

Theses of Doctoral (PhD) dissertation

Sacra Poesis

**The late humanist (1514-1619) Neo-Latin biblical poetry in
domestic and international context**

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1. Topic and objectives of the dissertation

My dissertation explores a popular genre group of the late humanist latin poetry, the *sacra poesis*. Furthermore, it concludes the research of it's theoritical and practical realization in domestic and international context.

The hungarian translation of the expression *sacra poesis*, which is used by me, is known as *sacred poetry*, which indicates a group of genre: (1.) *Antique paraphrase*: When the formal and content items of the re-written book or text area of Bible with specific locusmarker show the signs of antiquity (latin language, antique metrum and genre, classic expressions, intertextual references) (2.) *Christianized imitation*: In this case the imitated classic genre patterns (epic,elegy,ecloga,drama) are saturated with biblical themes (Christ's birth, history of suffering and resurrection or the fall).

Works created in the spirit of sacred poetry can be interpreted both in antique and biblical paradigm system. Their authors sought to create a delicate balance. With the broadcast of discourse disciplines with antique roots (rhetorics, poetics, grammar, dialectics) were trying the recipients to get closer to the sources of salvation and to the essence of Scripture. As the Lord's holy words and revelations are embodied into human writing and speech, thus the classical sciences were given a kind of interpretive, salutary function. So these poems arise from the synthesis of salvation and aesthetic value, which dual system of values have completely intertwined in the European neolatin literature in the era of the Reformation. German research has recognized the importance of this, and as a result a number of professional work had appeared abroad related to the german creators of *sacra poesis*. Research literature related to this topic in Hungary are poor. In-depth study of the works of sacred poetry is urgent precisely because of their involvement in Hungary, since a large part of the group's exponents were from Highland and Transylvanian origin.

In the introductory chapter of the dissertation (*I. The Late humanist intellectuals in Hungary*) beside contextualizing the topic of literary history and discussing the cultural-historical features of the period, I also tried to introduce the national *nobilitas litteraria* in details, which also served as a medium for the production of hungarian Neo-Latin poetry. In the second paragraph (*II. Conceptual background of sacra poesis*) the definition of sacred poetry, the clarification of terminology, my aim was to draw the history of literature and the background of literary theory. In the next four chapters (*III–V. Psalm paraphrases, Old Testament paraphrases, New Testament paraphrases, VI. biblical carmen, epic imitation*) I

have undertaken detailed philological and content analysis of Hungarian Bible paraphrases and imitations in any case regarding to the parallels in Germany, thus showing concrete examples of the practical realization of the *sacra poesis* theory in domestic and international context.

II. Methodology of the dissertation

Chapter 1: The late humanist intellectuals in Hungary

The starting point of the dissertation's research I selected the year of publication of the earliest work analysed in my thesis, (Eobanus HESSUS, *Heroidum christianarum epistolae*, Leipzig, per Melchiarum Lotter, 1514). As a final point I selected the year of publication of *Delitiae Poetarum Hungaricorum* (1619), that is a summary anthology published by Johann Philipp Pareus. The combined examination of the literary text corpus published in a concrete period of time, made necessary the contextualization of literary history in the thesis. As far as humanism is concerned, German research works with a highly articulated, shaded and employable era division regarding to the Neo-Latin domestic literature. Thus in the introductory chapter of the dissertation after reviewing the most important foreign and national eras, I have chosen one from the already existing interpretations, that I am going to follow.

Latin literature of the late humanism of Europe and the literary fruit of *sacra poesis* are the result of the diverse operation of the *nobilitas litteraria* (educated nobility). By the second half of the 16th century humanist organizations have become more common on the territory of historic Hungary. János Balogh Tolnai, who was a Neo-Latin poet, in his written Latin-glorified poem to Joannes Bocatius gives the portrait of the circle of Hungarian friends, *proles Palladias*. The circle, where Bocatius is honored includes the main representatives of the late domestic humanist literature and Neo-Latin poetry, but I also have to mention the well-known German humanists too. I used the *Index Nominum* Catalogue of Ferenc Csonka's Critical Edition to define the full name of the characters, who were many times with latinized first name in the poem. Then, I gave a brief analysis of the individual characters based on the relevant Hungarian research literature.

Chapter 2: Conceptional background of sacra poesis

The late humanist intellectuals of Hungary sought to transpose cultural patterns, methodological solutions experienced and studied during peregrination (in the vast majority of the cases I refer to the German research done in Wittenberg) into his own medium. Without a previous research of the German effects and its practical implementation I would not be able to interpret and evaluate the Neo-Latin lyric of the domestic era. In the first two chapters of the theoretical part with the help of primary source texts I pointed out the overlaps between the *humanitas* and *docta pietas* literacy ideas, but also between occasional and biblical poetry.

