

Latin paraphrases of Old Testament books in verse in 16th century Hungary

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ABSTRACT

A popular trend in 16th-century Hungarian Neo-Latin poetry was the transposition of biblical, especially Old Testament books and texts. Georg Purkircher (Georgius Purkircher) paraphrased the Book of Wisdom, Péter Laskai Csókás (Petrus C. Lascovius) the Song of Songs, János Bocatius (Johannes Bocatius) the Book of Sirach/Ecclesiasticus, and Leonhardus Mocoschinus (Leonhardus Mocoschinus) a part of the Old Testament books (from Genesis to II Kings) in Latin. Internationally, only Mocoschinus' paraphrase of the Old Testament is known to any extent. In the present paper I will attempt to outline the main similarities and differences between the paraphrases of the Old Testament in Germany and in Hungary by means of a detailed philological analysis of the domestic corpus of texts and by highlighting some related parallels in Germany.

KEYWORDS

neolatin poetry, biblical poetry, 16th–17th century, Old Testament paraphrase, Hungary

The first heyday of Christian poetry in Latin dates from the 4th to 6th centuries. At this time, Latin poetry of the early Christian period was developing in two directions. Hilarius and Ambrose aimed their hymns at meeting the liturgical needs of the emerging church. At the same time, the representatives of the classicist movement adapted the text of Scripture on the model of the

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Virgilian epic.¹ Juvencus of Hippo, who became famous as the Christian Virgil, composed a hexameter biblical epic called *Evangeliorum libri IV* around 330, which is largely a synopsis of the Gospels of Matthew, Luke and John. Around 360, a distinguished Roman woman named Proba edited a cento (*Cento Vergilianus de laudibus Christi*) from passages she had selected from Genesis and the Gospels, the content of which she reproduced by means of lines taken from the Vergilian works. We can also find parallels in contemporary Greek poetry. The wife of the Byzantine emperor Theodosius II, Aelia Eudocia, also composed a so-called Homeric cento from Genesis and the Gospels, using lines from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, to complete an unfinished project of her predecessor Patricius.²

There are several similar paraphrases from the 5th century. Cyprianus Gallus is associated with the ancient transcription of the Old Testament history books – unfortunately his work has not survived in its entirety. In his five-book *Carmen Paschale* Sedulius, a Gallic or Spanish priest, reworked the Old and New Testament books using classical verse technique. Claudius Marius Victor, who also acted as a rhetorician, told the story of Genesis up to the destruction of Sodom in hexameters. In the early medieval Latin poetry of the 6th century, there is also a continuation of this antiquarian tendency in the figures of Arator and Venantius Fortunatus, the former of whom composed his *Historiae Apostolicae Libri 2* in hexameter, while the latter wrote a biblical epic of four hymns on the life of St Martin (*Vita Sancti Martini*).³

The transposition of biblical books and passages became common practice again in Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries, after the early Christian period.⁴ Hundreds of Neo-Latin poets of various nationalities, Protestant and Catholic, attempted to transpose the Scriptural passages into Latin, sometimes Greek, and classical metre, mostly hexameter and distichon. In general, there were far more verse transcriptions of Old Testament texts than of New Testament texts.⁵ Historical books were the main focus of interest because of their thematic content, as they provided an excellent basis for a biblical epic in Latin. Paul Zwilling Didymus, for example, reworked the whole of Genesis in his narrative poem (Leipzig, 1580), Ulrich Bollinger versified the events of the Exodus in his paraphrase of Vergil's epic (Frankfurt, 1597), and Nicodemus Frischlin's work (Strassburg, 1599), consisting of twelve books and 12,500 hexameters, is both a transcription of several Old Testament historical books (the Book of Samuel, the Book of Kings, the Book of Chronicles, the Book of Jeremiah) and a Christian version of Virgil's *Aeneid*.

¹For more on the classification of early Christian poetry see. Rädle (2004), 200–205; Czaplá (2013), 21–24.

²Sowers uses *cento* as a synonym for paraphrase: Sowers (2020).

³For more on early Christian poetry see. Bertold (1947), 269–271; Albrecht (2004), 1051–1099; Hardie (2019).

⁴The appreciation and rebirth of early Christian Latin poetry during late humanism is clearly demonstrated by the large number of related text editions of the time. Czaplá in the impressive list of sources offered in his monograph also takes into account the early modern editions (European editions of the 16th and 17th centuries) related to the early Christian and medieval biblical epics: Czaplá (2013), 505–716 (*Quellenrepertorium*). In the early modern period, in addition to the idea of *humanitas* – as an alternative to it – a bipolar model of education, *docta pietas* ('educated piety'), which adapted to the needs of Protestant pedagogy, demanded both immersion in the classical sciences and the acquisition of religious knowledge. It is a complex pedagogical concept, within the framework of which humanists can teach/learn both subjects on the same text, thus creating a harmonious connection between the religious and cultural content and ideas of Greco-Roman antiquity and the Judeo-Christian faith. The conceptual foundations of this Protestant model of education were formulated already in the time of early Christianity, and it was these needs of early Christianity that gave birth to biblical paraphrases.

⁵Doelman (1990), 53.



Of the prophets, Jonah and Jeremiah were the most popular among early modern Christian poets. Grant, in his survey of biblical paraphrases in Latin verse, gives eight examples for Jeremiah and seven for Jonah, with English (Patrick Adamson), French (Jean Jacquemot) and Spanish (Caspar Sanchez) authors, mostly of German origin.⁶ At the same time, the most popular books of the period, after the Psalms, were the books of teaching and wisdom (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Wisdom, and the Book of Sirach/Ecclesiasticus).⁷ Czapla's monograph on the biblical epics is accompanied by a very detailed list in which he supplements Grant and Gaertner's lists from nearly 60 years earlier with a number of new sources in each category.⁸ His overview shows that the number of Latin transliterations amounts to more than thirty just for the wisdom books alone. The list of paraphrases relating to the Book of Proverbs opens with a joint work by the German Eoban Hessus and the Spanish Alvar Gomez (Basel, 1538). Hessus also revised the Book of Ecclesiastes, and his work was published in one volume with his psalm transcriptions in Leipzig in 1548. Czapla reviews the paraphrases up to the end of the 17th century, so that, for example, the last movement of the Book of Ecclesiastes is the work of the English William Hog, printed in London in 1685.⁹ From the Song of Songs, Francois de Monceaux wrote *Sacra bucolica* (Paris, 1587), and Martin Nessel, judging from the title of *Theatrum amoris* (Emden, 1649), interprets the same Old Testament book as a drama. For the Book of Wisdom, Czapla mentions only one paraphrase, a Greek-language work by Johann Conrad Rhumel (Nuremberg, 1615). For the Book of Sirach, he cites four examples by German authors, Johann Lorich (Ingolstadt, 1544), Johann Seckerwitz (Basel, 1556), Michael Hempel (Wittenberg, 1557) and Martin Nessel (Emden, 1654).

