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Travel Writing as a Reflection on Crisis

An Exiled Livonian Nobleman Visiting His Homeland

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Abstract. The reflection of external and internal crises in premodern travel literature has not been systematically researched, especially in the Eastern European and Nordic context. This case study presents a Latin travel account in an academic speech, *Oratio de vitae decore per prudentiam et patientiam comparando et conservando,* by the exiled and learned Livonian nobleman Christoph von Sturtz (1557–1602), who visited his homeland in 1599 after 26 years of exile. Contextualizing this hitherto neglected text from the late sixteenth century in its historical and biographical background, and analysing its content and rhetorical strategies, this article demonstrates that travel literature had remarkable potential not only to detect and reflect crises or to react to them properly, but also to analyse the reasons for them, to assess them, to propose guidelines on resolving them, and to prevent them from spreading elsewhere.

Keywords: Travel writing, political crisis, moral crisis, legal crisis, early modern Livonia, nobility, exile

Introduction

In 2019, two voluminous guides to travel literature were published: *The Cambridge History of Travel Writing*, about the phenomenon in its wider historical and geographical diversity; and *Artes apodemicae and Early Modern Travel Culture, 1400–1700*, more specifically about early modern learned travel writing.[1] According to these guides, which summarize the intensive research carried out on travel literature in recent decades, premodern learned travel literature was mainly a reflection of fascinating and advised experience, connected to curiosity, intellectual interest and discoveries, or as a means of generating knowledge. Observations about the dangers of travel belonged rather to the adventurous travel accounts of merchants, explorers, missionaries, ambassadors and pilgrims, and were rather uncommon in the recordings of *peregrinatio academica*.

1 Das, Youngs, *The Cambridge History*; Enenkel, de Jong, *Artes Apodemicae*.

Research into the relationship of external and internal crises to premodern travel literature has been much less systematic, especially in the Eastern European and Nordic context.[2] On the one hand, due to the external crisis in society, the lowest strata (soldiers, various craftsmen, etc.) were forced to travel the most, but the vast majority were illiterate and did not record such journeys in writing. On the other hand, many crises caused primarily by natural disasters, wars, and epidemics arose suddenly and required prompt action due to the circumstances. Because of this, such situations remained unrecorded in literature, as the potential authors had no time for diaries. Many travellers simply died before capturing their crisis experience (e.g. captivity) in literature. In addition, several travel guides advised travellers against comparing the conditions of their own country with others, and even more so against censuring the life and customs of other nations. Due to this advice, several crisis situations experienced in the countries visited probably went unrecorded in travelogues.[3]

Internal crises which arose during a journey were not among the topics recommended to be recorded by humanists in their apodemic treatises or to be observed in travel guides. Such aspects are quite characteristic of the development of the eighteenth century.[4]

Nevertheless, there are early modern travel accounts which constituted an analysis or assessment of an external crisis experienced during a trip—a rather understudied aspect to date. In North-Eastern Europe, such travelogues are represented in a Latin travel account by an exiled and learned Livonian nobleman named Christoph von Sturtz (1557–1602), who visited his homeland in 1599 after 26 years of exile. In this case study, I contextualize his hitherto neglected text from the late sixteenth century in its historical and biographical background, analyse its content, and determine the function of travel writing from the perspective of crisis.

The Livonian context: Travel options from 1558 to 1620

In the Neo-Latin literature penned by authors from North-Eastern Europe in the second half of the sixteenth century but printed elsewhere, a significant number of works are devoted to travel, which is neither a fascinating nor a methodologically prepared phenomenon, but rather is associated mainly with fleeing, exile, and hopelessness.

2 Cp. e.g. Drace-Francis, "Travel Writing from Eastern Europe", 192–96, Maclean, "Early Modern Travel Writing". For the Western European practice of travel, writing and exile, see Tucker, *Homo Viator*.

