

Raija Sarasti-Wilenius:

“Noster eloquendi artifex”. Daniel Achrelius’ Latin Speeches and Rhetorical Theory in Seventeenth-Century Finland

(Ph.D. thesis)

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Occasional oratory and poetry in Neo-Latin as well as in the vernaculars represent, according to the Swedish scholar Per S. Ridderstad, a kind of “mass literature” in the seventeenth century.² Produced in great numbers and in great haste, the speeches and poems were usually printed immediately. As products of literary convention they may therefore reasonably be expected to reflect most clearly and purely the state of the art of rhetorical and poetical instruction in the higher education of their day, so that their analysis should naturally be of prime importance to historians of rhetorical and poetical education. In spite of that, however, occasional writings have long been sorely neglected by scholarship, due to their non-literary or semi-literary status, and only very recently have researchers begun to acknowledge their value and taken an active interest in them. This is as true for the Nordic countries as it is for the rest of Europe. However, while occasional poetry in the five Nordic countries has attracted at least a moderate amount of interest during the last decades,³ occasional oratory remains a relatively unexplored field.⁴

The present study by Raija Sarasti-Wilenius (henceforth S.-W.) aims to help alleviate this shortage. The book is the printed version of her doctoral dissertation, which she wrote while participating in a five-year research project on Neo-Latin literature in the Nordic countries, and which she defended at the University of Helsinki in December 2000. It is dedicated to the analysis of 18 Neo-Latin epideictic speeches (12 funeral and 6 congratulatory orations) by Daniel Achrelius (1644-92), professor of eloquence at the Academy of Turku (or Åbo in Swedish, but S.-W., slightly ahistorically, prefers to stick to the Finnish appellation throughout).

¹ The book can be purchased by mailing to: <raija.sarasti-wilenius@helsinki.fi>.

² Per S. Ridderstad, “Vad är tillfällesdiktning? En kort översikt”, *Personhistorisk tidskrift* 76:3 (1980), pp. 25-41 (esp. pp. 34-35).

³ See, for instance, Annika Ström, *Lachrymae Catharinae. Five Collections of Funeral Poetry from 1628* (Studia Latina Stockholmiensia 37; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1994); Pernille Harsting, “Latin Valedictory Poems in the 16th Century: Tradition and Topicality of a Classical Genre”, in Minna S. Jensen (ed.), *A History of Nordic Neo-Latin Literature* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1995), pp. 203-218; Claes Gejrot and Annika Ström, *Poems for the Occasion. Three Essays on Neo-Latin Poetry from Seventeenth Century Sweden* (Studia Latina Stockholmiensia 44; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1999); Pernille Harsting, “From Melanchthonism to Mannerism: The Development of the Neo-Latin Wedding Poem in 16th Century Denmark”, in Thomas Haye (ed.), *Humanismus im Norden. Frühneuzeitliche Rezeption antiker Kultur und Literatur an Nord- und Ostsee* [= *Chloe* 32] (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), pp. 289-318.

⁴ Emin Tengström, *A Latin Funeral Oration from Early 18th Century Sweden. An Interpretative Study* (Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensia. Studia Graeca et Latina Gothoburgensia 45; Gothenburg, 1983), and Iiro Kajanto, *Christina Heroína. Mythological and Historical Exemplification in the Latin Panegyrics on Christina Queen of Sweden* (Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae B 269; Helsinki, 1993) may be quoted as notable English language exceptions from that rule.

The speeches were delivered at Turku in the years between 1670 and 1692, i.e. during the heyday of Swedish absolute monarchy. This was also the period of a somewhat belated humanism in Finland, the centre of which, from its foundation in 1640 until its temporary closing in 1713, was the Åbo/Turku Academy.

The book consists of an introduction, seven chapters (of fairly unequal length), and a conclusion, followed by a bibliography, indices, and five appendices.

