

# BIRTH AND DEATH IN MICHAEL VERANCIUS' POEMS WRITTEN TO THE SZAPOLYAI FAMILY IN 1540\*

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Michael Verancius (Mihovil Vrančić, 1514?–1571), the Croatian (and Hungarian) humanist, wrote two poems about the considerable events of the Szapolyai family's life in 1540. John Sigismund, son of King John I (John Szapolyai, 1487–1540), was born in Buda on 7 July 1540. Verancius composed a greeting poem entitled *Nativitas primogeniti filii Ioannis Hungariae regis* for this occasion. However, the Hungarian king died directly after his son's birth in Szászsebes on 21 July 1540. Verancius wrote also a funeral poem entitled *In obitum Ioannis Hungariae regis: Lacrimae* at the moment of mourning. This paper examines these occasional poems of Verancius as well as their generic traits. Numerous valuable literary works can be hidden in connection with the humanists of South-Slav origin and their research is timely and necessary. The main aim of my paper is to publish the texts of these manuscripts, which are not widely known.

## Introduction

The scientific investigation of the humanist circle, which was organised around King John Szapolyai (1487–1540) and, after his death, around Isabella Jagiełło (1519–1559), is often neglected in Hungarian and international studies as a result of both the lack of relevant sources and their inaccessible condition. The deficiency of a safe and constant royal centre had great influence on literary development in Hungary in the sixteenth century. The court of John I was one of many aristocratic centres. In fact, the literary significance of the Szapolyai circle lags far behind other noblemen. First of all, the examination of Stephanus Brodericus' (Stjepan Brodarić) and Antonius Verancius' (Antun Vrančić)

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literary activities took priority. I would like to present Michael Wrantius/Verancius' (1514?–1571) two lesser-known poems from 1540, which are also published at the end of the paper.

## Historical background

On 29 August 1526, the Hungarian army was seriously defeated at Mohács. The battle was over within two hours, and the Hungarian armed forces were annihilated. At least ten thousand foot soldiers, many barons (28), almost all of the bishops (7), and the commander-in-chief, Pál Tomori, were killed. From a political point of view, the greatest loss was the death of King Louis II, who fell from his horse and was drowned in the Csele stream.<sup>1</sup> The Hungarian state apparatus was paralysed. There was neither joint action nor resistance in the country. The subsequent decades were characterized by political chaos. After the defeat at Mohács, the divided Hungarian estates elected two kings simultaneously, and the internal consolidation of the country therefore became very difficult. The majority of the nobles elected John Szapolyai, the voivod (Hungarian *vajda*) of Transylvania on 11 November 1526, while a small group of magnates recognized the Habsburg archduke and the Bohemian king, Ferdinand I's claims for the throne on 16 December 1526.<sup>2</sup> The armed conflicts between the new rival monarchs further weakened the country from inside. After the Sack of Rome, Ferdinand was able to send armies into Hungary. The well-trained German mercenaries had no difficulties in defeating Szapolyai's ragtag armies. As a result of the defeat, he was forced to flee to Poland in 1528. In his hopeless situation, King John I established contact with the Sublime Porte. Suleiman recognized Szapolyai as the legitimate king of Hungary at the beginning of 1528 and, in the Treaty of Istanbul, promised him military assistance. The Ottoman armies reappeared in Hungary in the summer of 1529 and had little difficulty in pushing Ferdinand's troops into western Hungary. A substantial part of the country was under control of Szapolyai again with Turkish assistance by 1530. However, neither of the opponents was able to acquire the entire royal power permanently. The unsuccessful and senseless fight led to reconciliation. After lengthy preparations, the Treaty

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<sup>1</sup> PERJÉS (1979: 413–441), SZAKÁLY (1981: 22–36), SUGAR–HANÁK–FRANK (1990: 80–83).

<sup>2</sup> For the events after the defeat of Mohács and the period of the double election for the royal throne of Hungary, see, for example: JÁSZAY (1846), SZALAY (1861), BARTA (1977: 1–31), BARTA (1981: 152–205), KUNT–WOODHEAD (1995: 192–234), VÁRKONYI (1999: 13–46), PÁLFFY (2010: 50–76).

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of Várad was concluded on 24 February 1538.<sup>3</sup> Ferdinand or his successors were to inherit Szapolyai's realm, but he was obliged to defend the country with imperial forces against the probable Ottoman attack. King John I renounced the Hungarian throne on his heirs behalf. The Treaty of Várad did not assure the reunification of the two non-Ottoman parts of the country. King John married Isabella Jagiełło on 2 March 1539. Isabella gave birth to a son before King John's death in 1540. Meanwhile Ferdinand I unexpectedly betrayed the Treaty of Várad to the sultan, hoping the Turks were going to recognize him as the king of Hungary. When Szapolyai died in July, his almighty treasurer George Martinuzzi, bishop of Várad and Bálint Török de Enying, not only refused to surrender the country to Ferdinand, but also had the infant elected to be King John II and the election was confirmed by Istanbul.

