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1700-tal « 2023

JOHANNES LJUNGBERG: *Redaktionens förord* « 5

Articles

LINN HOLMBERG: *Right and Wrong Ways of Knowing: Dictionary Craze and Conflicts of Learning in Eighteenth-Century Europe* « 8

CHRISTINE JEANNERET: *A French Parnassus for the Danes: Knowledge, gossip, and eroticism in La Beaumelle's handwritten gazettes in Copenhagen* « 34

PAUL BORENBERG: *Pigor i sämre hushåll: Tjänstehjonsstadgan och den informella ekonomins storlek i 1700-talets Stockholm* « 55

BRIAN KJÆR OLESEN: *Holberg in Context: A View from Intellectual History* « 77

PETRA DOTLAČILOVÁ: *Designing 'Swedishness': Theatre Costume Design under the Rule of Gustav III* « 102

Dissertations

JONAS THORUP THOMSEN, *Danish Clergymen and their Book Collections. An investigation into Clerical Libraries, Book Distribution, and Knowledge Circulation in Denmark, ca 1685–1810*, review by Jakob Evertsson « 130

JANNE PALKISTO, *Säveltäjä-klarinetisti Bernhard Crusellin ammatillinen toiminta ja vuorovaiutus Ruotsissa 1795–1833 [Kompositör-klarinetisterna Bernhard Crusells yrkesverksamhet och växelverkan i Sverige 1795–1833]*, review by Markus Mantere « 133

ARE BØ PEDERSEN, *'En knude, som ved Menneskelige Raisons og historiske Exempler ikke kand løses'. Hebraisk mytologi og forsvar mot religionskritikk i Ludvig Holbergs Den jødiske Historie (1742)*, review by Karen Skovgaard-Petersen « 136

AGNETA HELMIUS, *Mode och hushåll. Om formandet av kön och media i frihetstidens svenska små- och veckoskrifter*, review by Gudrun Andersson « 140

NANNA EVA NISSEN, *Forensic Theology and the Evaluation of Blasphemy Offences. The Prosecution of Written Pacts with the Devil in Denmark-Norway between 1634 and 1754*, review by Anton Runesson « 145

ALVAR BLOMGREN, *The Hurricane of Passion. Popular Politics and Emotion in Late Georgian England 1792–1812*, review by Peter K. Andersson « 147

Literature

JON KRISTINN EINARSSON, *Jón Steingrímsson og Skaftáreldar. [The Constitutional aftermath after the Laki Eruption 1783–1784]*, review by Margrét Gunnarsdóttir « 150

THOMAS EWIN DALIVEIT SLETTEBØ, OLA TEIGE & ØYSTEIN LYDIK IDSØ VIKEN (RED.), *Fredsårrene. Norge i fred 1720–1807*, review by Dorothee Goetze « 154

BO LINDBERG, *Disputation, dissertation, avhandling. Historien om en genre*, review by Per Pippin Aspaas « 157

REBECCA LENNARTSSON, *Ulla Winblad. Liv och legend*, review by Henrika Tandefelt « 160

MIA SKOTT, *Tapetmakerskor. Självständiga yrkeskvinnor i 1700-talets Stockholm*, review by Paul Borenberg « 163

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT, *Brev från en resa i Sverige, Norge och Danmark (1796)*. Translation, introduction and notes by Elisabeth Mansén, review by Martina Reuter « 165

HANS EGEDE, *Dagbok 1721–36*. Bearbejdet til nudansk og med forord af Ane Martine Lønneke, review by Lis Norup « 168

LUDVIG HOLBERG, *Rettskunskab (1751)*. Oversatt av Anderas Harald Aure, review by Søren Koch « 173

Redaktionens förord

Årets nummer öppnar med en flashback till den nordiska 1700-talskonferensen som gick av stapeln i ett soligt Köpenhamn under några välgörande augustidagar 2022. Det var en fantastisk tillställning med många möten på tvärs över våra fem systemsällskap, däribland mellan flera av redaktionens medlemmar som annars oftare möts online. Det där var sannerligen högsäsong för vår verksamhet i öresundsregionen. Tidigare samma månad hade nämligen det svenska sällskapet stått värd för ISEC:s exekutivkommittémöte i Lund, och dessutom bjudit de internationella delegaterna på en utflykt över bron för att beskåda de danska kronjuvelerna, äta rågbröd och gå en bytur. Utöver själva mötet hölls även en seminariedag, vilken har resulterat i boken *Media and mediation in the Eighteenth Century*, redigerad av det svenska sällskapets ordförande Jonas Nordin tillsammans med ISEC:s ordförande Penelope Corfield. Denna bok, som ger inblickar i pågående 1700-talsforskning med anknytning till vår gemensamma internationella förening, återfinns en googling bort eftersom den är allmänt tillgänglig i digitalt format, precis som denna tidskrift.

För att återgå till tidskriften och den flashback från sommaren 2022 som återfinns på följande blad så består den i en text av *Linn Holmberg* (Stockholms universitet) på temat för keynote-föreläsningen ”Right and wrong ways of knowing”. Rätt och fel var temat för konferensen som helhet, och 1700-talets ”dictionary craze” – som Holmberg benämner konflikterna kring de nymodiga, alfabetiskt inordnade och därmed uppslagsbara vägarna till kunskap – var sannerligen något som väckte ivriga diskussioner om vad som var rätt och fel sätt att lära sig saker. De senaste århundradena har knappast gjort denna fråga mindre aktuell. Tvärtom ekar väl 1700-talet i detta avseende i aktuella debatter om vilken kunskapssyn som användandet av Chat GPT ger uttryck för.

Laurent Angliviel de Beaumelle var en fransk protestant som levde fyra år i Köpenhamn under upplysningens glansdagar. Den handskrivna tidskriften

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La spectatrice danoise, i vilken han talar genom en ung dams stämman, var berömd som en fascinerande länk mellan det färska parisiska skvallret och den danska huvudstaden. I årets häfte ger *Christine Jeanneret* (Köpenhamns universitet) en unik och fascinerande inblick även i den mindre kända *Gazette de la cour, de la ville et du parnasse*. Jeanneret argumenterar för att denna mer exklusiva tidskrift bjöd de suktande läsarna i nord på ett mer intimt tonläge än den tidigare nämnda *La spectatrice*.

Långt ifrån hovkretsarna, inte i geografisk mening men väl på samhällets sociala stege, befinner sig frågan om tjänstehjonsstadgans realiteter. Den har länge varit ett omdiskuterat forskningsuppslag i svensk socialhistoria. Börje Harnesks provocerande tes att stadgan i realiteten var verkningslös under 1700-talet har mött spridda reaktioner på senare år. I en studie av Stockholms Politikollegiums listor från 1753 över vilka i staden som var utan tjänst, eller som misstänktes sakna tjänst, undersöker *Paul Bovenberg* (Stockholms universitet) hur det förhöll sig med stadgans efterlevnad i den svenska huvudstaden. Undersökningen visar att Politikollegiets återkommande klagomål över att människor undvek att ta årstjänst var både verklighetsförankrade och överdrivna.

Ludvig Holberg är en ständigt återkommande gestalt i nordisk 1700-talsforskning. Årets häfte bjuder på en artikel om denne som tar utgångspunkt i det internationellt gångbara interdisciplinära fältet *intellectual history*. Närmare bestämt ger *Brian Kjør Olesen* (Pompeu Fabra University) en kritisk utvärdering av några av de senaste ingångarna till att förstå Holbergs gärning. Texten pläderar för mer kontextuella läsningar av Holbergs verk som tar hänsyn till dennes skiftande identitet som författare, eller mer precist hans varierade användning av olika genrer, röster och källor. Som om Olesens artikel inte vore nog med nytt material om denne lärdomsgigant recenserar både Are Bø Pedersens avhandling om Holbergs 'Den jødiske historie' (1748) och Andreas Harald Aures översättning av Holbergs *Rettskunnskap* (1751) i häftets recensionsdel.

Den 6 juni 2023 uppmärksammades 500-årsminnet av att Gustav Vasa valdes till Sveriges kung. Vad har det med 1700-talet att göra, kunde man i förstone undra. Några dagar senare kom svaret. Då uppfördes den svenskspråkiga 1700-talsoperan *Gustav Wasa* (1786) på Stockholms konserthus. Detta hör inte till vanligheterna, och därför är det en händelse som ser ut som en tanke att redaktionen fick in ett artikelmanus som berör denna – men också andra – föreställningar från Gustav III:s tid. Artikeln, som är författad av *Petrá Dotlačilová* (Stockholms universitet), anlägger ett unikt fokus på kostymdesign, vilket är ett synnerligen centralt perspektiv i sammanhanget med tanke på den betydande vikt teaterkungen fäste vid sådant. Passande nog ackompanjeras artikeln av ett ovanligt rikt bildmaterial.

Recensionsavdelningen är som vanligt den del av häftet som innehåller flest antal texter och författare. Glädjande nog har vi fått in texter som utvärderar avhandlingar försvarade i inte mindre än fyra nordiska länder, en trend som vi hoppas fortsätter framöver. Även de inkomna recensionerna av utkomna monografier, volymer och källutgåvor gör oss mycket ödmjukt tacksamma och hoppfulla inför framtiden. Inom redaktionen tar vi inte den verksamhet som består i recensionskrivande för given. Tvärtom vill vi uttrycka vår djupaste tacksamhet till alla som åtar sig det gränslöst viktiga arbetet att läsa ordentligt – för att anknyta till häftets första text – och ge respons i det forum som denna tidskrift utgör. Alla dessa reaktioner ger näring åt det där viktiga samtalet, som inte får slockna för att helt ersättas med något sorts dött digitalt vilorum där texterna ligger gömda tills de väcks till liv av bångstyriga algoritmer snarare än kollegialt engagemang över ny forskning.

Mycket nöje med läsningen, som förhoppningsvis också ger upphov till ett och annat kollegialt samtal!

När sensommaren går mot höst 2023

Johannes Ljungberg, huvudredaktör

Right and Wrong Ways of Knowing: The Dictionary Craze and Conflicts of Learning in Eighteenth-Century Europe

Linn Holmberg, Stockholm University

Abstract: This article explores how the eighteenth-century ‘dictionary craze’ – the explosive proliferation of alphabetically organized reference works – can be understood as part of a wider conflict of learning. Drawing on a wide mix of sources, I show that dictionaries, more than any other factual genre of the time, challenged established conventions about what constituted right and wrong ways of reading, learning, and ultimately knowing, and that this was a crucial reason for both the controversy and success of the genre.

After an overview of early modern norms of learning, the article examines how eighteenth-century disagreements about factual dictionaries challenged, reproduced, and reconfigured older views. By encouraging readers to follow their own curiosity, read in whatever order they liked, form their own opinions, remember temporarily, forget, and return when needed, dictionaries deviated from established ideals of disciplined study and ‘digestive’ reading, which held that ‘true’ knowledge was deeply incorporated in the individual. The dictionary’s claim to be a ‘shortcut’ to learning also fueled discussions about the very meaning of ‘knowing’, and how much the road to learning could be shortened without missing the goal.

Keywords: history of learning; history of reading; history of knowledge; encyclopedias; factual dictionaries

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Introduction

In eighteenth-century Europe, book markets were struck by a conspicuous trend. The demand for *dictionaries* suddenly seemed insatiable. As the vernacular tongues gradually replaced Latin in print, language dictionaries were naturally of great interest and use. However, factual dictionaries – treating arts, crafts, and sciences in alphabetically ordered articles – turned out to be an even greater sales success.¹ By mid-century, contemporary observers described the explosive increase of alphabetically ordered reference works as a ‘dictionary fever’ or ‘dictionary craze’.² Opinions about the phenomenon differed, though. Some interpreted the genre’s explosive popularity in a positive light. They described factual dictionaries as revolutionary tools of learning, and their multiplication as a symptom of enlightenment and education spreading to a wider public. Others considered the dictionary genre a plague, spoiling youths, and undermining the very foundations of learning. Some even asserted that dictionaries were to blame for increasing death rates in Paris.³ How can these contrasting opinions about factual dictionaries be understood?

The proliferation of dictionaries in Enlightenment Europe is a well-known fact. The phenomenon has generally been explained as a combined reaction to information overload, increasing commercialization of the book market, and crumbling scholastic schemes of knowledge.⁴ In this article, however, I will focus on another

¹ In the early eighteenth century, terminological distinctions were rarely made between dictionaries of languages and dictionaries of facts or subjects. They were all simply called *dictionaries*, *dictionnaires*, *lexica*, etc. Yet, as I have argued elsewhere, there was a difference between how people discussed dictionaries of these two kinds. While the former were seen as an ancient genre, the latter were described as a new phenomenon, characteristic of the present age. See Linn Holmberg, ‘Stranded Encyclopedias in Eighteenth-Century Sweden: Exploring the Rise of Alphabetical Encyclopedism’, in *Stranded Encyclopedias, 1700–2000: Exploring Unfinished, Unpublished, Unsuccessful Encyclopedic Projects*, ed. by Linn Holmberg & Maria Simonsen (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), pp. 99–135 (108). [Crossref](#).

² Melchior Grimm et al, *Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique*, ed. by Maurice Tourneaux (Paris: Garnier, 1878), vol. 4, p. 29 (1 August 1758): ‘la fureur des dictionnaires’. All translations are my own if nothing else is stated. Transcriptions reproduce the original spellings but capitalization has been adapted to modern standards.

³ *Gazette de santé* (1777, 10 July), p. 112.

⁴ Pierre Rézat, ‘L’âge des dictionnaires’, in *Histoire de l’édition française, vol. II: Le livre triomphant 1660–1830*, ed. by Roger Chartier & Henri-Jean Martin, 2nd edn (Paris: Fayard/Promodis, 1990), pp. 232–46; Richard Yeo, *Encyclopaedic Visions: Scientific Dictionaries and Enlightenment*

context for understanding the eighteenth-century dictionary craze and the different reactions it provoked: I will explore it as part of a conflict of learning.

Eighteenth-century debates about dictionaries are still an understudied subject. By delving into discussions about the genre in several countries – but with an emphasis on France and England – I will argue that dictionaries, more than any other factual genre of the time, challenged established conventions about what constituted right and wrong ways of reading, learning, and ultimately, knowing, and that this was a crucial reason for both the controversy and success of the genre.

Previous research has shown that normative ideas about learning are intimately connected to media landscapes and strategies for dealing with information overload. Ann Blair’s ground-breaking work on the period 1500–1700 has been of special relevance to my study.⁵ The same can be said about other works on the history of reading,⁶ and the history of education.⁷ Concerns about dictionaries and learning have not gone unnoticed in studies of lexicography and encyclopedism either. Many researchers have mentioned in the passing how eighteenth-century actors complained about the rising number of dictionaries, and how the alphabetical ordering of knowledge was feared to foster a shallow and fragmented under-

Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). [Crossref](#); Marie Leca-Tsiomis (ed.), *Dix-huitième siècle*, special issue: *Dictionnaires en Europe*, 38 (2006). [Crossref](#); Peter Burke & Joseph McDermott, ‘The Proliferation of Reference books’, in *The Book Worlds of East Asia and Europe, 1450–1850: Connections and Comparisons*, ed. by McDermott & Burke (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2015), pp. 237–81. [Crossref](#); Jeff Loveland, *The European Encyclopedia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

⁵ Ann Blair, ‘Reading Strategies for Coping with Information Overload ca. 1550–1700’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 64:1 (2003), 11–28. [Crossref](#); Blair, ‘Student Manuscripts and the Textbook’, in *Scholarly Knowledge: Textbooks in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Anthony Grafton et al (Genève: Droz, 2008), pp. 39–74; Blair, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age* (London: Yale University Press, 2010); Blair, ‘Revisiting Renaissance Encyclopedism’, in *Encyclopaedism from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. by Jason König & Greg Woolf (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 379–97. [Crossref](#).

⁶ Martyn Lyons, *A History of Reading and Writing in the Western World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Guglielmo Cavallo & Roger Chartier (eds.), *A History of Reading in the West*, transl. by Lydia G. Cochrane (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003 [1995]); Rolf Engelsing, ‘Die Perioden der Lesergeschichte in der Neuzeit: Das statistische Ausmass und die soziokulturelle Bedeutung der Lektüre’, *Arkiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens*, 10 (1969), columns 944–1002; Reinhard Wittman, ‘Was there a Reading Revolution at the End of the Eighteenth Century?’, in Cavallo & Chartier, pp. 284–312.

⁷ Chad Wellmon, *Organizing Enlightenment: Information Overload and the Invention of the Modern Research University* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015). [Crossref](#); Peter Josephson, ‘Hotet från autodidakten: böcker, självstudier och universitetets förvandling till forskningsanstalt, 1768–1819’, in *Universitetets gränser*, ed. by Peter Josephson & Thomas Karlsruhn (Göteborg: Arche Press, 2019), pp. 61–93.

standing of matters.⁸ Similar concerns were also aired in relation to newspapers and learned journals.⁹

However, there are many more sides to this debate that remain to be explored, and above all, understood against broader and older discourses about learning. What exactly was it that eighteenth-century actors disagreed about when portraying dictionaries as revolutionary tools for learning, or threats to everything that learning stood for? What concepts of learning – and knowing – were at work here? What traditions of thought did they relate to or criticize?

To answer these questions, this article will do two things. First, it will outline a background for understanding the eighteenth-century dictionary debates. In dialogue with earlier research, I will start by looking at older scholarly debates about the proper use and ‘abuse’ of reference works and then explain their arguments in light of early modern norms about the ‘right’ way to read, learn, and ‘know’ something, as expressed in several of the period’s influential educational texts. Thereafter, I will investigate how praise and criticism of dictionary learning in the eighteenth century related to these older debates and norms. In doing so, I will draw on a wide range of sources from several countries, including prefaces of dictionaries, bookseller ads, and reviews in learned journals.¹⁰ By combining these two strategies and corpuses of sources, I hope to carve out a position from where I can say something new not only about the driving forces behind the eighteenth-century dictionary craze, but also about conflicts of learning in the age of Enlightenment overall. But first, a few words about my analytical use of *knowing*, and its relationship to the empirical sources.

Right and Wrong Ways of Knowing: An Analytical Overview

Eighteenth-century actors did not use the phrase ‘right and wrong ways of knowing’, but they often spoke normatively of ‘true knowledge’. In some contexts, this

⁸ Yeo, *Encyclopaedic Visions*, pp. 25–27; John Considine, “‘Our Dictionaries err in Redundancy’: The Problem of Encyclopedism, Past, Present, and Future”, in *Symposium on Lexicography XI*, ed. by Henrik Gottlieb et al. (Tübingen: De Gruyter, 2005), pp. 195–205. [Crossref](#); Krister Östlund, ‘Johan Ihres kritik mot den franska encyklopedin: reaktion mot en påstådd kulturell urartning’, *1700-tal: Nordic Yearbook for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 2 (2005), 30–37. [Crossref](#).

⁹ Uriel Heyd, ‘News Craze: Public Sphere and the Eighteenth-Century Theatrical Depiction of Newspaper Culture’, *The Eighteenth Century*, 56:1 (2015), 59–84. [Crossref](#).

¹⁰ This article is a pilot study of a five-year research project titled ‘The Dictionary Craze: Transforming Knowledge in Early Modern Europe’, conducted within the Pro Futura Scientia Programme (2020–2025), and financed by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond. The project analyzes thousands of accounts of dictionaries and learning in some twenty periodicals, published in France, England, the Dutch Republic, the German states, Sweden, and Denmark between c. 1665 and 1800. This article summarizes some of the preliminary results.

referred to the epistemic status or value of a knowledge claim. In other contexts, however, it referred to the knower's behavior. This study focuses on the latter. To highlight the distinction, something more needs to be said about both meanings.

The early modern period was seething with debates about knowledge, and knowledge could be spoken of in many different ways. From the seventeenth century onwards, plenty of philosophers engaged in epistemological discussions about the possibilities, methods, and sources for obtaining true and certain knowledge of the earthly and the divine. Such debates typically went hand in hand with metaphysical speculations about the nature and origin of the soul, and the potential and limits of human reason and senses.¹¹ In everyday conversation, however, people commonly agreed that 'knowledge' came in different forms – in sciences, arts, and crafts – of which many were unbothered by metaphysical questions of absolute truth. Instead, they focused on what was useful, effective, aesthetical, probable, or widely accepted, although this too was an issue of ongoing negotiation and change.¹²

Irrespective of the object, form, or epistemic quality of a knowledge claim, knowledge was fundamentally spoken of as something *held* by individuals:¹³ firstly, by the original thinkers, observers, practitioners, or chosen ones receiving the word of God, whose trustworthiness was crucial to the legitimacy of their knowledge claims;¹⁴ and secondly, by individuals who incorporated – from people and texts – what they accepted to be valid practices and claims about a given subject. In early modern Europe, the learning and knowing of intellectual matters was intimately bound up with the reading and understanding of books.¹⁵ For this reason, scholars and educators had plenty of opinions about how to read, study, evaluate,

¹¹ For an overview, see A. P. Martinich & Avrum Stroll, 'Epistemology', in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed 28 October 2022: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/epistemology>

¹² Richard Yeo, 'Classifying the Sciences', in *The Cambridge History of Science: Eighteenth-Century Sciences*, ed. by Roy Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 241–66. [Crossref](#); Donald R. Kelley (ed.), *History and the Disciplines: The Reclassification of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1997).

¹³ For a longer account of the history of speaking about 'knowledge' as tied to the individual's mind, the faculty of thinking, and the agency of the human soul, see Wellmon, pp. 22–24.

¹⁴ As early shown by Steven Shapin, epistemic authority in the early modern period fundamentally depended on the trustworthiness of the person making a knowledge claim, whether it was an ancient authority or a contemporary natural philosopher. See Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. xxv–xxxi. [Crossref](#).

¹⁵ According to Wellmon, pp. 24–28, in classical antiquity, interpersonal contact had been seen as the ideal medium for transferring knowledge between individuals. After the fall of the Roman empire and the rise of Christian monasticism, texts achieved a higher status as carriers of authoritative knowledge. This attitude to texts remained a dominant feature in scholastic and humanist cultures of learning.

learn, and remember for the individual's knowledge to be considered 'true'. This 'trueness' had thus more to do with the *behavior of the knower* than the epistemic quality of the knowledge held. To 'know' something was not a static mental state, but a continuous effect of learning, reading, and studying – that is, the knower's actions. Once an understanding had been obtained, it could be deepened indefinitely, and it had to be properly maintained in order not to be corrupted or forgotten.

As I will show, when opinions in the eighteenth century clashed over the dictionary genre's rising popularity, they also clashed over what behaviors underpinned the very meaning of being a knowing person. To understand this clash, we need to look at some older debates.

Older Debates about Reference Works, Reading, Learning, and Knowing

In his *Reflections upon Learning* (1708), the English antiquarian Thomas Baker (1656–1740) grouched about the never-ending stream of new books piling up in European bookshops, which seemed to make learning into an almost impossible project. 'Books crowd in daily, and are heap'd upon books, and by the multitude of them, both distract our minds, and discourage our endeavours', he wrote.¹⁶ How were people supposed to handle this overabundance of texts? Baker concluded bitterly: 'I cannot but think we should have more learning, had we fewer books'.¹⁷

Baker was not the first (nor the last) to express this opinion. It had been a core argument to motivate all sorts of compilations since the dawn of book print technology. By gathering the most essential from the 'best' authors in one work, compilations reduced the necessity to buy and consult several books, and thereby made it possible for educated people to spend their time (and money) more wisely.

Yet how to properly use compilations had long been debated among the learned. According to Ann Blair, a discourse about the 'abuse' of reference works emerged in the late sixteenth century, when mentions of scholars who systematically read summaries, abridgements, and extracts *instead* of studying the original texts increased. The fact that wrong-doers were often anonymized testifies to the shame involved for scholars who tried to take this 'shortcut' in learning.¹⁸ Alluding to this debate, Francis Bacon (1561–1626) advised in 1612 that 'some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested'.¹⁹ In other words, there were right and wrong ways to read different books. Compila-

¹⁶ Thomas Baker, *Reflections upon learning* (London: Bosvile, 1708), 'Preface', n.a. (10–11).

¹⁷ Baker, n.a. (12).

¹⁸ Blair, 'Reading Strategies', p. 22.

¹⁹ Blair, 'Reading Strategies', pp. 13–14.

tions were only meant to be consulted, not read from cover to cover. But where did this idea come from?

Although Blair has paid great attention to what early modern actors advised about reading, note-taking, and information management, her studies do not delve deeper into the relationship between such recommendations and prevalent ideas about learning and ‘knowing’. To understand the intellectual conflict lines surrounding dictionaries in the eighteenth century, I believe it is crucial to do so.

The early modern period swarms with educational treatises, guides, and manuals in the art of studying, reading, excerpting, and writing. The issue of how the individual’s knowledge is gained, held, and maintained tends to be the underlying subject of such normative writings. One of the key questions was how to successfully navigate the rising ocean of books. In this area, many manuals repeated similar advice. To really ‘know’ and master something, *selectivity* was crucial. Therefore, one should choose a limited number of good books and take the time to really understand them rather than jumping from one text to another. For example, in his hugely influential textbook on the art of reading, *De ratione libros cum profectu legendi* (‘On the Method of Reading Books Successfully’, 1614),²⁰ the Italian Jesuit Francesco Sacchini (1570–1625) advised his pupils not to read too many *new* books in their spare time. They should rather revisit works they had already read, since ‘it is much better to learn a few things well, than to taste many’.²¹ He further stressed the usefulness of taking notes as a way of forcing the mind to dwell on the text, and thereby ‘digest’ its content.²²

The metaphor of *digestion* was frequently used in educational writings of the time.²³ Just like the body was digesting food, the soul or mind was thought to digest intellectual matters by devoting them careful attention. And just like there were dangers in over-eating, there were dangers in over-reading. In the *Winter-Evening Conference* (first printed 1684) – a popular book on Christian morality and self-discipline, often recommended to university students in late seventeenth-century England²⁴ – the Anglican clergyman John Goodman (c. 1625–1690) warned that

²⁰ Sacchini’s work was printed in several editions and translations in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and was widely used in Jesuit schools throughout Europe. See Markus Friedrich, *The Jesuits: A History* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2022), p. 344. [Crossref](#).

²¹ Blair, ‘Reading Strategies’, p. 15; Friedrich, p. 344.

²² Blair, ‘Student Manuscripts and the Textbook’, p. 64.

²³ Peter Stallybrass, ‘Eating the Book, or Why we Need to Digest What we Read’, in *Text, Food and the Early Modern Reader: Eating Words*, ed. by Jason Scott Warren & Andrew Elder Zurcher (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 168–84. [Crossref](#); Katharine A. Craik, *Reading Sensations in Early Modern England* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 93–114. [Crossref](#).

²⁴ See for instance *A Letter of Advice to a Young Gentleman at the University* (London: n.a., 1701, 1750), pp. 28–29.

those who read too much easily over-burdened their minds, ‘digested’ nothing, and thus understood little. ‘They stuff themselves so full of other men’s notions, that there is no room for their faculties to display themselves’, he observed. To avoid this, he advised students to read a few books many times over, and converse with friends to make sure they understood everything clearly.²⁵

Similar advice was given in monastic environments in France. In *Traité des études monastiques* (‘Treatise on Monastic Studies’, 1691), the Benedictine scholar and historian Dom Jean Mabillon (1632–1707) stated that it was ‘much better to know a little and have a well-ordered heart, than to know an infinite number of things and neglect ourselves’.²⁶ For men of the world, Mabillon admitted that it was probably useful to know a little about everything, but for that knowledge to be useful, it still had to ‘reach the heart through serious reflection’.²⁷ Those who bragged about their memory and all the books they had read seldom cared about understanding things profoundly or becoming more capable persons. The same was true for people ‘stricken with a restless curiosity, [who] pass from one subject to another, stopping at none’.²⁸ In Mabillon’s view, true knowledge was something deeply felt: a personal, multidimensional familiarity with a subject that was attained through long experience, disciplined study, and which transformed the person by making him better, wiser, and more capable in his judgement.²⁹

The ideal of selectivity and the metaphorical association between reading and eating had ancient roots. In his moral *Epistles*, the Roman politician and stoic philosopher Seneca (4 BCE–65 CE) had advised readers who truly wanted to learn something to focus on ‘a limited number master-thinkers’ and carefully ‘digest’ their works. Reading too many authors, or reading in a hasty, sloppy manner was a waste of time, just like ‘food does no good and is not assimilated into the body if it leaves the stomach as soon as it is eaten’.³⁰ Seneca ascribed moral qualities to these behaviors. Restless, erratic, and excessive reading was ‘the sign of a disordered spirit’, since a man with a well-ordered mind – who was calm and composed – did not fear lingering in the company of his own thoughts.³¹ As in all things, temperance was a cardinal virtue.

²⁵ John Goodman, *Winter-Evening Conference between Neighbours*, 4th edn (London: Leake, 1689), vol. 1, pp. 50–51.

²⁶ Jean Mabillon, *Treatise on Monastic Studies*, transl. by Jean Paul McDonald (Oxford: University Press of America, 1984), pp. 246–47; Jean Mabillon, *Traité des études monastiques* (Paris: Robustel, 1691), pp. 390–91.

²⁷ Mabillon, *Treatise*, p. 247; Mabillon, *Traité*, pp. 391–92.

²⁸ Mabillon, *Treatise*, p. 246–247; Mabillon, *Traité*, p. 390.

²⁹ Mabillon, *Treatise*, p. 186–187; Mabillon, *Traité*, p. 291.

³⁰ Seneca, *Epistles 1–65*, transl. by Richard M. Gummere (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1917), p. 7: ‘On Discursiveness in Reading’.

³¹ Seneca, p. 7.

Seneca's recommendations resonated with even older ideas about the nature of thought, perception, and memory, well-known among the literate classes in the Roman empire. In *Theaetetus*, Plato had compared the functions of the soul/mind to a wax tablet (often used as a writing tool in ancient Greece). In this dialogue, the young Theaetetus had suggested to Socrates that when we experience things with our senses, the soul processes the impressions by leading an 'inner discourse' with itself.³² That inner discourse makes an imprint on the soul, like an imprint on a wax tablet. The amount and quality of the wax varied in different souls: some had more, some had less, while some had softer and more impressionable ones. But the more the individual reflected on a matter, the stronger and clearer the imprint would become.³³ In the end, Theaetetus and Socrates rejected the idea that the soul's processing of sensory impressions could lead to certain knowledge about the nature of things. But they still identified active reflection as a crucial tool for 'digesting' ideas and impressions, irrespectively of their epistemological status.³⁴

In medieval Europe, textual 'digestion' could imply different behaviors depending on the nature of the text and the purpose of the reading, and thus encompassed memorization, transcription, spiritual contemplation, and logical analysis. In both scholastic and humanist cultures of learning, however, the status of ancient texts as sources of authoritative knowledge made memorization a central tool for textual digestion.³⁵ With the rise of the new natural philosophy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, critical thinking became a new ingredient in the meaning of digesting books to 'know' them. An early example of this idea can be found in *De incertitudine et vanitate scientiarum atque artium* ('The Uncertainty and Vanity of all Sciences and Arts', first published in 1526), in which the German polymath

³² Plato, *Theaetetus*, in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, transl. by Lane Cooper, ed. by Edith Hamilton & Huntington Cairns (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 895 (190: a).

³³ Plato, p. 897, 900–01(191:d–e, 194:c–195:a).

³⁴ Although Aristotle defined the soul differently than Plato, he too used the wax metaphor for describing the workings of the sensory impressions on mind and memory. He also drew the conclusion that an 'excess of objects perceived destroy the sense organs', which later generations could interpret as supporting the thesis that 'mindless' over-reading was something bad. See Aristotle, *On the Soul*, transl. by W. S. Hett (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1934), p. 137 (book II, sect. xii).

³⁵ See M. B. Parkes, 'Reading, Copying and Interpreting a Text in the Early Middle Ages', in Cavallo & Chartier, p. 91, 99; Jaqueline Hamesse, 'The Scholastic Model of Reading', in Cavallo & Chartier, p. 107; James Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, vol. 1 (Leiden/New York: Brill, 1990), especially 'Towards a Typology of Reading in the Fifteenth Century', pp. 18–20. [Crossref](#); Anthony Grafton, 'The World of the Polyhistor: Humanism and Encyclopedism', *Central European History*, 18:1 (1985), pp. 31–47. [Crossref](#).

Agrippa (1486–1535) roasted university teachers and students for ‘over-burdening’ their minds with ‘innumerable things and words’.³⁶ Many of them bragged about their extensive memory, but a few critical questions rapidly revealed how underdeveloped *their own thinking* on the subject really was.³⁷

Among mechanistic philosophers, arguments against ‘mindless’ reading and memorization got visceral. In *Recherche de la vérité* (‘The Search after Truth’, 1674), the French cartesian philosopher Nicolas Malebranche (1638–1715) theorized about the interconnectedness between the mental faculties and the brain by alluding to Plato’s metaphorical imagery of the wax tablet. He argued that human memory was a function of animal spirits creating ‘tracks’ in the fibers of the brain.³⁸ Every time a certain idea was thought, the animal spirits in the blood ran over the same track, thus making it deeper and easier to return to (i.e., remember).³⁹ For this reason, when people stuffed their minds full of texts without reflecting (i.e., leading an inner discourse with themselves), the animal spirits only created shallow and blurry tracks in the brain, which manifested as a fuzzy understanding. In Malebranche’s view, reading without reflecting was physically degenerative. To explain why so many people still followed this obsolete practice, he stressed the pressure of tradition, but also that many individuals were either too lazy or physically incapable to put themselves through the pains of reflection.⁴⁰ Memorization was easy. Critical thinking was hard.

Against this background, one can more easily understand the scholarly objections towards the ‘abuse’ of reference works in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. If information was gained too easily and quickly, the reader would not take the time to properly consider, understand, and digest the content, or let it transform him as a knowing person. True knowledge required time. If learning was a road, and the road was cut too short, the traveler would not reach his goal.

However, with the rise of the urban middle class in the second half of the seventeenth century, there was an increasing demand for ‘easy learning’ that could provide laymen with a general education. Educators who responded to this demand

³⁶ Henry Cornelius Agrippa, *The Vanity of Arts and Sciences* (London: Speed, 1676), p. 48.

³⁷ Agrippa, p. 49.

³⁸ Nicolas Malebranche, *De la recherche de la vérité*, 6th edn (Paris: David, 1712), p. 278, 294–95, 377.

³⁹ Malebranche, p. 377.

⁴⁰ Malebranche, pp. 394–95.

often joined in with critique of mindless scholarly pedantry,⁴¹ but they also challenged norms associated with disciplined, ‘hard’ study. In *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), John Locke (1632–1704) stressed that most boys of the English gentry would grow up and become men of business. In contrast to Mabillon, he described curiosity and vanity as useful motivators for learning, rather than distracting desires to be controlled. Curiosity was ‘but an appetite after knowledge’, he wrote.⁴² Since humans were vain and proud creatures, ‘let their vanity be flattered with things, that will do them good’.⁴³ Besides specialized knowledge of their chosen professions, the English gentry needed a general education to cultivate their manners, judgement, and ability ‘to speak of any subject’.⁴⁴

As many historians have shown, the practice and rhetoric of conversation came to permeate many central spaces of Enlightenment culture, such as salons, coffee-houses, academies, scientific societies, journals, and political assemblies.⁴⁵ In these environments, conversation emerged as a more social alternative to solitary reflection to ‘digest’ intellectual contents and improve one’s learning. Thus, the individual’s ‘knowing’ was increasingly judged by the way he spoke. Here, the dictionary would turn out to be a great ally.