In the introduction (counted as chapter 1, pp. 1-9) S.-W. first presents an overview of the historical, political, and intellectual background, briefly describing the foundation and development of Turku Academy and the role of Latin occasional speeches in the contemporary academic context. Before giving a survey of the contents of the following chapters, she reveals that the principal aim of her study is to interpret Achrelius' speeches in terms of their being products of literary convention by analyzing their composition within the theoretical framework of the rhetorical treatises then used at Turku, especially Achrelius' own *Oratoria* (1687), and Martin Miltopaeus' *Institutiones oratoriae* (1669). Finally, she explains her editorial principles in rendering Latin quotations (retaining seventeenth century Latin orthography, while adapting punctuation and typography to modern standards). Indeed, the author provides a generous number of quotations from the original speeches throughout, a welcome feature considering the general inaccessibility of these texts.

Chapters 2-4 lay the groundwork for the analysis proper. Chapter 2 (pp. 11-27) offers a general outline of Achrelius' life and works. Unlike his predecessor Martin Miltopaeus (Ruskiapää), Achrelius, "noster eloquendi artifex" ('our expert practitioner in the art of eloquence', reviewer's transl.), as his colleague Jacob Flachsenius appreciatively called him, was of Swedish origin. His father, Erik, was a native of Åkers in Roslagen on the Swedish coast of the Baltic Sea near Stockholm, whence the family's Latin name is derived. In 1640, Erik moved to Turku to become a professor of medicine, and Daniel was born there. S.-W. sketches the main features of Achrelius' academic career, focusing mainly on his being a student of Miltopaeus'; his early interest in natural science, which resulted in the writing of a dissertation on a physical theme and in the publication of his *Contemplationes mundi* (1682); and, finally, his career in the faculty of arts, where, in 1673, he was appointed *adjunctus* and, in 1679, Professor of eloquence. S.-W. vividly presents all the information available on Achrelius' activities as an academic teacher and supervisor, and further demonstrates his excellence as an orator and master of Latin eloquence. She describes his three rhetorical textbooks (*Oratoria*, 1687; *Epistolarum conscribendarum forma et ratio*, 1689; *Verborum Latini sermonis differentiae*, 1692), and gives details of not only his bibliophilic interests and his reputation as a writer of occasional poems in Swedish, but also his hot temper, which more than once got him into trouble with university authorities and with public notables such as the judges of the Turku Court of Appeal.

In chapter 3 (pp. 28-39) S.-W. discusses the status of "Epideictic Rhetoric and Occasional Literature in Seventeenth-Century Finland". After an arguably somewhat perfunctory three-page survey of the theoretical background of the *genus demonstrativum* in the ancient period (represented here by Pseudo-Dionysius and Menander Rhetor) as well as in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, she introduces a distinction between two categories of occasional literature in the seventeenth century: "epideictic rhetoric" proper, and "shorter occasional writings", consisting of poems, smaller pieces of prose, and what she terms "lapidary style", i.e. inscription-like texts (p. 30). She characterizes the former category as "rather elitist", a point she illustrates by comparing the social standing of the addressees of Achrelius' 18 speeches with that of the addressees of 20 of his shorter writings (which she generally does not include in her discussion; however, a comprehensive list of Achrelius' other Latin works is to be found in Appendix 1, pp. 262-266). She briefly describes the two main types of occasional speeches and writings in the seventeenth century, funerary and congratulatory, and their respective academic traditions in

Finland, and adds a few thoughts on the relationship between oral delivery and printed publication (and the question of financial patronage for publication) as well as on the choice of language (Latin still being predominant in epideictic speeches in the seventeenth century, while shorter occasional writings were more open to the use of vernaculars).

Chapter 4 (pp. 40-56) deals with "Teaching of Rhetoric and Rhetorical Textbooks". S.-W. first names the general authorities in rhetorical instruction in Finland (Melanchthon, Ramus, Vossius, Erasmus' *De copia*, Aphthonius' *Progymnasmata*, and Schefferus' *De stylo*), before she focuses on Miltopaeus' and Achrelius' textbooks. She places particular emphasis on the fact that they both reject Ramist positions (Miltopaeus' 705 pages deal, for instance, exclusively with rhetorical invention and disposition!), a point that will, in turn, prove essential to her own analysis of the speeches. While paying attention all the while to their sources, she discusses the views of Miltopaeus and Achrelius on the *genera dicendi* and on the subject of *status*, collates their respective lists of subspecies of epideictic rhetoric, and gives an account of their opinions on correct Latin style, imitation of established authors, and the use of collections, florilegia, etc. Detailed tables of contents of both works are given in Appendices 2 and 3 (pp. 267-271).

