nobis ingenii valor, non liberalitatis strenua maiestas, qua sola via est ad undantis scientiae apicem, decentisque corporis decorata proceritas, quae omnia quam studiosis conveniat, et decens sit, dubitat nemo. Obfuit sed quoniam sanguinolenti belli continua exercitatio. Illa enim maiorum oblectabat animos, devastantis omnia belli deflendam miseriam quantum fecerint, noverunt hi, qui vesana contumacia superbiae ducti quippiam aduersi eis moliti sunt. Cum vero pacis clementior ubertas gloriam tum patriae, tum genti splendidiorem indidit, paulatim pallescentis Minervae dulciloqua speciositas nostros fulcivit homines. Quam brevi in eo studio, quo vita honestatur, gloria dilatatur, omnis denique floridae virtutis honos amplificatur, profecerimus, dat apertissimum argumentum Ioannes Pannonius poeta [...]. Iani Pannoni Quinque Ecclesiarum Praesulis Poetae candidissimi Elegiarum aureum opusculum, Vienna, 1514, 1v.

⁴⁰The very same idea is expressed in a paratextual poem of Girolami Balbi to Werbőczy's *Tripartitum opus: Inclyta, quae Scythicis gens prodiit Hungara terris // Nil nisi sanguinei Martis amabat opus. // Clara quidem bello, partisque decora triumphis // Sed non pacificae conscia legis erat. // Non fora legitimis resonabant sparsa tabellis, // Nullaque conscripti regula iuris erat. [...]* Werbőczy, *The Customary Law*, 434.

⁴¹Around 90 percent of the students from Hungary attended one of these two universities in the first quarter of the 16th century. See Borbála Kelényi, 'Krakkótól Wittenbergig. Magyarországi hallgatók a krakkói, bécsi és wittenbergi egyetemeken a 16. században', *Gerundium* 8 (2017) 23–50, here 25. On the students in Vienna, see Anna Tüskés, *Magyarországi diákok a bécsi egyetemen 1365–1526* (Budapest, 2012). On Cracow, see Péter Haraszti Szabó, Borbála Kelényi, László Szögi, *Magyarországi diákok a prágai és a krakkói egyetemeken, 1348–1525. Students from Hungary at the Universities of Prague and Krakow* (Budapest, 2017).



Let Korláti sing Io, and your beloved relative,
 Let men and women rejoice at your good fortune.
 Two-horned Satyrs and Fauns leap around you
 And await you singing the Psalms. [...]
 Let the Pannonian people compete with Lyeus [Bacchus]
 And joyfully drain the scyphi [Greek drinking cups].⁴²

When even the parish priest of a small market town is invited to take part in a Bacchic ritual, the imagery of Antiquity and the learned vocabulary indicate the spread of the new poetic ideals as far as the lower social strata and minor towns, where such highbrow Latin poetry would scarcely have been conceivable in the age of Matthias Corvinus.⁴³ Obviously, the spread of these new humanist poetic practices also widened the social penetration of humanist ideas.

The most distinguished poetic output of this decade is the *Stauromachia* of Stephanus Taurinus, the first epic poem composed in Hungary (written between 1514–1519 in five books, published in 1519), which contains a contemporary literary account of the Dózsa Revolt (1514). Taurinus, a Moravian born humanist educated in Cracow and Vienna, was employed by Cardinal Tamás Bakócz, archbishop of Esztergom, as secretary in 1511. He had to live through the course of events preceding the Dózsa Revolt as a member of the archbishop's retinue — Bakócz' journey to Rome, the unsuccessful papal election, their return to Hungary, and the outbreak of the rebellion. Unlike many of the panegyric poems written by his contemporaries which celebrate the virtues of the victorious rulers using rhetoric topoi, the message of this epic poem remains hard to decode. Several scholars —including László Szörényi and László Jankovits — have recently called attention to the subversive, pessimistic, ironical, or paradoxical overtones of the text, both in its overt authorial judgments about the depravity of the nobles and in the textual imitations of its most direct poetic sources, the *Pharsalia* of Lucan, and the *Battle of Frogs and Mice* attributed to Homer.⁴⁴ The demonized figure of Dózsa is an amalgam of Catiline –

⁴²Ferenc Újhelyi Buzás, 'Franciscus Ujhelinus Corlatino templi Viihel Canonico meritissimo Patrono suo, carmine gratulatorio sese commendat', in: *Opusculum Francisci Viihelini, aduentum serenissimae dominae Bonae Reginae* (Cracow, 1524), d1r.

