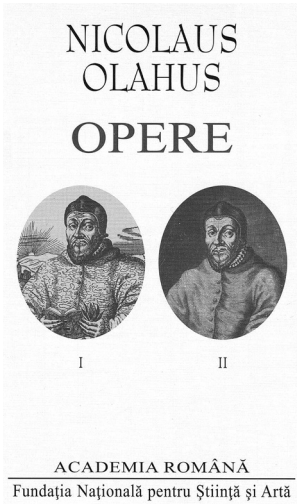

EDITORIAL EVENTS

Revisiting Nicolaus Olahus

LEVENTE NAGY



NICOLAUS OLAHUS, *Opere*, 2 vols.
Editing of the Latin text, critical apparatus and index by FLORENTINA NICOLAE and DORIN GAROFANU, translated from the Latin by MARIA CAPOIANU, IOANA COSTA, and FLORENTINA NICOLAE; forewords by IOAN-AUREL POP and MARIA CAPOIANU, critical reception dossier by LAURA BĂDESCU.
Bucharest: Academia Română, Fundația Națională pentru Știință și Artă, 2022.

THE VOLUME reviewed here is the most complete edition of Nicolaus Olahus' work to date. It has been published in a prestigious series, "Opere fundamentale" (Fundamental works), curated by the Romanian Academy and the National Foundation for Science and Art, which follows the model of the French Pléiade. It is a semi-critical rather than a full critical edition. The series aims to provide access to reliable texts to as wide an audience as possible, along with the most important critical apparatus. The foreword to the volume was written by Ioan-Aurel Pop, who places Olahus among the European humanists of the sixteenth century and discusses how Olahus' Hungarian intellectual contemporaries related to the fact that he had a Romanian ancestry. This is followed by Maria Capoianu's study, where the author describes Olahus' stay in Western Europe. Hungarian King Louis II died in the battle of Mo-

This review was prepared within the framework of the MTA–BTK Lendület "Momentum" Humanist Canons and Identities Research Group.

Levente Nagy

Head of the Department of Romanian Philology, Institute of Romance Studies, lecturer at Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Humanities, Budapest.

hács (29 August 1526), after which his widow, Queen Mary, stayed in various Western-European cities (Augsburg, Leuven, Brussels). Olahus, serving as the queen's secretary until 1542, accompanied Mary. During his stay in Western Europe, Olahus met or corresponded with the most famous humanists of the time, including Erasmus.

The two-volume work is bilingual: it contains both the original Latin text and its Romanian translation. Olahus wrote his historical, literary, and religious works, as well as his letters, exclusively in Latin. That is why it makes sense to also publish his writing in the Latin original. In his private and official letters (to his representatives, family members, etc.), he also used the German and the Hungarian languages. Only some of these letters have been published so far, and most of them remain unpublished. The book has the following structure: the historical works open the volume (*Hungaria, Athila, Chronicon breve*). The second part comprises the ecclesiastic works (*Catholicae ac Christianae religionis praecipua, Ordo et ritus, Processus sub forma Missae*), which have received little attention so far (with the exception of *Processus*). These are followed by the poems (*Carmina*), minor records (*Genesis filiorum serenissimi regis Ferdinandi, Brevis descriptio cursus viate Benedicti Zercheky, Ephemerides*), selected letters, two of Nicolaus Olahus' patents of nobility (1548, 1558), finishing with some details of Olahus' will. With the exception of *Hungaria, Athila, Carmina, Processus*, and the correspondence, the rest of Olahus' writing has not been published in print since the sixteenth/eighteenth century. The work of the editors and translators (Florentina Nicolae, professor at Ovidius University of Constanța, Dorin Garofeanu, instructor at several Canadian universities and researcher at the G. Călinescu Institute of Literary History and Theory in Bucharest, Ioana Costa, professor at the University of Bucharest, as well as the reputed longtime researcher of the oeuvre of Nicolaus Olahus, Maria Capoianu) is certainly commendable.