Most of the Old Testament paraphrases that appeared in Hungary in the 16th century belong to the category of wisdom books and historical books. Georg Purkircher (Georgius Purkircher) of the Book of Wisdom,¹⁰ Péter Laskai Csókás (Petrus C. Lascovius) of the Song of Songs,¹¹ János Bocatius (Johannes Bocatius) of the Book of Sirach,¹² and Lénárd Mocoschinus (Leonhardus Mocoschinus) of the Old Testament (from Genesis to II Kings).¹³ Czapla's repertory of Hungarian works includes only Mocoschinus' paraphrase of the Old Testament. In the present paper, I will attempt to sketch out the main similarities and differences between the Hungarian and German Old Testament paraphrases by means of a detailed philological analysis of the Hungarian corpus and by highlighting some related parallels from Germany. The examples from Germany can be taken as a point of reference because the late humanist intellectuals in Hungary constantly sought to transpose the cultural patterns and methodological solutions they had experienced and studied during their peregrinations, largely in Germany (Wittenberg), into their own work, adapting them to domestic and individual needs.

⁶Grant (1959).

⁷Gaertner's list of early modern European psalm paraphrases: Gaertner (1956). For more on Hungarian and German neo-Latin psalm paraphrases, see: Posta (2023).

⁸Czapla (2013), 526–600.

⁹Hog (2010).

¹⁰Purkircher (1559). Critical edition: Okál (1988), 33–90.

¹¹Lascovius (1578).

¹²Bocatius (1596). Critical edition: Csonka (1990a), I, 63–198.

¹³Mocoschinus (1599).



PARAPHRASE OF THE BOOK OF WISDOM¹⁴

Purkircher's transcription is accompanied by two paratexts in verse. The first is an epigram in praise of Baron Henrik Starhemberg, the second is a poem of dedication by the author himself to King Maximilian I of Hungary. The paratexts are followed by a summary of the contents, the *Argumentum libri Sapientiae*, and then the nineteen caput of the main text. According to certain passages in the argumentum and the main text, the church is in danger of being destroyed, tyrants are savagely and furiously attacking the faithful, they fear no divine punishment, and the sacred texts are mocked.¹⁵ Thus rulers must heed (audite) the wisdoms herein, that by mastering (notate, discite) and practicing them they may become godly, pious leaders for the welfare of their believing subjects.¹⁶

In the argumentum, Purkircher also testifies to his creative method when he says that he respects and loves the Church as his mother, that he seeks her advice and imitates her pious words. By imitation, Purkircher here obviously means the faithful reproduction of the original biblical text, the divine revelation, by other linguistic means, i.e. the operation of paraphrasing. Here we also read about the original author of the Book of Wisdom. Purkircher considers Philo of Alexandria, the Greek-speaking Jewish philosopher, the greatest glory of his people, who guarded and cherished the divine teachings with true love, to be the true author of the book. The original book was written at a time when the Jewish people were under Roman rule. Philo wrote his work to comfort his oppressed fellow citizens. It is thus presumably the turbulent events of Purkircher's time and the plight of the Church, i.e. the similarity of circumstances and the topicality of the subject, that justify Purkircher's choice of this book as the subject of his paraphrase.

Purkircher's use of the classical metre (distichon) and the arrangement of the textus into capita already takes the biblical text towards the antique paradigm. The syncretic authorial intention is also reflected in the use of words. Since the text is about the doctrines of eschatology and salvation history, about the fate of the good and the wicked in the afterlife, the classical terms are Styx, Stygius, Tartareus, Dis. Apart from the terms relating to the underworld, there are only three examples of antiquity in the vocabulary: Boreas, Olympus and Mars.¹⁷

In the second caput of the paraphrase we read about the barbaric mindset and views of godless people: life is just pain and a fleeting race, death is final, there is no afterlife, there is no God to fear the judgment of, life is to be enjoyed while you are young, there is nothing to care about, all that matters is the indulgence of pleasure. This chapter of the original biblical text is a

¹⁴Purkircher and his paraphrase are also mentioned by Ijsewijn in Ijsewijn (1990), 216; Ijsewijn (1998), 108; Taranová (2010), 669–679.

¹⁵“Haec liber iste docet, quem nostri temporis aetas / ultima cognoscat; saevos habet illa tyrannos, / qui sua iustorum pascunt furiosa cruore / corpora nec poenas curant, quas verba minantur / coelica, sanctorum rident quasi barbara verba, / saepius expositas gemitu maiore querelas. / Audaci fingunt hilares idola furore. / Has habet in mundo turpes ecclesia pestes.” Okál (1988), 43.

¹⁶“Dic mihi, quid summos evertat in orbe monarchas? / Impia, quam caeco, vita, furore colunt. / Auribus haec patulis, reges, audite, sub imos / pectoris haec abeant omnia verba sinus. / Et vos, iudicii quotquot pia frena tenetis, / hos etiam iustos aure notate sonos. / Imperio totum vobis qui subditis orbem, / discite, quae sancto pectore verba loquar. / Coelica vos geritis regnorum scepra, potestas / regia nec vobis est sine parta Deo”, Okál (1988), 56.