⁴³The poet, Ferenc Buzás, probably belonged to a peasant family, as he addressed Antonius Búza (belonging to the 'gentis Buzaike') as 'Agricola, et Cytharedus famigeratissimus Mecoenas suus' and claimed that he had studied using the money earned by the peasant Antonius. Ibid., d1v. Cf. ibid. *Quicquid enim lassus stivaque ligone et aratro // Quaerebas merces eruditentis erat.* "Whatever you earned with tiring work with the hoe and the plough, Became the reward of the student."

⁴⁴László Jankovits, László Szörényi, 'A megíratlan és a megírt magyar tárgyú eposz: 1519: Megjelenik Stephanus Taurinus *Stauromachia*ja', in László Jankovits, Géza Orlovsky (eds.), *A magyar irodalom története. 1. köt. A kezdetektől 1800-ig* (Budapest, 2007), 195–203; and László Szörényi, 'L'influenza della Farsaglia di Lucano sull'epopea tardoumanista latina in Ungheria (Stephanus Taurinus: *Stauromachia*)', *Neohelicon* 27 (2000) 97–111; Farkas Gábor Kiss, 'Ambiguity and Paradox in the Humanistic Literature of the Jagiellonian Age', in Gabriella Erdélyi (ed.), *Agency and Peasant Revolts in Central and Southern Europe (1450–1700)* (Göttingen, 2016), 169–187. On Taurinus' (Stefan Stieröxel) life, see Franz Babinger, 'Der mährische Humanist Stephan Taurinus und sein Kreis', *Südost-Forschungen* 13 (1954), 62–93, Conradin Bonorand, *Vadians Humanistenkorrespondenz mit Schülern und Freunden aus seiner Zeit: Personenkommentar IV zum Vadianischen Briefwerk* (St. Gallen, 1988), 198–201 and Martin Rothkegel, *Der lateinische Briefwechsel des Olmützer Bischofs Stanislaus Thurzó* (Hamburg, 2007), 59–60, 67.



whose oration from Sallust's *Conspiracy of Catiline* he delivers in a versified form⁴⁵ – of the evil Rufinus of Claudian's *In Rufinum*, and of the figure of Caesar in Lucan's *Pharsalia*. Despite this negative characterization, Dózsa still delivers a heroic speech during his torture, based on Cato's exemplary and morally unquestionable Stoic oration in Lucan's *Pharsalia*. At the same time, the entire story is framed within the epic language and the typological pattern of Homer's *Battle of Frogs and Mice*, the main comic characters of which – the king of the frogs, the mice and the crabs – can be paralleled to the main heroes of the Stauromachia, Dózsa/Zeglius, archbishop Bakócz and the Transylvanian bishop Ferenc Várdai. Thus, Taurinus avoided composing a panegyric description of the deeds of archbishop Bakócz (who was dead by the time of publication), and of Ferenc Várdai, his new patron, and created an ambiguous epic message, which could keep some distance from forming a biased judgment about these contemporary events.

