

Latin valedictory poems of the 16th century

Tradition and topicality of a classical genre

Pernille Harsting

In 1554 the 22-year-old Dane Hans Frandsen had his first collection of Latin poems, *Elegiarum Liber Primus* (The first book of elegies) published in Wittenberg, where he had been studying since 1551. The second poem in the collection, *Ad Librum, Elegia II* (To the book, Elegy II), is a valedictory poem, not to one of Hans Frandsen's fellow students, but to the poet's own work. It begins (vv. 1–22) like this:

Parue liber confecte mihi iuuenilibus annis
Tun' dominum linques tam cito quæso tuum?
Hei mihi quam uereor si scrinia nostra relinques
Ne subeas multis multa dolenda modis.
Plurima cogere duræ conuitia linguæ
Plurima cogere non toleranda, pati.
Forsitan et finget non æquus carmina lector
Quæ poterunt miseris te lacerare modis.
Posthæc te uerbis sæuis agitare studebit
Et uitium pedibus dicat inesse tuis.
Quod magis est, rutilum forsân iacieris in ignem
Te quando reputet criminis esse reum.
Te quæcunque tamen potis est fortuna manere
Ferre iuuat, ceptum non remorabor iter.
Vade sed incultus, qualem te nostra Thalia
Fecit, quæ prorsus paupere fonte fluit.
Vade bonis auibus precor, et loca grata saluta
Præmia quæ lactis prima dedere mihi.
Et si quis quærat, quid agam, me uiuere dicas
Hic ubi Leucoreos irrigat Albis agros.
Artibus ingenuis quoque nos incumbere dicas
Quas omni cura, docte Philippe, doces.

You little book, which I have written in my youth,
will you truly leave your master so soon?

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Alas, if you leave your home, my desk,
I am afraid that you will meet many evils.
You will be forced to face insults
and to put up with much that is insupportable.
Perhaps a hostile reader will invent poems
to destroy you with his bad verse.
Then he will try to provoke you with abuse,
such as that there be errors in your verse feet.
What is more, you risk being cast on the fire,
if he finds you guilty of the charge.
But it is good that you will bear whatever fate awaits you,
and I shall not delay your departure.
Leave, unpolished as you are – as my Muse has created you,
she who flows from a truly humble source.
Depart with good omens and greet the dear places,
which brought me up in my youth.
And if anyone asks how I am, answer
that I live here, where the Elbe waters the fields of Wittenberg
and that I immerse myself in the noble sciences,
which you, learned Philippus, teach with great care.

After this greeting to Melanchthon Hans Frandsen exhorts his book not to be ashamed of its modest exterior – that is not what matters among scholars – and urges it not to forget its master, and to remember well what he has said.

Hans Frandsen's poem to the book is divided into four parts: first, a lament that the book wishes to leave him, together with a warning of the dangers that await it; then, an acceptance of its travelling plans; next, a eulogy to the book's modesty; and finally, good wishes for the journey and an exhortation not to forget him who has been left behind. The poem is clearly a pastiche of a valedictory poem, in which the book plays the role usually accorded to the person to whom such poems were normally addressed. This substitution is not, however, Hans Frandsen's own good idea. In classical

Roman literature collections of poetry were often accompanied by some parting words, which thus became the poet's commentary or preface to his work and, as is the case in Frandsen's poem, this farewell often anticipates, with a greater or lesser degree of seriousness, any criticism that the book might meet later. Hans Frandsen's poem imitates Ovid's valedictory poem to one of his last works, the *Tristia* (Sad poems). While Frandsen was, I assume, a student of his own free will in Melanchthon's Wittenberg, Ovid was in forced exile by the Black Sea, where he had been banished by Emperor Augustus in AD 8, probably as a punishment for an earlier collection of poems, the *Ars Amatoria* (The art of love). Ovid did not want to prevent his book from travelling home to Rome, but he wished that he too could do so and asks the book to tell the world about his views

on his exile and to intercede with the Emperor for him. Even though young Frandsen's homesickness cannot be compared with the Roman poet's, he draws on numerous verbal and circumstantial associations (primarily with *Tristia*, but also with other works by Ovid) to signal a shared destiny with his great model.

Ovid's *Tristia* was one of the classical works that the pupils of the grammar school in 16th century Denmark first encountered. There is therefore no need to be impressed by Hans Frandsen's knowledge of literature, but rather by his ability to make his own personal tone heard against the background of such familiar associations. While unmistakably an elegant imitation of Ovid, the poem also contains elements not found in the classical model, namely the fourfold division, which structures the poem into a lament, a turning-point of acceptance, a eulogy and the concluding good wishes and hopes to be remembered in the future.

In order to find a model for the structure that we meet in Hans Frandsen's poem, we must first return to classical valedictory poetry: To play with the content of a genre and, for instance, create an effect of surprise by replacing one of the generic elements with another that is actually alien to the genre pattern presupposes that the genre is recognizable, or, in other words, to some extent, a familiar, defined quantity. And, indeed, classical literature offers numerous examples of valedictory poems to persons about to set off on a journey: among the best known are Horace's *Carmen* I.3, Propertius' *Elegia* I.6 and Statius' *Silvae* III.2.