¹⁷Okál (1988), 46, 47, 55, 68, 81, 87.



collection of various pagan philosophical ideas, which of course also include the doctrines of ancient philosophy, Hellenism, and specifically Epicureanism. Epicureanism appears in the text of the transposition in the form of an intertextual reference, when the poet, in the thirty-first line of his ode to Horace Torquatus (4.7), which begins 'Umbra sumus...', invokes the doctrines of Epicureanism.¹⁸

Already in the original biblical text (6:5–8), the harsh divine judgment of tyrannical rulers is emphasized. In one of the passages of the sixth chapter of the paraphrase, Purkircher repeats the words and expressions of divine wrath, punishment and pain (*ira vehemens, poenae onus, maiores dolores, maxima poena, saevissima tormina, aeterni vindicis ira, poenas graves*), emphasizes and elaborates the content of the phrases that frame the text, according to which the wrath of the Lord will fall on the wicked rulers and condemn them to eternal suffering with the most severe punishments. The narrator also indicates his awareness of the repetition by the interjection 'iterum repeto', thus indicating the importance of the main idea, the punishment of tyrannical rulers.¹⁹ In some places the poet similarly enlivens and interprets the original text by a more thorough linguistic and contentual expansion of biblical similes, by the insertion of paraphrases, question formulations and exclamations, and by a change of narrative technique.

However, in addition to the use of rhetorical-stylistic devices, Purkircher also employs other techniques for didactic purposes. One of these is the minimal restructuring of the text. In the original text, it is sometimes the case that a unit that still belongs there is moved from the end of a chapter to the beginning of the next chapter. Purkircher's transposition corrects these minor inconsistencies. For example, in the original biblical text, Purkircher moves the section on chastity and fornication, the sins and punishments of the ungodly generation, from the beginning of chapter four to the end of chapter three.²⁰ In the twelfth part of the original text, there is a sentence structure of multiple complexity (12,27) which the poet has broken down into shorter sentences and simplified for the sake of better understanding.²¹ In the fourteenth chapter of the original book, which tells the story of the flood (14,6), the narrator does not name whom he means when he speaks of the hope of the world, so Purkircher clarifies the narrative and clearly states the name of Noah.²² In certain places the transcription also contains explanatory statements and utterances which are missing from the original text but which help to understand the text, and which probably originate from the narrator. One example is the passage in brackets in the fourteenth caput, in which the poet warns against the sinful ambition of the sculptor who carves idols (cf. 14,18).²³

¹⁸Okál (1988), 47. For a relevant Vergilian reminiscence see Taranová, cited above.

¹⁹Okál (1988), 56.

²⁰Okál (1988), 52.

²¹"Nam cui divinos dederant reverenter honores, / hos illis fuerat maxima causa mali. / Mens invita Deum didicit celebrare potentem, / antea quem voluit dicere nemo Deum. / Propterea meritos tandem sensere dolores, / tardior his gravius poena ferebat onus", Okál (1988), 71–72.

²²"Et tua magnanimos quondam cum dextra gigantes / perderet et rapidis terra periret aquis, / prora Noë tota cum posteritate per altum / incolumem longo tempore parva tulit", Okál (1988), 74.

²³"Sculptor et ipse suas operis dum quaerere laudes / nititur (ambitio crimina multa parit), / arte sua coecas hominum confirmat inani / mentes, dum statuæ membra venusta facit", Okál (1988), 76.



PARAPHRASE OF THE SONG OF SONGS

The title of Péter Laskai Csókás's paraphrase of (*Iucundum ac suave sponsi Christi colloquium cum sponsa Ecclesia*, i.e. Christ's conversation with his betrothed, the Church) already refers to the allegorical-symbolic interpretation of the biblical book, and some of the eighteen paratexts accompanying the transcription also contain references to this textual interpretation. For example, Laskai himself emphasizes in his accompanying poem (*Pro materia carminis epigramma*) that the transcription reflects God's secret will (i.e. his covenant with Israel and the Church), which he has always sought to explain and explain with clarity, avoiding obscure allusions.²⁴

István Kaposi also speaks of Christ as the bridegroom (*sponsus*) and the church as the bride (*sponsa*) in his distichonic poem for the paraphrase. According to him, this meaning of the text can easily escape human understanding and comprehension unless the light of faith can illuminate it. Kaposi compares this holy matrimony to human marriage, but there is an essential difference between the two: while the virgin daughter loses her purity through marriage, humanity is purified precisely through the covenant with Christ.²⁵ Among the paratexts, the prose foreword of Péter Laskai Csókás, addressed to his patrons and the Senate of Debrecen, stands out. In this praefatio Laskai emphasizes that there is nothing in his transcription that is alien to the morals of respectable youth. From this we may infer that the paraphrase was intended to be educational for the young students.²⁶

Laskai's distichonic transcription reveals some of the generic characteristics of classical Greek drama. In the first line of the main text, the poet sketches the basic dramatic situation: the bride addresses her fiancé in sweet song. The unit named *Prologus Spiritus* functions as a dramatic overtone, an introduction, from which we can learn the basic idea, the message and the purpose of the 'play'. The dialogue form of the *Colloquium* section, the exchange between *Sponsus* and *Sponsa*, also suggests the dramatic character of the text.

As far as vocabulary is concerned, antiquisation is not predominant, and there are very few examples. Classical expressions such as *stygius paludes*, referring to Christ the Redeemer overcoming the stygian mire, i.e. death, or *Phoebeo exulta nitore*, meaning the bride shines with the light and glitter of Phoebus, are rare. In other passages, the lyric narrator compares the brilliance of the beautiful bride to the radiance of the sun (*Phoebus*), and elsewhere he says that the eloquent-spoken bride is not surpassed by *Minerva* herself. In one of the groom's utterances we recognise a well-known line from Virgil's *Eclogue* 10.²⁷

²⁴"Quae frustra feriunt, non sunt aenigmata, sensus, / Hic quae texuimus quilibet opto sciat. / Hic magni secreta Dei (modo cerne) voluntas / Versibus in nostris hic repetita iacet", *Lascovius* (1578), A1v.

²⁵"Christus sponsus amans Ecclesia sponsa vocatur / Ipsius hanc sibi quod sanguine vinxit amor. / Effugit humanos omnes haec copula sensus / Nec nisi eam fidei lux penetrare potest. / Virgo mundano cum iungitur ipsa marito, / Altrix non ultra virginitatis erit. / At genus humanum prius omni labe refertum, / Signa nec ulla pia virginitatis habens. / Postquam connubio Christi talamoque receptum est, / Vitae dat castae plurima signa suae", *Lascovius* (1578), A2v–A3r.

