

## NEO-LATIN SATIRE IN EASTERN EUROPE

Satire certainly is to be counted among the less well known genres of Neo-Latin literature.<sup>1</sup> There can be given various reasons to explain this situation. To begin with, the number of satirical works is rather limited and therefore cannot easily be found in the huge mass of Neo-Latin writings. A poem such as the *Satira in quendam Dantiscanum* (1576) by the minor Polish author Joachim Bilscius necessarily will escape attention, unless one scans in a systematic way his collection of *Carmina Latina*.<sup>2</sup> But many such items may be hidden in other similar collections.

A second reason for the minimal attention paid to satire in modern research on Neo-Latin literature is the much greater amount of problems which face the student of satires in comparison with love lyrics, epic, theatre and other easier genres. As a matter of fact, if modern satire intended to be something more than an insipid school exercise recasting slavishly Horace or Juvenal, it had to be valid criticism on life and manners in the author's own time and milieu. But this fact of being necessarily place - and time - bound implies that many of these texts are hardly understandable for one not thoroughly familiar with the life and time of the author, or at least provided with sufficient 'scholia'. I cite two examples of these kinds of problems, one from an author of my own country and one of Dubrovnik. From 1623 to 1626 Petrus Scholarius published three books of *Sermones Familiares*, which are interesting poems but must be rather dark for anyone not knowing Flanders and in particular the city of Antwerp. Fortunately there is a very good edition with full-scale commentary of the late seventeenth century.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, when I read satire XI of Junius Restius, the great eighteenth century satirist of Dubrovnik, which begins 'Insula quid vobis Melites...', I spontaneously thought of Malta, but then I found that another island near the coast

<sup>1</sup> See my paper on 'Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Neo-Latin Satire' in the Proceedings of the King's College Conference on Classical Influences 1500—1700 (Cambridge 1974), edited by R. R. Bolgar.

<sup>2</sup> Joachim Bilscius, *Carmina Latina*, ed. Th. Bieńkowski (Warsaw 1962).

<sup>3</sup> Petri Scholirii... *Sermonum Familiarium libri III...* commentariis illustrati... Alberti Le Roy (Hermopoli = Antwerp 1683).

of Dubrovnik (Mljet) also bears that classical name. This was still to be found by means of a good classical dictionary, since the name is in Pliny. But try to identify from a distance names as Umbla or Maruncus, which occur in the same poem!

A further consequence of the close connections between the satirist and his native milieu is that very often copies of their works now are very hard to come by outside the author's country. Modern reproducing techniques have alleviated this uneasy situation, at least to a certain extent. But what to do if no major public library owns a copy? Until now I could not locate e. g. the *Satyrae medicae XX* of Georgius Frank de Frankenau, published in Leipzig 1722. Strange as it may seem, a similar lack of wider circulation hampers the diffusion of modern studies and editions. As a matter of fact such works are often printed in local journals or even in private editions. It took me a couple of years and the personal intervention of two friends on the spot before I could get hold of a copy of the recent *editio princeps* of the Austrian satirist Simon Rettenpacher. It was published in the 113 th yearbook (Jahresbericht 1970) of the Benedictine Gymnasium of Kremsmünster and distributed among the alumni. Finally, scholars today more and more tend to abandon the use of Latin or of a major Western language in their own publications. In this way an international circulation of the results of their work, valuable as it may be, becomes utterly impossible. As a scholar who is interested in Neo-Latin literature in general and as a native speaker of Dutch, which in this respect is not a major language, I want to urge you to think this problem over again. It may suffice to compare the use scholars can make of Allen's edition of Erasmus's letters with notes in English on one side, and the recent edition of Grotius's Latin poems with commentary in Dutch on the other side, to draw the inescapable conclusions.

All this brings me to a first conclusion: in order to prepare the once to be written history of Neo-Latin literature we urgently need good critical editions with sufficient notes in either Latin or a major Western language of the more important Neo-Latin satirists. These editions do not exclude, of course, other publications in the various national languages for local use and education.