Furthermore, this chapter also defines the genre group of *sacra poesis* and formulates the theoretical concept. The title of *sacra poesis* is the title of the works of Georg Fabricius, Johann Stigelius, Nicolaus Selnecker and Adam Siber (*Sacra Poemata/Poemata Sacra*), its analogy is used to denote trend, and the definition is based on the experience of the primary sources that I have used as a basis for my dissertation. When I created the term, I decided to use the word *poesis* with a broader meaning. The German and English equivalents of the term (*Poesie, Dichtung, Poetry*) also refer to poetry in the practical sense as opposed to the *Poetik/Poetic* expressions of theoretical poetry. At the same time, the paratextures of the primary sources of the dissertation contain a number of theoretical statements concerning biblical poetry. The last one makes necessary the concept of *sacra poetica* beside the *sacra poesis* in the subchapter dealing with the theory of literature. (*Sacra poetica in paratextures*).

First of all, with the profound analysis of paratextures of national and German texts that provided the sources of the dissertation I referred to the demands that brought to life this strange, contradictory tendency, rooted in the Latin poetry of the early Christian age, the *sacra poesis*. Beside the paratexts there is another source group that had to be taken into consideration. The idea which claims that the classical discourse disciplines have a key role in Scripture explanation is presented by many authors of 16th century rhetorical literature. The creative principle of the poets of *sacra poesis* is built on this interpretative experience, which is also apparent in the accompanying texts. From this point of view, therefore, I found it fertile to negotiate the relevant rhetorical passages with the paratextures, since the processed passages proved to be suitable to draw the poetry theory of *sacra poesis*.

Chapter 3-6 (Analytical chapters): Psalm paraphrases, Old Testament paraphrases, New Testament paraphrases, biblical carmen, epic-imitation

The primary body of the dissertation – which includes representative examples of Hungary – is based on bibliographic material of RMK (*Régi Magyar Könyvtár II-III.*) and RMNy (*Régi Magyarországi Nyomtatványok I-II.*), collection time: 1514–1619. Beside the typical characteristic of *sacra poesis*, the accessibility of the forms also served as a criterion when I selected the jobs presented in details. Some parts of the texts are available in digital form and in modern text editions, however some of them had disappeared from the source of bibliography.

There are three big chapters. The first one is about psalm paraphrases, the second includes the paraphrases from Old Testament books, and the third chapter contains the New Testament paraphrases. I finished my thesis with the imitations of Christianity. Analytical chapters and subchapters were created through the logic of source communication and the definition of *sacra poesis*, that can be found in the second chapter. During the analysis of the text, I found important the methodological consistency, and I was looking for answers to the following questions: How does Synchronizing Copyright Intention work in biblical paraphrases and imitations? Does the poem emphasize the antique or biblical paradigm? Which functions of *sacra poesis* do appear in the work from among the tasks defined in the theoretical chapter?

During the analysis of the texts the emphasis was put on the work of hungarian authors like (Leonhardus Mokoschinus, Georgius Purkircher, Joannes Bocatius, Kaspar Pilcius, Christianus Schesaeus, Georg Ostermaier, Nikolaus Erhard, Adam Taganius, Péter Csókás Laskai, Lőrinc Szegedi, Bálint Fodor, János Sylvester, János Zsámboky). However the analytical chapters in each case end with a glimpse of the related german parallels and with the comparison of their domestic work. The German examples were mainly derived from the digitalized collection of the CAMENA full text database.

Due to the German aspects of the topic of the dissertation, I mainly used German-language research literature in my work. In October of 2016 I had the possibility to do some research in the Austrian National Library with the contribution of CEEPUS scholarship. At this time I was able to get to know closer numerous works written in foreign languages that are closely related to my topic. Then with the support of research related to the PhD students (2017) and the PhD candidate (2018) competition in the New National Excellence Program I could gain twice as much research literature written in a foreign language to the library of the

Institute of Hungarian Literature and Cultural Studies of University of Debrecen. Professional books also contributed greatly to the international contextualization of the topic of the dissertation on a wider scale. The scholarship mentioned above gave me the chance to participate in shorter research trips, where I could also search for several primary sources related to my topic in the Széchényi National Library and also in the Library of Reformed College in Sárospatak.

