

PAULUS HELIE – A SIXTEENTH-CENTURY DANISH HUMANIST AND HISTORIAN



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Paulus Helie was a Danish Carmelite and provincial prior during the Reformation. Among his works is the Chronicon Skibyense, a Latin chronicle about events in Denmark from 1046 to 1534. In this article the chronicle is seen not as a historical work, but as a work of literature. His use of words of classical, medieval and renaissance origin, his style, and his use of classical rhetoric are analysed. Finally, the chronicle is compared with historical works written in Italy in the fifteenth century.

1

In the 1520s and 1530s the humanist Paulus Helie, a Catholic reformer and the last provincial prior of the Carmelite Order, played an influential role in Danish politics. At first, he was a friar who supported King Christian II (1513–1523) and the Lutheran reform movement, but later he became their antagonist, using all his time and energy to write against the tyrant king and the Lutherans. The historians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries called him a “turn-coat,”¹ those of the nineteenth “a fiercely Catholic fighting cock,”² and those of the twentieth “the first political journalist in the history of Denmark.”³

During the last one hundred and fifty years many scholars have studied the life and work of Friar Helie. They have, however, all overlooked two aspects which are of crucial importance to our understanding of the man as a writer.

First, they have neglected his language. Before I began to study his works fifteen years ago, no one had been aware of his use of classical rhetoric.⁴ So, if you want to understand Helie, you ought first of all to read the

¹ E.g. Bartholinus 1666, 115 and Olivarius 1741.

² Palludan-Müller 1858–1859, 10.

³ Arup 1925–1955, IIA 391.

⁴ Rübner Jørgensen 1995, 2000a, and 2000b.

rhetoical treatises of Cicero, Quintilian and Erasmus. Having done that, you understand that his occasional vehement expressions were not necessarily the consequence of a vehement temper, as scholars usually tended to think, but a deliberate choice in order to emphasize the importance of the matter in hand. Briefly speaking, they were a consequence of his humanistic schooling.

Second, no scholar has been interested in his range of reading. Random tests show that he must have been rather well-read, since he was familiar not only with the classical authors and the Church Fathers, but also with several writers from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, they might be theologians, historians, or doctors of law and medicine. Certainly, works of Erasmus and Luther were known by others in sixteenth century Denmark, but who had read the French theologian and philosopher Lefèvre d'Étaples, and who would make references to Italian authors like Petrarch, Ficino, and Biondo or translate a book by Poliziano? Or read a treatise on public poor relief, written by the Spanish humanist Vives? Not many in Denmark, I think.

Considering the large number of authors Helie is able to use as authorities in his writings and combining this with his knowledge of language and his linguistic skills in general, you realise that when it comes to intelligence, knowledge and ability to express oneself, he must have outclassed most of his contemporaries. Actually, he may have been the greatest Scandinavian intellectual of the first half of the sixteenth century.⁵

2

Among Friar Helie's historical works the most famous is the so-called *Chronicon Skibyense*, found hidden in the wall behind the altar in the village church of Skiby in 1650.⁶ The manuscript itself has no title and no author name, but has been attributed to Helie since the late eighteenth century.⁷ By comparing the script with Helie's handwriting known from his signature and annotations in printed books this attribution has been confirmed beyond doubt.⁸ Thus, what we have here is something unique: an early sixteenth century chronicle in the author's own hand.

Let me show you what it looks like:

⁵ About his ecclesiology and anthropology, see Rübner Jørgensen 2002 and 2007.

⁶ The Árni Magnússon's Collection, Copenhagen, Ms. AM 858 4°. The text is printed in Helie 1932–1948, VI 51–149. By quotations in the following the first number refers to the page, the second to the line in this edition.

⁷ Langebek 1772–1878, II 555.

⁸ Rørdam 1873–1887, I.1 7–8.

Anno ab orbe reuerſitato, Millefimo
 quadageſimo ſexto, electus eſt in regem
 Danorū Sueno quidam Channio dicto ex
 ſore Epriide nepos, a qua etiam regno
 meum accepit, repudiato prius ſui Volf-
 fonis regnamento, ob materna pūdi-
 tiam ab eodem Volffone, pretextū legiti-
 timi coniugij maximo dolo ſupratam.
 Unde non eſt vulgo dictus ab Volffone
 parte, ſed ab Epriide matre Sueni &
 videtur, hic inter multos quos genuit
 erat filius duos habuit inſigni pietate
 ac probitate viros, qui erant maxima
 patris ornamenta, Quorū primus dic-
 tus Channius, martyre dei effectus (quod
 Ottonem a perfidis Jūis & Theonibus
 in cauſa pietatis ac religionis inter-
 fertus occubuit) glorioſiſſimis enaſit
 Gerundus vero ſecundus, ex reſpa reg-
 namento bonus, ſolo martyrio Ch-
 nio.

