In 1583 the rediscovery of a supposed Ciceronian oration, the *Consolatio*, created a wave of excitement in all areas of the humanist Republic of Letters. Few literati were left out of the debate, and the opinion of Andreas Dudith Sbardellatus was also requested by several of his friends. His reply to a Prague-based Italian doctor was a declaration about the type of culture (and the type of scholarly milieu) he would identify with.

As for the booklet of the *Consolatio*, Mr [Giovanni Michele] Bruto also wrote to me a few days ago. But who am I to be able or be obliged to join the host of worthy and weighty censors? I have never passed so much time in these studies to be able to write anything that could merit praise, nor have I ever aimed to make a name in this field. Since the time I studied in Paris, which was almost 30 years ago, and later in Italy much longer, I have realised that it was much better dealing with things than with words or linguistic ornaments, and I turned towards the study of more solid things, which I have always attended to with as much passion as my court offices and legations permitted me, and even if I gained, through my studies, some savoir-faire in it (as they say), I can assure you that by now I have become completely useless, since for many years I have never or only rarely taken in hand similar authors. I am so much in love with philosophy, and with your medicine, and with theology—and I think mainly of the kind of philosophy and theology that is called scholastic (which way of writing refines the intellect and arms the tongue)—that I do not even have the desire—if not by occasion—to deal with other books, and if I sometimes do so, it is because of some mathematical books, in order to introduce my son to this fine and well-organised science.

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1 Cicero [i.e. pseudo-Cicero], *Consolatio* (Venice 1583). On the debate see W. McCuaig, *Carlo Sigonio. The Changing World of Late Renaissance* (Princeton 1989), 303–346. The echo of the publication was huge; probably several hundreds of letters were written on the subject.

2 ‘Quanto al libretto de Consolatione, me ne scrisse alungi di sono anco il Sig. Bruto; ma chi son’io che possi, o debba, entrare nella schiera dei lodati et gravi censori?’
This confession of an exceptional northern humanist sounds rather anti-humanist in as much as it turns against a philologically oriented Italian type of scholarship, in which, by the end of the sixteenth century, the major theological, social and philosophical problems were sublimated and rarely dealt with directly in writing any more. Andreas Dudith, however, did tackle some of the main issues of his times, and for a long while he was also not averse to public attention. He paid a price for the liberty of doing so, and indeed he praised that very liberty highly.

Andreas Dudith was par excellence a Central European figure: born in Buda, he was the son of an Italian mother and a Croatian father. While his father was a landless noble who died early in a battle against the Turks, his uncle Augustinus Sbardellatus was a powerful and erudite bishop in Hungary. Andreas Dudith published relatively little but, in his letters, discoursed on a wide range of sciences (theology, philosophy, medicine, astronomy, etc.). Among his correspondents one

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Non passai in questi studii mai innanzi tanto, ch’io potessi scriver cosa, che meritasse lode, né mi curai d’acquistarmi in ciò nome alcuno. Per ciò cominciando a conoscer sin dal tempo ch’io studiai in Parigi, che sono poco men di 30 anni, et poi in Italia molto più, che molto meglio era d’attendere alle cose, che alle parole et ornamenti del dire, mi voltai allo studio di cose più sodè, alle quali, sempre che li negottie di corte et legazioni me l’hanno permesso, ho atteso con mio gran gusto, et se pur per li studii miei giovanili ne restai un poco infarinato, come si suol dire, le prometto ch’hora ne sono del tutto <i>netto, perciocché da molti anni in qua non piglio simili scrittori in mano, se non di rado, essendomi tanto innamorato della filosophia et della vostra medicina et di teologia et questa poi come quella per lo più scolastica, come ella vien chiamata (la quale maniera di scriver affina l’intelletto et ingrossa la lingue) che non mi vien né anco voglia se non a caso di maneggiar altri libri, se non fosse alle volte per diporto qualche libro matematico per introdurre mio figlio a questa bella et ben ordinata scienza’ (Letter to Giacopo Scutellari of 20 December 1583, published by McCuaig, Carlo Sigonio, 339).

1 Andreas Dudith’s surviving correspondence of more than 1,300 items has been almost fully edited in a Polish-Hungarian collaboration. Andreas Dudithius, <i>Epistolae</i> 1 (1554–1567) (Budapest 1992); 2 (1568–1573) (Budapest 1995); 3 (1574) (Budapest 2000); 4 (1575) (Budapest 1998); 5 (1576) (Budapest 2005); 6 (1577–1580) (Budapest 2002). I wish to thank the chief editors Lech Szczucki and Tibor Szepessy for letting me consult the unpublished letters of the seventh and last volume.