The Poems of Nicasius Ellebodius

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Abstract. This study explores the surviving poetry of Nicasius Ellebodius (1535–1577). While his great philological achievements of this Flemish humanist are well known, his lesser works, including his poems, have received much less scholarly attention. At the present state of research, nine poems of his are extant today, both Latin and Greek pieces, which make up altogether around 230 lines. Beyond their literary and aesthetical value, these occasional poems throw light on various aspects of Ellebodius's life and personality, his attitude to possible and actual patrons, his relationship with humanist friends. There survived poems from various stages of his life, from his Roman (mid-1550s), Paduan (1560s) and Pozsony periods (1570s). We provide a critical edition of all these poems (only two were edited in previous scholarship), and make decisive steps in exploring their context.

Keywords: Nicasius Ellebodius, Rodolfo Pio da Carpi, Henry II of France, Charles V (Holy Roman Emperor), Gabriele Falloppio, Georg Purkircher, Girolama Colonna, Carolus Clusius, Neo-latin poetry, Renaissance humanism

Nicasius Ellebodius (Nicaise Helbault, 1535–1577) is considered one of the best philologists of late sixteenth-century Europe: his main works are editions or paraphrases of classical, mainly Greek texts—especially the Aristotelian corpus—, and earlier scholarly generations have focused principally on this aspect of Ellebodius's oeuvre. No less interesting, however, is Ellebodius himself as a person; an active member of the Republic of Letters of his time. The Flemish humanist also wrote orations, poems, prose paratexts, and last but not least, letters:¹ these lesser works

of his allow us to catch glimpses of his personality, his habits of mind, and his own forms of expression in the framework of various literary genres; moreover, these texts throw light on the network of men of letters to which he belonged at various stages of life. Some brief overviews have already been written about Ellebodius’s life and connections, but these aspects have only received closer scholarly attention in the last two decades. A publication of his correspondence is currently being developed: more than two hundred pieces of his correspondence are known and will be published with ample notes and introduction in the near future.²

According to the present state of research, nine poems of his have survived, partly in manuscript form and partly in early modern editions. Only two of the poems appear in the modern edition (without commentary),³ and only a lesser part of them are discussed, peripherally, in scholarly literature: a string of poems in Ellebodius’s notebook has been briefly reviewed by Tibor Klaniczay, who called attention to the notebook itself in an article,⁴ and a Greek dedicatory tetrastich on by Ellebodius has been discussed in a recent study.⁵ The present article provides a critical edition of all poems by Ellebodius known so far and takes the first steps towards revealing their context and inherent values. These poems can be categorised as occasional poetry, and their overall significance cannot be compared to the great scholarly achievements of the Flemish philologist, like the Latin paraphrase and commentary of Aristotle’s Poetics or the translations of two comedies of Aristophanes. Still, we have at our disposal around 230 lines of Latin and Greek poetry, which forms an integral part of the humanist’s oeuvre. The surviving opuscula allow us to sharpen our image of Ellebodius as a humanist of his age and to learn more about his aesthetic orientation.⁶ On the other hand, the poems also serve—similarly to the letters—as puzzle pieces in the vivid and colourful picture of the late sixteenth-century respublica litteraria—at least those specific elite milieus to which Ellebodius

² This correspondence has been under editing in the framework of an NKFIH (National Research, Development and Innovation Office) fellowship by Zsuzsa Kovács, Ádám Szabó and Áron Orbán since December 2019. Thanks to Zsuzsa Kovács for calling our attention to the epitaph on Gabriele Falloppio (Chapter II. 1) and for several other pieces of advice related to this study.
³ See below, Chapter II. 1 and II. 4. The existence of the other poems edited in this study was already indicated by scholars (see the literature in the notes on the respective poems below), but they have not analysed the texts.
⁴ Klaniczay, “Nicaius Ellebodius Casletanus.”
⁵ See below, Chapter II. 5
⁶ We hope that our edition also lays the ground for an aesthetic assessment of Ellebodius’s poetry: the various metrical forms, the topoi and rhetorical figures that are applied, the rhetorical strategies and the occasions which Ellebodius chose to perpetuate in verse—to mention only a few literary aspects—can all be taken into account in such analyses.
belonged in Rome, Padua, and Pozsony (today’s Bratislava), which consisted of humanists and patrons from a number of nations (mainly Italy, Hungary, and the Low Countries). This study is intended to represent a decisive step in the exploration of Ellebodius’s poetry, providing a critical edition and at least minimal context for the poems; we hope to lay the ground for further contextualisation and aesthetic evaluation in future scholarship. In the transcription of the poems, we follow modern standards.7

I. A string of poems in Ellebodius’s notebook

The first pieces of Ellebodius’s surviving poetry come from his Roman period. He was in Rome from the spring of 1554,8 and after gaining admission to the Collegium Germanicum, studied there from March 1555 to September 1556. It was most probably Cardinal Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle, a leading minister of Charles V (or someone in his environment), who called the attention of Rodolfo Pio da Carpi, protector of the Collegium, to the young Ellebodius.

Two manuscripts have remained from Ellebodius’ school years; today, both are in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan, inserted in larger volumes.9 He produced the first manuscript, with the signature H 55, during his studies in Leuven and Rome,10 while the latter (I 159) was used only in Rome. It is the former which contains the poems. Its title was given by Ellebodius himself: Collectanea quae in exteris et long-inquis regionibus quaesivi et conscripsi. Thus, it is a document of various contents, a student’s notebook written in his own hand, only for himself. The notes in the manuscript cover all the subjects taught at the faculty of arts at that time: arithmetic, astronomy, theology, ethics, epigraphy and so on. The most significant part of the notes is about classical languages and literature: these were the main subjects in the curriculum and the focus of Ellebodius’s studies as well.11 However, some of the contents of the notebook seem to have been written down in the interval between his studies in Leuven and Rome.