An "Overview of the Orations" that form the textual corpus of S.-W.'s study is given in chapter 5 (pp. 57-64). For each of the 18 speeches, the following data are specified: addressee; year of publication; full text of the title page; information about dedications, epitaphs, or other appendices; length (from twelve to seventy printed pages!) and bibliographical size; corresponding entry numbers in major bibliographies; and very abbreviated notes about central topics treated. As there is no modern edition of the speeches, and copies seem to be rare, some information concerning library holdings would probably have been useful. Among the addressees of the orations are not only academics (such as Erik Achrelius, Miltopaeus, Johannes Gezelius), noblemen, and officials of the Court of Appeal (such as Gustav Adolf de la Gardie, Daniel Gyldenstolpe, or Johannes Lagermarck), but also royal figures (such as king Charles XI and his wife Ulrica Eleonora, the future king Charles XII and other princes). Biographical particulars of the addressees are listed in Appendix 5 (pp. 283-284).

The core of the entire study, however, is found in chapter 6, which takes up more than one half of the book (pp. 65-217). It is dedicated to the "Analysis of the Orations According to the Five Parts of Classical Rhetoric". That S.-W. should arrange her subject matter according to the five *officia oratoris* of classical, non-Ramist rhetoric (*inventio, dispositio, elocutio, memoria, actio*), is surprising and methodologically problematic. For, of her two principal textbooks of reference, Miltopaeus' only treats the first two *officia*, and Achrelius skips at least memory, a fact that makes the intended examination of the relationship between theory and practice somewhat difficult. Moreover, we know very little about the actual practice of the last two *officia*, which further complicates matters. By the same token, the topics that come in for discussion in the chapter are very unequally distributed. S.-W. herself seems to feel uneasy about these problems, as her apologetic remarks in the introduction (p. 5) show.

S.-W.'s general method of analysis is as follows: for every single problem she proceeds from its foundations in classical and early modern rhetorical theory, describes their reappearance in Miltopaeus and Achrelius (if that is the case), and finally turns to its illustration by offering suitable examples from the practice of Achrelius' speeches. Invention, predictably, receives the lion's share of attention (pp. 65-158), and the pages devoted to it are again subdivided into the topics of epideictic speech and the theory of amplification. For invention, the theoretical basis in Miltopaeus and Achrelius is solid enough for S.-W. to rely on it firmly. Nevertheless, it is strange that she does not, in this particular context, mention one of the most influential sources for the topics of praise, i.e. Aphthonius' *Progymnasmata*. Accordingly, as regards *loci* of praise of persons, she treats the significance of birth and personal virtue (which she associates with a contemporary debate on nobility in Sweden), the praise of the native region, the qualities of mind and body (specified according to the social group or gender of the addressee), the

peregrinatio or educational journey abroad (especially in the case of academics), and the relationship between honour and fame. In comparison with these general *loci* of praise, which receive ample illustration, the *loci* concerning death, lamentation, and consolation are treated with much greater brevity, and the *loci* of congratulation are basically reduced to a few lines. There is certainly no shortage of appropriate examples in the speeches, so this part of S.-W.'s study might easily have been more balanced.

The section on amplification opens with a historical discussion of the theories of methods of amplification from Quintilian to Achrelius including Erasmus and others. One may wonder, however, why S.-W. in this context quotes only Erasmus' *De conscribendis epistolis*, and not his *De copia*. Three selected means of amplification are put to closer examination in theory and practice: the *loci communes* (represented by the topos of modesty and the topos of praise of learning and sciences); examples (classified perhaps a little too rigidly according to a five-fold taxonomy); and quotations and sayings from ancient or later writers (in illustration of which S.-W., in Appendix 4, pp. 272-282, offers a meticulously assembled compilation of all the literary borrowings and quotations in Achrelius' speeches).

