

Jacob Jaspardus (fl. 1529–1549):

*“Homerulus noster Danicus”**

PERNILLE HARSTING

Renaissance humanism was introduced into Denmark in two phases, the first of which is represented by the small group of Danish scholars who studied at the universities of Rostock, Wittenberg, Cologne or Louvain in the beginning of the sixteenth century.¹ Here they were introduced to the ideas of South European humanism, which, on their return, they tried to apply to literature and education in Denmark. The early Danish humanists thus paved the way for the greater changes to come. It was not until after 1536, however, when the Lutheran Reformation had been accomplished in Denmark, that Renaissance humanism, mediated through Lutheran Germany, made its way into Danish culture and society. After the dismissal of the Catholic clergy and the reorganization of the schools and the university, the Danish state was in need of properly educated theologians and teachers, and many Danish students went to Germany, first and foremost to Wittenberg and Rostock, to obtain their master's degrees at one of the Lutheran universities.² From the meeting with Lutheran humanism, and especially through the influence of Melanchthon in Wittenberg,³ arose the learned Neo-Latin literature of the Danish Renaissance.

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¹ The preferred universities of the period 1511–25, cf. table, 78, in Jan Pinborg, “Danish Students 1450–1535 and the University of Copenhagen,” *CIMAGL* 37 (1981): 70–122.

² Vello Helk, *Dansk-norske Studierejser fra reformationen til enevælden 1536–1660* (Odense, 1987).

³ Cf. Minna Skafte Jensen, “Melanchthon, the Muses and Denmark,” forthcoming in *National Traditions: England and the European Renaissance*, ed. Jean R. Brink, and Pernille Harsting, “Epitalami latini della riforma in Danimarca (1536–1590): imitazione classica e rappresentazione luterana,” *Res Publica Litterarum* 15 (1992): 97–106.

Born in Århus in Jutland, probably at the beginning of the century, Jacobus Jaspardus Danus Arrhusiensis, as Jakob Jespersen often presented himself in his poetry, belongs to the period in between the two phases, a period of political and religious strife in the kingdom of Denmark.⁴ Like several of his fellow countrymen, Jaspardus left Denmark to study abroad⁵ and, in 1529, he was matriculated at the *Collegium Trilingue* in Louvain.⁶ In contrast with the other Danes, however, Jaspardus never returned to his native country. This was probably due to developments in Denmark. In 1523 there had been a rebellion against the king, Christian II, as a result of his policies, including the so-called Stockholm Bloodbath, in which the king had had at least 80 influential Swedes who opposed Danish dominion beheaded. The political and religious changes in Denmark may have meant better prospects for Jaspardus in the Netherlands, where the family of the expelled king had taken refuge. Another reason for spending the rest of his life abroad was the fact, which appears from his poetry, that Jaspardus was a fervent Catholic. An example of this is found in Levinus Crucius's *Parænesis* of 1543, an "exhortation to the Christian potentates, to turn the weapons of their treaty against the Turk, and against Luther and his conspirators."⁷ At the end of the *Parænesis*, in a poem composed as a "propemptikon in librum,"⁸ Jaspardus

⁴ On the life of Jaspardus, see C. F. Bricka, "Jakob Jespersen, en dansk Humanist paa Reformationstiden," *Historisk Tidsskrift* 5, no. 4 (Copenhagen, 1883): 302-15. Whereas Bricka explicitly "could not think of seeing anything of importance in this man" (314), Henry De Vocht, "History of the Foundation and the Rise of the *Collegium Trilingue Lovaniense* 1517-1550," vols. 1-4, *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 10-13 (1951-55), describes Jaspardus as "an enthusiastic and literary pupil of the *Trilingue*" (3:39); cf. also 3:244-7 and vols. 2-4 passim. Likewise *Biographie Nationale de Belgique*, vol. 10 (Brussels, 1888-1889), 490-93; H. Ehrencron-Müller, *Forfatterlexicon*, vol. 4 (Copenhagen, 1927), 285-6; M. L. Lausten in *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, ed. P. G. Bietenholz (Toronto, 1986), 2:234-5; the present article is the first attempt at a critical examination of Jaspardus's writings.