Hungaria, which was translated into Romanian by Maria Capoianu, is a republication of the text published by Ádám Ferenc Kollár in 1763.¹ The present publication reprints Kollár's text without any changes, including his preface and annotations. For the present publication, Florentina Nicolae and Dorin Garofeanu compared Kollár's text and its Romanian translation with the text of the *Hungaria* published by Mátyás Bél in 1735,² as well as the critical edition of *Hungaria*.³ The editors did not use any original Olahus manuscripts for this edition. However, even if they did not have the opportunity to look at these texts, they could have mentioned the fact that two manuscript versions of *Hungaria* have survived. One is held in the Austrian national library in Vienna (ÖNB Cod. 8739), while the other is in the Erzbischöfliche Diözesan- und Dombibliothek in Cologne (EDDB, Hs. 293, fols. 3–39). The Vienna version is also currently available:

https://search.onb.ac.at/primo-explore/fulldisplay?docid=ONB_alma21302549470003338&context=L&vid=ONB&lang=de_DE&search_scope=ONB_hanna&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=onb_hanna&query=any,contains,olahus&offset=0.

THIS VERSION contains a lot of marginalia and corrections, some of which are in Olahus' hand. However, there are also notes and corrections that were not added by Olahus but by another hand, which has not been identified so far. The text of *Hungaria* thus continuously underwent changes both already during Olahus' life and after his death.⁴ Incidentally, Olahus himself also noted in the poem he wrote as a preface to *Hungaria* (*Ad lectorem*) that he would correct the text as soon as he returned to Hungary (he wrote *Hungaria* in 1536, during his stay in Brussels). He especially promised to make corrections in connection with the place names, which he did indeed do. This situation presents considerable challenges for the publishers of Olahus' text. Identifying these toponyms is of major significance for research in both history and onomastics, and identifying place names also presented the biggest problem for the publishers of this volume. Chapter XVI is especially rich in toponyms. If we look at the manuscript of *Hungaria*, we can see that Olahus later rewrote almost all of this chapter. It can therefore also be concluded that Mátyás Bél published the earlier version, while all the other editions (Kollár, Eperjessy-Juhász) printed the later version of the text, the one rewritten by Olahus. Mátyás Bél thus used a text that did not contain Olahus' retrospective corrections, so Bél's text differs from all the other versions in this chapter. Although the publishers of this volume corrected Kollár's text based on Mátyás Bél's text in some cases, or they highlighted the difference between Bél's and Kollár's text (e.g., *Opere* I: 26), in the case of chapter XVI, they failed to point out the differences between the texts, even though Juhász and Eperjessy also published the original text that was later crossed out by Nicolaus Olahus. Unfortunately, Juhász and Eperjessy did not identify the places listed by Olahus in their critical edition, either.

The editors were unable to identify the following places in chapter XVI, which they claimed "do not appear in the archival collections that list which locations still exist and which ones have disappeared" (*Opere* I: 145–147): Velele, Zathar, Paled, Forgola, Bathe, Kallo, Bezermeny, Guta. However, most of these locations can be identified. Velele is Велятин, located in Ukraine today, close to the border (in Romanian: Veliatin, in Hungarian: Veléte); Paled = Botpalád in present-day Hungary, next to the Ukrainian border; Forgola = Forgolány (Ukraine today, Форголань); Kallo = Nagykálló (Hungary); Bezermeny = Hajdúböszörmény (Hungary), Guta = Gut, the area south of Nyíradony (Hungary). Zathar indeed has not been identified yet. Bathe is Bátor accord-

ing to some, i.e., Nyírbátor (Hungary), which is also supported by the fact that Mátyás Bél's text contains Bátor instead of Bathe, although Olahus' autograph text contains Bathe.⁵