7 We modernise the orthography (for instance, i–j, u–v) and punctuation where needed. In the critical notes, we use standard abbreviations.
8 Klaniczay, “Nicasius Ellebodius Casletanus,” 89.
10 Actually, there is a note in this manuscript which was written even later. In this, Ellebodius provides the dates of his arrival in Rome, the beginning and end of his studies at the Collegium Germanicum, and his arrival in Vienna in 1556 (Cod. Ambr. H 55 inf., 76v).
In the middle of the manuscript, between a short excursus about ancient measures of longitude and some copies of classical writings, there is a group of Ellebodius’ poems. It consists of four pieces, three written in Latin and one in Greek. A dedication can be read in place of a title: Reverendissimo ac Illustrissimo Domino Rodolpho Pio Cardinali a Carpo, Nicasius Casletanus. Rodolpho Pio da Carpi was a highly influential dignitary; no wonder the young Flemishman had high hopes concerning him. As one of the six members of the cardinal committee that presided over the Collegium Germanicum, Carpi took part in the administration of the institute and was also famous for his library and patronage. He had close ties to Ignatius of Loyola and to Charles V himself, who appointed him vice protector of the “German States”. Charles V, to whom Carpi also addressed political discourse, is the protagonist in Ellebodius’s string of poems, too.

1. The opening poem

A six-distich epigram opens the string of poems dedicated to Carpi. However, the addressee is not the cardinal himself, but a certain Fredericus, a medicus who was well versed in literature; at least Ellebodius applies the usual humanist topos to him too. No more information can be found about this person, but Fredericus was certainly a man trusted by Carpi (perhaps his personal physician because the Flemish student wanted him to be a mediator between Ellebodius and the cardinal). He asks Fredericus to show his string of poems—if he considers them good enough—to Carpi to win his benevolence and support for Ellebodius’s studies. Well-known topoi of humanist poetry are interwoven here with complaints about his (apparently real) situation: he has to serve and does not have time for studying, he even had to write this poem at night, so he really needs help from a generous patron. In the end, Ellebodius promises to write a laudation to Fredericus himself as well, provided the physician can get the support of the cardinal. In the manuscript, another hand has marked two verses in the poem and reformulated them under the original poem. This must have been done by a friend of Ellebodius, who tried to help the Flemish student by making suggestions. Ellebodius, however, deleted these lines, rejecting the proposal.

12 Cod. Ambr. H 55 inf., 84r–87r.
13 See Schmidt, Das Collegium Germanicum in Rom, 13.
14 Capanni, Rodolfo Pio da Carpi, 47.
15 Capanni, Rodolfo Pio da Carpi, 18–19.
17 Writing poems at night is also a frequent topos for humanists, but does not exclude that E. told the truth here.
Based on the content of the poem and the dating of the following two, we can assume that this work was written at the beginning of Ellebodius’ stay in Rome in 1554. Maybe a friend or a benevolent dignitary persuaded him to write and send poems to Carpi and other people in the cardinal’s surroundings to win the attention and favour of the protector of the Collegium Germanicum. It is highly probable that Ellebodius sent a clean copy of the string of poems to Fredericus and thus to Carpi. What is certain is that he entered the Collegium Germanicum the following year, so—with or without the help of the poem—he achieved his goal.

Reverendissimo ac Illustissimo Domino Rodolphe Cardinali a Carpo
Nicasius Casletanus

Excellentissimo ac Magnifico domino domino Frederico medico expertissimo

Ms.: Milan, Bibl. Ambr., H 55 inf., ff. 84r-7r

Accipe quaeso tuam cupientia carmina limam,
quaeque rudis nobis nostra Thalia dedit.
Servio, nec studiis sunt libera tempora nostris,
pervigil in media carmina nocte cano.
Haec lege iudicioque tuo si forte placebunt, 5
in doctas veniant praesulis illa manus.
Versibus hisce meis haec praemia sola petuntur,
   ut possim caepta Palladis ire via.
Turpiter ingenium faeda rubigine nostrum
   inficitur cultu mente carente suo. {1}
Ipse tuas alio celebrabo carmine laudes,
   si melior rebus fulserit aura meis.

{1} Alia manu inseritur pro versibus 9–10 Ingeniumque situ foedaque rubigine nostrum / inficitur cultu deficiente suo, sed postea E. delevit.

2. Invectives against the French king

Next come the central poems in the string: the first one is in Latin, written in distichs, the other in Greek, written in iambic trimeter. Both have the same subject: according to their title, they are dedicated to the Gallus, i.e., the king of France, Henry II, but this is not a real dedication, but rather an invective. Ellebodius targets the French king, who had been warring against the Emperor, Charles V, in the so-called Italian wars. Exploiting the ambiguity of the word gallus (which means
both “Frenchman” and “cock”), he describes Henry II as an arrogant and silly cock who dares to challenge a mighty eagle, the heraldic animal of the emperor.

The Flemish student refers to current events in the war, which makes it possible to approximately date the poems—to the late summer or early autumn of 1554. First, he mentions the defeat of Pietro Strozzi, an Italian general. Strozzi commanded the forces of Siena, a French ally, in the fight against Florence, which was supported by Charles V. Then, on August 2, 1554, there was a battle at Marciano that the Florentine army won decisively. Ellebodius mentions military operations in his homeland, Flanders, as well, which probably refers to the French campaign in the summer of 1554. A French army invaded the province in June. The soldiers plundered the territory and occupied some fortresses, but the emperor reacted slowly and avoided any serious confrontation for a long time. Probably this is why the sentence Carolus stertit (“Charles is snoring”) was created by those dissatisfied with the emperor’s activity. Ellebodius quotes this saying many times in the poem, so it had to be widespread in Rome. Finally, on August 13, Charles V attacked the French army to save a besieged castle, Renty. The result was a minor French victory, but the commanders were informed about the defeat on the Italian frontier, so they decided to lift the siege of Renty and finish the campaign. This turn of events made it possible for Charles V to proclaim success.