### The authorship of the poems

According to the title of the volume manuscript—*Praeludia Michaelis Verantii*—the poems examined in this paper were written by a certain Michael Verancius (Dalmata). He can be identified as the Šibenik-born, Croatian humanist Michael Verancius of Bosnian origin<sup>4</sup> (Mihovil Vrančić, Mihály Verancsics, 1514?–1571)<sup>5</sup> who was also an active humanist in the Kingdom of Hungary.<sup>6</sup> He was related to Iohannes Statilius (Ivan Statilić, ?–1542) who was a famous diplomat of King John I as well as the bishop of Transylvania from 1528.<sup>7</sup> Michael's brother, Antonius Verancius (Antun Vrančić, 1504–1573), was an outstanding humanist of the sixteenth century who was a Latin writer, a diplomat, the Archbishop of Esztergom, as well as the governor of Hungary. After his short studies he arrived at the court of Szapolyai. After King John had

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<sup>3</sup> VÁRKONYI (1999: 40–43), SUGAR–HANÁK–FRANK (1990: 85), PÁLFFY (2010: 66)

<sup>4</sup> His father, Frane Vrančić came from a Bosnian family and his mother, Margareta Statilić was of Dalmatian ancestry. The surname first appeared in the Dalmatian documents in the thirteenth century, see BIRNBAUM (1986: 213).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. CYTOWSKA (1967–1968: 171–179), JURIC (1971), CYTOWSKA (1975: 164–173), BIRNBAUM (1986: 213–240), URBAN (1987: 157–165), FALIŠEVAC–NOVAKOVIĆ (2000: 780–781), BESSENYEI (2011: 401–402). The first work, which reviews the biography of Verancius in detail, is the university thesis (entitled *De vita et operibus Michaelis Verantii*) of Elemér Mályusz. Unfortunately this work got lost, see SOÓS (1999: 188).

<sup>6</sup> I did not aim for completeness in the course of presenting the author's biography. I review the life of Michael Verancius until the death of his most considerable supporter, John Szapolyai.

<sup>7</sup> For details about his life, see SÖRÖS (1916: 1–56).

escaped abroad, the young Michael went to Cracow where he entered the service of the bishop Petrus Tomicki (1464–1535).<sup>8</sup> It is widely known that when he was fifteen years old, he was a student of Stanislaus Hosius (1504–1579).<sup>9</sup> Undoubtedly, all the members of the Statilius and the Verancius families were loyal intellectuals of King John. This is manifest in several works of Michael Verancius, including the two reviewed poems in this paper, the two elegies concerning the *querela Hungariae*-topos in 1528, and the wedding poem (*epithalamion*) written for John Szapolyai and Isabella Jagiełło's wedding in 1539. After King John's death, Michael Verancius was in Queen Isabella's service where he was also one of the courtmen. Finally, he went home to Dalmatia in 1544.

### Greeting poems to the John Sigismund's birth

On the occasion John Sigismund's birth, the Verancius brothers wrote glorifying elegies. The two brothers' literary activities, especially their historical works, seem to be interwoven on the basis of current research.<sup>10</sup> The comparison of the similar topics and the style of the poems may shed light on the siblings' literary techniques, as well as their literary contact with each other. Fortunately, Queen Isabella gave birth to a male heir in Buda on 7 July 1540.<sup>11</sup> Michael Verancius wrote a glorifying poem entitled *Nativitas primogeniti filii Ioannis Hungariae regis* for John Sigismund's birth which remained in manuscript and now it is located in the National Széchényi Library in Budapest.<sup>12</sup> This theme must have been highly popular: Venceslaus Schamotuliensis (Wacław Szamotulski) also

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<sup>8</sup> CYTOWSKA (1967–1968: 171), URBAN (1987: 158), BESSENYEI (2011: 401).

<sup>9</sup> He matriculated at the Academy of Cracow (most often referred to as Jagiellonian University) in August 1527, see CHMIEL (1892: 238).

<sup>10</sup> Michael Verancius played a great part in the completion of Antonius Verancius' planned historical work. Michael has compiled his work which presents the events in Hungary in 1536 (entitled *Liber de rebus Hungaricis 1536*) on behalf of his brother's commission. While this historical work was checked by Antonius who also added a few comments into the marginal. Cf. ACSÁDY (1894: 21–22).

<sup>11</sup> BETHLEN (1782: 321): *In hac itaque infirmitate constitutus dum ibi commoraretur, adfertur ei nuntium (quod Sigismundo quoque Poloniae regi renuntiatum erat) reginam Isabellam Budae die 7. Julii filium esse feliciter enixam.* Nicolas ISTHVANI also confirms this date of birth. – ISTHVANI (1622: 225): *Isabella, Vaivoda coniunx filiolum masculum enixa est anno 1540. 7. Julii.* Antonius Verancius only mentions in the *Memoria rerum* that “Isabella királyné asszon szöle egy gyermeket Budában szent Lőrinc napja előtt.” – VERANCICS (1857: 44).