The Rising Popularity of Dictionaries

Before the seventeenth century, alphabetical order was not a very popular choice for arranging factual contents of compilations. Since Antiquity, it had been much more common to use hierarchical, topical, or chronological orders.⁴⁶ Even though alphabetical order became more recurrent after the diffusion of print technol-

⁴¹ Pedro Javier Pardo Garcia, ‘Satire on Learning and the Type of Pedant in Eighteenth-Century Literature’, *Barcelona English Language and Literature Studies*, 13 (2014), accessed 12 December 2022: <http://www.edicions.ub.edu/revistes/bells13/>

⁴² John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (London: Churchill, 1693), p. 134.

⁴³ Locke, p. 136.

⁴⁴ Locke, pp. 174–75, 193–204, 221–24, 233 (203).

⁴⁵ David Randall, *The Conversational Enlightenment: the Reconception of Rhetoric in Eighteenth-Century Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019). [Crossref](#).

⁴⁶ See Judith Flanders, *A Place for Everything: a Curious History of Alphabetical Order* (London: Picador, 2020), p. 45, 74–75. See also Dennis Duncan, *Index, a History of the: a Bookish Adventure* (Dublin: Allen Lane, 2021), p. 24, 26–28, 36–43. Illustratively enough, the earliest known work to have used the title ‘dictionary’ – the *Dictionarius* of the thirteenth-century philologist John of Garland – was written as a narrative, in which the author walked the streets of Paris and recounted the names of things he saw. See Frédérique Lachaud, ‘La première description des métiers de Paris: le *Dictionarius* de Jean de Garlande (vers 1220–1230)’, *Société française d’histoire urbaine*, 16:2 (2006), pp. 91–114.

ogy, contemporaries did not start commenting on its rising popularity until the latter half of the seventeenth century. At this point, not all works using alphabetical order were titled ‘dictionary’ (they could just as well be called *thesaurus* or *bibliothèque*), nor did all works titled ‘dictionary’ use alphabetical order.⁴⁷ Yet the association between the dictionary title and alphabetical order strengthened as a discourse about dictionaries as a genre took form.

One of the first attempts to define and historicize the dictionary genre is found in the *Grand dictionnaire historique* (1674), compiled by the French historian, scholar, and Catholic priest Louis Moréri (1643–1680). In the preface, he enumerates several alphabetically organized compilations on language, history, geography, and sciences, printed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Despite carrying various titles, he describes them all as being ‘in a certain sense, dictionaries’, which he had used to compile his own work.⁴⁸ In Moréri’s narrative, the dictionary genre was the result of the humanist endeavor of rediscovering ancient languages and learning. Due to their use of alphabetical order, dictionaries were of a ‘marvelous usefulness, and especially appreciated by the learned’, since they allowed scholars to quickly find a piece of information, a reference, or simply refresh one’s memory.⁴⁹ Alluding to the debate about abuse of reference works, however, he reinforced the idea that there was a right way to use dictionaries: they should not replace the reading of original texts but rather facilitate navigation in and between them. In this way, Moréri seems to have imagined that the reader of his dictionary would be a scholar: someone who (just like him) spent large parts of his life reading, studying, and writing.

However, at the time of the publication of Moréri’s *Grand dictionnaire historique*, it was no longer obvious that scholars were the automatic receiver and user of a dictionary. Since the early seventeenth century, a number of small, vernacular dictionaries had appeared in England, France, and the German states that covered the terminology and elements of practical arts and professions.⁵⁰ One of

⁴⁷ A late but good example is Jacques Ozanam’s *Dictionnaire mathématique* (1690), which was thematically organized but complemented with an alphabetized index. At this point, however, reviews in learned journals pointed out that the use of ‘dictionary’ in the title produced expectations of alphabetical organization. See *Journal des savants* (1690, December), p. 478.

⁴⁸ Louis Moréri, *Grand dictionnaire historique, ou le mélange curieux de l’histoire sainte et profane* (Lyon: Girin & Riviere, 1674), ‘Preface’, p. a3v: ‘Tous ces ouvrages sont, en certain sens, des dictionnaires’.

⁴⁹ Moréri, p. a2: ‘Ces livres sont d’une merveilleuse utilité, & les gens de lettres en ont fait une estime particulier’.

⁵⁰ For an overview of early German mining dictionaries, see Linn Holmberg, ‘Sven Rinman’s *Bergwerks Lexicon* (1788–1789) and the Emergence of Mining Encyclopedias in Preindustrial Europe’ in *Specialized Dictionaries and Encyclopedias, 1650–1800: A Tribute to Frank Kafker*, ed. by Jeff Loveland & Stéphane Schmitt (Liverpool University Press, forthcoming 2024).

the first to praise the benefits of alphabetization in such works was the English captain Henry Mainwaring (1587–1653). In the *The Sea-Mans Dictionary* (1644), he declared that his work was intended for novices who quickly wished to learn the language and procedures on board a ship. Normally, this kind of knowledge took many years of practice to attain, but Mainwaring promised that his book could achieve the same result in only six months – *if* the student would ‘let me read this book over with him, and be content to look sometimes at a model of a ship and see how things are done’. If agreeing to this, Mainwaring assured that the novice ‘shall (without any great study, but conversation) know more, be a better seaman, and speak more properly to any business of the sea, than another gentleman who shall go two or three years together to sea without this’.⁵¹ The secret was spelled education through conversation, or as Mainwaring phrased it, the ability ‘to make a man understand what other men say, and speak properly himself’.⁵² To facilitate this mission, the English captain had brought all terms ‘into an alphabet’, which made them easier to find quickly when conversing.⁵³ At the same time, he stressed that the dictionary was to be read in its entirety, not just consulted sporadically.

Compared to Moréri, Mainwaring thus had quite a different idea about how a dictionary should be read, by whom, and what role it could play for the reader’s learning. His dictionary was not an aid for reading other more important books. It was the only book necessary for seamen to read, complemented by conversation, observation, and practice. Moreover, the captain claimed that the format would not just spare the young sailor years of time but also increase the very quality of his knowing: because of it, he would know *more* and be a *better* seaman. Indeed, Mainwaring suggested that the dictionary provided a quite radical *shortcut* – and there was no shame in taking it.

In the coming decades, Mainwaring’s arguments were repeated by compilers in other countries, who addressed other less educated groups of the population. For example, in 1677, a Parisian doctor named De Meuve published a pharmaceutical dictionary in French, intended for apothecaries.⁵⁴ According to the author, apothecaries (who often lacked higher education) were notorious for their insufficient understanding of Latin, which caused much disorder in the practice of medicine. In this work, he had translated everything they needed to know from

⁵¹ Henry Mainwaring, *The Sea-Mans Dictionary: or, an exposition and demonstration of all the parts and things belonging to a shippe: together with an explanation of all the termes and phrases used in the practise of navigation* (London: Bellamy, 1644), pp. 85–86.

⁵² Mainwaring, p. 85.

⁵³ Mainwaring, p. 84.

⁵⁴ De Meuve, *Dictionnaire pharmaceutique ou plustost apparat medicopharmaco-chymique* (Paris: D’Houry, 1677).

authoritative works in Latin, divided the content into smaller articles, and placed them in alphabetical order for easy retrieval. To make the reading more pleasant, he had even included small ‘dialogues’ in the articles, which explained preparations and medical properties in an easy way, fitting for collective reading aloud and conversation. Like Mainwaring, De Meuve argued that the dictionary format would make learning easier for the targeted group – and reviewers of the work agreed.⁵⁵ Apparently, taking a shortcut in learning was only reprimandable for scholars, who after all aspired to attain ‘true knowledge’. For the less educated, it was better that they learned a little than stayed completely ignorant. But as we shall see, this assumption would grow problematic as literacy increased and new groups in society made claims to be ‘learned’.

Even though the rising esteem for dictionaries was evident already in the late seventeenth century, nobody could have foreseen the hype that would surround the genre in the coming century. Soon dictionaries were made on every imaginable subject. Over time, the professional, confessional, and socio-economic backgrounds of both compilers and consumers varied greatly, and so did their use of dictionaries. The compilers were typically male but could otherwise belong to any part of the literate population: the nobility, the clergy, or the rising urban middle class. They were scholars, monks, priests, academics, lawyers, doctors, and statesmen as well as natural historians, explorers, chemists, merchants, missionaries, and amateurs (or, as often was the case, a combination of several epithets). Undoubtedly, many compilers occupied professions within the book trade, such as booksellers, printers, journal editors, journalists, writers, and translators. As previous studies have pointed out, it is hard to know for sure how dictionaries were read and by whom,⁵⁶ but titles and prefaces make clear that the works rhetorically targeted all parts of the literary population – including women, children, and students.

The dictionary craze grew especially strong in France. French book historians have shown how the number of printed dictionaries increased explosively in the 1740s, reached a peak in the 1770s, and then decreased significantly in the 1780s.⁵⁷ This development is not only evident from bookseller catalogues. Contemporary journals and literary magazines are swarming with reviews and letters to the editors concerned with dictionaries. The longest-running scholarly journal of the Old Regime, the *Journal des savants* (1665–1790), contains almost a thou-

⁵⁵ *Journal des savants* (1677, April), p. 88: ‘Meuve, *Dictionnaire pharmaceutique*’. For equally positive reviews of later editions, see *Journal des savants* (1678, February), pp. 77–78; (1690, May), p. 202.

⁵⁶ Loveland, pp. 321–23, 331–33.

⁵⁷ Rétat, p. 232.

sand news items devoted to dictionaries. As can be seen in Figure 1, the majority are concerned with factual dictionaries from the 1740s onwards.⁵⁸

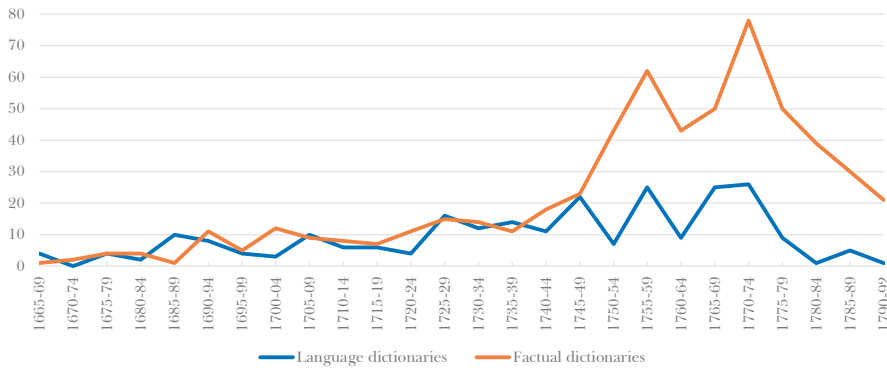


Figure 1. News items about dictionaries in the *Journal des Savants* (1665–1792)

Reviews and letters printed in the *Journal des savants* show that opinions about the dictionary genre became more conflicted as the number of publications increased. We shall start by looking at the positive voices.

Praise of Dictionary Learning

From the 1740s onwards, an increasing number of reviews in the *Journal des savants* argued that for purposes of learning, the dictionary format was superior to other types of factual genres. One reviewer explained that by making a dictionary, compilers spared everyone ‘the trouble and tediousness’ of having to read through a full book, to page back and forth in chapters, or even to skim through a table of content or an index (which were often faulty, anyway).⁵⁹ In a dictionary, the reader found each subject treated in one place, as fully as possible, simply by searching for the headword. In this way, it offered a more effective learning experience than other books. Ten years later, two Parisian booksellers remarked that the utility of

⁵⁸ These numbers are the result of a complete inventory of the *Journal des savants* (1665–1792) that I made during the spring 2021. As language dictionaries, I have counted mono-, bi-, and multilingual dictionaries devoted to general languages, e.g., English and Portuguese. As factual dictionaries, I have counted dictionaries that cover the terminology and elements of one or several subjects or fields of knowledge (e.g., love, religious cults, history, geography, or chemistry), of which most are monolingual and written in vernacular languages.

⁵⁹ *Journal des savants* (1748, October), p. 619: ‘Beauclas, *Dictionnaire universel, historique, chronologiques, géographique, de jurisprudence civile*’ [...] la peine & les longueurs inséparables [...] d’une recherche dans la lecture entière d’un traité’.

dictionaries had been recognized by scholars for a long time, but now, they were more popular than ever because ‘people see them as a shortcut to become learned in little time, for a cheap prize’.⁶⁰

As we have seen, the idea of the dictionary as a ‘shortcut’ to learning was not new, but it was new to portray this shortcut as something positive for the general population, worthy of defending. Some compilers contributed more than others to providing arguments for such a defense, and for tying the dictionary to a new philosophy of learning. One of them was Ephraim Chambers (c. 1680–1740), the former apprentice of a globe maker and author of the *Cyclopaedia, or, an Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences* (1728).⁶¹ The latter has long played a central role in the history of modern encyclopedias, as the forerunner of the French *Encyclopédie* as well as of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Yet little has previously been said about Chambers’ views on dictionary learning.

In the preface of the *Cyclopaedia*, Chambers began by stating that progress fundamentally depended on shortcuts. Language was the first shortcut, which made it possible to transmit the learning of one individual to another. Arts and sciences were the next ones, since they were systems of conclusions ‘orderly and artfully laid down in words, to save others the labor and expense of making [th]em at first hand’.⁶² The dictionary, finally, was just another step in the process. By extracting the most essential from the best works on every subject, and rewriting everything into concise articles in alphabetical order, the dictionary could transmit knowledge in a more effective way than other books.⁶³

In a way, Chambers alluded to the old Senecan ideal of selective reading, with the dictionary as a replacement for master-thinkers. At the same time, however, he questioned the idea that readers needed to be selective and carefully digest everything they read. He even disputed the idea that over-reading was counterproductive to learning. People should not fear overburdening their minds, he stressed. ‘Ideas are transient things and seldom stay long enough with us to do us either much good, or harm’.⁶⁴ Even if busy readers forgot much of what they read, the very act of exposing oneself to many things would make the mind more perceptible, and help forming a better, more critical judgement. For men of the world, a good judgement trumped specialized knowledge, and the former did not require

⁶⁰ Jacques-Bernard Durey de Noinville, *Table alphabetique des dictionnaires* (Paris: Chaubert & Herissant, 1758), ‘Avis de libraires’, p. iii: ‘on les regarde comme une voie abrégée our devenir sçavant en peu de tems & a peu de frais’.

⁶¹ Yeo, *Encyclopaedic Visions*, pp. 37–38.

⁶² Ephraim Chambers, *Cyclopaedia, or, an Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences* (London: Knapton et al, 1728), ‘Preface’, p. vii.

⁶³ Chambers, p. xxii.

⁶⁴ Chambers, p. xxx.

the latter. Dictionaries were the perfect tool for shaping a philosophical and independent mind, he argued. As compilations, they naturally brought together a multitude of different views, which stimulated readers to form their own opinions and prevented them from becoming dogmatic and small-minded.⁶⁵

Twenty years later, these thoughts were further elaborated in the *Encyclopédie* (1751–1772), edited by Denis Diderot (1713–1784) and Jean D’Alembert (1717–1783). In the *Prospectus* (1750), Diderot praised the dictionary genre for being partially responsible for the enlightenment spreading in society.⁶⁶ He described the dictionary format as a revolutionary tool of learning, and promised that the coming *Encyclopédie* would help ‘multiply the number of true savants, distinguished artists, and enlightened amateurs’ in society.⁶⁷ As a dictionary, it would explain all the arts, crafts and sciences in such a concise *and* thorough manner that no previous knowledge was required of the reader, since ‘the articles would explain each other’.⁶⁸ Diderot thus suggested that the *Encyclopédie* – *because it was a dictionary* – would be a self-sufficient system of learning.

The idea that a dictionary could be at once more concise *and* thorough than other books was emphasized by others as well. In the 1780s, a reviewer explained that thematic treatises always needed to suppose some fundamental knowledge on behalf of the reader and therefore left several notions of arts and sciences unexplained. If the reader did not know the corresponding terms, he would easily give up or achieve only an imperfect understanding of the subject. But if the treatise was written in the form of a dictionary, it could offer explanations of *all* central terms mentioned throughout the work. Since the reader only read as much as he wanted, the dictionary was equally useful to children and adults, beginners and experts, laymen and professionals. With this flexibility, it easily outrivaled other factual genres.⁶⁹

Compilers and reviewers also argued that the alphabetical order gave readers an unprecedented freedom to form their own educational path to knowledge: to decide for themselves in what order to read and learn about things, and to simply follow their own curiosity. In theory, this was an option that readers had with all books, but the dictionary not only allowed it – it forced it. Alphabetization broke up chronologies, disrespected hierarchies, ignored boundaries between fields,

⁶⁵ Chambers, p. xxix.

⁶⁶ Denis Diderot, *Prospectus de l’Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* [1750], in *Oeuvres de Denis Diderot*, ed. by Jacques-André Naigeon, vol. 3 (Paris: Desray & Deterville, 1798), p. 4.

⁶⁷ Diderot, p. 31: ‘multipliant le nombre des vrais savans, des aristes distingués, et des amateurs éclairés’.

⁶⁸ Diderot, *Prospectus*, p. 56: ‘les articles s’expliquent les uns par les autres’.

⁶⁹ *Journal des savants* (1781, June), pp. 354–62: ‘Dictionnaire de physique’.

and even by-passed the established movement from the basic to the advanced. As an enthusiastic reviewer of a chemical dictionary phrased it in 1781: ‘the apparent disorder gives the reader freedom to take the course he sees fit, and it is very possible that he makes a better choice than the author would himself’.⁷⁰ Several writers therefore came to speak of the alphabetical or *dictionarial* order as a method of study that placed the reader’s need and interest first.⁷¹ The dictionary was the ultimate choice for an individualized, anti-authoritative, curiosity-driven learning. In this sense, dictionary learning emerged as the antithesis of traditional education.

Not every dictionary compiler would advance such arguments in their prefaces, but enough of them did to make these ideas so widely known that reviewers could address them even if the compilers did not. Towards the end of the century, it sufficed to say, as a reviewer did in 1770, that ‘today, when someone wishes to learn something immediately, [...] and without following any particular order, the dictionaries provide the shortest path’.⁷² In the same period, dictionaries were regularly described as just as useful to scholars and busy professionals as to ‘the great mass of readers who want to inform and entertain themselves but not study’,⁷³ women, and ‘young people incapable of long-term reading’.⁷⁴ In short, dictionaries suited everyone.

Commercial interests obviously played a central role in the positive rhetoric surrounding the dictionary genre. It was in the interest of both compilers and booksellers to attract as many buyers as possible, and some reviewers writing for learned journals were compilers and/or booksellers themselves.⁷⁵ On the other hand, reviewers did not hesitate to point out when a dictionary’s grandiose claims to learning fell flat, or when it seemed to be the work of an inexperienced hack-

⁷⁰ *Journal des savants* (1766, August), p. 535: ‘Dictionnaire de chimie [...] laisse au lecteur la liberté de se former tel plan qu’il juge à propos, & il est très-possible qu’il fasse à cette égard un meilleur choix que l’Auteur même’.

⁷¹ *Journal des savants* (1774, October), p. 697; *Journal des savants* (1773, November), p. 764; *Journal des savants* (1764, November), pp. 754–55.

⁷² *Journal des savants* (1770, September), pp. 607–08: ‘Dictionnaire de littérature [...] Aujourd’hui on veut être instruit sur le champ, tout-à-la fois & sans ordre des différentes parties d’une science, les dictionnaires sont la voie la plus courte’.

⁷³ *Journal des savants* (1768, May), p. 354: ‘Dictionnaire portatif des faits & dits mémorables de l’histoire ancienne & moderne [...] la foule des Lecteurs qui cherchent à s’instruire en s’amusant & qui ne veulent point étudier’.

⁷⁴ *Journal des savants* (1772, February), p. 123: ‘Dictionnaire historique d’éducation [...] la jeunesse peu capable d’une lecture de longue haleine’.

⁷⁵ Ephraïm Chambers, for instance, edited the London-based *Literary Magazine*. See Yeo, *Encyclopaedic Visions*, p. 45.

writer, ordered by a greedy publisher.⁷⁶ In short, not all dictionaries were praised, nor were all criticized.

Whether the praise of the genre was driven by profit or honest opinion, the simple fact that it was repeated over and over certainly affected the attitude of generations of compilers, sellers – and readers. In the London-based *Gentleman's Magazine*, a reader openly confessed in 1750 that his 'library chiefly consists of Chambers Dictionary, the General Dictionary [by Bailey], and your Magazines', and thanks to 'the alphabetical range of the former, I can turn to such subjects as I want, to study or amuse myself with'.⁷⁷ Another reader described how he loved spending 'murky' evenings by the fireside, 'turning over my dictionary', for the sake of amusement and learning.⁷⁸

Preserved catalogues of private libraries further show the appeal that factual dictionaries had to many Enlightenment intellectuals in several countries, whose broad interests and participation in public debates distinguished them from the specialized scholar. Voltaire had close to sixty dictionaries,⁷⁹ while Thomas Jefferson had about forty.⁸⁰ Even in Sweden, the wealthy iron master and entomologist Charles De Geer collected some fifty dictionaries on a broad range of subjects, of which the majority were French.⁸¹

But not everyone was caught up by the enthusiasm.

Criticism of Dictionary Learning

Already in the first decades of the eighteenth century, scholars and professionals in various fields began expressing worries about how the rising number of dictionaries affected youths and their view of learning.⁸² In 1733, the Swiss theologian and philosopher Jean-Pierre de Crousaz (1663–1750) published a critical commentary on Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire critique et historique*. The latter had first been published in 1697 but recently appeared in a fourth edition in Amsterdam and seemed to be more popular than ever. Crousaz saw himself as a progressive educa-

⁷⁶ *Journal des savants* (1771, July), pp. 476–77: 'Sue, *Dictionnaire portatif de chirurgie*'.

⁷⁷ *Gentleman's Magazine* (1750), vol. 20, p. 247.

⁷⁸ *Gentleman's Magazine* (1788), vol. 58, pp. 29–30.

⁷⁹ *Bibliothèque de Voltaire: catalogue des livres* (Moscow: Académie des sciences de l'URSS, 1961).

⁸⁰ James Gilreath, & Douglas L. Wilson (eds), *Thomas Jefferson's Library: a Catalog with the Entries in his Own Order* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1989).

⁸¹ Erik Gustav Liliebjörn, *Katalog öfver Leufsta bruks gamla fideikommissbibliotek: nominalkatalog upprättad år 1907* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1907).

⁸² See for instance *Journal des savants* (1710, December), pp. 652–55; *Journal des savants* (1714, May), p. 340.

tor. A decade earlier, he had published an educational treatise in which he – inspired by John Locke – argued for the role of pleasure and curiosity in children’s learning.⁸³ He even suggested that dictionaries could be a great tool to discuss subjects that children asked about.⁸⁴ In his commentary on Bayle’s dictionary, however, Crousaz attacked the growing trend of regarding dictionaries as self-sufficient shortcuts to learning. He remarked how young people ‘want to know everything, read everything, and understand everything at the same time’. If they are allowed to act on this impulse, they ‘digest nothing, nor evaluate it as they should. They fill their memory with chaos’.⁸⁵ Many dictionaries seemed to encourage this behavior, he believed. Crousaz therefore advised against young people reading factual dictionaries without supervision. Left unguided to explore complex subjects on their own, they would jump from article to article but never take the time to understand subjects more profoundly. When confronted with contradictory views, they would quickly get confused, lose their patience, and start doubting everything instead. Dictionaries were a gateway to skepticism and atheism, rather than a thorough understanding of things.⁸⁶

In 1754, the French academician abbé Charles Bellet (1702–1771) expressed similar views in a memoir where he asked whether the ongoing multiplication of dictionaries was for the betterment or ruin of learning.⁸⁷ Bellet agreed that good dictionaries could help readers navigate the ocean of texts, yet he was deeply critical of the hype surrounding the genre. Many dictionaries seductively promised access to knowledge that it would normally take years to acquire. Now this seductive message had led to hordes of people reading nothing but dictionaries. To nuance his critique, he divided the population into two types of readers: deep and shallow. For deep readers, who felt a great love for learning, dictionaries could be of great assistance. For shallow readers, who often were young, uneducated, lazy, or busy, dictionaries were a pitfall leading to ignorance and apathy. By providing easily available answers to veritably anything, they were disrupting readers on their path to learning by suggesting that no further research was necessary.

⁸³ Jean-Pierre Crousaz, *Traité de l’éducation des enfans* (La Haye: Vaillant & Prevost, 1722), pp. 11, 204, 219–20, 404.

⁸⁴ Crousaz, p. 262, 420.

⁸⁵ Crousaz comment was summarized in several journals, including the Amsterdam-based *Bibliothèque raisonnée des ouvrages des savants de l’Europe* (1733, January–March), p. 80: ‘*Dictionnaire historique & critique* de Bayle [...] on veut tout savoir, tout lire, & tout apprendre en même temps: on ne peut ainsi rien digérer, ni juger de rien comme il faut. On remplit sa mémoire d’un chaos’.

⁸⁶ *Bibliothèque raisonnée des ouvrages des savants de l’Europe* (1733, January–March), p. 80.

⁸⁷ Charles Bellet, ‘Question sur les dictionnaires’, in Durey de Noinville, p. 1–26. Abbé Bellet’s memoir was first presented to the Academy of Belles-Lettres in Montauban in 1754.

Moreover, readers got used to finding answers in one and the same place, rather than learning how to evaluate the opinions of several sources.⁸⁸ In short, dictionaries risked shaping a public of uncritical, unreflective, authority-bound readers, without deeper understanding of the limits of their own knowledge. On the other hand, Bellet admitted that it was better that the great mass of people acquired at least some shallow learning than stayed completely ignorant. In the long run, the progress of arts and sciences lay in the hands of a small elite of geniuses anyway, and they would never settle for reading only dictionaries.⁸⁹

The consequences of shallow dictionary learning continued to be a much-debated subject in the coming decades. With the upsurge of the ‘portable’ dictionary in the second half of the century, critical remarks turned into a tsunami in the French press, as the stakes were raised from shallow learning to financial ruin and death. In 1764, an anonymous journalist complained about the flood of portable dictionaries of jurisprudence, and remarked how ‘the citizens consult them, talk according to them, think themselves sufficiently informed, pass acts, sign conventions and contracts, and go to trials that ruin them completely. [...] These dangerous tools breed problems for which there are no cures’.⁹⁰

When another dictionary of jurisprudence appeared two years later, the compiler himself – a lawyer named Joseph Renaudon – acknowledged in the preface that the dictionary genre was currently corrupting an entire generation. ‘For the young people who enter law school, I warn them’, he said, ‘nothing is more dangerous than dictionaries’. As an experienced lawyer, he had seen how law students were so ‘confident of being able to solve problems with dictionaries’ that they skipped reading the original texts. Consequently, they never studied anything in a solid and consistent manner. This behavior had even spread to experienced judges, he claimed. Still – as a reviewer of the work acidly remarked – there he was, bringing another law dictionary into the world, admitting that it could still be useful, *if only people used it right*.⁹¹

Most thus agreed that dictionaries were useful. The problem was how they were used – and by whom. Nowhere was this as evident as in the field of medi-

⁸⁸ Bellet, pp. 16–24.

⁸⁹ Bellet, pp. 25–26.

⁹⁰ *Journal des savants* (1764, June), p. 346: ‘*Dictionnaire portatif de jurisprudence* [...] les Citoyens qui les consultant, parlent d’après eux, se croyent instruits suffisamment, passent des actes, souscrivent des conventions, contractent des engagements, & entreprennent des procès qui souvent entraînent la ruine totale de leurs fortune’ [...] ces facilités dangereuses, naissent des inconvéniens auxquels il n’y a plus de remède’.

⁹¹ *Journal des savants* (1766, April), pp. 216–17: ‘*Dictionnaire des fiefs & droits seigneuriaux* [...] A l’égard des jeunes gens qui entrent au Barreau, je les en avertis, rien n’est plus dangereux pour eux que les dictionnaires’, ‘sûr de trouver dans les Dictionnaires la solution des difficultés’.

cine. In the 1750s and -60s, several cheap, vernacular, portable medical dictionaries were printed in Paris. They typically promised to provide ‘everyone’ with sufficient knowledge of any disease, and access to secret remedies.⁹² Soon pirated editions started popping up in other parts of France and Europe, swarming with errors, which – allegedly – lead to the death of several people.⁹³ In the *Gazette de santé*, a member of the medical community blamed dictionaries for contributing to increasing death rates in Paris. It is ‘all those dictionaries’, he sighed, ‘that place medicine in the hands of everyone, and which are nothing but weapons in the hands of fools’.⁹⁴ The article was rapidly reprinted and translated in several journals, including *Stockholms lärda tidningar* in Sweden.⁹⁵ In 1768, an anonymous reader cried out his frustration in a letter to the editor of the *Journal des savants*:

Cannot people ever realize that the true purpose of a dictionary is not to provide knowledge about the sciences, [...] it is not made to be read but to be consulted; [...] the real knowledge that belongs to the sciences, it should not be communicated in alphabetical order, and it should not be learned from dictionaries, but rather from textbooks that explicitly treat the sciences and arts by their principles and rules, where one passes methodically from the simple to the complex, from the known to the unknown.⁹⁶

The anonymous reader’s opinion was clear: the dictionary craze fundamentally challenged established conventions about how to read and learn from books.

Concluding Remarks

When explaining the skyrocketing popularity of factual dictionaries in eighteenth-century Europe, previous research has primarily pointed to the benefits of

⁹² *Journal des savants* (1758, March), pp. 187–88: ‘Dictionnaire médicinal’; *Journal des savants* (1760, May), p. 293: ‘Dictionnaire portatif de santé’.

⁹³ *Journal des savants* (1761, November), pp. 766–67.

⁹⁴ *Gazette de santé* (1777), n° 28 (10 July), p. 112: ‘tous ces dictionnaires pour mettre la médecine à portée de tout le monde & qui sont autant d’épées qu’on met entre les mains des fous’.

⁹⁵ *Stockholms lärda tidningar* (1778), p. 606.

⁹⁶ *Journal des savants* (1768, January), p. 57: ‘Un lettre sur le *Grand vocabulaire François* [...] Ne pourra-t-on jamais se persuader que le vrai but d’un dictionnaire n’est point de donner la science, mais seulement d’en faire connoître les instrumens, que le mot est son objet & non la chose, & qu’il est moins fait pour être lû que pour être consulté; [...] quant aux connoissances réelles qui constituent la science, ce n’est point par ordre alphabétique qu’on doit les communiquer, ce n’est point dans les dictionnaires qu’il faut les puiser, c’est dans les livres élémentaires, qui traitent expressément des sciences & des arts par principes & par règles, où l’on passe méthodiquement du simple au composé & du connu à l’inconnu’.

alphabetical ordering of information. In contrast, this study has focused on how contemporaries perceived and discussed the dictionary as a tool for learning. Although related to the former, it implies a different perspective. Above all, it offers another explanation for the dictionary genre's explosive appeal in the age of Enlightenment.

When eighteenth-century actors disagreed about dictionaries' role in learning, they disagreed about behaviors. It was one thing to use the dictionary as a *tool* – as a complement in the reading of other books – and quite another to use it as a *short-cut*, read in place of other books with the ambition of becoming 'learned' faster.

The critical voices repeated concerns that centuries earlier had been raised against the scholarly abuse of reference works. Their arguments were drawn from a well-established discourse on learning with roots in antiquity, which held that 'true knowledge' required long experience and disciplined, orderly study. The intellectual content of books needed to be carefully 'digested' and incorporated into the knower, in order to transform and improve his understanding. For this reason, excessive reading of books that provided answers too easily would hinder readers rather than help them to become knowing persons. Easy retrieval also risked stimulating an uncritical, hasty, sloppy, erratic way of reading, where the mind was overburdened with impressions that were never properly analyzed, understood, or remembered. Moreover, critics feared that the mishmash of conflicting opinions gathered in dictionaries would make young readers overwhelmed, confused, apathetic, skeptical, and in the worst-case scenario, atheistic. Against this background, the explosive popularity of dictionaries could indeed be seen as a threat to the very foundations of learning – as it had hitherto been conceived – since the format affected readers' behaviors.

Proponents of dictionary learning saw things from another perspective. The dictionary craze rose and flourished concurrently with a more liberal philosophy of education, favored by the growing urban middle class. This philosophy stressed the benefits of easy, general learning in a thriving culture of conversation and politeness, in which the usefulness of an individual's knowledge was measured by his or her ability to converse rather than by scholarly depth. Vernacular factual dictionaries became great resources in this context. Not only did they promise keys to the proper meaning of words, but also to provide sufficient information to make readers conversant in veritably any subject. As curiosity was reconceptualized as a natural appetite for knowledge rather than a distracting desire to be suppressed, the fragmented structure of dictionaries could be seen as particularly permissive of a new, curiosity-driven form of learning. As reviewers and readers enthusiastically pointed out, the dictionary format encouraged readers to read in whatever

order they preferred, however much or however little they liked, to form their own opinions, to browse, to learn, and to amuse themselves at the same time.

Thus, when proponents and critics of dictionary learning disagreed, they seemed to have done so for (at least) two reasons. Firstly, because they drew different conclusions about human nature and the driving forces for learning. While critics feared that the richness of opinions in dictionaries would cause confusion, proponents argued that it would produce more independent and non-dogmatic minds. While critics feared that dictionaries would make lazy readers even lazier, proponents argued that the easy access would trigger their natural curiosity. If not, they were not meant for studies anyway. In the end, the pros outweighed the cons, especially for the readers who thrived when they were allowed to pursue their curiosity freely, rather than forced to follow a predetermined route. In their own way, both sides problematized uncritical belief in authorities, but they had different ideas about what role the dictionary could play in forming a critical mind.

Secondly, proponents and critics disagreed about what knowing and learning meant, and how it could be attained. Here the dictionary debates activated much older questions. If learning was a road, how much could it be shortened without missing the goal? Was it necessary for studies to be long and laborious for the knowledge to 'take', or could it stick better if it was pleasant and easy, and adapted to readers' occasional needs? Critics commonly agreed that good dictionaries were excellent as *aids* for finding information and for refreshing one's memory. They could even agree that pleasure and curiosity made learning easier. But when it came to providing a basic education, the dictionary was not a shortcut – it was a detour. To follow a well-established order, to start with the basic principles, rules, and go from the simple to the more complex, *that was the shortcut*, because it implied taking advantage of the collective knowledge gathered by predecessors. Proponents, on the contrary, suggested that it was more efficient to look things up when needed, rather than memorizing, understanding, and 'incorporating' them far in advance, hoping that they would prove useful later. Indeed, this was the revolutionary potential of the dictionary: it allowed for readers to *know temporarily* – to inform themselves on a subject, remember it for a while, forget, and return if necessary. Doing so challenged scholarly norms associated with disciplined study and digressive reading, while simultaneously promoting a new meaning of being a 'learned' and knowing person.

