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Pulcherrimus ordo naturae in Crisis or How Bohemian Latin Poets Coped with Changes in Wittenberg Cosmology after 1574

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Abstract. This article examines how Bohemian scholars and students coped with the reform of teaching at the University of Wittenberg after 1574. At that time, the *physica integra*, i.e. the doctrine of Philipp Melanchthon and his collaborators about the created physical world and its complex causalities, in which the observation of crisis phenomena in society and nature as manifestations of special providence played a key role, was no longer taught at the university. The view of the physical world had permeated the teaching of various subjects there at least from the 1530s and reached a large number of students from different regions, including a whole generation of students from Bohemia. The article focuses on the two decades after the introduction of the changes in the Wittenberg curriculum, when Latin poems on astronomical and natural phenomena, as well as on the imminent end of the world, were still popular in Bohemia. It shows how the older authors gradually transformed the original Wittenberg approach while the younger generation had already begun to write more radical poems and gradually abandoned the Wittenberg cosmology and style. Even in their works, however, one can see attempts to strategically incorporate elements of the previous Wittenberg understanding for example through the poems of invited co-authors. One of the reasons for this may have been that the poems were mostly published as broadsides and used as gifts to raise as much support as possible from various patrons. The diversity of opinion, even on cosmology, was therefore an advantage in the intellectual life of the time.

Keywords: University of Wittenberg, natural philosophy, eschatology, Philipp Melanchthon, astronomy, Latin poetry, Bohemian lands

This article develops my recent research on the intellectual exchange between the universities of Wittenberg and Prague in the second half of the sixteenth century. As I explored how former students, upon their return to Bohemia, adapted Wittenberg education and reshaped it for the needs of the their new multi-confessional and multi-ethnic environment,[1] I realized how important the concept of observing and

1 Storchová, *Řád přírody*; Storchová, "Strategies for Adapting Knowledge."

reflecting on various forms of crisis phenomena was for this discourse, especially in terms of the fragmentation and disruption of the order of nature and society and reflections on the coming end of the world. The increasing focus on crisis phenomena and the growing radicality of their interpretation was also typical of the generation of scholars who were influenced by Wittenberg scholarship after 1574, when the University of Wittenberg (then referred as Leucorea) underwent a major curricular change that affected also the teaching of subjects about the physical world, throwing into crisis the model based upon the observation and consideration of crisis phenomena.

The aim of my study is to analyse the Latin poetry about the celestial sphere and the created world in general written by non-Catholic authors from Bohemia, many of them former Leucorea students, between 1575 and 1590, that is, during the period when both models of Wittenberg cosmology co-existed in the Bohemian environment and scholars moved and chose between them, using them strategically for different purposes. This was also the time in which the number of poems in Latin (both occasional and less often didactic) about celestial and other natural phenomena began to decrease, and the number of vernacular texts in prose (especially in Czech) began to increase in Bohemia. However, this sort of vernacular literature was still heavily influenced by Latin production (if only because lower-level education was still almost exclusively Latin).[2] Nevertheless, Latin poems dealing with crisis phenomena remained highly significant for scholarly communication and aid in the analysis of the shifts after 1574 through their juxtaposition with the much greater volume produced by the earlier generation of Wittenberg students.

Observation of crisis phenomena as part of the Wittenberg curriculum

In order to understand how Bohemian scholars coped with the changes in Wittenberg cosmology which began in the mid-1570s, it is necessary to outline the specifics of this prior perspective. *Physica integra* and its place in the teaching at the University of Wittenberg has already received extensive attention.[3] As is known, the teaching at the arts faculty was not only conceived as preparatory, but also as a way to acquire

2 Storchová, *Řád přírody*, 282–301.

3 See, among many other studies, Kusukawa, *The Transformation of Natural Philosophy*; Bellucci, *The Transformation of Natural Philosophy*; Methuen, *Science and Theology*, 11–14, passim; De Angelis, *Anthropologien*, 22–63; Meinel, "Certa Deus"; *Mathematik und Naturwissenschaften*, ed. Fuchs. A more detailed interpretation can be found in Storchová, *Řád přírody*, 59–81; Storchová, "Strategies for Adapting Knowledge," 177–79 and Storchová, "Astronomical Poetry between Wittenberg and Prague."

the foundations of universal scholarship by means of a universal dialectical method.[4] In their undergraduate studies, students had to acquire, in addition to the basics of Lutheran theology and the ability to express themselves fluently in Latin (and to a much lesser degree, also in Greek), a specific knowledge about God and the created world based on the Bible and ancient authorities.[5] It explained phenomena occurring in the sublunar and supralunar spheres, in the human body and society, and in the present and past. As Christoph Meinel has shown convincingly, a distinctive feature of this knowledge was its complexity and interconnectedness[6]—Philipp Melanchthon and his collaborators assumed that the same features of the created world manifested themselves in a variety of fields. Melanchthon wrote specifically about the interconnected circle of the arts which described Nature *(orbis artium)*.[7] Among them, a special position was held by the disciplines describing the beauty and order of the created world—*doctrina physica*, the science of the sublunar world; astronomy, focusing on celestial phenomena; and anatomy, dealing with the human body. Their aim was to convey to students the usefulness of knowledge about the cosmos and nature[8] and were also a prerequisite for the study of other disciplines, including theology.[9]

From a theological point of view, this conception of nature was primarily influenced by the Lutheran teaching on divine providence which had made its way into university instruction in the mid-1530s. It was this theological framework that gave legitimacy to the knowledge of nature, as well as to the whole system of education at Leucorea.[10] According to Kusukawa, it was the interest in the knowledge of providence through the study of this world and especially celestial bodies that was specific to the Lutheran scholars at Wittenberg and differed from the concepts of the Calvinists or other Protestant churches.[11] In the Lutheran approach, God was considered the Supreme Being endowed with absolute will, as *mens architectatrix* and *causa prima*. He created nature in order to make it visible to all people. God's mind manifests itself in the created world, giving evidence of its activity and desiring that people come to know God through his work.[12] All phenomena in nature are

4 Asche, "Philipp Melanchthon als christlicher Schulhumanist," 79–80. For a dialectical method and its role in the Melanchthonian curriculum, see Bihlmaier, *Ars et Methodus*, 273–74.

5 Bihlmaier, "Naturphilosophie," 469–70.

6 Meinel, "Certa Deus," 231–32. See also Bihlmaier, *Ars et Methodus*, 273.

7 Bihlmaier, *Ars et Methodus*, 252.

8 Ludwig, "Art und Zweck der Lehrmethode," 111.

9 Methuen, "The Role of the Heavens"; Methuen, *Science and Theology*, 18.

10 Frank, "The Reason of Acting," 220.

11 Kusukawa, "Aspectio divinorum operum," 43; Brosseder, "The Writing in the Wittenberg Sky," 575; Methuen, *Science and Theology*, 105. This interpretation has been also challenged; see for instance Almási, "Rethinking Sixteenth-Century »Lutheran Astronomy«," 6–10.