<sup>12</sup> National Széchényi Library (hereafter OSZK), *sign.* Quart. Lat. 776. fol. 7r–7v.

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wrote a poem, now lost, entitled *In nativitate Sigismundi filii regis Ioannis et Isabellae*. According to Endre Veress, this work appeared at the Hieronym Viator's press in Cracow in 1540.<sup>13</sup> We cannot compare the work of Verancius with this lost poem. However his brother, Antonius Verancius, also wrote a poem entitled *De felici nativitate Ioannis II, Serenissimi Ioannis regis filii* for this occasion.

### **Michael Verancius' *Nativitas primogeniti filii Ioannis Hungariae regis***

The dominant aesthetic category is glorification (*laudatio*) in the salutatory poems of both Michael and Antonius. The classical rhetorical works already offered the elements of formal as well as content elements to occasional poets.<sup>14</sup> This tradition was well known for the Verancius brothers of the faction of Szapolyai who had classical education. Features of laudation are noticeable everywhere in Verancius' poem. The content of his poem is the following: finally the crown prince who was so desired by everyone so long was born. The new king (*princeps*) means the sole salvation and hope for the wars exhausted by Pannonia. The glorification of the noble child (*generosa propago*) starts with the description of his physical appearance and his personality.<sup>15</sup> Brightness (*candor*) appears on his young face: his appearance is very similar to his father, he inherited the charm of the virginal Queen Isabella and he has got all of the favourable

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<sup>13</sup> V. Schamotuliensis: *In nativitate illustrissimi domini Ioannis Sigismundi, principis Hungariae et Transylvaniae, Marchionis quoque Moraviae ac Lusatae et ducis utriusque Silesiae, filii serenissimorum principum domini Ioanni et dominae Isabellae reginae Hungariae, poema gratulatorium*, Cracoviae excudebat Hieronymus Viator IIII kalendas Augusti, anno a natali Dominico MDXL, 4<sup>o</sup> – ESTREICHER t. XXX. p. 202, VERESS (1901: 86).

<sup>14</sup> The recommendations for *laudatio* from Cicero, Quintilian, and the author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* withstand comparison. Each treatise favours particular organizational principles. The *Rhetorica ad Herennium* claims that praise can be of *rerum externarum, corporis, animi* (3,10). These categories may trace the subject's career, from birth, to education, to achievements and character (3,13–14). Cicero distinguishes between *optanda* and *laudanda* (Cic. *De Or.* 2,342), including birth, good looks, and wealth among the former, and virtues among the latter. Quintilian recommended structure is to praise the subject either in chronological sequence, from the time before their birth onwards (Quint. *Inst.* 3,7,10–18).

<sup>15</sup> M. VERANCIUS: *Nativitas primogeniti filii Ioannis Hungariae regis*, 5–8: *Omnia persimilis patri, nisi matris in illo, / virgineus grato candor in ore foret. / Non nihil est etiam, quod avum quasi tangat utrumque, / sic in se magnae semina gentis habet.*

qualities of both the Szapolyai and the Jagiełło families. After that, the narrator of the poem turns to the infant. The narrator wishes him a long and glorious reign, since the people, the royal court (*aula*), and the Hungarian aristocrats (*proceres*) would stand up uniformly for their legitimate ruler (*cui populi et passim regna subesse velint*). The former glory of Hungary—probably the period of Louis the Great (1326–1382)—is recalled with the mention of the re-linking of the Adriatic Sea and the Black Sea.<sup>16</sup>

Verancius is thought to have emphasized these elements in his poem, as opposed to Ferdinand's legitimate claim for the Hungarian throne since 1538. The exulted personification of Pannonia also greets the beauty (*delicias*) of everyone. In the second half of the elegy (lines 17–28), the homeland, Pannonia, speaks to his enemies and to John's child in the form of a prophecy. His son is named for King John's lawful successor in spite of the 1538 Treaty of Várad. It is declared proudly to his enemies with the anaphor editing (*opponam [...] opponam*):

*Atque ait: Infensi toto hostes orbe venite,  
opponam vobis principis ora novi.  
Opponam regem metuendaque sceptrā. Cubantem  
cernite, et in cunis multa minantis habet.*<sup>17</sup>

The continuity of the Szapolyai family is provided by the child's birth.<sup>18</sup> Pannonia directly turns to the young John Sigismund in the second part of his speech. Now his most important task is to grow up quickly.<sup>19</sup> He is going to become the safe support of his father and his homeland (*et patris et patriae dulce iuvamen*) in this chaotic age. If he follows King John I's advice, Fortuna will provide him not condemnable victories.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> M. VERANCIUS: *op. cit.*, 11–12: *Tu semel Euxinos iterum coniungere fluctus / Adriaco poteris Dalmaticoque mari.*

<sup>17</sup> M. VERANCIUS: *op. cit.*, 17–20.