Who, then, were the people expressing these conflicting views?

Proponents and critics of dictionary learning did not form two united fronts. On the whole, it is difficult to identify any clear-cut group as predominantly positive or negative. Compilers, consumers, sellers, and reviewers of dictionaries could offer both praise and critique. As we have seen, some compilers – such as the

French lawyer Renauldon – were immensely critical of how dictionaries were used in their fields, yet still believed in the genre’s utility. Naturally, it is necessary to separate criticism of individual dictionaries (for being badly executed, for containing too much, too little, or heretic, provocative, erroneous, or outdated statements) from criticism of the genre, the dictionary craze as a societal phenomenon, or dictionary learning as a strategy. For instance, in several cases the confessional identity of the compiler clearly affected the content and reception of a dictionary (such as that of Pierre Bayle), but nothing suggests that attitudes – positive or negative – toward dictionary learning were contingent of confessional identities. However, it seems that the most critical voices stemmed from the well-educated and professionally well-established, who worried about the behaviors of the next generation within their fields. The strongest proponents, on the other hand, seem to have been actors deeply engaged in the new media landscape and public sphere, advocating for general education, and learning by conversing.

General opinions about the dictionary genre also changed over time, as the number of publications kept growing. Towards the end of the century, even the most liberal-minded educator could see risks with the extreme freedom that dictionaries encouraged. In the hands of philosophers, they could accomplish great things. In the hands of the lazy and uneducated, they were potentially dangerous, threatening to form a generation of imbecile dictionary readers, who ruined themselves in court, or killed someone while trying to cure them. In the end, right and wrong depended on *who* you were.

Still, it would not be entirely correct to describe conflicting attitudes toward dictionary learning as simply a clash between elite and popular culture. Dictionaries could be described as weapons in the hands of fools, but critics were generally less worried about uneducated merchants, artisans, and peasants reading dictionaries. As Bellet (and many before him) pointed out, perhaps it was better that these people acquired at least some shallow learning than stayed completely ignorant. The biggest threat was rather that already well-educated groups – judges, aristocrats, and public intellectuals – were seduced by the dictionaries’ message of easy learning, and slowly abandoned established practices and ideals. In this sense, critics feared a bigger change in learning behaviors, with unknown consequences.

Two hundred and fifty years later, these fears and conflicts are still with us. The Senecan ideal of selective reading has gone extinct in the digital age. With the pressure of staying up-to-date with globally amplified research in twenty-first-century Academia, there is little room for slow, digestive, repetitive reading. We have gotten used to hasty reading, temporary knowing, and forgetting. Knowing where to find information is more important than incorporating it into oneself. Old wrongs have become the new right, or at least, a necessity to stay afloat on the

vast and ever-rising ocean of texts. It is an old struggle, yet ideas about right and wrong keep oscillating.

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A French Parnassus for the Danes: Knowledge, gossip, and eroticism in La Beaumelle's handwritten gazettes in Copenhagen

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Abstract: Benefitting from a taste for everything French in the Danish-Norwegian absolute monarchy, La Beaumelle circulated in Copenhagen news and ideas from the French Enlightenment in a handwritten journal which content has never been studied before. The ideas and rhetorical strategies of his journalistic input are analysed and contextualised in the Danish political agenda and in the larger frame of the circulation of semi-private news and the intellectual history of the Enlightenment. Brilliant and irreverent, the author discussed moderate and subversive ideas along with much gossip from Paris. This article is the first study of the content of the *Gazette* and connects intellectual networks and the history of the press, by focusing on the relationship between French thinkers and the kingdom of Denmark-Norway.

Keywords: Handwritten newspapers; French Enlightenment; Denmark-Norway; Transmission of Knowledge; Intellectual History; Cultural Exchanges.

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Upon his arrival in Copenhagen, Laurent Angliviel de La Beaumelle (1726–1773) was thrilled:¹

Combien le Nord ne fait-il pas honte aux provinces méridionales par son zèle pour l'art royal et son attention à le faire fleurir. Heureux les peuples qui habitent de telles contrées, les avantages dont ils jouissent les dédommagent bien de l'âpreté du climat !²

His enthusiasm would not last long, but during his stay in the kingdom of Denmark-Norway (1747–1751), he published newspapers in French in which he circulated the latest news from Paris along with ideas from the French thinkers. In this article, I will explore La Beaumelle's journalistic input and discuss the rhetorical strategies by which it was communicated, mostly focusing on the handwritten journal he produced for a selected Danish audience, *La Gazette de la cour, de la ville et du Parnasse*, a periodical which content has never been studied before.³ The only surviving copy of *La Gazette* is preserved in the private archives of La Beaumelle's family. The collection preserves both the *Nouvelles*, written in Paris by Laurent's brother, Jean Angliviel, and the *Gazette* written in Copenhagen by Laurent. It contains 76 issues for a total of 255 pages, of which 34 issues of the *Nouvelles* and 43 issues of the *Gazette*. Sometimes both the *Nouvelles* and the corresponding *Gazette* are preserved, sometimes it is just one or the other. Some issues of the *Gazette* have been numbered and the last preserved number is 69. Generally, issues comprised four pages, but occasionally they had as few as three, or as many as eight. The *Nouvelles* cover the period from 27 November 1750 to 17 June 1752; and the *Gazettes* from 15 February 1750 to 1 October 1751. Usually two issues appeared per week, but this could also be irregular: sometimes we find three, sometimes gaps

¹ I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Hubert Angliviel de La Beaumelle who generously shared with me the *gazettes* preserved in the family archive. Hubert Bost and Claude Lauriol have provided me with precious comments and have shared invaluable sources with me: they shall here be thanked for their generosity and our constructive exchanges. My gratitude goes to my colleagues Jesper Jakobsen, Frank Ejby Poulsen, Lars Cyril Nørgaard and Paul M. Babinski along with the anonymous reviewers of this journal and the editor Johannes Ljungberg. Translations are mine unless otherwise stated. I retain the original spelling of the sources, except for the following modifications: in French I have tacitly changed 'j' to 'i' and 'u' to 'v', capitalization, accents, diereses, and cedillas have been modernised; in Danish, capitalization according to eighteenth-century norms has been retained. Square brackets have been used to rectify errors.

² Charles Grenier to Laurent Angliviel de La Beaumelle, 16 January 1748, quoted in *Correspondance générale de La Beaumelle, 1726–1773*, ed. by Hubert Bost, Claude Lauriol, Hubert Angliviel de La Beaumelle (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2005–), vol. 2, LB 427.

³ In his thorough study on La Beaumelle, Lauriol only briefly describes the *Gazette*, *La Beaumelle: Un protestant cévenol entre Montesquieu et Voltaire* (Genève: Droz, 1978), pp. 231–33.

between issues as long as two weeks.⁴ *La Gazette* is structured in paragraphs discussing French literature, philosophy and politics. La Beaumelle's favourite topics were Parisian gossip, anticlericalism, and eroticism. He intersperses serious criticism of ideas and religion with recurring anecdotes about actresses, aristocrats, and priests, in which he lambasts with delight his targets.

La Gazette (1750–1752) will be compared with his more famous printed journal, *La spectatrice danoise* (1748–1750).⁵ These two journals were among the very first examples to circulate controversial ideas on moral, political, and social issues in Copenhagen in the epicentre of an absolute monarchy of strong Lutheran obedience. The handwritten press was a powerful tool to circulate more or less subversive ideas of the Enlightenment. Advocating freedom of thought and opinion, along with gender equality and sexual freedom, relentlessly targeting the clergy, Enlightened thinkers disseminated their ideas through periodicals. More or less clandestine newspapers circulated everywhere in Europe. What is fascinating with La Beaumelle in Copenhagen is the freedom with which he defends moderate thinkers but sometimes also verges towards more subversive thinking, circulating these newspapers at the centre of the Danish absolute power. Similar in content, *La Gazette* and *La spectatrice danoise* differ in tone: the former is more intimate and alternates serious ideas with the latest gossip from Paris and Versailles, along with erotic texts or songs. Irreverent and brilliant, La Beaumelle found the perfect tone to seduce his enlightened Danish public. Flattering Danish aristocratic aspirations to elite French culture, he bypassed Lutheran censors by reaching directly to the royal family and the aristocracy.

Frenchness in the north

The northern periphery rarely appears on the map of studies of intellectual history and the Enlightenment. Scandinavia has been neglected in recent scholarship, just as it was during the eighteenth century, even though northern monarchies were strategically, politically, and economically important on the European map.⁶

⁴ A partial copy survives at the Royal Library of Copenhagen. Once in the possession of Johan Ludvig Holstein, Lensgreve til Ledreborg (1694–1763), the collection contains 62 gazettes from 22 February to 1 October 1751.

⁵ For a recent critical edition: *La spectatrice danoise de La Beaumelle*, ed. by Klaus-Dieter Ertler, Elisabeth Hobisch, Ellen Krefing (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2020). [Crossref](#). I worked with the original printed edition.

⁶ John Christian Laursen, 'Voltaire, Christian VII and Freedom of the Press', *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 6 (2002), 331–48, Marie-Christine Skuncke, 'Un Prince suédois auteur français: L'éducation de Gustave III, 1756–1762', *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 296 (1993), 123–63, Charlotta Wolff, 'The Swedish Aristocracy and the French

Including the north in studies on the circulation of enlightened ideas is crucial not only for the local history of the kingdom of Denmark-Norway, but also because it sheds a new light on the rest of Europe and allows us to overcome narrow national perspectives. The perception and collective imagination of the north drastically changed in the mid-eighteenth century.⁷ The inspiration for this change was the theory of climate set out in Montesquieu's *LEsprit des lois*. Montesquieu saw the south to be pleasant and beautiful, but also as threatening to soften the morals and ethics of its inhabitants, whereas the north, with its harsh and cold climate, strengthened its inhabitants both morally and physically, making them more inclined towards freedom. However, culture and ideas were still considered the prerogative of France. The myth of France and Frenchness represented an ideal that most European courts were eager to import, in order to emulate a cosmopolitan image of power and culture associated with France and the court of Versailles. Everything French was avidly sought after and imitated from Portugal to Scandinavia or Russia, be it fashion, cuisine and wine, philosophy, language or the visual and performing arts. The diaspora of French thinkers, cooks, or artists had been crucial for the construction of a European stage based on French culture.⁸ Nevertheless, the idea of a 'French Europe' has rightly been questioned.⁹

La Beaumelle and Montesquieu were both puzzled—and they were not alone—by the abrupt but peaceful shift from elective to absolute monarchy in Denmark in 1660.¹⁰ The Danish Enlightenment coexisted with an absolute monarchy and censorship conducted by the Lutheran clergy. At the same time, under Frederik V (1746–1766) and even more so Christian VII (1766–1808), who suffered from severe dementia, the government was almost entirely led by ministers who were enlightened aristocrats. Even though he was born a commoner (and later ennobled

Enlightenment circa 1740–1780', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 30: 3–4 (2005), 259–70. [Crossref](#); Wolff, *Vänskap och makt: Den svenska politiska eliten och upplysningstidens Frankrike* (Helsingfors: Svenska Litteratursällskapet i Finland, 2005). [Crossref](#).

⁷ *Figures du Nord: Scandinavie, Groenland, Sibérie, perceptions et représentations des espaces septentrionaux du Moyen Age au XVIIIe siècle*, ed. by Éric Schnakenbourg (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2012). [Crossref](#); *Northbound: Travels, Encounters, and Constructions, 1700–1830*, ed. by Karen Klitgård Povlsen (Aarhus: Aarhus Univ. Press, 2007).

⁸ Charlotte Bellamy, 'Les professionnels de bouche français dans la Suède gustavienne (1750–1820)' (unpublished doctoral thesis, European University Institute, Florence, 2020).

⁹ Pierre-Yves Beaupaire, *Le mythe de l'Europe française au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Autrement, 2007); Rahul Markovits, 'L'« Europe française », une domination culturelle ? Kaunitz et le théâtre français à Vienne au XVIII^e siècle', *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 67: 3 (2012), 717–51. [Crossref](#).

¹⁰ Michael Bregnsbo, Kurt Villads Jensen, *Den danske imperium: Storhed og fald* (Copenhagen: Aschehoug, 2005); Lauriol, *Études sur La Beaumelle* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2008), pp. 301–18.

as a count), the most famous of these ministers was undoubtedly Johann Friedrich Struensee, the German physician of the mad king, the queen's lover and de facto regent of Denmark. He introduced enlightened reforms at a frenetic pace in the early 1770s, perhaps most notably making Denmark-Norway the first country in the world to introduce unrestricted freedom of the press, stunning the whole Republic of Letters.¹¹ The announcement was greeted with stupor and enthusiasm among the philosophers, prompting Voltaire to write an encomiastic letter to the king, whom he misleadingly thought to be responsible for it. Struensee's reforms deeply affected the whole country across all social classes and represented a real threat to the absolute monarchy. Unsurprisingly, it led to Struensee's arrest and execution in 1772. In contrast to the turmoil of the Struensee era, La Beaumelle adopted a more cautious approach by circulating his *Gazette* in a confidential and restricted manner.

Public and semi-private press in Denmark-Norway

Publishing newspapers and periodicals became common all over Europe in the late seventeenth century and the news played an important part of sociability in urban life.¹² It was also a powerful tool and the ideal means to disseminate more or less subversive ideas of the Enlightenment and shape public opinion. In Denmark-Norway, the first newspapers appeared in the mid-seventeenth century and were closely based on German sources.¹³ Published monthly from 1666 to 1677, *Den danske Mercurius* was the first newspaper in Danish, based on the French model of the versified gazette, *La muze historique*.¹⁴ Anders Bording, author of the Danish version, wrote both national and international news and wove factual journalism together with commentaries and moral discussions. However, in 1701, Frederik

¹¹ Henrik Horstbøll, Ulrik Langen, Frederik Stjernfelt, *Grov Konfækt: tre vilde år med trykkefrihed 1770-73* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2020).

¹² Thomas Munk, *Conflict and Enlightenment: Print and Political Culture in Europe, 1635-1795* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2019), p. 48. [Crossref](#).

¹³ Peter Matthias Stolpe, *Dagspressen i Danmark, dens Vilkaar og Personer indtil Midten af det attende Aarhundrede*, 4 vols (Copenhagen: Samfundet til den danske literaturs fremme, 1878-1882); Paul Ries, 'The Politics of Information in Seventeenth-Century Scandinavia', in *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Brendan Dooley, Sabrina Baron (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 237-72. [Crossref](#).

¹⁴ René Herval, 'Un grand journaliste au XVII^e siècle, Jean Loret', *Revue de l'Université Laval*, 20: 10 (1966), 934-53; Hubert Carrier, *La Presse de la Fronde (1648-1653): Les mazarinades* (Genève: Droz, 1989-1991), vol. 2, pp. 115-17; Krefting, 'News versus Opinion: The State, the Press, and the Northern Enlightenment', in *Travelling Chronicles: News and Newspapers from the Early Modern Period to the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Siv Gøril Brandtzæg, Paul Goring, Christine Watson (Leiden: Brill, 2018), pp. 299-318: 304-05. [Crossref](#).

IV introduced an emendation of the censorship law, prohibiting opinion pieces in the news. Interestingly, journalists were advised to only deal with news, ‘som refereris at skulde virkeligen sig have tildraget’ and not opinion defined as ‘raisonnements, eller andris discourses over det som passerer, desligeste unyttige gisninger’ on the facts.¹⁵ The relatively bustling press of the seventeenth century gave way to more restricted and submissive newspapers. After 1720, the publication of newspapers grew quickly; several learned journals were published, discussing new ideas, technology, and knowledge. The first newspaper published in French was *La Gazette de Copenhague*, an adaptation of *La Gazette d’Amsterdam*. It appeared in 1719 and was renamed *Les Nouvelles de divers endroits* the year after.¹⁶ It consisted of reports from major European cities, obviously with a strong focus on Paris, but also a pronounced interest towards the Northern countries (Sweden, Finland, and Russia). Contrarily to La Beaumelle’s periodicals, this journal was typical of the French European gazettes.¹⁷ Written by many hands, from many different places, the traditional gazettes contained reports from correspondents in various European cities, along with being a tribune for official propaganda.

Handwritten gazettes furnished social elites with exclusive news about other social elites.¹⁸ They were a luxury for people interested in gossip and court society (especially Versailles), but also Enlightenment literature and philosophy. Subscription was a sign of distinction and conferred a sense of membership to the cultural elite. The tone of these gazettes evokes the intimacy of private correspondence and created an aura of exclusivity, even though they were sometimes produced in hundreds of copies. They often resembled transcribed conversation, recounting insider information, gossip, political discourse and more or less subversive ideas in the form of a semi-private press. Their production was closely associated

¹⁵ News ‘which refers to what really happened’ and opinion ‘reasoning or other discourses about what happened, such as useless conjectures’, Stolpe, *Dagspressen*, vol. 1, 348–55: 353, Krefting, ‘News versus Opinion’, p. 305–07.

¹⁶ Munck, *Conflict and Enlightenment*, p. 173; *Dictionnaire des journaux 1600–1789* (Voltaire Foundation), <<http://dictionnaire-journaux.gazettes18e.fr/journal/0506a-gazette-de-copenhague>> ed. by Philippe Régnier [accessed 4 June 2020].

¹⁷ Pierre Rétat, Jeanne-Marie Métivier, *Les gazettes européennes de langue française: Répertoire* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2002); Henri Duranton, Claude Labrosse, Pierre Rétat, eds., *Les gazettes européennes de langue française (XVII^e-XVIII^e siècles)* (Saint-Étienne: Publications de l’université de Saint-Étienne, 1992).

¹⁸ François Moureau, *De bonne main: La communication manuscrite au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris, Oxford: Universitas and Voltaire Foundation, 1993); Robert Darnton, *The Devil in the Holy Water or the Art of Slander from Louis XIV to Napoleon* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania, 2011); Heiko Droste, Kirsti Salmi-Niklander, ‘Handwritten Newspapers: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on a Social Practice’, in *Handwritten Newspapers: An Alternative Medium during the Early Modern and Modern Periods*, ed. by Heiko Droste, Kirsti Salmi-Niklander (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2019), pp. 7–26. [Crossref](#).

with salons and coffee houses, and the forms of sociability and collaborative literary practices fostered in these new social spaces. News was often first ‘published’ through recitation in the salons, then written down and circulated in manuscripts among the members.¹⁹

A Freethinker Calvinist in a Lutheran Monarchy

As Claude Lauriol states in his seminal biography from 1978, La Beaumelle has long been ignored, shunned, or even denigrated by French scholarship.²⁰ On the other hand, if he once attracted the attention of Danish scholars, that interest mostly disappeared after the 1930s, to be picked up again only recently.²¹ Born in a mixed religious family, he converted to Protestantism and moved to Geneva, where he studied theology and was initiated as a Freemason. A passionate Enlightened thinker and a convinced Calvinist, he freely discussed religious and philosophical subjects, simultaneously defending the reformed faith against deists and materialists and ferociously attacking the clergy. He arrived in Copenhagen at the age of 21, where he would make a name for himself both at the Danish court and in the Republic of Letters. It is no surprise that La Beaumelle arrived in Denmark a year after the passing of the extremely pietist Christian VI, who had imposed a

¹⁹ Claude Dulong, ‘From Conversation to Creation’, in *A History of Women in the West, vol. 3: Renaissance and Enlightenment Paradoxes*, ed. by Natalie Zemon Davis, Georges Duby, Arlette Farge, Michelle Perrot (Cambridge: Belknap, 1993), pp. 410–13, Karen Klitgaard-Povlsen, ‘Mellan hovkultur och vardagsrum’, in *Nordisk Kvinnolitteraturhistoria 2. Fadershuset: 1800-talet* (Höganäs: Wiken, 1993), pp. 16–22.

²⁰ Lauriol, *La Beaumelle*, 2–11 for the state of the art. See also the ongoing edition of La Beaumelle’s correspondence, edited by Lauriol: *La Beaumelle and Études sur La Beaumelle, Correspondance générale de La Beaumelle*, Régnier, *Dictionnaire des journeaux*.

²¹ Stolpe, *Dagspressen*, vol. 4, pp. 128, 244–51, Julius Clausen, ‘Franske literater i København på Frederik den femtes tid’, *Historiske tidsskrift*, 7 no. 1 (1897–99), 2–58; Julius Paludan, *Fransk-engelsk indflydelse paa Danmarks litteraturhistorie i Holbergs tidsalder*, (Copenhagen: Nationale Forfatteres Forlag, 1913); Hakon Stangerup, *Romanen i Danmark i det attende Aarhundrede: En komparativ Undersøgelse* (Copenhagen: Levin, 1936), pp. 99–115. More recently, Jens Engberg, *Magten og kulturen: Dansk kulturpolitik, 1750-1900* (Copenhagen: Gads, 2005), vol. 1, pp. 59–64, 169–78, Øystein Rian, *Sensuren i Danmark-Norge: Vilkårerne for offentlige ytringer 1536-1814* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2014); Laursen, ‘Censorship in the Nordic Countries ca. 1750–1890: Transformations in Law, Theory, and Practice’, *Journal of Modern European History*, 3 (2005), 100–17. [Crossref](#), Krefting, ‘Feminine Forkledninger: La Spectatrice danoise i 1700-tallets tidsskriftshistorie’, in *Opplysningens Tidsskrifter: Norske og danske periodiske publikasjoner på 1700-tallet*, ed. by Eivind Tjønneland (Bergen: Fakkforlaget, 2008), pp. 37–60; Krefting, ‘Panegyrikk, spectator-litteratur og offentlighet under det dansk-norske eneveldet’, *Norsk Litteraturvitenskapelig Tidsskrift*, 19:2 (2016), pp. 94–106. [Crossref](#), Krefting, ‘News vs Opinion’; Ertler, Hobish, Krefting, *La spectatrice danoise*.

ban on dance, theatre and any other form of entertainment. His dissolute successor Frederik V, a womaniser and an alcoholic, left his ministers launch a new cultural policy, led by the influent ministers Adam Gottlob Moltke (1710–1792) and Johann Hartwig von Bernstorff (1712–1772), who recruited La Beaumelle. More than fifty years after the disastrous publication by Robert Molesworth, strongly disparaging the Danish absolute monarchy and the country as a whole, the ministers decided to restore the image of the kingdom at a European level by hiring a talented and ambitious French writer, who would provide a more positive view of the country and its government, a task never completed by La Beaumelle.²² First a tutor to the eldest son of Count Carl Christian von Gram (1703–1780), Grand Master of the King's Hunt, he then became the first royal professor of French belles-lettres at the University of Copenhagen in 1751. A Calvinist in a Lutheran country, without any knowledge of German nor Danish, he had close contacts with the French community in Copenhagen, counting approximately four hundred persons, in particular the pastors Pierre-Paul Eyraud (1716–1783) and Jean-Ferdinand Mourier (1692–1754) from the French Reformed Church of Copenhagen. He was a regular visitor to the salon of Madame Mazar (Sophie Renée Roques, 1717–1789), daughter of a pastor from Geneva. The count of Gyldenstein, Jean Henri Huguétan (1654–1749), director of the Danish East India company, was one of his patrons.²³ His first successful publications appeared during his time in Denmark, *L'Asiatique tolérant, Traité à l'usage de Zéokinizul, roi des Kofrans surnommé le chéri* (1748), *Mes Pensées ou Le Qu'en dira-t-on* (1751) and his defence of Montesquieu, *Suite de la Défense de L'Esprit des lois* (1751). In Berlin in 1752, he started his epic quarrel with Voltaire. Back in Paris, he was sent to the Bastille for a few months in 1753. In Amsterdam in 1755, he published his *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Mme de Maintenon*, for which he was again thrown in the Bastille for a whole year. He was then forced to exile to Languedoc, where he got involved in the case against Jean Calas. Back in the graces of Versailles, he was appointed at the *Bibliothèque royale* by Louis XV in 1771 and died two years later.

A female spectator

For his first journalistic undertaking in Copenhagen, La Beaumelle took inspiration from the popular 'spectator' type, initiated in London in 1709 by Joseph

²² Roger Molesworth, *An Account of Denmark as it was in the Year 1692* (London: Goodwin, 1694). Henrik Horstbøll, 'Mellem despoti og demokrati: Den schweiziske forbindelse, Roger, Mallet og Reverdiil om den danske enevælde', *Fund og forskning i det kongelige biblioteks samlinger*, 42:2 (2003), 153–76. [Crossref](#).

²³ Lauriol, *La Beaumelle*, pp. 113–16.

Addison and Richard Steele's *The Spectator*. A Danish version had been published in Copenhagen from May 1744 to May 1745 by the Danish author Jørgen Riis (1717–1749), *Den danske Spectator samt Sande- og Gransknings-Mand*. Satiric and radical, Riis ferociously attacked the morality and manners of Danish society, along with its vices and folly. He was especially ruthless with the clergy and the nobility. Riis was a precursor, fighting prejudice, preconceived opinions, and ignorance with indignation. A month later, he launched a poetic weekly newspaper, *Den danske Anti-Spectator eller en for alle imod den danske Sandeman*, supposedly written by his opponents to criticize his own *Spectator* with the same ferocious and merciless tone.²⁴ La Beaumelle launched his own version, *La spectatrice danoise ou l'Aspasie moderne*, in September 1748. His original idea was to use a female spectator as his mouthpiece, Aspasie, instead of its usual male counterpart.²⁵ A supposedly female author occupies a 'marginal and ambiguous position', advocating women's right to use reason.²⁶ Writing as a French male disguised as a seemingly naïve Danish girl subjugated by everything French was a literary trick that allowed La Beaumelle to gag her and speak in her place. Under the pretense of promoting a fake female writer, La Beaumelle actually did exactly the opposite. There is a double form of conquest made by the author: a man dominating (in writing) a young woman and French culture overpowering Danish culture. According to Lauriol, La Beaumelle found a subversive tone, witty and light, that delighted and challenged the Danes. He knew exactly how to match the representation the Danes had about a Frenchman: southern, brilliant, irreverent and audacious. He was clever enough to understand how to please them by playing on French frivolity in opposition to the solemn German and Danish morals they were used to. At first, he was celebrated among the court's aristocracy. His relations with the most famous philosophes, notably Montesquieu, proved to the king that he had made a good choice in recruiting him as a young but valuable and recognized writer in the Republic of Letters. La Beaumelle created an enduring fascination for everything French in Copenhagen: ideas, but also books, roquefort and the French fortified wine ratafia.²⁷

Alternating satire and philosophy in *La spectatrice danoise*, he published scathing and contemptuous descriptions of the Danes: he criticized their spirit of lack-

²⁴ Stolpe, *Dagspressen*, vol. 4, pp. 175–229, Sven H. Rossel, *Mellem Holberg og Ewald 1730–1766* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1975), Christian Kirchoff-Larsen, *Den danske presses historie*, 3 vols (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaards Forlag, 1942), vol. 1, Eiliv Vinje, 'Den Danske Spectator (1744–1745)', in *Opplysningens Tidsskrifter*, pp. 15–36.

²⁵ The first female spectator appeared in France between 1728–1729, *La Spectatrice*, ed. by Alexis Lévrier (Reims: Université de Reims Champagne-Ardenne, 2013).

²⁶ Lévrier, *La Spectatrice*, pp. 9, 225.

²⁷ Lauriol, *La Beaumelle*, p. 237.

eyism, their mania for titles of nobility or royal favours.²⁸ Danish society was ferociously described in a fictional piece supposedly written by a nobleman from Jutland.²⁹ 'On parla, mais de manière si bruyante, que je crus être avec une troupe de François. [...] L'homme de guerre parla fillette, l'homme de cour guerre.'³⁰ Copenhageners are presented as failed French socialites who lack both conversational skills and esprit, making it an immensely boring city.

Il me tarde d'être loin des courtisans artificieux, des petits-maître bruyans, des Pharaonites et des quadrilleurs. Quant à l'esprit, [...] je ne puis mieux le comparer qu'à un feu d'artifice, qui, une fois allumé, s'élève, serpente, pétille, voltige et finit par se réduire en fumée.³¹

La Beaumelle considered that the state of the arts and sciences in Denmark was cruelly deficient compared to more enlightened southern countries, affirming that the country could easily distinguish itself in something, since so far it has done so in nothing.³² Remarkably, La Beaumelle sometimes broach highly controversial and clandestine ideas, for example the struggle between deism and Christianity in his *Reflexion sur l'incrédulité*.³³ Without taking sides, the *Spectatrice* both affirm that religion can be an illusion but an illusion inciting to virtue; whereas, the deists should not be condemned and no man can be punished for thinking, even if it an error.³⁴ Pierre Bayle had the highest influence in Copenhagen, owing above all to Otto Manderup, count of Rantzau (1719–1768) and Valdemar Hermann, count of Schmettau (1719–1785), both protectors of La Beaumelle. The latter wrote to his brother: 'On estime ici beaucoup le profond savoir et le génie transcendant de Bayle, mais la prétraille le croit fort dangereux'.³⁵ *La spectatrice danoise* also contains fake letters from offended readers (military and actresses) who consider themselves abused by the publication.³⁶ Some essays stigmatizing the Danish court's mores caused a great stir and many courtiers complained to the king.³⁷

²⁸ *La spectatrice*, I, pp. 401–14.

²⁹ *La spectatrice*, I, 249–56, 281–91.

³⁰ *La spectatrice*, I, p. 251.

³¹ *La spectatrice*, I, pp. 254–55.

³² 'Nous pouvons, par exemple, nous rendre illustres plus facilement que ne le peut un François, un Anglois, parce que les routes de l'héroïsme, les chemins de la perfection ne sont pas battus en Dannemark comme en France et en Angleterre.' *La spectatrice* I, 495–96.

³³ *La spectatrice*, I, pp. 465–81.

³⁴ *La spectatrice*, I, pp. 468–70.

³⁵ *Correspondance*, vol. 2, LB 427.

³⁶ *La spectatrice*, I, pp. 145–52, 361–68.

³⁷ *La spectatrice*, I, pp. 337–60, Krefting, 'Panegyrikk', pp. 94–106.

Frederik V sided with La Beaumelle, pleased by his disrespectful boldness, arguing that the 'le génie d'un auteur ne doit jamais être contraint'.³⁸ The monarch was undoubtedly delighted to keep the courtiers in check.

A French Parnassus for the Danes

After the success of *La spectatrice danoise*, La Beaumelle launched the handwritten journal *Gazette de la ville, de la cour et du Parnasse* in November 1750 in Copenhagen with a different scope, more or less the same content, but with an even more provocative tone. He had previously sent private handwritten news from Paris to the count of Schmettau; the latter circulated it among the court, where it was met with great pleasure. During his stay in Paris (from 3 June to 14 November 1750), he created a successful network of philosophers and publishers, frequenting the Café Procope, a famous coffee house for debating Enlightenment ideas, where he became acquainted with the abbot of Méhégan, Diderot, Buffon, Voltaire and became a protégé of Montesquieu.

For the *Gazette*, his brother Jean compiled four weekly pages from French newspapers unknown in Copenhagen such as *Courrier d'Avignon*, *Gazette de France*, *Mémoires de Trévoux*, *Mercur de France*, *Journal de Verdun*, and sent them to Copenhagen.³⁹ La Beaumelle then had them copied, sometimes staying extremely faithful to the original version, sometimes with modifications and often with omissions. He sorted the news, tightened the text and emended it to make it more critical and intense.⁴⁰ Its diffusion was intentionally limited to 35 subscribers, following the advice of count Rantzau.⁴¹ Restricting the *Gazette* to a selected inner circle was meant to give those involved a sense of privilege and direct access to exclusive news directly from Paris. And it worked: among the subscribers were the royal family, several ministers and aristocrats, along with the upper-class French community and foreign envoys from England, France, Prussia, and Russia.⁴² Contrarily to the printed newspapers that needed a privilege—granted by the Lutheran Church in Denmark-Norway—the *nouvelles à la main* escaped this policy and were more independent. It facilitated the process that the Danish censorship was mostly worried about printed texts in Danish, German and Norwegian, because they could reach a wider and less educated audience than the elite reading French.

³⁸ Lauriol, *La Beaumelle*, p. 158.

³⁹ Lauriol, *La Beaumelle*, p. 231.

⁴⁰ Lauriol, *La Beaumelle*, pp. 231-32.

⁴¹ Lauriol, *La Beaumelle*, p. 231.

⁴² Lauriol, *La Beaumelle*, p. 231.

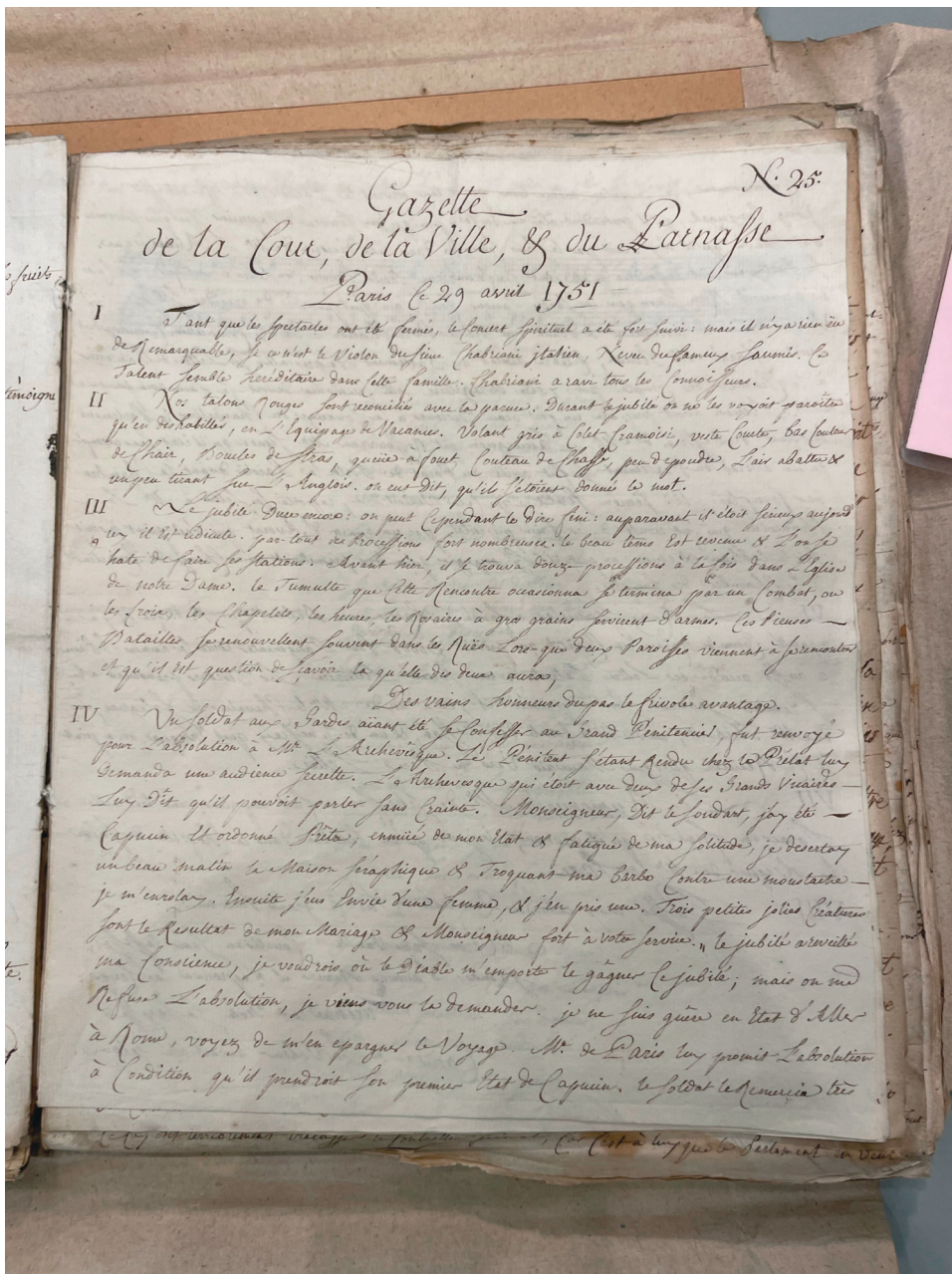
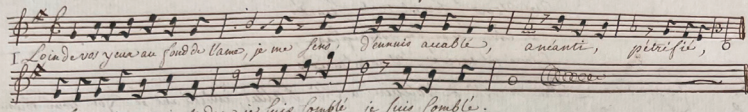


Fig. 1: Gazette number 25, 29 April 1751: title and anecdotes about concerts, fashion, and religion (with permission of the Royal Danish Library, Ledborg 357 kvart: La Gazette de la cour, de la ville et du Parnasse (c. 1700-1763, p. 1)

IX Voir une chanson nouvelle: Elle est si jolie qu'elle se seroit bien passée d'un
air nouveau.