I indicated above that Olahus' poem *Ad lectorem* was printed before *Hungaria*, something like a preface. In this edition, the last two lines of the Romanian translation of the poem are the following: *Strălucita victorie a hunilor odinioară, / Rege Atila fiind, soarta spre bine le-ntoarse*. However, these two lines are not part of the Latin text (*Opere* 1: 16–17). The editor of the poem, Florentina Nicolae, also notes that *Ad lectorem* is poem 35 in Olahus' collection of poems (*Carmina*), without these two lines (see *Opere*, 1: 15, 874–877.) At the same time, the two Romanian translations are also two different texts. On the one hand, the editors adopted Maria Capoianu's translation in the case of *Ad lectorem*; on the other hand, Florentina Nicolae also translated the same poem again as poem 35 of *Carmina*. This volume contains the *Hungaria* that was published by Maria Capoianu in 1993. In that edition, Capoianu again published Kollár's Latin text, in parallel with its Romanian translation. The two abovementioned lines were added to the Romanian translation of Olahus' *Ad lectorem* in this version.⁶ It is a mystery why Capoianu added these two lines to the Romanian version, since they are not part of Kollár's text, either. The two lines were in fact written by János Thuróczy, rather than by Olahus. Thuróczy finished his *Chronica Hungarorum*, which was published in Augsburg in 1488, with this distich: “Sorte nova redit Hunnorum clarissima quondam, / Tempore, quae fuit Atilae victoria Regis.” The distich also appears in the Mátyás Bél edition of Olahus' *Chronicon breve* (*Opere* 1: 386) as a motto (also published in this edition). Capoianu also published the *Chronicon* in 1993, along with its Romanian translation. She did not explain there either why she added the two lines in question at the end of the Romanian translation of *Ad lectorem*. Thus, the distich about the king of the Huns was not written by Nicolaus Olahus but by János Thuróczy. Olahus only adopted it as a motto for his *Chronicon*, which contains autobiographical records from the time period between the coronation of King Matthias and 1558.

A similar editorial inconsistency can be identified in the edition of *Carmina*. The editors number the poems based on Cristina Neagu's edition.⁷ The poems of the present edition were translated by Florentina Nicolae. The editors indicate in the introduction that they did not include poem 76 of the Neagu edition because it is not Olahus' poem but rather three lines quoted from Virgil's *Aeneid* (III, 493–495) (*Opere* 1: XLI). This is an excellent observation on the part of the editors, which Emőke Rita Szilágyi also points out in her review of the Neagu edition.⁸ Nobody besides Cristina Neagu considers these three lines by

Virgil to be Olahus's poem. Szilágyi also highlights the fact that Olahus quotes the three lines by Virgil in one of his letters addressed to Tamás Nádasdy (Vienna, 17 November 1539).⁹ Regardless, the editors included it among Olahus' poems as poem 77 (*Opere* 1: 931), noting that these three lines are "adaptations of Virgil's *Aeneid*." The editors' decision mystifies me because this is not an adaptation but a simple quotation. Olahus only rewrote a single word in the poem (*nobis* instead of *nullus*), which does not justify calling it Olahus' poem. All the more so because one word was also changed in the Latin text of this edition: *Iam sua, non alia* replaces *Iam sua, nos alia*, which Olahus quotes accurately. That being said, the Romanian translation is correct: *Noi suntem chemați...* This is thus a simple typo, just like *nullus~nobis* must be a simple slip of the pen rather than an adaptation. Or it may be the case that Olahus himself quoted a Virgil text that contained the word *nobis*.

A similar issue is the fact that *Processus sub forma Missae* was included in the edition. *Processus* is a piece on alchemy, describing the alchemic transmutations of matter by analogy with the Catholic mass. This work is popular among those researching alchemy, and even Carl Gustav Jung analyzed it. Cristina Neagu has tried to prove in various studies that *Processus* was written by Olahus, based on an unfounded claim by István Weszprémi, an eighteenth-century physician. Neagu later also began to doubt this idea, writing in 2019 that the author of *Processus* cannot be identified accurately.¹⁰ The editors nevertheless included it in the volume, noting that it is "a piece attributed to Nicolaus Olahus" (*Opere* 1: XLVIII). Except for István Weszprémi and Cristina Neagu (who later revised her position), nobody has ascribed this piece to Olahus. The English, Hungarian, or French editors of *Processus* have all rejected Olahus' authorship.¹¹ In spite of this, it is salutary that this highly popular and fascinating sixteenth-century piece has now also been published in Romanian, although there is nothing to prove that it was written by Olahus.