⁵ Jaspardus may have visited various universities. I am not convinced, however, of the very uncertain identification in *Corpus Reformatorum* vol. 1 (Halle, 1834), 835, no. 422, of Jaspardus with the anonymous "adolescens Danus" in Melanchthon's letter, referred to in P. S. Allen, *Opus epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterdami* (Oxford, 1938), 9:382, introduction to letter no. 2570, and in Desmet-Goethals, 13 n. 31, as a proof of Jaspardus's possible visit to Cologne in 1526, a date which is merely a conjecture in *CR*.

⁶ 18 May 1529, cf. Ellen Jørgensen, "Nordiske studerende ved Universitetet i Louvain," *Historisk Tidsskrift*, 9, no. 3 (1925): 389. Jens Worm, *Lexicon over danske, norske og islandske lærde Mænd*, vol. 1 (Helsingør, 1771), 495, suggests that Jaspardus was one of the Catholic monks expelled from Denmark in connection with the Lutheran Reformation. More probably De Vocht is right in describing Jaspardus as one of the Scandinavian students who "came to Louvain to find the development which their native land did not offer," (3:369).

⁷ "Parænesis Levini Crucii Curionis Boscepani, ad Potentatus Christianos, ut percusso inter se foedere, ferrum in Turcam, ac Lutherum, illiusque coniuratos, ac pertinaces asseclas convertant" (fol. A1).

⁸ On Renaissance "propemptika in librum" and the history of this literary genre, see Pernille Harsting, "Latin Valedictory Poems in the 16th Century: Tradition and Topicality of a Classical Genre," forthcoming in *A History of Nordic Neo-Latin Literature* ed. Minna Skafte Jensen.

rus recommends the book of Crucius as a safeguard against the Lutherans:

I Liber, et falsas doctrinas hæreticorum
 Argue, Lutheri schismata carpe feri.
 Corripe pestiferam, quam non erat Arrius ausus
 Evomere, hæreseos illius illuviem. (fol. F1r, 1-4)

The poem is written "in Parænesin hanc Levini Crucii Enomii Aldernardini sui amici singularis." This is the same Levinus Crucius who was the headmaster of the school in Bailleul and later taught as parish priest in Boeschepe,⁹ and with whom Jasperus began his career as a Greek teacher, probably after having studied for a period at the *Trilingue*.¹⁰ The friendship with Crucius was lifelong and of great importance for Jasperus's introduction to various literary patrons.¹¹

Much of our information on the life of Jacobus Jasperus comes from his own writings. Thus, in a letter of 1531, addressed by Jasperus to Erasmus of Rotterdam¹² in the hope that he might gain the *amicitia* of the latter, we learn that Jasperus used to belong to the court of Cardinal Lorenzo Campeggio, where he held the position as secretary to Jacobus Canta, the great Chamberlain of Campeggio.¹³ This was in 1530-1531, when the Cardinal was representing the Roman Church as a legate to Charles V at the Diet of Augsburg and afterwards at the Imperial Court in Brussels and in Ghent. When Campeggio left the Netherlands, Jasperus—so he writes in the letter to Erasmus—did not want to accompany him to Italy and was offered the position as teacher of Greek to Nicolaus Olaus, secretary of Mary of Hungary, Regent of the Netherlands and the sister of Charles V. In the dedicatory letter of the *Anactobiblion, et Heroepe* from 1544 (cf. below), addressed to the Archduke Ferdinand of Austria and to his elder brother Maximilian, Jasperus states that his service at the house of Olaus lasted for about ten years, that is until 1540-1541. Jasperus's life in the following years is documented by a series of Latin poems which he had printed in Antwerp from 1541 until 1549. In these books we can follow the career of Jasperus, who in the earlier works presents himself as "publicus professor Græcus, ac trium linguarum studiosus" (1541), "literarum Græcarum professor" (1544), and "pro-

⁹ Cf. De Vocht, 3:440.

¹⁰ Cf. De Vocht, 3:244.

¹¹ Among these were Franciscus Craneveldius and Rutgerus de Taxis, cf. Desmet-Goethals, 14, with references to the correspondence of Craneveldius, edited by De Vocht in *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 1 (1928).