Le Persiflage.



1
Loin de vos yeux au fond de l'ame, je me ferois, j'aurais aimé, aimé, aimé, aimé, aimé, aimé,
Mais lorsqu'on vous voit Madame, je suis comble, je suis comble;

2
Sans balancer tout rend les armes
A l'objet de tant de beautés,
Je vous chante, vous enchante:
par vos talens et par vos charmes
Vous m'affectés, vous m'affectés.

3
Quoy vous voulez vous perdre pour
Conte un galant manivra,
Si mon bonheur est difficile,
Je n'ay pour ne vous rien taire,
Des priés, des priés.

4
Quelle enfance! qu'elle misère!
D'ay bon amour, vous des l'honneur
Vous jurez au mieux la fidélité,
C'est une horreur, c'est une horreur

5
D'un air tout-à-fait agréable
Vous voulez, vous s'effendre en vain
Dans vos yeux je les mon Destin,
Et votre cœur m'est favorable,
Il est divin, il est divin

6
Vous me priez pour une épreuve
Me croyez vous fait pour l'ingénié,
de grand peut-on s'en mouvoir,
plus follement les tendresse
C'est à priés, c'est à priés.

Fig. 2: Gazette number 25, 29 April 1751: tune and lyrics of a popular song “Le persiflage” (with permission of the Royal Danish Library, Ledreborg 357 kvart; La Gazette de la cour, de la ville et du Parnasse (c. 1700-1763, p. 3)

La Beaumelle had a talent for picking up on the Danish taste for anything linked to France and French culture. According to him, the connoisseurs wanted brilliance; they were not overly interested in theatre, only in the actresses' affairs. Gossip about the court of Versailles was the most sought-after news. He recommended his brother to write with 'beaucoup de bons mots, des contes joliment écrits, de la vivacité dans les analyses, de l'ironie dans les critiques'.⁴³ He also advised him to plagiarise: 'Puissez dans le Mercure et les journaux, mais du court et du joli'.⁴⁴

All the news is fictively presented as if it were written directly in Paris, each number starting with a mention such as 'Gazette de la cour, de la ville et du Parnasse, Paris [followed by a date, for instance:] ce 22 février 1751'. Thereby, La Beaumelle carefully concealed his rewriting process. His scope was clearly to have his selected readers believe they had direct access to Parisian culture, as if it had been reported from the horse's mouth. Let us now take a closer look at gossip, eroticism and anticlericalism in the Gazette, on one hand, because they were La Beaumelle's favorite topics and, on the other one, because they represent interesting strategies for divulging ideas.

Curiosity: gossip and philosophy

The columns in the *Gazette* regularly hinted at gossip with 'on dit que' or 'on parle beaucoup de'. For instance, on 3 March 1751, commenting on a new publication, *Histoire du camouflet, souverain potentat de l'Empire d'Equivopolis*, he stated: 'On dit que l'auteur a voulu tourner en ridicule un certain langage qui s'introduit à la cour et qui roule sur les équivoques'.⁴⁵ He did not appreciate the book and attacked it sarcastically: 'Comme on sçait que pour estre bien veu [i.e. vu], il faut faire des sottises, on s' imagine que pour estre lu, il faut en écrire aussy', adding that 'Le bon sens et le goût ne sauroient être plus cruellement maltraités. [...] La plume me tombe des mains'.⁴⁶

In the same issue, he evoked a highly subversive text: 'On parle beaucoup d'un livre extrêmement hardi, *Le monde, son origine et son antiquité*, première partie, *De l'âme et de son immortalité*, seconde partie'.⁴⁷ The printer of this book had been sentenced to the pillory and La Beaumelle explained that he had tried to no avail to find the book, because the copies had been seized by the French police. But he is confident that he might find a copy that he will present to his readers 'dès

⁴³ *Correspondance*, vol. 4, LB 785, Lauriol, *La Beaumelle*, p. 232.

⁴⁴ *Correspondance*, vol 4, LB 850.

⁴⁵ *Gazette*, 3 March 1751.

⁴⁶ *Gazette*, 3 March 1751.

⁴⁷ *Gazette*, 3 March 1751.

que cette grande allarme aura cessé'.⁴⁸ La Beaumelle advertised this controversial publication, with the intuition that his enlightened audience would be curious and would attempt to obtain a copy from him. Published anonymously, the first part of the book had been written by Jean-Frédéric Bernard (1683?–1744) and Jean-Baptiste de Mirabaud (1675–1760) and the second one by Mirabaud with collaborations from César Chesneau Du Marsais (1676–1756) and Jean-Baptiste Le Mascrier (1697–1760). This clandestine text did not leave much of a trace in history, like most of the other radical writings, but its various authors were all exponents of radical ideas, in this case a discussion of the materialist character of ancient philosophy.⁴⁹ Two of the other authors, Mirabaud and Du Marsais, were both writers of clandestine philosophy and members of the deistic coterie, le Club de l'Entresol, whose members counted Montesquieu, Bolingbroke, the marquis d'Argenson and Ramsay.⁵⁰

Another example illustrates La Beaumelle's strategy of tailoring Parisian ideas for Danish readers. After denigrating the Comédie-française for the miserable quality of the theatre plays, slandering the Dauphin and the clergy, and accusing Voltaire of being a diamond thief with great delight, he finished the 15 February 1751 issue with a review of *Lettres critiques sur les divers écrits de nos jours, contraires à la religion et aux mœurs*.⁵¹ There he dismissed the author's reflections as 'triviales', as well as his style 'égaié par des portraits un peu malins'.⁵² However, the review is just a pretense to explore other works, such as *La Fable des abeilles*, *Les Lettres persanes*, *L'Essai de philosophie morale*, *les Réflexions critiques des Pensées de Pascal*, *Les Pensées philosophiques*, *Les Mœurs*, *La Lettre sur les aveugles* and *Les Caractères*. In a two-page digression, he distills key ideas from some radical thinkers: Bernard Mandeville's defense of private vices to foster public benefits in the *Fable of the Bees* (1714) and Anthony Collins's rejection of revelation and defense of the law of nature. He evokes Diderot's philosophical exploration of beauty and blindness in

⁴⁸ *Gazette*, 3 March 1751.

⁴⁹ Pierre Rézat, 'Érudition et philosophie: Mirabaud et l'Antiquité', in *Le Matérialisme du XVIII^e siècle et la littérature clandestine*, ed. by Olivier Bloch (Paris: Vrin, 1982), pp. 91–100; Georg Gross, 'Textkritik in der französischen Aufklärungsliteratur: Mirabaud, Dumarsais, Le Mascrier', *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Wilhelm-Pieck-Universität Rostock*, 6:2 (1956–1957), 237–50; *Clandestine Philosophy: New Studies on Subversive Manuscripts in Early Modern Europe, 1620–1823* ed. by Gianni Paganini, Margaret C. Jacob, John Christian Laursen (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2020). [Crossref](#); Alan Charles Kors, *Naturalism and Unbelief in France, 1650–1729* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2016). [Crossref](#).

⁵⁰ Nick Childs, *A Political Academy in Paris 1724–1731: The Entresol and Its Members* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2000).

⁵¹ Written by Louis Charpentier and otherwise unknown, this publication did not leave traces in history, apart from the copy preserved at the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

⁵² *Gazette*, 15 février 1751.

his *Lettre sur les aveugles* (1749) and the feminist thinker Madeleine de Puisieux's attack on religion in *Les Caractères* (1750). François-Vincent Toussaint's scandalous proposition that morality can be freed from religion in *Les Mœurs* (1748) is never discussed directly but La Beaumelle mentions the title and the author, in a cautious reference to the idea that marriage is a legal, not a religious matter. Spinoza's name is discreetly evoked. More moderate thinkers also appear: Montesquieu's defense of suicide and denunciation of the clerical celibacy in *Les Lettres persanes* and Voltaire's opposition to fanaticism and religion in his comments to Pascal's *Pensées*. La Beaumelle finishes by dismissing the reviewed work and its author as entirely unrelated with these Enlightenment ideas, which are 'comme vous le voyez très intéressantes', in contrast to the author of the *Lettres critiques* as: 'un de ces hommes contemplatifs que les choses d'ici-bas ne regardent plus'. He carefully avoids outright judgment, but there could be no doubt where La Beaumelle stood. The *Gazette* was a celebration of elite society and a discrete champion of French Enlightenment ideals in Denmark-Norway.

By intermingling wit with subversion, he introduced his Lutheran readers in Copenhagen to both French culture and Enlightenment ideas. A form of intimacy emerges between author and readers, resulting from the sharing of gossip and the jesting tone of his writing, reminiscent of conversations rather than formal writing. The happy few were given direct access to and—or so was the trick meant to be—a privileged glance at debates and wit coming directly from Paris. Under the guise of French lightness, it was also an opportunity to share the latest enlightened ideas. Undoubtedly, his highly educated audience was well aware of these subversive tactics and was just as eager to read about them as it was to read the latest Parisian gossip. As Lauriol has noted, Schmettau was an avid reader of French radical Enlightenment ideas. La Beaumelle procured for him Diderot's *La Lettre sur les aveugles* and Schmettau himself published radical deistic works.⁵³

Titillating the Danes: eroticism and libertinism

To remain true to the plan La Beaumelle presented to his brother, he wrote anecdotes about French actresses, for instance the story of an Englishman who was madly in love with Mlle Coraline, one of the leading actresses of the Comédie-Italienne. He gave Coraline an extremely expensive watch with two large diamonds and 'on eut le soir même le bonheur d'un tête-à-tête avec la Coraline et le plaisir de l'électriser'.⁵⁴ The next day, she convinced her official lover 'à titre de

⁵³ Lauriol, *La Beaumelle*, pp. 116, 234.

⁵⁴ *Gazette*, 8 March 1751.

bardot', M. de Malboissière, fermier général, to buy the watch from her for two thousand crowns.⁵⁵ La Beaumelle concluded:

Il est naturel qu'un publicain paye triple les plaisirs; mais ce qui n'est pas séant, c'est que la Coraline ait fait présent de ce bijou à son greluchon, qui s'est hâté de répandre cette histoire. Ainsi vit-on chez nous autres François.⁵⁶

Such gossip was meant to give a taste of French libertinism to the Danes, but also to conform to the stereotypes associated with the image of France culture in the north. The clichés are further reinforced because they concern female actresses, who were automatically associated with scandalous courtesans. Enticing men by performing on stage, often in roles charged with eroticism, they were among the favourite targets of both conservative moralists and misogynist admirers.

In a tone of ribaldry, he copied a confiscated poem, *Les reclusières de Vénus*, a daring description of a brothel, interspersed with anticlerical and irreverent stanzas: 'Les nombreux écus, / Que les dévots présentent à Vénus, / Pris des appas et des chaudes caresses, / Qu'à chaque instant prodiguent les prêtresses.'⁵⁷ The association of convents with brothels, or priestesses with prostitutes, was indeed a classic literary device in erotic literature. Finally, he mentioned a play: 'Scirop au cul ou l'heureuse délivrance, tragédie. C'est ici une polissonerie dans le goût du Pot de chambre cassé; icy à dire, une critique de nos pièces modernes, mais, bon Dieu, quelle critique!⁵⁸ This play can be traced to an anonymous publication, attributed to Charles-François Racot de Grandval, actor at the Comédie-italienne. The subtitle of the play is *tragédie heroi-merdifique* and it is written in the *poissard* genre, a literary style imitating the mores and language of the *poissardes*, female fishsellers at the market. It became a prodigious success in the second half of the eighteenth century among French aristocrats, who tried to imitate the accent and the language heard in popular markets or in disreputable taverns, with a bawdy fascination for bluntness and baseness, along with a taste for debasing themselves.

La Beaumelle was not just titillating his Danish readers by circulating anecdotes or songs confirming French stereotypes associated with sexuality and libertinism. Taking rhetorical strategies into account, it is important to note that such use of eroticism, obscenity, and vulgarity was inscribed in a broader radical discourse on freedom and a salutary transparency in the use of crude language

⁵⁵ *Gazette*, 8 March 1751.

⁵⁶ *Gazette*, 8 March 1751.

⁵⁷ *Gazette*, 8 March 1751.

⁵⁸ *Gazette*, 17 June 1752.

and explicit eroticism to open a debate on sexuality and the place of women in society.⁵⁹ Libertines enjoyed being disreputable citizens, as dissidents of all kinds, sexual, intellectual, and political.⁶⁰ By mid-eighteenth century, the libertinism of the body was equated with the libertinism of the mind as a form of knowledge, or as Diderot put it: 'Mes pensées ce sont mes catins'.⁶¹ For his Lutheran audience in Copenhagen, La Beaumelle did not promote radical feminism but only enticed them with frivolous and erotic gossip or literature.

Anticlericalism: philosophy against superstition

La Beaumelle's most critical stance was reserved for the clergy, especially the French Jesuits and Jansenists, who both were his favourite targets. In the February and March issues of the *Gazette*, he repeatedly mentions what he calls 'L'Affaire du clergé' that is, the controversy surrounding Voltaire's publication of *La Voix du sage et du peuple* (1750). In this polemical pamphlet, Voltaire supported the 1749 fiscal reform of J. B. Machault d'Arnouville, general inspector of finances. Until then, the Church's possessions and wealth were not taxable, and the clergy settled for some free gifts (*dons gratuits*). Machault proposed to introduce an annual five percent regular tax on all income, a tax against which the clergy fought ferociously. In his pamphlet, Voltaire urged the government to establish its authority over the church but Louis XV's power and prestige were extremely dependent on the church's support. The king ultimately transferred Machault, censored *La Voix du sage* and abolished the tax reform.⁶² Between 1751 and 1753, echoing Voltaire, a popular literature emerged, with all kinds of new voices denouncing oppression and inequality by the clergy.

De nouvelles voix s'élèvent contre le clergé et font entendre leurs plaintes. Le pauvre qui jusqu'à présent étoit demeuré assis comme Lazare à la porte du riche bénéficié [sic], mêle sa voix à celle du sage, du chrétien, du prêtre, de la femme, du poète, du riche.⁶³

⁵⁹ Jean-Christophe Abramovici, *Obscénités et classicisme* (Paris: PUF, 2003).

⁶⁰ *Romanciers libertins du XVIII^e siècle*, ed. by Patrick Wald Lasowski (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), pp. xi–xiii, Robert Darnton, 'Philosophical Sex: Pornography in Old Regime France', in *Enlightenment, Passion, Modernity: Historical Essays in European Thought and Culture*, ed. by Mark Micale, Robert Dietle (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2000), pp. 88–112: 98–99.

⁶¹ Denis Diderot, 'Le Neveu de Rameau', in *Œuvres romanesques* (Paris: Garnier, 1962), p. 395, Michel Delon, 'J'abandonne mon esprit à tout son libertinage', *Revue de la BnF*, 50:2 (2015), 38–45. [Crossref](#).

⁶² *The story of civilization: vol 9, The Age of Voltaire*, ed. by Will Durant, Ariel Durant (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1935–1975), pp. 254, 387–88.

⁶³ *Gazette*, 15 February 1751.

La Beaumelle echoed Voltaire's attack on the esprit de corps of the clergy and his demand for more equality in taxation. Further, La Beaumelle mentioned a refutation of Voltaire's pamphlet:

Le fiel théologique y coule à grand flots. Les épithètes odieuses de déiste, de spinosiste, d'impie, que les Jansénistes donnent de si grand cœur à tous ceux qui n'ont pas leur zèle fanatique y sont libéralement prodiguez. M. de Voltaire rira sans doute de ce pieux emportement.⁶⁴

La Beaumelle condemned the Jansenists as fanatics who smeared their critics as deists and spinozists. He is advocating neither deism nor Spinozism, but his free mention of these controversial terms is nonetheless quite remarkable. These were clandestine topics, most notably in the attack on the idea of divine revelation carried out by the philosophers. As an exiled French Huguenot in a Lutheran kingdom, La Beaumelle fought the clergy on multiple fronts: against the Jansenists and other Catholics in France, and against the Lutheran theologians in Denmark-Norway, especially at the faculty of theology of the University of Copenhagen.⁶⁵ He considered the controversy between the church and the deists as a war, fought to advance philosophy against superstition.⁶⁶

'Excès d'esprit'

The *Gazette* met with great success and brought La Beaumelle a comfortable income with which he became involved in a trade between France and Denmark. In Paris, he sold books by Holberg and his own *Spectatrice*, along with portraits, tea and pelisses.⁶⁷ The choice of items is interesting, especially the pelisses, since they represented coveted tokens of the north, incarnating the French imaginary of Greenlandic or Sami people. In Copenhagen he gave the Danes access to works by Montesquieu, Diderot and Voltaire, along with subscriptions to the *Encyclopédie*.⁶⁸

However, his unrestrained ambition and arrogance created hostilities and jealousy among some Danes, shocked that a very young Frenchman with subversive

⁶⁴ *Gazette*, 15 February 1751.

⁶⁵ His most ferocious criticism against the Danish theologians appears in *La spectatrice* and *Mes Pensées*, not in the *Gazette*, since the latter focused on French culture.

⁶⁶ The *Réflexion sur l'incrédulité* starts with a bellicose statement: 'Il n'y eut jamais de guerre plus intéressante que celle que les déistes ont déclaré depuis un siècle aux Chrétiens', *La spectatrice*, I, p. 465

⁶⁷ Lauriol, *Études sur La Beaumelle*, p. 209.

⁶⁸ Lauriol, *Études sur La Beaumelle*, p. 234.

ideas, was giving lessons to them.⁶⁹ When he did not obtain the position of the Crown Prince's tutor, he settled his scores in *Mes Pensées* and wrote with contempt about the Danes, openly disparaging the king and the court.⁷⁰ He worried about his security, sold *Mes Pensées* under the table and was officially disgraced, leaving Denmark definitely in September 1751. His abrupt departure was due to a vendetta by the university Lutheran professors and all those who felt attacked by his reckless and provocative writings. But, as minister Bernstorff put it, it was also because of

la présomption qu'il a de lui-même, la fougue de son esprit, la pétulance de son stile [sic], et son penchant vers le désordre et la débauche [...] il s'est livré à tant d'excès d'esprit, de corps et de langue, que l'on a esté obligé de le renvoyer.⁷¹

Being a libertine in writing was something that the Danish aristocracy could accept, but pushing the boundaries and actually practicing 'debauchery' was going a step too far.

A literature from the margins, written from and for a peripheral outpost of the Republic of Letters, La Beaumelle's newspapers nonetheless seduced his Danish audience to engage with critical ideas from France. This first study of *La Gazette* has brought to light some of the ideas and rhetorical strategies used to circulate semi-private news in the North by focusing on selected examples dealing with gossip, eroticism and anticlericalism. The most striking feature of the *Gazette* compared to the *Spectatrice* is its intimate tone. In the latter, La Beaumelle does not spare his Danish audience by harshly criticizing the absolute monarchy, Lutheranism, and freely evoking the controversial Freemasonry. However, he discusses less controversial topics like friendship, marriage, vices and virtues, reason, theatre and opera. The tone is more neutral, because the publications was intended for a broader audience, the criticism is toned down and far less vitriolic than in the *Gazette*. Gossip does not have such a prominent place in the *Spectatrice*, substituted by more decorous anecdotes about the Danish society. Because the *Gazette* originated in private letters written by La Beaumelle to count Schmettau and because they had a very restricted circulation, they kept the tone of intimacy linked to private communication. Gossiping is a means to divulge knowledge and focusses on intimacy and secrecy; it originates in private conversations, written down and circulated in a semi-public sphere. La Beaumelle managed for some time to lure the Danes with the promise of information about a culture they were infatuated

⁶⁹ Lauriol, *La Beaumelle*, 157-58.

⁷⁰ Lauriol, *Études sur La Beaumelle*, pp. 254, 256, 300.

⁷¹ *Bernstorffske Papire*, ed. by Aage Friis, (Copenhagen: Nordisk Forlag, 1907), vol. 2, p. 309.

with. A powerful tool to divulge extreme ideas, the *Gazette* also undermined authority and doctrines. Erudite newspapers spread new discoveries, ideas and controversies, advocating new and sometimes radical ideals. Philosophical incredulity was pitched against religious and monarchical authoritarianism. Reason was an invaluable tool in the Republic of Letters, but it could also be a dangerous one.

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Pigor i sämre hushåll: Tjänstehjonsstadgan och den informella ekonomins storlek i 1700-talets Stockholm

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Abstract: The Swedish Servant Acts compelled everyone without an occupation to take up service as a servant. However it is unclear to what extent this compulsion was actually enforced. Repeated complaints from the authorities give the impression that it was largely ignored. One suspicion was that people chose to live with relatives rather than taking service. A list compiled by the Stockholms authorities enables a quantification of mostly women who evaded service around 1755. The study shows that up to a fifth of all female servants were suspected of being live-ins rather than employed as servants, and most of them probably earned their living in the informal sector of the urban economy. A comparison with tax registers reveals that these people were accounted for. In conclusion, while historical scholarship is dependent upon ample source material, this study suggests that a good part of the servant population was recorded in tax registers, but that the nature of their service might not have been properly accounted for, and that many servants provided for themselves on an extensive informal economy of the city which is difficult to quantify.

Keywords: Servants; Stockholm; Demography; Informal Economy; Labour

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1712 dundrade Överståthållaren i Stockholm över ”den fördärvliga oseden och vanarten” att ”i synnerhet en stor hop pigor och lösa kvinnfolk” istället för att ta årstjänst hade slagit sig ned i stadens utkanter. De tyckte sig ”nu ej behöva så mycket arbeta för födan, utan därför slå sig aldeles till lättja, och där de så stegra lönen över det som skäligt och vanligt är för husbönderne och matmödrarne”.¹ Sådana klagomål är återkommande i årstrycket.²

Tjänstehjonsstadgan föreskrev att alla som inte själva hade ett hemman eller en borgerlig näring skulle ta årstjänst som dräng eller piga. Tjänstetvånget har i olika former funnits kodifierat sedan medeltiden, men mellan 1664 och 1739 utökades lagstiftningen på detta område succesivt.³ Det var i första hand unga och ogifta som skulle ta tjänst, och tjänstetiden skulle vara från mickelsmäss och ett år framåt.⁴ I Stockholm kunde halvårstjänster tillämpas, från påsk till mickelsmäss och från mickelsmäss till påsk. Den som undvek årstjänst skulle anmälas och skickas till krigsmakten, till straffarbete, eller tvingas tjäna hos sin anmälare till lägre lön.⁵

Så långt lagens bokstav. Men flera förordningar under 1700-talet ondgjorde sig över att den inte följdes. Människor undvek att ta tjänst, och det konstaterades dystert att detta ledde till brist på tjänstefolk, vilket i sin tur gav högre löner och mer generösa tjänstehjonskontrakt – och det sågs som en hotfull samhällsutveckling.⁶

¹ Publication angående tienstefolcket här i staden, Stockholms rådhus den 5 september 1712, Kongl. boktryckeriet, Stockholm 1712.

² Exempelvis: angående tienstefolcket här i staden, Stockholms rådhus den 23 maj 1712, Kongl. Hovtryckeriet, Stockholm 1712. Eller företalet till Kongl. Maj:ts förnyade stadga och förordning, angående tienstefolck och legohion. Gifwen Stokholm i råd-cammaren then 21 augusti 1739 (hädanefter benämnd som Tjänstehjonsstadgan 1739).

³ Stadgorna sammanfattas mycket förtjänstfullt hos Carolina Uppenberg, *I husbondens bröd och arbete: kön, makt och kontrakt i det svenska tjänstefolkssystemet 1730–1860* (Göteborg: Gothenburg studies in economic history, 2018), s. 113. [Crossref](#).

⁴ Tjänstefolkssystemet brukar länkas samman med det europeiska giftermålsmönstret som demografiskt fenomen, där unga människor tog tjänst i andras hushåll i väntan på äktenskap. Michael Mitterauer, ”Servants and youth”, i *Continuity and Change*, 5, 1990, s. 11–38. [Crossref](#); John Hajnal, ”Two Kinds of PreIndustrial Household Formation System”, *Population and Development Review*, 8:3 (1982), 449–494. [Crossref](#); Christer Lundh, ”Life Cycle Servants in Nineteenth Century Seden – Norms and Practice”, *Lund Papers in Economic History*, 84 (2003), 1–14. [Crossref](#); Cristina Prytz, ”Life-Cycle Servant and Servant for Life: Work and Prospects in Rural Sweden c. 1670–1730”, i *Servants in Rural Europe: 1400–1900*, red. av Jane Whittle (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2017), s. 95–112. [Crossref](#).

⁵ Tjänstehjonsstadgan 1739.

⁶ Företalet till Tjänstehjonsstadgan 1739.

Bör man uppfatta dessa klagomål som att tjänstehjonsstadgan inte efterlevdes? Eller bör man snarare tolka dem som en del av en tidstypisk patriarkal retorik, utan någon större bäring på verkligheten?

Äldre forskning har påpekat brister i tjänstehjonsstadgans efterlevnad. Börje Harnesk karaktäriserar hela tjänstefolkslagstiftningen under 1700-talet som ”på det hela taget verkningslös” eftersom den inte låg i linje med ekonomiska incitament på landsbygden och en egalitärt inriktad bondekultur i det Norrland som han studerar.⁷ Gustav Utterström framhåller att orlovssedeln, som skulle användas som ett intyg om att man lovligen lämnat sin förra tjänst, inte var i allmänt bruk på grund av bristande läs- och skrivkunnighet bland befolkningen.⁸

Nyare forskning har däremot kommit fram till slutsatser som pekar i motsatt riktning. Möjligtvis kan detta bero på att senare studier i högre utsträckning har utgått från rättsligt källmaterial än förordningstexter. I sin studie av västgötsk landsbygd visar Carolina Uppenbergs att tjänstehjonsstadgan var välkänd, att systemet med tjänstefolk hade hög legitimitet och att det uppvisade en påtaglig kontinuitet över tid. Dessutom menar Uppenberg att systemet skapade socialt erkända positioner, som gjorde anställningsförhållanden begripliga och legitima.⁹ Hennes slutsats rimmar väl med Hanne Østhus studie av tjänstefolk i Christiania (Oslo) och Köpenhamn för åren 1750–1850, som visar hur en mer utarbetad lagstiftning gav tjänstefolket större möjlighet att processa mot sina husbönder i rätten, då deras lagstadgade skyldigheter var tydligare formulerade.¹⁰ Detta ska inte tolkas som att tjänstevångets bestämmelser var lätta att utvärda för drängar och pigor. Uppenberg understryker att lagstiftningen i grunden kringskar tjänstefolkets möjligheter att arbeta självständigt och tjäna egna pengar.¹¹ Men det innebär

⁷ Börje Harnesk, *Legofolk: Drängar, pigor och bönder i 1700- och 1800-talens Sverige*, (Umeå: Umeå Studies in the Humanities, 1990), s. 216. [Crossref](#).

⁸ Gustav Utterström, *Jordbrukets arbetare: levnadsvillkor och arbetsliv på landsbygden från frihetstiden till mitten av 1800-talet* (Stockholm: Tiden förlag, 1957), s. 250. Se även Arthur Montgomery, ”Tjänstehjonsstadgan i äldre svensk arbetarpolitik”, *Historisk tidskrift*, 53:3 (1933), 245–276. Vilhelm Vilhelmsson går inte fullt så långt, men pekar på vägar runt den isländska motsvarande lagstiftningen: Vilhelm Vilhelmsson, ”Tactics of Evasion: The survival strategies of vagrants and day labourers in eighteenth and nineteenth century rural Iceland”, *1700-tal: Nordic Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 17 (2020), 34–56. [Crossref](#).

⁹ Uppenberg, s. 118 och 255–258.

¹⁰ Hanne Østhus, *Contested authority. Master and servant in Copenhagen and Christiania, 1750–1850* (Florens: European University Institute, 2013), s. 341–343.

¹¹ Uppenberg, s. 159. Uppenberg har även undersökt torparinstitutionen på landsbygden, vilken utgör en på vissa sätt analog till städernas mångsysslande arbetskraft i Carolina Uppenbergs, ”Contracted coercion: Land, labour and gender in the Swedish crofter institution”, *Scandinavian Journal of History* (2023), 1–22. [Crossref](#). I ett bredare perspektiv kan man se tjänstehjonsstadgans bestämmelser som en del i det ramverk som upprätthöll den

att tjänstehjonslagstiftningen inte var död bokstav, utan att den aktivt formade tjänstefolksinstitutionen.

Rättsligt material ger oss inblickar i allehanda vardagskonflikter, men kan ytterst bara ge indicier om helheten. Alla konflikter kom inte till rätten, och det rättsliga materialet framhäver naturligt nog bråken och oordningen. Ett möjligt källmaterial för att göra en kvantitativ studie skulle kunna vara mantalslängderna, där hushönder och tjänstefolk har upptecknats för att betala mantalsskatt. Problemet är att mantalslängderna tenderar att ge en friserad bild av den förflutna verkligheten. Harnesk skriver om dem som inte fångas upp av de officiella kategorierna:

[d]e fann åt sig själva flera olika sätt att skaffa sig uppehållet. För dessa livsformer fanns i mantalslängderna och kyrkobokföringen inga kolumner. Många befann sig i ett gränsland mellan kategorin tjänstehjon och andra, friare, former.¹²

Listor över personer i arbetets gränsland finns dock, i alla fall för ett år, i Stockholms Politiekollegiums arkiv. I den här artikeln kommer jag att använda sådana särskilt upprättade längder över tjänstefolk, i vad som kallades sämre hushåll, för att uppskatta i vilken utsträckning invånare i Stockholm undvek tjänstehjonsstadgans krav på årstjänst vid 1700-talets mitt.

År 1753 utfärdade Överståthållareämbetet en publikation ”angående tjänstlösa pigors och kvinnspersoners angivande uti Politiekollegiet”.¹³ Myndigheterna misstänkte att tjänstepigorna hade börjat säga upp sina tjänster för att i stället arbeta som tjänstehjon med årskontrakt och flytta in hos andra som inhyses. Mantalsskrivningen hade inte kunnat hindra detta eftersom den utfördes tidigt på året

sociala ojämlikheten i samhället och som ledde till att Stockholm under 1600- och 1700-talen var en även med tidens mått mätt synnerligen ekonomiskt ojämlig stad: Erik Bengtsson, Mats Olsson, Patrick Svensson, ”Merchantilist inequality: wealth and poverty in Stockholm, 1650–1750”, *The Economic History Review*, 75:1 (2021), 157–180. [Crossref](#).

¹² Harnesk, s. 216.

¹³ Publication, angående tjenstlösa pigors och qwinspersoners angifwande uti Politie-Collegio, 30 maj, Stockholm 1753” citerad genom Modée, Reinhold Gustaf, Lindhielm, Hedvig Eleonora & Fougt, Elsa (red.), *Utdrag utur alle ifrån den 7. decemb. 1718./1791 utkomne publice handlingar. Stockholm. 1-15. 1742-1829 [Del 5] Utdrag utur alla ifrån 1749 års slut utkomne publice handlingar, placater, förordningar, resolutioner och publicationer, som riksens styrsel samt invärtes hushållning och författningar i gemen, jämwäl ock Stockholms stad i synnerhet angå: med nödigte citationer af alla paralell-ställen, som utwisa, hwad ändringar tid efter annan i et eller annat mål kunnat wara gjorde. Hwarförutan de uti desze handlingar åberopade äldre acters innehåll korteligen anföres, så ofta nödigt warit. Följandes efterst wid hwar del et fullkomligt orda-register öfwer des innehåll. Femte delen til 1754 års slut, som är tilökt med efter åretalen inrättad förteckning på alla de publice handlingar och acter, som i denna femte delen innehållas. Med hans kongl. maj: ts allernådigste privilegio. Stockholm, tryckt hos Lorentz Ludvig Grefing, på des egen bekostnad, år 1756. (Stockholm: Grefing, 1756), s. 3595–3596.*

medan somliga tjänstefolks kontrakt löpte ut först vid påsk. På så vis kunde en piga vara upptecknad hos en husbonde vid årets början för att framåt våren säga upp sin tjänst utan att detta registrerades av myndigheterna.¹⁴ För att råda bot på oskicket utgick det en instruktion om att alla som hade en piga hos sig som inte var städslad i tjänst i maj månad, alltså efter det att nya kontrakt skulle vara klara, måste anmäla dessa till Politikollegiet, ”på det orsakerna till tjänstlösheten måtte därstädes kunna utrönas och beprövas”.¹⁵

Den nya förordningen resulterade till synes inte i något löpande arbete, åtminstone inte något som lämnat några spår i kollegiets arkiv. Däremot förekommer en samling listor över vilka i staden som var utan tjänst, eller som misstänktes sakna tjänst. Politikollegiet upprättade listorna vid ett tillfälle. Men genom denna lista och viss övrig dokumentation är det möjligt att få en bild av hur gränslandet mellan kategorin tjänstehjon och andra, friare former av arbete egentligen såg ut i staden vid 1700-talets mitt.