These poems can scarcely be said to follow the same pattern, however, and when in our Greek and Latin classes we learn to categorize them as *propemptika* (plur. of *propemptikon* [*carmen*], an accompanying poem, from Greek *προπέμπω*, accompany), this is something of an anachronism, although, as I shall show below, an anachronism with a solid tradition behind it. In fact, the first time we meet the words *προπεμπτική λαλιά* and *προπεμπτικός λόγος* (a speech to a traveller) as the designation of a genre in the preserved literature from antiquity is in the second part of the 3rd–4th century treatise on epideictic rhetoric attributed to Menander Rhetor from Laodikeia in Asia Minor.

According to Menander Rhetor, a propemptic speech is a speech containing good wishes addressed to a person about to leave on a journey. There are three kinds of propemptic speech: the first consists chiefly of admonitions and good advice, which is characteristic of speeches made by a person of higher status to a person of lower status, for instance, by a teacher to a pupil. In the second type the speaker primarily expresses his warm feelings for the traveller. This is the case when the speaker and the traveller are equals, for instance, at the parting of two friends. The third kind of propemptic speech focuses on the praise of the person who is leaving. Such a speech will normally be made by a person of lower status for a person of higher status, for instance, Menander Rhetor writes, when the representative of a town bids an imperial governor farewell.

Menander Rhetor now proceeds to

discuss the second type of speech, that made by a friend to a friend. Such a speech should be divided into the following four parts: (1) In the introduction the speaker should express his grief and complain at the loss of a friend, and shared sporting experiences may be recalled. The speaker can then praise the town his friend is going to leave and draw attention to the libraries, lecture halls and other attractive buildings in the town. (2) Now the speaker should express his resignation to the inevitable and his acceptance of his friend's decision to travel. (3) The next part of the speech should be formed as a eulogy of the traveller's qualities, which bring joy both to his parents and his native town. Here one should also speak of the prosperity that awaits the traveller on his return. On the basis of his acquaintance with the traveller the speaker should mention how his home town will benefit from his abilities, and if he is well educated, it will be appropriate to predict the brilliant career that awaits him, for instance, as a teacher of rhetoric. Menander Rhetor stresses the importance of speaking only in accordance with the truth and what is generally accepted; otherwise the audience will react negatively. One can also praise the traveller's beauty, but in order to avoid misunderstandings as a result of focusing too much on this subject, one should point out how his high morality contributes to his beauty. (4) In conclusion, one should ask the traveller to remember old friendships. One should describe his route by land or by sea, and, finally, one should ask the gods to protect him on his journey.

We can see that Hans Frandsen's

poem follows the arrangement recommended by Menander Rhetor for a propemptic speech. Furthermore, the poem contains good advice and admonitions as is appropriate in a valedictory address from a person of higher status to a traveller of lower status. But how had Hans Frandsen gained acquaintance with these prescriptions from late antiquity?

Among the sophist Himerius' writings from the 4th century AD there is a brief introduction to the genre of the *propemptikon* together with a number of examples of propemptic speeches; but we find actual rules for the genre only in the presumably slightly earlier treatise by Menander Rhetor. This is the only major treatise on epideictic rhetoric that has survived from antiquity; but on the basis of fragments of other late antique teaching material and other evidence of late antique literary practice we can conclude that the treatise was not the only one of its kind, and that it reflects established practice in the schools of rhetoric in late antiquity and contains what may be defined as applied *progymnasmata* or elementary rhetorical exercises. The treatise is, in fact, a regular handbook of epideictic rhetoric, in which the various genres are presented in a formalized and clearly structured fashion.

As was the practice in the schools of antiquity, Menander Rhetor's examples illustrating the rules for the various genres were drawn from classical (in this case Greek) literature (e.g. Homer, Plato, Thucydides), but there are also several references to contemporary sophists (e.g. Aristides, Nico-

stratus, Philostratus). The second part of Menander Rhetor's treatise seems to have met a demand for a handbook containing instructions on the appropriate tone to be used, primarily in formal contexts towards the imperial Roman officials, who administered the distant, less classically educated provinces, for instance, in Asia Minor or North Africa. Menander does, in fact, give specific rules for speeches to governors (*περὶ προσφωνητικοῦ*) and for speeches, in which one invites governors to the games (*περὶ κλητικοῦ*). There are also rules for a number of speeches intended for private occasions, for example, at weddings (*περὶ ἐπιθαλαμίου*) and birthdays (*περὶ γενεθλιακοῦ*).

As appears from the survey of the rules for valedictory speeches, Menander Rhetor prescribes not only the appropriate invention and arrangement of various speeches, but also how a given kind of speech must be adapted to various relationships between speaker and addressee. In other words, the treatise takes into account the demands posed by social decorum and formulates rules for literary decorum, so that one can read here what should be said to whom and on what occasions.