²⁶"Praeterquam enim quod in his, nihil a moribus honestorum iuvenum admittitur alienum, peculiaris etiam huius mei instituti ratio est, quod et mei officii esse duco...", *Lascovius* (1578), A4v–B1r.

²⁷*Lascovius* (1578), C2r–v., C3r., D2r. "Magnus amor iunctis, amor omnia vincit in aevo / Castus amor laetos cogit adesse dies", *Lascovius* (1578), C2r. Cf. Virgil *Ecl.* 10, 69: "Omnia vincit amor et nos cedamus amori",



Laskai's paraphrase is composed of two main structural units (the prologue of the Spirit and the conversation). In the dialogue section, the bride and groom alternate in their responses to each other, and the Spirit's words are read in parallel. In this triple division, fifteen units follow one another. The primary aim of the author, when considering the text as a whole, is to unfold the allegorical-symbolic meaning of the text, the mystical relationship between Christ and the Church, and the biblical teachings that flow from it, and this is present at every level of the text.

In the *Prologue*, the poet clearly identifies the speakers of the Colloquium with Christ and the Church, and thus defines the core of the text. It is also clear from this unity that in the dialogue part the words of the Spiritus have an explanatory and instructive function.²⁸ The knowledge of the Word of God, and in particular the revelation of its secret teachings on the covenant between Christ and his Church, are particularly necessary in the present situation of the Church, since in the midst of all the anger and rage, the only consolation for the despairing faithful is the support and help of the Lord.²⁹

In the section of the *Colloquium/Sponsa-Sponsus dialogue*, the level of the ordinary meaning of the original biblical text and the level of allegorical-symbolic meaning are present at the same time. In some places Laskai paraphrases the original text of the *Song of Songs*, taking locutions from it, such as when the bride asks the bridegroom for kisses, when the bride wanders lonely and seeks the way to the bridegroom's flock, when the bridegroom is like the blossoming, green apple tree and the vine that bears a bountiful fruit, and the bride is like the lily or the rose among the thorny brambles and has the eyes of a dove.

In other cases, the author adheres to the original text only to a small extent, and in several places he embellishes and rhetoricizes the text with his own formulations of questions and analogies. For example, the bride asking for kisses receives in response the following rhetorical question from her fiancé, "Shall I ignore the words mixed with honeyed juice?"³⁰ The bride compares the flame of love in her heart to a fire burning in the dry reeds.³¹ The allegorical-symbolic meaning is also explicit at this level of the text. The church in peril is identified with the bride, and Christ, who offers protection, with the bridegroom – identifications that are also evident at the linguistic level. For example, in several places the bride refers to her betrothed as Christ (*sponsus, maritus*). In addition to the *Prologue*, the first three units of the main text also represent the current situation of the Church. The bride is burdened on all sides with defeat, ruin and destruction and, driven by her love and desire for peace, she asks her fiancé to marry her and to be her protector.³²

Spiritus is presumably the mouthpiece of the author, Laskai. He speaks objectively, not responding to the speeches of the characters (*Sponsa, Sponsus*), but formulating general biblical teachings and wisdom on the subject of the main text. In the fourteen units connected with the Spiritus, two lines ("Quisquis adit dominum prece non dubitante benignum, / Me duce foelices

²⁸"Sponsum nunc mecum sponsam tu coge loquentes, / Sponsus erit Christus sponsa beata cohors (...) O quam dulce Dei cognoscere verba benigni, / Spiritus haec nobis suggeret ipse Dei", *Lascovius (1578)*, A4v.

²⁹"Inter enim tantos Ecclesia totque furores, / Auxilio fortis stat bene facta Dei.", *Lascovius (1578)*, B4v.

³⁰"Anne ea quae pleno nunc poscis amore recusem? / Verbaque mellito mista liquore morer?," *Lascovius (1578)*, C1r.

³¹"Ignis ut in sicca succensus arundine flagrat: / Flagrat et accensi sic mihi cordis amor", *Lascovius (1578)*, D1r.

³²Sponsa: "Undique collectis multa me mole ruina / Opprimit insidiis, tu mihi dexter ades. / Dexter ades, quoniam sponso tibi sacra dicata / Sponsa queror, cupio iam tua iussa sequi", *Lascovius (1578)*, B4v.



possidet ille dies.”, i.e., anyone who turns to the Lord with certainty and not doubting with petition and prayer, will have happy days under the guidance of the Spirit) are constantly repeated word for word in order to emphasize the main point and teaching of the text. In the other passages, the content of the main line of thought (the salvific relationship between the Church and Christ) is developed. Like the bride-bridegroom’s correspondence, the individual words of wisdom (e.g. the Lord’s justice and protection, divine forgiveness and providence, the treasure of salvation and divine gifts, prayer and the power of faith, the church-ship allegory, the church as the flock of Christ, the marriage of Christ and the church) are sequenced in a loose structure of the original biblical book.

PARAPHRASE OF THE BOOK OF SIRACH

The authors of the texts accompanying Bocatius’ work almost all emphasize the educational character and purpose of the paraphrase. According to Ernest Hettenbach, Bocatius, in his scholarly poem, teaches the knowledge and desire of virtue, which is born of the fear of God and based on pure faith.³³ Nicolas Steinberg advises young students to study Bocatius’ work diligently and to put the moral rules of conduct it contains into practice from childhood. Just as the doctor sweetens bitter medicine with honey, so Bocatius, through his muse, makes the serious, austere doctrines more pleasant for his pupils by means of his wise art, wrapped in sweet song.³⁴ Johann Spangenberg, too, sees Bocatius as teaching us to live a quiet, carefree life, to follow the divine commandments at all times. On the moral level, children will benefit greatly from the teachings in this book.³⁵ The genre-marking title of the paraphrase (*Paraenesis ad vitam bene beateque transigendam*) reflects this educational intention.

The verse text in distichons offers several examples of the antiquisation of vocabulary. Bocatius boldly operates with the names of the gods (Atlas, Iuppiter, Neptunus, Mars, Venus, Cupid, Pluto, Ceres, Phoebus), the winds (Eurus, Boreas, Auster), mythological creatures (Parcae, Lachesis, Furia, Erynnis, Tisiphone, Syren, Titan) and people (Ulysses, Hercules, Argus), as well as ancient terms for heaven (Olympus) and the underworld (Phlegethon, Avernus, Styx, Elysium, Charon).