Listorna utgick från hushållshierarkier och yrkestitlar som inte alltid hängde ihop med hur människor faktiskt försörjde sig. Det som Politikollegiet ytterst var intresserade av var om en person hade *laga försvar*, alltså en egen näring eller en lagenlig tjänst hos någon annan. Den som inte hade laga försvar betraktades som en lösdrivare.¹⁶ Men att ha laga försvar var inte detsamma som att ha en försörjning – och vice versa. Soldater med familj hade laga försvar genom sin tjänstgöring, men var ändå beroende av tillfälliga arbeten vid sidan av för att säkra försörjningen.¹⁷ Å andra sidan kunde den som tvingades till årstjänst som piga eller dräng hållas från mer lönsamma eller kanske bara mer intressanta sysslor, som de hade kunnat sysselsätta sig med om de inte varit tvingade till att ta årstjänst. De titlar som förekommer i materialet bör därför snarast ses som ståndsbeteckningar i en ekonomi som präglades av ett omfattande mångsyssleri.¹⁸ När myndigheterna

¹⁴ Modée s. 3595–3596.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Tjänstehjonsstadgans lösdriveribestämmelser har närmast undersökts av Theresa Johnson, *Vårt fredliga samhälle: 'Lösdriveri' och försvarslöshet i Sverige under 1830-talet* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2016). [Crossref](#). Lösdriveri i Stockholm har undersökts av Tobias Oswald, *Stadens gränsplatser: Kungliga Poliskammaren och vardagens omstridda rum i Stockholm, 1776–1835* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2022). [Crossref](#).

¹⁷ Johan Söderberg, Ulf Jonsson och Christer Persson, *A stagnating metropolis: The economy and demography of Stockholm, 1750–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), s. 47. Hur det kunde vara lite si och sådär med vad gårdens drängar faktiskt arbetade med, se Uppenberg, *I husbondens bröd och arbete*, s. 140.

¹⁸ Sofia Ling, *Konsten att försörja sig: kvinnors arbete i Stockholm 1650-1750* (Stockholm: Stockholmia förlag, 2016), s. 19-20. För tidigmoderna ståndsbeteckningar se Christopher Pihl och Maria Ågren, “Vad är en hustru? Ett begreppshistoriskt bidrag till genushistorien.” i *Historisk tidskrift*, 134:2 (2014), s. 189. [Crossref](#).

försökte inordna pigorna i hushållsordningen så talade man också om just oreda, lättja, lösdriveri och arbetskraftens brist och dyrhet. Viljan att skapa ordning verkar alltså inte ha bottnat i ekonomiska överväganden. Uppenbarligen gick det att försörja sig också utanför pigtjänsten.

De typer av friare försörjningsstrategier som man misstänkte att befolkningen tog till gick inte ihop med myndigheternas försök att ordna samhället i läsbara hierarkier. Ändå fyllde den rörliga och informella arbetskraften en viktig del i kittet mellan hushållens ekonomier: de kunde utföra tjänster, gå ärenden, hämta och sälja eller agera bulvaner.¹⁹ Johan Söderberg, Ulf Jonsson och Christer Persson har framhållit begreppet *den informella sektorn* som användbart för att beakta de försörjningar som föll utanför myndigheternas insyn i tidigmoderna städer. Begreppet användes ursprungligen för att analysera utvecklingsländers ekonomier, men är tillämpligt också på förmoderna förhållanden för att ringa in den typen av verksamheter där släktband, vänskaper och tillfälliga påhugg utgjorde viktiga försörjningsstrategier för stadens invånare.²⁰ Man kan tänka på det som en formell, halvformell och helt informell del av ekonomin. Med formell ekonomi menar jag sådana försörjningsgrenar som var synliga och överblickbara för myndigheterna: i detta fall i första hand den lagstadgade årstjänsten. Med halvformell avser jag alla de försörjningsvägar som stod till buds som visserligen var lagliga, men svårare för myndigheterna att skapa en överblick över – och i förlängningen också svåra för historiker att se i källmaterialet. I den här studien syftar jag då framför allt på krognäringen och fabriksnäringarna. Med informell ekonomi avser jag allt annat: korta påhugg, betalda tjänster, oegentliga inhysesarrangemang, och allt annat som gav en människa försörjning, men som inte ansågs vara ett lovligt sätt att försörja sig på, även om det strikt talat inte innefattade kriminell verksamhet.

Listmaterialet ger ingen definitiv bild av det oklara gränslandet mellan årstjänst och försvarslöshet. Men det kan utgöra grunden för en uppskattning av det

¹⁹ Maria Ågren, "Emissaries, allies, accomplices and enemies: married women's work in eighteenth-century urban Sweden", *Urban History*, 41:3 (2014), 394–414. [Crossref](#). Se även Bernard Capp, *When gossips meet: women, family, and neighbourhood in early modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), s. 51. En närbild av hur viktig just barnens arbetskraft var återges av Jan Mispelaere, "'När det så stor varder att det något kan göra': Om barns och ungdomars arbete i det tidigmoderna Sverige", *Historisk tidskrift*, 133:1 (2013), 3–32. [Crossref](#). Kvinnors viktiga roll i arbetskraften i Stockholm har undersökts av Kekke Stadin, "Den gömda och glömda arbetskraften: stadskvinnor i produktionen under 1600- och 1700-talen", *Historisk tidskrift*, 1980:3 (1980), 298–319. För en fallstudie om försörjningsstrategier utanför skräväsandets ramar i 1700-talets Stockholm, se Mia Skott, *Tapetmakerskor: Självständiga ykreskivinnor i 1700-talets Stockholm* (Stockholm: Stockholmia förlag, 2022).

²⁰ Söderberg, Jonsson, Persson, s. 46.

ta gränslands omfattning i staden. I vilken utsträckning hade staden ett problem med att människor undvek att ta årstjänst? Vilka människor undvek årstjänsten – och vart sökte de sig i stället? Kan det faktum att det var just pigor som lyftes fram ha bottnat i ett försök att stävja sexhandeln i staden?

Artikelns första del ger en överblick över dem som upptecknades i Politiekollegiets längder och presenterar en jämförelse med Tabellverkets uppgifter över stadens invånare för att ge en bild över hur stor andel det var som på detta sätt sökte sig undan årstjänsten. Undersökningens andra del jämför delar av Politiekollegiets listor med mantalslängdernas uppteckningar och diskuterar i vilken utsträckning tjänstehjonsstadgans regleringar och Politiekollegiets misstankar rörde sexhandeln i staden.

Tjänstefolket i Politiekollegiets listor

De listor som upprättades för Politiekollegiet var uppdelade efter stadens församlingar, och de är inte helt jämförbara mellan varandra.²¹ För listorna över staden mellan broarna och Maria Magdalena församling på västra Södermalm heter det att de är "[f]örteckning[ar] på de personer i staden som synes inga tjänstehjon behöva, samt de, som sitter för sig själva med eller utan försvar." För Klara och Kungsholmen lyder rubriken istället "Förteckning på de personer som äro i tjänst antagna hos stadens invånare, såsom gardes och artillerikarlar, båtsmän, murarbetare och flera, som synas ej behöva tjänstehjon[...]"²² För Jacobs församling (på Norrmalm) och Katarina församling (på östra Södermalm) är rubrikerna enkelt nog "Förteckning uppå följande sämre hushåll som haver tjänstehjon [...]"²³ Utöver dessa listor finns även uppteckningar över stadens krogar i Jacobs församling och fabriksarbetare i Maria församling.²⁴ Listorna för Stadsholmen, Klara, Olofs och Kungsholmens församlingar samt Maria Magdalena innehåller uppgifter över adress, husbondens namn och titel samt tjänstehjonets namn, titel och ålder. För Jacobs och Katarina församling finns inga åldrar nedtecknade.

Vad som började som en uppmaning till att rapportera kvinnor som satt inhyses och saknade årstjänst verkar alltså ha vuxit ut till ett mer allmänt förtecknande över personer som borde ta tjänst. Misstänkliggörandet av sämre hushåll

²¹ Förteckning över tjänstefolk, personer som ha tjänstefolk samt förteckning över krogar, Politiekollegiet, Sockholms Stadsarkiv. För de enskilda listorna för varje församling kommer jag att referera till varje lista med dess områdesnamn, inte dess fullständiga titel.

²² Klara-Olofs-Kungsholmens församlingar, *ibid*.

²³ Katarina och Jacobs församling, *ibid*.

²⁴ Förteckning över tjänstefolk, personer som ha tjänstefolk samt förteckning över krogar, Politiekollegiet, Stockholms Stadsarkiv.

och andra som man inte ansåg ha behov av tjänstefolk hade i sig inget stöd i tjänstehjonsstadgan. Ändå kan man anta att detta var hushåll som saknade en näringsverksamhet av det slag som krävde tjänstefolk, och att möjligtvis både hushållsföreståndare och tjänstehjon hade sin huvudsakliga försörjning på den informella marknaden.

Listorna innehåller uppgifter om namn på husbönder och tjänstehjon samt adressuppgifter, men inga uppgifter om övriga hushållsmedlemmar. För att kunna göra en uppskattning av vilka typer av hushåll det rör sig om har jag därför jämfört hur hushållen i två områden – ett kvarter på Södermalm och en gränd på Stadsholmen – står skrivna i Politikollegiets register med hur de är upptecknade i mantalslängderna. För att kunna ge en jämförande bild med statens befolkning som helhet har jag använt Tabellverkets listormaterial för året 1754.

Sammanlagt upptar Politikollegiets listor 1 026 personer i tjänsteställning hos 874 husbönder, relativt jämnt spridda över stadens olika församlingar. Ytterligare 71 personer *satt för sig själva* och saknade tjänst och tjänstefolk, varav 65 på Stadsholmen. Det absoluta flertalet av tjänstefolket var kvinnor. Endast två manliga tjänstehjon förekommer i materialet. Av dem som satt för sig själva var också en majoritet kvinnor: 50 av 71.

Tabell 1: Politikollegiets listor över tjänstefolk och husbönder

Område	För sig själva	Husbönder	Tjänstehjon
Klara, Olof, Kungsholmen	5	141	171
Jacob	0	211	246
Stadsholmen	65	164	225
Maria Magdalena	1	183	201
Katarina	0	175	183
Totalt	71	874	1 026

Källa: Förteckning över tjänstefolk, personer som ha tjänstefolk samt förteckning över krogar; Politikollegiet, Stockholms Stadsarkiv.

De här uträkningarna är baserade på min egen genomgång av källmaterialet. För Klara-Olof-Kungsholmen, Jacob och Katarina församling har listupptecknaren skrivit en sammanräkning på slutet. Dessa siffror skiljer sig från de siffror jag har kommit fram till i min sammanräkning. Exempelvis avslutas listan för Katarina församling med anmärkningen ”Tillsammans 106 tjänstehjon” för församlingens norra del, medan jag själv kommer fram till 103. Anledningen till differensen kan vara att listans upptecknare har noterat att även vissa av dem som står skrivna som husbönder egentligen kanske borde ha tagit årstjänst som tjänstefolk, som myntdrängsänkan Anna Killman eller bakdrängen Jacob

Kvorn.²⁵ Listorna över Stadsholmen och Maria Magdalena innehåller däremot inte någon sammanräkning på slutet. För att göra en systematisk genomgång har jag därför förlitat mig på min egen genomräkning, med medvetenhet om att inte heller alla som skrivits in som husbönder nödvändigtvis var självskrivna undantag från försvarslöshetslagstiftningen.

För att de här siffrorna alls ska ha någon betydelse måste de förstås sättas i relation till andelen av befolkningen och andelen av den tjänande befolkningen i staden. Tyvärr finns inget självklart material att använda för att göra detta. En genomgång av husförhörlängder eller mantalslängder för hela Stockholm skulle innebära en allt för krävande arbetsinsats. Dessutom saknas mantalslängder för vissa delar av staden för 1755. Ett mer överkomligt material är härvidlag Tabellverkets befolkningsöversikter över Stockholm.²⁶ Tabellverket, som samlade in uppgifter om befolkningens storlek och sammansättning via stadens magistrat, har bevarade uppgifter om Stockholms befolkning för året 1754. Men verkets kategoriseringar av befolkningsgrupper är långt ifrån självklara. Tabellverket listade stadens befolkning efter ”stånd och omständigheter”, alltså inte efter någon regelrätt arbetskategorisering, utan snarare efter social status.²⁷ Vad gäller kvinnorna är det än mer dunkelt: ofta verkar de ha redovisats i samma kategori som sin make. Men i vissa fall är de förtecknade efter egen verksamhet. Trots detta kan listorna användas för att göra en uppskattning över hur stor del av stadens tjänstefolk som Politikollegiet upptog.

Året 1754 räknar Tabellverket åldersstrukturen i staden och finner då 61 752 invånare: 28 187 män och 33 565 kvinnor. Siffrorna måste ses som ungefärliga: formulärets sammanräkning av befolkningen efter civilstånd ger nämligen en summa av 62 111 invånare, fördelade på 28 359 män och 33 752 kvinnor, alltså något fler än i tabellen över åldrarna.

²⁵ Katarina församling, Förteckning över tjänstefolk, personer som ha tjänstefolk samt förteckning över krogar, Politikollegiet, Stockholms Stadsarkiv.

²⁶ Jag använder Tabellverket på nätet via Umeå universitet. För Tabellverkets arbetsmetoder, se <https://www.umu.se/globalassets/organisation/fakulteter/samfak/enheten-for-demografi-och-aldrandeforskning-vid-umea-universitet/databaser/cedar-tabellverket-och-databasen-tabverk.pdf>. Hämtat 2022-12-30.

²⁷ Formulär 100, tabellverket på nätet, <http://rystad.ddb.umu.se:8080/Tabellverket/Tabverk>. Hämtat 2022-12-30.

Tabell 2: Kvinnor i staden efter tabellverket och Politiekollegiets listor

Kvinnor i staden	33 752
Ståndens lakejer och tjänstefolk	1 859
Ungdom och arbetare över 15 år	2 342
Friskt inhyses folk i städerna	960
Samtliga borgerskapet och betjäntes tjänstefolk	4 841
Summa av kategorierna ovan	10 002
Politiekollegiets listor	1 169

Källa: Tabellverket 1754, Förteckning över tjänstefolk, personer som ha tjänstefolk samt förteckning över krogar, Politikollegiet, Stockholms Stadsarkiv.

Andelen män i Politiekollegiets listor är överlag försvinnande få. Redan utan jämförelser med annat material är det uppenbart att män som undandrog sig tjänst veckor ha varit ett marginalfenomen – i alla fall sett utifrån Politiekollegiets listor. Därför kommer jag i jämförelsen nu att inrikta mig på den kvinnliga delen av befolkningen.

Totalt listas 1 169 personer som antingen tjänstehjon i hushåll som inte verkade behöva det, som sittandes för sig själva eller som arbetare vid fabriker i Politiekollegiets listor. Detta antal skulle utgöra drygt en femtedel av alla kvinnor som arbetade som tjänstefolk för borgerskapet i staden, och en försvarlig del av stadens kvinnor i tjänsteställning över huvud taget. Tabellverket listar även 960 kvinnor som ”friskt inhyses folk i städerna”.²⁸ Siffran är misstänkt nära de 1 024 kvinnor som Politiekollegiet listat som tjänstefolk i sämre hushåll. Under denna kategori räknar Tabellverket 40 män, medan 23 män finns med i Politikollegiets listor.

I huvudsak rör det sig här alltså om kvinnlig arbetskraft som misstänks undvika årstjänsten – vilket inte är konstigt med tanke på att det var pigor som var föremålet för Överståthållarämbetets publikation år 1753 som föranledde listorna. Källmaterialet håller därför knappast för att resonera mer utförligt om drängarnas förhållande till årstjänsten, men desto bättre om pigornas.

De som satt för sig själva

Av dem som satt för sig själva fanns nästan alla uppptecknade på Stadsholmen. 20 av dem var män, varav flera på ett eller annat vis verksamma inom textilindustrin. Fem av dem var hovskräddare hos adelsmän och tre var strumpvävargesäller. Här återfanns även en perukmakargesäll. Fem var betjänter av något slag: kontorsbe-

²⁸ Kategori 10a, formulär 100, tabellverket på nätet, <http://rystad.ddb.umu.se:8080/Tabellverket/Tabverk>. Hämtat 2022-12-30.

tjänster, kanslibetjänster eller bodbetjänster. I den "skånske glasbodbetjänten" Elis Linströms fall, utan lön.²⁹ Resterande sex personer var verksamma som arbetare i fabriker. Dessa män verkar inte direkt ha saknat laga försvar, för i listan har man noterat anknytning till fabriker eller andra arbetsplatser.

45 av de personer som satt för sig själva i staden innanför broarna var kvinnor. De flesta av dem var någonstans mellan 20 och 30 år, vissa i fyrtioårsåldern och en person så ålderstigen som 52. Vuxna människor således, men knappast lastgamla. Arton av dem försörjde sig på ett eller annat vis med sömnad, ytterligare tre står som arbeterskor vid fabriker vilket antagligen innebar att de utförde någon form av sömnadsarbete där, medan två kvinnor noteras som i färd med att lära sig att sy för sin försörjning. Dessa olika typer likställdes inte. Medan det noterades om den 33-åriga jungfru Lisa Werner att hon "säger sig föda sig med söm, löst folk", så skrevs den 44-åriga pigan Beata Ek som skradderska hos sekreteraren Carlschiöld utan någon motsvarande anmärkning. Jungfru Juliana Dahl, 23 år, arbetade hos kungliga hovbrodören Leij. Skillnaden i yrkeskunnande, social status och inkomst framstår som ansenliga inom denna grupp. Utöver dessa yrkesverksamma kvinnor angavs sju andra som arbetandes med att stå i bod eller krog, eller som ringerska i kyrkan.

Sju kvinnor stod utan tjänst, medan ytterligare tre var havande med barn och en skulle snart gifta sig med en boktryckargesäll. Utöver dessa listades tre kvinnor som enligt egen uppgift resande. Om jungfru Agneta Brahe, 30 år, noterades enbart att hon "sällan tid att vara hemma".³⁰ Vad som egentligen menas med detta är svårt att säga. Hon är den enda med ett uppenbart adligt namn som förekommer, samtidigt tituleras hon jungfru, och inte fröken som var brukligt bland ogifta adelskvinnor. Kanske var Brahe tänkt att avse hennes (tidigare) arbetsgivare?

Villkoren för de ensamstående kvinnor som bodde längre ut från stadskärnan verkar ha varit svårare än för den grupp som fångats upp inne i själva staden. Norr om staden, i Klara, Kungsholmens och Sankt Olofs församlingar listades fem kvinnor som på olika vis verkar ha trillat ut utanför hushållsordningen. Pigorna Stina Broberg (30 år) och Greta Forsström (36 år) var utan husbönder. Det var också den 42-åriga pigan Märta Stormhatt, som skrevs som sjuklig, men tjänade ihop till brödfödan med klädtvätt. Maria Wassman (22 år) var gift, men "är ej tillsammans med sin man"³¹, medan kvinnspersonen Brita Jansdotter (48 år) var "hjälpjon".³² Kvinnspersonen avsåg antagligen en ogift mor. Kanske förklarar det den ganska underliga titeln hjälpjon? Enligt tjänstehjonsstadgan fanns det inget

²⁹ Västra kvarteret, husnr. 6, Staden, Förteckning över tjänstefolk, personer som ha tjänstefolk samt förteckning över krogar, Politikollegiet, Stockholms Stadsarkiv.

³⁰ Västra kvarteret, husnr. 49, Staden, Förteckning över tjänstefolk, personer som ha tjänstefolk samt förteckning över krogar, Politikollegiet, Stockholms Stadsarkiv.

³¹ Kvarteret Adlern, Klara-Olof-Kungsholmens församlingar, *ibid*.

³² Kvarteret Kongsbacken, Klara-Olof-Kungsholmens församlingar, *ibid*.

utrymme för den här typen av tjänster, men det kan ha varit en pragmatisk lösning för den som inte kunde komma i fråga för annan typ av årstjänst.

Bara en person skrevs som sittandes för sig själv i Maria församling: extravaktmästaren Lars Falck.³³ Däremot upprättades i församlingen en särskild lista för de personer som var ”under namn av tjänst eller försvar vid fabriken vistande, dels med, dels utan bevis eller attester”.³⁴ Listan upptog 96 namn, alla kvinnor, deras adresser, fabriken de arbetade för och datum för eventuella attester för arbetet för fabriken. Två av dem benämndes med yrkestitel: spolerskorna Maria Söderberg och Anna Forsberg, arbetandes vid Dalmansons fabrik, men utan attester. Ytterligare 20 var änkor, medan majoriteten, hela 58 personer, titulerades som pigor. Av de 96 fabriksarbeterskorna saknade nära hälften, 46 personer, någon form av attest som kunde bevisa att de var verksamma för fabriköerna.³⁵

För dem som varken var tjänstefolk eller husbönder verkar det alltså som att textilmarknaden – i bred mening – var en vanlig födkrok. Genomgången av Maria församlings fabriksarbeterskor visar också att det kunde vara lite si och så med bevisen för sådan näringsverksamhet. Ändå var det en påvisbar försörjning, som möjliggjorde för många, framför allt kvinnor, att självständigt tjäna en inkomst.

Släktrelationer

För alla församlingar förutom Katarina och Jacob har skrivaren lämnat utrymme för att notera tjänstehjonets titel. Sammanlagt ger det 598 tjänstehjon. De flesta av dessa – 351 personer – benämndes som pigor medan 63 benämndes som flickor. Elva personer hade någon annan titel, exempelvis jungfru. Att de flesta benämndes som pigor framstår som normalt och oskyldigt – det är trots allt pigtjänst materialet handlar om. Uppgiften är ändå inte betydelslös. Man hade kunnat tänka sig att många bland den här delen av befolkningen som togs i tjänst hos så kallade sämre hushåll skulle benämnas med det nedsättande epitetet kvinnspersoner, alternativt var änkor, jungfrur eller mamseller som inte ansåg sig behöva ta tjänst. Men så var alltså inte fallet. Huvuddelen var sådana människor som man kunde förvänta sig att finna i en tjänstesituation, men som av en eller annan anledning hade hamnat i dessa mindre hushåll.

171 personer benämndes med en släktrelation till husbonden i stället för titel. Det ligger i linje med myndigheternas misstankar i förordningen från 1753 om

³³ Kvarteret Kattryggen, Maria Magdalena församling, *ibid.*

³⁴ Förteckning över tjänstefolk, personer som ha tjänstefolk samt förteckning över krogar, Politikollegiet, Stockholms Stadsarkiv.

³⁵ Maria Fabriker, *ibid.*

att pigor valde att bo hos släktingar i stället för att ta årstjänst.³⁶ Mörkertalet kan antas ha varit stort. 171 personer, vilket utgör drygt en fjärdedel av alla hjon som benämndes med någon form av titel, är sannolikt bara ett minimum som kan hänföras till denna kategori. I åtminstone ett fall i mantalslängden noteras en svägerska som arbetandes i ett hushåll, när Politikollegiets listor endast noterat personen som piga.³⁷ Det framstår som troligt att det fanns flera sådana relationer som kollegiet har missat när de har upptecknat sina listor.

Av de relationer som faktiskt nämns var 118 av 171 hjon skrivna som döttrar till husbönderna. Ytterligare sex var fosterdöttrar, nio var syskondöttrar och två var barnbarn. Sjutton personer var svägerskor till husbonden och elva personer var husbondens syster, medan sex personer endast omnämns som "släkting".

Att döttrar var en så framträdande grupp i materialet kan mycket väl ha speglat verkligheten. Det kan också ha varit så att det var en relation som var så uppenbar för kollegiet att den ofta noterades, medan andra släktrrelationer, som svägerskor eller syskonbarn lätt gick dem förbi och istället noterades som pigor eller flickor i materialet.

I samma församlingar har dessutom hjonets ålder ofta, men inte alltid, noterats. Det ger en möjlighet att se åldersammansättningen på tjänstehjonsgruppen som helhet, i synnerhet gällande döttrarna. Återigen blir det tydligt att det inte rör sig om några ålderstigna och ledbrutna tjänstehjon, men inga yngligar heller i jämförelse med vad som är brukligt inom tjänstefolksgruppen. Som jämförelsepunkt kan man ta tjänstefolket i Maria Magdalena församlings första och andra brandvaktsdistrikt år 1760: Vissa började tjänstgöra redan i de tidiga tonåren, andra fortsatte i tjänst (eller återvände till den) i 30-årsåldern, men den absoluta majoriteten pigor var 19–26 år gamla.³⁸ Tjänstehjonen i Politikollegiets listor framstår i jämförelse som något yngre. De flesta var mellan 15 och 24 år gamla.

Tabell 3: *åldrar på tjänstehjon och döttrar*

Titel	0–14 år	15–19 år	20–24 år	25–29 år	30–34 år	35–39 år	40 +	Summa
Hjon	64	106	133	47	32	12	14	408
Varav döttrar	2	54	42	17	6	0	0	121

Källa: Förteckning över tjänstefolk, personer som ha tjänstefolk samt förteckning över krogar; Politikollegiet, Stockholms Stadsarkiv.

³⁶ Modée, s. 3595–3596.

³⁷ Husnr. 17, Staden västra, Mantalslängder år 1755, Överståthållarämbetet för uppbořdsärenden, Stockholms stadsarkiv.

³⁸ Paul Borenberg, *Servants: Power, Status and Opportunity in 18th century Stockholm*, (Uppsala: opublicerad masteruppsats, 2014), s. 26. [Crossref](#).

Det är i samma åldersspann vi finner döttrarna: två av dem var yngre än 14 år och sex personer var i tidiga 30-årsåldern, medan flertalet befann sig någonstans mellan 14 och 29 år. Det innebär att man inte kan säga att det rörde sig om någon grupp yngre men fortfarande hemmavarande barn, utan trots allt människor som befann sig inom den ålderskategori som vanligen tog årstjänst som pigor men som av en eller annan anledning inte hade gjort detta. Det verkar alltså inte ha rört sig om en kategori av utslagna människor, eller kvinnor som normalt inte var förmögna till att delta som arbetskraft i ordinarie hushåll. Det kan ha varit så att de föredrog att stanna i föräldrahemmet framför att ta årstjänst som pigor, som Politikollegiet misstänkte. Möjligen kan det också ha varit så att det inte fanns tillräckligt stor efterfrågan på pigor bland stadens mer etablerade hushåll heller.

Så kallade sämre hushåll

Vilka var då dessa så kallat sämre hushåll som misstänktes hålla sig med tjänstehjon? Här finns inte utrymme att ge annat än en något impressionistisk bild av denna kategori. Hur de tjänade sitt uppehälle är svårt att säga – bakom ståndsbeteckningar som ”extra vaktmästare” eller ”kofferdisjömansänka” kan allsköns mer eller mindre legala och inkomstbringande sysslor i den informella ekonomins gränsland dölja sig. Arbetsforskningen har visat att yrkestitlar i tidigmodern tid sällan avslöjar, utan snarare döljer, ett samhälle som präglas av ett utbrett mångsyssleri.³⁹

Ändå kan några generella slutsatser dras utifrån listans längder över husbönder. Den första är att huvudparten var män: 743 husbönder mot 131 ensamma matmödrar.⁴⁰ De 131 matmödrarna utgjordes i överväldigande utsträckning av änkor, ofta till arbetare, sjömän eller soldater. I vissa fall även till skräddare eller andra hantverkare.

Det andra var att husbondegruppen antingen präglades av människor som arbetade med sina egna händer – utan andra uppenbara resurser – eller av människor som redan mer eller mindre tydligt befann sig inom den halvofficiella ekonomin. Till den första gruppen hör timmermän, sjömän, gardessoldater och gesäller eller fabriksarbetare. Till den andra gruppen, som endast förekommer undantagsvis, kan räknas män som den extra stadsvaktmästaren Eric Lundin⁴¹ eller den avskedade Gardeskorpralen Eric Smedström.⁴²

³⁹ Se Maria Ågren (red.), *Making a living, making a difference: Gender and work in early modern European society*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

⁴⁰ Förteckning över tjänstefolk, personer som ha tjänstefolk samt förteckning över krogar, Politikollegiet, Stockholms Stadsarkiv.

⁴¹ Katarina församling, *ibid.*

⁴² Klara-Olofs-Kungsholmens församlingar, *ibid.*

Men här fanns framför allt krögarna, som verkar ha tilldragit sig myndigheternas särskilda intresse. Stockholm hade vid tiden åtminstone 720 krogar.⁴³ Tillståndet hanterades av Handelskollegiet som en sorts biståndspeng för nödställda eller pensionsförmån för gamla.⁴⁴ Krogarna fick inte anställa arbetsfört tjänstefolk, utan bara sådana som var för svaga för att kunna utföra vanlig pigtjänst.⁴⁵ Kanske är det då förklaringen till att många krögare fanns med på listorna över hushåll som höll sig med tjänstefolk fast de inte borde – sannolikt som arbetskraft i krogen. Listorna upptar sammanlagt 68 krögare på Stadsholmen med 104 tjänstehjon (i övriga församlingar har de inte särskilt utmärkts). Vissa av dem anställdes flera kvinnor, som vaktmästaren Rosling som hade både en 32-årig änka och en 32-årig piga hos sig.⁴⁶ En annan krögande vaktmästare, Gabriel Lindbom, höll sig med två döttrar, 17 och 26 år hemma, samt hela tre pigor, 23–25 år gamla.⁴⁷

Det behöver inte ha handlat om regelrätt betjäningpersonal här, även om det kanske var vad myndigheterna misstänkte. En krögare kunde – i alla fall vid ett enskilt tillfälle – argumentera för att dess tjänstefolk inte alls var anställda inom krognäringen, utan anställda som hjon i ens eget hushåll och på så vis få behålla dem i tjänsten.⁴⁸ Med det sagt så är det kanske osannolikt att det krävdes en flerhövdad hushållsstab för att hålla ordning på ett vaktmästarhushåll. Det är alltså troligt att krögarna omligen höll sig med friskt tjänstefolk. Med tanke på hur många krogar staden hade är detta knappast förvånande. Om något är det förvånande att inte fler krögare hamnade på Politikollegiets listor än vad som var fallet.

Vanligtvis var alltså pigornas husbönder andra människor från de arbetande klasserna i staden, men som kanske redan gift sig, skaffat barn och etablerat sina egna hushåll på marginalen som en piga kunde inhysas hos och hjälpa. Det finns därmed inget som uppenbart tyder på att detta tjänstefolk sögs upp i någon konkurrerande näringsgren. Krogarna tog visserligen sin beskärda del av arbetskraften, men långt ifrån någon majoritet.

⁴³ Stockholms stad, 1754, Tabellverket på nätet, [Crossref](#). Hämtat 2022-12-30.

⁴⁴ Ling, s. 176–180. Se även Christine Bladh, "Kvinnors dubbla beroende av sprit. Beskänkta kvinnor och kvinnor med utskänkning i Stockholm 1812–1816" i *Kvinnor och män som aktörer och klienter, en antologi som skildrar tidigt 1800-tal och framåt*, red. av Christine Bladh, Elisabet Cedersund och Jan-Erik Hagberg (Stockholm: Nerenius & Santérus, 1997), 11–40.

⁴⁵ Ansökningar om krogrättigheter volym 6, Handelskollegiet, Stockholms stadsarkiv.

⁴⁶ Inre kvarteret, husnr. 1, Staden, Förteckning över tjänstefolk, personer som ha tjänstefolk samt förteckning över krogar, Politikollegiet, Stockholms Stadsarkiv.

⁴⁷ Inre kvarteret, husnr 89, Staden, *ibid*.

⁴⁸ Osvald, s. 165.

Tegelviken och Kolmätargränd

Politiekollegiets material ger inte någon särskilt fyllig bild av hushållssammansättningen där dessa tjänstehjon levde. Men mantalslängder kan fungera som ett jämförande material för att skapa ett utdrag som visar på hushållens sammansättning.⁴⁹ Mantalslängderna gör det också möjligt att kontrollera om myndigheternas misstanke, om att inhyses pigor undvek att mantalsskrivas, egentligen stämmer. För att testa det har jag kontrollerat Politiekollegiets uppgifter mot Mantalslängdens uppgifter på kvarteret Tegelviken på Södermalm, och på Kolmätargränden på Stadsholmen.

Tegelviken

Katarina församling var stadens mest proletariserade: relativt fattigare än övriga församlingar, med många små hushåll.⁵⁰ Längst ut i församlingen, på Södermalms nordöstra strand, låg kvarteret Tegelviken, namngiven efter en liten vik som först användes som utskeppningshamn för ett tegelbruk och som under 1700-talet hade ersatts av ett tjärhov. År 1755 noterade mantalskommissarien 720 invånare i kvarteret: 156 män med sina hustrur och en ungar. 112 söner och 107 döttrar under 15 år samt fyra söner och tolv döttrar över 15 år. Till detta läggs 57 manliga och 100 kvinnliga tjänstehjon, samt tre män och sexton kvinnor som betecknats som *gammalt folk*.⁵¹ Av Tegelvikens hushåll noterade Politiekollegiet här tretton stycken som ”sämre hushåll som haver tjänstehjon [...]”.⁵² Listan upptar fjorton kvinnonamn som tjänstehjon i dessa hushåll, men inga mansnamn.

Myndigheterna misstänkte att tjänstehjon lät sig mantalsskrivas i mars, för att sedan säga upp sin tjänst och i stället bo som inhyses hos släktingar och vänner. En jämförelse mellan Politiekollegiets lista över kvarteret Tegelviken och mantalslängden från samma år visar att så sannolikt inte var fallet. Av de fjorton kvinnonamn som finns upptecknade i Politiekollegiets lista över Tegelviken återfinns tretton av dem som mantalsskrivna i samma hushåll. Det enda undantaget är i timmermannen Erik Enbergs hushåll, där Politiekollegiet antecknade en Brita Söderberg som

⁴⁹ För en diskussion kring Mantalslängdernas tillförlitlighet och användbarhet som källa i 1700-talets Stockholm, se Mats Hayen, *Stadens puls, en tidsgeografisk studie av hushåll och vardagsliv i Stockholm, 1760-1830*, (Stockholm: Studier i stads och kommunhistoria, 2007), s. 68–74. [Crossref](#).

⁵⁰ Söderberg, Jonsson, Persson, s. 98.

⁵¹ Kvarteret Tegelviken, Katarina Södra, Mantalslängder år 1755, Överståthållarämbetet för uppbördsärenden, Stockholms stadsarkiv.

⁵² Katarina församling, Förteckning över tjänstefolk, personer som ha tjänstefolk samt förteckning över krogar, Politiekollegiet, Stockholms Stadsarkiv.

tjänstehjon.⁵³ I mantalslängden finns ingen Brita Söderberg omnämnd, men för Erik Enbergs hushåll står det antecknat att han levde med sin hustru och två små döttrar i en egen gård han hyrde, där han även höll tre gäster.⁵⁴ Det är möjligt att någon av dessa namnlösa gäster var den Brita Söderberg som sedan skrevs in i Politiekollegiets listor. Om det fanns en utbredd praxis att låta sig bli mantalsskriven hos en husbonde och sedan lämna tjänsten, så verkar alltså inte Politiekollegiet ha lyckats kringgå den med sina uppteckningar år 1755. Eller så var det inte ett så utbrett problem som myndigheterna oroade sig för att det var.