Menander Rhetor's treatise on epideictic rhetoric was popular in Byzantium, as can be seen from the many preserved epideictic speeches and poems, composed in accordance with the late antique precepts, and from the fact that Menander Rhetor's writings were diligently copied in Byzantium and included in rhetorical compendia.

In the Renaissance the work was imported from Byzantium to Italy, where

it was translated into Latin and the vernacular and thus made accessible to a wider audience. This Renaissance interest in the late antique treatise was, as I see it, due to the fact that as opposed to classical writers on rhetoric Menander Rhetor gave specific rules for each epideictic subgenre, thus offering explicit definitions within the difficult field of decorum.

By the middle of the 16th century Menander Rhetor's treatise had achieved a wide circulation in Italy. In Greek it was to be found in a large number of manuscripts, many of them copied in the 15th and 16th centuries, and in 1508, furthermore, it was printed in Venice in the first volume of Aldus Manutius' *Rhetores Graeci*. Since the beginning of the 15th century handwritten Latin translations of, at any rate, one of the chapters had been in circulation; a translation into Italian of another chapter of the treatise was published in 1553, while a translation into Latin of the whole work appeared in 1558. Menander Rhetor's precepts were also incorporated into Renaissance treatises on poetics and rhetoric. One example is Julius Caesar Scaliger's *Poetices Libri Septem* (Seven books on the art of poetry), which was published posthumously in Lyon in 1561 and exerted great influence on late Renaissance and, especially, Baroque poetics. Scaliger rarely mentions his sources, but from its structure and choice of vocabulary it is evident that his chapter on *Propempticon* is based on the precepts for the genre in Menander Rhetor's treatise.

We should not imagine that Menander Rhetor's treatise was actually studied by

Danish schoolboys in the Renaissance. Probably Hans Frandsen only learnt to write *propemptika* after beginning to study under Melanchthon in Wittenberg, which had already been reached by the currents from Italy by the beginning of the 16th century. This can be seen from, for instance, Melanchthon's extant *Προπεμπτικὸν ad Ioh. Hessum Amicum* (CR 10, 482, no. 9) from 1520. In 1556, however, a school book was published which aimed at unifying standards in Danish grammar schools and bringing them up to those in schools abroad. This *Grammatica Latina in Usum Danicae Iuventutis Uniformitatis Causa* (Latin grammar for the Danish youth for the sake of uniformity) was printed in Magdeburg and reprinted in Wittenberg in 1558 and in Frankfurt-on-Oder in 1559. The book's publisher and distributor was Claus Føerd, who paid the printing expenses and is presented on the title page as a citizen and bookseller of Copenhagen, while the editor was the reformer of the Danish school system, the Bishop of Zealand, Peder Palladius. In his preface Palladius writes that the book is intended for use in the grammar schools in Denmark, Norway, Iceland and the Faroes and has been published not because there were no textbooks already and certainly not to disparage "our much loved preceptor" Melanchthon's works, but in order to promote greater and more uniform knowledge in Danish school children (A3r–A3v). Palladius' wish to introduce a standard work more directly rooted in Italian humanism may nevertheless contain a certain opposition to Melanchthon's domination of the Danish school system. In fact, the *Grammatica Latina*

contains four important texts by three of the influential grammarians of the Renaissance, namely the Dutchman Hermannus Torrentinus' revision of and commentary on the first part of the famous school book from the Middle Ages, Alexander of Villa Dei's versified *Doctrinale*, the Italian Antonio Mancinelli's likewise versified *Versilogus* (Prosody) from 1488 (in the revised version by the German Johannes Murellius); and two works by the Dutchman Johannes Despauterius, his *Syntaxis* from 1509 (in the revised version by Sebastianus Novimola from Duisburg) and his book on grammatical figures, *De Figuris Grammaticalibus*, from 1519. Among these figures Despauterius includes "Epithalamium", "Epitaphium" as well as "Propempticon", which is defined as follows (op.cit. 41v, translated from Latin):

A propempticon is a poem which is written to accompany someone, as one finds it in Sidonius; the word comes from propempo, i.e. accompany, send ahead, escort with pomp and circumstance.

Despauterius' classical authority for the genre of *propemptikon* is, then, not Menander Rhetor, but the poet and bishop Sidonius, who lived in the 5th century AD. We know that Sidonius received a traditional education in the school of rhetoric, which in the 5th century included a thorough knowledge of handbook rules such as Menander Rhetor's for epideictic rhetoric. Yet, the only poem in Sidonius designated as a *propemptikon* – that is, the poem Despauterius must be referring to in his description of the genre –

is a "*propemptikon* to the book" (*Carmen* 24), that is, a poem which builds a bridge between the classical and the late-classical traditions by bearing the late-classical designation but otherwise having been written in imitation of the classical "poems to the book".