III. Findings and solutions of the dissertation

Chapter 1: The Late Humanist Intellectuals in Hungary

- The texts analyzed in this chapter, the presented portraits all expanded and shadowed that extremely complex knowledge, that according to the current studies came from the organization of *res publica litteraria* and *proles Palladias*, the members of Hungarian humanist groups and their activities.
- The poem of János Balog Tolnai provides rather a heterogenous picture about the domestic *nobilitas litteraria* beside the drawing of diverse European connections and the international humanist friendship. There are differences between the Hungarian progeny of Pallas on the basis of their nationality, social and religious affiliation and their professional career and occupation.
- Some of the members did not come from Hungary, although many of them had a Hungarian consciousness.
- There is also a correlation between social affiliation and occupation. In the most cases, teacher and pastor training are linked to the simpler citizens of the market town, while members of noble had more military carrier.
- In terms of denominational affiliation there were no differences between members. It can be said that they all belonged to one of the two great Protestant denominations (Reformed, Lutheran). At the same time, Catholics are rarely found among the people listed in the poem of Tolnai Balog.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Background of Sacra Poesis

- The manifold aspirations of the cultivated nobility were based on the idea of *humanitas* ('higher level classical literary and literacy') in the spirit of which the fine sciences of the trivium (rhetoric, grammar, dialectic) was regarded as a universal explanatory tool.

- The most outstanding patterns for studying the subjects of the trivium were the Greek, Latin texts of the most prominent antique authors. The imitation of the classic literary patterns of the 16th century appeared through the creation of occasional poems in the Neo-Latin poetry.
- The 16th century was the century of reformation, and beside the *studia humanitas* there was also an emphasis on religious education. As a result, beside the idea of *humanitas* a bipolar model of education was created as an alternative, called *docta pietas*, ('educated piety'), which in the line with the needs of Protestant pedagogy at the same time demanded a deepening in the classical sciences and the acquisition of religious knowledge.
- The sacred poems of the group of genre of the *sacra poesis*, which nurture from the Holy Scripture and absorb the knowledge of antiquity, provided an opportunity for this parallel teaching/learning and the realization and promotion of the pedagogical ideal of *docta pietas* in the 16th century.
- The roots of late humanist *sacra poesis* are found in the literature of the early Christian age. The first golden age of Christian Latin poetry was in the 4–5th century (Juvenius, Cyprianus Gallus, Sedulius, Claudius Marius Victor). The early medieval Latin Poetry (in the 6th century) has a continuation of the Antique trend, Arator and Venantius Fortunatus are the representatives.
- The appreciation and the rebirth of early Christian Latin poetry in Late Humanism is well illustrated by the large number of contemporary text editions. Among the editions written in the 16th century the edition of Georg Fabricius appeared in 1564 (*In poetarum veterum ecclesiasticorum opera christiana...*) had special importance, which is considered a true anthology of early Christian Latin poetry.
- The central ideas of the *praefatio* written by Fabricius, accompanied by the anthology of 1564, answer this question, which needs of the early Christianity brought to life the saint Bible poetry.
- The *praefatio* includes the draft of a protestant educational system where the classic readings of the ancient greek-roman rhetorical training is replaced by a christian content and whose conceptional foundations were formulated in the early Christian Age.
- At the same time another function of the early Christian poetry had appeared in the *praefatio* of Fabricius. During the eventful years of ancient christianity and christian persecution, the poetry which used the tools of rhetoric were suitable for filling interpretive (exegetical), faith-protecting, missionary function and position.

- In the thoughtfulness of paratextures accompanying the works of *sacra poesis* there are many similarities between the functions of early Christian Latin poetry.
- According to the paratextual details quoted in this chapter the *sacra poesis* in the 16th century can be endowed with the following functions: 1. Teaching-interpretation (in the service of the school). 2. Strengthening and maintaining of the Religion (in the service of the church) 3. The mediation of the salvation and spiritual healing power (in the service of the Christian soul).
- The interpretive function has an outstanding role among the positions mentioned above. In late humanism, the fine disciplines of the trivium, especially rhetoric, had a special importance in the Scriptural interpretation. In antiquity rhetoric was the tool of transmission of truth and the persuasion of goodness, and all this in the early Christian era had a kind of religious didactic function, furthermore they focused on the meditation of the declared truth of the Scripture. Later, in the age of reformation, this idea was revived, which also provided the theoretical background for *sacra poesis*. These are supported by contemporary theme editors (German and domestic) disputations, orations and paratextures.

