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**LATIN, SWEDISH AND FRENCH –
Some Considerations on the Choice of Language in the Letter
Collection of the Gyldenstolpe Family¹**

RAIJA SARASTI-WILENIUS

A high-ranking Swedish statesman, Count Nils Gyldenstolpe (born in Turku in 1642, died in Stockholm in 1709) collected a great number of letters and other manuscripts during the five last decades of his life. Due to the bankruptcy of his grandson Count Nils Filip Gyldenstolpe (1734–1810), the collection passed from the family's ownership and was bought by Bishop Johan Magnus Nordin, a keen collector of manuscripts, at an auction in 1787. After Nordin's death in 1814, Crown Prince Charles John acquired the collection, donating it to the Uppsala University Library, where the collection is currently housed.² Among Nils Gyldenstolpe's manuscripts, there are a little less than 600 letters exchanged by members of his family between the years 1660 and 1708.³ These texts, offering a view of the life of a cultured family during three generations, are valuable sources for research on seventeenth and early eighteenth century Sweden and Finland. The letters have earlier been read exclusively as historical cum biographical evidence, revealing facts about the persons involved. Treated as a collection, the letters make it possible to throw light on several social and cultural customs of the time. After a short presentation of the Gyldenstolpe family and the letter collection, I am going to look at the letter collection only from the

¹ The first draft of this article was presented at the 12th International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies, Bonn 3–5 August, 2003. The article has been written as part of the research project *The Arrival of Humanism in Finland* financed by the Academy of Finland.

² S. Ågren, "Om Nordinska handskriftssamlingen i Uppsala Universitetsbibliotek. Några anteckningar", in *Uppsala Universitets Biblioteks Minneskrift 1621–1921*, Uppsala 1921, 469–97.

³ UUB, Nordinska samlingen vols 468–70.

point of view of languages used, discussing questions such as what can be said about the languages used, what they can tell us about the family, and about the time, in general, and what kinds of ideas concerning languages there are to be found in the letters themselves.

The Gyldenstolpe family

The story of the Gyldenstolpe family begins with Nils Gyldenstolpe's father, Michael Wexionius, whose family name derives from Wäxjö, a locality in Småland, southern Sweden, where Michael was born the son of a pastor in 1609. After the cathedral school of Wäxjö, he studied at the University of Uppsala and completed his studies in Germany (Marburg, Wittenberg) and Holland (Leiden, Groningen, Amsterdam) in the 1630s. When the Academy of Turku was founded in 1640, Michael Wexionius was appointed to the chair of history and politics and, as he says in a letter dating from July 1661, "left his native country and brought his family to the ends of the earth to live among these unfamiliar people".⁴ From 1647 on, Michael Wexionius also acted as the professor of jurisprudence at Turku. In 1650, he was raised to the nobility and took the name of Gyldenstolpe. When seven years later he was nominated as assessor of the Turku Court of Appeal (*hovrätt*), the highest court in Finland, he hoped to be able – at least partially – to keep his chair in jurisprudence at the Academy but this was not allowed and he served as a judge until his death in 1670. Michael Wexionius-Gyldenstolpe was a major figure in the first decades of the Academy of Turku. He was a learned scholar and a productive author, with publications on ethics, politics, economics, geography, history and law.⁵

⁴ Michael W.-G. to Nils G. 22 July, 1661: *Tum quod maximo cum dispendio ad regiam vocationem patriam reliquerim magnisque sumptibus in extrema haec terrarum loca ad ignotam gentem familiam meam transtulerim.*

⁵ M. Klinge *et al.*, *Kuninkaallinen Turun Akatemia 1640–1808*, Keuruu 1987, index s.v. Wexionius, Michael; A.A.A. Laitinen, *Michael Wexionius-Gyldenstolpe* 1, Helsinki 1912; M.G. Schybergson, *Historiens studium vid Åbo universitet* (Åbo universitets lärdomshistoria 3), Helsingfors 1891, 13–7; A. Liljenstrand, *Juridikens studium vid Åbo universitet* (Åbo universitets lärdomshistoria 2), Helsingfors 1890, 30–5; A.W. Westerlund, *Åbo hovrätts presidenter, ledamöter och tjänstemän 1623–1923: biografiska och genealogiska anteckningar*, Åbo 1923, 166–8; *Svenskt Biografiskt Lexicon* (henceforth *SBL*) 17, Stockholm 1969, 509–12.