3 Gelléri, "Handbooks for the Courtier," 157.

4 Gelléri, *Lessons of Travel,* 107–38.

The existence of such texts was not accidental, but caused by historical events: the cruel military conflict between Russia and Livonia known as the Livonian War (1558–83), the first period of which took place within Livonia from 1558 to 1561. As result, the previously independent Livonian Confederation (known in Latin as *Terra Mariana*) suffered the loss of its political independence; its lands were [devastated] by the Muscovites and divided up between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Sweden, and Denmark in 1561.[5] The reason for travelling in these circumstances was not only to escape direct hostilities in the early years of the war, but also that in the following decades, Polish-Lithuanian and Swedish power gradually took over the estates and secular positions of the local nobility, as well as ecclesiastical positions in the territory under re-Catholicized Polish-Lithuanian rule.

The local intellectual elite saw one of the preconditions of this historical catastrophe in the loss of unity between the states of Livonia. Poets interpreted this metaphorically as unity's travel *(peregrinatio concordiae)* to exile, as can be seen e.g. in the title of an elegiac Greek poem by the Livonian student and refugee Georg Neuners (Neiner(us)), *ΑΠΟΔΗΜΙΑ ΤΗΣ ΟΜΟΦΡΟΣΥΝΗΣ* ("Exile of Unity"), or given its Latin title, *Exilium et peregrinatio Concordiae* ("Exile and journey of Concordia/Unity"), published in Wittenberg in 1561.[6] The poem demonstrates that in literary practice, the negative experiences of mobility—travelling for an unpleasant reason or even crisis—was one of the topics of learned travel literature.

The difficult situation and choices faced during and after this war concerned not only the literati, citizens, and lower social strata, but also Livonian nobles, and led them into forced exile, temporary or lifelong absence from their homeland, often with the loss of their estates and citizenship. Reliant on political preferences and religion, Livonian noblemen left for Prussia and Brandenburg, Poland, Sweden, Moravia, Bohemia, the court of the Habsburgs, and other German territories.[7]

5 For a short introduction to this war and its results, see Filjuškin, "Der livländische Krieg".

6 Published in Neinerus, *Querela Livoniae*, B3v–B4v. Neuners was later the Lutheran parson in Riga and died during the Calendar Riots in 1587.

7 To mention just a few: among the sons of Livonian nobleman Gerhard Dönhoff (1554–1602), Ernst Magnus (1581–1642) left Livonia for Prussia and Brandenburg for services to Georg William, Elector of Brandenburg, settling near Königsberg and founding the eastern Prussian line of the family, while his brother Kaspar (1587–1645) was a courtier to the Polish Kings Sigismund III and Wladyslaw IV and the first member of his family to enter the magnate ruling elite of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, founding the Polish line of the family, and Gerhard (1590–1648) left Livonia for Pomerania, founding the Pomeranian line of the family. Some of them retained their titular offices in Livonia. Johann von Dücker from the Livonian nobility (1551–1611) became Privy Councillor in Tirol and drafted Archduke Maximilian's legal claims to the crown of Poland (Rechtsansprüche des Erzherzog Maximilians auf die Krone Polens) in 1587, as well as a chronicle of House Fürtenberg.

The first generation of exiled Livonian nobility had to establish themselves abroad. Some found literary activities to be an option by which to reflect on the injustice that had befallen them, on the still critical situation in their homeland, and on their memories of leaving it. Those who stayed in their homeland and somehow managed to retain their estates travelled in new circumstances, which is to say rather seldom and only for practical reasons. Only exceptionally did they send their sons on the Grand Tour, and corresponding literary practices were just as rare. According to Estonian historian Arvo Tering, in the decades up to the 1620s, a maximum one member of the Livonian nobility went on the Grand Tour each year.[8] The tradition of *peregrinatio academica* and *aulica* with its literary practices was properly introduced only with the establishment of Swedish rule in Livonia in the 1620s. In particular, the first university in Tartu, established in the 1630s, with its new immigrant intellectuals and their sons, supported the cultivation of travel literature.[9]

Because of this historical background, it is impossible to report on descriptive (not to mention advisory) travel writing by Livonian authors in the decades from 1560–1620, as was established and standardised in other European countries at the time,[10] but on a contrary case from Livonian travel accounts, and to show the functionalization of the rhetorical and narrative possibilities of this genre for reflection on and the analysis of crisis.