¹² Cf. Allen, 9:383-6, no. 2570. The letter is dated Brussels, 19 November 1531. Cf. also the other preserved letter from Jasperus to Erasmus, dated Brussels, 25 July 1533, in Allen, 10:277-8, no. 2849.

¹³ Cf. Allen, 9:384, "... dominus meus Iacobus Canta Astensis, quem graece institui." On Canta, who is not mentioned in the *Diz. biogr. degli italiani*, see De Vocht, 3:111 n. 1; 173 n. 2; 244 n. 5, and J. F. d'Amico in *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, 1:258.

fessor Græcolatinus" (1544) and from 1547 adds an "M." for "magister" to his title, e.g., "M. Iacobus Danus" (1547).

There are still extant a limited number of copies of nine books by Jasparrus (all of them printed in Antwerp, some of them in two editions), various poems and epigrams printed in works by other authors, and a few letters to Levinus Crucius and to Erasmus of Rotterdam.¹⁴ All of Jasparrus's writings, however, and thus our information on his life, appear to date from before 1 April 1549.¹⁵

The nine extant titles are:

1. *Genethliacon* and *Epitaphium*, 1544 (in two editions: BB, J 27 and BB, J 28, 4 fols.). A poem on the birth and an epigram on the death of the daughter of René of Chalons and Anne of Lorraine. Included one Greek and two Latin poems to René of Chalons.
2. *Anactobiblion, et heroepe*, 1544 (BB, J 29, 27 fols.) A collection of poems and letters to various members of the nobility, most importantly to the Archduke Ferdinand of Austria and his brother Maximilian, and to their father, King Ferdinand of Bohemia and Hungary.
3. *Encomium Angliæ*, 1546 (BB, J 30, 16 fols.). A letter and a poem dedicated to King Henry VIII. Various epigrams to various noblemen at the English Court.
4. *Epitaphia*, 1547 (in two editions: BB, J 31 and J 32, 2 fols.). Two Latin epitaphs for Francis I of France and his son Charles; in the latter edition are also included translations of the epitaphs into French and Dutch.
5. *Epitaphium*, [1548] (BB, J 33, 2 fols.). Latin epigrams to Ida, the wife of Erasmus Schetz from Antwerp, followed by translations by J. Athenius (Dutch) and G. C. de Diest (French).
6. *Epitaphia*, [1548] (BB, J 34, 2 fols.). Latin epigrams with translations into French and Dutch to Isabella, the wife of Cornelius-Duplicius de Schepper, and to Elisabeth, the wife of Franciscus Craneveldius (cf. below).
7. *Neogynia*, [?] (BB, J 35, 2 fols.). A Greek and two Latin epithalamia for Iohannes Hilstius, a relative of the Schetz family, and Magdalena, the daughter of Franciscus Werner.
8. *Genealogia filiorum Nicolai Everardi*, 1549 (BB, J 49, 6 fols.). The book is dedicated to Nicolaus Grudius and deals with the children of

¹⁴ On the works of Jasparrus, see *Bibliotheca Belgica*, vol. 3 (Brussels, 1964), 593–601 (hereafter BB), and Lauritz Nielsen, *Dansk bibliografi 1482–1550* (Copenhagen, 1919), 47–50 (LN). To the list of epigrams, I can add 5 Greek distichs and *Idem latine* by Jasparrus in Levinus Crucius, *Viridarium Florum* (Antwerpen: Symon Cocus, 1548), fols. *2–*2v. Moreover, I have recently found a manuscript dedication, together with a few hitherto unknown manuscript poems by Jasparrus, in a collection of some of his works. An edition of and a commentary on this autograph by Jasparrus is under preparation.

¹⁵ The date of Jasparrus's dedicatory letter in the *Genealogia* (cf. BB).

Everardus, three of whom were the poets Nicolaus Grudius, Hadrianus Marius, and Johannes Secundus.¹⁶

As appears from the *Bibliotheca Belgica* the above titles are all to be found in libraries in Belgium. I can add that books 1¹⁷ and 2 are also to be found in the Vatican Library.