12 *CR* 2: 816; *CR* 11: 294, 296.

interconnected: Melanchthon spoke of a chain of causes *(nexus causarum)* pointing to God as the ultimate cause.[13] God's order and activity in nature can be recognized by signs which show themselves in traces imprinted upon the world *(impressa vestigia Dei)*. These *vestigia divinitatis* are present in all of nature, from the celestial sphere through the terrestrial world to individual human bodies, animals, plants, etc.[14] Moreover, nature was created not only for man to observe, but also to use for his own benefit.[15] The concept of nature is in any case a doctrine of God Himself, even if only in the sphere of the Law and not in that of Scripture.[16]

As Georg Singer put it, at Leucorea providential theology was directly linked to geocentric cosmology.[17] The physical world was also believed to show the unceasing fatherly care that God exercises over human beings *(conservatio et sustentatio rerum)*. In his most influential textbook, *Initia doctrinae physicae*, Melanchthon defines divine providence as the knowledge by which God judges and cares for all things and rules over the totality of nature.[18] Nothing in the world happens by chance. It is God who, in this interpretation, rules the world, is permanently present in it and constantly intervenes in it.[19] In observing nature, therefore, it is necessary to concentrate on both types of Providence: general and special. General providence *(providentia generalis)* is related to the orderly operation of the world and natural causes *(causae naturales)*. To some extent, it can—precisely on the basis of regularity—even be predicted. The search for order and regularity, as well as their mathematical understanding, is natural for the human mind,[20] but it must be strengthened by further study. The regular movements of the heavenly bodies, for instance, are very telling in enabling knowledge of the laws of the created world.

In the description of the earthly world, then, one can encounter a number of arguments similar to those regarding the heavenly sphere, the essential difference being that the former is affected by the Fall. Bodies can be transformed in the sublunar sphere with respect to the four elements and the four qualities, and there is decay and extinction. Its observation, therefore, constitutes a less certain path to knowledge of God and divine providence. However, Melanchthon, as early as the

13 Meinel, "Certa Deus," 249. See also *CR* 13: 292f.

14 *CR* 21: 370. The idea of observing the Creator's footprints in nature has a long history going back at least to St Augustine (Helm, "Medizin," 510). See also Storchová, *Řád přírody*, 77–78.

15 Link, "Schöpfungslehre," 366.

16 Keen, "Naturwissenschaften und Frömmigkeit," 76. For the differences between the realms of Law and Scripture, see *CR* 13: 7; Wels, *Manifestationen des Geistes*, 72–74.

17 Singer, "Sternenlauf und göttliche Vorsehung," 65.

18 *CR* 31: 203–6.

19 *CR* 13: 213.

20 *CR* 11: 290.

mid-1530s, believed that the observation of the earthly world had to be based on mathematical and geometrical methods.[21] The general providence operating within the sublunar sphere governs such phenomena as the changing of the seasons, the weather, the crops, and the existence of all living organisms. Within the Wittenberg curriculum, the *doctrina physica* was devoted to them. The terrestrial world contains the *vestigia divinitatis*, is the place of the revelation of God and can—similarly to the human body—bring the observer closer to the divine law.[22] God's providence can be clearly visible, for example, in the plant world. In this model, plants were created by God for their healing powers: for each specific disease there is a plant with the appropriate healing power.[23]

Finally, the human body also represented a parallel to the supralunar and sublunar spheres. Theological reasoning was closely intertwined with anatomy in Wittenberg from the early 1540s onwards; it was taught at the arts faculty, i.e. as part of the common training for all students.[24] This considered the body to be the instrument of the knowledge of God and his work; the body was also believed to manifest the causal order of creation, the *ordo causarum* emanating from God to the other spheres of the created world.[25]

To sum up, the interest of Wittenberg scholars was strongly directed towards regularities in the course of nature. They related the concept of created order (*ordo*) to the idea that the world was created by divine decree *(ordinatio)*.[26] God brings order to the world, is its structuring principle. God created order to bear witness to himself and his providence;[27] this order spreads from him to particular natural phenomena and social institutions. The order of nature is then a kind of communication platform between God and man. Traces of its perfection and beauty, yet also its fragility and crises, can one observe not only in the heavens and the earthly world, but also in one's own body. The order of nature is distinguished, among other things, by its aesthetic quality, for it is mostly beautiful *(pulcherrimus)*. The observation of the order of the created world is a way to God and points to God's preference for how people should behave and how the whole of society should function, especially the hierarchical relationships and cooperation between different social

21 Methuen, *Science and Theology*, 26.

22 Frank, "Natur als Offenbarung," 20.

23 *CR* 10: 82; *CR* 11: 808–9; *CR* 12: 224.

24 Helm, "Wittenberger Anatomie," 240f; Helm, "Religion and Medicine," 60. See also Storchová, *Řád přírody*, 82.

25 Hofheinz, *Philipp Melanchthon und die Medizin*, 55.

26 Meinel, "Certa Deus," 246. Melanchthon used the term *ordo* in various senses, see Huschke, *Melanchthons Lehre vom Ordo politicus*, 105f. See also Storchová, *Řád přírody*, 78.

27 *CR* 13: 411–12. See also Kusukawa, "Aspectio divinorum operum," 45.

groups. One important theme is the vulnerability of the order of nature and the unexpected irregularities within it, since both divine providence and human sinful behaviour can damage it or bring it into crisis.[28]

God's special providence *(providentia specialis)* manifests itself in direct and, from a human perspective, unexpected interventions in the created world that neither correspond to the usual course of things nor contradict the Aristotelian picture of an unchanging heavenly sphere and an ever-changing earthly realm.[29] These are all kinds of phenomena *praeter naturae ordinem* (comets, eclipses, meteors, halo phenomena, the appearance of parhelia, i.e. sun dogs, unusual clouds and signs in the sky), as well as extreme weather fluctuations, earthquakes, massive fires, epidemics, etc.[30] Astronomy and astrology, which blended into one field at the University of Wittenberg,[31] were therefore key disciplines, a view reflected in the curriculum. The reading of the signs of the heavens (especially those outside the ordinary course of nature) were a fundamental intellectual competence that could be applied to all areas of the workings of divine providence.[32] These signs could be read not only in the present, but also backwards, towards the past, from which historical reports of unusual events pointing to God's plans for humanity had been preserved.[33] Symptomatically, Melanchthon and his collaborators' interest in astronomy and astrology intensified after the discovery of a bright comet in 1531 and other unusual celestial phenomena, notably the five comets of the 1530s and the solar eclipse of 1544.[34]