I doubt whether Sidonius was known and read in 16th century Denmark, but it is a fact that a number of well known classical poems, among others those by Horace, Propertius and Statius mentioned above, were categorized and studied as examples of *propemptika*. This does not seem reconcilable with the fact that the genre term only appears in the 3rd–4th centuries AD, that is, long after the lifetimes of the poets mentioned, and, indeed, the rather different poems do not give the appearance of having been written according to an established and formalized generic pattern. The genre designation does, however, appear in certain of the manuscripts, in which the classical texts have been preserved, and probably derives from the literary critics and copyists of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages, who in their categorization of the texts were thinking in terms that became current around the 3rd–4th centuries AD. The practice of applying late-classical generic terms to classical literature was adopted by the Renaissance scholars and reinforced, I believe, as a result of the re-discovery of the epideictic treatises of late antiquity.

To sum up: a Danish grammar school pupil would be familiar with short theoretical definitions of the various genres of occasional literature; no doubt these definitions were fleshed

out by the teacher and illustrated by classical poems or collections of examples (*florilegia*). – But the schoolboy probably did not acquire more than basic skills in writing occasional poetry until he entered university. Here the composition of *propemptika* not only formed part of the Latin syllabus, but also acquired an actual function outside the classroom.

On completing grammar school a steadily increasing number of commoners were admitted to the University of Copenhagen. Here they began their studies, and after a year or two they were ready to set out on study tours in Europe, equipped with recommendations from their home university. As a rule, their goal was to study theology at the Lutheran universities in Germany, which in the middle of the 16th century primarily meant Wittenberg and Rostock. (By way of contrast, the travels embarked on by the sons of the nobility often included both France and Italy and had a more general cultural aim.) In the introduction to his book on Danish and Norwegian study tours from the Reformation to Absolutism (*Dansk-norske studierejser fra reformationen til enevælden 1536–1660*), Vello Helk points out how difficult it was to obtain financial support for these tours. Some commoners found it possible to incorporate a study tour in their education by accompanying the sons of the nobility abroad as tutors. Others were supported by parishes or cathedral chapters, while yet others acquired private patrons. A few study tours, among them Hans Frandsen's further studies of medicine in France in 1559–60, were financed by

the king, but an actual royal travel scholarship was not introduced until 1569.

A study tour would often take in more than one university, but ended as a rule with the gaining of a master's degree from a recognized Lutheran university in Germany. The graduation ceremony and the departure from the foreign university were often marked by *propemptika*, composed by the new graduate's fellow students, who were thus afforded an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of Latin and the classical literary genres. The earliest Neo-Latin poem, written by a Dane and furnished with the genre designation, is, as far as I know, Knud Bramsen's *Προπεμπικόν*, printed in Wittenberg in 1564. In the following I have chosen to let the genre in Danish Neo-Latin poetry be represented by a slightly later poem, Jakob Jensen Holm's *Carmen προπεμπικόν*, which was printed in Wittenberg in 1573 and dedicated to three young noblemen, Falk Gøje, Mogens Gøje and Erik Lange and to their tutor, Søren Skøtt.

The brothers Falk and Mogens Gøje were the sons of Falk Gøje and Ida Ulfstand, but after their father's death they were brought up by their uncle Kristoffer Gøje. In 1573 young Falk Gøje was 18 years old, while Erik Lange was 19 and Mogens Gøje probably somewhere in his 20s. Søren Skøtt's age is unknown, but it is probable that he was about 30 in 1573, as at that time he had already been Falk and Mogens Gøje's private tutor for at least 10 years. In fact, he had been sent abroad once before, in 1566, as the two young noblemen's tutor, at which time the youngest, Falk Gøje, was a mere 11

years of age. We can follow their first stay abroad in detail through the letters the two brothers and their tutor sent home to Kristoffer Gøje and Ida Ulfstand. Thus, we learn that from 1566 the brothers and their tutor stayed in Strasbourg with the heir to the Melanchthon school, Johannes Sturm, and the many letters report on the progress made by the boys in Latin, German, Greek and Music, and on the difficulties experienced in transferring money abroad to cover the great expenses involved in the trip (Bang 1897, 119).

In 1570 Søren Skøtt and his charges were back in Denmark. Here Søren Skøtt received royal permission for a substitute temporarily to take over the benefice he had been granted in Grenå. This made it possible for him to set out on another study tour, which this time would also include France and Italy. On this tour he was responsible both for the two Gøje brothers and for Erik Lange.

On the night of 24 August 1572 the party was unfortunate enough to be in Paris, the very night the Dowager Queen, Catherine de' Medici and the Catholic Guises demonstrated their power in France and had the Huguenots, the French Protestants, butchered in the streets of Paris. On 30 September 1572 Søren Skøtt wrote – in Danish – to Ida Ulfstand (Rørdam 1869–71, 250):

Dear madam (...) I have the honour to inform you that your sons, Erik and we all with God's grace are well and that we have safely arrived here in Strasbourg from France.

Skøtt goes on to describe the problems regarding their further travels – they are certainly not going to Catholic Italy! And on the terrible events in Paris (Rørdam 1869–71, 251):

How many fine folk, counts, countesses and others have perished for God's Word in all France I think your noble sons have told you. God be praised that we with all our countrymen have escaped. (...) I have never before seen such a misery as took place there; blood from the slain ran like water in the street. (...) Neither nobleman nor commoner, women or children were spared; the highest died first so that those that killed them could become rich of their goods. As soon as they were dead, they stripped both men and women naked, and then they dragged them by the legs down to the water; the others ran after them and threw ordure over the poor martyrs. Then they threw them into the river.