Av de 13 sämre hushållen var tre krogar. Det står inte utskrivet i Politiekollegiets lista över just Katarina församling, men det framgår av mantalslängderna. I några fall verkar det trots allt ha rört sig om släktingar som tagit tjänst hos vandra, som i fallet med sjömannen Jean Wiberg. Han var 24 år och ute till sjöss och han levde med sin 23-åriga hustru och hennes 26-åriga syster Ingrid Hellström, utan barn.⁵⁵ Att ett sådant litet och barnlöst hushåll skulle ha behov av en pigga måste framstått som besynnerligt för misstänksamma ögon. I ytterligare två av de tretton hushållen kan man ana en släktkoppling mellan husbonde och tjänstehjon. I det ena bodde vågkarlen Magnus Palm (51 år) tillsammans med sin hustru (50 år) och deras fyra barn i åldrarna tre till fjorton år, och drev samtidigt en krogverksamhet. I sin tjänst hade de pigan Stina Palm, 28 år. Möjligtvis en släkting till husbonden, att döma av efternamnet.⁵⁶

I det andra hushållet bodde kofferditimmermannen Lars Friberg (36 år) och hans hustru (34 år) tillsammans med tre söner: den äldsta nio år gammal, den yngsta bara tio veckor. I hushållet bodde även husbondens äldre syster, pigan Caisa Friberg, 46 år gammal.⁵⁷ Rent spekulativt kan nog den äldre system ha fyllt en viktig funktion i hushållet: barnen var små, och att ha två kvinnor i hushållet som kunde samarbeta om barnpassningen och som båda kunde tillföra extrainkomster från enklare påhugg kan ha varit en förutsättning för att få tillvaron att gå runt. Inte minst eftersom Fribergs hustru nyligen genomgått en graviditet, som kan ha krävt tid för återhämtning.

⁵³ Kvarteret Tegelviken, husnr. 35, Katarina församling, *ibid.*

⁵⁴ Husnr. 35, Kvarteret Tegelviken, Katarina Södra, Mantalslängder år 1755, Överståthållarämbetet för uppborärenden, Stockholms stadsarkiv.

⁵⁵ Husnr. 23, *ibid.*

⁵⁶ Kvarteret Tegelviken, husnr. 45, Katarina församling, Förteckning över tjänstefolk, personer som ha tjänstefolk samt förteckning över krogar, Politiekollegiet, Stockholms Stadsarkiv, och Kvarteret Tegelviken, Katarina Södra, Mantalslängder år 1755, Överståthållarämbetet för uppborärenden, Stockholms stadsarkiv.

⁵⁷ Husnr. 59, Kvarteret Tegelviken, Katarina Södra, Mantalslängder år 1755, Överståthållarämbetet för uppborärenden, Stockholms stadsarkiv.

Man kan svårligen anklaga Politiekollegiet för slapphänthet i uppteckningen. Till exempel upptecknade de gesällen Nils Holmstedt, tillsammans med tjänstehjonet Lisa. I mantalslängden kan man läsa att det rörde sig om den 29-åriga överskärargesällen Nils Holmstedt, som levde tillsammans med sin 30-åriga hustru och deras son på två år samt flickan Lisa, 13 år gammal, som var ”ofärdig i armarna”.⁵⁸ Deras förekomst på listan över sämre hushåll som höll sig med tjänstefolk utan att egentligen behöva dem antyder att omständigheterna inte var skäl nog att undandra sig ordinarie pigtjänst.

Vissa av hushållen i Politiekollegiets listor kanske inte hade något uppenbart behov av sitt tjänstefolk. Men de flesta hade småbarn i hemmet, vilket kanske kan ha varit en anledning till att man ville ha en extra vuxen person närvarande. En möjlig gemensam nämnare för varför de upptecknades i listorna är att de inte hade tagit årstjänst i enlighet med tjänstehjonsstadgan. Därmed var det inte så mycket undangömmandet av arbetskraften som Politiekollegiet följde upp. Snarare handlade det om att kartlägga den informella arbetsmarknaden utanför den årstjänstlagstiftning som tjänstehjonsstadgan reglerade.

Kolmätargränd

Stockholms sexhandel bedrevs i hög utsträckning i hemmen. Särskilda bordeller verkar ha saknats, utan de prostituerade vistades i hemmen som pigor och tjänstefolk.⁵⁹ Eftersom det nästan enbart var kvinnor som nedtecknades i Politiekollegiets listor kan man undra om förklaringen står att finna i en ökad medvetenhet och oro för sexhandelns utbredning i 1700-talsstaden?

En stark indikation på att materialet inte ger några explicita upplysningar om Stockholms sexhandel är notisen för den välkända kopplerskan Lovisa von Platen (kallad *Plattskan*). Hon finns antecknad i listorna som Madmoisell Lovisa von Platen, 40 år gammal och boende för sig själv i hus nummer 19 på Västerlånggatan nära Järntorget. Hon står skriven för sig själv, utan några pigor i sitt hushåll.⁶⁰ Men låt oss titta närmare på några av de platser som var kända för att inrymma den ljusskygga bordellverksamheten.

Olyckligt nog finns inte mantalslängder bevarade för stadens inre, östra och södra kvarter för året 1755. Där låg Baggensgatan, (ö)känd för sin utbredda sexhandel.⁶¹ I Politiekollegiets listor upptecknades misstänkt nog ett par hushåll på

⁵⁸ Husnr. 10, *ibid.*

⁵⁹ Rebecka Lennartsson, *Mamsell Bohmans fall: Nattlöperskor I 1700-talets Stockholm*, (Stockholm: Stockholmia förlag, 2019), s. 116–117.

⁶⁰ Södra kvarteret, husnr. 19, Staden, Förteckning över tjänstefolk, personer som ha tjänstefolk samt förteckning över krogar, Politiekollegiet, Stockholms Stadsarkiv.

⁶¹ Lennartsson, s. 106.

denna gata med fler än ett kvinnligt tjänstehjon. Exempelvis höll sig den före detta kocken Johan Eggers med inte mindre än tre unga pigor – Stina (22 år), Anna (30 år) och Stina (30 år) – till sin spisverksamhet.⁶² Kanske var detta en front för sexhandel, eller så utgjorde sexhandel en sidoinkomst, vid sidan av spisgästerna. Enbart utifrån Politiekollegiets listor går det inte att säga säkert.

Mantalslängder finns däremot bevarade för stadens västra kvarter. Där låg ett annat stråk som var beryktad för sin sexhandel: Kolmätargränden, en smal gränd med sträckning mellan Västerlånggatan och Riddarhustorget. Bellman beskrev gränden 15 år senare som "[s]mal och smutsig, full med grus, rådhustaket syns i änden, sen blott krog och jungfruhus".⁶³ I Politiekollegiets listor finns det dock inget särskilt som tyder på att gränden skulle ha varit det Sodom som Bellman senare beskrev det som. Där upptecknades åtta hushåll. Samtliga personer som upptecknades i Politiekollegiets lista står också att finna i mantalslängden för samma år på denna adress.⁶⁴

Tre av hushållen utgjordes av kvinnor som försörjde sig inom den informella ekonomin: fogdeänkan Anna Ryman, 38 år gammal, levde med den 22 år gamla "kvinnspersonen" Stina Wahlström och en 14-årig dotter. De försörjde sig med att sy och tvätta. Även jungfruparet Maja Brita Hellman (40 år) och Maja Salin (54 år) arbetade med sömnad. Det tredje hushållet förestods av en 35 år gammal timmermansänka: Gertrud Stenberg. Hon uppgavs försörja sig med klädtvättning och hade hos sig pigan Margareta Möller (35 år gammal) och tre barn i åldrarna två till åtta år.

Tre av de upptecknade hushållen i den lilla gränden var krogar. Kofferdisjömännens Lars Byman (46 år) och hans hustru (26 år) höll krog nummer 56 och hade hustruns syster Maja (22 år) anställd som piga. Den andra krogen hölls av drängen i Kammarkollegiet Eric Winberg (45 år), som levde med sin hustru (37 år), deras fyra barn i åldrarna fyra till åtta år samt pigan Catharina, 23 år.

Den tredje krogen låg inte i staden, men på Södermalm. Dess ägare, myntdrängen Jonas Lundberg (41 år), bodde på Kolmätargränden där han höll spisgäster med sin 52-åriga hustru, en sjuårig son och pigan Sigrid som var 29 år.

De två resterande hushållen bestod av den 63-åriga extra myntdrängen Johan Holm, hans 72-åriga hustru med deras 18-åriga piga Maja Granberg och sprut-

⁶² Inre kvarteret, husnr. 137, Staden, Förteckning över tjänstefolk, personer som ha tjänstefolk samt förteckning över krogar, Politiekollegiet, Stockholms Stadsarkiv.

⁶³ Carl Michael Bellman, "Fredmans epistel 34" i *Fredmans Epistlar*, (Stockholm: Tryckt hos Anders Zetterberg, 1790). [Crossref](#).

⁶⁴ Husnr. 89-97, Staden västra, Mantalslängder år 1755, Överståthållarämbetet för uppborärenden, Stockholms stadsarkiv.

lagaren Peter Moelius, 44 år, med sin 30-åriga hustru som höll sig med den 21-åriga pigan Brita.

Hushållens karaktär liknar mycket de hushåll som fanns upptecknade kring Tegelviken. Det finns alltså inga uppenbara tecken på att listorna fångade in stadens sexhandel. Rebecka Lennartsson beskriver sexhandeln under tiden som utbredd, men gömd och informell.⁶⁵ Därför är det tänkbart att många av de pigor som upptecknades av kollegiet var en del av stadens sexhandel, och att flertalet av husbönderna ägnade sig åt koppleri. Men det går inte att säga att listorna på ett tydligt sätt fångade in den ljusskygga sexhandeln. Hade de gjort det hade knappast den ökända kopplerskan Lovisa von Platen stått skriven som en ensam mademoiselle i fastigheten vid Västerlånggatan.

Tjänstehjonsstadgan och den informella ekonomin

Fanns det någon verklighetsförankring i myndigheternas återkommande klagomål över att människor i undvek att ta årstjänst? Jag menar att svaret på den frågan är både ja och nej.

Ja, eftersom de kvinnor som var i tjänst eller inhyses bland stadens så kallat sämre hushåll var många. En uppskattning är att de skulle ökat antalet pigor med en femtedel om de hade tagit tjänst. Att dessa människor kunnat undvika årstjänsten och i stället valt andra sätt att försörja sig i den ordnade ekonomins utmarker märktes säkert av för den husbonde som ville rekrytera en piga i staden. Det var nog så att stadens pigor kunde pressas till ganska dåliga villkor, men att de visste att det fanns någon form av alternativ till årstjänsten om villkoren blev orimliga, lönen alldeles för låg eller matmodern alldeles för krånglig. Kanske inget glamoröst, bekvämt eller lukrativt alternativ, men åtminstone någon form av alternativ. Politiekollegiets initiativ 1753 vittnar om att myndigheterna ville se sådana flyktvägar stängda. Vidare visar uppteckningen av fabriksarbeterskor att dessa ofta saknade officiell dokumentation på sina uppdrag. Det framstår som troligt att en avsevärd del av kvinnorna också fann sin försörjning inom den informella sektorn.

Men å andra sidan nej: myndigheternas oro var överdriven. I överståthållarämbetets publikation den 30 maj 1753 presenteras misstanken om att pigor sökte lura mantalskommisarierna genom att avvika och låta bli att förnya sin tjänst när väl mantalskrivningen hade skett. När jag jämför ett urval ur Politiekollegiets listor med mantalslängderna från samma år finns inga tecken på att så faktiskt var fallet. Det kan givetvis ha skett tidvis, men det finns inget i den här undersök-

⁶⁵ Lennartsson, s. 116–117.

ningen som tyder på att det skulle ha skett med någon större systematik. På det punkten verkar alltså myndigheternas oro ha varit obefogad.

En möjlig förklaring till att en ganska stor grupp stod utanför tjänstefolkssystemet kan vara att efterfrågan på deras arbetskraft var låg. Det finns mycket få män i listmaterialet: 21 som satt för sig själva, och två som har tjänst hos andra. Resten var kvinnor. Hade dessa aktivt undvikit pigjtjänsten, eller hade de helt enkelt inte funnit någon annan tjänst? Krognäringen med Stockholms över 700 små krogar slukade redan en ansevärd mängd kvinnlig arbetskraft, även om den åtminstone nominellt var reserverad för dem som inte var friska eller starka nog att utföra vanliga pigsysslor. Ändå verkar det funnits pigor över. Kan det helt enkelt ha varit så att efterfrågan på pigor till hushållen inte var särskilt hög?

Om vi nu utgår från samtidens problembeskrivning, att vissa undvek årstjänsten, menar jag att problemet visserligen fanns, men kanske grundade det sig i något annat än arbetsovillighet. Grundproblemet kan ha varit att Stockholm hade ett överskott på ogift kvinnlig arbetskraft. Detta trots att hushållen var välfyllda med pigor, trots att den omfattande krognäringen anställde många pigor och trots att det fanns arbete för kvinnor som sömmerskor.

Ett listmaterial lämpar sig inte särskilt väl för att synliggöra extraordinära försörjningsstrategier. Ändå får jag intrycket att det fanns möjligheter att försörja sig också utanför pigjtjänsten. Fabriksnäringen och krognäringen hade säkerligen en betydande dragningskraft för den kvinnliga arbetskraften i staden. 1700-talet var också den tid då sexhandeln ökade i staden. Men mest intressant i den här undersökningen är trots allt hur stor andel av det listade tjänstefolket som inte hade någon uppenbar koppling till dessa näringar. Att bo inhyses i ett fattigare hushåll eller som piga verkar faktiskt ha varit ett möjligt försörjningsalternativ det också. Att sitta inhyses hos en släkting eller vän kan nog ha inneburit en möjlighet att mer flexibelt ordna tjänsteutbytet än vad tjänstehjonsstadgan tillät. Visserligen kan man inte utifrån listmaterialet skapa någon översikt över precis vad dessa människor gjorde. Vissa tvättade, kanske skötte några grisar eller hjälpte till med barnpassningen, om än utanför det stadgade tjänstehjonskontraktet. Dessa arbetsuppgifter var inte bara vanligt förekommande i den tidigmoderna ekonomin, utan rentav en nödvändighet för att den skulle fungera.⁶⁶

Hur ska man jämka samman tjänstehjonsstadgans anspråk på en stelbent reglering av anställningsförhållandena med den tidigmoderna ekonomins tendenser till informalitet? Harnesk menar helt enkelt att tjänstehjonsstadgan inte

⁶⁶ Den här typen av små-uppgifter är förekommande i så gott som all arbetsforskning om tidigmodern tid, men dess nödvändighet synliggörs kanske tydligast hos Mispelaere och Ågren, "Emissaries, Allies, Accomplices and Enemies".

klarade av att stå emot de ekonomiska strukturerna, och att den därför var verkingslös.⁶⁷

Den här undersökningen visar att det absolut fanns ett stort gränsland bortom tjänstehjonstadgans tjänstevång där det gick att leva. Samtidigt har Uppenbergs visat att tjänstefolkssystemet var allmänt accepterat, för att relationen mellan tjänstefolk och husbonde skapade erkända samhällspositioner.⁶⁸ Kanske är det också framför allt så man bör förstå tjänstehjonsstadgans bestämmelser i praktiken. Att den i första hand skapade läsbara auktoritetsförhållanden. Den här undersökningen visar i alla fall att det var så som den i praktiken verkar ha fungerat i Stockholm: antalet försvarslösa var få, men andelen människor som hade laga försvar i hushåll där de rimligtvis inte var fullt sysselsatta med tjänstefolkssysslor var många.

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⁶⁷ Harnesk, s. 216.

⁶⁸ Uppenberg, s. 256, 264–67.

Holberg in Context: A View from Intellectual History

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Abstract: A prolific and versatile writer, Ludvig Holberg has long been the subject of intense scholarly debate about the identity of his thought and the best way of interpreting his works. What, in particular, has muddied the waters is his use of multifarious textual techniques and conventions, including the use of a broad array of literary genres, a plurality of voices, and diverse literary, historical, and intellectual sources. Engaging, critically, with current contextualist scholarship, this article focuses on what intellectual history can bring to the study of Holberg. Hence, as the article aims to show, thinking in a particular way about the context of Holberg's works, that is, in conjunction with the languages and personae that inhabit his writings, may help us to better understand the textual conventions and techniques that he employed in his writings, thereby illuminating his identity as a writer.

Keywords: Ludvig Holberg; contextualism; language; persona; intellectual history; interpretation.

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Introduction

In the past decade, Ludvig Holberg has been the subject of renewed and revitalized scholarly interest.¹ Whilst the digitized edition of Holberg's oeuvre, *Ludvig Holbergs Skrifter* (Ludvig Holberg's Writings), has furnish Holberg's texts with up-to-date introductions and editorial comments,² recent scholarship – including several PhD dissertations – has shed new light on the diverse contexts that shaped Holberg's works and their reception.³ Besides reinterpreting some of Holberg's most studied works,⁴ recent scholarship has also sparked a renewed interest in his conception of natural law and the variety of his historical writings.⁵ Yet, conflicting views of Holberg still prevail. In 2020, for instance, volume 17 of the present journal featured a polemic exchange between, on the one hand, Knud Haakonssen and Sebastian Olden-Jørgensen, whose volume *Ludvig Holberg (1684-1754): Learning and Literature in the Nordic Enlightenment* examines Holberg's works in a variety of contexts, and Ole Thomsen, on the other, who criticized the volume for

¹ I am grateful to the two anonymous reviewers for their comments on an earlier version of this essay, and to one of the reviewers for indispensable help with Latin translations. Unless modern, English editions are cited, all translations are my own.

² See holbergsskrifter.dk or holbergsskrifter.no.

³ Knud Haakonssen and Sebastian Olden-Jørgensen, eds. *Ludvig Holberg (1684–1754): Learning and Literature in the Nordic Enlightenment* (London: Routledge, 2017). [Crossref](#); Brian Kjær Olesen, 'Monarchism, Religion, and Moral Philosophy: Ludvig Holberg and the Early Northern Enlightenment' (PhD diss., European University Institute, 2016). [Crossref](#). On the reception and publishing contexts of Holberg's writings see Jens Bjerring-Hansen, *Ludvig Holberg på bogmarkedet: Studier i Peder Paars og den litterære kultur i 1700- og 1800-tallet* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanums Forlag, 2015); Thomas Slettebø, 'In Memory of Divine Providence: A Study of Centennial Commemorations in Eighteenth-Century Denmark-Norway (1717-1760)' (PhD Diss., University of Bergen, 2016). [Crossref](#).

⁴ See Bent Holm, *Ludvig Holberg, a Danish Playwright on the European Stage: Masquerade, Comedy, Satire*, trans. Gaye Kynoch (Wien: Hollitzer Verlag, 2018), [Crossref](#); Thomas Velle, 'Ludvig Holberg's Mobile Novel Niels Klim's Travels Underground (1741–1745): A Functionalistic Approach to its Place in European Literary History' (PhD Diss., University of Gent, 2018). [Crossref](#); Trygve Tronhuus Svensson, 'Ludvig Holberg's retorikk' (PhD Diss., University of Bergen, 2018). [Crossref](#).

⁵ Eiliv Vinje and Jørgen Magnus Sejersted, eds. *Ludvig Holbergs Naturrett* (Oslo: Gyldendal Nordisk Forlag, 2012); Jørgen Magnus Sejersted and Sebastian Olden-Jørgensen, eds. *Historikeren Ludvig Holberg* (Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press, 2014); Are Bøe Pedersen, "'En Knude, som ved Menneskelige Raisons og historiske Exempler ikke kand løses': Hebraisk mytologi og forsvar mot religionskritikk i Ludvig Holbergs Den Jødiske Historie (1742)' (PhD Diss., University of Bergen, 2022). [Crossref](#); Inga Henriette Undheim, 'Historie og komedie: Litterære strukturer og strategier i Holbergs rikshistoriografi' (PhD Diss., University of Bergen, 2019). [Crossref](#).

its lack of interpretative unity.⁶ On Thomsen's account, Haakonssen and Olden-Jørgensen's volume succumbs to postmodernism – a somewhat exaggerated claim, however, considering the range of positions conventionally covered by this term – and fails to recognize the universality of Holberg's thought, by which we are to understand the Enlightenment. On Haakonssen and Olden-Jørgensen's account, such allegedly universal concepts as the Enlightenment have become obstacles to appreciating the multifaceted writings of Holberg. Instead, they advocate a 'contextual intellectual history' that aims to resist the 'common practice of privileging certain parts of Holberg's complex oeuvre' by situating Holberg's 'major genres and subjects' in the contexts 'provided by Holberg's own works'.⁷ This exchange is indicative of two prevailing approaches within current Holberg scholarship. While the first approach, given voice by Thomsen, sees the task of interpretation as that of identifying a single, unified context in which Holberg's works become meaningful, the second approach (of which Haakonssen and Olden-Jørgensen's volume is a pivotal example) takes Holberg's writings as evidence for a plurality of identities and contexts.

In this article I argue that both these approaches have led to mistaken claims about Holberg's identity as a writer, in part because of their methodological commitments. While the universalist approach insists on placing Holberg's writings in the context of free-floating unit-ideas such as *the* Enlightenment, thereby obscuring the relationship between Holberg's thought and the context which shaped it, the pluralist approach operates without any clear distinction between Holberg's intellectual, social, and political contexts, which has resulted in misleading accounts of Holberg's intellectual activity.⁸

I have two principal aims in this article. First, I wish to challenge some of the directions taken in recent scholarship. As most, if not all Holberg-scholars acknowledge today, the architecture of Holberg's writings is both complex and multilayered. As a writer, Holberg was as versatile as he was prolific, his style of writing, as eclectic as it was entertaining and enlightening. Focusing on Holberg's

⁶ Ole Thomsen, 'Lidt om synet på Holberg i anledning af en engelsk-sproget bog om ham [Review of Knud Haakonssen & Sebastian Olden-Jørgensen (eds.): 'Ludvig Holberg (1684–1754): Learning and Literature in the Nordic Enlightenment' (New York, 2017)]', *1700-tal: Nordic Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 17 (2020), pp. 218–24. [Crossref](#); Knud Haakonssen and Sebastian Olden-Jørgensen, 'Svar til Ole Thomsen [Reply to 'Lidt om synet på Holberg i anledning af en engelsksproget bog om ham']', *1700-tal: Nordic Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 17 (2020), pp. 225–28. [Crossref](#).

⁷ Knud Haakonssen and Sebastian Olden-Jørgensen, 'Preface', in *Ludvig Holberg*, eds. Haakonssen and Olden-Jørgensen, p. x.

⁸ On this point see also Kasper Eskildsen, 'Ludvig Holberg og den nordeuropæiske oplysning', *Historisk Tidsskrift* (Copenhagen) 117 (2017), pp. 549–65.

use of diverse literary genres, a plurality of voices, and a broad variety of literary, historical, and intellectual sources, I seek to demonstrate that the prevailing methods of contextual interpretation fall short of accounting for key aspects of the textual conventions and techniques that shaped Holberg's writings.

My second interrelated aim is to advocate a contextualist approach, drawing on central methodological insights developed within the field of intellectual history. Considering the construction of a writer's identity a particular kind of intellectual problem, the core concern of the article is with what Holberg was doing in his writings. Coming to terms with the textual conventions and techniques used by Holberg to cultivate his identity as a writer, I argue, we need not only to contextualize Holberg's writings using the techniques of historical reconstruction, we need moreover to do so in a particular fashion, that is, by approaching Holberg's works as situated expressions of linguistic action.

The central claim of the article is thus that in so far as we wish to understand Holberg's identity as a writer, we should start by recovering not only the *languages* that Holberg used and inhabited,⁹ but also the authorial *personae* cultivated throughout his writings.¹⁰ The contextual perspectives on which I draw here are by no means representative of the field of intellectual history at large, which comprises a broad range of approaches, and nor have they gone unchallenged.¹¹ Nevertheless, the claim I wish to defend in the following is that they do push forward our understanding of Holberg's intellectual world. Reconstructing how Holberg engaged in contemporary debates through the application of different languages and the cultivation of different personae, we shall be in a better position to grasp not only the contexts that shaped Holberg's interventions and what he was doing when contributing to specific debates, but also the conditions

⁹ Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics, I: Regarding Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). [Crossref](#); J. G. A. Pocock, *Political Thought and History: Essays on Theory and Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

¹⁰ Ian Hunter, 'The History of Philosophy and the Persona of the Philosopher', *Modern Intellectual History*, 4 (2007), pp. 571–600. [Crossref](#); See also Conal Condren, Stephen Gaukroger, and Ian Hunter, eds., *The Philosopher in Early Modern Europe: The Nature of a Contested Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). [Crossref](#); Conal Condren, 'Specifying the Subject in Early Modern Autobiography', in *Early Modern Autobiography: Theories, Genres, Practices*, eds. Ronald Bedford, Lloyd Davis, and Philippa Kelly (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2006), pp. 35–48. [Crossref](#).

¹¹ Richard Whatmore, *What is Intellectual History?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016). For recent criticism see Martin Jay, 'Historical Explanation and the Event: Reflections on the Limits of Contextualization', *New Literary History*, 42 (2011), pp. 557–71. [Crossref](#); Peter E. Gordon, 'Contextualism and Criticism in the History of Ideas', in Darrin M. McMahon and Samuel Moyn, eds., *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History* (Oxford 2014), pp. 32–55. [Crossref](#).

under which his works were produced, which is to say those conditions that both structured and created the very possibility of cultivating a particular identity as a writer.

By way of illustration we may consider a statement which appears in the first instalment of Holberg's memoirs, the *Ad virum perillustrem *** epistola* (1728), where he writes, 'while I pull philosophical beards, I wear one of my own.'¹² Holberg's statement, or so we may assume, was meant as an engagement with rival philosophical languages, doctrines, and conceptions. Deciphering exactly what the nature of the intervention he was making was, that is, which particular 'move in an argument' he intended to make, requires that we situate Holberg's works in relation to the languages of philosophy available at the time.¹³ Yet, the statement holds one further clue to what he was doing. Making this statement about pulling philosophical beards he was also engaged in a debate about what constitutes a philosophical persona. Wearing a philosophical beard of his own, he was reacting to what he considered a false idea of philosophy (his pulling of philosophical beards). What Holberg was doing was in other words to address one of the major philosophical issues of the day by using the conventions of ironic self-description to fashion his own philosophical authority.

Fleshing out this perspective, I proceed in three steps, structured around the most widely used textual conventions and techniques in Holberg's works. Focusing on Holberg's genres, his voices, and sources, the article discusses the methodological presuppositions upon which recent interpretations rest and draws out their implications. For the sake of argument and illustration I furnish the discussion with examples from Holberg's writings and the contexts in which he acted. My aim in doing so, to think anew about Holberg's identity as a writer.

Holberg's genres

I turn first to Holberg's genres. Throughout his writings, Holberg explored a wide range of genres and he often reflected on the duties and possibilities that each genre entailed. Recent scholarship has paved the way for a broader understanding of Holberg's genres and the contexts in which he authored his works. As Bent Holm asserts in his contextual study of Holberg's plays, for instance, the classification of a

¹² Ludvig Holberg, *Ad virum perillustrem *** epistola*, 1728, ed. Finn Gredal Jensen (Ludvig Holbergs Skrifter, 2015ff, vers. 2.13), p. 208: 'barbas Philosophorum vellico, ipse tamen philosophor' (accessed 21.03.2023). Cited in Ludvig Holberg, *Ludvig Holberg's Memoirs: An Eighteenth-Century Danish Contribution to International Understanding*, ed. Steward E. Fraser (Leiden: Brill, 1970), p. 151.

¹³ Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, p. 115.

specific play as a representation of a specific genre is ‘a questionable strategy’ that ‘swiftly close down for more nuanced, complex readings’ and shifts the focus away from the political and religious contexts in which Holberg wrote his comedies.¹⁴ Another direction in recent scholarship has demonstrated close ties between the genres that Holberg used and the personae he cultivated in his writings. Haakonssen, for instance, connects ‘different authorial personae’ in Holberg’s oeuvre to ‘different practices that Holberg as a matter of fact engaged in’, including such ‘interwoven’ offices as ‘the natural lawyer, the pragmatic gentleman historian, that of the minimalist religionist and that of the eclectic moralizing “entertainer”’.¹⁵ Moreover, whilst Thomas Slettebø has analysed how Holberg responded to the social tensions arising from his use of different genres by dividing his oeuvre into what he referred to as his honourable and his humorous works,¹⁶ Sebastian Olden-Jørgensen has emphasised the broad variety of historical subgenres that constitute Holberg’s historical works.¹⁷ Although Holberg, on Olden-Jørgensen’s account, ‘was an historian first and last’, the pragmatic, gentleman historian had many faces.¹⁸

Despite the advances made by recent scholarship, contextual treatments of Holberg’s genres still foster misleading conclusions about his identity as a writer. The core problem here is that treatments of Holberg’s genres seem to presuppose or rely on a concept of coherence, whereby the strictures of genre is supplanted to other levels of interpretation. Especially two versions of coherentism dominate the current climate of scholarship. The first version aims to extract from Holberg’s writings a set of coherent ideas that are believed to make up his identity as a writer or thinker. To illustrate the presuppositions and implications of this method of interpretation we may turn, here, to recent accounts of Holberg’s religious writings. Holberg was, or so we are told, an ‘intellectual protestant’ and an anti-Catholic, whose ‘view on morals and religion’ was characterized by ‘a basic continuity’.¹⁹ Although ‘the perspective changes’ in Holberg’s later writings as ‘questions of moral theology and philosophy’ give way to ‘a methodical subjectivism’, derived

¹⁴ Holm, *Ludvig Holberg*, p. 110.

¹⁵ Knud Haakonssen, ‘Introduction, Part 2: the Author and the Work’, in *Ludvig Holberg*, eds. Haakonssen and Olden-Jørgensen, pp. 13–25 (on p. 21). [Crossref](#).

¹⁶ Thomas Slettebø, ‘Holberg’s Authorial Personae’, in *Ludvig Holberg*, eds. Haakonssen and Olden-Jørgensen, pp. 29–44. [Crossref](#).

¹⁷ Sebastian Olden-Jørgensen, ‘History: National, Universal and Dynastic’, in *Ludvig Holberg*, eds. Haakonssen and Olden-Jørgensen, pp. 159–81. [Crossref](#).

¹⁸ Olden-Jørgensen, ‘History’, p. 159.

¹⁹ Jørgen Magnus Sejersted, ‘Jewish History’, in *Ludvig Holberg*, eds. Haakonssen and Olden-Jørgensen, pp. 196–215 (on p. 197). [Crossref](#); Jørgen Magnus Sejersted, ‘Morals and Religion in Holberg’s Essays’, in *Ludvig Holberg*, eds. Haakonssen and Olden-Jørgensen, pp. 80–97. [Crossref](#); Sebastian Olden-Jørgensen, ‘Den antikatolske Holberg: Kirke, stat og naturet i skyggen af Samuel Pufendorf’, *Historisk Tidsskrift*, 117 (2017), pp. 1–34.

from ‘German protestant eclecticism’,²⁰ the intellectual context in which Holberg formed his religious ideas was strongly influenced by intellectual currents coming out of Germany such as Pufendorffian natural law, Thomasian eclecticism and ideas of natural religion. The implication here seems to be that by extracting from across Holberg’s works a set of coherent ideas this method is supposedly able to ascribe to Holberg a stable and continuous identity as a writer. This, however, is not my perspective.

Holberg, so much is certain, remained an anti-Catholic his entire life, but this does not account for the alleged continuity (or coherence) of his religious views. Holberg’s early religious views, or so I take it, are best described as orthodox Lutheran. In the *Ad virum perillustrem *** epistola*, for instance, he embraces a set of traditional Lutheran doctrines and describes a series of encounters he had on his European travels with the Catholic Counter-Reformation.²¹ By contrast, his later religious views clusters around such ideas as religious toleration, the freedom of the will, the goodness of God, intellectual enquiry or examination, the truth of the Christian religion, and the fundamental articles of faith. German eclecticism and natural religion were arguably pivotal to Holberg’s formulation of these ideas, but the most important context for the formation of these ideas was neither German or Pufendorffian or Thomasian. The main intellectual context that shaped Holberg’s religious ideas is rather related with enlightened Arminianism and Grotian irenicism.²² In Epistola XXXII, included in the first volume of the *Epistler* in 1748, Holberg argued that ‘both Le Clerc and Grotius worked for the best of the Christian religion’, urging ‘concord and mutual tolerance upon those, who, although in agreement about the fundamental articles of faith, are separated by petty differences’.²³ Moreover, in Epistola CXXXIII and again in Epistola CCXXXVIII, which appeared respectively in the second and third volume of the *Epistler* in 1748 and

²⁰ Sejersted, ‘Morals’, pp. 80, 84–86.

²¹ See especially Holberg, *Ad virum perillustrem *** epistola*, pp. 170–77.

²² For a comprehensive account see Olesen, ‘Monarchism’, 215–301. For enlightened Arminianism and Grotian irenicism see J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion, vol. 1: The Enlightenment of Edward Gibbon, 1737–1764* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). [Cross-ref](#); Martin van Gelderen, ‘The Low Countries’, in Howell A. Lloyd, et al, eds., *European Political Thought 1450–1700: Religion, Law and Philosophy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 398–403.

²³ Ludvig Holberg, *Epistler*, I–V, 1748–54, eds. Eiliv Vinje og Nina Marie Evensen (Ludvig Holbergs Skrifter, 2015ff, vers. 2.13), Tomus I, p. 180, 181: ‘Clericus saavel som Grotius have været vel intentionerede for den Christelige Religion, sees af deres grundige Skrifter om den Christelige Troes Sandhed [...] Eenighed og indbyrdes Tolerance, dem som formedelst smaa Stridigheder separere sig fra hinanden, skjønt de ere eenige udi Troens fundamentale Article’ (accessed 27.04.2023). Cited in Ludvig Holberg, *Selected Essays of Ludvig Holberg*, ed. P. M. Mitchell (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1955), p. 36, 37.

1750, he defends the religious views of Jacob Arminius as his own, praising his defense of ‘the freedom of the will’ and ‘God’s goodness and righteousness’ along with his ‘Christian toleration and compassion towards heretics’.²⁴ Holberg’s engagement with enlightened Arminianism and Grotian irenicism not only shaped his intervention in contemporary European religious controversies, it also underpinned his thinking about Christian education and the persona of the Christian believer in *Moralske Tanker* and the *Epistler*, especially his moral catechism suggested in Epistola XLVI.²⁵ These works were written as much as in response to Erich Pontoppidan’s *Sandhed til Gudfrygtighed* (1737), an epitome of pietist reform, as to the orthodox Lutheran view of religious education outlined, for instance, in Frandtz Thestrup’s *Underviisnings Spørmaale* (1721).²⁶ Hence, by reconstructing Holberg’s *languages*, as opposed to extracting a set of coherent ideas from across his writings, we are in a better position to recover the discontinuities in Holberg’s religious writings, his changing religious commitments and identities, first as an orthodox Lutheran, then an irenic and a tolerationist writer.

The second version of coherentism aims at interpreting a particular work by focusing on the relationship between the genre in which the work is written and its corresponding authorial persona. In order to illustrate the presuppositions and implications of this method of interpretation we may turn again to Holberg’s thinking about philosophical office-holding. As Kristoffer Schmidt has recently argued, a ‘turning point’ in Holberg’s literary career occurred in the late 1730s, when he ‘took the decisive step from pragmatic historian to moral philosopher’.²⁷ Venturing into the Plutarchian genre of parallel biographies, Holberg’s *Adskillige store Heltes og berømmelige Mænds, sær Orientaliske og Indianske sammenlignede Historier og Bedrifter efter Plutarchi Maade* (1739) marked the ‘beginning’ of ‘a literary turn’ as the ‘historian Holberg’ here ‘attempted to write as a moralist’.²⁸ Though Hol-

²⁴ Holberg, *Epistler*, Tomus II, p. 226: ‘den fri Villie’, ‘Guds Godhed og Retfærdighed’; Holberg, *Epistler*, Tomus III, p. 209: ‘christelig Tolerance og Medlidenhed mod Vildfarende’.