Illustration 1. AM 858 4°, 1^r. The first page of the chronicle.

The handwriting we see here is a humanist cursive. It is an Italian script, introduced in the second half of the fifteenth century⁹ and quite new in Denmark in the Reformation era. According to the late Erik Kroman, a distinguished palaeographer, Helie was among the first, if not the first, to use this script in Denmark.¹⁰ How he learnt to write the humanist cursive we do not know, but since it looks very much like the script used in the Papal Chancellery about 1490, my guess is that he may have got acquainted with it during his student years in Italy.¹¹ Could he not have picked it up by copying it from a letter received from Italy, you may ask. No, he could not. He had to learn not only to write the individual letters in a new way, but also to know that the quill needed to be cut and held in a different position while writing than was the case with the traditional neo-gothic script.

According to German palaeographers, the use of the humanist cursive was an expression of a culture or a civilization.¹² Thus, on the basis of his script alone we are able to place Helie among the sixteenth-century European humanists. Of still further interest is the fact that he used the same script when he wrote in Danish. By doing so, he differed from German humanists, who normally preferred to use the Gothic script when writing in the vernacular.

3

The content of the chronicle is:

1. A royal genealogy from King Sven Estridsøn's two sons Canute the Holy and Eric the Good to King Frederick I, that is, from 1046 to 1523 (727 words).
2. The election of King Christian I in 1448 (63 words).
3. Sweden's relationship to the Nordic Union during the reign of King Christian I, that is, from 1448 to 1481 (2,161 words).
4. Fifty-three annalistic entries, covering the years 1452–1523 (5,666 words).
5. A catalogue of complaints against King Christian II (2,089 words).

⁹ Wardrup 1963, 22–23. Cf. Ullman 1960, Bischoff 1986, 195–201, and Boyle 1984, 195–196.

¹⁰ Kroman 1944, 78.

¹¹ Frenz 1974, 479–480 and esp. table X.4. – I must admit that we do not know anything about his studies in Italy, but it seems impossible that he could have imbibed the modern, humanistic ideas in Denmark.

¹² Lülfig 1973, 30–33; cf. Steinmann 1976.

6. The rebellion against King Christian II and the election of King Frederick I in 1523 (283 words).
7. Forty-four annalistic entries, covering the years 1524–1534 (10,930 words).

By and large the *Skiby chronicle* is, as just shown, structured as a traditional annalistic work of the Middle Ages. It contains, however, elements which we never find in other annals: a comprehensive royal genealogy (1), a thematic treatment of Sweden's relationship to the Nordic Union (3), and a catalogue of the dethroned King Christian II's many crimes (5). As far as the genealogy is concerned, it is of special interest that the line from the kings of the eleventh to those of the sixteenth century is not traced through Princess Sophie, daughter of Danish King Eric Glipping (d. 1286) and wife of Duke Nicholas of Werle as in modern genealogies,¹³ but through Euphemia, daughter of the Swedish Duke Eric Magnusson and his wife Ingeborg, who on her side was a daughter of the Norwegian King Hakon V (d. 1319). Hence, Helie's genealogy can be taken as an argument in favour of the preservation of the Union of the three Nordic countries, a union which in those days was more or less in ruins.

In the beginning the entries are rather short. However, they contain more details than is usually the case in medieval annals and often explain cause and effect of the events. Personal comments are common, too. Here are two examples from the oldest part of the chronicle:

Eodem anno [1483] D. Eylerus ex archidiaconatu electus ad episcopatum Arhusiensem consecratus est episcopus. Sed quoniam fauore principis ac populi destitutus erat, nullaue prudentia peditus, coactus est, cum paucis annis eam administrasset prouintiam, episcopatum resignare D. Nicolao Claussøn tunc Canonico Roschildensi (p. 61 ll.1–7).