While referring to these two battles, Ellebodius scorns the French king and glorifies the emperor. The author’s motives were certainly not only patriotic sympathy for his attacked homeland but also the intention to show loyalty to the emperor. As seen above, Carpi was a well-known supporter of the German cause in Rome, so these poems might have earned his attention and benevolence, especially the Greek one, which—beyond its political content—shows a good command of Greek language and literature; such a solid knowledge of Greek was unusual at such a young age (Ellebodius was only nineteen years old). There is a correction in the first poem made by the same hand as in the previous one. In this case, Ellebodius did not delete it, so he may have accepted the suggestion.

Ad Gallum

Tolle graves fastus, animi depone furorem,  
et flectas cristas, Galle superbe, tuas.  
Gallus es, ales iners, nil cristam praeter et unguis,  
parvaque ius regni terminat ora tui.

18 Mallett and Shaw, *The Italian Wars*, 257–64.  
19 Rickard, *Battle of Renty*.  
20 Henry II, King of France (r. 1547–1559).
Cum quoque sis aquila longe tu viribus impar,
vis tamen hanc summo sollicitare polo.
Potasti Galli\textsuperscript{21} nimium sitibundus in undis,
inde tibi nomen provenit, inde furor.
Deprime, dum ius est, nimium temeraria caepta,
ne toties tanti paenituisse velis.
Qui decus imperii captas furialibus armis,
quin tua ne pereat Galle corona vide.
An tibi dant animos obliquae cornua Lunae,
et studeat rebus quod modo Turca tuis?\textsuperscript{22}
Oppida cuncta tuo credis cessura furori,
quod primo faciles experiare deos?
Data lege nihil toto manet orbe ligatum,
omnia fert dubia sors malefida rota.
Utque diem Titan revehit, vaga Luna tenebras,
sic homini varias fata dedere vires.
Carolus Austriaco stertit de sanguine Caesar,
stertit, at hoc melius nullus in orbe videt.
Sic quondam Fabius stertebat Maximus, atque
stertendo rerum reddita summa fuit.\textsuperscript{23}
Stertit quo lepores perhibentur stertere somno,
stertit, sed vigili lumine cuncta notat.
Multa tenet fateor verborum opprobria Caesar,
illa sed in magnum versa fuere decus.
Naufragus aequoreis fuerat subversus in undis,
cum rigidos saevo Marte petebat Afros.\textsuperscript{24}
Talia Geldronum populus iactabat, at inde
Caesaris experta est Geldria victa manus.\textsuperscript{25}
Tu quoque, ni veterum fallant oracula vatum,
Debabis Caroli mite subire iugum.

\textsuperscript{21} The Gallus River in Galatia. It was believed that those who drank its water would go mad (see Plin. Nat. Hist. XXXI. 5).
\textsuperscript{22} France had been in an alliance with the Ottoman Empire since 1536. They often coordinated military action against the Habsburgs.
\textsuperscript{23} Quintus Fabius Maximus Verrucosus (c. 280–203 BC), a Roman general in the Second Punic War who received the nickname Cunctator because of his delaying tactics.
\textsuperscript{24} In 1535, Charles V. led a campaign to Africa and conquered Tunis.
\textsuperscript{25} After the Third Guelders War (1538–1543), in the Treaty of Venlo, William of Jülich was forced to cede his territories, the Duchy of Guelders and the County of Zutphen, to Charles V.
Et nisi te moneant Francisci exempla parentis, conteret omne tuum Caesaris ira robur.{1}

Fallor? An innocui noscunt ventura poetae, sive ea sunt terra, sive gerenda mari?

Haec dum vaticinor, Flandrorum missus ab oris, aurea qui referat nuncia cursor adest.

Flandrica dum Gallus vastat temerarius arva, infelix Flandro caesus ab hoste fuit.

Is quoque quem vane laudabat Italia Strozzus, dicitur infamem corripuisse fugam,
qui modo Caesarea, si vera est fama, cohorte cingitur et victas mox dabat ille manus.

Inque caput Galli totas Germania vires concitat, et saevus Flander in arma ruit.

Quin etiam toto seiunctos orbe Batavos per mare ducturos bellica signa ferunt.

Parte ferox alia densis Hispania castris
Gallorum magnas depopulatur opes.

Nam Deus iniustis poenas aliquando rependit, quas male quaesivit, nunc male perdat opes.

Ah, quam multa manent Gallum discrimina rerum! In poenas credo vix satis unus erit.

Plaudite, Caesarei, laetos agitate triumphos, maestaque iam laetis solvite corda iocis.

Ducite faelices per compita, ducite ludos, timpana laeta sonent, tibia, plectra, lyrae.

Qui prius ibat ovans Gallus plaudentibus alis, ultrices aquilae sensit adesse manus, armaque nil prosunt illi socialia Turcae, nam movet avitis bella nefanda diis.

Galle retro propera, resonantia Caesaris arma audio, Galle cave, sta, fuge, Caesar adest!

{1} conteret … robur] a. m. sublin. ac add. in marg.: crede feres regni maxima damna tui.

