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Johannes Bisselius: "Deliciae Veris" — Frühlingsfreuden. Lateinischer Text, Übersetzung, Einführungen und Kommentar. Frühe Neuzeit 180. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2013. Pp. xv + 793. Hb, \$210.00; 149.95 Euros.

The reputation of the Upper Swabian Jesuit poet Johannes Bisselius (1601–1682) has—until this paradigm-shifting edition—languished in the imposing shadows of his renowned confrère Jacob Balde (1604–1668) and certain other celebrated Jesuit contemporaries, such as the dramatists Jacob Bidermann (1578–1639) and Jacob Masen (1606–1681). The book under review showcases Bisselius's lyrical talent, especially as manifest in his greatest—if heretofore unheralded—achievement: the three-part *Deliciae veris* [Joys of Spring], which appeared in Ingolstadt in 1638 and again, in the author's corrected version (used by the volume's editors), in Munich in 1640. The present edition is a product of more than a decade of concentrated analysis of early modern Jesuit poetry by the Heidelberg editorial team Sodalitas Neolatina, and belongs to the team's larger project (dating back to the early 1990s) of publishing critical editions of Neo-Latin poetry—a much neglected area of European literary history. The apparatus of this edition of Bisselius includes a thirty-six-page introduction by Wilhelm Kühlmann; the Latin text with facing-page German translation (some 340 pages); introductions and commentaries to each of the sixty-five elegies—a thematic "Elegia" may contain from one to seven individual elegies (350 pages); followed by nearly sixty pages of bibliography and registers. Like other Niemeyer editions produced by the Heidelberg group, this one is nothing if not generous in scope and rock-solid in scholarship.

To speak of Bisselius only as a poet requires some elaboration. Indeed, this was the case with most writers of the early modern period, long before one could earn a living by art alone. These figures have typically been remembered and studied in the much too narrow categories of our modern, discipline-defined histories. During the Thirty Years' War and its aftermath, the "poet" Bisselius also held positions of political and ecclesiastical authority in some of the most important parts of German lands, including professor of rhetoric in the bishopric of Regensburg (1623–1626 and 1631–1632), Maximilian I of Bavaria's court historian at Munich (1639), and senior pastor of Amberg's St. George Church in the final decade of his life. This was a crucial time for the Society of Jesus, engaged in the work of re-Catholicizing this erstwhile Calvinist city. It was in this dual role of poet and pastor that Bisselius contributed most effectively to the rise of the city's spiritually militant post-1634 Marian congregations. The dedication of the *Deliciae veris* to the powerful Benedictine abbot Urban Weber (Textor) in the Steiermark, who had given shelter to a number of

Bisselius's Regensburg colleagues during the 1633 Swedish invasion, testifies to the reach and resonance of his name. One could similarly enumerate the many Humanists with whom he carried on a lively correspondence. Among them, were the eminent Nuremberg Protestant pastor Johann Michael Dillherr and Nicolaus Rittershausen, a professor of law in nearby Altdorf. It may well have been through Dillherr that Bisselius came to know the work of the Nuremberg pastor's cosmopolitan friend, the poet Georg Philipp Harsdörffer. Bisselius was eventually to exploit Harsdörffer's European stories in certain of his sermons.

However, for all his importance to Jesuit political and educational causes of the seventeenth century, Bisselius will no doubt be most lastingly valued for his poetry. This, as we can now fully appreciate, stands shoulder to shoulder with the finest in the Neo-Latin tradition, transcending the confines of the adjective "Jesuit." On the other hand, *Deliciae veris*, while deeply indebted to classical *laus naturae* antecedents of Horace, Virgil, and Lucretius, is thoroughly interwoven with distinctively Jesuit themes, goals, and styles (first and foremost, Ignatian sensuality [*applicatio sensuum*])—as distinct from the more sober Protestant imagination). Bisselius, moreover, elucidates the consequences of the patristic understanding of nature's purpose: not empirical reality, but the manifestation of divine order and providence. For its meaning to become clear, nature requires divine illumination—for example, in Book 1, Elegy 4 ("Dawn"), the narrator, expecting the rising sun, is disheartened to see clouds prevent the "god" from breaking through: the god of nature has failed. But then, from a nearby church of Mary, comes an epiphany: the Virgin's shining image beckons him to enter. Elsewhere (Book 1, Elegy 1, 10–13), Bisselius combines historical knowledge with the natural motif of the migrating stork, and the ecclesiastical calendar's feast of the Chair of St. Peter (22 February). Following the flight path of the stork northwards from Africa, through lands lost to Muslims all the way to Antioch, and then south again (the stork's return as an intimation of spring), Bisselius effectively retraces and reaffirms the transmission of patriarchal authority to Rome. This is poetry as interpretive historiography, capable of being read today for both pleasure and edification.

The structural complexity—the magnificent architecture of the construct, not to mention the plethora of interconnected motifs (meteorological, zoological, botanical, legendary, biblical, folkloric, biographical, ecclesiological, and poetic)—that confronts the reader of these elegies—succinctly captured in the general introduction and elaborated upon in introductions to individual poems by the translators and editors—can hardly be summarized in so brief a frame as a book review. What ultimately distinguished Bisselius as a poet of greatness, Kühlmann argues, was his creation of a comprehensive and coherent *Weltgedicht* (literally, "world poem"), involving the management of universal externals by an

overarching subjectivity. This managing subjectivity, as Kühlmann explains, is to be discovered, a) in the way Bisselius “stages” his autobiographical role in the poems, and b) in how he establishes the “aesthetic difference” of his use of the motivic and topological tradition. To do all of this, observes Kühlmann, was to operate at a level of creativity well in advance of contemporary regulatory rhetoric—indeed to anticipate the modern self: “[wir haben] es mit einer originellen poetischen Konzeption an der Schwelle zur modernen lyrischen ‘Subjektivität’ zu tun” ([we are dealing here with an original poetic conception at the threshold of modern lyrical subjectivity], 27). This statement reiterates a position that Kühlmann has been propounding since at least 1994 (see his introduction to *Intertextualität in der Frühen Neuzeit* [Bern: Peter Lang, 1994]): namely, his affirmation—in spite of the postmodern tendency to disavow the autonomous self, perhaps most of all in early modern authors—of precisely this controlling individual subject-writer. This position would seem to be convincingly affirmed by the poetic work of Johannes Bisselius.

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