The editions for international circulation should be made preferably by scholars of the country to which the Latin poet belongs, or at least by scholars intimately acquainted with that country. It seems obvious to me that a reliable edition of the still unedited *Sermonum liber* by Damianus Benessa (1477—1539) or of the satires of Restius only can be made by someone intimately familiar with the Croatian-

Venetian cultural area and knowing not only Latin but also Croatian and Italian.<sup>4</sup>

I am now coming to a brief discussion of satirical poetry written in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. This discussion will bear a very tentative character since there does not exist to the best of my knowledge any practicable survey of this genre.

To begin with, it is rather difficult to trace the limits of the genre. One could be inclined to think of poems or collections of poems called *satyra* or *sermo* by their authors. But then one finds that the Czech Michael Pieczkonides wrote his *Petri Ribaldi Peruani Satyrarum liber prior... Impressum Utopiae* about 1622 almost entirely in elegiac distichs.<sup>5</sup> For so doing he hardly could claim a classical Roman example. On the other hand the thick book *Sarmatides seu Satyrae equitis cuiusdam Poloni* by Antonius <sup>l</sup>oz Poninski, printed probably in 1741, is in hexameters, but apart from that metrical form, it bears much more features of a didactic poem than of a classical satire.<sup>6</sup> It enters into the rich

<sup>4</sup> Two manuscript copies of Benessa's poems are kept in the library of the Franciscan Minorites at Dubrovnik: M. Brlek, *Rukopisi knjižnice male Braće u Dubrovniku*, vol. I (Zagreb 1952), pp. 88—89 n° 78 (autograph) and pp. 260—261, n° 256 ([p.V]: Fr. Antonius Aghich Minorita Rhacusinus/Lectori Municipi suo plurimam dicit salutem... [p. X] Scribebam Romae XVI Kalendas Octob. MDCCXIX). Both manuscripts contain the complete poems of Benessa: *De morte Christi libri X; Epigrammatum libri III; Eclogarum liber; Sermonum liber singularis Satyrae X* (pp. 191—254 of the autograph; pp. 492—553 of the Aghich copy) and *Miscellaneorum liber*. Benessa wrote his satires to recreate himself from his sacred poetry:

Seposito interea scribendi sacra labore  
Nunc paucis iuvat hic rationem sumere vitae...  
(Sat. I. 1—2)

<sup>5</sup> For information on Czech poets, cf. J. Hejnic—J. Martinek, *Enchiridion renatae poeseos in Bohemia et Moravia cultae* (Prague, 1966 sqq.).

<sup>6</sup> The *Sarmatides* were published anonymously. The author was born at the end of the 17th century and died in 1744. He supported king August III and from 1738 he was *voivod* ('palatinus') at Poznan. Modern literature on him seems to be exclusively in Polish. Bio-bibliographical information can be found in *Nowy Korbut*, vol. 3 (1965), pp. 115—117. J. Kleiner, *Studio inedita* (Lublin 1964), p. 8 points out the influence of A. Pope on Poninski. More recently Paulina Buchwald — Pelcowa treated the *Sarmatides* in her book on Satirical literature at the time of the Saxon kings (Wrocław 1969); Kliniowicz's Manual of Polish literature in the 18th century (Warsaw 1972) shows that Poninski is a representative of the views of the Enlightenment (p. 36). Copies of the *Sarmatides* are in the Jagellonian Library in Kraków (lacking one quire, with the end of the preface) and in the University Library of Łódź (complete; sign. 1007460). We thank our friend prof. J. Starnawski, who supplied us with the essential bibliographical information.