26 King Francis, father of Henry II, was defeated and captured at the battle of Pavia in 1525.
27 Pietro Strozzi.
28 After the battle of Marciano, Strozzi was forced to flee, but he avoided being captured.
Τοῦ αὐτοῦ

Νικησάτω νῦν ἡ χαρὰ τὴν ἀνίαν ὑφ’ ἡδονῆς μέγιστον ὀρχεῖσθε πάνυ.
Τὴν συγκρότησιν τῆς μάχης καὶ τὸν μάλον λέγω τοῦ ἀγριοποῦ ἀλεκτρυόνος,29 πλείστον δὲ καιρὸν ἀνθυπηγωνισμένου.
Τέθνηκεν ἡ τάλαινα θήρα τῷ μύθῳ καὶ πρὸς βάθη πέπτωκεν Αἰδωνέως.
Πέτρου φεύγοντος Στρώζου30 τοῦ ἡγεμόνος.

{1} post τὴν 1 litteram E. del. {2} post δ’ 1 litteram E. del. {3} ἐνωτίσασθε E. ὦ ins. in marg. {4} post λέγω 2 litteras E. del. {5} Οὔτως] Οὔτως ms. {6} ὀλεσσεν] ὀλεσσεν ms. {7} Ἅγγελος] Ἅγγελος ms. {8} post φόνον] 1 litteram E. del. {9} εἰληφὸς] εἰληφὸς ms. The text of the poem is based on Theodore Pro-

3. The concluding poem

Although the addressee of the last poem in the string is Charles V, only its beginning concerns the emperor. Ellebodius apologises to him for his modest poetic achievements: his poverty and young age do not allow his talent to blossom or for him to compose in more prestigious genres. In the 26-distich poem, we can in fact read, packed with commonplaces, a description of the Flemish student’s situation in Rome, interwoven with praise for Cardinal Carpi, in whom he lays his hope. The poet expresses his confidence that the celestial powers, the gods and stars, will

29 I. e. Henry II, king of France.
30 Pietro Strozzi.
favour his path, and in the second half of the poem (from line 27), we arrive at praise for the cardinal. Ellebodius adapts a number of well-known panegyrical topoi to the real person of Carpi: the cardinal’s name (Pius) already mirrors his character; he has virtuous ancestors; the family’s probity contrasts with others’ avarice and arrogance; for his virtues, the cardinal will earn eternal fame; finally, the poet promises, in due order, to sing the praise of the prospective patron. Behind the topoi that run throughout the entire poem—from the modesty topos through the theme of the errant Ulysses to the commonplaces of praise for the patron—one can clearly see how Ellebodius intends to impress Carpi by contrasting the limits posed by his poverty with his promising talent.

Noteworthy are the additions of the benevolent corrector familiar to us from the previous poems. In addition, this reviewer of the poems, who seems to have known both Ellebodius’s situation and the Carpi family well, inserted distichs referring to other praiseworthy characteristics of the cardinal (his generosity as patron, after line 30) and his uncle (Alberto’s scientia, after line 38), and on the other hand, to Ellebodius’s hard service (after line 4). Apparently, these concrete references were meant to enhance the impression on Carpi of the poor but talented Flemish student.

*Ad Carolum Caesarem*

Carole da veniam nec[1] torvo despicie vultu
Exiguis elegis si tua facta canam.
Namque mei studii cursum remoratur egestas
nec numero vitae bis duo lustra meae. [2]
Ingenio poteram superas volitare per auras,
Me nisi paupertas invida deprimeret
Si me sors vellet fatis melioribus uti
Parcaque det vitae stamina longa meae.

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31 Tibor Klaniczay assumed that with line 15, at the beginning of folio 87r, a new poem begins (Klaniczay, “Nicasius Ellebodius Casletanus,” 88–89). However, lines 15–18 logically continue the previous argumentation in lines 11–14: the celestials are not deaf to the prayers of the pious mortal—Ulysses, too, finally arrived home. Formal features do not support the assumption either: there is no title or any change in style that would indicate the beginning of a different poem.

32 “Albertus” must be the uncle of Cardinal Alberto III Pio da Carpi.

33 Here, the insertion by Ellebodius’s corrector (“Altera fert lapidem gestat manus altera pennam, / Ut me penna levat, sic grave mergit onus”): is based on the epigram at no. 121 of Andrea Alciato’s *Emblematum liber* (Augsburg: Steyner, 1531): “Dextra tenet lapidem, manus altera sustinet alas: / Ut me pluma levat, sic grave mergit onus. / Ingenio poteram superas volitare per arces, / Me nisi paupertas invida deprimeret.” In light of this, the insertion should not be taken in a literal sense as a reference to actual stones that Ellebodius would have worked with.
Tunc ego non parvis elegis, humilique Camena
   Sed tua Mantoo\textsuperscript{34} carmine gesta canam.  
Nec tam dura meam moderantur sidera vitam
   Quin alia sperem conditione frui.
Scilicet aspiciunt caelestia numina terras
   Nec spernunt dura supplicis aure preces.
Multa vafer fuerat discrimina passus Ulysses
   Dum ferat aequoreas per duo lustra vias.
Attamen undosi post tanta pericia ponti
   Ignatus patriae redditus ille fuit.
Atque ego post duros aerumnososque labores
   Sentio mutatos in mea fata deos  
Me miserum primo, patriaque bonisque carentem
   Suscepit tectis inclita Roma sui.
Nullus erat tota qui me cognosceret urbe,
   Quique dare vitae commoda, nullus erat.
Ni deus ex alto me respexisset Olympo
   Vel fame debueram vel perisse siti.
Tu quoque Cardinea redimite Rodolphe corona
   Es factus rebus portus et aura meis.
Stemmata iactantes sileant famosa \{3\} parentum,
   Tu superas animi nobilitate genus. \{4\}  30
Unica purpurei laus diceris esse senatus
   Et magnus sedis Pontificalis honor.
Maxima tu miseris solus solatia praestas
   Sic quadrant rebus nomina facta suis
Diceris esse Pius patrio cognomine, magnos
   Tu virtute tuos sic imitaris avos.
Fortunas alii capiunt duntaxat avitas
   Haeredem patriae tu probitatis agis \{5\}
Quaerat avarus opes et nomina sanguine miles
   Omina defendas nominis ipse tui.  
Sic eris insigni notus super aethera fama
   Et laudem a memori posteritate \{6\} feres.
Carmine plura forent nostro dicenda, tacebo
   Materia vires exuperante meas.
Sed nos nulla tuae capient oblivia laudis
   Sive premamus humum, sive premamur humo.