One may wonder how much of this is an actual eye-witness account when one reads at the end of the letter (Rørdam 1869–71 p. 253):

We were in Paris for just over 14 days after this persecution before we dared to go out and procure our passports; we came here to Strasbourg without danger on 18 September. This cruelty took place on St. Bartholomew's Night at 11 o'clock and has continued there since.

As the plans for continued travel in France and proceeding to Italy had to be abandoned, the young noblemen and their tutor considered the possibil-

ity of travelling via Heidelberg to Leipzig or perhaps to Wittenberg. The choice fell on the latter, and here Søren Skøtt completed his studies by taking a master's degree. This piece of information and the date of the party's departure from Wittenberg appear from the Latin title page of Jacob Jensen Holm's *Carmen προπεμπικόν*:

A valedictory poem to the Lords Mogens and Falk Gøje of Skjærsø and to Erik Lange of Engelsholm, who are all distinguished by noble birth, education and virtue, and to the scholarly and learned Master of Divinity Søren Skøtt from Grenå, written by Jacob Jensen Holm, when they departed from Wittenberg for their fatherland in the month of September 1573.

In the introductory part of the poem Jacob Jensen Holm writes of the new bright star, which appeared one night in the constellation of Cassiopeia and portended evil times. – This probably refers to the supernova that had been registered on several occasions in November 1572, but is known first and foremost from Tycho Brahe's treatise of 1573 *De Nova Stella* (Of the new star). – While the poem's narrator sits beneath the stars and observes this phenomenon, he thinks with horror of the current threats to Christendom, until he is overcome by sleep. In dreams he sees a castle situated on the top of a mountain. Inside the castle sit the three Fates, spinning the warp of human life. Suddenly they tear the threads, sending multitudes of people to their deaths. Beside himself with terror, the narrator prays for help from God, who summons the Muse Euterpe

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to interpret the vision for him. The fact is, Euterpe says, that we must all die; God is eternal, and He often exposes mortal man to a hard fate. At this very time, God's enemy, the Roman Pope, has sent his murderers against Christians, but Christ will win at the last and lead their souls in triumph to heavenly joys. The narrator's compatriots can bear witness to the fact that it is possible to endure and survive these earthly horrors. Euterpe enjoins the narrator to laud his fellow countrymen in a poem. Thereby he will also benefit the cause of Christianity. Then she vanishes, and the narrator awakens from his dream and begins his laudation. – Denmark is looking forward to receiving the young men who have escaped innumerable dangers through God's help. Their knowledge makes them an ornament to their country; it is a fine thing to have studied science at so young an age – it leads directly to the stars and contributes to the praise of God and the prosperity of the nation.

Now follow encomia to each of the travellers:

Mogens Gøje is well versed in justice; with his legal skills he is an asset to his fatherland. (MG became a close associate of King Christian IV and administered Herlufsholm's School for Sons of the Nobility from 1609 until his death in 1615.)

Falk Gøje has a talent for poetry and for languages. He will achieve all that he wishes and take the safest way if he

makes virtue the goal of his endeavours. (FG was a friend of Tycho Brahe, who appointed him in his will, together with Erik Lange, as a guardian for his heirs. FG shared Erik Lange's faith in alchemy and died in debt in 1594.)

Erik Lange is admonished to do whatever he embarks on thoroughly and enjoined to live in accordance with what is right and to make honour the goal of his life. (In 1590 EL became engaged to Tycho Brahe's sister and married her in 1602. His "thorough" interest in alchemy led to his being sentenced to a debtors' prison in 1590, and in 1592 he had to leave Denmark. In 1596 he was sentenced to be deprived of his estate and he died in Prague, probably in 1613.)

The longest of the encomia is addressed to the new Magister, whom Jacob Jensen Holm designates as "the learned Søren Skøtt". He will reach the top although he started from the very bottom, for he is supported on his way by the Muse Calliope. He has always sought to understand the causes of things and is skilled at physics and geography. With his new master's degree he will lead men's souls on the right road.

Euterpe has enjoined him to sing all this, the narrator says; he himself would not have been able to do so. Now he expresses his wishes for a good journey and good weather to travel in and concludes the poem with the following lines (vv. 283–97):

Festinate, vocat redeuntes patria voto
Sollicito, vobis multoque applaudit amore,
Inque Sinum recipit: vultu fortuna sereno
Vos vocat, et spondet fulgentes omine fasces
Felici, vobis populi sancitque fauorem.

Solliciti excipiunt reduces qui sanguine iuncti
Omnes cognati, vel queis cum sanctior vsus
Delictæ matres: dextras coniungere dextris
Sollicitæ exoptant, et vota ad sydera voluunt.
Ite Deo tuti, Christus comitetur euntes
Immotus custos, circumuallata periculis
Vita laboriferis, ipso duce nulla nocebunt
Brachia latronum sæuo pallentia letho,
Non pestis, non insidiæ, non acre venenum
Aspidis, hic patriæ tutos vos limine sistat.