(In the same year [1483] Sir Ejler, chosen from the archdeaconry to the bishopric of Aarhus, was consecrated bishop. But since he lost the favour of the prince and the people and did not have any prudence he was forced, after having governed the said province in some years, to resign in favour of Sir Nicholas Claussøn, at that time a canon at Roskilde).

Anno 1485 obiit Reuerendus in Christo pater D. Olauus Martini episcopus Roschildensis, fastu et pompa ignobilis, pietate vero et miseri-

¹³ For instance in Danstrup & Koch 1969–1972, IV 123, and in Olsen 1988–1991, VI 200.

cordia nobilissimus, a cuius obitu successiones fuerant semper deteriores

(p. 61 ll.22–26).

(In the year 1485 the reverend father in Christ Sir Oluf Mortensen, bishop of Roskilde, died, a simple man with regard to arrogance and pomp, but of the highest nobility when it comes to piety and charity. After his death the successors became increasingly inferior).

Later the entries become longer and the explanations, evaluations and comments more comprehensive, and at the end we get a long account of the events during the civil war in the 1530s which in Danish historiography is called The Count's Feud. This account, which covers seven pages, was planned to have been even longer, but the text stops abruptly in the year 1534 with the three words "Dum hec aguntur" (When this happened; p.149 l.28). What Helie had intended to write after that, no one knows. My guess is that he would have told us about the rest of the war: the siege of Copenhagen and the city's capitulation. Furthermore, it is not unlikely that he would have included the arrest of the Catholic bishops in August 1536 and the Diet of Copenhagen in October, where the new King Christian III and the Estates decided to change the official religion from Catholicism to Lutheranism. This, I think, would have been a natural ending to a chronicle that more and more focused on the conflicts between Catholics and Protestants.

4

Another thing that makes the chronicle different from the historical writing of the medieval era is its language. Apart from *nomina* the vocabulary consists of nearly 3000 different words. These words come from several sources. There are classical words, words taken from the Bible, and words borrowed from the Church Fathers, whom the humanists of the Renaissance had given a revival. Some of the classical words are used in their classical sense (e.g. *miles* and *pedagogus*), others in their medieval sense (e.g. *imperator* and *templum*), and others again now in their classical now in their medieval sense (e.g. *comes* and *dux*). In addition, there are some purely medieval and some neo-Latin words in the chronicle (for examples, see Appendix 1).

Among the neologisms is *eques auratus* (a golden knight). This really is a new expression in Helie's days, since, as far as I know, its first appearance

is in a letter from Oxford University to Sir Thomas More in 1523.¹⁴ The two insulting words *papista* (devotee of the pope) and *priapista* (devotee of Priapus) originate from Martin Luther.¹⁵ The latter of the two was used by the German reformer to describe the cardinals in Rome, but was turned against Luther himself by Hieronymus Emser in the early 1520s.¹⁶ We seldom see the word in Catholic polemics against the Protestants, perhaps because the good friars who composed those treatises did not know the ancient god Priapus and consequently did not understand the meaning of the word. Helie applied the polemical term to the monks and friars who went into matrimony. Furthermore, there is *animicida*. To name a religious opponent a “murderer of souls” was not uncommon during the Reformation, but then the expression *animarum interfector* would be used, not *animicida*.¹⁷ Here again the word is borrowed from Luther.¹⁸ Helie also gave the two reformers in the city of Malmö Klaus Tøndebinder and Hans Spandemager (in English: Barrel-maker and Tubmaker) the classically inspired surnames *uascularius* and *sitularius*.¹⁹ The former he had found in Cicero’s second speech against Verres, where it describes a man who makes vessels of metal (2.4.54); the latter seems to have been his own invention, based on the word *situla*, which means a water bucket.

Evaluating Helie’s vocabulary, one may say that he was no Ciceronian.²⁰ He lived in a Christian world, not in a bygone, ancient world and therefore did not find it unnatural to use words from the late classical and medieval periods for concepts and things unknown to people in Antiquity. In general, his Latin is a Silver Age Latin, influenced by the Church Fathers. The same was, by the way, the case with the Latin of Lorenzo Valla, Erasmus of Rotterdam, Thomas More, and Juan Vives, just to mention four authors from his own time and recent past.

In the *Skiby Chronicle* there are many literary loans (for examples, see Appendix 2). When they first came to my attention, I regarded them as hidden quotations. Later I have come across several of them in the works of

¹⁴ More 1947, 273, 304, 383, 386, 402, and 424.