8 Tering, *Eesti-, liivi- ja kuramaalased*, 68–69.

9 From the traditional genres of travel writing cultivated in Livonia in the 17th century, the farewell poems and three apodemic treatises written and published in the academic printing shop in Tartu have been systematically studied (Viiding, *Die Dichtung neulateinischer Propemptica*; Viiding, "Neulateinische Reisemethodik in Livland"). Among travel instructions, a letter penned by the Livonian nobleman David Hilchen to his eldest son David in 1609 has been discussed in Viiding, "David Hilchen und seine Expertenkorrespondenz", 34–36. The first overview of *alba amicorum* (a frequent companion when travelling) in Estonian archives and libraries has been published by Kaju, *Vive hodie*; in Latvian archives and libraries by Taimiņa, *Album Amicorum*. However, many voluminous handwritten travel accounts are only mentioned in secondary literature, e.g. a travelogue by the representative of an influential patrician family from Riga, Dietrich Dreiling, *Speculum vitae et peregrinationis* (LVVA, 4038-2-7; 4038-2-9, travelogue by Dietrich Dreiling vol. I 1650–1670, vol. II 1675–1685) or one by Nicolaus Bergius, from a family of theologians in Tallinn, *Annotata eorum qui conversatione cum eruditis invisa sunt notabiliora*, both from the 1670s and 1680s (UUB, N A 022a, diary by Nicolaus Bergius 1682–1687). Among the more unconventional texts that can be classified as travel literature are guidelines for predicting future trips based on hand and facial features in fortune-telling books, e.g. Nicolaus von Vicken, *Metoposcopia cum Chiromantia et Concordantia Genethliaca. Pars prior,* 185–90 (UBS, M I 125).

10 Enenkel, de Jong, "Introduction", 2–3.

Christoph von Sturtz: personal background of crisis and travel experience

The text under consideration here is titled *Oratio de vitae decore per prudentiam et patientiam comparando et conservando, in qua Serenissimi ac potentissimi principis ac Domini, Dn. Sigismundi III. Regis Poloniae ac Svetiae etc ac ordinum regni Poloniae Magnique Ducatus Lithvaniae prudens consilium de ordinanda Rep. Livoniae, et magna solertia Dn. Commissariorum commendatur, Habita a Nobili et clarissimo viro Christophoro Sturcio I.V.D. et Historiarum Professore Die XXIII. mensis Octobris Anno 99* ("A speech about obtaining and preserving the dignity of life through prudence and patience, in which the wise counsel of the most serene and powerful Prince and Lord Sigismund III, King of Poland and Sweden, etc., of the States of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and of the great skill of the commissioners is commended for the organization of the Republic of Livonia, delivered by the noble and most illustrious man Christoph Sturtz, I.V.D. and Professor of History, on the 23rd day of October in the year [15]99."). It was published in Rostock in the following year.

Its author, the Livonian nobleman Christoph von Sturtz, was one of the most erudite representatives of his generation of Livonian noble refugees. He was born in 1557 into the family of the learned German lawyer Christoph Sturtz the Elder,[11] who settled in Livonia in 1542 as chancellor to Riga Archbishop Wilhelm von Brandenburg, and the Livonian noblewoman Anna von Pahlen. Although his father compiled a visitation order, a court order for the Livonian Archbishop and a draft of the Reformation and Church Service Order for Livonia[12] and was ennobled in 1547, he fell out of favour with the archbishop and the Livonian estates even prior to the Livonian War: in the summer of 1556, after 14 years of loyal service, he was arrested twice during the Coadjutor's Feud,