Στενάζομεν βαρούμενοι.

Make haste; anxious, your fatherland summons you
and acclaims you with much love
and takes you in its arms: fate calls on you
with serene eyes and promises you brilliant careers
and guarantees you the people's favour.
Anxious, all your near relatives receive you returning home
and so do your loved mothers, who are even closer to you.
Anxious, they long to press your
hands and they send prayers to Heaven.
Go safe with God; Christ will accompany you on your journey
as an unfailing guardian. Life is surrounded
with toilsome dangers; but with Him as guide
the highwaymen's murderous arms cannot harm you,
nor can plague or ambush or the serpent's sharp
tooth. He will guide you safely to your fatherland.

We sigh, deeply desolate.

Jacob Jensen Holm's poem is considerably longer than the other preserved *propemptika* (Hans Frandsen's poem to his book contains 48 lines, Holm's poem 297). For the dramatic descriptions of the Fates and St. Bartholomew's Night Holm has made successful use of a number of lines taken from Virgil's *Aeneid*, but his poem, unlike Hans Frandsen's, is not based on a single model. Thus, among other things, one can sense the presence of Melanchthon's astronomical-religious poems, which found considerable fa-

vour at the time, as a source of inspiration.

With respect to Menander Rhetor's fourfold structure of the propemptic speech, in Holm's poem the part lamenting the decision to travel has been replaced by a lament of the horrors of St. Bartholomew's Night; and the otherwise obligatory 'remember-me-and-the-time-we-spent-together' has been completely left out. However, in the description of the young men's virtues and qualities and their importance for their native country we recog-

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nize the late-classical genre precepts. This is also true of the description of the journey and the warning against the many dangers that threatened travellers both in antiquity and in the Renaissance. In accordance with the generic pattern the poem ends with a prayer that God will afford the travellers His protection.

Jacob Jensen Holm and Søren Skøtt were both theologians and probably of the same age: Holm was 30 in 1573. He acquired his master's degree in Wittenberg in about 1574 and returned home to an excellent career, which included being appointed Bishop of Ålborg in 1587. As already mentioned, Søren Skøtt returned home to a living in Jutland.

Jacob Jensen Holm writes as a friend on an equal footing to Søren Skøtt, who is actually pointed to as the real addressee of the poem, both on the title page, where the emphasis is on the presentation of Skøtt, and through the fact that the major part of the laudation is addressed to him. In relation to the three young noblemen Holm presents himself in the manner of a preceptor with good advice and exhortations, a role that was easy for him inasmuch as he had been tutor to the young nobleman Absalon Juul on his study tour to Wittenberg only two years earlier. Note, however, that Holm disclaims any authority: it is the Muse who has placed the words in his mouth!

In Danish Neo-Latin literature, then, we find two kinds of *propemptika*, both composed in accordance with Menander Rhetor's rules and both deriving from and relating to university studies: (1) poems like Hans Frandsen's in im-

itation of classical poems to books, and (2) actual valedictory poems, in which fellow students lament an imminent separation after a period of communal studies abroad and celebrate their friend's recent acquisition of a master's degree.

We are in possession of numerous valedictory poems proper from the 16th century. The earliest of them were all printed in Wittenberg, where the Danish students met the late antique genre in their classes, and where the right circumstances existed for the actual use of the genre: it was primarily to Wittenberg that Danish students travelled in the middle of the 16th century, there it was that they took their degrees, and there it was that they separated when the time had come for one or more of their number to return to Denmark. Quite a few of the valedictory poems proper are entitled *propemptikon*, but as the genre became more widespread, we find many congratulatory poems which comply with the prescribed arrangement and contents of the genre, without, however, having been designated as *propemptika* in their titles.

Nearly all the poems are written by fellow students to a newly fledged graduate and therefore belong to Menander Rhetor's group of *propemptika*, in which author and addressee are on an equal footing and the focus is, accordingly, on their mutual affection. As young Hans Hemmingsen, son of Niels Hemmingsen, Professor of Divinity at the University of Copenhagen, wrote in his *propemptikon* to his fellow countryman Desiderius Foss, when the latter left Wittenberg in 1568 (v. 3):

Carmina iam dicenda: neget quis carmina amico?

Now poems shall be declaimed, for who can deny his friend a poem?

The *propemptikon* was thus a literary genre which flourished in the 16th century among students, who got to know each other while studying abroad and as educated commoners constituted a class of rising 'new men' in Danish society. The *propemptika* derive from an antique tradition, but the intense travel activity of the Renaissance gave the genre topicality. In the students' valedictory poems elements of the classical genre are combined with references to current events, and the poems always reflect an actual parting.

The event that forms the background for an occasional poem, such as a *propemptikon* or an *epithalamium*, is often introduced in an epiphany scene in the poem; Jacob Jensen Holm's poem is a good example of this. As is meet and proper, the narrator of Holm's poem is in the countryside, outside the town and close to the divine forces. When in his dream he begs God to help him and God sends the Muse Euterpe, she enjoins the narrator/poet to relate what she has told him.