Deviations from the usual order, then, not only showed God's constant care for the created world but guided the observer to a better understanding of God's intentions for this world. To Christians, they were appealing and disciplinary. They carried special meanings, often warnings and threats of divine punishment. They encouraged Christians toward moral reflection, repentance and moral conduct. Whether or not Christians learned from them, the whole world and mankind was

28 Methuen, *Science and Theology*, 9; Barnes, *Astrology and Reformation*, 228–29.

29 Methuen, *Science and Theology*, 59. See also Storchová, *Řád přírody*, 67–68.

30 Wels, "Melanchthons Anthropologie," 72; Wels, *Manifestationen des Geistes*, 103. The extraordinary phenomena may also have had a physical interpretation. Melanchthon, for example, in the *Initia*, interpreted comets as rising vapours that ignite and affect human temperaments and health (*CR* 13: 153). Accidental transformations of unstable matter may also have contributed to the "unnatural" births of physically different humans and animals.

31 See Kusukawa, *The Transformation of Natural Philosophy*, 130; Methuen, "The Role of the Heavens," 395; Barnes, *Astrology and Reformation*, 139–52; Brosseder, "The Writing in the Wittenberg Sky," 563f.

32 This is Brosseder's main argument, *In Bann der Sterne*.

33 Caroti, "Melanchthon's Astrology," 113–15.

34 Kusukawa, *The Transformation of Natural Philosophy*, 124f; Methuen "The Role of the Heavens," 395–96; Barnes, *Astrology and Reformation*, 140.

and would forever be at the mercy of God's will, leaving us no choice but to hope for His mercy.[35]

The connection between the knowledge of the whole of nature *(physica integra)*, its theological dimension and its social relevance was repeatedly mentioned by Melanchthon and his collaborators. They did so in a variety of genres, including occasional texts such as poems and university orations.[36] Wittenberg's study of the physical world had a specific purpose that was unrelated to the formation of modern science.[37] The study of nature and its causes was intended to shape the rules of social coexistence and individual morality. It focused mainly on conveying a harmonious and orderly image of the world to a wide group of recipients in an attempt to discipline them socially, to help them to live in different communities (from the family and urban communities to relations between sovereigns and subjects), and to promote individual piety.[38] It was directly related to power relationships in the sense that in addition to the norms of individual Christian morality, it also produced a relatively conservative set of ideas about the social order created by God, i.e. natural social inequality and its legitimacy. In this context, it is necessary to mention a thesis held by some historians that the Wittenberg approach to nature and the workings of God's providence in the created world arose in response to civil disobedience—namely, the fights with Reformed radicals and the Thuringian riots of 1527.[39]

Melanchthon repeatedly returned to the idea that, for example, the perfect order of the celestial sphere offers a model for individual religious and social life as well as for the functioning of the Church, society, and specific communities.[40] The world was created as an order-based hierarchical organism in which each part fulfils its role; human society functions in the same way.[41] Order, for the naming of which Melanchthon adopted the older term *res aeterna*, also includes relations between

35 *CR* 2: 817–18.

36 Meinel, "Certa Deus," 241.

37 The involvement of Wittenberg natural philosophy in the story of the birth of modern science was complicated by the fact that it was based on Aristotle and Galen, rejected heliocentrism and had such a strong interest in astrology. Meinel, "Certa Deus," 229–30.

38 Kusukawa, *The Transformation of Natural Philosophy*, 67–74; Bellucci, *The Transformation of Natural Philosophy*; Meinel, "Certa Deus," 250. See also Storchová, *Řád přírody*, 96–97.

39 Kusukawa, *The Transformation of Natural Philosophy*, 71–74. The dispute with a nonconformist group known as the Zwickau prophets, who were active in Wittenberg between 1521 and 1522 and preached rebellion against all forms of scholarship and ecclesiastical and secular authority, was to have a major influence. Civil disobedience is believed to be one of the factors that provoked Melanchthon's interest in a knowledge of nature which would provide an argument for a model based on obedience to civil authorities (Kusukawa, "Aspectio divinorum operum").

40 *CR* 21: 641–42; *CR* 2: 815–17.

41 Strohm, "Zugänge zum Naturrecht," 353–54; Frank, "»Politica Aristotelis«," 345.

sovereigns, authorities, judges and subjects.[42] According to him, the observation of order in the supralunar and sublunar spheres has a normative effect on the human mind, creates moral equanimity and leads to virtuous behaviour. He explicitly asserted that knowledge of the created world is necessary for order and discipline to prevail in the Church and society.[43] In the teaching at Wittenberg University, therefore, knowledge of nature was an instrument of discipline; the study of the created world was to lead to the inculcation of socially binding norms in a large group of believers, and each individual would thus accept his or her place and social role. It also offered tools for combating heretics who, despite their experience of the created world, refused to accept the true teachings of the Church.[44]

Knowledge of the created world and its social implications in the Wittenberg approach was thus often related to reflection on crisis situations in which the vulnerability of the natural order was revealed. An extreme form of this reflection was apocalyptic thinking, i.e. shared ideas about the coming end of the world. Considered by some historians to be one of the most important themes and a key factor in determining Lutheran identity throughout the sixteenth century, it was a kind of omnipresent cultural code characterized by a language of punishment, judgment, and evil omens.[45]

Volker Leppin distinguished two main streams of Lutheran eschatology, whose names are derived from the traditional and somewhat schematic division of Lutheran theological streams: Philippist and Gnesio-Lutheran.[46] Wittenberg scholars were concerned with the former, i.e. the scholarly humanist model, although—as Leppin himself acknowledged—the two lines of interpretation were intertwined. Referring to Genesis, they interpreted celestial phenomena as astrological signs. The interest of leading Lutheran theologians, including Melanchthon himself,[47] focused on miraculous signs and was strongly influenced by the Wittenberg doctrine of the observation of divine traces in nature. Rather than a singular moment of impending judgment, then, it was an exhortation to Christians to observe the workings of the created world over the long term. Chronological schemes could also be deduced

42 Strohm, "Zugänge zum Naturrecht," 354. As described in *Locus de magistratibus civilibus*, it is also an order of laws, contracts, crimes and punishments. See also Huschke, *Melanchthons Lehre vom Ordo politicus*, 125f.

43 Meinel, "Certa Deus," 252.

44 Helm, "Religion and Medicine," 61.

45 Leppin, *Antichrist und Jüngster Tag*, 50, 280. See also Kaufmann, *Konfession und Kultur*, 33–34, 66.

46 Leppin, "»…mit dem künfftigen Jüngsten Tag«"; Leppin, *Antichrist und Jüngster Tag*, 130f. See also Storchová, *Řád přírody*, 110–12.