Only one of Jaspardus's works, in two editions, however, is now in the Royal Library in Copenhagen, namely:

9. *Epithalamium illustriss. D. Francisci à Lotharingia, Ducis Barri, Marchionis Pontis Montionis, ac inclytæ D. Christinae à Dania Ducis Mediolanensis Cæsaris Caroli Quinti Opt. Max. ex sorore neptis, ac Christierni eius nominis secundi, Danorum, Suecorum, et Norvegiarum regis filiæ, per IACOBUM IASPARUM DANUM Arhusiensem publicum Professorum Græcum, ac trium linguarum studiosum.* (From the frontispiece of the August edition, on which were also printed, apart from the colophon, three Hebraic quotations and a Greek epigram, cf. below).

This collection of encomiastic poems was published in two editions, both printed in Antwerp by Johannes Grapheus, the first in July (LN 101a) and the second in August 1541 (BB, J 25; LN 102). It is thus the earliest of the printed books by Jaspardus, and also the first known Neo-Latin epithalamium written by a Danish poet. In 1760, the Danish student Christian Pedersen Brandt¹⁸ produced a reprint of the August edition of the *Epithalamium* together with a dissertation on the book and its author (BB, J 26).¹⁹ In the following, I shall introduce the *Epithalamium* and in examining the two editions of July and August 1541 as well as the reprint and the dissertation of 1760, I shall try to throw more light on the author, Jacobus Jaspardus.

Like all of Jaspardus's writings, the *Epithalamium* is an encomiastic tour de force. In presenting his poetry to the Imperial Court and to influential persons in the Netherlands and abroad, Jaspardus appealed for recognition as a learned poet and made himself known to the various patrons who might supply him with the means of earning a living.²⁰ Jaspardus expresses this most clearly in one of the epigrams of the *Epithalamium*, addressed to the bridegroom, *Aliud ad sponsum, quo hortatur et admonet eum liberalitatis in doctos viros*:

Sis modo Mecænas haud deerunt Sponse Marones,
Artis enim nutrix extitit omnis honos. (fol. B1)

¹⁶ My brief description of this book relies on BB (cf. n. 29 below).

¹⁷ In the edition printed by Loëus (= BB, J 27).

¹⁸ On Brandt (1733–1780; from 1762 “famulus” at the Royal Library in Copenhagen), see H. Ehrencron-Müller, vol. 2 (Copenhagen, 1925), 31–32.

¹⁹ The dissertation is to be found in several copies in the Royal Library in Copenhagen, two of them with Brandt's manuscript annotations in the MS. Gl. Kgl. Saml. 2549 in quarto.

²⁰ Thus, the *Encomium Angliæ* serves as an introduction of Jaspardus to the English Court. In all likelihood, however, Jaspardus never carried out his intention of visiting England.

The Maecenases whom this particular Maro wanted to glorify were the Princess Christina of Denmark and Francis of Lorraine, the Duke of Bar. The *Epithalamium* celebrates their wedding which took place in Brussels, on 10 July 1541.

Christina was born in 1521 or 1522, the youngest daughter of Elisabeth of Austria (the sister of the Emperor Charles V and of Mary of Hungary, Regent of the Netherlands) and the above-mentioned Christian II, King of Denmark. On the frontispiece of the printed book, Christina is presented as the daughter of "Christierni eius nominis secundi, Danorum, Suecorum, et Norvegiorum regis." Although in 1523 Christian II was forced to take refuge in the Netherlands and, in 1531, when trying to recapture the Danish crown, was condemned to lifelong captivity in Denmark, neither Christina, nor her elder sister, Dorothea, who had grown up together at the Imperial Court in Brussels, ever abandoned their claim to the three kingdoms as their rightful inheritance. Jaspardus's dedication is quite in line with this conviction. Princess Christina had already been married once, in 1534, to the Duke of Milan, Francesco Sforza, who left her a thirteen-year-old widow and Duchess of Milan in 1535.²¹ The bridegroom, Francis of Lorraine, was born in 1517 and died in 1545, only four years after having married Christina.