¹⁵ Luther, *Wider den falsch genantten geystlichen stand des Babst vnn der bischoffen*, 1522 (Luther 1883–, X.2 122, 21–31).

¹⁶ Emser 1523, sig. Cij^r.

¹⁷ Cp. *De expulsiōe fratrum minorum*, SM II, 1920–22, 355 l. 13 and 359 l. 28. The expression goes back to St Augustine and Lactantius and has its roots in the Bible (Rev. 6:9). See St Augustine, *Contra epistulam Parmeniani* 1.8.14, (Augustinus 1963–1968, I 242), and Lactantius, *Divinae institutiones* V.19.1, (Lactantius 1890, 461).

¹⁸ Luther, *De servo arbitrio*, 1525 (Luther 1883–, XVIII 624 l. 23).

¹⁹ In *De expulsiōe fratrum minorum* they are named *tunnarum fabricator* and *urnarius*, SM II, 1920–22, 340 l. 20 and 342 l. 16.

²⁰ About Ciceronianism and other forms of Latin in the Renaissance, see D’Amico 1983, 126–134 and Grendler 1993.

other writers, so I now prefer to view at least some of them as standard expressions.

Adding quotations, literary loans and standard expressions together, their number is approximately 530. About 350 are from classical authors, 140 from the Bible, the rest from Church Fathers, Saxo Grammaticus, Erasmus, Luther or other contemporary writers. Among the classical authors Cicero is the most frequently used, but there are also loans from Terence, Caesar, Livy, Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Lucan, Seneca, Suetonius, Quintilian, etc. Apart from Saxo, classical expressions are seldom seen in Danish literature of the Middle Ages, so their occurrence in the *Skiby Chronicle* must be regarded as a consequence of the author's humanism.

5

As regards the style, Helie seems to have followed the advice of Erasmus: to study the style of the ancients and then create his own.²¹ However, the influence of Cicero is apparent now and then:

Talis erat fides sacrilegorum principum illius seculi, contra iusiurandum, contra publicam fidem, ac contra signatos inaugurationum libellos et diplomata.

(p. 110 ll. 27–28)

(In such a way the sacrilegious princes kept their word, against their oath, against their public vow, and against their obligations and letters, sealed on their inaugurations).

Cicero *In Verrem* 2.5.34:

contra fas, contra auspicia, contra omnes divinas atque humanas religiones.

(against the law of God, against the omen, against every divine and human religion).

Also this statement about the heretic King Frederick might have been inspired by Cicero:

Nec ulli erant magis tuti ac securi regia protectione in hoc regno, quam tante impietatis authores et executores, quoniam apud hunc sacrilegum regem nullus erat uel iusticie uel innocentie respectus, apud quem pietas erat supersticio, pudicitia hypocrisis, religio stulticia, abstinentia insania.

²¹ Phillips 1969.

(p. 131 ll. 22–27)

(No one in this kingdom was safer and more secure under royal protection than these instigators and executors of that great impiety. Because in this sacrilegious king there was no respect for either justice or innocence; for him piety was superstition, chastity hypocrisy, religion folly, abstinence insanity).

The two statements are characterized by an emphatic ending, rising toward a climax. Among other emphatic endings in the chronicle we find:

Huius Christiarni temporibus defecit Suetie regnum a federe trium regnorum, electo sibi proprio rege, Carolo Chanuti marscalco regni, sed maximo suo malo.

(p. 56 l. 31–p. 57 l. 2)

(In this Christian's days the Swedish realm fell away from the union of the three kingdoms by electing their own king, Charles Knutsson, marshal of the realm, but to the greatest damage to themselves).

quidam frater Paulus Helie Varbergensis, qui singulari fauore prosequutus est studiosos omnes, verum suo magno malo.

(p. 80 ll. 8–10)

(a certain friar Paulus Helie from Varberg, who showed all the students his special favour, but to great sorrow for himself).

qui mox, coacto grandi exercitu, cepit opidum Halmstadense, non sine graui iactura Suecorum.

(p. 159 ll. 21–23)

(who immediately after having collected a big army took the town of Halmstad, but not without serious losses for the Swedes).

Antithetic expressions like these are not uncommon in classical literature. Sometimes one finds them in medieval works too. However, so far I have not seen them used as endings. To end a sentence with an emphatic antithesis thus seems to be peculiar for Helie.