47 Kurihara, *Celestial Wonders*, 6.

from the workings of special providence, reflecting the connections between unusual phenomena in the past and present, and at the same time calculating when the end of the world might occur. The Melanchthonian conception, however, could easily be adapted to a new, more radical political context.[48] The Gnesio-Lutheran line was based from the beginning on the Synoptic Apocalypse, working more with the Gospel of Luke (21:25) describing the eschatological fear; it thus pointed to the unique moment of the end of the world, which is inexorably approaching.[49]

Dis/continuities in Wittenberg knowledge after 1574

The *doctrina physica* formed a stable core of Wittenberg teaching, so it was passed on to students without major changes for several decades.[50] It was not affected by the crisis that Thomas Töpfer associates with the period around 1550, when the teaching began to reflect more the disputes between various Protestant streams and the university's involvement in political struggles, e.g. a debate about the legitimate change of sovereign.[51] In the period after the middle of the century, when many students from Bohemia also went to Wittenberg, teaching became more and more an instrument of dynastic politics. Melanchthon himself died in April 1560 but this did not cause any sudden change in teaching in Wittenberg. The number of students continue to grow after his death, until the early 1570s;[52] then it began to stagnate, and Leucorea began a gradual transformation from an internationally influential university with a complex, perhaps even universalising teaching model into more of a local institution training Lutheran theologians and pastors. Nevertheless, fragments of the prior understanding of nature and society continued to be applied in teaching. The turning point for the Melanchthonian curriculum came only in 1574, when Caspar Peucer, Melanchthon's son-in-law and keeper of his writings, was accused of crypto-Calvinism and arrested. After the departure of Melanchthon's last collaborators, the teaching shifted from the original *physica integra* to practical theological disciplines and the defence of orthodox Lutheran theology. The concept of reading signs and divine

48 The Magdeburg community illustrates how Wittenberg astronomical and historical interpretive frameworks were used in political argumentation during the 1548–1552 negotiations, especially to assert the right to resist. See Moritz, *Interim und Apokalypse*; Kürbis, "Der Antichrist im Chorrock."

49 Leppin, "»…mit dem künfftigen Jüngsten Tag«"; Leppin, *Antichrist und Jüngster Tag*, 130f.

50 Kusukawa, *The Transformation of Natural Philosophy*, 149.

51 Töpfer, "Zwischen bildungskultureller Vorbildwirkung und politischer Legitimitätsstiftung," 446.

52 Scheible, "Die Philosophische Fakultät," 122–23.

traces in the world was weakened;[53] the new Wittenberg professors began to connect the providential framework with different interpretations. The new university rules of 1580 show that complex cosmology and natural philosophy were gradually excluded from the teaching of theology, leaving only a humanist linguistic basis and dialectical teaching methods.[54]

After the changes of the mid-1570s, a different role for the university, already prominent at Leucorea in previous decades, became much more pronounced: it was the ordination of pastors and the negotiation of basic issues of Lutheran orthodoxy, not only for the German lands but also for more distant regions where the graduates went.[55] As Markus Wriedt has pointed out, Melanchthon's conception of teaching in Wittenberg from the beginning influenced the formation of Lutheranism as a "state Church" with its social and disciplinary institutions.[56] Leucorea had always established cultural and theological norms for Protestant communities throughout the region.[57] After the mid-1570s, teaching focused mainly in this direction and the Wittenberg professors abandoned the ambition for a comprehensive educational model based on a particular cosmology.

Despite changes in the university curriculum, one cannot deny the lasting influence of Melanchthonian ideas about the legitimacy of astronomy and astrology, the direct action of divine providence in the world, and the divine command to observe the created order. As Matthias Asche has already pointed out, Wittenberg intellectual life had a strong impact on all German and neighbouring regions affected by the Reformation.[58] At least among Central European Protestants, it established a tradition of knowledge and scholarly communication[59] which endured even as the teaching at Leucorea was transformed. Moreover, Melanchthon's textbooks, including those on the order of nature, such as the *Initia doctrinae physicae* and the *Commentarius De anima*, continued to be used in Protestant schools.[60] The model of special providence continued to shape Protestant astronomy long after Melanchthon's death, for example, greatly influencing the controversies surrounding the discovery of the "new star" in 1572 and the long-predicted conjunctions of 1583–1584. Authors with Wittenberg training developed Lutheran theological

53 Brosseder, *In Bann der Sterne*, 257f, 295. See also Storchová, *Řád přírody*, 76–77.

54 Töpfer, "Philipp Melanchthons Loci communes," 138–39.

55 Bohnert and Asche, "Perspektiven," 29–30.

56 Wriedt, "Humanistische Reform," 138.

57 Töpfer, "Die Universität Wittenberg," 34–35.

58 Asche, "Philipp Melanchthon als christlicher Schulhumanist," 77.

59 Asche, "Philipp Melanchthon als christlicher Schulhumanist," 85.

60 In Saxony, for example, they were withdrawn from schools only after 1600. Salatowsky, "Die menschliche Seele," 154.

assumptions and emphasized the framework of *providentia specialis*—the discovery of the nova was in this sense a miraculous intervention in the order of the heavenly bodies through which God warns Christians.[61]

Wittenberg astrology and eschatological discourses also found a wide resonance in popular texts addressing a broad urban audience.[62] The system of signs associated with divine providence *(prodigia, portenta, ostenta, miracula, signa* and *praesagia*), which was originally found in textbooks and scholarly texts (by authors such as Caspar Peucer, Johannes Garcaeus, and Joachim Camerarius) was developed in shorter cheap prints such as broadsides, pamphlets and historical calendars.[63] Their radical output consisted of reports of miraculous signs *(Wunderzeichen)* in vernacular languages. According to Volker Leppin, apocalyptic cheap prints in general can be considered a distinctly Lutheran phenomenon in the German lands until the early 1590s.[64] Their creators were recruited mainly from among Lutheran clergymen who were strongly influenced by the Wittenberg conception of astronomy and astrology.[65] The popular texts are another example of how the influence of the prior Wittenberg approach may have been long-lasting, if not as a comprehensive model but at least in the fragments which remained.