Irony and ambivalent rhetoric become recurring traits of the humanist works of the Jagiellonian period. The author of the anonymous *Apologia regis Wladislai* (Apology of King Wladislas),⁴⁶ a political pamphlet written in Latin against Queen Beatrix, is called Udis in the text, i.e., the well-known Outis, or Nobody of Homer's *Odyssey*. Thus, Udis – or Nobody – speaks up against the infertile Beatrix in defence of the annulment of her marriage to King Wladislas II, claiming that even the gods of the pagan mythology stand on his side. By applying popular mythological imagery, Udis-Nobody tried to charm his public in Rome with a fictitious literary frame with which the local audience might have been familiar from the *pasquillades*. Irony begins to occur in the literary descriptions of internal political affairs: whereas Janus Pannonius criticized only the Emperor and the Pope, Bohuslaus Lobkowicz turned against the ambitious future archbishop Tamás Bakócz in an epigram.⁴⁷ In the comedy entitled *Gryllus*,⁴⁸ written by Bartholomaeus Francfordinus, a schoolmaster in Buda in 1519,⁴⁹ the protagonist Gryllus (named after one of the comrades of Ulysses who was turned into a pig by Circe) is a parasite who earns his bread by flattering and dropping useful information to his patron just as

⁴⁵Sándor V. Kovács, 'Taurinus és Sallustius Catilinájá', *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 60 (1956) 319–322.

⁴⁶Edited (with many mistakes) in Udis, 'Apologia regis Wladislai', in Ervin Roszner, *Régi magyar házassági jog* (Budapest, 1887), 452–479. Vilmos Fraknói attributed this work to Johann Filipec (Vilmos Fraknói, 'II. Ulászló királlyá választása', *Századok* 19 (1885) 5). It is worth noting that both known manuscripts (Munich, BSB, clm 24106, 7r; Prague, National Library, I. D. 3., 98r) contain a work by Augustinus Moravus who was in Padua at the time of writing (1492) and the author of *Udis* had excellent knowledge of Greek, as did Augustinus. More recently, Miriam Hlavačková attributed this work to Anton Sankfalvi, though without any serious reason: Miriam Hlavačková, 'A diplomat in the service of the Kings of Hungary. The activity of the Bishop of Nitra, Antony of Šankovce at the end of the Middle Ages', *Historický Časopis* 58 (2010) 15–35.

⁴⁷Jan Martinek, 'Bohuslai a Lobkowicz in Thomam Bakócz de Erdöd carmen', *Listy filologické* 112 (1989) 97–103.

⁴⁸Bartholomaeus Frankfordinus Pannonius, *Opera quae supersunt*, ed. Anna Vargha (Budapest, 1945).

⁴⁹Ágnes Ritóok-Szalay, 'Budai polgárok könyvei a 16. században', *Magyar Könyvszemle* 90 (1974) 312–313. His marginalia in his copy of the *Tripartitum* of Werbőczy also show him as a critical and sarcastic reader of the text, using Erasmusian adages and proverbs, e.g. "cecus cecum ducit" and "lana caprina" on the lawbook of the Kingdom of Hungary. Similarly, Tamás Pelei, a canon of Gyulafehérvár and later archdeacon of Ózd, applied the adages of Erasmus to his contemporaries on the margins of his copy of the *Adagia*. See Bálint Lakatos, 'Tamás Pelei's Glosses About the Personalities of the Transylvanian Chapter and Episcopal Court (1515–c. 1535)', in Attila Bárány, Attila Györkös (eds.), *Matthias and his legacy. Cultural and Political Encounters between East and West* (Debrecen, 2009), 339–361.



any humanistic poet would do.⁵⁰ After he reveals how the son of his patron was abducted, he gets beaten and receives no award for finding the lost son. Significantly, he recites a monologue that recalls the main statements of Erasmus' *Praise of Folly*: "pro sapiente quisque morionem agitat" – everybody is acting like a fool instead of a wise man. Irony and mockery becomes a standard model of communication in the works of Jacobus Piso, Stephanus Taurinus or Bartholomaeus Frankfordinus, a rhetorical trait which also surfaces in the vernacular satirical song of Ferenc Apáti.⁵¹

The literary production of the Jagiellonian period exhibits a number of further features that distinguish it from the times of King Matthias Corvinus. Firstly, it was during this period that Latin ecclesiastical scholarship also became visible in Hungary. Serious scholastic debates may doubtless have been held at the short-lived University of Pécs (1367), or at the Dominican *studium generale* in Buda (14th and 15th centuries), but very few traces survive. It is only due to the appearance of the printed publications of the Observant Franciscan Pelbartus of Temesvár (from 1498),⁵² and the sermons of his student Osvaldus of Laskó (from 1497),⁵³ that we have a significant quantity of theological texts at our disposal. These scholastic tracts – mostly sermons (*Pomerium*, *Biga salutis*, *Gemma fidei*), commentaries (on the Psalms) and encyclopaedic works (*Rosarium*) following a Scotist direction – reveal a level of ecclesiastical literacy in the Pest convent of the Observant Franciscans that easily rivals the standard of texts produced in any of the European educational centres.

