

Vlado Rezar

A GREEK ELEGY BY THE ZAGREB CANON AND HUMANIST
GEORG WYRFFEL

Georgius Wyrffel (also Vurffel, Wyrffelius, Vurffelius, Virffelius; Ulm, ca 1535 – Eisenstadt, ca 1585) was a doctor of theology and a humanist. The existing biographical entries on him are incomplete, or, to be more precise, confusingly refer to two different persons of the same name who were simultaneously active in both Germany and Croatia. The first mention of Wyrffel's name can be found in the register of Ingolstadt University from 1552; after that, at the beginning of the 1560s his name appears as the scribe of Greek manuscripts kept in the Fugger family collection in Augsburg (e.g. the *Dionysiaka* of Nonnus copied in 1561, Vindob. phil. gr. 52). Although he came from a Protestant background, he started his ecclesiastical career as a Catholic priest in Croatia. Bishop Juraj Drašković brought him from the Tridentine Council to Zagreb, where he served from 1563 until 1573 as a canon and the head of the newly established school of the Chapter of Zagreb, and as a personal secretary to the bishop of Zagreb. During that period he was laurelled as a Latin poet in Vienna in 1568 and studied in Rome at the *Collegium Germanicum*, collaborating closely with Cardinal Sirleto, the renowned Hellenist. He then returned to Germany, and from 1574 he was a counsellor of the Bavarian Duke Albert V and the librarian in charge of the Greek manuscripts in his court library in Munich. Finally, he spent the last few years of his life as a parish priest in Eisenstadt, Austria.

A small part of his literary work - a few hundred verses mostly in Latin but also in Greek dedicated to German, Italian and Croatian patrons - was published during his life, while the rest of it is preserved in manuscripts down to the present day. Among a large number of humanistic Latin poetic treatments of Christian-Muslim conflicts on the battlefield, the poem presented here is a unique Croatian example of a »turcomachia« written in Ancient Greek. It represents a little-known battle between Turkish and Croatian troops on the river Glina in the vicinity of Zagreb in the August of 1573, in which Count Juraj Drašković, a humanist and Wyrffel's patron, led the Croatian troops to victory. Despite a number of orthographical and morphological errors, the poem consists of a plethora of Homeric stylistic reminiscences, suggesting that the author had a thorough classical philological education and that he was an accomplished writer of Greek verses. This comes as no surprise since his only printed Greek epigram (in Cicero's *De officiis*, 1569) proves that he received his education in Ancient Greek from the famous German Hellenist Hieronymus Wolf.

Keywords: Georg Wyrffel, Juraj Drašković, humanism, Greek elegy, battle at the river Glina