Not unique, but quite remarkable, is his word-doubling, that is to say his frequent use of the rhetorical figure *conduplicatio*: “uastat ac destruit” (ravage and destroy), “sacra et diuina” (holy and divine), “instante et urgente” (insisting and urging), “insania et impudentia” (insanity and impudence), just to mention four of more than 300 word-doublings in the chronicle. The last example can, however, also be regarded as *hendiadys*, a rhetorical figure known from the works of Caesar, of whom Helie imitated other features (see below). So perhaps it should be translated “insane impudence”.

Another stylistic trait is alliteration and assonance, i.e. the use of words with the same initial letter or with the same stress vowel. Alliterations are “corpus et cadauer” (body and corpse; p. 91 l.19), “ac/atque alios in armis” (and others in arms; pp. 92 l.31 and 93 l.13), and “pestifera sua predicatione” (by his pestiferous preaching, p. 118 l. 14). Assonance with one vowel is “támen altáre mánsit” (however the altar remained, p. 120 l. 25), and with two: “inuasérunt témplum díue uírginis” (they invaded the church of Our Lady; p. 120 l. 18).

To avoid monotony assonance often occurs in patterns: e.g. transverse: “díuo Ioánni euangeliste sácer” (consecrated to St John the Evangelist; p. 120 l. 14) and reverse: “próbra et conuítia in Christi sacerdótes” (invectives and curses against the priests of Christ; p. 120 l. 28–29).

Stylistically Helie often makes use of parison and isocolon. The former of these denotes a correspondence between parts of the sentence (the cola, the comata), e.g. an identical position of the verbs; the latter that more than one colon or coma has the same number of stressed syllables. This statement about a bishop who died in 1533 is an example:

Putabat ...

episcopátum non ésse offícium sed státum (5)

non àministratíonem sed prèsidéntiam (5)

non fùnciónem áliquam spírituálem dirigéndis ánimabus dèstinátam (10)

sed sèculárem quándam dignitátem còngregándis pecúniis dèlegátam (10)

(p. 141 l. 1–6)

(He thought ... that the episcopate was not an office, but a rank; not an administration, but a presidency; not a spiritual function in order to guide the souls, but a secular distinction for the purpose of collecting money).

Here the stylistic correspondence is further stressed by the repetition of “non ... sed”, by the chiasmus: “functionem ... spiritualem” / “secularem ... dignitatem” (noun – adjective / adjective – noun), by the parisonic position of “dirigendis animabus destinata” / “congregandis pecuniis delegata”, and by the double use of final rhyme (homoioteleuton): “episcopatum / statum” and “destinatam” / “delegatam”. Finally, the two last cola end with the medieval cursus velox, that is, with stress on the second, fourth and seventh syllable, counted backwards.

It is, however, not only the cola and the comata that may be thus structured in order to create a balance: the composition of their units can have the same purpose:

pertinaciter + et + contentiose (5 + 1 + 5)

(persistently and impetuously; p. 115 l. 22)

omnis impietatis + ac + abhominacionis (7 + 1 + 7)

(of every impiety and profanation; p. 118 l. 21)

sacrilegam tyrannidem + ac + infamen crudelitatem (8 + 1 + 8)

(sacrilegious tyranny and malicious cruelty; p. 127 l. 21–22)

In the first example the balance is created by combining two adverbs with the same number of syllables, in the second by adding the adjective *omnis*, and in the third by using adjectives with an uneven number of syllables, because the nouns are of different length. The purpose of this stylistic device, which can be found in all the works of Helie, is, as mentioned, to create a textual harmony, and thus an eloquent narrative.

6

In the account of the rebellion of the city of Malmö in 1534, we read that the citizens made a surprise attack on the castle, which in those days was situated some four hundred meters south of the town. When writing of their later demolition of the northern wing of the castle, Helie uses the words “partem, que urbem respiciebat” (the part that looked back on the city; p. 143 l. 18), thus creating the impression that he has walked out to the castle together with the reader and is now standing on the spot, looking back on the city.