Two major figures wrote extensive works among the Dominicans in the Jagiellonian period: the Italian-Hungarian Nicolaus de Mirabilibus, whose father was an Italian sculptor who had moved to Cluj (Kolozsvár), had written a treatise in Italian while he was in Florence in 1488 (*Libello de consciencia*, 1488) and held a dispute on the original sin there against Giorgio Benigno Salviati (1489) in the presence of Marsilio Ficino, Angelo Poliziano and Pico della Mirandola. As he moved back to the royal court of Hungary in 1490 and became the vicar general of the Hungarian province in 1493, he dedicated a treatise on predestination to Johann

⁵⁰Farkas Gábor Kiss, 'Dramen am Wiener und Ofener Hof: Benedictus Chelidonium und Bartholomaeus Frankfordinus Pannonius (1515–1519)', in Martina Fuchs, Orsolya Réthelyi (eds.), *Maria von Ungarn (1505–1558). Eine Renaissancefürstin* (Münster, 2007), 293–312 and Ágnes Juhász-Ormsby, 'Humanist Networks and Drama in Pre-Reformation Central Europe: Bartholomeus Frankfordinus Pannonius and the Sodalitas Litteraria Danubiana', *Renaissance and Reformation* 35 (2012) 5–34.

⁵¹Péter Bognár, Iván Horváth, 'Apáti Ferenc, Cantiléna', in Edit Madas (ed.), „*Latiatuc feyleym ...*” *Magyar nyelvemlékek a kezdetektől a 16. század elejéig* (Budapest, 2009), 356–357.

⁵²Ildikó Bárczi, *Ars compilandi* (Budapest, 2009); Balázs Kertész, 'Two Hungarian Friars Minor (Franciscan Observants) in the late Middle Ages: Pelbart de Temesvár and Oswald de Laskó', in Péter E. Kovács, Kornél Szovák (eds.), *Infima aetas Pannonica. Studies in late medieval Hungarian history* (Budapest, 2009), 60–78; Farkas Gábor Kiss, 'Communis quidam bonae doctrinae thesaurus: authorship and inspiration in late medieval commentaries in Central Europe', in Slavica Ranković (ed.), *Models of Authorship in the Middle Ages* (Toronto, 2012), 92–112; Alexandra Baneu, 'The Ab auro Prologue of Pelbartus of Themeswar's Theological Encyclopedia', *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai Philosophia* 60 (2015) Special Issue 5–18; ead., 'Quales scientiae sunt addiscendae pro theologia Melius intelligenda? Pelbartus of Themeswar on education', *Philobiblon* 21 (2016) no. 2 53–64; ead., 'Pelbartus of Themeswar's use of sources in the Rosarium. A statistical study', *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai Philosophia* 61 (2016) Special issue 5–13.

⁵³See above in note 52, and Gedeon Borsa, 'Laskai Osvát és Temesvári Pelbárt műveinek megjelentetői', *Magyar Könyvszemle* 121 (2005) 1–24; Balázs Kertész, 'The 1499 Constitutions of the Hungarian Observant Franciscan vicariate', *Chronica. Annual of the Institute of History, University of Szeged* 15 (2017) 173–186.