The epiphany is thus both a rhetorical-compositional device and at the same time an involvement of a Christian and a pagan authority for the poem. The apparently unproblematic coupling of the two authorities is a distinguishing feature of the Northern 16th century Renaissance. Where Italian Renaissance humanism is characterized by a return to the sources, to classical and late-classical Greek and

Roman literature, which formed the pattern for Renaissance poetry and prose, this mainly secular current was brought to Denmark via Lutheran Germany with the result that not just the classical texts, but the classical texts in a Lutheran context and interpretation formed the pattern for Danish Renaissance literature. This amphibiousness, 'Lutheran Humanism', the dissemination of which derived from Melancthon's authority and impact on the educational system, is manifest in the epiphanies of occasional poetry. Here we rarely meet invocations of divine inspiration, as in Homer's "The wrath of Peleus' son, O Goddess sing..." On the contrary, in most Danish occasional poems from the Renaissance, inspiration is depicted rather as in the opening of Hesiod's *Theogony*, as a power coming from above, which charges the passive poet with passing on a divine message. In Jacob Jensen Holm's *propemptikon*, the narrator prays to his Christian God and receives in answer a pagan Muse, who appears to him as a veritable *angelus*, a celestial messenger. The narrator is already seized by fear at the horrors of St. Bartholomew's Night, horrors which the author subtly presents as a nightmare that is unfortunately not limited to the world of dreams. Otherwise Euterpe's sudden appearance would probably have had the same devastating effect on him as that depicted in many of the other poems. In them the celestial messenger has to reassure the poet,

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who is struck by fear and dread, like certain shepherds in a field.

The tone of the *propemptika* is Christian in a classical formulation and in a late-classical genre framework, which had undergone only slight changes and had been successfully adapted to the conventions and customs of a later age.

The most important topics in the Danish Neo-Latin valedictory poems are the celebration of the master's degree and the importance of fellowship, not in connection with athletics as in Menander Rhetor, but in connection with common "service in Minerva's army", as university studies were usually called in the poems.

The acquisition of a master's degree was a turning-point in the life of the successful candidate: now he would leave the student's life and the fellowship at the foreign university behind him and set out on yet another dangerous journey, on which plague, robbers and war were real threats. One chapter of his life was over, another was about

to begin: ahead of him a career would be waiting in Denmark. Looked at as a process of initiation, the acquisition of knowledge was one step, the overcoming of the dangers of the journey yet another, and the goal of it all was a successful return and acceptance in Danish 16th century society. Hence the two-way movement of the mood in the poems: grief and uncertainty at parting and great expectations of the future.

As a rule the return from a study tour was followed by the new graduate's accession to an official post – and by a wedding feast, which presented fellow students and colleagues with fresh opportunities for employing their acquired Latin skills in the service of occasional literature, friendship and Lutheranism. All this is described most precisely by Hans Hemmingsen in the last lines of his already mentioned *Προπεμπικόν* from 1568 to his fellow countryman Desiderius Foss (vv. 45–53):

Interea his quæ te teneant loca dissita terris,
Sis memor oro mei et Spazi cui Musica curæ est:
Et rude carmen habe, nostri hoc ceu pignus amoris.
Post tibi cum roseo per mollia tempora serto
Circumuincta sacras VIRGO sistetur ad aras,
Felix illa dies, felix dicetur et annus,
Carmina tunc melius tibi forte et plura canemus.
Viui, vale, Christo vadens comitante benigno,
Hic mihi principium, finisque hic carminis esto.

But no matter in what distant part of the world you find yourself,
remember me and music-loving Spazius.
Accept my unskilled poem as a pledge of my love.
Later when a virgin with a rose wreath around her soft hair
is placed by your side before the sacred altar,

– happy shall that day be called, and that year as well –
at that time I shall certainly sing more and better poems to you.
Live well, fare you well, you who leave with Christ as your
benevolent companion,
He shall be the beginning, He shall be the ending of my poem.