Earlier in the chronicle he has said that “per uniuersam Cimbriam serperet uirus Lutheranice factionis” (the virus of the Lutheran party twisted [like a snake] around all Jutland; p. 107 ll. 19–20), i.e. imperceptibly, that “ex hoc conuentu emanarunt ... littere quedam decretales” (from this Diet certain royal letters have leaked out; p. 112 ll. 1–3), and that there was no seriousness among the Lutherans “absterso omni pudore” (since they had wiped off all modesty; p. 114 l. 22). Rhetorically, the idea that words ought to speak not only to the ears, but also to the eyes, so that the audience or the readers are brought into the position of an eye-witness, is called *ekphrasis* or *evidentia*.²² Erasmus recommends this kind of writing in his book on rheto-

²² Helie seems often to opt for verbs that express such a visual language. To discover this, however, one has to look at the original meaning of the verbs, e.g. *imbuere* (p. 85 l. 3:

ric from 1512,²³ but actually, it was a common humanist ideal, based on the dictum “*Ut pictura poesis*” (a poem is like a picture) in Horace’s *Ars poetica* (v. 361).²⁴

Unlike ancient historians and medieval chroniclers Helie is reluctant to make use of speeches. The function of the speeches he does use – all of which are short and concise – is either to stress an argument already made, or to characterize a person through his or her words. In this, they are in line with the classical tradition.²⁵ An example is this utterance of King Christian II, used as an explanation of why, after having received the Polish envoys cordially, he ordered them drowned:

Si scirem (inquit) capitis mei galerum meorum consiliorum esse conscium, mox in ignem coniectum exuri sinerem.

(p. 94 ll. 26–29)

(If I knew, he said, that the cap on my head was aware of my plans, I would immediately throw it into the fire and let it burn).

The message is obvious: woe to those, who have the king’s confidence!

But the king’s utterance is pure fiction. The saying comes from Valerius Maximus, who tells that the Roman Consul Caecilius Metellus answered a question about the future in this way:

Absiste, inquit, istud quaerere: nam si huius consilii mei interiorem tunicam consciam esse sensero, continuo eam cremari iubebo.

(*Facta et dicta memorabilia* 7.4.5)

(Don’t ask such a question, he said, because if I learned that my inmost tunic was aware of this plan, I would order it to be burned immediately).

The interesting thing here is not so much the use of a classical anecdote, but the fact that the Roman tunic is replaced by a cap, the piece of clothing that for a Dane is nearest the head, where thoughts are formulated. To transform an expression or a metaphor from Antiquity so that it became understandable for his Danish readers was not unusual for Helie.²⁶ By doing so, he just

‘imbue’, orig.: ‘let drink’), *conculcare* (pp. 112 l. 9 and 113 l. 13: ‘despise, scorn’, orig.: ‘trample down’).

²³ Erasmus, *De duplici copia verborum ac rerum*, 1512 (Erasmus 1703-1706, I 77E–78A); see also Rüegg 1946, 86 and 123, and Bietenholz 1966, 90.

²⁴ O’Malley 1974, 62–64 and Lausberg 1971, 118; cf. also Trimpi 1973.

²⁵ On Leonardo Bruni’s use of fictitious speeches, see Ullman 1946, 52.

²⁶ A good example is his rendering of Erasmus’ “*tragoediarum histriones*” (the actors of tragedy) with “*fastelaghens gække*” (the carnival’s fools) in his Danish translation of *Institutio principis Christiani* (Rübner Jørgensen 2000b, 208–209).

followed the humanist ideal of *translatio ad sensum* (translation according to the meaning).

7

Among the rhetorical devices we find anaphora: “sine mente, sine ratione ac sine prudentia” (without sense, without reason and without prudence; p. 39 l. 40), litotes: “illud protegente non sine capitis periculo urbis prefecto” (this the town’s bailiff defended not without mortal danger to himself; p. 120 l. 26), proverb: “operculum sane tali patella dignum” (the lid was really worthy of this pot; p. 126 l. 15),²⁷ chiasmus: “callide impudens et impudenter callidus” (cunningly impudent and impudently cunning; p. 108 l. 18), periphrasis: “cleri locum” (the clergy’s place; p. 120 l. 23) instead of *chorum* (choir), and this wonderful comparison used about Helie’s former student, the apostate Friar Franciscus Wormordi from Amsterdam: “ipso mendatio mendatior et ipsa calumnia calumnior” (more lying than lying itself and more defaming than defamation itself; p. 116 l. 7–8). The inspiration for such a hyperbolic comparison is again Erasmus, who mentions the expression in his book on rhetoric.²⁸ Furthermore, about Petrus Laurentii, another apostate friar of the Carmelite Order, he says with a pun (paronomasia) that he travelled to Malmö “ibidem futurus priapista, quia noluit esse papista” (for there to be a devotee of Priapus, since he did not want to be a devotee of the pope; p. 112 ll. 25–26).