von Schallenberg, the Czech chancellor in Buda, and to István Fodor of Nagylucse, based on a sermon that he held in the court of Wladislas II.⁵⁴ Another Dominican author, Jakob von Lilienstein wrote two works: a short *Treatise against the erring Waldensian brethren* (*Tractatus contra Waldenses fratres erroneos*, 1505) was dedicated to Ambrose of Plzen, the archbishop administrator of Prague, and confuted the articles of faith which he attributed to the Czech Brethren;⁵⁵ and a much larger encyclopaedia entitled *On divine wisdom* (*De divina sapientia*, 1505), dedicated to Wladislas II.⁵⁶ Both of these works reveal the strong impact of Renaissance humanism (e.g. Scipio the African is paralleled to Solomon as a good orator),⁵⁷ especially in the dedications, where ancient and Biblical examples are cited side by side, and the latter work, which is structured according to vices and virtues, is heavily influenced by astrology.

Towards the end of the period, the Benedictine and Pauline monks followed suit: Ambrosius Pannonius, abbot of the Benedictine Schottenstift, issued a number of devotional texts from Vienna for Hungary (1513–1518), and Gergely Gyöngyösi, prior of Santo Stefano Rotondo, published spiritual admonitions and sermons in Rome (*Decalogus de sancto Paulo primo heremita*, 1516, second edition in 1532).⁵⁸ Significantly, although both of them were writing for a Hungarian audience, neither of them was actually writing any longer in Hungary. Besides, a few authors dedicated their works to Wladislas II while they sojourned in his kingdom, but did not necessarily settle there. Dominico Rannusio Crispo held a sermon in the presence of the king, “in front of the Hungarian lords”, while the court visited Bohemia between February and October 1497,⁵⁹ and he resided in the country until at least 1498, as he became the archdeacon of Ung. He must have been one of the first preachers to give a humanist sermon in Hungary, a practice which he had borrowed from Rome, where he had already given a sermon at the funeral

⁵⁴Edited publication of his works is offered in *Két magyarországi egyházi író a XV. századból. Andreas Pannonius – Nicolaus de Mirabilibus*, eds. Vilmos Fraknói, Jenő Ábel (Budapest, 1886). See Ádám Bujdosó, ‘Nicolaus ex Mirabilibus on Conscience’, in *Investigatio Fontium. Griechische und lateinische Quellen mit Erläuterungen*, ed. László Horváth (Budapest, 2014), 151–158; Amos Edelheit, *Scholastic Florence: Moral Psychology in the Quattrocento* (Leiden, 2014); Dávid Molnár, ‘Fodor István szeremi püspök elveszett könyvtárának egyik kötete: Nicolaus de Mirabilibus De providentiájának prágai kézírata’, *Magyar Könyvszemle* 132 (2016) 366–367.

⁵⁵*Tractatus contra Waldenses fratres erroneos quos vulgus vocat Pickardos fratres sine regula, sine lege et sine obedientia* (Nürnberg, 1505). (VD L 1736) Interestingly, Lilienstein, who had lived among the Czech brethren for three years, had a very positive opinion of their lives, but obviously he identifies fully with their Christian doctrine (ibid., fol. G5r–G6v).

⁵⁶Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, ms. clm 26827. It is the author’s preparatory copy for the dedicatory copy to the king, including instructions concerning the illuminations. On this work, see Martin Grabmann, ‘Der “Liber de divina sapientia” des Jakob von Lilienstein O. Pr. Eine ungedruckte theologische Summa aus dem Beginn des 16. Jahrhunderts’, in: id., *Gesammelte Akademieabhandlungen* (Paderborn, 1979), 124–140.

⁵⁷Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, ms. clm 26827, 2r.

⁵⁸Gregorius de Gyengyes, *Decalogus de beato Paulo primo heremita... Reprint der Originalausgabe von 1532*, ed. Stanislaw Świdziński (Coesfeld, 2008). Cf. Gábor Sarbak, ‘Appunti al Decalogus di Gergely Gyöngyösi, priore generale dell’Ordine dei Paolini, pubblicato a Roma’, in Jozef Ijsewijn (ed.), *Roma humanistica. Studia in honorem Rev. dni. dni. Iosaei Ruyschaert*, Leuven, 1985, 228–235; Gábor Sarbak, ‘Gyöngyösi Gergely, 1472–1531. Correctio correctionis’, in *Ghesaurus. Tanulmányok Szentmártoni Szabó Géza hatvanadik születésnapjára* (Budapest, 2010), 115–122.