<sup>18</sup> M. VERANCIUS: *op. cit.*, 21–22: *Nam pater in nato, natusque in patre renatus, / vivet, et hinc generis ordo perennis erit.*

<sup>19</sup> M. VERANCIUS: *op. cit.*, 23–24: *At tu cresce, puer, iuvenesque velociter annos. / Ingrederē, atque aevi robora firma tui.* Cf. Ov. *Met.* 2,642–645: *adspicit infantem 'toto' que 'salutifer orbi / cresce, puer!' dixit; 'tibi se mortalia saepe / corpora debebunt, animas tibi reddere ademptas / fas erit,* and cf. Verg. *ecl.* 4,37.

<sup>20</sup> M. VERANCIUS: *op. cit.*, 27–28: *Splendida nec parvos spondet fortuna triumphos, / consiliis usus si genitoris eris.*

## Antonius Verancius' elegies to the birth

Antonius Verancius wrote two poems to the child's birth. A shorter poem, *Fragmentum de filio Ioannis Regis* precedes the elegy of Antonius Verancius in the volume of his selected work.<sup>21</sup> It was probably written before the child's birth, as Verancius just incites the little boy to be born.<sup>22</sup> He requires long life for the child, for the certain hope of the homeland (*spes nostras firma*) surpassed by Nestor's age, and he expresses the hope that further kings will derive from his family.

The longer poem by Antonius Verancius entitled *De felici nativitate Ioannis II, Serenissimi Ioannis Regis filii*<sup>23</sup> starts with the same basic scenario as his sibling's poem: the precious child came into existence (*Nascitur [...] soboles generosa*), and his face beams with strength and vigour such as Hector's (*Hectoreus [...] vigor*). King John has got the purple that is the symbol of royal power and it is also going to be dominated, as well as the country, by the newborn successor. The narrator entrusts the exploration of the child's future to the wool spinning sisters (*lanificae [...] sorores*). The desire for the restoration of the glorious past, the happy golden ages (*aurea [...] saecula reddet*),<sup>24</sup> and the former greatness of the country appear here. The restoration of war damages (*reparabit damna*) and of legal status (*restituēt leges, iustitiamque*), as well as the consolidation of the situation of the country (*firmabit Regnum*), belong to these wishes. It is necessary to restore the country in the present after the devastation of the war in order that the glorious past can be returned. The *laudatio* also appears emphatically in the poems of Antonius. The political interests and goals of the faction of Szapolyai can be discovered in this work. The author's most important intention was to reinforce John Sigismund's legitimacy and his right to inherit. Therefore the day of the boy's birth is brighter than the era of the mighty King Matthias I (*Matthiae tempore magni / illuxit melior*). He will protect the Danube, he will liberate the Szava from its handcuffs and he will set free the Drava. Antonius Verancius has confidence that the Hungarian nobility will stand up uniformly (*spem concepimus omnes*) for the "national king,"

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<sup>21</sup> To the manuscript of this elegy, see OSZK, *sign.* Fol. Lat. 2380/II, fol. 99r. Cf. VERANCICS (1875: 11).

<sup>22</sup> ANTONIUS VERANCIUS: *Fragmentum de filio Ioannis Regis*, 1–3: [...] *Spes nostras firma, nascere magne puer, / Nascere, terque senis superes o Nestoris annos, / Et nobis Regum semina certa feras.*

<sup>23</sup> OSZK, *sign.* Fol. Lat. 2380/II, fol. 99r–100r. Cf. VERANCICS (1875: 11–12).

<sup>24</sup> See this motif in the ecloga of Vergil: *Tu modo nascenti puero, quo ferrea primum / desinet ac toto surget gens aurea mundo*, – Verg. ecl. 4,8–9.

as he will be able to bring peace for everybody and to unite the noblemen in the interest of the country.<sup>25</sup> The birth of John's child should be a happy feast for all inhabitants of the country and, in a narrow sense, for the Hungarian people (*Hunniacum quicumque genus*). Highlighting the word *dies* six times emphasizes the exceptional significance of this event. At the same time this day is joyful (*laeta*) and festive (*festus*). In the second half of the elegy, the unrestrained happiness, pleasure, and the pictures of the feast appear at the royal court. All of them are free from suffering, trouble, and grief. Antonius asks for the celestial gods' help in order to protect John Sigismund from any danger at the end of the glorifying poem. Similarly to Michael Verancius' elegy, King John draws up the survival of his family and the constant reign of Hungarian nobles of origin in the closing lines, as it were, he breaks the claim of the Habsburg for the throne in the Treaty of Várad.