crop of large philosophical poems written in Latin during the eighteenth century, such as *Anti-Lucretius* of Cardinal de Polignac, which is roughly contemporary with Poninski's *Sarmatides*.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore there are quite a few modern *Martials*, masters of the satiric epigram such as the Czech Paulus a Gisbice, born 1581, once a European celebrity as can be deduced from the contents of his *Periculorum poeticorum partes tres* (Wittenberg, 1602) and his *Schediasmatum farrago nova* (Leiden 1602). Another such poet was his Slovak contemporary Johannes Filiczki de Filifalva (1580—1622), whose *Carmina* published in Basle 1614, contain some epigrams worthy to stand next to those of Ulrich von Hutten.<sup>8</sup> And last but not least the *Epigrammata Satyrica* of Raimundus Cunichius, a citizen of Dubrovnik, are sharp and witty snapshots of contemporary literary and musical culture.<sup>9</sup> Finally we find even satirical poetry, and certainly not the worst, which was written in mediaeval rhyming verse, sometimes in a mixture of Latin and vernacular. A good example is the eighteenth century *Ia sem Pater Minorita* by the Slovak Johannes Terlanday (1708—1770). All this illustrates the great variety and strong vitality of classical and mediaeval Latin traditions until the very end of the 'Ancien Régime'. The only exception in Eastern Europe — but I may be in error here by lack of sufficient information — is the total absence of menippean satire, which flourished exuberantly in Western Europe (except Spain and Portugal) from the second half of the sixteenth to the middle of the eighteenth century.

Let us proceed now to a few general observations concerning satirical poetry in the East of Europe. If it is certainly true that satirical poetry was practised in this part of Europe, I nevertheless got the impression that it was less popular in this area among Neo-Latin poets than it was in some other countries such as Italy or the Netherlands. This may be due mainly to political, including religious, circumstances which prevented the development of more prophane and critical genres in favour of an endless mass of pious, moralizing or encomiastic verses. This seems particularly true for

<sup>7</sup> The first satire, divided into nine poems, treats 'De naturae praestantia' and the 'intentum' is defined as follows: „ut actus morales conformiter ad instinctum et dotes animi et corporis instituantur". The contents, however, are broader contain also discussions on the question how satire should be written (no personal attacks; a decent, beautiful and pleasant style... [part 2]) and on the right of every time and author to develop his own way of writing without slavish imitation (parts 3 and 4).

<sup>8</sup> On the Slovak poets see J. Mišianik, *Antológia staršej Slovenskej Literatúry* (Bratislava, 1964).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. V. Gortan — Vl. Vratović, *Hrvatski Latinisti* (Zagreb 1970) II, 433—540.

the Hungarian area, of which I do not know a single satirist worthy of that name. This is remarkable since in few countries Latin was used so generally and for so long a time.<sup>10</sup> As far as I can ascertain there is no Latin satire either from Albania or Russia, but in these countries, in contrast with Hungary, Latin writers were rare and incidental. On the other hand it is highly noticeable that nearly all Croatian satire, which sometimes is very good indeed and certainly not limited to scholastic platitudes, was written in Dubrovnik, when it was still a small but thriving independent republic of merchants, comparable to the Italian principalities where satire sprouted luxuriantly. It equally strikes the general observer that in the Polish and Czech areas satire was almost exclusively an affair of noblemen, and this from the very beginnings. Slavic Neo-Latin satire was born when the great humanist Bohuslaus Hassenstenius a Lobkowicz wrote his famous address to Saint Venceslas, which offers a vivid picture of the moral corruption afflicting his country.<sup>11</sup> I want to stress this presence of the nobility, because in Western Europe they used to ignore Latin and even to pride themselves upon this ignorance, so that it was absolutely impossible that noble men would have been the main representatives of a Neo-Latin literary genre. In this respect the Neo-Latin satirists of the Eastern German area (Saxony, Thuringia, Prussia) rather fit the West-European pattern: they were schoolmasters such as Michael Abel of Frankfurt/ Oder or Johannes Lauremberg of Rostock, professor in the Danish University of Soere. The first of those two men published his satires in Prague.<sup>12</sup> Lauremberg<sup>13</sup> however belongs to the history of humanism in the Danish and Sleswick-Holstein area and therefore I will exclude him from present considerations.