⁵⁹The sermon was edited by János Csontos, ‘II. Ulászlónak ajánlott kézirat a konstantinápolyi Eszki Szerailban’, *Magyar Könyvszemle* 14 (1889), 26–44 (now the manuscript’s shelfmark is Topkapi Sarayi Müzei, III. Ahmet Kütüphanesi, ms. 46.). See Farkas Gábor Kiss, ‘A humanista szentbeszéd kompilációs technikája: két magyarországi példa a 16. század közepéről’, in Farkas Gábor Kiss, Ibolya Maczák (eds.), *Átfedések. Szövegalkotás a 16–18. századi irodalomban* (Budapest, 2019), 23–24.



of Cardinal Jean de la Balue and in front of the Pope in 1491.⁶⁰ Another humanist scholar who dedicated a scholarly treatise to Wladislas II was Johannes Bolkenhayn, who composed his work in defence of the clergy: in his *On the immunity and liberty of the church and the dignity of clergy* (*De immunitate et libertate ecclesiastica atque de sacerdotum honore*, 1499), he listed arguments in favour of the priestly order and against the bad councillors surrounding the king in royal courts, and asked for the protection of church benefices.⁶¹

Secondly, by this period the elite humanism of the Corvinian age had expanded to a wider circle and the humanists themselves had become socially stratified. Books became easily accessible to every literate person: there are more book catalogues surviving from the period between 1501 and 1526 (19 altogether) than from between 1450 and 1500 (18), and the number of books catalogued also increased.⁶² During the reign of Matthias, many active humanists pursued brilliant careers and became members of the ecclesiastical aristocracy after study tours to Italy, when they became elected as bishops and archbishops of the country (we need think no further than Janus Pannonius, Ladislaus Vetesius, Péter Váradi or Johannes Vitéz the Younger). In the Jagiellonian age, it is almost exclusively the middle-ranking clergy and lay secretaries and chancellors who pursue humanistic studies and publish their works. Although the educational careers of the church elite resemble the patterns of the Corvinian age, and although many bishops visited elite Italian universities such as Padua or Bologna (among them Philip Csulai Mór, György Szathmári and Ferenc Várdai, or — with only a Cracovian university background — László Szalkay, to name but a few), thus obviously meeting the most modern cultural standards of their age, paradoxically, they no longer published humanist texts. It was the task of the middle-ranking clergy to write polished humanist works, for which they might have received a canonry or an endowment as a provost at the height of their career, while also having to fulfil the official administrative duties connected to their position. Jacobus Piso, Stephanus Taurinus, Valentinus Cybeleius/Hagymási,⁶³ Martinus Thyrnavinus,⁶⁴ and Bartholomaeus Frankfordinus are typical representatives of this stratum: all of them served noble patrons with similar cultural interests to their own, although their patrons did not produce any published works. Of course, there are significant differences in the cultural commitments and social rank of Jacobus Piso, royal secretary and private tutor to the young Louis II, and the Benedictine abbot Martinus Thyrnavinus, although they are similar in the sense that neither of them reached higher

⁶⁰Johannes Burchard, *Diarium sive rerum urbanarum commentarii, 1483–1506*, ed. L. Thuasne (Paris, 1883), 425, 426, 441.

⁶¹The only known copy of this work is in Pistoia, Biblioteca Fabroniana, ms. 313. See Luigi Chiappelli, 'I manoscritti giuridici di Pistoia, con testi e documenti inediti', *Archivio giuridico* 35 (1885) 64–70, here 65.

⁶²See Csaba Csapodi, Klára Csapodi-Gárdonyi, *Bibliotheca Hungarica. Kódexek és nyomtatott könyvek Magyarországon 1526 előtt* (Budapest, 1994), vol. 3., and *THECA - Catalogi et inventaria medii aevi bibliothecarum regni Hungariae*, ed. Farkas Gábor Kiss (Budapest, 2015). <http://hece.elte.hu/index.php/theca/> and <https://theca-online.herokuapp.com/>. Accessed on March 3, 2020.