### **The genre of the funeral song and Michael Verancius' *In obitum Ioannis Hungariae regis. Lacrimae***

Consolation literature as a distinct literary type, the *paramythikos logos* or *consolatio* and the *epicedium* in verse form (or *epicede*, funeral ode),<sup>26</sup> began in the classical period and flourished throughout the Hellenic and Roman periods. A song of mourning for the praise of the dead was sung in the presence of the corpse and was distinguished from *threnos*, a dirge, which was limited neither by time or place. The difference between an *epicede* and an *epitaph* is (as Servius states) that the *epicedium* is proper to the body while it is unburied and the *epitaph* appears in another way.<sup>27</sup> In Roman funeral processions, the *nenia*, a song of praise for the departed, was chanted; occasionally professional wailing women (*praeficae*) were hired for the task. The *laudatio*, *comploratio*, and *consolatio* were mixed with each other in this genre.<sup>28</sup> The *epicede* became very popular in the Hellenistic period and was also widely imitated in Latin literature. It was written originally in a variety of metres, for example in distichon. The

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<sup>25</sup> A. VERANCIUS: *De felici nativitate Ioannis II, Serenissimi Ioannis Regis filii*, 21–23: *Haec est nostra fides, hanc spem concepimus omnes, / Amissae pacis pandet et iste viam. / Et quos disiungit proceres furibundus Enyo...*

<sup>26</sup> MCFARLANE (1986: 33).

<sup>27</sup> SCALIGER (1594: 385).

<sup>28</sup> The custom of a funeral oration had Greek precedents, for example Pericles' famous speech for the Athenian dead in Thucydides (2,35–46), but *laudatio* became a distinctive component of Roman funeral rituals (Cic. *Brut.* 61; Sen. *Suas.* 6,21 etc).

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basic requirement of the genre of an *epicede* or a *threnos* is that the poet can lament only for an outstanding individuality. In his third book, Scaliger asserts that making a group of themes is needed in this genre. First of all, the poet has to begin with the praise of the dead person. Then, he should give the full details of losses with their importance as well. Thereafter the description of the misery and the consolation follow. Finally the summary, including the moral of the story, closes the poem:

*Est igitur epitaphium, aut recens, aut anniversarium. In recenti partes hae: laudes, laturae demonstratio, luctus, consolatio, exhortatio.*<sup>29</sup>

John Szapolyai, the last Hungarian national king, died a natural death most likely on 21 July 1540.<sup>30</sup> Michael Verancius created his funeral poem (*epicedium*) entitled *Divi regis Hungariae Ioannis I epicedion* at the moment of mourning which was printed in Hieronymus Viator's press in Cracow in 1540.<sup>31</sup> According to Endre Veress, Sebastianus Marschevius (Sebastian Marszewski) and Michael Verancius also wrote funeral poems

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<sup>29</sup> SCALIGER (1594: 386).

<sup>30</sup> According to the letters of Petrovics and Martinuzzi, which are preserved by Wolfgang de Bethlen, King John died on 21 July. – BETHLEN (1782: 323): *et mox sequenti die circa horam matutinam septimam et vivendi simul anno salutos 1540. die 21. Julii finem fecit*. Nicolas ISTHVANFI also affirms it in his work. – ISTHVANFI (1622: 225): *Postero die, qui XXI. Quintilis mensis dies fuit, (...) a familiarium intimis in cubiculum deductus fuit, in quo eadem nocte e vivis excessit, quum annum aetatis quinquagesimum tertium absolvisset*. However, the newest scientific literature puts the king's death onto the previous days of 18 July, without quoting of the sources. Cf. VÁRKONYI (1999: 44); SUGAR–HANÁK–FRANK (1990: 85) and PÁLFFY (2010: 66) refer only to July. Antonius Verancius puts this day to the previous day of Saint Lawrence (10 August): "János király meghala Szászsebesen szent Lerinc nap előtt" – VERANCSICS (1857: 44). According to György Szerémi, the king's funeral was on the day of Saint Lawrence. – SZERÉMI (1857: 354): *Et Regina vidit quasi semidolore, sicut Georgius heremita; et sepultus est in mense Augusti Laurentii martiris anno 1540*. Besides this, the totally unreliable Szerémi claimed even the poisoning of the king. – SZERÉMI (1857: 353): *De Italo fisico accipiens demum potum ad purgandum stomachum, quod gustasset, mox ad terram casum dederat, et ait pauper rex: Capiatis me et teneatis, quia haec est ultima manducacio mea et potus*.

<sup>31</sup> JURIC nr. 3886, ESTREICHER t. XXXIII. p. 352. The classification number of the lost printed paper in Warszawa, according to CYTOWSKA (1967–1968: 176) was: Biblioteka Narodowa *sign.* Lat. Qu. 128. KORZENIOWSKI also refers to a manuscript work of Verancius. – KORZENIOWSKI (1910: 161–162). This manuscript was brought back into Poland in 1928. – SUCHODOLSKI (1928: 6). Later this variation of the text was also presumably destroyed during World War II.