Reactions to changes in the Wittenberg approach in Bohemia: Reflections on crisis phenomena become more radical

How did students from Bohemia cope with the Melanchthonian *physica integra* and its changes? If we look at their experience through the prism of the Latin poetry they wrote during their studies and after their return home, it appears that Wittenberg cosmological concepts had a great influence from the first generation of students, who studied at Leucorea in large numbers from the 1540s onwards. As I have shown elsewhere,[66] their poems on the created world and especially on astronomical phenomena mentioned various aspects of the Melanchthonian approach to nature. For example, their poems referred to divine providence, the observation of divine traces in the created world and in the human body, and they also discussed the epistemological limits of the human mind in the wake of the Fall, for example the concept

61 Methuen, *Science and Theology*, 33f; Weichenhan, "Caspar Peucers Astronomie," 108f.

62 Barnes, *Astrology and Reformation*, passim.

63 Bauer, "Philipp Melanchthons Gedichte astronomischen Inhalts," 152; Storchová, *Řád přírody*, 76.

64 Leppin, *Antichrist und Jüngster Tag*, 44.

65 Kurihara, *Celestial Wonders*, 4, 47.

66 Storchová, "Astronomical Poetry between Wittenberg and Prague"; Storchová, *Řád přírody*, 74–87.

of the *notitiae naturales*. They also developed poetic models typical of Leucorea—dramatic descriptions of celestial phenomena interwoven with references to classical mythology and a moralising message of divine wrath and punishment.[67] In terms of style, such poems followed Virgil and Ovid, enriching them with astronomical terminology from Lucan, Marcus Manilius, Aratus and Pontano.[68] However, from the first generation, Bohemian students tried to adapt Wittenberg knowledge to the expectations of the domestic environment, especially Bohemian patrons and possible readers who, unlike the Wittenberg professors, often were not Lutherans. As a result, they weakened the astrological context of the celestial phenomena described and neglected the more radical theological interpretations.[69] They were also rather cautious when it came to commenting on the decline of the physical world and the disintegration of the social order; with a few exceptions, they wrote rather cautiously about the coming end of the world.[70] It was the next generation of poets, who came of age during the 1560s and 1570s, who were more radical in this respect—as we shall see, elements of Wittenberg scholarship became part of more radical interpretations and began to perform new functions.[71]

Rather unsurprisingly, many years after the curriculum changed in Wittenberg and the complex *physica integra* ceased to be taught there, we still encounter its manifestations in the Bohemian lands, albeit always adapted to the local context. This happened especially with older authors who had still undergone the original Wittenberg training and built their later works on this basis. The poet Jan Rosinus, a student at Leucorea from 1557–1562, who later served as a town official in Domažlice in southwest Bohemia, is an example of the strong continuity of Wittenberg training.[72] As early as 1582, in the context of the great plague of that year, Rosinus wrote poems about unusual celestial phenomena, which are preserved in his written collection *Carmina*. As the preface shows, Rosinus corresponded about the significance of these phenomena with Petr Codicillus, another former Wittenberg student and a professor at the University of Prague.[73] Specifically, they addressed the reasons why

67 Bauer, "Philipp Melanchthons Gedichte astronomischen Inhalts," 141, 150.

68 Bauer, "Philipp Melanchthons Gedichte astronomischen Inhalts," 159.

69 Storchová, "Astronomical Poetry between Wittenberg and Prague."

70 Storchová, *Řád přírody*, 179–84; Storchová, "Astronomical Poetry between Wittenberg and Prague."

71 The corpus I am going to analyse in this article includes all the Bohemian Latin poems dealing with the physical world from the period between 1575 and 1590 of which I am aware. It cannot be ruled out, however, that other poems about this topic will be found in the future.

72 Vaculínová, "Pohromy jako trest," 51–52. For Rosinus' biography and works, see *CCEEH* 2 (forthcoming).

73 Rosinus, *Carmina*, 58r–58v. For Codicillus' life and work, see *CCEEH* 1: 280–88.

the evening sky turned red in the first week of March and light arrows appeared.[74] While Rosinus assumed that this was a *portentum*, which could foretell great damage and bloodshed, Codicillus pointed to possible natural causes leading to the change in the colour of the sky—for a fire had broken out in a village outside Prague, the light of which could have caused the red.

A copy of Codicillus' letter is followed in the collection by two elegiac poems entitled *In chasma seu portentum mirabile* (About the glow in the sky or the miraculous sign) and *Aliud prolixius eiusdem* (Another more extended poem), which describe the appearance of two columns of light, rays in the shape of a sword or an arrow, and a pale moon in a red sky, which were observed on 6 March 1582 over Domažlice.[75] Rosinus begins the second elegy with a classical mythological description of Apollo diving into the waves (i.e. the sunset), which was typical of Wittenberg astronomical poems. In the spirit of Wittenberg literary conventions, he locates the whole celestial phenomenon in relation to star constellations.[76] Rosinus interprets this celestial phenomenon as a manifestation of divine wrath, foretelling widespread damage, wars, and a plague that will rage like a sword. It is a punishment for the decline of true piety and "manly virtue" in a time of increasing battles and wars.[77] He explains the red sky by reference to the blood of Christ bringing true salvation.[78] He asks God to protect Bohemia and send a bright day after the bloody twilight. In conclusion, Rosinus appeals for greater piety and, referring to a school quote from Horace, writes that "it is sweet to die for one's piety".[79]

Codicillus' *oeuvre* shows that the Wittenberg perspective could have been adapted to a new cultural and confessional environment. As I have discussed elsewhere,[80] Codicillus, who as a student in Wittenberg wrote quite typical astronomical poems about lunar eclipses in the late 1550s, changed his approach upon his return to Bohemia. In his Latin broadsides on the same subject from 1577 to 1580, he still used a similar poetic style, but he weakened the mythological references and fragments of Wittenberg cosmology and providential doctrine. He no longer wrote so explicitly about divine interventions in nature, the beautiful order of the world, the "certain divine traces" in the world to be observed by Christians, nor the divine light instilled in the human mind that makes this knowledge possible. What he

74 For more details about their dispute, see Storchová, *Řád přírody*, 189–90.

75 Rosinus, *Carmina*, 59r–62r.

76 Rosinus, *Carmina*, 59r, 60v.

77 Rosinus, *Carmina*, 61v.

78 Rosinus, *Carmina*, 59v.

79 Rosinus, *Carmina*, 60r; Storchová, *Řád přírody*, 190.

80 Storchová, "Strategies for Adapting Knowledge," 197–98; Storchová, "Astronomical Poetry between Wittenberg and Prague."

unsurprisingly reinforced, on the other hand, were images of the corruption of his contemporary world and the threat of God's wrath. In his later poems he mentioned the decline of true piety and the disintegration of the social order: the inhabitants of Bohemia disobey laws, disrespect the rules of marital life, pursue their own selfish interests, and thereby undermine the interpersonal trust and social cohesion that is the basis of every community and municipality; there may be riots or uprisings, perhaps even major political changes. He mainly appealed to a fear of divine punishment, for repentance and an improvement of morals, and reinforced the overall disciplinary tone of the poem.[81]

The poems of Václav Dasypodius (Dasypus) from the late 1570s illustrate how elements of Wittenberg knowledge could be incorporated into more radical discourses within the Prague University environment. Dasypodius hailed from the town of Nymburk in central Bohemia, first studying in Hungary, Saxony, and at some Bohemian town schools, and in 1578 he received his bachelor's degree from the University of Prague.[82] He enrolled at Leucorea in early July 1580 and was ordained as a pastor in mid-September, to then serve in northern Bohemia. From a later period we have reports of some of his unpreserved poems, which probably resonated with Wittenberg themes, such as a poems on the earthquake of 1581, and a 1588 elegy on the Last Judgement.[83] In 1591, he wrote an astronomical calendar in Czech, *Calendarii perpetui pars prior*.