The oak tree (*Iovis umbrosa arbor*) is described by the name of the chief god Iuppiter, who is also referred to as *Tonans*, or Thunderer, by Bocatius when he speaks of the heroic hand of God giving to the people a king. Elsewhere, the aged lover is called Cupid’s old soldier (*senex miles Cupidinis*). In the passage on greed, those who covet the treasures of the mine sacrifice to Pluto. Among the high mountains, Eurus scatters the glumes. The Lord gives Moses his law as the ruler of Olympus (*magni regnator Olympi*). In the unity of the fear of God, the souls of the doubters

³³“Ergo piis quod hanc doces laboribus / Notamque cunctis esse docto carmine / Optam, Bocati dum Syracidae libros / Sacros in ordinem ductos exhibes, / Accomodo discentibus fusos metro”, Csonka (1990b), II, 957.

³⁴“Sedulus has versa leges, teneroque probandis / Gestibus et factis infer ab ungue, puer / (...) / En tibi, si qua minus sapiunt et amara videntur, / Musa facit docti suavia cuncta viri. / Dulcia sic reddunt absinthia tetra labellis, / Acris sic medici pocula melle linunt. / Curat idem quoniam sapiente Bocatius arte, / Dulcibus involvens dicta severa modis”, Csonka (1990b), II, 958.

³⁵“Hic docet humanam sine sollicitudine vitam / Defere, et in cunctis coelia iussa sequi. / Hunc ergo assidue pueri versate libellum, / Ad mores vobis commoda multa feret”, Csonka (1990b), II, 959.



are encouraged by the promise that prosperity and salvation will rise again from the fortress of Elysium. The process of dying is described by Bocatius as the preparation for Charon's boat ("Cum properas, currusque paras, navesque Charontis").³⁶

Lachesis, the thread of life, can give men eternal life and fame. When the author speaks of intrigue and slander, he speaks of the fortunate man who lives his life without envy, anger and madness. The words anger or madness are here replaced by the name of one of the Furies, Tisiphone. And the word Titan (i.e. Helios, son of Hyperion) is used instead of the sun disappearing from the sky. Another locus says that he who is lazy will not encourage Herculean labors ('non suadebit Herculeos labores'). In the description of Solomon we read that the wise king had a hundred eyes like Argus. In the section warning against fornication and lewdness, the narrator exhorts his readers to keep away from the seductive song of the sirens, not to fall prey to them. They should do as the pious Ulysses once did with his ships, so that the resounding voices of the monsters do not reach their ears. This last detail can also be interpreted as an intertextual allusion to a famous episode in the *Odyssey*.³⁷

Aegidius Hunnius, in his *praefatio* to the paraphrase, also mentions Bocatius' creative method, the editing of the paraphrase. In his reworking, Bocatius collects the teachings of the original biblical book, which are disordered, scattered and jumbled together, into thematic chapters. This technique of bringing together ideas that are sometimes distant but coherent in content allows for the immediate citation of coherent passages in both school and church use.³⁸ There are many repetitions in the original biblical book, and Bocatius tries to bring these recurring themes together in a single poem for the sake of clarity and simplicity. For example, on the subject of wisdom there are several passages scattered throughout the fifty-one chapters of the original text: *the secret of wisdom, wisdom and integrity, wisdom educates, the school of wisdom, the happiness of the wise, true and false wisdom, the greatness and the destruction of the wise, wisdom and folly, the discourse of wisdom, wisdom and the law*. In Bocatius these ideas are summarized in two thematic poems (*De sapientia, De sapientibus*). The poet does the same with his teachings on friendship (*Friendship, True and false friends, Befriend those worthy of you, False friends*) (see the elegies *De amicis* and *De inimicis*).

The rhetoric of the paraphrase can be seen, among other things, in the analysis of the elegies on diseases (Liber quartus, Elegia II. *De morbis*). Lines 1–12 are a transposition of the biblical locus (38,9–14). When we are sick, we should offer sacrifices to the gods, sacrifice incense, and keep away from sins and evil and harmful things. But let us not delay in visiting the doctors, either, for God lives among us on earth in human form. Many times, the doctor and the medicine can be the cure for our ills.³⁹

It is only here that the argument of the text unfolds. Lines 13–14 contain the main idea, the teaching to be conveyed: yet (tamen) the altar and the prayers are worth more than the physician (Machaon, son of Aesculapius), since Moses once asked for heavenly help in words

³⁶Csonka (1990a), I, 75, 81, 98, 110, 129, 134, 170.

³⁷Csonka (1990a), I, 110, 123, 139–140, 150, 154, 186.

³⁸"Ubi simul operam dedit, ut adhibita methodo, quae sparsim alias hinc inde toto libro leguntur, in certa capita redigeret, ut quacunq; de re vel in Ecclesia, vel in schola disserendum alicui sit, ex suis quasi cellulis sententias ad institutum congruentes proferre et ad usum praesentem accomodare queat", Csonka (1990b), II, 956.

³⁹Csonka (1990a), I, 167–168.



of supplication. So, when we are afflicted with sickness, we must pray, for it is through prayer that we can obtain salvation from the Lord. The godly soul will surely receive rewards and privileges from heaven in return for his prayers.

In lines 19–34 the author gives the example of a greedy, money-hungry man who, when ill, can no longer enjoy his accumulated wealth. Bocatius uses metaphors to illustrate the suffering and anguish of such a man. The dying rich man's money is as useless and futile to him as the nose and mouth of a marble statue, or the love-lust of a castrated man. Just as the former cannot enjoy smells and tastes, so the latter can no longer serve Venus and experience pleasure. It may be interesting to note that the example and the metaphors associated with it are drawn, in the thematic sense, from the sphere of the seven cardinal sins. The poem's teaching whereby prayer helps the sick can be understood as a kind of instruction. This wisdom is also emphasized by the rhetorical nature of the text.