Time does not allow me to expatiate much longer. Therefore I will conclude this survey indicating the main themes treated by the East-European satirists. There seem to be three:

<sup>10</sup> Zsigmondé Ritoók, 'Politikai szatira magyarországon a XVI. szárban', *Reneszánsz Füzetek* 11 (1971), 265—277, discusses political satire in 16th century Hungary, but as far as I can see from the foot-notes and the short French summary they are more 'libelli infames' and other pamphlets of a temporary nature than real 'sermones' in the Horatian and Juvenalian tradition. — I was unable to secure a copy of the *Simulatio per satyras deducta*, Tyrnaviae 1733, by the Jesuit Imre Kelcz.

<sup>11</sup> I used the edition in the anthology of K. Hrdina, *Bohemia Latina* (Prague 1931), pp. 47—52.

<sup>12</sup> Abel Michael; *Musae undecimae seu ineptae versificatoriae deliberatio* (Prague, 1591).

<sup>13</sup> Laurembergius Johannes, *Satyra* (Soere, 1636).

1. Moralizing on the wickedness and/or stupidity<sup>14</sup> of the world. This stock theme was adopted more or less and with different degrees of poetical skill to the world where the poet actually was living. The satire of Hassensteinius makes good reading whereas that of another Czech, Carolides, is a rather dull school exercise, which could have been written anywhere.<sup>15</sup> In the case of Poninski this moralizing developed into a long philosophical discussion between the author and some *satyri* on ethical and religious questions. I wonder if the introduction of those 'satyri' may have been inspired by the frontispiece of the famous collection *Elegantiores praestantium virorum satyrae*, published at Leiden in 1655.

2. In the next place come Horatian descriptions of the author's life and time.

In this kind of satire the great name is Restius, who introduces the reader in pleasant scenes of everyday life in late eighteenth century Dubrovnik.<sup>16</sup> Verses 32—37 of his first satire (*Ad Maecenatem prooemium*) offer a programmatic description of his purpose and his way of writing, a superb blend of ancient forms and modern contents:

Antiquo sermone novae res et nova vitae  
Pandenda est ratio veterique ignota Quirino.  
Dandus mobilibus decor est immobilis atque  
Ad nova non facilis mihi traducenda vetustas,  
Quae, senibus similis, praefracte temporis acti  
Iura tuetur amans paretque recentibus aegre.

3. Finally there was literary satire, the best representative of which certainly is the German Abel. His two poems, the first of which is against sixteenth century pedantic Lucilian archaism and the second against unqualified critics, deserve further investigation in the context of the late humanist literary conceptions.

<sup>14</sup> 'Stultitia est agitanda hominum...' proclaimed D. Benessa, *Sat. II. 5*,

<sup>15</sup> *Satyrus praesentis seculi, in qua breviter passim usitata virtus perstringuntur* a M. Georgio Carolide a Karlsperga, s.l.a. (preface dated 1595; at the end: Typis Annae Schumanianae. Dr. J. Martinek kindly provided me with a copy of the text.).

<sup>16</sup> Junii Antonii Comitis de Restiis, patricii Ragusini, Carmina (Patavii, typis Seminarii, 1816) The *Satyrarum Liber* covers the pages 1—170. Satires XI and XVI have been edited with full-scale comments by A. Filippi, 'Voci ed Echi nelle Satire Latine di Giunio Resti' in *Atti e Memorie della Società dalmata di Storia patria* I, 1 (Zara 1927) = *Rivista Dalmatica* IX (1927), n. 1.

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To sum up: in my opinion the first thing to do now is to make good editions of Abel, Poninski, Restius and also of some epigrammatists such as Paulus a Gisbice. For minor authors a reliable analysis of their work may suffice to fit them into the picture of East-European humanist literature.

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