The broadside containing the Latin poem on the Dog Star *(Carmen de Canicula)* of 1578 was thus published shortly before Dasypodius went to the University of Wittenberg;[84] it was probably intended to represent him before for the Leucorea professors whom he was soon to meet in person. Such a leaflet could also be directly handed over as a gift. The accompanying composition on the broadside is in Greek and is quite extensive, which added to the presentation of the student's literary achievement. The main Latin poem, which is also quite long, develops a Melanchthonian approach, illustrating the acquisition of basic astronomical and medical knowledge. Dasypodius does not pay much attention to determining the precise location in the sky of Sirius, i.e. the Dog Star, as we might expect with exceptional astronomical phenomena that were usually observable for only a limited time; nor is he concerned with determining the significance of this star in terms of divine providence.

Dasypodius explains in particular the influence of Sirius on the earthly world and on the human body, something previously discussed by ancient authors. This

81 Codicillus, *Carmen de eclypsi lunae… 26. Septembris*, no pagination. See also Storchová, *Řád přírody*, 177–78; Storchová, "Strategies for Adapting Knowledge," 198.

82 Hejnic and Martínek, *Rukověť* 2, 31.

83 Hejnic and Martínek, *Rukověť* 2, 32.

84 For a more detailed analysis of Dasypodius' broadside see Storchová, *Řád přírody*, 190–91.

Dog Star harms human health like a rabid dog, primarily by bringing a heat wave, massively warming the air, corroding the earth and drying out all living beings (*naturas fragiles animantium*).[85] The Dog Star has a number of negative effects on the human body: it causes inflammation, swelling and pain, leads to the overproduction of dark bile, inhibits mental activity, etc. These health problems often end in death. Dasypodius connects this passage with the strategy of *captatio benevolentiae*, when he expresses concern for the health of his supporters during the difficult summer period. Finally, he also met the future recipients of his broadside in Wittenberg during those very dog days.

A year later, Dasypodius managed to publish two more collections, which he probably also wanted to present at Leucorea: *De miserando rerum statu Παράκλησις* (A consolatory poems about the miserable state of affairs) and a Latin treatise on angels, rather floridly entitled *Τὸ ἔπος ἡρωικὸν περὶ τῆς γενικῆς ὑπηρεσίας … angelorum* (A heroic epic about universal services of angels). Both collections were again aimed at the Wittenberg milieu, and in them Dasypodius applied both an older type of Melanchthonian cosmology (this also thanks to the strategic selection of a specific group of co-authors) and a conception closer to the new focus on practical Protestant theology. The accompanying poems to the collection *De miserando rerum statu Παράκλησις* were contributed by Wittenberg graduates a generation older, Prague University professors Petr Codicillus and Matouš Philomates, and the distinguished Latin poet and editor Tomáš Mitis.[86]

The accompanying poems are more explicitly related to religious practice, dealing with themes such as consolation, which may be related to some extent to the new situation at Leucorea. Dasypodius' poem then develops the motif of paternal punishment for contempt of piety. In the preface, Dasypodius applies fragments of Melanchthonian scholarship that he apparently still considered useful and orthodox in terms of their theological basis – these include, for example, the effect of original sin on human cognitive abilities *(cogitatio hominis densissimis obfusa tenebris, huc et illuc fluctuans)*.[87] The human mind is only able to glimpse the mystery of God *(mysterium Dei)* and the near future because of the divine light that illuminates it. Theological education also plays a role in acquiring this knowledge. Education, together with the divine will, makes it possible to reflect on the present state of the world and the catastrophes to come, including the death, Last Judgment and destruction of all earthly things by fire *(mundi vastationem, rerumque omnium*

85 Dasypodius, *Carmen de Canicula*, no pagination. Storchová, *Řád přírody*, 191.

86 For Mitis' and Philomates' lives and works see *CCEEH* 2 (forthcoming). For a more detailed analysis of Dasypodius' collection *De miserando rerum statu Παράκλησις* see Storchová, *Řád přírody*, 191–93.

87 Dasypodius, *De miserando rerum statu Παράκλησις*, Aiir.

conflagrationem).[88] Negative future developments can be predicted from Bible prophecies as well as from signs (*ex prodigiis*), which are an integral part of all nature and the human body. Only the grace of God can save us from the coming judgment and the fear of it.

However, Dasypodius radicalizes this largely Melanchthonian basis in the following part of the preface. He describes in detail the signs of the approaching doomsday, which are omnipresent, permeating the entire created world. In the sky, the end of the world is heralded by eclipses of the sun, the different colours of the moon, shooting stars, and hitherto completely unknown and unprecedented phenomena.[89] In the same way, the whole created world is being miraculously deformed. The warnings are therefore also evident in the sublunary world, where confusion is occurring even at the level of the most basic elements; the time frame of the year and day is also changing, the activity of the sea is changing, the shape of geological formations such as mountains is changing.[90] One can also observe constant change in laws and social relations. The increase in tragic events in society is unprecedented: contempt for piety, justice and innocence, violence against good Christians, violation of law and order, confusion of all social relations and actions against natural laws *(iura naturae)*. There are also increasing pathologies in political life: above all, various struggles, uprisings, frauds, civil unrest and wars.