Michael Wexionius-Gyldenstolpe and his wife Susanna Crucimontana (1617–69) had twelve children among whom three daughters and six sons reached maturity. Three of the sons (Gabriel, Carl and Gustaf Gyldenstolpe) made themselves careers in the army.⁶ The second eldest son, Nils Gyldenstolpe, moved to Stockholm and made an important career at the Swedish Royal Court.⁷ Daniel and Samuel Gyldenstolpe followed in their father's footsteps, the former became an assessor of Turku Court of Appeal and the latter professor of history and politics at Turku (later district judge in Upper Satakunta, western Finland).⁸

Ad familiares of the Gyldenstolpe family

Out of the nearly 600 letters in the Gyldenstolpe collection, the largest number – some 500 letters – are addressed to Nils Gyldenstolpe who also collected slightly less than 100 letters addressed to his (second) wife, Countess Margaretha Ehrensteen (1659–1721). Only in a few isolated cases is the recipient some other member of the family. Regrettably, the letters written by Nils Gyldenstolpe himself have not come down to us, almost the only exceptions being the letters he sent to his wife. The majority of the letters received by Nils, which serve as the principal sources of this article, were written by his father and brothers. Moreover, there are letters from his sisters,⁹ brother-in-law,¹⁰ uncle¹¹ and his family, and his wife and sons.¹²

Since all correspondents in this letter collection are family members

⁶ T. Carpelan, *Ättartavlor för den på Finlands Riddarhus introducerade adeln* 1, Helsingfors 1954, 494–5; *Svenska Adelns Ättartavlor* (henceforth *SAÄ*) 3, Stockholm 1900, 210–1.

⁷ *SBL* 17 (above n. 5) 513–5.

⁸ Westerlund (above n. 5) 177–8; *SAÄ* 3 (above n. 6) 212; Schybergson (above n. 5) 17–8; J.J. Tengström, *Chronologiska Företeckningar och Anteckningar öfver Finska Universitets fordna Procancellorer samt öfver Facultaternas Medlemmar och Adjuncter från Universitets stiftelse inemot dess andra sekulärår*, Helsingfors 1836, 140.

⁹ Susanna Gyldenstolpe was married to Professor Enevald Svenonius, Sofia Gyldenstolpe to Capitan Henrik Silfversvan and Sara Gyldenstolpe to District Judge Johan Spofvenhielm. Carpelan (above n. 6) 494; *SAÄ* 3 (above n. 6) 210–1.

¹⁰ Professor Enevald Svenonius (1617–87).

¹¹ Professor Olof Wexionius (1626–71).

¹² Edvard, Carl Adolf and Ulrik Niklas Gyldenstolpe. *SAÄ* 3 (above n. 6), 212–3.

and since the letters were not composed with publication in mind nor intended for a wider audience, the letters of the Gyldenstolpe family can, generally speaking, be regarded as familiar. However, describing the letters as strictly private would be too simplistic and would ignore certain features which relate to the dialectic of public and private, an important and much discussed aspect of humanist epistolary activity.¹³ In order to shed some light on how public and private interact with each other in the letters, it is worth taking a look at how these concepts are used in contemporary textbooks and manuals of letter writing, which present various ways of classifying different types of letters.¹⁴ A textbook published by Daniel Achrelius, Professor of Eloquence, in Turku in 1689 divides letters into four chief classes according to two different criteria – subject matter (1 and 2) and style (3 and 4) – as follows: 1) theological (*sacrae sive theologicae*), 2) civil (*civiles sive politicae*), 3) rhetorical (*pomposae sive oratoriae*) and 4) familiar (*privatae sive familiares*) letters.¹⁵ The second class, civil letters, has two sub-divisions: letters which are purely public (such as letters exchanged between rulers or states concerning war, peace, marriages, etc.) and letters which combine features of both public and private communication (*publicoprivatae*). Again, the latter, the mixed type, is divided into two further sub-species, this time, according to correspondents: the letters are exchanged either between two private persons or between a

¹³ J.R. Henderson, "Humanist Letter Writing: Private Conversation or Public Forum?", in T. Van Houdt, J. Papy, G. Tournoy, C. Matheussen (eds.), *Self-Presentation and Social Identification. The Rhetoric and Pragmatics of Letter Writing in Early Modern Times* (Suppl. Humanistica Lovaniensia 18), Leuven 2002, 17–38.