11 The updated biography of Christoph the Elder in Neitmann, "Ein Franke an den »weit entlegenen Enden der Christenheit«," 167–76. He studied in Leipzig (1532) and Wittenberg (1541); however, his doctorate seems to be more of a misunderstanding that arose in the twentieth century—the earliest mention of it is only in Karge, "Die Reformation und Gottesdienstordnung," 133. He was the only one within the circle of the Archbishop of Riga in the 1540s and 1550s, who was proficient in Latin, for which he was harshly reprimanded in the Coadjutor's Feud in 1557 (Hartmann, *Herzog Albrecht von Preussen*, 55, No. 1563), and his writing practices in the chancellery indicate that Sturtz's house is likely to have had a library typical of a humanist lawyer and politician of the time. As early as 1546, Sturtz the Elder complained that he did not have a proper house in which to keep his books alongside his horses, servants, armour and other belongings (Hartmann, *Herzog Albrecht von Preussen*, 338–39, No. 1338).

Christoph's paternal line in Germany did not belong to hereditary nobility, even though it was rich and influential. His great uncle Georg (1490–1548, dr.med., city physician in Erfurt, professor of medicine) was a patron of many well-known humanists in Erfurt, e.g. Eurycius Cordus and Eobanus Hessus.

12 Edited in Karge, "Die Reformation und Gottesdienstordnung", 133–61.

and his family property—the estates in Serben (Latvian Dzērbene), Aula (Latvian Auļi), Drostenhof (Latvian Drusti) and Alten—was confiscated. In February 1557, he was publicly accused by the Livonian estates, and died in 1559 or early 1560. Subsequently, Sturtz's family estates were destroyed in the Livonian War. Although the nobility and coat of arms of the family was reconfirmed by the Polish King Stephen Báthory (1533–86) in 1579, the four sons of Christoph the Elder (Christoph the Younger, Wilhelm, Friedrich, and Johann) unsuccessfully sought to get their estates back.[13] These were returned to the family only by Sigismund III in 1596, but the Swedish government confiscated them again the next decade.[14]

According to the university matricula, Christoph the Younger started his studies in 1573 at the University of Wittenberg, before moving to Rostock in 1575, then to Helmstedt in 1577.[15] After a solid academic legal education and a *peregrinatio* in Padua, Bologna, and Rome from 1579 to 1580 as the tutor to two Danish noblemen, Knud Brahe from Tostrup (1555–1615) and Claus Mouridsen Podebusk from Kørup (1562–1610),[16] Sturtz returned to Rostock via Copenhagen.

From the early 1580s, Sturtz supervised disputations in Rostock, receiving a doctorate in law in 1584.[17] From that year until 1588 he served as counsellor to the Danish King Frederick II (1534–88).[18] On the recommendation of Professor of Theology David Chytraeus (1530–1600), Sturtz held the ducal professorship of history (*historiarum professor ducalis*) in Rostock from 1586 to the end of his life,[19]

13 Trelińska, *Album armorum nobilium*, 189–90. Báthory granted the family property instead to one of his officers, Johann Drobbisch (Hagemeister, *Materialien zu einer Geschichte der Landgüter*, I,197).

14 Hagemeister, *Materialien zu einer Geschichte der Landgüter*, I, 197; Seraphim, *Kur-Liv-Estländer auf der Universität Königsberg,* 73–74.

15 The matriculation in Königsberg on 4 July 1584 mentioned in Tering, *Lexikon der Studenten*, 681, is not documented in the matricula of Königsberg University and was, in fact, only an honorary matriculation (*in honorem Academiae inscriptus*) which was accorded in Königsberg on 4 July 1586 during his business trip to the city as a councellor (Seraphim, *Kur-Liv-Estländer auf der Universität Königsberg,* 73–74).