\textsuperscript{34} Reference to Virgil, born near Mantua.
Sique meis dederit studiis fortuna quietem
Noscatur toto nomen in orbe tuum.
Nunc mea si bona sunt hilari cape carmina vultu,
Sin mala, Lethaeis iniiciantur aquis.
Me miserum, sacri quondam viguere poetae
Sed modo nos vates turba profana sumus.

{1} prae nec] unum vocabulum E. del.  {2} nec... meae] a. m. sublin. ac add. in marg.: Altera fert lapidem gestat manus altera pennam, / Ut me penna levat, sic grave mergit onus.  {3} famosa] E. corr. ex praeclara  {4} post tu... genus a. m. add. in infimo folio: Nam tua gorgoneo maduerunt labra liquore, / Inde faves doctis docte Rodolphe curis, / Et tua pierides cinxerunt tempora lauro / Et Charites plena dona dedere manu.  {5} post Haeredem... agis a. m. add. in infimo folio: Quas fugit Alberti miranda scientia terras? / Crede mihi, mutuo clauditur illa polo.  {6} posteritate] E. corr. ex posteritat†...†

II. Ellebodius’s further poems

1. An epitaph on the death of Gabriele Falloppio

Gabriele Falloppio (or Falloppia), professor at the chair of anatomy and surgery in Padua and a key figure in the development of anatomy in the sixteenth century, passed away on October 9, 1562. Jan Zamoyski, who had made a magnificent career as a politician and became Grand Chancellor and Great Hetman of the Polish Crown by the end of the century, studied in Padua between 1561 and 1564 and issued a funeral oration commemorating his beloved master. As was usual, versed epitaphs accompanied the oration in the publication, and one was composed by Ellebodius. Although Ellebodius, who arrived in Padua in November 1561, only studied medicine later (in the second half of the century), he most probably saw and heard Falloppio, a most popular professor at the university. About the relationship between Ellebodius and Falloppio or Zamoyski, respectively, neither the poem nor the surviving correspondence provides us with further clues.

The epitaph is in iambic meters reminiscent of Horace’s epodes and uses the common topoi of classical-humanist literature. Falloppio is, among other things, praised as the protégé of Apollo (line 4): while the invocation of Apollo is most usual in poetry, here the god’s mention also indicates Falloppio’s medical profession, which is otherwise not directly referred to in the poem. The organising idea of the epitaph is that even if poems and orations cannot bring a dead man back to

35 Trimetrum iambicum cum dimetro (Archilochio). This is the meter of the first ten epodes of Horace.
life, they can perpetuate the memory of his glory and merit. His fame reached all nations, including the Sarmatae (Poles) in the far north (line 21): in the other half of the poem, Ellebodius connects the commemoration of Falloppio with the laudation of Zamoyski, who is such a talented man that his funeral oration alone can secure immortal glory for the Italian scholar.

*Nicasii Ellebodii Casletani Flandri, In obitum Gabrieliis Falloppii*


Nam cur Faloppi musa tristibus mea
Te prosequat {1} cantibus?
Decus Faloppi maximum gentis tuae,
Et cura magna Apollinis?
Nullo recludi fata possunt carmine,
Nec vota vanae imagini
Levem reducant spiritum, circumluit
Quem pallidus semel lacus.36
At ut necessitas quod attulit, tibi
Avara mors adimerit:
Delere nomen gloriamque, et invidae
Oblivioni tradere
Non quibit unquam. Vivet illud in libris
Et omnium memoria,
Dum litteras, artesque dum pulcherrimas
Tractabit humanum genus.
An tam remota longe ab urbibus Italis
Gens ulla terras incolit,
Laudum tuarum quae vacet praeconio,
Et nomen haud colat tuum?
En ultimis e Sarmatis, scientiae, et
Virtutis insignis bonis,
Et stirpe natus iuvenis ex amplissima,
Os explicat suum tibi, et

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36 Reference to the Underworld.
2. A poem celebrating Georg Purkircher’s doctorate in medicine

After Ellebodius began his studies in Padua, he became acquainted with students from Hungary, too; one of them was Georg Purkircher (c. 1535–1577), who came from a German burgher family in Pozsony, and who by 1563 had already composed several pieces of humanist poetry. Later, after Ellebodius moved to Pozsony, his friendship with Purkircher deepened: both were in some way humanists who worked as physicians in that city. The fact that Purkircher graduated as a doctor of medicine in Padua is known from a booklet issued on this occasion on December 21, 1563. The five-folio edition, entitled Lusus poetici, includes eight epigrams by his friends and comrades, which apparently have not been investigated by Purkircher’s or his friends’ modern biographers. Since Purkircher was both physician and poet, it is no wonder that the poems are centred around the symbolism of initiation by Apollo (god of poetry and medicine, among others) and the muses, a topical theme in humanist poetry.

Ellebodius’s 34-line poem, written in similar iambic meters as the 1562 epitaph, stages Purkircher crowned with laurel by Apollo and donated a lyre by the muses; due to his manifold wisdom and merit, Purkircher ascends to heaven and eternal glory. Noteworthy is the way Ellebodius pictures Purkircher’s knowledge: he masters not only the art of healing but can also reveal all the hidden causes in nature and

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37 For instance, on the coronation of Maximilian as king of Hungary. On the life and works of Purkircher, see Áron Orbán’s detailed encyclopaedia entry: Orbán, “Purkircher, Georg.”