¹⁴ See, e.g., Erasmus, *Opus de conscribendis epistolis* (Opera omnia Desiderii Erasmi Roterdami 1:2), Amsterdam 1971, 310–4; Justus Lipsius, *Principles of Letter-Writing. A Bilingual Text of Justi Lipsi Epistolica Institutio*, ed. and trans. R.V. Young and M. T. Hester, Carbondale 1996, 20; J.R. Henderson, "Defining the Genre of the Letter. Juan Luis Vives' *De conscribendis Epistolis*", *Renaissance and Reformation* 7 (1983) 96; Ch. Fantazzi, "Vives versus Erasmus on the Art of Letter-Writing", in Van Houdt, Papy, Tournoy, Matheussen (above n. 13) 41–4. For classification of letters in ancient literature, see Cic. *fam.* 2,4,1; Iul. Vict. *rhet.* (appendix *De epistolis*); P. Cugusi, *Evoluzione e forme dell'epistolografia latina nella tarda repubblica e nei primi due secoli dell'imperio*, Roma 1983, 105–35.

¹⁵ D. Achrelius *Epistolarum conscribendarum forma et ratio*, Aboae 1689, 9–15. Achrelius probably did not base his classification on just one model; he compiled from several sources and then presented his own view of the matter. See S. Hansson, *Svensk brevskrivning. Teori och tillämpning*, Göteborg 1988, 31.

private person and someone holding a high public office. Pliny's correspondence with Trajan concerning the Christians (Plin. *epist.* 10,96-97), Seneca's recommendation for mercy presented to Nero (Sen. *clem.*) and Erasmus's letters to European rulers are examples of the latter sub-species. The relationship between correspondents is not only observed in this public-private type of civil letter but it is also an essential part of the definition of a private (or familiar) letter, which is described in terms of style: letters exchanged between friends (naturally also family members) in which a certain negligence regarding rhetorical rules is allowed.¹⁶ Therefore, we might add that there is even a third criterion besides subject matter and style, i.e., the recipient, that counts when the class or the type of a letter is defined.¹⁷

In the Gyldenstolpe family, one of the sons (Nils) rose in social standing above his father and brothers. The dynamics of this development are reflected in the letters which testify to different attitudes taken up by the letter writers and a certain change of attitude noticeable in some of the correspondents. A relationship between two brothers or cousins can acquire features of that between a client and a patron. This particularly influenced the style employed. Most of the letters represent familiar speech, reproducing the tone of conversation¹⁸ but some writers, when they turned to the recipient (patron) in order to ask for support, favours, benefits, etc., composed quite formal letters with a lot of embellishment. As for the subject matter, the letters were written not only for the sake of communication but for several different purposes. The letters combine confidential conversations, personal thoughts, family news and gossip with requests, recommendations, congratulations, consultation, instruction, meditation on scientific topics, reports of political news, etc., elements representing several types of letters. Subject matters, thus, range from private to public.

¹⁶ Achrelius (above n. 15) 13–4: *Epistolae familiares dicuntur illae, quae amici ad amicos mittunt in quibus quaedam animi licentia ab uno argumento in aliud ambulat servato non adeo curioso dispositionis artificio.*

¹⁷ Cf. Henderson (above n. 13) 22.

¹⁸ Cic. *fam.* 9,21,1; Quint. 9,4,19–20; Sen. *epist.* 75,1 relate a letter to conversation (*sermo*). Also many early modern manuals on letter writing define a letter as a conversation between those absent from one another. Fantazzi (above n. 14) 48. Achrelius defines the letter in a similar way (above n. 15) 4: *Epistola est colloquium absentis cum absente.*

According to the classification presented in Achrelius' textbook, if two private correspondents discuss public affairs, their letters belong to the mixed, public-private-type of civil letters. Viewed against the definitions presented in contemporary manuals of letter writing, not all of the letters of the Gyldenstolpe collection can be classified as private because of the subject matter discussed or the style used in these letters.

Which language and why?