PARAPHRASE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY BOOKS

The work of Mocoschinus is unique in the Hungarian source material, because in his transcription of the Old Testament historical books the poet attempts to imitate a classical genre, the epic, with a precision unprecedented in the examples analyzed so far. The most eminent members of the humanist circle of Upper Hungary welcome Mocoschinus' transcription in a preface and in verse, and the German side is represented by Aegidius Hunnius, German theologian and professor at Wittenberg. Almost all the paratext authors attempt to define the genre and generic patterns of Mocoschinus' work.

In his *praefatio*, Aegidius Hunnius speaks of the Old Testament in the context of historiography, referring to the Old Testament books as *Historia Biblica* or *Sacra Biblica Historia*, i.e. sacred biblical history, or *Sacrorum Bibliorum Annales*, i.e. annals/chronicles of sacred books. Nicholas Lednensky, in his poem of welcome, calls the Old Testament books *Fasti Sacri*, using the term *Fasti* to refer to the title of Ovid's work, which here is understood in the sense of a yearbook rather than a calendar. In his dedicatory poem Mocoschinus describes in his own words that István Illésházy had not undertaken the writing of a *Carmen Perpetuum* on a biblical subject similar to that of Ovid, and that he himself wished to fill this gap with his own work. Severinus Schultetus in his *Praefatio Schultetus* also uses Ovid as a parallel, and calls the Old Testament paraphrase *sacrosancta/Christiade Metamorphoses*. Márton Mocoschinus in his anagrams and elegies, and Mózes Szunyogh and János Rufinus in their epigrams use the genre terms *carmen heroicum/carmen heroum/carmen cultum/carmen Camoena* to refer to Mocoschinus' work. In their turn, Andras Lucae and Sándor Soczovinus, among others, compare the paraphrase to the heroic poems of Homer and Virgil, but add that the biblical story is much more significant than those.⁴⁰

In addition to the division of the text into capitals, the use of classical Latin, the ancient metre (hexameter) and intertexts from Virgil's *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the author also favours the method of substitution in the vocabulary, which consists in supplanting an element of the biblical paradigm for an element of the ancient paradigm. A survey of the ten books of the Old Testament paraphrase offers a number of examples of syncretic vocabulary, but

⁴⁰Mocoschinus (1599), (2v.,)(5r.,)(6r.,)(8r., A1r., A2r., A3r).



I will mention only the most striking: Lord God – Pater Olympius, Rector Olympi, Dominus Olympi, Dominator Olympi, Tonans, Rex Superum, Au(c)tor Olympi, Rex Olympi, Attonitus Pater, Moderator Olympi, Olympi Numen; heaven (kingdom) – Olympus; Paradise – Elysium/Elysias sedes; Hell – Tartarus; afterlife/underworld – Styx, Phlegethon, Acheron, Cocytus; winds – Boreas, Aquilo, Eurus, Zephyrus, Auster; Noah's boat – Argo; Eve – Nympha; virgin daughter of Zion – Nympha; vine/wine – Bacchus; grain/bread – Ceres; sun (world) – Phoebus; giant(s) – Gigas, Gigantes, Cyclops, Polyphemus; war – Mars; Red Sea – rubra Thetis; shepherd figures (e.g. David) – Tityrus, Menalcas, Meliboeus; the Endor woman who summoned Samuel to Saul – Sibylla.

The author paraphrases ten of the books of the Old Testament: the books of Moses 1, 2 and 4, the book of Joshua, the book of Judges, the book of Ruth, the books of Samuel 1 and 2, and the books of Kings 1 and 2. In his preface to the paraphrase, dated 20 August 1598, Severinus Schultetus wishes Mokoschinus a long and happy life, so that he may complete his work in the name of Christ, the heroic Bible, in a happy manner. Mokoschinus died in 1599, and thus the long-awaited completion never came to pass. The books covered include Judeo-Christian mythology, the stories of the Israelites' conquest of their homeland and their mythology, which can be compared either with the content of Virgil's *Aeneid*, the story of the Trojans in search of a new homeland, or with Ovid's *Metamorphoses* – a systematic summary of Greco-Roman mythology. Of course, even these ten books are not included in their entirety in the work of Mokoschinus, the poet condensing or omitting those parts of the original biblical text which have no major influence on the development of the central plot, the Jewish conquest.

Some elements of the narrative can also be interpreted as epic conventions. For example, in Exodus Chapter 3, we read the Lord's instructions to Moses to go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt. Here the Lord is anticipating the outcome of events, the plagues that await Pharaoh and the Egyptians.⁴¹ Furthermore, the *in medias res* opening of the Book of Numbers, which cuts to the heart of the matter with Chapter 11, is noteworthy in this respect.

In many places, the expansion and detailing are used to imitate the epic detailing narrative style – the following examples come from the Genesis unit. The first caput deals with the creation story. The narrative of the creation of the world does not differ much from the original text, but the naturalistic description of the creation of man in anatomical detail is entirely the result of individual poetic ingenuity on the part of Mokoschinus, who presumably intended to imitate the epic detailing narrative: "He dries his bones to a hardness, adds joints to the moving muscles, adds the blood vessels, the fountains of power and life to come, and the liver and brain with the heart, the throat, the windpipe and the sac of the wheezing lungs and the sensations that pass easily through the organs."⁴²

Equally interesting are the sections on circumcision in the seventeenth caput. While in the Scriptures we find a discreet description of the procedure, hardly more than a brief mention (17,23), the author of the Latin transcription uses much bolder language and seeks to be clear in

⁴¹Mokoschinus (1599), 18v. „The Lord senses the evil, foresees that Pharaoh will not want to dismiss the Jews unless his divine power and goodness restrain the tyrant's violence and cruelty. The Almighty is preparing for a long battle, and he will not conceal his power. Much bloodshed will befall the Egyptians and Pharaoh will inflict much suffering on the Jews. Many a shield, many a helmet, many a brave carcass of a valiant warrior will roll beneath the foam of the Erithraean sea. After the murder of the first-born, Pharaoh will send the people of God from their land.,

⁴²Mokoschinus (1599), B1v.



his description of the circumcision procedure: “That part of the body which is covered by human nature, you shall mutilate with a fiery snare down to the uppermost skin, so that the skin which is torn and the red glans may be a sign of the covenant ordained between us... Yet he deprives his member of the skin and changes its nature. Then he cleanses his son and his servants in turn, and tears hard rock pillar at the tip.”⁴³