Chapter 3: Psalm Paraphrases

- The most Psalm poets (Fodor, Szegedi, Schesaeus, Ostermaier) follow faithfully the original Bible texts, and do not discuss issues in details, only smaller language colorations and changes can be observed in their paraphrases. For almost all domestic Psalm poems is true that emphasis is put on the value of salvation, that can be found in the declaration of God. The exterior falls into the background, almost in each interpretation the words of Psalms have the same, actual meaning. From the classical paraphrases we can hear the collective complaint of the afflicted Hungarians and their repentance or prayer to God.
- The Psalm paraphrases of Kaspar Pilcius and Joannes Bocatius can be compared with the high level of formal and linguistic development of the poems of Hessus, Spethe és Spangenberg which were re-written for scholar purposes. Pilcius and Bocatius were the only one who applied in his poems distichonic, hexameter metrum and more varied strophic forms. The lyrics of their poems is well organized, rich in tropes and shapes, plenty in details, in certain cases it witnesses the antiquity of vocabulary. All of these are the characteristics of Psalm Revisions written by Purkircher and Sylvester. What is more Purkircher also wrote the german paraphrase of the 79th Psalm, that had already existed in Latin.

Chapter 4: Old Testament Paraphrases

- In the re-writing of Purkircher and Laskai the focus is on the updating Bible theme, they see well the similarity of the circumstances of their formation and the timeline of the original text, the necessity of teaching transmission (this is also important in paratextures).
- Purkircher did not do many changes in the original Bible text and his individual talent of writing poems was not shining. However his saying has undoubtedly outstanding importance in the process of re-writing the Book of Wisdom. It is also true for Laskai that he did not intend to follow faithfully the original Bible text in his paraphrase. However, it is unique among the domestic works in the complexity of editing.
- The works of Bocatius and Seckerwitz have similarities in many respects. Firstly, in the paratextures accompanying to the texts the teaching purpose is strongly emphasized in both revisions. Furthermore, the elaboration of the texts, the high level of rhetoric reveal the awareness of the poets. The paraphrase of the son of Sirak of Bocatius is the most elaborated among the Hungarian transfer of Old Testament.
- Germans often focus on the creative method and on the creation of the paraphrase. Hesus names the sources of compilation and gives a talk about circumstances of the genre-stylistic revision. The creation of the texts also proves these observations. From Hesus' syncretic vocabulary, his sensual pictures, sophisticated word processing techniques, we can feel the experience of high culture of *poeta doctus*, that makes his talent and knowledge visible.

Chapter 5: New Testament Paraphrases

- Spethe's and Spangenberg's paraphrases in the New Testament are similar in several respects to the Hungarian works.
- The diversity of form and genre also characterizes domestic re-writings. Schesaeus sometimes encapsulates the gospel passages in elegy and eclog. Pilcius also works with iambic meters and hexameter.
- Both Hungarian and German poets strongly rhetorize their poems, classic expressions are common in their vocabulary, and they live together with various figures, poets pictures.
- The extremely logical and clear editing of the paraphrases (especially at Schesaeus), the explanatory-interpretive intent that is detectable in the text (and the supporting rhetorical stylistic apparatus) witness the didactic purpose. The paratextures also strengthen this authorial intent, which, among other tasks, such as at Schesaeus, faith protection or consolation also emphasizes the teaching function of transitions.

Chapter 6: Bible Carmen, Epic Imitation

- The Hungarian Christianized genre imitations are promising wing attempts compared to the German parallels.
- While Pilcius and Mokoschinus only imitated one element (metrum, vocabulary, contexts, rhetorical-stylistic tools, narrative), they tried to fit in with the antique models, whereas in the work of Fabricius and Frischlin we see the highest degree of imitation.
- The German poets along with an accurate representation of the form elements, they also strove to accurately reproduce the structure and content. That is why Frischlin's work can be considered a true Christianized epicimitation, while Mokoschinus's work is more paraphrased, which also outlines the intention of making a biblical epic.

Almost every piece of *sacra poesis* in Hungary offers many untapped research opportunities. The texts have diverse meaning, this is especially true for the meta-system of the volume of *Meditationes Piaae*, the remaining books of Mokoschinus's that have nearly six hundred pages, and especially for complex composition of Laskai paraphrase found in the appendix.