What is noteworthy in the Finnish context of the time is that the male letter writers of the Gyldenstolpe family mainly exchanged letters in Latin. As expected, the women wrote in either Swedish or in French. In addition to Latin, most of the male writers used at least one other language, most often Swedish or French, in their letters addressed to one and the same male recipient (Nils G.).¹⁹ If both the writer and the recipient were fluent in more than one language, which is the case with the male correspondents of the Gyldenstolpe family, on what grounds did the writer choose a particular language for a particular letter? Or did he not make a conscious decision at all? Do the writers themselves give reasons for their choice of language? Do the contents of the letters reveal something which would explain the use of a particular language?²⁰

Writers only seldom explain why they have chosen the language in which they are writing. It seems, however, that they remember well if they once have used a language other than Latin. Later on they may refer to these letters by saying, for instance: "as I wrote in my Swedish letter...". Since letters in Swedish and French were more rare, this kind of a reference was usually sufficient enough whereas referring to letters in Latin always required a mention of the exact date. In a few cases, the contents of the letters reveal the reason underlying the choice of language. On his European

¹⁹ Michael 194 letters (187 in Latin, 9 in French), Daniel 67 letters (63 in Latin, 4 in Swedish), Samuel 77 letters (74 in Latin, 2 in Swedish, 1 in Italian), Carl 42 letters (36 in Latin, 7 in Swedish), Gustaf 18 letters (16 in Latin, 2 in Swedish), Nils' sons 25 letters all together (18 in Latin, 6 in French, 1 in Swedish), Enevald Svenonius 22 letters (20 in Latin, 2 in Swedish).

²⁰ Cf. C.L. Vermeulen, "Strategies and Slander in the Protestant Part of the Republic of Letters: Image, Friendship and Patronage in Etienne de Courcelles's Correspondence", in Van Houdt, Papy, Tournoy, Matheussen (above n. 13) 277–9.

journey, Samuel Gyldenstolpe sent a letter in Italian to his brother Nils from Holland where he was waiting for an opportunity to travel to Spain and Italy.²¹ The reason for this exceptional choice of language is clear: by showing his ability and preparedness, Samuel tries to make a favourable impression and convince his elder brother, who was his closest patron and whom he called his *Maecenas*, that the journey to the southern countries was not a passing whim and attempts to persuade him to support his endeavour.

Prime Choice: Latin

The collection includes letters written by Nils Gyldenstolpe's three youngest brothers (Samuel, Carl, Gustaf) from the ages of five or six years onwards. Even the very first messages of a few sentences were written in Latin. All the sons of Michael Wexionius-Gyldenstolpe grew up with the idea that it was customary that the men of their family exchanged letters in Latin. Why was Latin the prime choice for the Gyldenstolpes? Of course, it was not extraordinary to use Latin in seventeenth century learned circles. Just as every well-schooled person of the time, Michael, his sons and grandsons had been taught Latin from the first school day on and had learned to compose Latin verses, letters and speeches. Since we are dealing with learned men used to communicating in Latin, should Latin then not be considered as a natural choice, even in the familiar correspondence? Considering that contemporary Swedish and European correspondents, even learned ones, who shared a native tongue seem to have written to each other more often in their native language than in Latin, it is possible that the using of Latin might have meant something special to the Gyldenstolpes.²²

The Gyldenstolpes were also a noble family. Latin was not at all a common language in the letters written by other Swedish and Finnish noblemen of the time; noblemen mainly wrote in either Swedish or French. Michael Wexionius-Gyldenstolpe was a *homo novus*, a nobleman of recent creation. In seventeenth century Sweden, able men were increasingly needed for the administration of the country and a growing high prestige was given to education as a noble virtue. This offered ambitious, literate commoners an

²¹ Samuel G. to Nils G. 3 October, 1676.

²² Vermeulen (above n. 20) 278.

opportunity to rise on the social scale.²³ In 1650 Michael's family was registered in the rank of the lower nobility due to his scholarly merits.²⁴ Ten years after his ennoblement, Michael started to write letters to his son Nils who had just moved to Stockholm, the first known letter dating from August 1660. From this first letter onwards, we learn how Michael was in deep financial difficulties and still regretted that he had had to leave his chair in the Academy for his office as assessor in the Court of Appeal. It is possible that Michael Wexionius-Gyldenstolpe did not yet primarily identify himself with the nobility but rather with learned elite. By establishing Latin as the prime communication language in his correspondence with his sons, Michael could emphasize his family's learnedness and erudition, features which distinguished them among their new social peers, justified their social advancement and boosted their self-esteem.