²⁵ Ludvig Holberg, *Moralske Tanker*, 1744, eds. Eiliv Vinje og Nina Marie Evensen (Ludvig Holbergs Skrifter, 2015ff, vers. 2.13), Libr. I, Epigramm. 5., pp. 47–61; Holberg, *Epistler*, Tomus I, pp. 246–255.

²⁶ Erich Pontoppidan, *Sandhed Til Gudfrygtighed, Udi En eenfoldig og efter Muelighed kort, dog tilstrækkelig Forklaring over Sal. Doct. Mort. Luthers Liden Catechismo* (Copenhagen: det Kongel. Waysenhusets Bogtrykkerie, 1737); Frandtz Thestrup, *Underviisnings Spørmaale For at forstaae og i Levnet til Brug at føre D. Morten Luthers Liden Catechismus* (Copenhagen: J. J. Høpffner, 1721).

²⁷ Kristoffer Schmidt, ‘Heroes and Heroines: the lives of men and women’, in *Ludvig Holberg*, eds. Haakonssen and Olden-Jørgensen, pp. 98–115 (on p. 109). [Crossref](#).

²⁸ Schmidt, ‘Heroes and Heroines’, p. 112. See also Ludvig Holberg, *Adskillige store Heltes og berømmelige Mænds, sær Orientaliske og Indianske sammenlignede Historier og Bedrifter efter Plutarchi Maade*, I–II, 1739, eds. Finn Gredal Jensen and Karen Skovgaard-Petersen (Ludvig Holbergs Skrifter, 2015ff, vers. 2.13).

berg's comparative biographies only cautiously assessed 'the virtues and vices of the portrayed' persons, the sequel, the *Adskillige Heltinders og Navnkundige Damers Sammenlignende Historier efter Plutarchi Maade* (1745), 'was the work of an experienced and confident and moralist', thereby completing the literary turn from history to moral philosophy in Holberg's career as a writer.²⁹ However, this account of the changes in Holberg's thinking presupposes that these personae and the genres in which they appear are coherent, or, that is, fixed and compartmentalised identities. Although I share the emphasis on Holberg's authorial personae as a way of interpreting the genres he used, the perspective I am advocating takes a different direction. Consider, for example, the wider intellectual context in which Holberg's thinking about philosophy took shape.

Holberg's perception of philosophy developed along two distinct, yet intertwined lines of contestation. The first perception of philosophical office-holding was central to Holberg already from an early stage in his professional career. In his *Introduction til Naturens- og Folke-Rettens Kundskab*, which first appeared in 1716, Holberg included *philosophia moralis* or moral philosophy along with medicine, mathematics and history in the category of the useful sciences most beneficial to the state and society. Like Pufendorf and Thomasius – two of his principal interlocutors in the treatise on natural law – Holberg too considered human sociability and the possibility of peaceful coexistence 'the fundamental problem in philosophy'.³⁰ Advocating this image of philosophy, what Holberg was doing at this stage of his career was to offer a secular alternative to the prevailing Lutheran theory of clerical authority in matters of government that had risen to prominence during and after the monarchical revolution of 1660.³¹ Advocates of this tradition such as Johann Wandal and Hector Gottfried Masius argued not only that Lutheranism best served the interest of absolutist state, they also advised the king in matters pertaining to morality and religion and passed moral judgement on the actions of absolute monarchs.³² Tra-

²⁹ Schmidt, 'Heroes and Heroines', p. 112. See also Ludvig Holberg, *Adskillige Heltinders og Navnkundige Damers Sammenlignende Historier efter Plutarchi Maade*, I–II, 1745, ed. Karen Skovgaard-Petersen (Ludvig Holbergs Skrifter, 2015ff. vers. 2.13).

³⁰ Knud Haakonssen, 'The History of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy: History or Philosophy?', in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Knud Haakonssen, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 1–25 (on p. 14). [Crossref](#).

³¹ For the broader outlook of this theory and its centrality to Danish absolutism see Brian Kjør Olesen, 'The Monarchical Moment: Constitutionalism, Lutheran Political Thought, and the Rise of Danish Absolutism', in *Constitutional Moments: Founding Myths, Charters and Constitutions through History*, ed. Xavier Gil (Leiden: Brill, Forthcoming 2023).

³² Johann Wandal, *Den Stormægtigste og Høybaarne Arffve-Konnings og Monarchs/ HER CHRISTIAN DEN FEMTES...* (Copenhagen: Hendrick og Jørgen Gøede, 1671); Hector Gottfried Masius, *Interesse Principum Circa Religionem Evangelicam Ad Serenissimum ac Potentissimum Danicæ Regem* (Copenhagen: Joh. Phil. Bockenhoffer 1687), esp. p. 168.

ditionally the preserve of theologians, Holberg argues that moral judgement and counsel should be based not on clerical authority, but be drawn from the precepts of natural law and the examples of history. The persona of the philosopher, cultivated by Holberg in his early writings, commands not only moral philosophy, which serves the ‘creation and preservation of human society’, but also history, from which one learns about ‘Geography and language’ as well as ‘Jus publicum and politica’.³³ Rejecting clerical authority, Holberg claims the predominance of philosophical authority in the world of politics. The philosopher has become a civil servant, an advisor to the prince and his government.³⁴

The second perception of philosophy cultivated in Holberg’s writings turns on the distinction between a true and a false philosophical persona. In his plays and elsewhere, he intended to discredit a particular culture of learning, steeped in neo-scholastic and rationalist ideas about philosophy. Drawing on the social representations of the persona of the philosopher, flourishing within the context of the theatre, especially in the tradition from Moliere,³⁵ several of Holberg’s comedies are themed around the abuse of the philosophical office, the philosopher’s pedantry and misconstrued sociability. In *Erasmus Montanus* (1731), to mention only the most notable example, a young student, returning from Copenhagen to his place of birth, arrogantly believes himself capable of defending any proposition using the techniques of *philosophia instrumentalis*, that is, logic and metaphysics.³⁶ Montanus thus refuses to concede that he is wrong in a dispute with the locals about whether the earth is flat or oblong, the locals being of the opinion that it is flat. Once a philosopher has defended a statement in public, Montanus claims, he can never be persuaded otherwise.

Holberg’s representation of the false philosophical persona in his plays and elsewhere took aim at more than mere satire. Like Christian Thomasius and Johann Burkhardt Mencke, whom he had met respectively in Halle and Leipzig in 1708, Holberg used satire to attack the prevailing academic culture at Protestant universities, ripe with neo-scholastic theology, philosophical rationalism, and met-

³³ Ludvig Holberg, *Ludvig Holbergs Introduction til Naturens- og Folke-Rettens Kundskab, uddragen af de fornemste Juristers besynderlig Grotii Pufendorfs og Thomasii Skrifter, illustreret med Exempler af de Nordiske Historier, og confederet med disse Rigers, saa vel Gamle som Nye Love* (Copenhagen: Johan Kruse/Ove Lynnov, 1716), Fortale til Læseren, p. 9, 10: ‘Menneskelige societets opbyggelse og ved liigeholdelse’, ‘Geographie og sprog’, ‘Jus publicum og politica’.

³⁴ On this point see Knud Haakonssen, ‘Indledning til Natur- og Folkeretten’ (Ludvig Holbergs Skrifter, 2015ff, vers. 2.13); Olesen, ‘Monarchism’, pp. 33–34.

³⁵ Stéphane van Damme, ‘Philosophe/philosopher’, in *The Cambridge Companion to the French Enlightenment*, ed. Daniel Brewer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 153–66 (on p. 154). [Crossref](#). See also Holm, *Ludvig Holberg*.

³⁶ Ludvig Holberg, *Erasmus Montanus*, 1731, ed. Finn Gredal Jensen (Ludvig Holbergs Skrifter, 2015ff, vers. 2.13), Femte akt, scene 2, p. D5v.

aphysics.³⁷ In contradistinction to the neo-scholastic and rationalist philosopher that he ridiculed in his plays, Holberg went on to espouse a different philosophical persona elsewhere in his writings. In his *Oratio valedictoria*, for instance, delivered in 1736, when he retired from the office of rector to the University of Copenhagen, Holberg sets out to define the duties of philosophical office-holding. ‘We consider the one a true and genuine Philosopher’, declares Holberg, ‘who would rather be than seem to be, who knows when to keep quiet, no less than when to talk, and who educates more by his way of life, than by his words’.³⁸ The persona of the philosopher, Holberg suggests, must be judged not by the adherence to some philosophical doctrine (his words), but by his conduct (his way of life), that is, the performance of the social duties attached to the philosophical office. Holberg further elaborates on these duties, arguing that ‘a true Philosopher’ is one who ‘searches for the truth through deliberations, avoids tortuous arguments, who admits to be defeated whenever he is persuaded, he reads only little, but thoroughly digests what he reads, and seeks the right taste in literature’.³⁹ The philosopher lives a modest, though active and useful life. This was Holberg’s version of philosophy as a form of *negotium*, as opposed to the contemplative and withdrawn ideal of philosophy as an *otium*, central to early-modern philosophy.⁴⁰

We are now in a better position to reassess the relation between the gallery of personae that Holberg cultivated and the genres in which he wrote. Consider again Schmidt’s argument that Holberg in the late 1730s decisively shifted his own persona from a pragmatic historian to a moral philosopher. Whilst Holberg, admittedly, turns towards moral philosophy in the late 1730s, publishing what may be considered his major works on moral philosophy in the 1740s and 1750s, the assertion that the shift implied a corresponding change in Holberg’s persona is

³⁷ Holberg, *Ad virum perillustrem *** epistola*, pp. 40–41. On the German context see Thomas Ahnert, *Religion and the Origins of the German Enlightenment: Faith and Reform of Learning in the Thought of Christian Thomasius* (Rochester, N.Y.; Rochester University Press, 2006); Ian Hunter, *The Secularisation of the Confessional State: The Political Thought of Christian Thomasius* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). [Crossref](#).

³⁸ Ludvig Holberg, *Oratio valedictoria*, 1736, ed. Finn Gredal Jensen (Ludvig Holbergs Skrifter, 2015ff, vers. 2.13), p. 94: ‘Verum nos & genuinum credimus Philosophum, qvi mavult esse quam videri, qvi non minus tacere callet, quam dicere, qvique moribus potius, quam verbis, instruit’ (accessed 21.03.2023).

³⁹ Holberg, *Oratio valedictoria*, 1736, p. 94: ‘Veri est Philosophi meditando verum indagare, vertigines fugere, victum se fateri, quoties convictum se intelligit, pauca legere, lecta bene digerere, & rectum in literis gustum venari’ (accessed 21.03.2023).

⁴⁰ Anne Beate Maurseth, ‘Falske og ekte filosofer: Holbergs posisjon i en europeisk 1700-tallsdebatt’, *Edda*, 109 (2022), 156–69 (on p. 165). [Crossref](#). See also Stephen Gaukroger, *Francis Bacon and the Transformation of Early-Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 44–57. [Crossref](#); Condren, Gaukroger, and Hunter, eds., *The Philosopher*.

less convincing. Moral philosophy along with history had been central themes in Holberg's thought from his early writings all the way through to his major works on moral philosophy. As we have seen, the persona of the philosopher and that of the historian not only coexisted throughout his oeuvre, they were closely intertwined. Thus, there is no decisive transition from the persona of the historian to that of the philosopher, set in motion in order for him to write as a moralist.

What Holberg was doing was not to change one persona and one genre for another. In light of Holberg's thinking about philosophical office-holding, we may offer another explanation. Indeed, when situated in this context, what Holberg was doing was to re-cultivate the persona of the moral philosopher in order to adjust to changing circumstances. In his treatise on natural law Holberg combined history and moral philosophy in order to cultivate the persona of the moral philosopher as a counselor to the prince and his government. By contrast, the persona of the moral philosopher, which Holberg cultivates from the late 1730s onwards, seeks instead – not unlike the playwright and the satirist of the 1720s – to educate the wider public. The reason why the pragmatic historian plays no role in this regard is that history, as he writes in his *Betænkning over Historier*, included in the third volume of his *Dannemarks Riges Historie* (1735), is first and foremost written for princes, governments, and people of nobility.⁴¹

There are two general points to be made here about Holberg's genres and his identity as a writer, both of which renders the methods of interpretation discussed above untenable. First, the genres and personae that appear in Holberg's writings are not to be considered closed entities that embody coherent authorial identities. Holberg was not first a natural lawyer, then a satirist and a playwright, then a historian, and finally a moral philosopher. At times, Holberg expressed the same ideas through different genres and personae – his irenicism, which he voiced both as a historian and as a moral philosopher, is one such case in point – at others, he refurbished what it meant to write in a particular genre and to cultivate a particular authorial persona. Second, throughout Holberg's writings there are important family resemblances that tie the persona of the philosopher to those of the historian, the playwright, and the satirist. As Holm, for instance, has put it, there were no 'firewalls' between his authorial personae.⁴² What this suggests is that the wider intellectual context in which Holberg wrote was one of contestation and transformation. Not only were the boundaries between philosophy, rhetoric, and poetry shifting in the eighteenth century, so were the demarcations of philosophy, history,

⁴¹ Ludvig Holberg, *Betænkning over Historier*, in *Dannemarks Riges Historie*, Tomus III, 1735, ed. Eiliv Vinje og Nina Marie Evensen (Ludvig Holbergs Skrifter, 2015ff, vers. 2.13), p. c1r.

⁴² Bent Holm, 'Holberg's comedies: intentions and inspirations', in *Ludvig Holberg*, eds. Haakonssen and Olden-Jørgensen, pp. 135–56 (on p. 135). [Crossref](#).

anthropology and physics.⁴³ Seen in this light, Holberg's consideration of the duty and office of a particular persona offers important clues as to his intentions in writing what he did. Holberg's identity as a writer is thus closely tied to changing constellations of personae and genres, cultivated throughout his writings in order to make possible a range of interventions in contemporary debates.

Holberg's voices

I wish to consider next the issue of Holberg's voices. As recent scholarship has shown, Holberg often sought to mask his own identity and opinions. His published works – particularly his comedies and his satirical works, but also his essays – embody a plurality of voices and perspectives, and he often plays with notions of authorship, publishing both pseudonymously and under his own name. In the late 1710s and 1720s, for instance, Holberg published all of his satirical works under the pseudonym 'Hans Mikkelsen', often accompanied by yet another invented author, 'Just Justesen', a figure, whom Holberg used as the voice of his more general literary reflections on satire and comedy. Throughout his published works, these pseudonyms appear alongside other pseudonyms such as 'Zille Hans's Daughter', through whom he addressed issues of meritocracy and the social role of gender, and 'Nicolaus Klimius', who appeared as the author of the utopian novel *Nicolai Klimii Iter subterraneum* in 1741.⁴⁴ Although Holberg only publicly declared his authorship of the early comedies and satirical works in 1728, when he discussed his literary production in the first part of his memoirs, his authorship was a poorly kept secret. Besides being known to his publishers in Copenhagen, his distributor in Norway, and, possibly, to a small group of friends, often considered fictitious,⁴⁵ about whom he writes without any further specification,⁴⁶ Holberg's pseudonymity had been revealed by Albert Thura in his *Idea historiae litterariae Danorum* (1723).⁴⁷

⁴³ Conal Condren and Ian Hunter, 'The Persona of the Philosopher in the Eighteenth Century', *Intellectual History Review*, 18 (2008), pp. 315–17 (on p. 316). [Crossref](#).

⁴⁴ Haakonssen, 'Introduction', pp. 15–16; Karen Skovgaard-Petersen, 'Journeys of humour and satire: Peder Paars and Niels Klim', in *Ludvig Holberg*, eds. Haakonssen and Olden-Jørgensen, pp. 116–34 (on p. 128). [Crossref](#).

⁴⁵ Lars Roar Langslet, 'Ludvig Holberg – det store overblik', in G. Dahlberg, P. C. Teilmann, and F. Thorsen, eds., *Holberg i Norden: Om Ludvig Holbergs författarskap och dess kulturhistoriska betydelse* (Stockholm: Makadam Förlag, 2004), pp. 27–40 (on p. 29).

⁴⁶ Holberg, *Ad virum perillustrem *** epistola*, p. 134. On Holberg's authorship see Bjerring-Hansen, *Ludvig Holberg på bogmarkedet*, p. 50.

⁴⁷ On this point see Niels Grotum Sørensen, 'Indledning til Just Justesens Betenkning over Comoedier' (Ludvig Holbergs Skrifter, 2015ff, vers. 2.13) (accessed 19.04.2023).

Yet, even in his autobiographical writings, he presents his self-portrait with a cloak of fiction.⁴⁸

Holberg, in other words, playfully expressed his opinions through diverse authorial voices and fictional characters. To be sure, Holberg was not the only early Enlightenment thinker to play with pseudonyms and a plurality of voices in his writings. Indeed, some of the writers that Holberg most admired, used similar literary strategies. Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*, for instance, contained a plurality of authorial voices and personae brought to life through a labyrinth of cross-references,⁴⁹ and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, played with pseudo-factuality in much the same way as Holberg did in both *Peder Paars* and *Nicolai Klimii Iter subterraneum*.⁵⁰ Yet, Holberg's use of different voices begs the pertinent question of what it means to say that Holberg – 'the person', as Haakonssen has aptly formulated it, 'who was born in 1684 and died in 1754' – held any of the opinions voiced in his works.⁵¹ Recent scholarship has sought to explain Holberg's voices and opinions by placing his writings in social context. Yet, this general approach seems to presuppose a correspondence between Holberg's writings and the social setting in they are said to belong, thereby reducing Holberg's works to a medium through which an external reality is acting. To fully grasp the scope of this problem I shall consider three variations of this perspective on social context that have resulted in different interpretations of Holberg's authorial practices.

Scholars who adhere to the first perspective on social context are generally content to understand Holberg's voices and his use of pseudonyms in light of his social status. Besides his intention to entertain his readers by introducing a plurality of voices into his satirical works, Holberg used these voices to shield himself from criticism and to avoid losing his social status.⁵² At the time when Holberg's published his satirical works and his comedies, he was a professor at Copenhagen, and since it was unbecoming of a professor to engage with low culture such as comedy and satire, Holberg had to disguise his authorship. Holberg's social status as a university professor conflicts with his work as a poet and a playwright. Whilst such considerations may have motivated Holberg, this interpretation tells us very little about why he chose to publish some of his writings pseudonymously

⁴⁸ Karen Skovgaard-Petersen, 'Holberg's autobiographical letters', in *Ludvig Holberg*, eds. Haakonssen and Olden-Jørgensen, pp. 45–56. [Crossref](#).

⁴⁹ Mara van der Lugt, *Bayle, Jurieu, and the Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). [Crossref](#).

⁵⁰ Skovgaard-Petersen, 'Journeys', p. 124, 128;

⁵¹ Haakonssen, 'Introduction', 16.

⁵² Lars Roar Langslet, *Den store ensomme: En biografi om Ludvig Holberg* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2002), pp. 108–09, 113.

or how he intended the plurality of voices and opinions to be read. What is certain, however, is that concerns for his social station is an implausible explanation of the textual techniques and conventions that governed this aspect of his writings. When Holberg publicly declared his authorship in the *Ad virum perillustrem* *** *epistola*, well-known as it had been for several years, his social station was the same as when he wrote and published his early satirical works, that is, he was a university professor.

Scholars who subscribe to the second perspective on social context have turned to the structures of absolutism in the early eighteenth century for an explanation of Holberg's use of pseudonyms. If the reference to Holberg's social status fails to offer any satisfying explanation of why he published his satirical works pseudonymously, scholars who emphasise the structures of absolutism suggest that Holberg struggled with the institution of censorship. Unable to develop a fully comprehensive philosophy of history and society, Holberg used such pseudonyms as 'Nicolaus Klimius' in order to avoid censorship of what is often considered his most subversive work.⁵³ Yet, while Holberg indeed was a fierce critic of the prevailing norms of censorship, he never advocated their complete abandonment. Moreover, this interpretation does not explain why Holberg only used pseudonyms in some cases, whilst uttering similar views in other works, published under his own name, nor does it explain why he chose to cloak his identity by using pseudonyms in his comedies.

The exponents of the third perspective on social context have rejected the emphasis on censorship, focussing instead on the close connection between different voices and opinions, on the one hand, and, on the other, the social offices that Holberg aspired to by taking upon himself different authorial personae. For instance, as Olden-Jørgensen has shown, what Holberg struggled with in his historical works was not censorship and suppression, but the tension between the duties of the historian and those of the citizen.⁵⁴ What this suggests is that the cultivation of a persona such as the historian or the citizen limits the author by imposing upon the writer a set of social obligations belonging to distinct offices in society while simultaneously making possible the expression of distinct voices

⁵³ Torben Damsholt, 'Historikeren Holberg mellem utopi og skepsis', *Almanak* (1985), 157–66 (on pp. 162–63); Øystein Rian, 'Ludvig Holbergs historie- og samfunnsforståelse', in Peter Christensen Teilmann and Gunnar Sivertsen, eds., *Ind i Holbergs fjerde århundrede* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanums Forlag, 2004), pp. 47–58; Øystein Rian, *Sensuren i Danmark-Norge: Vilkårerne for offentlige ytringer 1536–1814* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2014); Nagel, 'Borgerlige og menneskelige rettigheter', pp. 113–14

⁵⁴ Sebastian Olden-Jørgensen, "'Saa at jeg har efterlevet en Historieskrivers uden at overtræde en Borgers Pligt' – naturret og historie i Holbergs behandling af enevældens indførelse 1660", in *Ludvig Holbergs Naturret*, eds. Vinje and Sejersted, pp. 118–139.

and a corresponding range of opinions. Consider yet another example. As Slettebø suggests, the ‘aging Holberg’, keen as he was on ‘defending himself and his writings’ against mounting criticism, felt the need to demonstrate his ‘social responsibility and respectability’.⁵⁵ In order to do so, Holberg began to distinguish his honourable from his humorous works – a distinction first introduced in the late 1720s and only fully explored in the mid 1740s. Whilst the honourable works, comprising history and jurisprudence, were uncontroversial and should be read ‘in the context of Holberg’s professional career as a university professor’, the humorous works, that is, his satirical works from the late 1710s and 1720s, were controversial.⁵⁶ Responding to ‘public reactions to his writings’ and to the ‘boundaries set by political and institutional factors such as censorship and anti-libel legislation’ Holberg sought to justify the most controversial parts of his published oeuvre by creating what Slettebø calls an ‘overarching persona of the moralist’.⁵⁷

It is doubtful, however, that Holberg ever cultivated such a persona. In the preface to *Moralske Tanker*, for instance, Holberg discusses different ways moralising, distinguishing the ‘serious’ forms, including fables, dialogues, novels, fictional travel accounts, fictional letters, and Spectator-journals, from the ‘humorous’, that is, satires and comedies. Discussing the strengths and weaknesses of each of these ways of moralising, Holberg turns to his own literary production, arguing that he has attempted ‘to moralize in various ways’.⁵⁸ Now, the argument that Holberg was making in *Moralske Tanker* is thus that whilst there are numerous ways of moralising, they are unable of being comprised together under one single moralising persona. Hence, in Holberg’s essentially unsystematic system of moral philosophy, there is no trace of any overarching persona of the moralist. Instead, he structured his works around a web of family resemblances between different personae, speaking with different moral voices. Returning to this point in the preface to the first volume of the *Epistler*, Holberg offers further reflections on the plurality of moralising personae and voices in his works. As he writes:

With this last piece of writing I have finally fulfilled my resolution to *moralise* in all useful ways, and the reader must judge for himself which method may be said to be the most forceful. The different ways I have made use of to this purpose are merry *Poëmata*, satires, reflections on the exploits of heroes and heroines, serious moral thoughts, fic-

⁵⁵ Slettebø, ‘Holberg’s authorial personae’, pp. 29–30.

⁵⁶ Slettebø, ‘Holberg’s authorial personae’, p. 30.

⁵⁷ Slettebø, ‘Holberg’s authorial personae’, pp. 29–30.

⁵⁸ Holberg, *Moralske Tanker*, p. 20: ‘at moralisere paa adskillige Maader’.

titious travel accounts, and finally the present *Epistles*. So it remains only to undertake moral issues through conversations, which, however, may be said to have happened through my plays that consist of dialogues and which nearly all are moral.⁵⁹

What is missing from this list of useful ways of moralising both in the *Moralske Tanker* and the *Epistler* is natural law and history, or, that is, his honourable works. This leads us to the distinction that Holberg makes between the humorous and the honourable works. On Slettebø's account, the key motivation behind the contradistinction was whether a given work was considered controversial or not. This reading, however, seems to place Holberg's intentions in making such distinctions in a misleading light. Consider, for instance, Holberg's treatise on natural law. In spite of being written in the context of his professional career as a university professor, this work was a controversial work, not only because of its rejection of clerical authority in the world of politics, but also because of its intellectual allegiance with a distinct language of natural law associated most of all with Grotius, Pufendorf and Thomasius. The distinction between honourable and humorous works that Holberg introduces in his later works turns therefore not on the issue of controversy. Rather Holberg differentiated his works on the basis of their method of moralising and their intended audiences. Hence, the contradistinction is best understood along the same lines as Holberg's changing perception of the persona of the philosopher, that is, as part of the shift that occurs in his later writings from the philosopher as an advisor to the prince to a public moralist. This reading may furthermore explain why Holberg left out history and natural law from the eclectic survey in the *Epistler* of the various ways in which he had sought to moralise – the public, that is.

What these perspectives share in common is a reliance on external factors for the elucidation of Holberg's linguistic practices. The shared assumption is thus that for us to understand Holberg's identity as a writer, we need to see his writings as a product of his social context, reducing his voices to retrospective rationalisations, occurring *ex post facto* or after the fact. This, however, is not my perspective. The emphasis on social context confuses motives for intentions, or, that is, what Skinner, following J. L. Austin's classical exposition of speech acts

⁵⁹ Holberg, *Epistler*, Tomus I, p. 3r–3v: 'Jeg haver saaledes endeligen ved dette sidste Skrift nogenledes fuldført mit Forsæt at *moralisere* paa alle brugelige Maader, og maa Læseren selv dømmе om, hvilken *Methode* kand holdes for den kraftigste. De differente Maader, hvoraf jeg til den Ende haver betient mig, ere ved lystige *Poëmata*, ved *Satires*, ved *Reflexioner* over Helte og Heltinde Bedrifter, ved alvorlige *moralske* Tanker, ved *fingerede* Reyse-Beskrivelser, og endelig ved disse *Epistler*; saa at der fattes ikkun at udføre *moralske Materier* ved Samtaler, hvilket dog ogsaa kand siges at være skeed ved mine Skue-Spill, som bestaae udi *Dialoger* og fast alle ere *moralske*' (accessed 01.05.2023). Cited in Haakonssen, 'Introduction', p. 19.

theory, calls the ‘illocutionary force’ of texts.⁶⁰ Considering Holberg’s identity as writer from the contextualist perspective with which I am concerned, the pressing question is not what motivated Holberg’s use of pseudonyms and the plurality of voices in his writings, but rather what he may be said to have intended in composing his work as he did. Holberg did not intend to mask his authorship and his opinions in order to pre-empt the loss of social status or to defend his satirical works, nor did he employ such literary practices to escape the institution of censorship. Rather, considered as interventions carrying a certain illocutionary force, Holberg’s use of pseudonyms and the plurality of voices in his works should be read as part of an ongoing dispute about the proper understanding of the offices or personae that Holberg cultivated. Consider, for example, the turn in Holberg’s thinking about moral philosophy which took shape in the 1740s. As Slettebø rightly points out, Holberg’s preoccupation with moralising in the mid-1740s is contemporaneous with the emergence of a new generation of inexperienced moralist writers in Denmark and Norway, with whom ‘Holberg did not want to be associated’.⁶¹ As Slettebø argues, Holberg’s negative reaction to the new generation of moralists was ‘motivated’ in part by a grave concern for ‘increased competition’ on the book market, in part by ‘the concomitant threat this represented to the social status of the author’.⁶² While this may well have been Holberg’s *motivation* for attacking the young moralists, focusing on his *intentions* in doing so had to do with their conception of philosophy and philosophical office-holding. In the first half of the 1740s, Andreas Lundhoff, for instance, authored several short works in which he defended a rationalist conception of philosophy and refuted the position advocated by Holberg, a position which according to Lundhoff places negotium above otium and substitutes laughter for reason.⁶³

This being said, there is still a case to be made for studying the motives of a writer, that is, for studying external restraints as a way of decoding ‘what conventionally recognisable meanings’ an author may have ‘intended to communicate’.⁶⁴ Holberg’s works were not, of course, detached from the broader social

⁶⁰ Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, p. 133; J. L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words*, ed. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa, second edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962/1975), [Crossref](#), pp. 94–108. For the distinction between motives and intentions see, importantly, Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, pp. 96–102.

⁶¹ Slettebø, ‘Holberg’s authorial personae’, p. 38.

⁶² Slettebø, ‘Holberg’s authorial personae’, p. 39.

⁶³ Andreas Lundhoff, *Een kort historisk Beskrivelse paa En sand Philosophi Liv og Levnet Meddeelt alle Sandheds og Dydens Elskere* (Copenhagen: Johan Christoph Groth, 1744). See also Olesen, ‘Monarchism’, pp. 200–203.

⁶⁴ Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, p. 87.

context in which they were written. Seeking to moralize the public, Holberg may well have been responding to what he saw as a very real threat to his identity as a writer.

Holberg's sources

The third aspect I wish to consider turns on Holberg's use of diverse sources in his writings. Throughout his oeuvre, Holberg draws on, imitates and copies a range of authors, often without acknowledging his sources. Consequentially, a long-standing tradition of scholarship has been devoted not only to mapping Holberg's sources in his essays,⁶⁵ his comedies,⁶⁶ and his historical works,⁶⁷ but also to recovering the influence on Holberg's thought of such major European thinkers as Pufendorf,⁶⁸ Bayle,⁶⁹ Locke,⁷⁰ and Descartes.⁷¹ The merit of this tradition of scholarship has been to shed light on such pivotal aspects of Holberg's writings as which books he was reading, when he was reading them, and the way in which he used them in the composition of his own texts, that is, what he used and what

⁶⁵ F. J. Billeskov Jansen, *Holberg som Epigrammatiker og Essayist*, 2 vols. (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaards Forlag, 1938–1939); F. J. Billeskov Jansen, *Ludvig Holberg og menneskerettighederne ... og andre Holbergstudier* (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzel, 1999), pp. 160–99.

⁶⁶ Jens Kr. Andersen, *Holbergs kilder? Studier i komediedigterens mulige litterære forudsætninger* (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1993); Gunnar Sivertsen, *Kilden til Jeppe paa Bierget* (Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2010).

⁶⁷ Olden-Jørgensen, *Ludvig Holberg som pragmatisk historiker*; Olden-Jørgensen, "Saa at jeg har efterlevet"; Kristoffer Schmidt, 'Kildestudiernes nytte: Om Holbergs kildebrug i udvalgte biografier i Heltehistorier', in *Historikeren Ludvig Holberg*, eds. Sejersted and Olden-Jørgensen, pp. 279–302; Kristoffer Schmidt, 'Holbergs naturretslige og historiske syn på spaniernes kolonisering af Amerika', in *Ludvig Holbergs Naturrett*, eds. Vinje and Sejersted, pp. 140–58.

⁶⁸ Tim Berndtsson, "Hvad Contra-Parten har at sige derimod": Historiografisk dialog mellem Holberg och Pufendorf', in *Historikeren Ludvig Holberg*, eds., Sejersted and Olden-Jørgensen, pp. 147–180; Rolv Nøtvik Jakobsen, 'General Church History', in *Ludvig Holberg*, eds., Haakonssen and Olden-Jørgensen, pp. 182–195 (on p. 192). [Crossref](#); Sebastian Olden-Jørgensen, "Absolut enevolds Regiering er de sikkerste af alle": Ludvig Holbergs statsforståelse på baggrund af samtidens politiske kultur', in *Historikeren Ludvig Holberg*, eds., Sejersted and Olden-Jørgensen, pp. 89–117; Olden-Jørgensen, 'Den antikatolske Holberg'; Olden-Jørgensen, 'History', pp. 173–174.

⁶⁹ Inga H. Undheim, "De vanskeligste Verk nogen kand foretage sig": Om Holbergs og Pierre Bayles betenkninger over historier', in *Historikeren Ludvig Holberg*, eds. Sejersted and Olden-Jørgensen, pp. 181–205.

⁷⁰ Thomas Bredsdorff and Lasse Horne Kjældgaard, *Tolerance – eller hvordan man lærer at leve med dem, man hader* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2008), pp. 51–52.

⁷¹ Anne E. Jensen, *Holberg og kvinderne eller Et forsvar for ligeretten* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1984).

he chose to ignore or leave out. Especially recent scholarship has led to a better understanding of his eclectic methods of writing. Whilst Jørgen Magnus Sejersted and Slettebø, for instance, has shed important new light on Holberg's methods of compilation,⁷² Haakonssen has depicted him as an epistemic entertainer, whose epistemic and eclectic attitudes resulted in the attempt 'to entertain by getting his audience to entertain ideas' not necessarily Holberg's own.⁷³ Although there is 'a very basic Pufendorffian framework for Holberg's intellectual universe', the 'Holbergian labyrinth' branches out into different directions.⁷⁴ Having said Pufendorf, we must necessarily follow up by asking which Pufendorf.⁷⁵ However, the question to which much recent scholarship is addressed has come to be framed, largely, as a question of originality. What this seems to imply is that the task of interpreting Holberg's works consists in the identification of one or more original sources that can explain his thought and ideas.

Current scholarship harbours three central variations of this approach. The first, and by far the most common variation, focuses on Holberg's contribution to eighteenth-century intellectual history. Offering a negative perspective, scholars working on Holberg's treatise on natural law have portrayed Holberg as an unoriginal thinker.⁷⁶ As argued by Ditlev Tamm, the most recent advocate of this line of interpretation, Holberg's treatise on natural law is of little interest in the wider context of European natural law.⁷⁷ Following Pufendorf's major works on natural law down to the title, the contents and the chapter headings, Holberg did not intend for his work to be an original contribution to the Pufendorffian tradition of natural law. Seeking to establish an alternative origin for Holberg's treatise, Tamm turns to the legal tradition in Denmark, arguing that Holberg meant for his treatise to supplement the existing law code of the Danish monarchy, Christian den Femtes Danske Lov of 1683, by introducing to a Danish readership the basic principles of law.⁷⁸

⁷² Jørgen Magnus Sejersted, 'Jewish History', pp. 200–202; Thomas Slettebø, 'Kompilatoren Holberg. Om patriotisk og protestantisk kompilasjon i Ludvig Holbergs Dannemarks Riges Historie', *Historisk Tidsskrift (Copenhagen)*, 120 (2020), pp. 13–46.