38 Guilelmus Bernhartus Behmus, Bertrand Diemar (two poems), Nicasius Ellebodius, Dionysius Puklerus, Paulus Kerzius (Kyr), Elias Corvinus, and Michaelos Sophianos.

39 Purkircher’s two biographers did not have access to the edition; they just mentioned it together with the fact of the graduation. See Kneifel, Purkircher György, 38–39; Okál, “Život a dielo bratislavského humanistu,” 20. So did Endre Veress earlier, see Veress, ed., Matricula et acta. The only surviving copy of the edition is now in Sárospatak, Library of the Reformed College.

40 Trimetrum iambicum cum dimetro (Archilochio).
penetrate all secrets of the world (lines 11–18). This is, on the one hand, the well-known classical-humanist topos of the wise man or inspired poet who learns the rerum causas, the secret causes of all things; on the other hand, it may also hint at the parallels between microcosm and macrocosm cherished by many doctors and “philosophers” of the time, who saw the study of medicine as instrumental to the study of nature. This comprehensive concept of theoretical medicine, explicitly echoed by Ellebodius in some of his letters, should be valued in the light of Ellebodius’s later study of medicine in Padua in the second half of the 1560s. Beyond Purkircher’s wisdom, the eulogy made by Ellebodius extends to Padua and Italy as the “mother of erudition”: while naturally a commonplace, this is also in line with Ellebodius’s personal experience, who had ample occasion for studies and learned conversations in Pinelli’s circle.

In Doctoratum Georgii Purkircheri Pisoniensis


O quae tenetis verticem Parnassiae
Rupis: Poëtae Lesbium
Aptate vestro barbitum Georgio,
Vestro Poëtae, tempora
Apollo cuius dextera cinxit sua
Semper virente laurea,
Cum plauderetis ipsae, et versibus bona
Effunderetis omina.
Nec vero vestra distulerunt irrita
Venti procaces carmina.
Progressus ingens, maximarumque artium
Perceptio constans, meam
Orationem vanitate liberat.
Natura nostris sensibus
Nil tam removit, ulla vel solertia
Inventa sunt mortalium,
Quae non labore, cura, diligentia,
Quaesita comprehenderit.

42 Piso is the mythical founder of Pozsony. Purkircher someti,mes called himself Pisoniensis: see Okál, “Martin Rakovský,” 155.
Prae caeteris, caussas nocentes corpore
Dedit fugare languido
Phoebus, Phoebique proles Aesculapius.
Concursus hoc mirantium
Testatur, et iste candidissimus dies
Donans laborum praemia.
At te Georgi convenit doctissime
Gaudere commodis tuis.
Te mater eruditionis Itala
Beata tellus suspicit,
Et urbs telluris ista lumen Italae
Fundata prisco Antenore.43
Te plebe virtus segregatum ignobili,
Te magnus ardor ingenii{1},
Te singularis artium scientia
Ad alta tollit sidera.

{1} ingenii] ingeni in ed.

3. An epigram in praise of Girolama Colonna

In late 1567 or early 1568 (still in his Paduan period), Ellebodius wrote a three-distich epigram in praise of Girolama Colonna, the daughter of Ascanio Colonna (1498–1557, Grand Constable of Naples) and Giovanna d’Aragona. The Colonna were a prominent family of the papal nobility; Marcantonio II Colonna (1535–1584), for instance, took part in the above-mentioned Italian war on the imperial side; he was commander during the campaign against the pro-French Siena (1553–54). In 1568, Ottavio Sammarco (ca. 1540–?) edited a volume of poems in praise of Girolama, both vernacular and Latin, and included Ellebodius’s epigram. Ottavio—the son of Fabrizio Sammarco, the famous Neapolitan jurist—corresponded with Paolo Manuzio, and it may have been through Manuzio (Ellebodius’s acquaintance since the early 1560s) that Ellebodius and Sammarco came into contact. Manuzio mentions in his letter of 31 January 1568 to Ellebodius that Sammarco sends thanks for the epigram.44 In 1614, the epigram reappeared in an anthology of poems from the Low Countries.45 The poem itself involves topical praise of Girolama’s beauty

43 Antenor is the mythical founder of Padua (already found in the Aeneid).
44 Paolo Manuzio, Epistolarum libri IIIX, 453: De epigrammate Sammarcus agit gratias…
45 The existence of this poem of Ellebodius in the 1614 edition was already indicated by Wagner, Zur Biographie des Nicasius Ellebodius, 26.
based on the myth of Paris’s judgment, the rivalry between the three classical goddesses concerning who would be chosen as the most beautiful. Naturally, Girolama’s beauty surpasses that of all three deities.

In laudem Hieronymae Columnae


Cum tria pastoris coelestia numina formam
Idaei arbitrio supposuere suam:
Addita tunc si illis, Hieronyma, quarta fuisses,
Dixisset cunctis sensibus attonitus:
Quamvis mortalis, Divas Hieronyma vincis.
Quidquid habent illae, nempe, Columna, tuum est.