The fourth caput is about Cain’s fratricide, and Mokoshinus describes the scene, just mentioned in the Bible, the moment of the murder (4,8) as follows: “Without delay he tramples Abel by the hair, who is laid on the ground by the hair, with both feet, tortures him with blows, and, lying on him with a sickle, breaks his neck and head, and causes his death by cruel cuts. The body, empty of soul, was followed by a deadly horror.”⁴⁴

In his description of the battle scene of the fourteenth caput, during which Abraham rushes to rescue the captive Lot, compared to the very brief biblical account (14,14–16), which is limited to the essentials, Mokoschinus gives a much richer detail of the events: “And now they come into the region of Dan, and rushing with unsteady steps upon the enemy, and the battle not seeming to be even (as to the odds), Abraham foretells what is to be done, places the troops in their proper areas, and in the dark night bursts with noise and with his weapons very wildly into the midst of the battlefield. They intensify the din, and wage war by night, and march forth blindly, and leave dead bodies all over the camp, the enemy fleeing, pursuing the fugitives from hither and thither, and avenging the enemy’s bloodshed.”⁴⁵

The rhetoric of the biblical text serves not only to imitate the epic detailed narrative style, but also to explain in greater depth, by rhetorical means, the sometimes abstract, vague and laconic ideas (for example, on religious ethics: sin-punishment, victim-murder). The eleventh chapter of Genesis is a rewriting of the Babel story. In the Bible, the Lord comes down from heaven to see the city and the tower that the people are building, and then, without hesitation, announces his plan (11,7: “Let us go down and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another’s language”). In the paraphrase, the Almighty, before coming to a decision on the fate of the tower and its builders, grinds his teeth: “Woe to you, hated race, and human deeds contrary to our ambitions! Have they not been submerged in the scattered foam? Have they not died submerged? Were they not benefited by the example of punishment? Straying from the right path, they were all again carried away by their error, and lost all fear and respect for us. Nowhere is there any firm faith left; those whom I had destined to perish amid the waves, I have shut up in the ark, and led safely through the raging sea, and as soon as the world was destroyed, I led them back from the midst of death. Shall rain come again upon the earth from Olympus? And again shall a shower fall upon the earth and the sea? I swore I would not. Why? My divine purposes will lie defeated. Have I no power to destroy mankind? So be it! Let me now delay their great plans, let me hinder the boastful works of men!”⁴⁶

⁴³Mokoschinus (1599), D1v–D2r.

⁴⁴Mokoschinus (1599), B6v.

⁴⁵Mokoschinus (1599), C8r.

⁴⁶Mokoschinus (1599), C6r.



PARALLELS WITH GERMANY

Johann Seckerwitz's transcription of the Book of Sirach is accompanied by two paratexts.⁴⁷ One of them, a diction-like accompaniment poem, was written by Philippus Bechius and addressed to the reader (*Ad lectorem*). According to the poem, the paraphrase, like the biblical book itself, has a teaching function (*docet*). Briefly and concisely, the poet instructs us on such useful things as the qualities of the body and soul, the sins and virtues, the knowledge of which is of great benefit to us. Bechius interprets Seckerwitz's work as a guide, the following of which will lead his readers to the stars, that is, to salvation, to immortality. The other accompanying text, Seckerwitz's *Praefatio*, is addressed to Prince Christophorus of Württemberg. Seckerwitz asks the monarch to accept his paraphrase with goodwill, since the book is as fitting for the prince, who has done much for religion and literature, as a hunter's dog or a horseman's steed.

The main text is a faithful copy of the original biblical book, both in its structure and in its ideas. The fifty caput of the transcription, the *praefatio* at the beginning of the volume, and the *oratio* at the end of the volume are exact replicas of the chapter divisions and structure of the biblical Book of Sirach. Throughout the transcription, there are many examples of the use of classical vocabulary: Olympus, Stygius, Tartareus, Avernus, Tonans, Rex Superum, Venus, Phoebus, Bacchus, Mars, Ceres, Thetys, Persephone, Phaethon, Mydas, Zephyrus, Aeolus, Boreas, Notus, Eurus, Melpomene, Thalia, penates, Gygantes, Charis, Erynnis, Furia, Cyclops, Parca, Titan. In order to gain an impression of the rhetoric of the text, it may be a good idea to look at a locus. For example, in Chapter 38 on illnesses the author follows the biblical text, paraphrasing the content in some detail, using figures, rhetorical questions and repetition to make his rendering more colorful and sensual. Seckerwitz's text is also more directly instructive, for the original text reads "He who sins against his Creator shall be delivered into the hands of physicians." This idea is expressed more openly, more clearly, more directly in the poet's paraphrase: sickness is God's punishment, and he who sins will fall ill.

Another relevant parallel is Eoban Hessus's transcription (*Ecclesiastes Salomonis*), based on the Book of Ecclesiastes.⁴⁸ Hessus himself wrote both of the accompanying texts, which precede his paraphrase of the distichon of twelve caput, a *praefatio* in verse addressed to the reader and a prose dedication to John Frederick Prince of Saxony. Hessus, in his preface to the reader, calls his work *vanus*, i.e. vain or superfluous. By this choice of words, the author is obviously alluding to a central idea of Ecclesiastes (*vanitas*), the importance of which he emphasizes by repetition (*vana, vanus*).

From the *Praefatio* to John Frederick we learn that Hessus's work was not conceived along an independent, original concept, but was the result of a compilation: a paraphrase of Johannes Campensis' commentary on the Book of Ecclesiastes and a synthesis of an edition commented on by Luther.⁴⁹ Hessus thus created his own poetic paraphrase on the basis of Campensis' prose version and Luther's variant and interpretation of the text, which, by its very nature, was obviously a very suitable genre for the use of rhetorical-stylistic devices and thus for a stronger emphasis on the sacred content and doctrine contained in it. It is probably to this generic-stylistic revision and

⁴⁷Seckerwitz (1556).

⁴⁸Hessus (1548).