⁶³See the new edition in Bálint Hagymási (Valentinus Cybeleius), *Művecske a bor és a víz dicséretéről és kárhoztatásáról*, ed. Edit Krähling (Budapest, 2017).

⁶⁴Farkas Gábor Kiss, 'Political Rhetorics in the Anti-Ottoman Literature. Martinus Thyrnavinus: To the Dignitaries of the Hungarian Kingdom', in *Ein Raum im Wandel. Die osmanisch-habsburgische Grenzregion vom 16. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert*. Eds. Norbert Spannenberger, Szabolcs Varga (Stuttgart, 2014), 141–157 and Svorad Zavaršký, 'Martinus Thyrnavinus and the Republic of Letters: Some Remarks on the Sources of Thyrnavinus's Opusculum ad Regni Hungariae Proceres (1523)', *Graecolatina et Orientalia* 37–38 (2016) 91–101.



ecclesiastic rank, whereas their patron, Ladislaus Szalkay, bishop of Eger and later archbishop of Esztergom, wrote only two epigrams⁶⁵ and probably had no literary ambitions. Foreign humanists arriving in the country often had to satisfy themselves with the position of a personal secretary (as Taurinus or Rudolf Agricola Jr., both of whom started to work in Esztergom under Cardinal Bakócz), or of a private tutor, as Valentine Eck, who acted as a preceptor to Alexius Thurzó.⁶⁶ Valentine Eck soon became a schoolmaster in the city of Bardejov (Bártfa), and Leonard Cox a schoolmaster in Košice (Kassa), thus, they were independent of any direct aristocratic patronage.⁶⁷ The general intellectual trend of the Jagiellonian age can thus be characterized as the divergence and separation of cultural and political ambitions.

This separation of political and humanistic/literary careers forms the background of the phenomenon once described by János Horváth in his classic work as the proliferation of “humanists with party allegiances”,⁶⁸ which he regarded as characterizing the Jagiellonian period. Still, it was not the humanists who strove harder for party or power positions in this period. Their stronger “party allegiance” is, in fact, the direct result of the steady growth in the number of intellectuals with a modern, humanistic educational outlook, while the number of available positions in church and state administration remained unchanged. The career opportunities that could have provided them with financial and — at least to a certain extent — intellectual independence were no longer available to all those with talent, and the closing of their career prospects obliged them to look for patrons inside the church (or state) hierarchy. The elected few who were able to reach the highest ranks of church administration were satisfied with propagating their humanist commitment through patronage, and at the same time were able to use the works of their clients to publicize their own political agenda (e.g. the case of Ladislaus Szalkai and Martinus Tyrnavinus).

Finally, this was an age in which the presence of a vernacular culture also became apparent in Hungarian. While at present we know of only three manuscripts written in Hungarian and dating back to before 1490,⁶⁹ this number rises to at least thirty-five codices in the period between 1490 and 1526.⁷⁰ Three decades ago, Andor Tarnai summarized these changes in a now classic monograph on vernacular Hungarian culture with the telling title which translates

⁶⁵Caspar Ursinus Vellius, *Nenia serenissimae dominae Mariae reginae Pannoniorum de obitu serenissimae dominae Elisabethae Reginae Danorum* (Vienna, 1526), B1v. (with the inscriptions L. S. and Salcanus Ursino).

⁶⁶On Agricola and Eck, see Jacqueline Glomski, *Patronage and Humanist Literature in the Age of the Jagiellons. Court and Career in the Writings of Rudolf Agricola Junior, Valentin Eck, and Leonard Cox* (Toronto, 2007).

⁶⁷This does not mean, however, that they did not turn to aristocratic patrons any longer. On Cox, see Glomski, *Patronage*, and Ágnes Juhász-Ormsby, Farkas Gábor Kiss, 'Leonard Cox's Pedagogical Commentaries', *Neulateinisches Jahrbuch* 21 (2019) 169–194.