The inclusion of the brief autobiography of Olahus' secretary, Benedek Szercseky (Zercheky) (*Brevis descriptio cursus vitae Benedicti Zercheky*), in the volume is also problematic. Szercseky also mentions Olahus' death in the text: "[Olahus] died between 10 and 12 o'clock on 17 January 1568 in Nagyszombat" (*Opere* 1: 958–959). Therefore, this cannot have been written by Olahus himself. It is strange that neither the editors nor the translator (Florentina Nicolae) commented on this passage. *Brevis descriptio* was thus not written by Olahus but by Szercseky. If the editors wanted to include these two pieces (*Processus sub forma Missae* and *Brevis descriptio*) in the volume anyway, it would have been better to include them in a separate chapter, as pieces of uncertain authorship.

Except for *Hungaria*, *Athila*, a few poems, and parts of the correspondence, the rest of Olahus' works are published in Romanian translation in this volume for the first time. This is indeed a serious achievement on the part of the editors and the translators (Florentina Nicolae and Dorin Garofeanu in particular), even if the editors adopted Maria Capoianu's earlier translations in the case of *Hungaria*, *Athila*, and the correspondence. Therefore, only those letters were included in the edition, for instance, that Olahus wrote to his humanist friends during his stay in Belgium. These are clearly very valuable pieces of Olahus' correspondence, but they comprise only a fraction of it. The editors publish the Latin text of the letters based on the Arnold Ipolyi edition: *Oláh Miklós levelezése* (Monumenta Hungariae Historica, Diplomataria, XXV) (Budapest: M. T. Akadémia Könyvkiadó-Hivatala, 1875). Ipolyi completely disregarded the genesis of the codex containing the correspondence (*Epistolae familiares*). In other words, he did not consider the fact that Olahus, having selected the letters he wanted to include in the codex, gave them to three clerks to copy them. Olahus then checked and corrected the letters, in some cases completely rewriting them. Interesting conclusions can be drawn from these changes regarding Olahus' writing strategy, as well as the image he wanted to project about himself for posterity. Unfortunately, Ipolyi's edition omits these important details.¹² That is why it would have been a good idea to use the latest critical edition of the letters, which is also available online, during the publication and fine-tuning of the Latin text and its Romanian translations.¹³ For example, some of Capoianu's incorrect dating could also have been corrected this way. 13. *Calendas Septembris* is not 18 August but 19 August (*Opere*, 2: 1016–1017), while *sexto Idus Februarii* is not 7 February but 8 February (*Opere*, 2: 1040–1041). These two letters were written to Olahus by Levinus Ammonius, whose non-Latinized name is Lieven van den Zande rather than Levin von der Mande, as it appears in our edition (*Opere*, 2: 1010).

I also do not understand why the editors did not draw attention to the fact that they are also publishing new letters, compared to Capoianu's two above-mentioned editions and translations. These include, for instance, letters written to Ioannes Arnoldus, István Báthory (palatine of Hungary), provost Imre Bebek, Bishop of Trent Bernhard von Cles, Joannes Boclerus, Paulus Borius, and others. The editors justify publishing the letter written to Arnoldus by stating that "on the one hand, this is the earliest known letter by Olahus; on the other hand, it was written during the carefree days before the disaster of Mohács, and it highlights some of the unique characteristics of Olahus' personality" (*Opere*, 2: 1116). Both conclusions are incorrect. The publishers of the letter could also easily have seen this, had they looked at the abovementioned

critical edition of Olahus' correspondence. More specifically, Olahus wrote his first known letter to the College of Canons in the Chapter of Braşov (Kronstadt, Brassó) on 9 February 1523, while in Esztergom.¹⁴ The letter to Arnoldus was written on 23 May 1529, in Znojmo. It must have been an inadvertent mistake for the editor and the translator (Dorin Garofeanu) to say that the letter was written in the carefree days before the disaster of Mohács (*Opere*, 2: 1106), since it is well-known that the battle of Mohács took place three years earlier, on 29 August 1526. Znojmo (Znoyma) is also identified incorrectly. According to Garofeanu, it is Znairn, located by the Danube between Vienna and Linz (*Opere*, 2: 1151). In fact, it is Znojmo, located in Czechia, on the left bank of the Dyje River, the German name of which is Znaim or Znaym.