Secondary Choices: French and Swedish

Nils climbed further up the social ladder, advancing to the top offices of the country and was first promoted to Baron, then to Count. He worked in the field of foreign policy and diplomacy serving, for instance, as Swedish ambassador to the Hague and French became an everyday language which was also used inside his family. Although his sons still wrote more often in Latin than in French, the latter was more frequently used in their letters than in those of their uncles.²⁵ Even Nils' wife used French, whereas his sisters and nieces, who all stayed in Finland, wrote exclusively in Swedish. As far as the positions of Latin and French are concerned, one detail may illuminate the different situations of Michael's and Nils' families. In the 1660s, Michael Wexionius-Gyldenstolpe urges his sons, for practice, to sometimes write letters in French whereas, at the turn of the eighteenth

²³ L. Gustafsson, "The Literate Nobleman. A Study in the Literature of the Earlier Part of Sweden's Period as a Great Power", *Lychnos* 1959, 38–9.

²⁴ Michael had solicited Count Per Brahe for a permission to use the name and coat-of-arms of an old Swedish noble family Stolpe because his mother was descended from that family. The petition was accompanied by Michael's assurances that he could not even think that he would deserve to be ennobled for his own merits (topos of *modestia*). Laitinen (above n. 5) 86–7.

²⁵ See n. 19.

century, his son Nils encourages his own sons to use Latin instead of French.²⁶ That Nils encouraged his sons to write Latin does not only indicate that he wanted his sons to improve their Latin. The exhortation might also go back to the learned background of Nils' family and his desire to keep up that reputation, an attempt in which he indeed succeeded since learnedness and intellectual activities are mentioned in his biographies, and even in those of his offspring. In fact, some biographers do not describe his political career as very successful but praise his erudition and especially his juridical knowledge.²⁷

The opposite encouragement of the Gyldenstolpe fathers of the two successive generations mirrors not only the changed situation of their family but also that of the Latin language. At the turn of the eighteenth century when Nils' sons wrote their letters and Nils urged them to use Latin, the position of Latin was beginning to change in the country. Swedish gradually became more common in all, even academic, contexts.²⁸ That the two youngest sons of Michael Wexionius-Gyldenstolpe used more Swedish than their elder brothers cannot, however, solely be explained by the general decreasing use of Latin; the fact that they made their careers in the army might also have influenced the choice of language. For example, the second youngest brother, Carl, who served in the Swedish and Dutch armies, first wrote exclusively in Latin but later on used more and more Swedish. Although he never totally gave up writing Latin, it was probably less used in his circles of colleagues and friends, and his native language, Swedish, became thus a more natural choice for him.

Michael's other sons wrote their father in French, too, but they never wrote their brother Nils in French.²⁹ In Nils' brothers' letters, the second choice was always Swedish, whereas for Michael, in familiar correspondence, it was always French. Michael had become interested in France and the French language during his scholarly journey (*peregrinatio*),

²⁶ Michael W.-G. to Nils G. 18 January, 23 May, 22 July, 12 September, 1661; 15 October, 1664. Ulrik Niklas to Nils G. s.d. (UUB, Nordin 470:119).

²⁷ *SBL* 17 (above n. 5) 514; *Svenskt Biografiskt Handlexikon* 1, Stockholm 1906, 419; *Svenska män och kvinnor. Biografisk Uppslagsbok* 3, Stockholm 1946, 175.

²⁸ R. Sarasti-Wilenius, *Noster eloquendi artifex. Daniel Achrelius' Latin Speeches and Rhetorical Theory in Seventeenth-Century Finland*, Helsinki 2000, 38–9.

²⁹ In his letter to Nils G. dating from May 1662, Michael W.-G. mentions that he has received a letter from Daniel G. which was written in Latin, Greek and French.

particularly when he was studying at the University of Marburg in 1630s, in the time of the Thirty Years' War. When Nils wrote that he would travel to England, Michael answered – probably due to his own unfulfilled wish to visit France – that he would have preferred Nils to travel to France. However, in the present situation, Nils should learn English and study things about England in order to make the most of the journey.³⁰ As for Nils, he first supported the anti-France foreign policy, position the Swedish government took under Bengt Oxenstierna's lead, but in the 1690s he changed his attitude and was an enthusiastic Francophile (and Oxenstierna's opponent) for the rest of this life. He even received bribes from France which were welcome help in his financial difficulties.³¹