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List of publications related to the dissertation

Hungarian book chapters (10)

1. **Posta, A.:** A bölcsességi irodalom verses parafrázisai a protestantizmus 16. századi neolatin költészetében: Georgius Purkircher és Eobanus Hessus.
In: A reformáció és a katolikus megújulás latin nyelvű irodalma / Békés Enikő, Kasza Péter, Kiss Farkas Gábor, Lázár István, Molnár Dávid, MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont Irodalomtudományi Intézet, Budapest, 203-211, 2019, (Convivia Neolatina Hungarica, ISSN 2416-125X ; 3) ISBN: 9786155478697
2. **Posta, A.:** A klasszikus és a vallási műveltség összefonódása a reformáció humanizmusának idején: A 16. századi protestáns neolatin költészet Sacra Poetica műfajcsoportja.
In: A tudomány ekként rajzolja világát": Irodalom, nevelés és történelem metszetei tanulmánykötet, I. kötet / szerkesztette Fodor József Péter, Mizera Tamás, Szabó P. Katalin, ELTE Doktorandusz Önkormányzata : Doktoranduszok Országos Szövetsége Irodalomtudományi Osztály ; Eger : EKE Doktorandusz Önkormányzat, Budapest, 214-237, 2019. ISBN: 9786155586415
3. **Posta, A.:** Az antikizálás üdvérték-közvetítő szerepe Leonhardus Mokoschinus 1599-es hexameteres latin nyelvű Őszövetség-parafrázisában.
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4. **Posta, A.:** A klasszikus és a vallási műveltség összefonódása Caspar Piltz Meditationes Piaae (Bártfa, 1583) című kötetében.
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5. **Posta, A.:** A 16. századi protestáns neolatin költészet Sacra Poetica irányzatának koncepcionális háttere.
In: Fiatal Kutatók és Doktoranduszok VII. Nemzetközi Teológuskonferenciájának Tanulmánykötete. Szerk.: Kiss Gábor, Pécsi Püspöki Hittudományi Főiskola, Pécs, 115-121, 2017. ISBN: 9786155579189
6. **Posta, A.:** Az antikizálás üdvérték-közvetítő szerepe Christianus Schesaeus, 16. századi magyarországi neolatin költő verses parafrázisaiban.
In: Tavasz Szél = Spring Wind 2017 : II. Kötet. Irodalomtudomány, Kémia- és környezettudomány, Kommunikáció- és médiatudomány, Közgazdaságtudomány, Közigazgatás-tudomány, Matematika- és informatikai tudomány. Szerk.: Keresztes Gábor, Doktoranduszok Országos Szövetsége, Budapest, 61-71, 2017. ISBN: 9786155586187
7. **Posta, A.:** Poetica Evangelica a protestantizmus 16. századi neolatin költészetében: Leonhardus Mokoschinus hexameteres Ószövetség-átírata.
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8. **Posta, A.:** "Pallas magyar ivadékai" a tudóslevelezésben és a neolatin költészetben.
In: Szöveg, hordozó, közösség: Olvasóközönség és közösségi olvasmányok a régi magyar irodalomban : Fiatalok konferenciája 2015. Szerk.: Gesztelyi Hermína, Görög Dániel, Maróthy Szilvia, Reciti, Budapest, 151-164, 2016. ISBN: 9786155478246
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In: In via eruditionis: Tanulmányok a 70 éves Imre Mihály tiszteletére. Szerk.: Bitskey István, Fazakas Gergely Tamás, Luffy Katalin, Száraz Orsolya, Debreceni Egyetemi Kiadó, Debrecen, 30-39, 2016. ISBN: 9789633185759
10. **Posta, A.:** Leonhardus Mokoschinus Historiarum Veteris Testamenti Heroico Carmine Redditarum című művének paratextusai.
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List of other publications

Hungarian scientific articles in Hungarian journals (5)

11. **Posta, A.:** A Debreceni Református Kollégium 17. századi professzorainak neolatin halotti költeményei.
Gerundium. 10 (1), 21-32, 2019. ISSN: 2061-5132.
12. **Posta, A.:** A Debreceni Református Kollégium 17. századi professzorainak neolatin üdvözlőkölteményei.
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13. **Posta, A.:** Pintér Márta Zsuzsanna: Theatrum és literatúra, Universitas, Bp., 2014.
Agria. 9 (3), 260-270, 2015. ISSN: 1789-4379.
14. **Posta, A.:** Alistáli Farkas Jakab 1652-es respondensi felelete mint Apáczai De summa scholarum necessitate című beszédének egyik forrása.
Egyháztört. Szle. 15 (4), 20-50, 2014. ISSN: 1585-7476.
15. **Posta, A.:** Az 1565-ös kolozsvári Bonfini-kiadás latin nyelvű kísérő versciklusa.
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