Space does not permit me to say more about Helie’s use of rhetoric, so I will restrict myself to these few samples. But I can tell you that we have only one other text from late Medieval and Reformation Denmark as rhetorical as the *Skiby Chronicle*. This is the official response to Hans Mikkelsen’s defence of the dethroned and exiled King Christian II, published by the Council of the Realm in 1527, and that, incidentally, was also composed by Helie.

²⁷ This proverb goes back to St Jerome, *Epistola* 7.5. It is contained in Erasmus’ *Adagia*, 1.10.72 (Erasmus 1703-1706, II 387C–E).

²⁸ Erasmus, *De duplici copia verborum ac rerum*, 1512 (Erasmus 1703-1706, I 35D).

In a Danish context Paulus Helie as a writer is unique. So is his chronicle. But how should we regard the chronicle, if we relate it to what was written outside Denmark?

To Martin Luther everything that happened in this world bore witness to how God used man as his tool.²⁹ Although now and then we see this *deus absconditus* (hidden God) in Helie's chronicle too, he warns us nonetheless against interpreting sudden deaths, accidents, and catastrophes as being a result of God's wrath. His causal explanations are, in fact, seldom religious, because when someone's life came to a bad end, it was normally a result of that person's own vices. It was man's greed, lust, envy, and avarice that caused his fall.³⁰ Therefore, the chronicle can be seen as an example of secular history writing. But since everything is evaluated within the paradigm of virtues and vices, it is at the same time an example of ethical history writing. Both this ethicism and this secularism characterize humanist historiography in the Renaissance.

The classical authors and the humanists regarded history as an instructive mirror or a *magistra vitae* (a teacher for living).³¹ So does Helie: to him it is by reading about man's foolish acts in the past that we can avoid repeating them. At least in theory, for the errors people make are more or less the same generation after generation. Despite his belief that man can become ethically better with the right education and instruction, his anthropology, influenced as it was by St Augustine, was rather pessimistic.³² This pessimism was, however, common among the humanist writers of the time. The Renaissance was a splendid era, but not a happy one.

Compared to most historical works written in the Renaissance, Helie's chronicle has three shortcomings. First, there is no description of the physical appearance of the men and women mentioned in the chronicle. Second, there are no battle descriptions, and third, he makes no use of state papers (with the exception of the *Catalogus accusationum* against King Christian, whose author was Helie himself). On the other hand, just like the other Renaissance writers Helie has decided not to include any supernatural and miraculous tales.³³ By omitting them, he not only differs from his medieval colleagues, but also from contemporary writers in Denmark, among whom

²⁹ Cf. Krumwiede 1952, passim and Bietenholz 1966, 47.

³⁰ The same kind of explanations can be found in Italian historical works, e.g. in the works of Bruni, cf. Wilcox 1969, 55.

³¹ Kristeller 1974–1976 II and 38–39; Buck 1991, 1–2.

³² Cf. Rübner Jørgensen 2007, 530–555.

³³ Cf. Ullman 1946, 55 and Cochrane 1981, XII.

were Christian Pedersen, the editor of Saxo (Paris 1514). Besides, in the chronicle he always refers to himself in the third person. Since Leonardo Bruni, inspired by Caesar, did the same in his memoirs *Rerum suo tempore gestarum commentarius* from the 1440s,³⁴ one may ask if it might not be more appropriate to call Helie's chronicle a *commentarius*. One argument could be that there is a high frequency of personal comments in the chronicle. Another that it consists of information he had collected about persons and events during his lifetime or of what he himself had written earlier. A counterargument, however, is the chronicle's annalistic structure and its purpose. Helie's aim was not the same as that of Bruni. He did not want only to deliver raw material to later historians, but also to explain what had happened and to persuade his readers to change their attitudes. Therefore, in his chronicle he seems to have combined two kinds of historical writing of the Renaissance: the *Annales sui temporis* and the *commentarius*, and thus to have created a new kind of historiography in Denmark.