for the Hungarian king's death.<sup>32</sup> The work of Marschevius appeared in Victor's press in Cracow in September 1540.<sup>33</sup> Endre Veress believed that the poem of Verancius had been lost.<sup>34</sup> However, this funeral poem can be found in a manuscript in the National Széchényi Library. Latin verses, which are ascribed to Michael Verancius, include a poem entitled *In obitum Ioannis Hungariae regis. Lacrimae*.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, numerous letters of Antonius Verancius regarding the same event can be found in the episcopal library in Pécs (Klimo Library).<sup>36</sup>

Michael Verancius deploys all formal elements—especially the *laudatio*, the *comploratio*, and the *consolation*—of a funeral song in the spirit of the available literary tradition. His poem decorously raised a monument to the memory of his most significant supporter, King John. At the beginning of his *epicedium*, “the object” of the poem, the royal dead body (*regale cadaver*), appears immediately. Connecting with *laus*, the glorification of John Szapolyai is closely associated with the genre of *laudatio* (lines 1–7).<sup>37</sup> The sky is shocked by his greatness. The vital soul (*mens vivida*) gets out from the dead body, since mortal beings can do nothing against female personifications of destiny's (*Parcae*) order and against unmerciful death.<sup>38</sup> Only death could take the royal crown from King John I, the eternal winner (*invicto capiti*).<sup>39</sup> It was only death that was able to destroy everything. Frequent elements of the genre of *epicedium* were the mourning and the lamenting for the dead. In terms of *comploratio*, twelve embittered questions sound towards the cruel and unfair death of all times. Why is death, that is the iron-willed law (*ferrea lex*), pleased to desolate the rising soul (*mens ardua*)? Who can avail

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<sup>32</sup> VERESS (1901: 88).

<sup>33</sup> S. MARSCHÉVIUS: *In serenissimi Hungariae regis Ioannis I. obitum*. – ESTREICHER t. XXII, p. 191.

<sup>34</sup> VERESS (1901: 88).

<sup>35</sup> OSZK, *sign. Quart. Lat. 776*, fol. 8r–10r.

<sup>36</sup> *Epistolae Antonii Verantii ... de obitu Ioannis regis Ungariae...*, anno 1540. – Klimo Library, *sign. Ms. 71*, fol. 76–99. ESTREICHER (t. XXX, p. 353) cites a consolatory letter of Antonius Verancius to the Queen Isabella: *Poprzedza Epistola consolatoria ad Isabellam, Hungariae reginam, Antonii Wrandtii*.

<sup>37</sup> M. VERANCIUS: *In obitum Ioannis Hungariae regis, 1–7: Actum est, heu nulli vis eluctata potentem / stravit Ioannem, iacet en regale cadaver. / O superi, interiit quem fulgens utraque Phoebi / admirata domus stupuit, quem Theutonius ardor, / quem ferus excesor regnorum Turca piorum / invitus regnare tulit, quorumque nocere / alter non potuit, cum posset nesciit alter*.

<sup>38</sup> SCALIGER (1594: 386): *Laudes non solum mortui, sed etiam mortis*.

<sup>39</sup> M. VERANCIUS: *op. cit.*, 13–15: *Mors sola coronam / invicto capiti detraxit, sola triumphum / abstulit, et tristi victrix in funere gaudet*.

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himself of his life if death has already ruled over it? All worldly glory vanishes at the moment of death. Where did the memory of the great rulers and the military leaders of the past centuries disappear to after their death? The cult of King Matthias was considerable at the Szapolyai court at this time.<sup>40</sup> Michael Verancius mentions the great ruler in his work: where is the mighty Matthias, where is his father (John Hunyadi) who is famous for his victories? The rulers of the recent past cannot be absent from the enumeration. The fame and glory of Vladislaus II (*vel Ladislavus*) and his son, Louis II (*huius soboles Ludovicus*), dwindled away.<sup>41</sup> And where is King John now (*Nunc ubi Ianus*)? Verancius points out directly the corpse lying on the bier in his funeral poem for the second time. In terms of *lacturae demonstratio*, he expresses that the king's death is a huge loss for the country, and probably the sadness will never terminate completely.<sup>42</sup> Divine and natural signs accompanied the noble king's death similarly to the Roman emperors' deification (*apotheosis*). The Christian God, the land, and the rivers all provided their signs. In Buda, there was strong gust of wind (*valido ventorum turbine*) at that time. The people who were at the court of Buda at the time of the king's death observed a shining star (*astra petens*), much like "the apotheosis of Caesar."<sup>43</sup> This star was trying to ascend higher and higher into the celestial spheres.<sup>44</sup> The king's death and the subsequent mourning touched not only his dependents, but also touched nature itself. The personified sun (*ipse Phoebus*), knowing the events in advance, did not emit its vital sunshine to the earth in order to scorch the fields angrily with its fire after King John's death. Fish perished in the dried up rivers; neither the grass nor the seeds could spring on the lands, which once were fertile. Even animals fell into deep mourning (*maeret pecus omne*) all over the fields. According to Wolfgang de Bethlen, a big earthquake preceded the death of the king in the environs of

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. other elegies of Michael Verancius in 1528. – M. VERANCIUS: *Alia querela Hungariae contra Austriam*, 115–119: *Quaerere non opus est longe. Rex ipse Ioannes, / quem vos deseritis, credite, talis erit. / Cui si depones nomen venerabile Iani, / Matthias proles ipse erit Uniadis, / Et bene si memini, talis fortuna secuta est / Illum, ut post magnum referat imperium.*

<sup>41</sup> To the fame and glory in Renaissance literature, cf. MCFARLANE (1986: 26–27).