The main poem of the collection is also more radically eschatological than the earlier Bohemian poetry. In it, Dasypodius describes various forms of punishment at the time of the approaching end of the world. His style is not as mythologizing as was common in the Wittenberg astronomical poems, but is rather vivid, excited and urgent and contains various puns. The poem is imbued with appeals to observe the increase in crisis phenomena in the surrounding world. Dasypodius returns repeatedly to how the whole world is collapsing and how the crisis is physically manifested in all its parts, including not only celestial bodies such as *stellae, sol, luna, sydera*, but also *terra* itself and human *corpora*.[91]

Again, he mentions that the imminent end of the world and the coming calamity are also indicated by more frequent unusual celestial occurrences: besides eclipses and comets, and the unusual colour of the sky (especially red), these are signs associated with more radical discourse of astrology, such as flames and various fiery figures in the sky like dragons or armed men.[92]All adverse phenomena affect the human body and the functioning of the organs, and they also upset the human

88 Dasypodius, *De miserando rerum statu Παράκλησις*, Aiir.

89 Dasypodius, *De miserando rerum statu Παράκλησις*, Aiir.

90 Dasypodius, *De miserando rerum statu Παράκλησις*, Aiiv.

91 Dasypodius, *De miserando rerum statu Παράκλησις*, Aiiiiv; Storchová, *Řád přírody*, 192.

92 Dasypodius, *De miserando rerum statu Παράκλησις*, Aiiiiv.

mind. The current state of affairs can be comprehensively described as *ingens confusio rerum*.[93]

The disintegration of order affects different levels of the social whole, from individual households and the Church, affected by various manifestations of heterodoxy, to entire states. The main poem concludes with the reflection that everything points to the fact that this corruptible world *(hic corruptibilis mundus)*, which according to the 'holy prophets' was destined to last 6,000 years, is approaching its end and destruction *(finis seculorum* and *rerum omnium consumatio)*.[94] Initially Dasypodius mentions the prophecy of Elijah, but he also summarizes other—in the older Wittenberg discourse somewhat marginal—parallels for estimating the coming end of the world, derived, for example, from the number of days of Creation, from the comparison of the time of the Flood and the Last Judgment, from the age of Christ and the Jubilee years, and from a number of Old Testament patriarchs. The quotations at the end of the collection develop the Melanchthonian tradition but at the same time adapt it to a more radical apocalyptic framework.[95] Dasypodius quotes a translation of a prophecy by Johann Regiomontanus pointing to the year 1580, when either "miraculous things" *(předivné věci)* were to occur or the world was to cease to exist. He mentions Melanchthon's remark about the critical year of 1583 (which he translates as *všecek svět má zahynouti a v své zlosti pominouti*, i.e. the whole world is to perish and pass away in its evil). He quotes Johann Aventine to the effect that God will punish today's Christians like "Greeks", which can be understood as a reference to the eschatological concept of the four world monarchies and the imminent end of the last of them. The overall tone of the collection *De miserando rerum statu Παράκλησις* is thus considerably more radical than mid-century Wittenberg scholarly eschatology, but at the same time it strategically incorporates "time-tested" intellectual authorities into this picture.

Codicillus and Philomates, as Dasypodius' professors from the University of Prague, left their mark on his other works, too. They wrote accompanying poems for Dasypodius' Latin treatise on angels, *Τὸ ἔπος ἡρωικὸν περὶ τῆς γενικῆς ὑπηρεσίας*, which was also published in 1579 and was again most likely intended primarily for a Wittenberg audience. Dasypodius also intertwined the theme of angels with an interpretation containing elements of Melanchthonian knowledge. He introduces the interpretation of the angels with a passage in which God summarizes how he created the world. He presents it in an unsurprisingly Melanchthonian vein—he created it as a machine in which everything has its just order (Dasypodius directly applying the conceptual framework of *machina mundi* which has its *gremium*), all

93 Dasypodius, *De miserando rerum statu Παράκλησις*, Bv.

94 Dasypodius, *De miserando rerum statu Παράκλησις*, C4r–v.

95 For further details see Storchová, *Řád přírody*, 193.

things know their creator and bear witness of him.[96] The order of the created world is the context for the activities of the angels who act as messengers in it. God's will is manifested in the workings of the created world, the miraculous purposefulness of creation and the causal connections between natural phenomena. All created things "indicate" *(fateantur)* the omnipotent God.[97] Codicillus also weaves into Dasypodius' volume a poetic interpretation of Psalm 102, in which he develops the Wittenberg concept of God's unceasing care for the world and of the creation of the world as an orderly machine in which everything is related to everything.

What shifts have occurred since the mid-1570s in poems with primarily eschatological content, in which reflections on nature and the created world were more the context of the coming Judgement Day? The rather lengthy Latin broadside *Carmen de extremo Dei iudicio iam iam imminente* (A poem about more and more approaching God's Last Judgment), published sometime after 1576,[98] illustrates the difference in eschatological imageries between the work of the first generation of Wittenberg graduates from Bohemia and the poems written after 1574, even though the latter still contained elements of the older discourse.

Zikmund Turnerus, a native of Kutná Hora in central Bohemia and still a student at the time, dedicated his broadside to his elder brother Václav, who was a pastor, which may also have influenced the overall more radical tone of his description of the end of the world. Turnerus' poem is, in a way, a school poem; however, it allows us to reflect on the widely shared imageries among Prague students. Turnerus characterizes the current crisis in a rather unsurprising way: everything is undergoing rapid changes; impiety, fraud, crime and dishonesty are spreading; pious people and the true Church in general are suffering persecution, literally under siege by enemies and cruel tyrants. Heterodoxy grows, the people listen to false teachings. *Discordia* spreads like a disease within urban communities, threatening social harmony. Disputes and wars proliferate all over the world. The general decline of morals is clearly visible in the area of sexual behaviour, where people cannot control their desires and commit fornication *(Nulla pudicitiae ratio est, morumque cupido* [...] *Nullus adulterii modus est, sed facta pudenda / (Infandum) prono pectore quisque patrat)*.[99] Turnerus returned to the criticism of contemporary decline in the poem's

96 Dasypodius, *Τὸ ἔπος ἡωιρκὸν περὶ τῆς γενικῆς ὑπηρεσίας*, A4r. For a more detailed analysis of Dasypodius' collection *Τὸ ἔπος ἡωιρκὸν περὶ τῆς γενικῆς ὑπηρεσίας* see Storchová, *Řád přírody*, 193.

97 Dasypodius, *Τὸ ἔπος ἡωιρκὸν περὶ τῆς γενικῆς ὑπηρεσίας*, B2v.

98 Hejnic and Martínek, *Rukověť* 5, 414. For a more detailed analysis of Turnerus' poems on Judgement Day see Storchová, *Řád přírody*, 194–96.

99 Turnerus, *Carmen de extremo Dei iudicio iam iam imminente*, no pagination. Storchová, *Řád přírody*, 195.

conclusion, which contains an appeal to the faithful. Among the sinful acts he again includes, besides impiety and gluttony, offences against proper marital life. All these events show that the "machine" of the world will soon cease to function *(Vergit et ad finem machina tota suum)* and people will meet a sad end. Nor can Christians be surprised that they have to face ever more frequent divine punishments—the question of whether they deserve their punishments is, in this sense, merely rhetorical. Turnerus documents the severity and uncompromising nature of divine wrath with examples from biblical history, including Egyptian rulers, which he presents as examples of tyranny deservedly punished.