The *Epithalamium* by Jaspardus consists of eight fols. with fifteen poems which may be divided into three sections. The first section is formed by five poems (of 20, 18, 32, 12, and 96 verses), four of which are written in elegiac distichs while the last is polymetrical. The poems all describe the bride, the bridegroom, the celebration of the wedding, and ideas on marriage. The second section consists of six epigrams in Latin, followed by a Greek translation. They were addressed to (1) Mary of Hungary, (2) the bridegroom, (3) the bride, (4) René of Chalons, (5) the Chancellor of Brabant, and (6) the bridegroom. The third section includes a *Carmen extemporale* (66 distichs), a *Hendecasyllabon* (41+4 verses), a Greek *Homerokentron* (28 verses), and finally an *Epithalamium caeci* (28 verses) and two distichs *De autore caeco. Votum*.

In the first poem of the collection, the *Epithalamium*, Jaspardus allows Christina to present herself in a monologue:

Inclyta Christierni Cimbrorum filia regis
 Regis Danorum sum minor atque vocor
 Regis Danorum, Suecorum, Norvegicorum
 Nata minor natu corpore maior ero.
 Grator est multo procero in corpore virtus,
 Quamvis exiguo sint sua dona data. (fol. A2, 1-6)

In his use of the monologue, Jaspardus follows the example of the *Danish Chronicle*, a fifteenth-century rhymed history which, owing to its popularity,

²¹ The marriage may not have been consummated; at least this is what Jaspardus wishes to indicate in a printed note on fol. A2 in the August edition of the *Epithalamium*: "Puellam vel virginem vocat, quia multae etiam in coniugio virgines manserunt."

was the first book to be printed in Danish in 1495. Already in the opening of the poem we get a clear impression of Jaspardus's poetic style. In his description of the imposing stature of Christina, who is "nata minor natu corpore maior," one suspects Jaspardus of having chosen the Plinian expression "procero in corpore" (*Ep.* 4.9.23, *Pan.* 4.7 etc.) instead of Seneca's "pulchro e corpore" (*Ep.* 66.2) because of his (i.e., Jaspardus's) obvious fascination with stylistic figures. Thus the poem opens with an epanastrophe between the verses 1 and 2: "regis" / "Regis," and continues with an anaphora (verses 2-3): "Regis Danorum" / "Regis Danorum." In verse 4 Jaspardus has combined chiasmus, antithesis, alliteration, and paronomasia:

	Nata	minor	natu	corpore	maior	ero
chiasmus		A	B	B	A	
antithesis		x			x	
alliteration	1	2	1		2	
paronomasia	x		x			

Finally, "procero" and "corpore" in verse 5 form an anagram, "multo" and "exiguo" an antithesis, and verse 6 is concluded with two pairs of alliteration, "sint sua" and "dona data!"

In the second poem, *Aliud*, Jaspardus introduces the topos of *paritas*: equality of birth, beauty, and *mores*:

Omnia conveniunt, ætas, genus, ordo, figura
Congruit et paribus moribus integritas. (fol. A2, 7-8)

Other appropriate topoi such as the beauty of the bride and the manliness of the bridegroom are elaborated here as in several of the poems, and Jaspardus likewise directs his *vota* for long lives and offspring to the bridal couple:

Si vates Danus, si non est pectore vanus,
Intra annum puer his vagiet in thalamis. (fol. A2v, 15-16)

There are quotations from and allusions to various classical authors in the poems, first and foremost to Catullus, Virgil, Martial, and Ovid, and to the prose of Cicero and Pliny. In the *Hendecasyllabon*, however, we find more than mere allusions to classical texts. In fact, this poem is a verbatim copy of Claudian's first *Fescennina de nuptiis Honorii Augusti*:

Princeps chorusco sydere pulchrior,
Parthis sagittas tendere certior,²²
Eques Gelonis imperiosior,

²² Cf. n. 23 below.