Appendix 1. Helie's vocabulary: Examples of words of different origin

Words from classical authors:

antesignanus (leader, protagonist), *apoplexia* (stroke), *arx* (castle), *calculus* (voting), *ensor* (valuer), *cesar* (emperor), *comes* (follower, count), *cometa* (comet), *comitia* (Diet), *consul* (counsellor of the realm), *diadema* (diadem, crown), *dux* (leader, duke), *edes* (manor), *factio* (party, sect), *fatidicus* (ominous), *gnato* (parasite), *histrio* (jester), *imperator* (emperor), *imperium* (office, empire), *iusiurandum* (oath), *maiores* (ancestor), *mancipium* (slave), *magister equitum* (lord chamberlain), *mars* (war, battle), *mecenas* (benefactor), *miles* (soldier), *numen* (God), *pedagogus* (a boy's escort to school), *philosophia* (philosophy), *pontifex* (bishop), *respublica* (country, realm), *satellitium* (escort), *superi* (God), *tartarus* (hell), *satrapes* (vassal), *sycophanta* (schemer), *templum* (church building), *tragedia* (tragedy), *tyrannus* (tyrant).

Words from the Bible:

alienigenus (foreigner), *altar* (altar), *baptisma* (baptism), *blasphemare* (be blasphemous), *ecclesia* (church), *episcopus* (bishop), *ethnicus* (heathen, foreign), *evangelium* (Gospel), *gehenna* (hell), *hebdomada* (week), *mysterium* (mystery), *naucerus* (skipper), *offendiculum* (indignation), *pascha* (Easter),

³⁴ Ullman 1946, 49 and Cochrane 1981, 20.

pentecostes (Pentecost), *primogenitus* (first born), *propheta* (prophet), *satanas* (Satan), *sobrietas* (sobriety), *viator* (traveller), *zelus* (ardour).

Words from the Church Fathers:

apologia (apology), *catalogus* (catalogue), *digamia* (bigamy), *diocesis* (diocese), *doctrina* (doctrine), *eleemosyna* (alms), *eucharistia* (Eucharist), *exoticus* (foreign), *heresis* (heresy), *hypocrita* (hypocrit), *orthodoxus* (orthodox), *paranymphus* (man who comes for the bride), *pseudepiscopus* (false bishop), *theologia* (theology).

Word from the Middle Ages and the ecclesiastical world:

archiepiscopus (archbishop), *baccalaureus* (bachelor), *bull* (papal bull), *cancellarius* (chancellor), *canonicus* (canon), *cantor* (precentor), *cruciata* (crusade), *doctor* (doctor), *domicellus* (young nobleman), *facultas* (faculty), *markio* (markgraf), *monachus* (monk), *monialis* (nun), *papa* (pope), *reliquia* (relic).

Neologisms or neo-Latin words:

anabaptista (anabaptist), *animicida* (murderer of soul), *eques auratus* (golden knight), *lutheranus* (Lutheran), *papista* (devotee of the pope), *priapista* (devotee of Priapus).

Appendix 2. Examples of literary loans

ab arce descendens (going down from the castle): Erasmus – *ad mortem usque* (until death): Valerius Maximus – *capite truncatus est* (got beheaded): Lucan, Saxo – *casso tamen labore* (with the waste of energy, however): Pliny – *dux belli* (commander of war): Cicero, Livy, The Bible – *fauore numinis* (by God's favour): Saxo, Erasmus – *grauiter est offensus* (got seriously offended): Cicero – *hereditario iure* (by the right of inheritance): Cicero – *infelix mars* (unlucky battle): Livy – *ingenij vigor* (vigour of nature): Ovid, Seneca, Saxo – *irritare atque prouocare* (irritate and provoke): Seneca – *labor ac studium* (work and study): Thomas More – *magna constantia* (with great staunchness): Cicero, The Bible – *magno comitatu* (with a large escort): Cicero – *michi notus* (known to me): Cicero, Horace – *more et ritu* (according to custom and use): Virgil – *periit naufragio* (died by shipwreck): Cicero, Quintilian, Saxo – *pretextu euangelice libertatis* (with the evangelical freedom as pretext): Schatzgeyer, Herborn, Clichtovius – *summa iniuria* (with the greatest injustice): Cicero – *usque in presentem diem* (until the present day): The Bible – *uterinus frater* (carnal

brother): The Bible – *uires ac facultates* (power and abilities): Quintilian – *ui tempestatis* (by force of the tempest): Caesar, Cicero, Livy, Sueton, Tacitus, Quintilian, Valerius Maximus.

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