<sup>42</sup> M. VERANCIUS: *In obitum...*, 29–31: *Nec non labor ille / exhaustus nunquam? Mors, o mors omnia sola / delet, et in cineres cum vult inimica resolvit.*

<sup>43</sup> Cf. *Ov. Met.* 15,799sqq.

<sup>44</sup> M. VERANCIUS: *op. cit.*, 36–40: *Quae celsior ibat / astra petens reliquis, quam maerens regia vidit / illisam terrae, quasi tum cervice revulsa / praecelsae turris, monstrarent fata cadentis / heu Domini capitis, veluti praeludia quaedam.*

Kolozsvár (Romanian *Cluj-Napoca*).<sup>45</sup> Verancius may have inserted this event into his own elegy. The sorrowful Transylvania (*Dacia tristis*) had a presentiment of King John's death, as even the land trembled (*contremuit tellus*) inside.<sup>46</sup> At that time, Szapolyai's soul rose into the heavens: the powerful spirit (*spiritus ingens*) dispersed reluctantly from the opened holy heart (*sacra [...] pectora*) in the air.

Then the *comploratio* was transferred to the young wife and the newborn baby. The speaker was asking for tears and sighs from Queen Isabella onto her husband's new sepulchre, as the better part of their marriage was lost then. Not only the queen, but the whole court as well as all the people put on their mourning dresses (*pullatas [...] vestes*) and even the baby (*infantemque*) was covered with black clothes.<sup>47</sup> At the end of the poem there is a comforting *consolatio* for the unfortunate John Sigismund. During that time the child was smiling because he was not able to realize his loss yet. He could not have known his father, but the reputation of King John and the fame of his huge kingdom would remain eternal in the spirit of *exhortatio*.<sup>48</sup> Queen Isabella will send her pain sighing and crying to her young son. It is only her son who can signify the sole consolation for her in the time of lamenting. Sweet songs (*dulcia carmina*) are not allowed to be sung by the nurse to the baby, since his father's death will always be a sobbing funeral lament (*naeniae*) at the whole royal court. In the last lines, the mourning poem is closed with the great cruelty of fate (*tanta inclementia*):

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<sup>45</sup> BETHLEN (1782: 323–324): *Mortem eius magnus terrae motus circa Claudiopolim praecessit; de quo Brutus: Erat, ait, Ioannes Rex illustri per omnes Maiores prosapia oriundus, sed virtutis et ingenii laudibus omni nobilitate clarior; tanta enim in illo a primis adolescentiae annis indoles enituit, ut et in recte sentiendo prudentia, et in faciendo animi celsitudo semper perluxerit, adeo ut tam in secundis qua min adversis rebus semper praesenti fortuna maior fuerit habitus, semperque paratus, tam adversae fortunae grassantis in se cuius excipere, quam secundae fallacia gaudia contemnere.*

<sup>46</sup> M. VERANCIUS: *op. cit.*, 50–53: *Dacia tristis idem sensit, cum sedibus imis / territa contremuit tellus, dum spiritus ingens / ire parat, dum membra quatit, dum sacra recludit / pectora, et invitus vacuas discedit in auras.*

<sup>47</sup> M. VERANCIUS: *op. cit.*, 60 – 62: *Accipe pullatas insignia tristia vestes. / Accipiat maestos infelix aula colores. / Accipiat populus quicquid fit luctibus aptum.*

<sup>48</sup> Cf. SCALIGER (1594: 386): *Claudendum Poema exhortationibus: tantum abesse, ut illi sint lugendi, ut eorum praesens felicitas, quae superstitionibus obtigit non contemnenda: illorum virtus, animus, exitus sit exoptandus.*

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*Heu misero patri, cui Parcae sorte nefanda,  
et regnum, et natum dulcem, vitamque momento  
abstrexere simul. Tanta inclementia fati est.*<sup>49</sup>

The sequence is remarkable. Michael Verancius is expressively putting the plunder of King John's kingdom (his homeland) to the first place of his losses, and only after that it can be followed by the loss of his sweet son and finally by his life itself.

### Conclusion

This important period of Hungarian history (1526–1541) has been studied only from one point of view by Hungarian scholars, especially by the historians up to the present. In my opinion, the research of the historical fight's "loser," John Szapolyai, the publication of the documents and sources concerning him, as well as the research of the humanists of Southern-Slav origin and their work are timely and necessary.