⁴⁹Luther (1532).



interpretative intention that the author refers when he speaks of dressing the interpretative texts of Campensis and Luther in new clothes (*libellum... quasi nova veste indutum*) and illuminating them with the new light of Latin verse (*illorum optima scripta novo quasi lumine Latinis carminis illustrare*). In addition to the creative method, the paratext also sheds light on the author's intention. Hessus dedicates his work to John Frederick as a token of his gratitude, for the prince is known to be a great admirer of such writings, and this book contains advice on life which may guide the monarch in the performance of his duties, especially in his efforts to preserve the true religion.

Hessus paraphrases the classical names of the winds (Boreas, Auster) and uses mainly the names of gods (Oceanus, Phoebus, Bacchus, Parca). Caput 4 speaks of the greedy people whose thirst cannot be quenched by the waters of the river Hermus, nor their longing quenched by the golden waters of the river Tagus. The motif of eternal thirst and futile longing, and the main river of Lydia, the Hermus, remind the reader of the figure of Tantalus, king of Lydia. Luther, in his commentary on the Book of Ecclesiastes, also draws a parallel between the miserly man who wavers between longing and abstinence, and the vain longing of Tantalus, based on Horace's Sermon 1. In this way, Hessus' paraphrase has an indirect intertextual link to the Horatian text. Thus, in addition to or instead of the biblical text, the interpretations of Campensis and Luther form the basis of Hessus' paraphrase. In these works we find abundant examples of rhetorical devices of explanation, and Hessus both paraphrases the figures he sees there and creates new ones himself, either from the original text or by the exercise of his own ingenuity.

I will mention just one or two of the many examples. In caput 1 we find the simile of the theatre, which is an adaptation of Campensis' interpretation. The original text runs "The sun rises, and the sun sets, hurrying back to the place where it will rise again." (line 1, 5); while Hessus paints the image of Sol/Helios, calling his winged horses and setting off in his fiery chariot across the sky. At the same time, Hessus, in his dedication to John Frederick, stresses the great care he has taken to polish the stylistics of the text, especially the avoidance of repetition. The text contains a number of circumlocutions, for example, in caput 2, forgetfulness is expressed by immersion in the waters of Lethe. Hessus also uses similes and figures of speech in addition to circumlocutions, thus demonstrating his poetic talent and the variety of his narrative technique.

In his biblical epic, Nicodemus Frischlin paraphrased the Old Testament historical books (the Book of Samuel, the Book of Kings, the Book of Chronicles and the Book of Jeremiah).⁵⁰ As a testimony to the poet's diligence and incredible work ethic, the first four books of a work of 4,000 hexameters were completed in four weeks, and the fifth part was published ten days later. Czaplá also writes of the author's intentions, which included a precise imitation of the *Aeneid* down to the smallest detail of content, while at the same time seeking to surpass previous similar poetic works, to demonstrate his poetic skills in the literary genre of the highest standard (epic ~ genus sublime) and to create a work that would equal or even surpass the pagan model.⁵¹ Martinus Aichmann, in his preface to Frischlin's work (*Illustrissimo Principi ac Domino, Dn. Mauritio...*), emphasizes the school reading assignment character (*schullektüre*) of the poem (*sacra historia*).

⁵⁰Frischlin (1599).

⁵¹Czaplá (2013), 269–272.



Ulricus Bollingerus, in his praefatio to his readers, draws attention to the similarities and thematic-structural analogies between Frischlin's epic and the *Aeneid*. Bollinger traces the plot of the books of the *Hebraeis* and matches each plot element down to the smallest detail with the corresponding parallel content of the *Aeneid*. The resulting analogies and correspondences are tabulated by Czapla for ease of reference. Book 1: The reception of the exiled David by the Philistines. ~ The reception of Aeneas, fleeing from Troy, in Carthage. Books 2-3: David tells Mephibosheth about the beginnings of the Jewish kingdom, the war in Palestine and Goliath. ~ Aeneas tells Dido about the destruction of Troy, his sea adventures and Polyphemus. Book 4: The love of David and Bathsheba. ~ The love of Aeneas and Dido. Book 5: David warns his son Solomon against building the temple. ~ Anchises encourages Aeneas with dreams to descend into the Underworld. etc.⁵²

CONCLUSION

In summary, the following lessons may be drawn from the textual analysis. The Hungarian authors, Purkircher and Laskai, in their paraphrases, focus on the topicality of the theme of the biblical book, they clearly see the similarity of the circumstances of its origin and the timeliness of the message of the original text, the necessity of transmitting its teaching, and this connection is also emphasized in the paratexts. The Germans, on the other hand, often focus on the creation of the paraphrase and the creative method itself; for example, Hessus names the sources of the compilation and also speaks of the circumstances of the generic and stylistic reworking. These observations can also be supported by the formal and linguistic features of the texts. Hessus's syncretic vocabulary, his sensuous imagery and his sophisticated techniques of text formation reveal the experience of a well-versed, highly cultured, practiced poeta doctus who is not afraid to show off his knowledge and talent. Purkircher's paraphrase, on the other hand, may be seen as a fledgling effort. The original biblical text was not much altered by the author, and although it was not in this work that he allowed his individual poetic talent to shine, his transcription of the Book of Wisdom is undoubtedly of particular importance in terms of its message and its role in his oeuvre. It is also true of Laskai that in his paraphrase he does not strive to follow the original biblical text faithfully, nor does he over-rhetorise or over-stress the antique character of the text, but the complexity of his editing renders his work unique among those of his native land. The works of Bocatius and Seckerwitz are similar in many respects. On the one hand, the paratexts accompanying the texts in both adaptations strongly emphasize the educational purpose, and on the other hand, the poets' awareness of this is also evident in the high level of rhetorical-stylistic elaboration displayed in the texts. Bocatius' paraphrase of the Book of Sirach is by far the most elaborate of the Hungarian Old Testament paraphrases. Mocoschinus tried to imitate the ancient models only by imitating certain elements (e.g. metre, vocabulary, intertexts, rhetorical-stylistic devices, narrative style), while Frischlin's work shows the highest degree of imitation. For this reason, this latter can be considered a genuine Christianised epic, whereas Mocoschinus' work is more of a paraphrase, in which the intention to create a biblical epic is also outlined.

⁵²Czapla (2013), 276-281.



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