ONE PARTICULARLY valuable aspect of the volume is that it publishes Olahus' religious works, some of his minor historical works, as well as his two patents of nobility and parts of his will. Even in Latin, these were last published in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and this is the first time that readers can read them in Romanian. This has resulted in the most complete Olahus edition and translation to date, which naturally constitutes a real novelty for the Romanian readers and researchers. The Romanian translation is excellent, I did not find any mistranslations or errors in it. This edition will certainly give new impetus to the research on Olahus. The summary of the history of the reception of Olahus' works at the end of the volume is certainly of great help to researchers, as is the first-rate index of places and persons. The work of the editors and typesetters also deserves praise, since setting the bilingual texts parallel with each other is a very difficult task, but the typesetters and editors of this edition have done an excellent job. Even though a typo has remained in the edition of the correspondence (on page 1010, the name of Levinus Ammonius remains in the header, so it seems that we are reading his correspondence rather than that of Olahus), but none of this detracts anything from the value of this well-executed volume.

It also follows from the above that publishing Nicolaus Olahus' texts requires great attention and erudition, posing numerous challenges for the editors. That is why the work of the publishers, editors, and commentators of this edition deserves praise. This volume also shows that it is time for a critical edition of Olahus' works. This can only be achieved with the collaboration of a number of authors and Olahus researchers (Romanians, Hungarians, Slovaks, etc.). In any case, the reviewed volume will also certainly be of great help to the authors of any future critical edition.



Notes

1. *Hungaria et Atila*, edited by Adamus Franciscus Kollarius (Ádám Ferenc Kollár) (Vindobonae: Typis Ioannis Thomae Trattner, 1763).
2. Matthias Bel (Mátyás Bél), *Adparatus ad historiam Hungariae* (Posonii: Typis Joannis Paulli Royer, 1735).
3. Nicolaus Olahus, *Hungaria–Athila* (Bibliotheca Scriptorum Medii Recentisque Aevorum, Saec. XVI), ediderunt Colomannus Eperjessy et Ladislaus Juhász (Budapest: K. M. Egyetemi Nyomda, 1938).
4. On the relationship between the two versions see: Gergely Tóth, “The First Edition of Nicolaus Olahus’ *Hungaria* in Matthias Bel’s *Adparatus* (1735),” in *Nicolaus Olahus 450: Proceedings of the International Conference on the 450th Anniversary of Nicolaus Olahus’ Death* (Publikationen der Ungarischen Geschichtsforschung in Wien, Bd. XVII), edited by Emőke Rita Szilágyi (Vienna: n.p., 2019), 123–127.
5. Bél, 29; ÖNB, Cod. 8739, 25v.
6. Nicolaus Olahus, *Opere I, Hungaria–Chronicon*, translated, argument and notes by Maria Capoianu (Bucharest: Libra, 2002), 25.
7. Cristina Neagu, *Servant of the Renaissance: The Poetry and Prose of Nicolaus Olahus* (Bern–Berlin: Peter Lang, 2003), 291–352.
8. *Magyar Könyvszemle* 131, 2 (2015): 225.
9. Nicolaus Olahus, *Epistulae*, Pars II, 1534–1553 (Bibliotheca Scriptorum Medii Recentisque Aevorum, series nova, XIX/II), edited by Emőke Rita Szilágyi (Budapest: Reciti, 2022), 262, letter n° 610.
10. Cristina Neagu, “Nicolaus Olahus and the Processus sub forma Missae: Identity, Authorship, and an Obscure Work on the Art of Alchemy,” in *Nicolaus Olahus 450*, 214.
11. For the most comprehensive summary of these refutations see Farkas Gábor Kiss, Benedek Láng, and Cosmin Popa-Gorjanu, “The Alchemical Mass of Nicolaus Melchior Cibinensis: Text, Identity and Speculations,” *Ambix* 53, 2 (2006): 146–148.
12. More on this: Emőke Rita Szilágyi, “Editorial Procedures and Types of Censure: On the Upcoming Critical Edition of Nicolaus Olahus’ Correspondence,” in *Nicolaus Olahus 450*, 193–204.
13. Nicolaus Olahus, *Epistulae*, Pars I, 1523–1533 (Bibliotheca Scriptorum Medii Recentisque Aevorum, series nova, XIX/I), edited by Emőke Rita Szilágyi (Budapest: Reciti, 2018), <http://reciti.hu/2019/4989>.
14. *Epistulae*, I, letter I, p. 51.