16 ASFE [Amore Scientiae Facti sunt Exules] (http://asfe.unibo.it; accessed September 30, 2024): Sturtz DF1,2941 (29 October 1579), Brahe and Podebusk 31 October 1579 (DF 1,2942 and 2943); in Bologna Sturtz NGB 1,731 (5 December 1579); Brahe and Podebusk 1–5 December 1579 (NGB 1,728 und 729). Additional information for Brahe and Podebusk shows that Sturtz returned from Italy with Brahe; Podebusk, however, travelled further to France and England, returning to Denmark only in 1582, s. Helk, *Dansk-Norske studierejser*, 178, 347.

17 *Actus promotionis*, F3v.

18 Tering, *Lexikon der Studenten*, 681.

19 The trusting relationship with Chytraeus developed early during Sturtz's studies in Rostock. His first occasional poems and congratulations were published together with Chytraeus, whom he later thanked for his ducal professorship. Chytraeus also sought to help the Sturtz' brothers

and from 1588 to 1602 he also served as a counsellor to the Polish King Sigismund III.[20] From the time he gained his permanent position at the university at the latest, Sturtz decided to remain in exile in Mecklenburg, since there were no religious disputes there and justice prevailed.[21] Later, he rarely mentions his exiled status, and only ever for two reasons: to emphasize his political experiences (as a refugee whose homeland had lost its independence and who understood the success of a country particularly well)[22] or to highlight his expertise regarding the situation in Livonia.

Although Sturtz carried out his counsellor's duties mainly in the form of laudatory and propaganda writing, as well as in correspondence from Rostock, he was also required to travel extensively. For example, he travelled to meet the Polish King Stephen Báthory in Grodno in 1579, and again in Königsberg in 1586.[23] His son Azarias was born during his travel to Copenhagen in 1581.[24] However, there are no records of these trips in a literary form, let alone published in print, and his account from 1600 remains the only example of his travel writing.

Christoph von Sturtz's reflection on different types of crisis

The journey Sturtz made from Rostock to Riga and back in 1599 was quite unusual in the early modern context: it was a short visit to his own homeland after 26 years of exile due to the need to manage his family affairs and property in Livonia. Equally unusual is the mix of genres chosen to reflect this event: a description of the journey as a central part is framed by an exhortative political speech to educate young listeners about the benefits of travel as a universal virtue-shaping exercise and to communicate his own political aims (*pro domo sua* for Livonia, the plea for unity).

According to the introduction to his speech, the long and difficult journey was a lesson which prompted Sturtz to recognize that the most necessary virtues in human society are prudence and patience, and that only with them was it possible to obtain and preserve the dignity of life. The first part of the speech-travelogue was more general, even philosophical in its approach to prudence, with learned references to

with the restitution of their family property by penning a petition to Count Pontus de la Gardie in 1584, albeit in vain (Hofmeister, "Christoph Sturtz d.J.," 53). At the funeral of Chytraeus in July 1600, Sturtz gave a eulogy on behalf of the university (Sturtz, *Oratio memoriae*).

20 Hofmeister, "Christoph Sturtz d.J.," 53; Gadebusch, *Livländische Bibliothek*, III,237.

21 Sturtz, *Oratio de laudibus*, A2v.

22 Sturtz, *Oratio de laudibus*, A4r.

23 Sturtz, *Oratio de Stephano*, Fr, F2v; Seraphim, *Kur-Liv-Estländer auf der Universität Königsberg,* 73.

24 Gadebusch, *Livländische Bibliothek* , III, 237.

classical literature and mythology.[25] The second part was a collection of examples of prudence represented in the form of a travelogue recording his journey through the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Masovia, Prussia, and Livonia;[26] and the third part was a more philosophical approach to the keyword *patientia*, again in the light of his travel experiences.[27]

The official framework, i.e. the subtitle of the speech and its dedicatory letter, praises Polish rule, the Polish officials in Livonia and the King of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Polish-Lithuanian States for giving Livonia a new *Ordinatio* in 1598, as well as the Polish nobleman Piotr Ostrowski von Ostrow, one of the royal commissioners in Livonia from 1598–1599, and Sturtz's patron.[28] Yet his attitude in the main part of the speech-travelogue was different: from cautiously critical hints to explicit analysis of the crisis.