The short subchapter on disposition (pp. 158-169) is certainly one of the best parts of the book. In a clear and concise manner, S.-W. discusses the problems of *dispositio naturalis* and *artificialis*, and the different possible ways of arranging an epideictic speech, which she exemplifies by lucidly analysing the tables of contents of one example each from the funerary (Enevald Svenonius) and the congratulatory speeches (G.A. de la Gardie), in this case most directly linking theory and practice. It is regrettable that S.-W. does not offer similar tables of contents for all or at least a major part of the speeches. For, in spite of the mass of details presented, the reader is hardly given a clear impression of any of the speeches as a whole, unless he or she is prepared to put scattered pieces of evidence together in jigsaw puzzle style.

The lengthy subchapter on style (pp. 169-206), however, clearly demanded intensive effort on the part of the author, and it is accordingly the hardest for the reader to digest. Apart from the introductory remarks on the different styles of oratory and on the artistic means of *elocutio* (such as linguistic purity, word order, syntax, and rhythm), it mainly consists of long lists of tropes and figures filled up with even longer lists of examples collected seemingly at random from the speeches. Without external guidance, a clear line of argument is not easily found.

The section on memory (pp. 206-210) is, to say the least, problematic. As neither Miltopaeus nor Achrelius actually treat memory in theory, and as there is no evidence as to how Achrelius memorized his speeches, it is more or less reduced to a compendiumesque repetition of the ideas of earlier thinkers. Nor can S.-W.'s ingenious calculations of the number of days at Achrelius' disposal for composing and memorizing each of the speeches contribute anything substantial to the elucidation of the issue. For similar reasons, the section on delivery (pp. 211-217) is also entirely theoretical, albeit based on Achrelius' own treatment of the modification of voice, body, and gesture in his *Oratoria*.

The two short final chapters discuss topics touched upon occasionally earlier in the book, namely the "Relation Between Orally Delivered and Written Speeches" (chapter 7, pp. 218-221), which remains, according to S.-W., "an unsolved question" in the case of Achrelius (p. 221); and the "Reliability of Biographical Information in Epideictic Speeches" (chapter 8, pp. 221-232), which she puts to a test through a study of the funeral oration in memory of Achrelius' own father, reaching the conclusion that the biographical data may sometimes be inaccurate owing to the panegyric purpose of the orations.

In the "Conclusion" (pp. 233-239), S.-W. summarizes the results of her investigations and expresses her conviction that the analysis of Achrelius' speeches in the light of the theoretical precepts provided by his own and Miltopaeus' treatises has revealed that "Jacob Flachsenius' epithet for Achrelius, *noster eloquendi artifex*, is entirely justified" (p. 239).

The book includes 11 illustrations, mainly facsimiles of title pages. It offers a comprehensive bibliography, subdivided into books printed before 1800 and later literature, and detailed *indices nominum* as well as *rerum*. The five appendices also prove very useful for the reader. Factual errors are rare and do not require discussion here. Furthermore, S.-W.'s English style is fluent and elegant throughout, even if it occasionally still betrays the non-native speaker. There may be a few more typographical errors than is usual for a dissertation, but they scarcely, if ever, impede the correct understanding of the argument.

As a whole, S.-W.'s book leaves the specialist reader with somewhat ambivalent feelings. On the one hand, it is clearly a pioneering work that provides precious information about highly interesting, but not easily accessible, texts, and as such it no doubt contributes in a major way to the study of occasional Neo-Latin oratory in the Nordic countries. On the other hand, the reader is left with a feeling that the author, by pressing Achrelius' speeches into the rigid frame of the five *officia*, has not done complete justice to her own declared objectives. But, this is not to deny that, in spite of these minor weaknesses, the book is a valuable contribution to the investigation of Nordic baroque literature and will certainly be welcomed by historians of rhetoric and Neo-Latin scholars alike.

Manfred Kraus
Philologisches Seminar
University of Tübingen
D-72074 Tübingen
Germany
manfred.kraus@uni-tuebingen.de

Manfred Kraus is *Akademischer Rat* at the Philologisches Seminar of the University of Tübingen. He has written several major articles for the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* (Tübingen).