Significance of language proficiency

The letters show how Michael, who appreciated the good knowledge of languages as an essential part of learning, took care that his sons learned languages to such an extent that language proficiency became a kind of a distinctive mark of the family. The family could indeed be proud of the sons' knowledge of languages on several occasions, e.g., when Michael took his two eldest sons, a little less than ten years old, to Stockholm where several significant persons admired their knowledge of Latin or when two of the sons, on two separate occasions, at the ages of 13 and 15, delivered Latin panegyrics on two patrons of the family.³² In his letters to the sons who had

³⁰ Michael W.-G. to Nils G. 20 December, 1660: *Iter tuum in Angliam faxit Omnipotens ut feliciter succedat! Mallem tamen, si commode fieri potuisset, in Galliam. Sed, uti Comicus ait, quando ut volumus non licet, velimus quod possumus. Interea consultum foret in lingua istius regionis Te graviter exerceri, nec non de moribus gentis dextre informari quo commodius et majori cum fructu celebre istud quoque regnum invises.* The reference to a comedian, cf. Ter. *Andr.* 805.

³¹ *SBL* 17 (above n. 5) 514–5.

³² Samuel Gyldenstolpe describes these occasions in the funeral oration in memory of the eldest brother Gabriel, who died at the age of twenty-five when he was in the service of the Swedish army in Riga. *Panegyris seu Parentatio in Memoriam Dn. Gabrielis Gyldenstolpens*, Aboae 1667 (A6v). Moreover, he describes how Gabriel had imbibed knowledge of several languages with his mother's milk (A5r): *statim deinde cum ipso lacte materno, pietatis semina variasque linguas hauserat atque imbiberat.* The panegyrics mentioned are Gabriel Gyldenstolpe, *Perbrevis Panegyricus Virtuti et Honori Dni. Laurentii Creutz*, Aboae 1655; Samuel Gyldenstolpe, *De Illustrissima Braheorum*

moved away from home, Michael gave them fatherly advice and frequently encouraged them to continue studying and, not least, utilizing languages. In time, this practice was to be continued by Nils who suggested themes such as *Comparatio Romuli et Augusti* for his sons' writing exercises in Latin.³³ The teaching of languages to other persons was highly recommended.³⁴ It was not only foreign languages that should be learned and practiced; it was also advisable to try to refine one's style in the vernacular language.³⁵

Michael not only exhorted his sons but also continued to instruct them by means of letters. Michael's encouragement to write in French included that he would correct the text and then return the revised letter to Nils. In Nils' previous letters in French, father had noticed more errors than he had hoped to see.³⁶ We do not have Nils' answer but judging from the soothing and explanatory tone in Michael's following letters, Nils was not at all enthusiastic about his father's suggestion. He was probably unsure of his abilities in French at the time and was simply annoyed at or tired of his father's advice. Michael also made corrections to Nils' Latin text, pointing out orthographical errors and shortcomings in argumentation and style. Nevertheless, later on Nils wrote Michael at least a couple of letters in French receiving afterwards Michael's judgment and corrections (though in Latin). When Michael noticed that his well-intentioned instruction somewhat irritated Nils, he suggested a stylistic exercise which Nils could carry out by himself without his father's intervention: "translate a piece of

Prosapia Sermo Panegyricus, Aboae 1671.

³³ Edvard G. and Carl Adolf G. to Nils G. 14 March, 1696.

³⁴ E.g., Michael W.-G. to Nils G. 20 December, 1660: *Exercitia tua in Romana pariter et Gallica lingua, quibus alijs quoque informatione tua subsidio esse possis, vehementer approbo. Animadvertis, mi fili, ut alat omnis terra peritos. Sic perge, Deum ardentem cole, assidue precare, virtuti atque eruditioni stude, atque cum illis libenter conversare ex quibus melior simul et doctior evadas, ut et tibi ipsi honori et promotioni et nobis gaudio atque solatio esse queas.*

³⁵ Michael W.-G. to Nils G. 6 July, 1661: *tersum stylum et genuinum etiam in vernacula excolas lingua verbaque et phrases minus usitatas aut commodas tanquam scopulos vites.*

³⁶ Michael W.-G. to Nils G. 23 May, 1661: *Gallicas itidem subinde abs te literas expecto. Exercitio siquidem in illo studij genere impense tibi est opus. Occurrebant quippe in illis quas antea dederas plura quam sperassem σφάλματα, quae, ubi nonnihil ocij nactus fuero, tibi annotata transmittam.* Michael uses the Greek term σφάλματα in order not to sound so harsh (a kind of euphemism) or in order to put special emphasis on that word. See also Michael W.-G. to Nils G. 22 July, 1661.