Quae digna mentis laus erit arduæ? [etc.] (fol. B3, 1–4)

The comparison of Francis with Honorius is flattering, of course, but I am not convinced that this is Jaspardus's aim. More probably we have here a case, not of imitation, but of plagiarism. In spite of the fact that the *Fescennina* had already appeared in several editions before 1541,²³ Jaspardus apparently wants his readers to regard the poem as written entirely by himself. To this end he replaced the lion of Honorius,

Gaudensque sacris vulneribus leo
Admittet hastam morte superbior (Claudian, 14–15)

with an animal more familiar to his part of the world, the goat (!):

Gaudensque adactis vulneribus caper. (fol. B3, 14)

And after the last verse of the first *Fescennina* (formed by 41 verses), Jaspardus added four verses in order to make the poem refer directly to Christina and Francis:

Beata regis filia Danici.
Beata tanto Principe patria:
Læti parentes foedere nobili
Quod non resolvet livor edax. Vale. (fol. B3v)

The *Hendecasyllabon* is followed on fol. B4 recto by a Greek *Homerokentron*. This is the last poem of the first edition, the July edition. To the August edition of the *Epithalamium* was added on fol. B4 verso an *Epithalamium cæci* and a poem *De autore cæco. Votum*. These poems "by a blind poet," the last poems of the collection, have given rise to some speculation about the author, Jacobus Jaspardus. The remaining part of this paper is dedicated to a discussion of "the myth of the blind poet."

Jaspardus was unknown to Danish scholarship before 1760, when at the Royal College, Regensen, in Copenhagen, the Danish student, Christian Pedersen Brandt presented a reprint of the *Epithalamium*, "Quod tandem ab imminente interitu e latebris iuxta exemplar suum emendate protraxit" (1), together with his "dissertationem historico-criticam, eius atque Autoris Cœci fata ulterius examinantem" (ibid.). The book that Brandt had bought at an auction in 1753 in Odense on Funen was a copy of the August edition of the *Epithalamium*, which indeed he did save from "imminent destruction." Brandt's is the only extant copy and now belongs to the Royal Library in Copenhagen. In his dissertation, Brandt concentrates on the sparse biogra-

²³ I have inspected the incunabula of 1482 (Vicenza) and 1495 (Venice) as well as the Aldine edition of 1523, the Paris edition of 1530, and the Lyon edition of 1535 (but have not had access to the Basel edition of 1534). In all of these the *Hendecasyllabon* is entitled *Epithalamium*. All the above editions have "certior" in verse 2 (as has Jaspardus), where modern editions have "doctior." Jaspardus's text is closest to that of the Aldine.

phical material he is able to draw from the *Epithalamium* about its author, who was otherwise totally unknown to him. Referring to the first of the two distichs entitled *De autore cæco. Votum* on the last folio of the August edition:

Hos qui composuit versus, quàm hoc cernere vellet,
Luminibus captus nobile coniugium, (1-2)

Brandt assumes that Jaspardus belongs to the noble catalogue of blind poets, and claims that: "nullus lectorum existimabit eum veritati repugnantia et non concilianda de se ipso testari, dum sæpius folio epithal. ultimo . . . se esse cæcum, et antea se esse publicum Professorum Græcum simul affirmat" (10). Brandt adds that the faults in the three Hebraic quotations on the frontispiece of the August 1541 edition,²⁴ "quas tamen in meo olim impresso exemplari tam foede et monstrose typographus expressit" (14), must have resulted from the blindness and not from any ignorance on the part of the author.

In 1970 the Royal Library in Copenhagen came into possession of the first edition of Jaspardus's *Epithalamium*, printed in July 1541. Had Brandt known this rather than the August edition, he would undoubtedly not have made Jaspardus's supposed blindness a subject of discussion. The August edition is a reprint of the July edition with a few changes. On the frontispiece of the August edition, after the Hebraic quotations which were reproduced from the July edition in the incorrect form observed by Brandt, Jaspardus added a Greek distich: "everything usually survives in its second and better version."²⁵ The implied reference to the July edition must have made the epigram incomprehensible for Brandt,—in fact, he prudently avoided commenting on it.

Most of the changes from the July edition to the August edition are the corrections of misprints and the rewriting of some lines. Most important is the addition of the two altogether new poems, the *Epithalamium cæci* and the poem *De autore cæco. Votum* on fol. B4 verso. On this page, which is blank in the July edition, Brandt rests the whole of his argument concerning the blind poet, "dum sæpius folio epithal. ultimo . . . se esse cæcum . . . affirmat" (cf. above). Indeed, the initial verses of the *Epithalamium cæci* refer to a blind poet:

Munera dent alii, pauper dat carmina cæcus,
Quod nisi dat cæcus carmina pauper habet?