The reviewed poems fit into the basic lyrical genres of the occasional poetry: the glorifying song (*panegyric*), the wedding poem (*epithalamium*), the funeral ode (*epicedium*), the epitaph (*epitaphium*), and the most popular genre of the humanist literature, the epigram. Both Antonius and Michael Verancius adopted the typical characters of the genre—glorification (*laudatio*), mourning (*luctus*), and consolation (*consolatio*)—from the existing traditions in their poems. They did not strive to overstep these genre models, and in reality their poems became typical pieces of occasional poetry. I think this is one of the reasons that neither content nor formal contact can be discovered in the poems of the two brothers written to the same topics. Their poems cannot have influenced each other's writings. Michael Verancius' works are outstanding in this regard that they could express clearly John Szapolyai's historical merits in spite of powerful propaganda from Ferdinand's faction. For that very reason, his poems are of great importance to the more accurate research of this determinative era of the Hungarian history.

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<sup>49</sup> M. VERANCIUS: *op. cit.*, 78–80.



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admirata domus stupuit, quem Theutonius ardor, quem ferus excesor regnorum Turca piorum invitus regnare tulit, quorumque nocere alter non potuit, cum posset nesciit alter.	5
Pro fatum inclemens et pro male ducta sororum stamina, quae semper properant evertere magna. Extinctus venis calor est, et spiritus ore diriguit medio, nec dulci blanda monetur lingua sono, cessit mens vivida, et omnibus istis imposuit natura modum. Mors sola coronam invicto capiti detraxit, sola triumphum abstulit, et tristi victrix in funere gaudet.	10 15
Tamne cito haec fieri voluit mens ardua. Rex nunc qui fuerat non sit? Sic vitam invertere solo ictu oculi placuit tam vari principis? Aut si ferrea lex fati est, quare non computet annos purpureis, serosque trahat sub marmora reges?	20
Quis iam quis vitae est usus, si morte regatur, si licet arbitrio dominae crudelis iniquevae? Infelix studium cui semper sternere quicquid excelsi est usquam. Dic, ne peregrina revolvam, ille ubi Matthias magnus, clarusve trophaeis Hunniades huius genitor, vel Ladislavus, aut huius soboles Ludovicus? Nunc ubi Ianus? Ecce ubi nunc Ianus iacet hic. Quid profuit, eheu illa tua in patriam pietas, nec non labor ille exhaustus nunquam? Mors, o mors omnia sola delet, et in cineres cum vult inimica resolvit.	25 30
Ipse pater rerum caelo manifesta ruinae signa dabat, dabat et tellus, dant flumina tanti argumenta mali. Nonne haec sensisse putamus aethera, cum valido ventorum turbine sphaera aurea deiecta est Budae? Quae celsior ibat astra petens reliquis, quam maerens regia vidit illisam terrae, quasi tum cervice revulsa praecelsae turris, monstrarent fata cadentis heu domini capitis, veluti praeludia quaedam.	35 40
Ipse etiam Phoebus sensit, luctusque futuri ut potuit miseros monuit. Nam veste lugubri tristior obtexit vultus, et luce carentes ostendit terris radios, quos ille deinde edidit ardores? Et terras igne perussit saevus, et in sicco sitibundos flumine pisces deseruit. Non herba viret, non semina sponsa nutrit humus sterilis, maeret pecus omne per agros, fecundos agros olim camposque beatos.	45
Dacia tristis idem sensit, cum sedibus imis	50

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territa contremuit tellus, dum spiritus ingens  
ire parat, dum membra quatit, dum sacra recludit  
pectora, et invitus vacuas discedit in auras.

At tu, quae exultas thalamo partuque recenti,  
da lacrimas gemitusque novis, Isabella, mariti 55  
funeribus. Rupta est taedae concordia concors,  
parsque tori melior cecidit. Profunde dolores

et lacrimis, quos corde geris, restingue hymenaeos,  
in luctusque tuos flendo converte calores.  
Accipe pullatas insignia tristia vestes. 60  
Accipiat maestos infelix aula colores.  
Accipiat populus quicquid fit luctibus aptum.

Infantemque nigris albenti veste remota  
involves miseranda tuum. Tuus est tuus inquam  
solius, totum pater hunc tibi liquit habendum. 65

Forsitan ille monet risus quandoque malorum  
inscius, et felix hoc solo, quod sua nescit  
ipse mala. At mater lactanti prima misello  
nuntia erit lapsi generis regnique potentis.

Et puero numquam dulcis, sed lacteus humor 70  
cum lacrimis permixtus erit, dabit oscula nato  
cum gemitu fletuque simul. Nec dulcia nutrix  
carmina perquiret, dum somnia poscit alumno,  
sed genitoris erit mors flenti naeniae semper.

Ille, nec amplexus teneros, in colla parentis  
ablati, dabit infelix, nec dulcia iunget 75  
oscula, quae patri regnis potiora fuissent.

Heu misero patri, cui Parcae sorte nefanda,  
et regnum et natum dulcem vitamque momento  
abstraxere simul. Tanta inclementia fati est. 80

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