Sturtz does not touch on the practical details of his journey in his speech at all. Based on the order of the places he visited, we can nevertheless assume that he travelled to Livonia by land rather than by sea, which would have been the more usual option for travelling from Rostock to Riga in the summer. There is no information about his return journey, but the date—with his speech being given in Rostock on 23 October 1599—suggests a quick sea journey rather than a slow one on land.

The first place visited by Sturtz was the court of the Polish King, most probably in Krakow—a region he had not been to before. Although he found common Polish people to be virtuous, friendly and benevolent to all travellers, especially nobles and intellectuals, great caution was necessary when attending the Polish court: the courtiers there were, in his opinion, best won over by true humility, merits and zeal.[29] Secondly, he felt it unwise to discuss politically sensitive or religious topics in the court; better to mix topics together at random. Thirdly, there was a great deal of impropriety in the Polish court, and even as everyone pretended to be very wise, the traveller must never call it foolishness, for otherwise he might arouse anger and envy against himself. It was therefore prudent to behave and act according to local customs.[30]

25 Sturtz, *Oratio de vitae decore,* A2r–B2r.

26 Sturtz, *Oratio de vitae decore*, B2r–D2v.

27 Sturtz, *Oratio de vitae decore*, D3r–D4r.

28 Piotr Ostrowski delivered the final report of the Livonian Revision Commission in October 1599 and submitted the draft version of the Livonian Land Law to Jan Zamoyski in Zamość that December. He should not be confused with Jan Ostrowski, captain and starost of Dünamünde (Latvian Daugavgrīva) from 1583–1600 and starost of Neuermühlen (Latvian Adaži) from 1587–1600, who in the name of King Sigismund III restored St James's Church in Riga for the Jesuits in June 1590 and was hated in the city for this very reason.

29 Sturtz, *Oratio de vitae decore*, B2v–B3r.

30 Sturtz, *Oratio de vitae decore*, B3r.

The biggest attraction in the Polish court was the King. Unlike many other contemporary descriptions of Sigismund III, Sturtz finds him friendly and easy to talk to, but modest in making promises. To Sturtz, Sigismund appears to consider everything carefully, and always fulfils his promises.[31] Sturtz's assessment of the King as a moral exception in the court is expected—he was the King's counsellor, after all, and it was thanks to Sigismund III that his family regained their Livonian estates.

Another trusted person in the Polish court according to Sturtz was Vice-Chancellor Piotr Tylicki (1543–1616), who is said to have been Sturtz's patron and supporter. With regard to all of the other courtiers, Sturtz's advice was to keep one's mouth shut.[32]

Sturtz's overall message is clear: that there was a moral crisis in the Polish court. From a rhetorical point of view, he exemplifies this with a strong antithetical strategy: the credibility of the King and Vice-Chancellor is contrasted against the moral depravity of the rest of the court at the level of attitudes, actions and words alike. Two apophthegmata from the Greek and humanist tradition—one about Aesop, the other about Aristotle recommending cautious, concise and pleasant communication[33]—and a comparison of slanderous courtiers to stinging snakes further confirms the seriousness of the situation.

The next region Sturtz passed through on his journey and reflected on in his speech was the Masovian Voivodeship—a territory in mid-north-eastern Poland with Warsaw as its capital. In Sturtz' opinion, the local inhabitants were harsh, wild and easily offended, requiring polite and skilful communication from travellers. By comparing this to the external circumstances in the region, to urban architectural characteristics like surrounding the city with a German-style wall, Sturtz understood that the locals had been subjected to different powers (the Teutonic Order, the Sarmatians and the Prussians), which is what had made them so tough.[34] Here Sturtz recognized an ongoing crisis of political power among many nations living under the Polish Crown: what does life mean under constantly changing foreign supremacy?