4. A poem celebrating the return of the Habsburg archdukes from Spain (1571)

This poem has been preserved in a manuscript containing the poems of Miklós Istvánffy, humanist and statesman, friend of Ellebodius; it is included in the modern edition of Istvánffy’s Carmina. Archdukes Rudolph and Ernest, sons of Maximilian II, were educated in Spain at the court of Philip II. For various reasons, they intended to return to their father’s court, and King Philip gave them leave. They set sail from Barcelona on 18 July 1571 and arrived in Vienna (by ship) on 23 August 1571; at many stations of their journey, they were ceremonially received by local dignitaries. Ellebodius had arrived in Pozsony in May of the same year, and his patron, István Radéczy, was a key supporter of Habsburg rule in the Kingdom of Hungary as a lieutenant, royal councillor, president of the Hungarian chamber and bishop of Várad (today’s Oradea); thus Ellebodius had good reason to hail the

46 Istvánffy’s recording of Ellebodius’s poem certainly has to do with the intention of the Flemish humanist’s environment to keep his memory alive and preserve his oeuvre: the poem was written down after the epitaph for Ellebodius (fol. 67v). See also the case of Ellebodius’s Greek tetragastichon (II. 5): it was in August 1577, shortly after Ellebodius’s death, that Clusius mentioned in a letter to Joachim Camerarius the fact that his friend and compatriot had written a Greek dedicatory tetrastichon for his “Spanish flora”.
48 Mayer-Löwenschwerdt, Der Aufenthalt der Erzherzoge Rudolf, 40.
Habsburg archdukes. The 16-line poem, composed in Fourth Asclepiad stanzas, eulogises the archdukes who stand fast amidst turbulent times and shine like stars above the stormy sea; “Quassa Pannonia”—that is, Hungary torn apart, invaded and threatened by the Turks—will greatly benefit from their prospective rule.

Archiducibus Rudolpho et Ernesto ex Hispania reversis. 1571

Ms.: MTAK (Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences), M. irod. írók, 4-r. 241/11

Quales per mare turgidum
  lactatis rapido turbine navitis
Multa vix domiti prece
  Affulgent gemini lucida sidera,

Tales rebus in asperis
  Illuxere diis rite faventibus
Fratres Austriaci duo
  Quassae Pannoniae certa salus suae.

Nam sic flagitat indoles,
  Sic a Caesaribus ducta potentibus
Virtus et genus inclytum,
  Velox fama tuit quod super aethera.

At laetare bonis tuis,
  Felix Pannonia, atque, ut tibi principes
Servent incolumes tuos,
  Urgeto superos assidua prece.

5. A Greek tetrastichon for Carolus Clusius’s Spanish flora

Carolus Clusius (Charles de l’Écluse, 1526–1609), the famous naturalist and one of the central figures of the respublica litteraria in Central Europe in the 1570s and 1580s, knew Ellebodius, his compatriot, since at least the beginning of his Viennese

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49 The Fourth Asclepiad stanza consists of the following lines: Glyconic + minor Asclepiad + Glyconic + minor Asclepiad.
period (from late 1573). Among the dedicatory poems of Clusius’s *Rariorum plantarum historia*, which was, in fact, the first volume of his *Opera Omnia*, one can find a Greek tetrastichon with the signature Νικάσιος ὁ Ελλεβόδιος. This may seem curious, given that the *Rariorum plantarum historia* appeared in 1601, while Ellebodius died in 1577. The reason has already been unravelled elsewhere; here, it will suffice to summarise the solution in a nutshell. From certain letters of Clusius to his Nuremberg friend, Joachim Camerarius the Younger, Ellebodius seems to have dropped in at Plantin during his journey to Flanders in 1575 in regard to the matter of the appearance of Clusius’s work about the flora of the Iberian Peninsula, usually abbreviated as the *Spanish flora*. In a letter to Camerarius from 1577, Clusius speaks about a poem by Ellebodius: “The late Nicasius Ellebodius, a man of excellent memory, had written a Greek tetrastichon. I sent this to Plantin when he received the first part of my book; it was not published either.” The book must have been the *Spanish flora* and the tetrastichon the same as in the 1601 edition. Since Clusius sent the manuscript of his book in 1574, the tetrastichon must have also been composed around that time as a dedicatory epigram in praise of the book. When the *Spanish flora* finally appeared in 1576, it did not contain any dedicatory epigrams. Ellebodius’s tetrastichon, however, found its way into the 1601 edition since its general topic—the praise of Clusius as a botanist—fitted the 1601 edition no less than the *Spanish flora*. The epigram applies the topical idea of the scholar who throws light on hidden secrets of nature: the innumerable beautiful and useful plant species that Gaia, Mother Earth produced, had been hidden in the dark, but Clusius uncovered them on paper for the whole world. The author plays on a theme which recurs in several Clusius-related dedicatory poems: that the plants were hidden, closed—in Latin: *clusus*—to the public, but Clusius revealed them. Ellebodius’s elegant verses represent both a nice remembrance of his friendship and cooperation with Clusius and a tribute to the really valuable work—either the *Spanish flora*, the first botanical work written on the flora of a specific region of Europe, or the *Rariorum plantarum historia*.

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50 For the close relationship of Ellebodius and Clusius, see Áron Orbán, “Clusius, Ellebodius and Purkircher.”

51 *Rariorum plantarum historia*... (Antwerp: C. Plantin, 1601).

52 See Orbán, “Clusius, Ellebodius and Purkircher,” subchapter “Ellebodius’s contribution to Clusius’s *Spanish flora*.”

53 Ellebodius went to Flanders basically to visit his parents; the journey lasted from July to October 1575.

54 *Rariorum aliquot stirpium per Hispanias observatarum Historia* (Antwerp: C. Plantin, 1576).

55 August 20, 1577: “Scripserat tetrastichon graecum Dominus Nicasius Ellebodius piae memoriae. Id misi Plantino cum priorem libri mei partem accipere; nec id expressum est”: Hunger, *Charles de l’Escluse*. Wagner, *Zur Biographie des Nicasius Ellebodius*, 21 knew about this reference by Clusius but thought that the tetrastichon was lost.
historia, which was by far the most detailed botanical work about European flora that had been produced thus far.