text from a French author into Latin or German, then put aside the text of the author and on your own translate the text again into French. Then compare your translation to the original text".³⁷

Michael's motive for this kind of advice was naturally the concern for his sons' future lives and careers. The letters reveal that Michael invested in his sons' learning, in general, and in their knowledge of languages, in particular, in order to secure them respectable careers and to help them enter into patronage relationships with powerful patrons. In his letters, Michael makes it quite clear that it would be crucially beneficial for Nils' career to gain the patronage of more than one great supporter, which shows the meaning that the kinship, friendship and client–patron relationships had for people of the time. It was difficult to get something done, gain a benefit, a promotion or a position unless you had the right connections, knew someone who was powerful enough or who, for his part, knew someone who would act to your advantage.³⁸ When Nils had moved to Stockholm but had not yet found a proper job, Michael wrote to one of his patrons, Count Per Brahe, Governor-General and the highest judicial officer of the country (*drots*), suggesting various alternatives for the start of Nils' career, one of them being that Brahe would introduce Nils to the Royal Court where he could teach the young prince, the future king Charles XI, Latin and Finnish.³⁹ Becoming a tutor was a common way to enter into a patronage relationship. If Michael's hope had materialized, it would have meant an investment in a patron who was destined to become powerful.⁴⁰

³⁷ Michael W.-G. to Nils G. 22 July, 1661: *Transfer ex Gallico in Latinum aut Germanicum sermonem. Seposito deinde authore, tuo marte, priori linguae redde, quod postmodum conferas. Id haud exiguo in stili exercitio erit adjumentum.*

³⁸ P. Englund, "Om klienter och deras patroner", in S. Dahlgren, A. Florén, Å. Karlsson (eds.), *Makt & vardag. Hur man styrde, levde och tänkte under svensk stormaktstid*, Trelleborg 1993, 86.

³⁹ Laitinen (above n. 5) 134. In a letter to Nils himself Michael mentions only Finnish. Michael W.-G. to Nils G. 1 August, 1660: *Regni Drozeto potes etiam humiliter insinuare Te velle Regem in Fennica lingua exercere.*

⁴⁰ M. Biagioli, *Galileo, Courtier. The Practice of Science in the Culture of Absolutism*, Chicago & London 1993, 19–24.

Concluding remarks

On the grounds of a few explanations given or implied by the writers or revealed in the contents of the letters of the Gyldenstolpe family, I think it is justified to presume that the language was not randomly chosen and that, in many cases, the writer made a more or less conscious decision to use a particular language. There are several relevant factors that influence the decision. First of all, the choice of the language depended on who wrote and to whom: the writer had naturally to use a language s/he could write and s/he knew that the addressee could understand. For instance, the women never wrote nor were addressed letters in Latin. If both the writer and the addressee were fluent in more than one language, the subject matter and the purpose of the letter, i.e., what was written and why, could influence the writer in his choice of language. As the example of Samuel Gyldenstolpe's Italian letter shows, the writer could effectively pursue his goals by using a particular language.

Since the regular exchange of letters was regarded as a dialogue, it is possible that the recipient, in the first place, answered in the same language as the letter he received was written.⁴¹ But the writer could also simply use a language which he found most convenient and could sometimes choose another simply for a change. He could also choose a particular language in order to practice that language or to instruct the addressee in it, or in order to show respect for the recipient, to transmit values of the family from one generation to another or to define his social identity.

Latin, which was standard in the mutual letters of the male members of the Gyldenstolpe family during three generations, can be regarded as a natural but perhaps not obvious choice in a familiar correspondence in the second half of the seventeenth century and in the early eighteenth century. The use of Latin, of course, associated Michael Wexionius-Gyldenstolpe and his family, newcomers to the nobility, with the *res publica literaria*. Learning was the justification for their social advancement and remained an essential feature of their public image, at least during Michael's and his sons' lifetime. French and Swedish (and other languages), which were occasionally used for various reasons, only added some variety to the epistolary communication in Latin. The letters, particularly those of Michael

⁴¹ H.M.J. Nellen, "In Strict Confidence: Grotius' Correspondence with his Socinian Friends", Van Houdt, Papy, Tournoy, Matheussen (above n. 13) 229.

Wexionius-Gyldenstolpe, manifest how greatly a wide knowledge of languages was appreciated, not least because it was considered a good investment with regard to one's future career.

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