A lengthy passage describes how the Day of Judgment will unfold: how God will punish a sinful world, what life will be like for the blessed in paradise and the damned in hell. The whole narrative is based on the Bible and partly uses mythologizing references, containing rather expressive, contradiction-based descriptions of suffering, fear, screaming, destruction, etc. These make Turnerus' poem different from the moderate pieces of the earlier period. In this vein, the poem then proceeds to a plea for God not to tarry and to descend from heaven soon to punish sinners.

Compared to the poems of Wittenberg graduates from the previous two decades, Turnerus' poem about the horrors of the Last Judgement sounds much more radical. Even so, the overall message could have been strategically "weakened" to make it acceptable to scholars versed in the older Wittenberg model. Turnerus used a paratextual space to do this. The broadside is accompanied by a short *Paraenesis*, whose author is mostly probably Matyáš Gryllus of Gryllov (it is signed only with the monogram M. M. G. à G.).[100] Gryllus studied at Leucorea in the early 1570s, before the reform of the Melanchthonian curriculum, and met Turnerus as his professor at the University of Prague. Compared to the main poem, his accompanying poem contains slightly more elements of older scholarship and thus adds another level to the overall feel of the pamphlet. Gryllus praises Turner for his piety, although his poem is still rather a beginner's *(quamvis sit iuvenile)*. He emphasizes more the motif of the signs of God, which appear in the heavens to an unprecedented degree and give a hint of the coming of Judgment Day. He invites readers to observe the stars and to open themselves to Christ. Gryllus also emphasizes equally the level of divine punishment and the forgiveness for those who live godly lives, so he does not focus only on the Last Judgment as such, nor does he describe expressively its horrors and the suffering of sinners. His eschatological discourse seems to be rather moderate.

Only a few years later, Latin poems appeared that departed more clearly from the Wittenberg tradition. At the end of the 1580s we can observe an incremental change in scholarly reflection on crisis phenomena, which in the following years

100 For Gryllus' life and work, see *CCEEH* 1: 475–81.

included a gradual abandonment of Wittenberg interpretive frameworks and a move away from writing Latin poetry with astronomical or eschatological content in general. An example of a Latin poem from the period when this transformation was beginning is *De ecclipsi solis* in dactylic hexameters by Samuel Radešínský.[101] It appeared again in the form of a broadside and describes the solar eclipse of 26 February 1588. The composition already differs significantly from older Wittenberg astronomical poems in structure and style. Instead of a poetic description of the eclipse with reference to ancient deities and mythological figures, Radešínský uses a much more descriptive interpretation of the sun's effect on the world and human beings. He describes the sun, for example, as the *sator rerum*, the supreme originator of everything, to which the elements are subject and which creates human life and gives life force *(vitales auras, animas, aethereum vigorem)* to the human body.[102] Thus, the poem does not thematise the complex functioning of the world as a machine, nor its order or the interconnectedness of the individual fields of creation and the analogies between them. The overall picture of the stars and celestial phenomena is more pessimistic; the meaning of the celestial signs is "mysterious" *(arcanus)* and therefore also partly incomprehensible: besides punishments and wars, they foretell death in all its forms. They are related to earthly phenomena such as rivers of blood. God's power still transcends the stars, so in the final prayer Radešínský asks God to eradicate the unfavourable signs.

Conclusion

The aim of this study has been to go beyond merely showing that in Bohemia, one of the semi-peripheral regions of (East-)Central Europe that was strongly influenced by Protestantism, the reflection on crisis phenomena in nature and society became more frequent and radical in the last third of the sixteenth century and was increasingly attributed eschatological significance, linked to disciplinary appeals to readers. This trend can clearly be seen in Bohemian literature, of course. My analysis of Neo-Latin poetry on natural phenomena, which was a popular genre in the teaching of the University of Wittenberg and was written by Bohemian students after their return home, was primarily intended to show how reflections on the physical world and its workings were gradually changing at a time when the Melanchthonian framework of interpretation and teaching began to disintegrate. I therefore chose the 1570s and 1580s as the period to be studied, when this kind of Latin poetry was still published in Bohemia and was part of the intellectual exchange between Wittenberg and Prague.

101 For a more detailed analysis of Radešínský's poem, see Storchová, *Řád přírody*, 190.

102 Radešínský, *De ecclipsi solis*, no pagination. Storchová, *Řád přírody*, 190.

Some Bohemian Latin poets thus felt it necessary to react to the changes that took place in Wittenberg after the dismissal of the Melanchthonian professors in the mid-1570s and, more significantly, after the publication of the new study rules in 1580.

So what were their strategies? On the one hand, a new generation of students began to abandon the older cosmology and its concepts, as well as the style typical of Wittenberg astronomical poems. A comparison of poems by various Bohemian authors (particularly Rosinus and Radešínský) has shown that this new type of poetic reflection, which often had been published in the form of broadsides, took shape in the early 1580s.

On the other hand, a certain 'strategic treatment' regarding the changes in the Wittenberg curriculum is evident throughout the period. Some of the authors, while gradually adapting and radicalizing the descriptions of crisis phenomena, still retained elements of the original Melanchthonian cosmology, which they knew from their own days of study. The exchange of letters between Codicillus and Rosinus shows that Bohemian scholars discussed how far to apply Wittenberg astronomy to the particular extraordinary celestial phenomena they observed. Some poets of the younger generation, represented in my article by Dasypodius, were then able to 'switch' between different types of knowledge about the physical world or they tried to avoid radical discontinuity by inviting scholars familiar with older knowledge into their collections (and even broadsides). While the educational reform at Wittenberg was largely politicized, scholars from Bohemia did not shy away from reconciling different cosmological concepts in their works.

My local case-study has looked only at a narrowly defined group of contemporaneous texts but it still shows the diversity and different motivations of early modern scholars. The more general question is, of course, how scholars and students from other (East-)Central and Northern European regions with long-standing ties to Wittenberg reacted to the gradual transformation of the university's curriculum, especially those countries closer to orthodox Lutheranism than the multi-ethnic and multi-confessional Bohemia with Prague as its capital, which became a melting pot after 1583. How quickly did students and scholars from other regions adapt to the new situation in Wittenberg? Did they still develop the original Melanchthonian knowledge? Did they find it possible to combine it with the new teaching, and if so, how and why did they do so? Hopefully, this article will contribute to a larger discussion on the influence and transformations of Wittenberg scholarship in a period that in previous research stands in the shadow of the "golden age" when Melanchthon and his collaborators were active at the university, yet a period in which it still had great significance upon the surrounding non-Catholic regions.

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Abbreviations

CCEEH – Companion to Central and Eastern European Humanism (see Secondary literature below)

CR – Corpus reformatorum (see Sources below)

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