Sturtz's literary strategy consists of rhetorical questions and answers. What is the point of the power of foreign rulers, and what does it demonstrate other than throwing people into constant uncertainty, sometimes here, sometimes there? Although all supremacy reflects the will of God, the principle of alternation is just as eternal. To confirm this, Sturtz quotes Ovid, Metam. XV. 419–21: "sic omnia verti /

31 Sturtz, *Oratio de vitae decore*, B3r.

32 Sturtz, *Oratio de vitae decore*, B3v–B4r.

33 The apophthegma about Aristotle was in the early modern sources very common, cp. e.g. Erasmus, *Apophthegmatum ex optimis utriusque linguae scriptoribus,* VII, Aristoteles 2, 576. The source of the story about Aesop has not been identified.

34 Masovia was only incorporated into the Polish Crown in 1526.

cernimus atque alias adsumere robora gentes, / concidere alias" ("This is how we see everything changing—some nations rise to power, others fall").[35]

The next region visited by Sturtz, Prussia, again demonstrates this political crisis. Its lands are as fertile as paradise, yet it had lost its independence in the mid-fifteenth century and was now fully under the Polish Crown (Royal Prussia) or linked to Poland through agreements (Ducal Prussia). For Sturtz, Prussia was primarily an instructive example of the causes of political crisis. These included a lack of social and moral values and of knowledge. He lists internal conflicts and the prodigality of the Teutonic Order and of citizens, their lack of unity, piety and cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, temperance and bravery), of legal skills and ignoring long-term prospects when entering into agreements. Masovia, Prussia and more recently Livonia had all been examples of *translatio imperii* from Germans to Poles, and it was very important for the remaining Germans to familiarize themselves with these examples and take them into account if they wished to avoid a political crisis. Although such admonitions do not often work among the common people, prudent and responsible persons should certainly repeat them in at least three types of texts—advice, sermons and prayers.[36]

However, even at that time, the Prussians themselves are said to have been careless: although Sturtz noticed some reconstruction of fortifications and castles, and repairs to their defensive walls on his journey, they remained modest. Without such preparations in peacetime, there was the risk of a not only political but also military crisis if new wars were to break out. In the situation of a political crisis, only the unchanging Lutheran faith among all ranks of Prussians deserved recognition—in Sturtz's opinion, this helped them stand firm against internal discord and conflicts, as well as foreign supremacy.[37]

After three ominous examples of moral and political crisis as seen by the author during his journey, Sturtz's writing culminates in his visit to his homeland, Livonia. However, he does not describe his arrival as a happy homecoming, even though this is the most emotional (with many superlative adjectives) and most rhetorical (with various rhetorical questions and exclamations, comparisons and metaphors) part of his speech. It is, instead, a *lamentatio*. The fertility and wealth of the land had been lost in wars and devastation. The country was divided between foreign rulers, its former inhabitants in exile. Along with them, the earlier *prudentia* had also left. Former faith and piety had vanished—the city authorities did not respect them as before. Vices, impiety, inequality, injustice, idolatry, and blasphemy now reigned among the rulers. Not even

35 Sturtz, *Oratio de vitae decore*, B4r–v.

36 Sturtz, *Oratio de vitae decore*, B4v–Cv.

37 Sturtz, *Oratio de vitae decore*, Cv–C2r.

paganism had disappeared among the natives of the land. Sturtz even suspected that the *genius loci (provinciae)* may be reflected in the situation at the time.[38]