Moreover, there is no doubt that this is a poem from the pen of Jacobus Jaspardus himself. The alliterations and the *figuræ etymologicae* of the verses 19-20 speak for themselves:

Non peto pro numeris, numeres mihi munera multa.

²⁴ Ruth 4. 11; Prov. 19. 14; Gen. 24. 60.

²⁵ Δεύτερα τῶν πάντων ἔσαι εἰσθεὺς ὑπάρχειν, ἔργων τῶν προτέρων πράγματα βελτίονα.

Sed peto pro paucis paucula versiculis.

The 1760 editor, Brandt, concludes from these lines that Jasperus was not only blind, but also poor, and claims that he shared Homer's fate, "uterque enim paupertate pressus in alieno solo extra patriam poëmata sua scripsit" (14).

Indeed, Jasperus appears to have had bad eyesight. In a letter of 1543 to Levinus Crucius, concerning the proofreading of the *Parænesis*, and printed as a preface to this work, Jasperus regrets that "unum et alterum erratum, forte incidit," as he is unable to read very small characters. In 1544, however, Jasperus is described as a master of dancing, an activity that requires at least tolerably good eyesight.²⁶

Et salit ad modulos aptissimus: ac citharoedos,
 Ut nymphas risu protinus exhilaret.
 Officioque viros mulcet, mulcetque maritas,
 Aptè virgineis perplacet ille choris.
 Nemo hic saltantem dicat vidisse Camelum,
 Aut Onagrum longis candidus auriculis. [!]

Yet, whether or not the blindness of Jasperus was a passing phenomenon, surely the words of Jasperus in the *Epithalamium cæci* and in the following *De autore cæco. Votum* should be read in other than the literal sense. In fact, the poetical *decorum* of the Renaissance requires of the author that he present his writings as a humble present from a humble poet. Whether or not Jasperus suffered from blindness and poverty, this characterization of "the blind poet," however, may also be seen as an elaboration of the topoi appropriate to the literary genre. This includes the "captatio benevolentiae" as well as exhortations to the addressee that he should be generous towards his future client.

With the first poem of the collection, in which Christina is presented in a monologue, Jasperus proved that he was capable of writing in the voice of a character. Accordingly, I believe that Jasperus's portrait of the blind poet is not a self-portrait but a literary device. The blind poet is of course an allusion to the king of poets, "blind Maeonides." Thus, the readers of the *Epithalamium cæci* are expected to create a mental linking of Jasperus with Homer, however presumptuous. The Jasperus-Homer link is already announced by the *Homerokentron*. In fact, this poem, composed of whole verses selected from both the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*, namely the verses that Jasperus found appropriate for celebrating a wedding, proves that Jasperus knew his Homer very well indeed. The Homeric poems also constituted the basic material of Jasperus's teaching as we understand from the above-mentioned 1544 letter in the *Anactobiblion, et Heroepe*. Here Jasperus writes that as a

²⁶ Introductory poem by Franciscus Craneveldius to *Anactobiblion, et heroepe*, fol. A2, 7–12.

teacher of Greek to Nicolaus Olaus for a period of ten years “prælegi inter varia utrumque Homeri vatis opus à prora ad puppim illique toto anno ne unum quidem intermisit diem, in quacumque etiam expeditione, aut negociis fuimus” (A6). Jaspardus’s mastery of the Greek language is indisputable and exceptional for a Dane of his time. It was thanks to his learning that Jaspardus gained a foothold in the Netherlands and was able to enter the service of Jacobus Cantua and Nicolaus Olaus. Jaspardus’s Homeric aspirations were certainly encouraged by his contemporaries. Thus, one of his patrons, Franciscus Craneveldius,²⁷ referred to Jaspardus’s skills in a poetic *laudatio* which forms the commendatory preface to the *Encomium Angliæ* of 1546 addressed to Henry VIII:

Laudibus innumeris dignus celebrabere Dane,
 Principibus possis quòd placuisse viris:
 Quòd linguas plures nosti quàm norit Homerus,
 Carmina quòd scribas mille Latina die:
 Græca ferè totidem, summo dignissima plausu,
 Vulgatis itidem Rhythmica mixta modis. (fol. 2r, 1–6)

The description of Jaspardus’s immense daily production, which to a modern reader seems ridiculous, is in fact a learned reference to Horace, *Sermones* 2.1.4, and a piece of flattery!