[Without title]


Μύρια μὲν βλαστῶν πραμμήτωρ γαῖ’ ἀνιήσιν
Εἴδεα, τῶν πέλει’ ἀνθρώπως μεγ’ ἂκος τε καὶ ἡδος:
Ταῦτα δὲ νυκτὶ τοπρίν κεκαλυμμένα, νῶν πολυίδμων
Κλούσιος ἀτρεκέως γραπταῖς σελίδεσσι φαείνει.
Νικάσιος ὁ Ελλεβόδιος

III. Lost poems

Considering Ellebodius’s wide humanist network that already existed in the Paduan period, he certainly composed more poems than those that survive today, at least occasional poems.\(^5^6\) Let us highlight here one group of examples: we know of at least two poems of Ellebodius related to Richard White (Ricardus Vitus, 1539–1611), the great English humanist who belonged to the Paduan circle of friends in the 1560s. On the one hand, Ellebodius composed an epitaph on the death of Michael Sophianos, his beloved Greek master and friend in Padua. After Sophianos died in the summer of 1565, a number of his friends commemorated him in epitaphs, some of which have survived in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana.\(^5^7\) Richard White addressed a poem of praise to Ellebodius, in which he refers to the Flemish humanist’s epitaph on Sophianos as a poem worthy of the excellent deceased Grecist.\(^5^8\) On the other hand, White refers in another of his works to poem(s) by Ellebodius written to White himself. In his notes to his oration De Eloquentia et Cicerone, White expounds on the issue of the names of classical gods, quoting several verses by classical poets, and at one point, a line by Ellebodius comes to his mind, which he quotes in Latin translation. In Padua, he said that Ellebodius wrote to him alia carmina Graeca, quae Latina sunt, “Deo iuvante, livor ut nihil potest; sic non

\(^5^6\) As seen above (Chapter I. 1 and 3), Ellebodius promised in his 1554 string of poems further laudatory works if he received a patron’s support; although these are topical promises, it is possible that he fulfilled them at least in part.

\(^5^7\) N156 sup.; see Meschini, Michele Sofianòs, 24–28.

\(^5^8\) F. 63r: “…Extinctum merito carmine fleveris / Antiquae effigiem Graeciae, et indole / Perfecta iuvenem. Laudibus his enim / Nil Victorius adiicit” [Pietro Vettori].
iuvante, nequidquam labor potest”\(^{59}\). Half a page later,\(^{60}\) he quotes another line from Ellebodius in Latin: \(\text{...subiecit hunc versum Graece, qui Latinus est, “Quaeque stam monstrat, quos fructus proferet arbor”}\). From the context of the nouns \textit{carmen} and \textit{versus}, both must mean “lines” from a poem, which may be one and the same poem written to White. Interestingly, he quotes both passages in Latin, but these, too, have poetic meter: the first are two iambic trimeters, the second a hexameter. White probably composed Latin translations of the Greek lines, even in a \textit{Notae} part of a prose work of his, but it cannot be excluded that the Latin translation originally belonged to the Greek poem (the practice was not unusual at that time), and White was quoting from that.

\section*{Conclusion}

Above, we have reviewed all the known poems of Ellebodius. This is a meagre corpus, and considering the character of the works and the personality of the Flemish humanist, it might be considered unlikely that he wrote many more poems, especially different ones such as epic poems. His correspondence and other works suggest quite the opposite: Ellebodius was a philologist, did not esteem himself a poet, and did not want such glory. His remaining poems actually corroborate this profile: they are occasional pieces and do not reveal any poetic ambition. They do not reveal great originality either but mirror Ellebodius's great erudition.

Concerning the occasions, Ellebodius wrote the string of poems at the beginning of his career to obtain a patron (the string contains longer pieces as well); his later poems were seldom written at his own initiative; the Flemish humanist usually joined in an undertaking and added a short poem to a collection which aimed to celebrate a friend or a person of high status. Participating in such joint enterprises was—so to speak—a requirement for a member of the \textit{res publica litteraria}. As for panegyrics to patrons or their relatives, in the sixteenth century, it was almost a duty for a humanist to complete such pieces, but Ellebodius did not really have the nature for this. Even in the letters, he usually avoided figures of speech and preferred to express his friendly emotions openly and sincerely. He did not want to make an aulic career through powerful patrons either; he was satisfied with a quiet place and honest income that would allow him to do his philological work effectively. Thus, he wrote panegyrical-type poems to patrons or their relatives only to the extent that was necessary: a string of poems at the beginning of his career and two short poems in later periods.

\(^{59}\) White, \textit{Ricardi Viti Basinstochii Orationes}, 79. The context of the line is the possible relationship between the name Jupiter, Iovis and the verb \textit{iuvare}.

\(^{60}\) White, \textit{Ricardi Viti Basinstochii Orationes}, 80: \textit{Sed ad rem praeuentem quod attinet, Ellebodius, ut de bono successu sper, credo, non malam conciperem, subiecit hunc versum Graece...}
On the other hand, Ellebodius’ poems show his quite good linguistic skills: the
Flemish humanist was an expert in classical Latin and Greek, had a great vocabulary,
and knew classical meters as well. He possessed the know-how of humanist poetry;
he applied a great number of well-known humanist topoi in his poems.

In sum, it can be said that Ellebodius’ poetry, despite its meagerness (or because
of it), corroborates what we knew about his erudition and personality. He was a tal-
ented humanist and a skilled philologist with a great network of connections, but
also an anti-poseur and anti-aulic figure who expressed his emotions towards his
friends without using copious figures of speech and was unwilling to constantly seek
the grace of powerful men. In some cases, the poems reveal some concrete details
about Ellebodius’ life and career, adding new data to our knowledge. In the above
overview, we have only provided one edition and the basic context of the surviving
poems. We hope that future scholarship will exploit these poems in the research of
issues of a larger scale, be these issues of biography, humanist networks, patronage,
or literary-historical and aesthetic assessment.

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