References

- On Hans Frandsen see Friis-Jensen & Skafté Jensen 1980 and 1984. Cf. also Carl S. Petersen in *DBL* (2) vol. 7, 1935 pp. 217–18, and Ehrencron-Müller vol. 3, 1926 pp. 107–9. The *Elegiarum Liber Primus* is to be found in various libraries, cf. L. Nielsen 1931–3, no. 630.
- On the curriculum of the Danish grammar school see Kristian Jensen 1982.
- I have used the edition and translation of Menander Rhetor's work in Russell & Wilson 1981 (the translation of "The Propemptic Talk", 395–399.10, is found on pp. 126–35). On Menander Rhetor's treatises and the tradition of epideictic rhetoric, see Russell & Wilson 1981 pp. xi–xlv; on the *fortuna* of Menander Rhetor's work in Byzantium, see Hunger 1978 pp. 88–9 and *passim*; and on the *fortuna* of the work in the Renaissance, see Harsting 1992 b.
- On the genre of *propemptikon* in antiquity, see Jäger 1913, Cairns 1972 p. 3 and *passim*, and Russell & Wilson 1981 pp. 304–5 with reference also to D. Wachsmuth (*Kleine Pauly*, s.v. *Propemptikon*), who rejects any influence of the prose *προπεμπτικός λόγος* on the classical valedictory poems, as advanced by Jäger and later (in a wider context) by Cairns. I agree with the latter on the importance of generic studies of classical as well as of later literature, but I believe that the treatises of Menander Rhetor from 3rd–4th centuries can be used only very cautiously and with reservations to illuminate the literary practice of the preceding eight centuries, whereas they appear to have had a considerable impact on Renaissance literature, cf. Harsting 1991 and 1992 b. In Barner 1970 pp. 68–70, the usefulness of a rhetorical approach to Baroque literature is illustrated with a reference to the *propemptikon*.
- Julius Cæsar Scaliger's chapter on "Propempticon, Apopempticon, Hodoeporicon" is found in Scaliger 1561, book 3, chapter 104, pp. 156–7.
- A copy of part of the 1556 edition of the *Grammatica Latina*, edited by Peder Palladius, is to be found in the University Library in Uppsala, the 1558 and 1559 editions in the Royal Library in Copenhagen, cf. L. Nielsen 1931–3, nos. 675–7.
- Helk 1987 offers a full exposition of the Danish study tours from 1536 through 1660.
- The *Προπεμπτικόν* by Knud Bramsen (1539–1608) is to be found in one copy only in the University Library in Uppsala, where it was discovered in 1961, cf. Ballhausen 1990 pp. 347–8 and p. 350.
- On Jakob Jensen Holm (1543–1609), see Bjørn Kornerup in *DBL* (2), vol. 10, 1936 pp. 442–3, and Ehrencron-Müller vol. 4, 1927 pp. 112–13; on Mogens Gøje (d. 1615), see C.F. Bricka in *DBL* (1) vol. 6, 1892 pp. 84–5; on Falk Gøje (1555–1594), see Thiset in *DBL* (1) vol. 6, 1892 pp. 65–6, and Thoren 1990 p. 355; on Erik Lange (1554–1613), see C.F. Bricka in *DBL* (1) vol. 10, 1896 pp. 18–19. Peter Zeeberg has kindly supplied me with the information on Erik Lange's age, based on his studies of the poetry of Tycho Brahe.
- The *Carmen Προπεμπτικόν* by Jakob J. Holm has been preserved in one copy in the Royal Library in Copenhagen, cf. L. Nielsen 1931–3, no. 950.
- The letters from Søren Skøtt, now to be found in the Royal Library in Copenhagen, are edited in Bang 1897 and in Rørdam 1869–71.
- Examples of Melanchthon's astronomical poems are CR 10, coll. 538–40, nos. 108 (1530), 113 (1533), 116–17 (1534). A contemporary and positive critic is Scaliger 1561, book 6, chapter 4, "Recentiores", p. 308.
- On the concept of 'authority', see Weimann 1988 especially pp. 90–121: "Luther und

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Shakespeare: Autorfunktion im Umbruch", and on Melanchthon as a 'Weimannian' "Autor" and "Autorität" in relation to the Danish Neo-Latin occasional poetry, see Harsting 1992 a.

On Hans Hemmingsen (1550–1602), see H. F. Rørdam in *DBL* (1) vol. 7, 1893 pp. 323–4, and Ehrencron-Müller vol. 4, 1927 pp. 5–6. I have not been able to identify "music-loving Spazius" v. 46. Hemmingsen's *Προπεμπτικόν* was printed in a small collection of poems

entitled *Eivóδια amicorum ad humanissimum virum, virtute ac eruditione præstantem M. Desiderium Fossium Danum, cum Viteberga peregrinandi gratia discederet* (Wittenberg: Johannes Krafft, 1568). The *Eivóδια*, which has only been preserved in one copy (in a private collection – I wish to thank the owner for kindly giving me access to this material), is registered in Rosenkilde and Ballhausen 1987, no. 291, and presented in Ballhausen 1990 pp. 349–51.

Published with the support of grants from
The Joint Committee of the Nordic Research Councils for the Humanities
Ingeniør N. M. Knudsens Fond
Landsdommer V. Gieses Legat

© The Authors and Odense University Press 1995
Printed in Denmark by AJO Tryk as. Odense
Cover design by Ulla Poulsen Precht
ISBN 87-7492-961-5
ISSN 0078-3331

The picture on the front cover:
Christian IV, King of Denmark, and Axel Oxenstierna, Chancellor of Queen Kristina of
Sweden, playing dice, a "war-game (*alea belli*)" with "golden liberty (*aurea libertas*)" at stake. The
Swedish-Danish conflict is a main theme of much Neo-Latin literature in the Nordic countries.
Netherlandic engraving c. 1644. (Museum of National History, Frederiksberg.)

A History of Nordic Neo-Latin Literature

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Odense University Press
Campusvej 55
DK-5230 Odense M

Odense University Press