Though Jaspardus received support for and understanding of his poetic program from many patrons, it is evident, however, that not all of his contemporaries valued his poetry as he might have wished. Erasmus did not approve of Jaspardus’s poetic refutation (now lost) of Julius Caesar Scaliger’s *Contra D. Erasmus*, on which he commented: “Accepi et Dani naenias, quem optarim esse episcopum in sua Dania. Fortasse me non odit, sed plus nocet intempestiva benevolentia quam faceret inimicus. Quid inutilius quam ineptis versiculis lacerare Scaligerum. . . ?”²⁸ Likewise, the dedicatee of Jaspardus’s *Genealogia filiorum Nicolai Everardi*, Nicolaus Grudius,—rather surprisingly, it seems²⁹—attacked Jaspardus in two epigrams,³⁰ one of which is entitled *In Iacobum Gasparum Danum, qui, ut modestus videretur, scripsisse se dicebat invita Minerva*:³¹

²⁷ On Craneveldius (1485–1564) see *Biographie Nationale de Belgique* vol. 4 (Brussels, 1873), 484–86.

²⁸ Letter from Erasmus to Nicolaus Olaus, cf. Allen, 10:199, no. 2792, dated Freiburg, 19 April 1533. Cf. also 10:125, no. 2736, *ibid.*, 5 November 1532 and addressed to Viglius Zuichemus: “Scaligeri libellum nondum perlegi. Ioannes [sic] Danus insectatus est illum carmine; mallem illum quiescere.”

²⁹ In spite of many efforts, it has not been possible for me to obtain access to the *Genealogia*, which may contain the solution to the riddle.

³⁰ Nicolaus Grudius, *Epigrammatum Lib. II*, 67–68, in *Poemata et effigies trium fratrum Belgarum* (Leyden: Ludovicus Elsevirius, 1612).

³¹ In the autograph manuscript, Bon. Vulcanii codex 70, 142ff., Grudius corrected (with

Invita qui te credam cecinisse Minerva,
Quum tamen ad numeros rideat illa tuos?

The other epigram was written *De Iacobo Gasparo Dano, versificatore inepto*:

Vate scrobem Dano geminam moriente parârunt.
Tassius³² hinc hospes, hinc pius ædituus.
Errorémne putas? an factum numine divûm?
Condat ut hæc artus? altera versiculos?

Excessive praise and ridicule are the jokers of encomiastic literature. Jaspardus met both in his adopted country. In his native country, on the other hand, Jaspardus was forgotten until two centuries after his death. In 1760, however, Christian Pedersen Brandt laid claim to Jaspardus as belonging to Danish literary history. This monopolization may seem improper considering Jaspardus's lifelong exile in the Netherlands. Yet, in his poetry, Jaspardus insisted on his Danish origin, always referring to himself as *Jacobus Jaspardus Danus Arrhusiensis* or, in his later writings, merely *Jacobus Danus*. Jaspardus's Danish (= exotic!) origin is also presented as a distinctive mark in the laudatory poem by Franciscus Craneveldius which introduces the *Anactobion, et heroepe* of 1544:

Natus in extremis Cimbrorum finibus, inter
Danorum scopulos carmina docta canit. (fol. A2, 5-6)

And probably in Brandt, who took Jaspardus at his word when reading and editing the *Epithalamium*, Jaspardus would have found a literary advocate after his heart. Thus,—though evidently he did not, as Brandt would have it, share Homer's fate of lifelong blindness and exile forced by poverty—Jaspardus's aspirations were probably at long last fulfilled, in 1760, when he was recognized in Brandt's dissertation as "Homerulus noster Danicus."

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an eye on publication?) the original "In quendam, qui" to "In Jacobum Gasparum Danum, qui." I wish to thank the manuscript department at the Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit in Leiden for kindly having supplied me with photographs of the two epigrams.

³² I.e., of Rutgerus de Taxis, cf. n. 11 above and De Vocht, 3:246 n. 8.