⁶⁸“Hatalmi pozíciók megszerzésére törekvő párt-humanisták” – “humanists with party allegiances striving for power positions”: János Horváth, *Az irodalmi műveltség megoszlása. Magyar humanizmus* (Budapest, 1935), 180.

⁶⁹These are the ‘Bécsi-codex’ (c. 1460), the ‘Jókai-codex’ (c. 1440) and the ‘Müncheni-codex’ (1466). I have omitted the ‘Birk-codex’ from the number of pre-1490 manuscripts, as it consists of only six leaves detached from a now unknown incunabular print.

⁷⁰I have counted only the manuscripts that are or were once separate codices, and that were written at least partially between 1490 and 1526. For a reliable and continuously updated list of late medieval Hungarian mss., see the website of the exhibition: Edit Madas (ed.), *Magyar nyelvemlékek* (Budapest, 2009); <http://nyelvemlekek.oszk.hu/tud/nyelvemlekek>, accessed on 1.3.2020.



literally as “The Hungarian language starts to be written.”⁷¹ Although Hungarian literary culture still remained limited to small ecclesiastical circles — essentially to texts required by nuns, private aristocratic (mostly female) readers and lay brethren — a certain continuity in the vernacular literary tradition is already apparent.⁷² We can find texts that survive in multiple copies, indicating the existence of regular readers and scribes who were concerned with their circulation, which, in turn, is a sign of a developing literary culture. In a few cases, it can be clearly demonstrated that Renaissance humanism had an indirect influence on these vernacular texts that were mostly translated as readings for nuns. The early 16th century Hungarian translation of Roswitha’s *Dulcitus (Három körösztény leány)*,⁷³ a medieval drama about the martyrdom of three virgins in the hands of the pagans, was in all probability based on Conrad Celtis’ humanist edition of the piece (1501), or on a slightly modified manuscript copy related to it, as the text of Roswitha’s dramas had a very limited circulation beforehand. The *Verse legend of St Catherine of Alexandria*, written for Dominican nuns (copied in 1530/31, but probably composed a few decades earlier), contains a great number of Classicizing elements and references to Plato, Aristotle, Avicenna and Al-Gazel among other philosophers, which are not present in its most important source, the version of the legend composed by Pelbárt of Temesvár. These Classicizing features may be likened to the humanist trends in the Dominican treatises mentioned above.

To sum up, the age of the Jagiellonian kings brought along a previously unseen growth and expansion of late medieval and humanist scholarly and lay culture.⁷⁴ These changes were partly due to the radical cultural developments of the ages (the arrival of the printing press and the availability of cheap prints, the spread of literacy due to the growing population living in cities and easier access to education), but partly also because of the decentralization of culture in the country. While the rule of Wladislas II and Louis II might have been less successful on the military and strategic level, it did allow for a plurality and cross-fertilization of late medieval and humanist cultural currents that had not been characteristic of the reign of King Matthias.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research article funded by the ERC COG project nr. 864542 – Know Students.

⁷¹Andor Tarnai, ‘A magyar nyelvet írni kezdik’ *Irodalmi gondolkodás a középkori Magyarországon* (Budapest, 1985).

⁷²For the most recent summary on late medieval female vernacular literacy in Hungary see Sándor Lázs, *Apácaműveltség Magyarországon a XV.-XVI. század fordulóján* (Budapest, 2016).

⁷³Katharina M. Wilson, ‘The Old Hungarian Translation of Hrotsvit’s *Dulcitus*: History and Analysis’, *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* 1 (1982) 177–187; Péter Tóth, ‘Némely alázatos doktor szíz Mária képében. 1506: Drámai szövegeink a középkorban’, in *A magyar irodalom története*, 185–86.

⁷⁴István Monok, ‘A 16. századi protestáns értelmiség olvasmányélményéről’, in Erika Kiss et al. (eds.), *Ige-Idők. A reformáció 500 éve* (Budapest, 2019), 167.

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