Adopting a more analytical approach, Sturtz stated that first, local inhabitants should seek to understand and eliminate the causes of the crisis in society. However, he did not yearn for the local rule of the time of the Livonian Order, nor did he call for the expulsion of Polish rulers from the land. In Sturtz's opinion, Livonia was, after all, in a legal crisis: as a result of internal conflicts and the new political situation, Livonians could not follow their earlier laws and regulations. Thus, a new judicial system was to be established with new laws created and promulgated. For this purpose, King Sigismund III sent the Polish Royal Commission to Livonia in 1598–1599, which consisted of three high-ranking Polish-Lithuanian high officials and six local officials from Tartu, Riga, and Cēsis, all listed by name in the speech and honoured to one extent or another.[39] Among the new laws planned by the Polish authorities, and especially by the Grand Chancellor and Grand Hetman Jan Zamoyski (1542–1605), the new Livonian Territorial Law drafted by local lawyer David Hilchen (1561–1610) was the most crucial.[40] Only it could recover land step by step in times to come, until Livonia fully adopted the Polish-Lithuanian social order, giving hope that exiled Livonians could return home in the future. Until then, both the legal crisis and the large number of refugees from Livonia were unavoidable.[41]

Of course, Sturtz had to be cautious so as not to offend the Polish authorities, on whom the fate of his own relatives and Livonia as a whole depended. Thus, he did not explicitly mention two earlier legal orders by the Polish kings in Livonia (*Constitutiones* from 1582, and the first *Ordinatio Livoniae* from 1589), which were "part of Báthory's repressive policy towards the Livonian nobility, severely limiting their rights", e.g. changing the status difference between the nobility and citizens so that citizens could own manorial land, and the nobility could acquire urban property.[42] He even avoided praising the second *Ordinatio Livoniae* of 1598 for its new approach, removing the discriminating provisions of the earlier legal orders and treating Livonian nobility equally when filling governmental posts in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.[43] From a personal perspective, Sturtz described his

38 Sturtz, *Oratio de vitae decore*, C2r–C3r.

39 According to the speech, Sturtz met the commissioners in Riga in person (Sturtz, *Oratio de vitae decore*, C4v).

40 For the new edition and commentary of this draft, see Hoffmann, *Der Landrechtsentwurf*.

41 Sturtz, *Oratio de vitae decore,* C2v–D2v. For the legal structure, judicial system and criminal law of Livonia in the Polish period, see Pihlajamäki, *Conquest and the Law*, 25–30; for the role of Hilchen's draft in Livonian legal history, 55–57.

42 Pihlajamäki, *Conquest and the Law*, 60–62.

43 Pihlajamäki, *Conquest and the Law*, 61.

visit first and foremost as an attempt to understand whether remaining in exile was necessary, and to check whether the new political supremacy of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had sufficiently changed the legal situation for him as a nobleman of Livonia.

In order to make his example more vivid, Sturtz expanded on a contemporary allegorical personification of a humble woman ("Livonia supplex") to make her a despised, deserted, almost dead Livonia ("Livonia proculcata, proiecta, paene mortua") who had been forced to give up her children—local inhabitants—leading them to become refugees ("sedibus patriis exuti, peregrini, exules"). Only when the legal crisis was resolved would Livonia regain her children and be happy once more ("Felix futura est Livonia").[44]

Conclusions

On the basis of this case study about travel writing from the premodern Baltic Sea region, travel literature offered good opportunities to thematize different kinds of crises, especially when a crisis in the author's own life was entangled with a crisis in society. The predominantly narrative or descriptive (never prescriptive) approach of such literature and its tendency to use examples, excursions, and rhetorical devices were well suited for recording a crisis. Also, the variation of the narrator's attitude that prevailed in travel literature—from wondering to lamenting, from argumentative to antithetical—made it suitable for recording a crisis. In the case of the academic environment, the journey to places and institutions in crisis functioned as valuable didactic, warning, and comparative material to acquire *prudentia civilis,* yet *ex negativo*: what should be avoided. As the Livonian nobleman Christoph von Sturtz generalized in his speech-travelogue in 1599, such travels and travel writings taught readers how to accept God's will and to wait for the right time to act when faced with a crisis. Considering the abundance of different types of crises in premodern Europe, and the abundance of travelogues in early modern literature, it should be assumed that Sturtz was not the only person in Europe to use the didactic and analytical potential of travel genres to thematize a crisis.

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44 Sturtz, *Oratio de vitae decore,* C3r–D2v.

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