⁷³ Haakonssen, 'Introduction', p. 18.

⁷⁴ Haakonssen, 'Introduction', 14; See also Knud Haakonssen, 'Holberg's Law of Nature and Nations', in *Ludvig Holberg*, eds. Haakonssen and Olden-Jørgensen, pp. 59–79. [Crossref](#).

⁷⁵ Knud Haakonssen, 'Naturretten, Pufendorf og Holberg – men hvilken naturret? Hvilken Pufendorf?', in *Ludvig Holbergs Naturrett*, eds. Vinje and Sejersted, pp. 31–45.

⁷⁶ Kåre Foss, *Ludvig Holbergs naturrett på idéhistorisk bakgrunn* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1934); Ditlev Tamm, 'Holberg og juristerne', in *Holberg og juristerne*, eds. Klaus Neiiendam and Ditlev Tamm (Copenhagen: Jurist- og Økonomiforbundets Forlag, 1984), pp. 35–144 (on p. 46).

⁷⁷ Ditlev Tamm, 'Ludvig Holberg og hans naturret', p. 47.

⁷⁸ Ditlev Tamm, 'Holberg og naturretten', in *Holberg i Norden*, eds. Dahlberg, Teilmann, and Thorsen, pp. 106–18 (on p. 110).

Other scholars, by contrast, have offered a positive perspective on Holberg's originality, turning from natural law to his idea about woman and gender equality. On this issue, Anne-Hilde Nagel asserts, Holberg's Enlightenment, which embraced basic conceptions of civic and human rights, was far ahead of such towering figures as Rousseau.⁷⁹ Thomas Bredsdorff reaches a similar conclusion, arguing that some of Holberg's ideas were only caught up with in the twentieth century. As Bredsdorff further asserts, Holberg was unoriginal in all aspects of his thinking except for his ideas about equality between the genders.⁸⁰ Rejecting Anne E. Jensen's contention that Holberg's thinking rests on a Cartesian foundation, that is, the separation of mind and body, Bredsdorff turns to Holberg's theatrical experience in Rome and Copenhagen in search of an explanation of the origin of his thinking about woman and gender equality.⁸¹ Even Holberg's most original ideas must rest on a pre-existing and unshakable foundation.

Both these perspectives are, however, flawed. Leaving aside the Whiggish assumption that some ideas and persons are ahead or behind in the grand scheme of history, the celebration of originality comes at the expense of contextual interpretation. Holberg's thinking about woman and gender equality belonged not to a discourse of civic and human rights – Holberg was mainly concerned with duties, not rights – nor to his experience of how the theatre functioned behind the scene. Rather, Holberg's view on the subject at hand was shaped in the context of his meritocratic contentions.⁸² Moreover, turning to his allegedly unoriginal conception of natural law, the central point here is not whether Holberg authored any original doctrines about natural law, but rather how he partook in the dissemination and consolidation of the tradition of modern natural law in which he placed himself. As we have seen, Holberg's intention in writing his treatise on natural law was not to reconfigure the tradition of natural jurisprudence, but to substitute for the figure of the moral theologian a moral philosopher as the advisor to the prince. Consequentially, we should read Holberg's natural law not in light of the lofty canon of political philosophy, that is, Holberg as an unoriginal copy of Pufendorf, nor should we be primarily concerned with the treatise as a supplement to the Danish legal tradition. Although the latter reading might elucidate

⁷⁹ Anne-Hilde Nagel, 'Borgerlige og menneskelige rettigheter: Politisk tenkning i Ludvig Holbergs *Naturens og Folkerettens Kundskab*', in *Ludvig Holbergs Naturrett*, eds. Vinje and Sejersted, p. 115. See also Anne-Marie Mai, 'Holberg, Ludvig', in *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment*, 4 vols., ed. Alan Charles Kors (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 218.

⁸⁰ Thomas Bredsdorff, *Den brogede oplysning* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2003), p. 135.

⁸¹ Jensen, *Holberg og kvinderne*, pp. 70–71; Bredsdorff, *Den brogede oplysning*, 166–68; Thomas Bredsdorff, 'Originalitet og import i Holbergs oplysningstænkning', *Sjuttonhundretallet: Nordic Yearbook for Eighteenth-Century Studies* (2014), pp. 11–24. [Crossref](#).

⁸² For a discussion see Olesen, 'Monarchism', p. 190.

what may well have been an important motive for Holberg, it nevertheless offers little insight into what he thought about natural law and what he intended to do in writing his treatise.

The second variation portrays Holberg as a plagiarist. In his studies of Holberg's parallel biographies, Schmidt has shown that Holberg eagerly translated and copied the contents of previous works on the persons he was portraying in his parallel biographies, only rewriting and adding new information when the sources did not fit his agenda. This was no unorthodox practice, but unlike his contemporaries Holberg carefully avoided referring to his sources.⁸³ Retracing Holberg's use of sources in his biography of the Russian tsarina Catherina I, Schmidt, furthermore, points out that Holberg's idea of women and gender equality was not original – as Bredsdorff claims – but rather a commonplace, if not a cliché.⁸⁴ Holberg based his entire account of Catherine I on the French historian Rousset de Missy, whose work on the Russian tsarina opened with a rejection of 'the idea that women were naturally inferior.'⁸⁵

Whilst it is important to note the extent to which Holberg not only drew on and imitated the style of other authors, but also plagiarised their works, this line of research is potentially misleading. Interpreting Holberg's texts in relation to an original source reduces them to mere copies, taken to be original only when Holberg needed to work his sources over in order to make them fit his agenda, that is, the moral argument he wished to showcase. The task of interpretation thus consists of mapping which parts of Holberg's works are original as opposed to those that are mere unoriginal or plagiarised copies.

The third variation concerns rationality and truth. As Olden-Jørgensen has shown, Holberg's historical works and his treatment of historical sources are occasionally manipulative and incorrect, as Holberg seeks to balance the conflicting duties of the historian and the citizen. Nowhere in his writings is this conflict clearer than in his treatment of Frederik III and the introduction of Danish absolutism in 1660.⁸⁶ As Olden-Jørgensen asserts, Holberg's historical writings – especially *Dannemarks og Norges Beskrivelse* (1729) – are characterised by a 'strained political correctness'.⁸⁷ Indeed, 'quite contrary to the evidence', Holberg rejected earlier accounts of the introduction of absolutism in which political conflict took

⁸³ Kristoffer Schmidt, 'Ludvig Holbergs Heltehistorier – mellem moralfilosofi og historie' (PhD diss., University of Copenhagen, 2015), p. 269; Schmidt, 'Kildestudiernes nytte', pp. 279–302.

⁸⁴ Schmidt, *Ludvig Holbergs Heltehistorier*, pp. 125–127.

⁸⁵ Schmidt, 'Heroes and Heroines', pp. 108–109.

⁸⁶ Olden-Jørgensen, "'Saa at jeg har efterlevet'", pp. 128–137.

⁸⁷ Olden-Jørgensen, 'History', p. 175; Sebastian Olden-Jørgensen, 'Ludvig Holbergs dansk-norske enevælde', *Magasin fra Det Kongelige Bibliotek*, 17.3 (2014), pp. 17–26. [Crossref](#).

centre stage and argued that ‘the nobility was not forced to accept absolutism but freely assented to the proposal of the burgers and the clergy’,⁸⁸ Holberg was thus manipulating his sources to make the ‘coup d’état’ of 1660 fit the ‘official ideology’ of the absolute monarchy. Although Holberg slightly altered his account in *Danemarks Riges Historie* (1732-35), admitting some degree of force, albeit the force of necessity, to have occurred, the basic narrative structure still ‘underlies’ this work, following a ‘moderately patriotic and royalist line’ of interpretation.⁸⁹

As Olden-Jørgensen suggests, Holberg knew perfectly well what the sources really said. This leads to the question of how to make sense of Holberg’s disposition. The two possibilities we are presented with is either that Holberg misunderstands his sources, that is, that he suffers a failure of rationality, or that he deliberately manipulates them, that he in pursuing his own agenda sets aside the historical truth. Olden-Jørgensen’s preference lies with the latter, the meaning of the sources and thus the events they relate being – as he presupposes – readily understandable. In either way, we are told, Holberg’s disposition is to be understood as an attempt to depict the introduction of absolutism according to the account of the foundation of states and societies in modern natural law theories. To be sure, the language of natural law was quintessential to Holberg’s historical thinking, but the claim that Holberg was manipulating the sources and the historical truth is misleading.

Olden-Jørgensen’s argument confuses two distinct perspectives on Holberg, the historian. The first is historiographical or propaedeutic and aims at discerning what Holberg may have meant about a given past phenomenon, treating him as a colleague in conversation. From this perspective, entering into dialogue with Holberg about the truth-claims he makes about a given issue is fully legitimate, as is a concernment with the rationality of those claims. Holberg’s writings should thus be rationally reconstructed with an eye on the task of better understanding a given past phenomenon. The second perspective is historiographical in the sense that it takes aim at understanding Holberg as an historian, writing in his own context, speaking to his own time. Approaching Holberg from this perspective we need to be concerned with what he was doing when authoring his historical works. On the basis of this kind of historical reconstruction the establishment of truth and rationality has no bearing on the interpretation of his works.⁹⁰ Hence, Olden-Jørgensen’s treatment of Holberg is misleading because he purports to be historiographical in the second sense, all the while he is proceeding in the mode of the first. By contrast, in so far as we need to think about rationality and truth, a far

⁸⁸ Olden-Jørgensen. ‘History’, p. 175.

⁸⁹ Olden-Jørgensen. ‘History’, pp. 175–176.

⁹⁰ For an important discussion of this perspective, see Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, pp. 27–56.

richer perspective would be to approach the relation between Holberg's language of natural law and his historical accounts in terms of a framework of understanding, a world view, a horizon. Within such a perspective, the truth claims presented by Holberg in his historical works are neither manipulative or untruthful, nor are they irrational.

Whilst the strategies for mapping literary and intellectual dependencies discussed above are far from irrelevant to the contextualist perspective with which I am concerned – indeed there are rich and as of yet unexplored potential in their combination – they are reductionist in the sense that they limit the task of interpretation to a search for origins. This diverts our attention away from or deliberately ignores what the contextualist perspective considers the more pressing issue, that is, what Holberg was doing.⁹¹ Rather than searching for origins, the contextualist perspective with which I am concerned focuses on redescrptions. Consider, for instance, Holberg's treatise on natural law and its relation to Pufendorf. As we have seen, history played a central role to the persona of the philosopher that Holberg cultivated in this work. Portraying the persona of the philosopher as an advisor to the prince and an opponent of moral theology, Holberg not only re-described the Pufendorffian language of natural law – Pufendorf had categorized history amongst the 'Elegant and Curious' forms of learning – he also re-described the office of the philosopher to better meet the challenges to the modern absolutist state.⁹²

Conclusion

This article has attempted to think anew about Holberg's identity as a writer by approaching the task of interpretation as an intellectual historian. One idiosyncrasy related with this approach (it will be apparent by now) is that this task has very little, if anything, to do with Holberg himself. Rather, the article insists, to understand his identity the task must be engaged by thinking contextually about the textual conventions and techniques that structured the composition of his works. Going against the current, the article has challenged some of the conclusions that currently dominate the climate of scholarship, their presuppositions and implications.

The last thing this article has attempted is to privilege one particular kind of historical enquiry over others. Only our imagination may justifiably be said

⁹¹ Olden-Jørgensen, at least, is up front about this; Olden-Jørgensen, *Ludvig Holberg som pragmatisk historiker*, p. 83.

⁹² Samuel Pufendorf, *Of The Law of Nature and Nations: Eight Books*, ed. Basil Kennett (London: J. Walthoe, R. Wilkin, J. and J. Bonwicke, S. Birt, T. Ward, and T. Osborne, 1729), p. 173.

to limit the ways in which a study of Holberg's identity as a writer or indeed any aspect of the past may fruitfully be undertaken. Rather, what has concerned me in this article has been the extent to which a contextualist approach that focuses on *languages* and *personae* can lead to a better understanding of Holberg's identity as a writer. This, I take it, should be the subject of conversation. If, as Holberg suggests, it takes a philosopher to pull philosophical beards, pulling historical ones likewise requires the cultivation of a historian's persona. This is the spirit in which this article has been written; its aim, to contribute to the ongoing conversation about how best to cultivate and practice our trade.

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Designing 'Swedishness': Theatre Costume Design under the Rule of Gustav III

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Abstract: This article explores the early development of Swedish costume design during the reign of Gustav III (1771-1792). From the beginning of his rule, the Swedish king consciously and actively developed the local cultural scene, funded the Swedish Royal Opera and other institutions, as well as wrote and performed theatrical works himself. He also intervened in the scenography of pieces and was very interested in dress in general, using it often for his political aims. Theatre and dress were not only treated as aesthetic objects, but also as tools for creating a sense of Swedish national identity among the people.

The 'Swedishness' of costume design is thus primarily connected to the subjects represented in those initial plays which addressed Swedish themes: historical figures and people from different Swedish regions. On the other hand, both the designers and forms used to create this Swedish design were often imported and adapted from abroad, especially from France and Italy. Using a transnational perspective and material-oriented approach, this study examines certain strategies and milestones in Swedish costume making, highlighting international exchange, but also showing unique cases of adaptation to the local stage.

Keywords: costume design; theatre; Sweden; Gustav III; France; Italy

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In Sweden, the last quarter of the eighteenth century saw an unprecedented flourishing within the performing arts, promoted vehemently by King Gustav III (1746–1792), who himself was involved in the theatre as a writer, performer and designer.¹ His interest in theatre was deeply intertwined with his political ambitions: the theatre was one of the tools with which he aimed to generate a sense of national unity and even national identity in his subjects and to construct his own image as the nation's leader. At the same time, the king was deeply interested in the philosophical, the didactic and, not least, the aesthetic aspect of performing arts, which he aimed to develop during his reign often taking inspiration from abroad.

Gustav III's great passion for theatre and the importance he gave to the performing arts during his reign is well known and has been widely researched.² However, while theatrical costumes have traditionally been seen as a mere decoration or, at best, as a dramaturgical tool, this article argues that they played an integral part in the king's political project, becoming literally the fabric through which power and ideology were expressed. Special attention will be given to the transnational substance of this 'patriotic' project; the ways in which political ideas, dramatic and musical forms, costume concepts and people travelled, were adopted and adapted, creating something new. The perspective of cultural mobility and transfer have proved extremely efficient in theatre and performance studies in recent years.³ This follows a general trend in the humanities, which moves away

¹ In this article, I use English spelling of the names of sovereigns, except for those mentioned in the titles of the plays, which are left in the original.

² E.g.: *Gustavian Opera, An Interdisciplinary Reader in Swedish Opera, Dance and Theatre 1771–1809*, ed. by Inger Mattsson (Uppsala: Royal Swedish Academy of Music, 1991); Marie-Christine Skuncke and Anna Ivarsdotter, *Svenska operans födelse: Studier i gustaviansk musikdramatik* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 1998); Jennie Nell, 'The Royal Rhetor: Princely and common virtues in the operas and plays of Gustavus III', in *Virtue Ethics and Education from Late Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Andreas Hellerstedt (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), pp. 207–52. [Crossref](#).

³ E.g.: Melania Bucciarelli, Norbert Dubowy and Reinhard Strohm, *Italian Opera in Central Europe*, 3 vols (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2006–2008); Rahul Markovits, *Civiliser l'Europe: politique du théâtre française au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2014); Rahul Markovits and Jane Marie Todd, *Staging Civilization: A Transnational History of French Theater in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2021). [Crossref](#); Christine Jeanneret, 'Costumes and Cosmopolitanism: Italian Opera in the North', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 32, 1 (2020), 27–51. [Crossref](#); Christine Jeanneret, 'Made in Italy, Tailored for Danes: Giuseppe Sarti and Italian Opera in Copenhagen', *Music and Letters*, 102, 2 (2021), 271–93. [Crossref](#); *Mapping Artistic Networks: Eighteenth-Century Italian Theatre and Opera across Europe*, ed. by Tatiana Korneeva (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021).

from nationalist cultural identity and ethnic authenticity, also for the study of patriotic projects such as national theater.⁴ Considering how little information about costume of this period is preserved in Europe in general (except for France), the Swedish case represents a unique opportunity to study the dynamics of costume design in terms of the relations between the foreign and the local, the aesthetics and politics, cosmopolitanism and national identity. In short, this article thematizes the process of creating the Swedish national theatre, opera and costume by emphasizing their constructed and inherently transnational essence.

Performing power and fashioning identity

Using theatre and performance as a political tool was of course not unique to Sweden and to the eighteenth century. It was part of aristocratic and royal propaganda (but also counter-propaganda) long before, in Italy, France, Great Britain and other European countries. The spectacles could embody the legitimacy of the rulers, portray social hierarchies, celebrate successes on the battlefield, and other events, but the theatre could also become the place to express contesting opinions and even directly undermine the ruling power.⁵

The emerging consciousness of a Swedish national identity in the second half of the eighteenth century has been thoroughly discussed by Swedish historians. Gustav III has been described as the first Swedish ruler who implemented a nationalistic programme within industry, politics, and culture.⁶ Love for the fatherland ('l'amour de la patrie') was considered a personal, social, and political virtue,

⁴ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994); *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Peter Burke and Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). [Crossref](#); *De la comparaison à l'histoire croisée*, ed. by Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann (Paris: Seuil, 2004); *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto*, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). [Crossref](#).

⁵ See, for instance: Roy Strong, *Art and Power: Renaissance Festivals, 1450–1610* (Los Angeles and Berkeley: University of California, 1984); Barbara Ravelhofer, *The Early Stuart Masque: Dance, Costume and Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Marie Apostolidès, *Le roi-machine. Spectacle et politique au temps de Louis XIV* (Paris: Minuit, 1981); Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (London: Yale University Press, 1992); Georgia Cowart, *The Triumph of Pleasure: Louis XIV and the Politics of Spectacle* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2008); Jeffrey S. Ravel, *The Contested Parterre: Public Theatre and French Political Culture, 1680–1791* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1999).

⁶ Patrik Hall, *Den svenskaste historien. Nationalism i Sverige under sex sekler* (Stockholm: Carlssons, 2000); Jonas Nordin, *Ett fattigt men fritt folk. Nationell och politisk självbild i Sverige från sen stormaktstid till slutet av frihetstiden* (Eslöv: Symposium, 2000); Bo Lindberg, 'Introduktion: nationalism och nationell identitet i 1700-talets Sverige' in *Nationalism och nationell identitet i 1700-talets Sverige*, ed. by Åsa Karlsson & Bo Lindberg (Uppsala: Opuscula Historica Upsaliensia, 2002), pp. 7–15.

which featured heavily in his education, through his study of history and philosophy. From the moment the prince was born, the court constructed a narrative of him being the third great Gustav, following in the footsteps of his famous predecessors Gustav Vasa (1496–1560), considered the founder of the early modern Swedish state building and a *pater patriae*, and Gustav II Adolph (1594–1632), who won considerable victories for the Protestant cause in the Thirty Year's War. Later in life, Gustav III incorporated patriotism into his politics and the figures from the glorious Swedish past re-appeared in his self-fashioning, political 'performance', and in his plays.⁷

The concepts of patriotism present in Gustav III's discourse were connected to the power of the king and state, thus differing from the republican and civic ideological movements.⁸ The Swedish king aimed to steer nationalistic discourse from above, utilizing various tools to awaken love and pride for the fatherland within his subjects. He did this not solely through legislation, which was not, according to Sara Ekström, his preferred tool of power, but also through education, examples and persuasion via spoken and written discourse, performance, and dress.⁹

In 1773, just two years after he became king, Gustav III founded the Swedish Royal Opera, and then several other cultural institutions (including The Swedish Academy in 1786 and The Royal Dramatic Theatre in 1788), showing that culture would acquire a more prominent position during his rule. The opera was to feature as an important medium for boosting Swedish nationalistic sentiment – a way through which the language would be refined and Swedish history and its heroes promoted.¹⁰

⁷ Marie-Christine Skuncke, *Gustaf III: det offentliga barnet: en prins retoriska och politiska fostran* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 1993), 36–39; Nell, 'The Royal Rhetor', 209, 216–217. It was not only the opera and theatre, but also other theatrical events – i.e. events with a performative aspect such as carousels, divertissements, pageants, or public and private audiences – that enabled him to communicate directly with his subjects and thus to 'perform' his political power; see Maria Berlova, 'Playing King', *Nordic Theatre Studies*, 26, 1 (2018), 80–90. [Crossref](#); Maria Berlova and Michael Kroetch, *Performing Power. The Political Secrets of Gustav III (1771–1792)* (London: Routledge, 2021). [Crossref](#).

⁸ Erik Lönnroth, 'Sweden', in *Nationalism in the age of the French Revolution*, ed. by Otto Dann & Rowland Dinwiddy (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 1988), pp. 101–112; Mikael Alm, *Sartorial practices and social order in eighteenth-century Sweden: fashioning difference* (Routledge: New York, 2022). [Crossref](#).

⁹ Historian of ideas Sara Ekström analyses these tools of power in Gustav III's politics in her doctoral thesis *All styra genom känslor. Regeringskonst i tre gustavianska projekt 1772–1792* (PhD diss., Stockholm University, 2023). Previous scholarship of the Gustavian nationalistic project, mentioned above, is reviewed in her thesis.

¹⁰ Mattsson, *Gustavian Opera*, pp. 15–46.

The king was keenly involved in the visual aspects of spectacle, which later also showed in his ability to imagine and describe designs, sets, and even the choreography that he wanted to put on stage.¹¹ In the same way, he applied this visuality when choosing his own clothing for various occasions. Often, he referred to the clothes worn by his royal predecessors, in order to underline the historical continuity and foster patriotism among spectators, unique even in the international historical context. For instance, his coronation garment in 1772 was not of the fashion of the time, but was inspired by Charles XI's (1655–1697) ceremonial dress (Fig. 1–2).¹² Charles XI was the ruler who re-introduced autocracy in Sweden; hence, through reference to his clothing, Gustav III also was also referring to his future political plans.¹³ Another symbolic moment was Gustav III's departure to fight the war with Russia. The date itself, 23 June 1788, marked the anniversary of Gustav II Adolph's departure for the Thirty Years War in 1630. Furthermore, the king wanted to draw other parallels with the past through his dress and accessories. Swedish count, military man, and politician Fredrick Axel von Fersen described his garment in the following manner:

On this day His Majesty wore his war uniform, with a jacket embroidered like that of Gustav Adolph, over which he carried Charles XII's rapier in a wide bandolier. Charles X's hat with a large bunch of straw as a banner, and a yellow-and-blue cockade too.¹⁴

While the faithfulness of this report, and the exact composition of Gustav III's attire has been since debated by several scholars,¹⁵ there is no doubt his garment referred to the victorious Gustav II Adolph.

Possibly the most famous example of the king's attention to his clothing is the project of the Swedish national costume, a specific kind of attire to be worn by everybody (except for peasantry and priests), which he introduced in 1778 (Fig. 3).¹⁶ Lena Rangström has argued that while the main reasons of this 'costume

¹¹ Which is apparent from his notes about the performances he planned for the court stage, see *MS Konung Gustaf III:s egenhäniga skrifter, Dramatiska arbeten*, Uppsala Universitetsbibliotek Carolina Rediviva, Gustavianska Samlingen, F. 412.

¹² Lena Rangström, *Kläder för tid och evighet* (Helsingborg: Livrustkammaren, 1997), pp. 103–17.

¹³ I am grateful to Jennie Nell who brought my attention to this political connection.

¹⁴ 'H. M. klädde sig denna dagen uti sin krigsuniform, med en jacka broderad lika med Gustav Adolfs, uppå hvilken ett bredt axelgehång bar Konung Carl XII:s värja. Konung Carl X: s hatt med en stor halmtapp till fälttecken och en gul och blå kokard dertill', Fersen 1871: 38, English translation from Berlova and Kroetch, *Performing Power*, p. 130.

¹⁵ Berlova and Kroetch, *Performing Power*, pp. 130–31.

¹⁶ See Eva Bergman, *Nationella dräkten. en studie kring Gustaf III:s dräktreform 1778* (Stockholm: Nordstedt & söner, 1938); Rangström, *Kläder för tid och evighet*, 165–87; Rangström,



Fig. 1: David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl, *Allegory of King Charles XI receiving the government of his mother Hedvig Eleonora*, 1692, Nationalmuseum, NMDrh 126.

Fig. 2: Alexander Roslin, *Gustav III in coronation dress*, 1777, Nationalmuseum, NMGrh 660.

Fig. 3: Pehr Hilleström, *Repas public, Le jour de l'an 1779*, Nationalmuseum, NMDrh 499.

reform' were economic – to boost local production, to free the people from the caprices and expenses of foreign (mainly French) fashion as the king argued in his pamphlet – it had also the clear purpose of creating a sense of unity in his subjects, and most of all, the sense of national identity.¹⁷ This was confirmed by the later historiographical studies of Gustav's national costume project by Alexander Maxwell, Mikael Alm and Sara Ekström.¹⁸

Certain sartorial features of the national costume refer to the Renaissance dress, known also as the Spanish fashion. According to Rangström, these historical and geographical references were not incidental, because, in the patriotic narrative of the time, the Spanish dress in fact had Swedish origins, through the mythological Goth ancestors who travelled all the way down to southern Europe. The folk dress of Scania, similar to the Spanish dress, should have been evidence for this theory.¹⁹ In any case, through this creation, we can see the transnational (and transhistorical) aspects of the dress and costume, typical for Sweden in this period.

Considering Gustav III's skillful self-fashioning and efforts to fashion his entire court and all his subjects, it is no surprise that he also had his own ideas and aims for theatrical costume, which will be analyzed in subsequent sections of this article.

French inspiration in theatre and design

From an early age, Prince Gustav was educated in French culture and was especially fond of French drama, which he had the opportunity to see on stage performed by his mother's French theatre troupe of Jeanne du Londel, and he also performed himself.²⁰ During his stay in Paris between 1770 and 1771, he took in performances at the Opéra, Comédie-Française, and at the court almost daily.

Modelejon: Manligt mode 1500-tal 1600-tal 1700-tal (Vänarmo: Atlantis, 2002); Alm, *Sartorial practices*; Ekström, *Att styra genom känslor*, pp. 95–153. While the project of Swedish national costume was particular, it was not unique. According to Alexander Maxwell, the 'desire for national uniforms emerged in the Late Enlightenment and climaxed during the French Revolution'. He studies these movements, including the Swedish case, in his book *Patriots against Fashion: Clothing and Nationalism in Europe's Age of Revolutions* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 80. [Crossref](#).

¹⁷ Rangström, *Modelejon*, pp. 127–42.

¹⁸ Maxwell, *Patriots against Fashion*; Alm, *Sartorial practices*, Ekström, *Att styra genom känslor*.

¹⁹ Rangström, *Modelejon*, pp. 127–38.

²⁰ Skuncke, *Gustaf III: det offentliga barnet*; Marie-Christine Skuncke, *Sweden and European Drama 1772–1796: A Study of Translations and Adaptations*, diss. Uppsala University, *Historia Literarum* 10 (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1981); Agne Beijer, *Drottningholms slottsteater på Lovisa Ulrika och Gustaf III:s tid* (Stockholm: LiberFörlag, 1981); Beijer, *Les troupes françaises à Stockholm, 1699–1792. Listes de répertoire* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1989).

Therefore, we can conclude that Gustav III was very up-to-date with the latest trends in French theatre and design. To follow the French in the arts and to use the French language for communication, was of course not a new thing among the nobility of early modern Europe, and not even in Sweden.²¹ But Gustav III did not only copy the French works; he also aimed to adapt the foreign models for the Swedish cause in a rather sophisticated manner.

The first Swedish-language opera, staged in 1773, *Thetis och Pelée*, was inspired by the famous French *tragédie en musique* from 1689.²² Gustav himself wrote the first draft of the story, as well as the list of costumes, detailing the fabrics, colours, and accessories for each character in the opera.²³ Several other operas in Swedish had plots taken from classical mythology.

In this early period, Swedish architect, designer, draughtsman and engraver Jean Erik Rehn (1717–1793) usually designed the sets and costumes for all the operas and plays. Rehn visited France to study between 1740 and 1745 and then again in 1755.²⁴ His drawings testify to this foreign influence and a conventional shape of costume, similar to the designs of Jean-Baptiste Martin (1730–1763) and early Louis-René Boquet (1717–1814), who were costume designers for the French court theatre and Paris Opera: they feature a wide and rigid *tonnelet*²⁵ and high feather panache for male performers, and wide hoops for women

²¹ See, for instance, Marc Fumaroli, *When the World Spoke French* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2011); French original *Quand l'Europe parlait français* (Paris: Fallois, 2001), quoted in Markovits and Todd, *Staging Civilization*, 2–3; Stefano Fogelberg Rota, *The Queen Danced Alone: Court Ballet in Sweden during the Reign of Queen Christina (1638-1654)* (Turnhout/Tours: Brepols, 2018); Inga Lewenhaupt, 'Slottsteatrarna före den gustavianska tiden', in *Drottningholms slott. Från Hedvig Eleonora till Lovisa Ulrika*, ed. by Göran Alm and Rebecka Millhagen (Stockholm: Votum Gullers Förlag, 2004), pp. 368–95; Beijer, *Drottningholms slottsteater*; Beijer, *Les troupes françaises*.

²² *Thetis och Pelée* premiered on 18 January 1773 at Boolhuset in Stockholm, with music by Francesco Uttini, libretto by Johan Wellander and choreography by Louis Gallodier.

²³ E.g.: 'Pele... l'habit est de Taffita celadon brodde en argent tissus casque diamante manque', 'Jupiter / Habit de satin cramoisi tonnelait de satin jeune mante de satin cramoisi manni-fiquement brodde la couronne tout de diamant manque' [original spelling], in '26. Habits pour l'opéra de Thétis et Pélée', *Konung Gustaf III:s egenhändiga skrifter. Dramatiska arbeten*, MS F. 412, vol. 3, p. 412, Gustavianska Samlingen, Uppsala Universitetsbibliotek Carolina Rediviva; quoted in Mattsson, *Gustavian Opera*, pp. 237–52.

²⁴ Anna-Greta Wahlberg, 'Jean Erik Rehn', *Grove Art Online* (Oxford University Press, 2003). [Crossref](#).

²⁵ The *tonnelet* was a kind of stiff knee-length (or shorter) skirt worn by male performers as part of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century *habit à l'antique* or *la romaine*. Also called the *bas de saye*, the *tonnelet* would imitate the lower part of the Roman military uniform with its pleated skirts, and it would be covered with striped leather *lambrequins*. During the eighteenth century, it became rather rigid, stiffened with paper or heavier fabric.

(Figs. 4 and 5).²⁶ Rehm created designs for *Thetis och Pelée*, following Gustav III's instructions expressed in the lists of costumes, but only one – and indirect – piece of visual evidence was preserved of this collaboration: a scene from the opera depicted on a fire fan (Fig. 6).²⁷ This picture shows still rather conventional costume à la romaine²⁸ with a wide *tonnelet* for the man, and a richly adorned dress with a wide hoop for the female figure. Such garments also appear in the costume inventory for the opera. Analyzing this source, theatre historian Rut Eriksson came to the conclusion that the costumes for *Thetis och Pelée* were inspired by designs of Martin, and thus would have been considered old-fashioned in the 1770s.²⁹ This shows that Rehm's concept of stage costume was rather traditional, unaffected by the costume reform that was underway at the time, a theoretical discourse that started to have practical consequences on French stages (Comédie-Française, court theatre and Opéra) in the 1750s.³⁰ The proponents of the reform required a stage costume that would abandon the proprieties of court dress as well as fashionable styles, simplify and reduce the volumes, and instead take inspiration from the dress of the past, other regions or countries. French historian Pierre Frantz connected this shift in thinking about the costume to the new aesthetics of tableau, where theatre was compared to the visual arts and appreciated in a similar way.³¹ In my study of the costume reform, I distinguished different phases of this movement, the first – moderate – wave (1750s–1770s), and the second, more radical, which took place

²⁶ For more about Martin, Boquet and the conventional stage costume of the first half of the eighteenth century, see Petra Dotlačilová, *Costume in the Time of Reforms: Louis-René Boquet Designing Eighteenth-Century Ballet and Opera* (PhD diss., Stockholm university, 2020), pp. 77–101, 181–90.

²⁷ The fan features a verse from Act IV, scene 8 of the opera, two figures on the ground, representing Thetis and Pelée, and one flying on an eagle representing Jupiter, who in that scene utters the depicted verse: “J grymme andar samlens här, att år den dierfve straff bereda” (“Ye cruel spirits gather here, to plan audacity's defeat”). However, since the decoration on the fan is a collage of coloured prints, they might have been recycled from an earlier source – although the depicted garments are certainly stage costumes, and not fashion plates.

²⁸ *Habit à la romaine*, also called *habit à l'antique*, refers to a uniform from the Ancient Roman period, considered in early modern Europe as the most graceful and noble costume, used to dress characters in tragedies that took inspiration from classical mythology and Greco-Roman history. This type of costume emerged in Renaissance Italy, subsequently making its way to other European stages, but its composition and look also changed over time. In early eighteenth-century France, it was composed of *pourpoint* or *corps* – a doublet made of richly embroidered fabric, imitating the breastplate – long decorative sleeves completed with a round skirt called a *tonnelet*, sometimes covered with *lambrequins* or stripes. *Habit à la romaine* was completed with boots called brodequins, and a helmet with a feather panache.

²⁹ Rut Eriksson, *En Kostymhistorisk Studie Kring Kungl. Teaterns Repertoar Från Gustaviansk Tid Till Nationalromantikens Genombrott* (PhD diss., Stockholms universitet, 1974), pp. 56–58.

³⁰ Dotlačilová, *Costume in the Time of Reforms*, pp. 108–65, 221–97.

³¹ Pierre Frantz, *L'esthétique du tableau dans le théâtre du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: PUF, 1998).



Fig. 4: Jean Erik Rehn, Costume design for a warrior, Nationalmuseum, NMH 555/1995.

Fig. 5: Jean Erik Rehn, Costume design for a shepherdess, Nationalmuseum, NMH 553/1995.

Fig. 6: Fire Fan with the motive from the opera *Thétis och Pélée*, The Swedish Royal Palace.

Fig. 7: Pehr Hilleström, *Orpheus och Euridice*, 1773, Royal Swedish Opera archive.

from ca 1781.³² As we will see in the following, the Swedish costume – through the agency of Gustav III – finally developed along the lines of the French costume reform as well.

Moderately reformed design can be observed in a painting from the first performance of Gluck's *Orpheus och Euridice* (1773), probably also designed by Rehn and captured in a painting by Pehr Hilleström (1732–1816) (Fig. 7). Here we can see Orpheus dressed in costume *à la grecque*³³ in the form of a crossed-over tunic in red and gold fabric, long sleeves, trimmed with a fringe and golden embroidered or painted geometric ornaments; Eurydice wears all-white dress in the contemporary shape, adorned with a white veil.³⁴ This kind of costume corresponds with the early phase of costume reform, carried out in practice, amongst others, through the work of designer Louis-René Boquet.³⁵ It consisted of partial inspiration from ancient models and visual arts, and reduced ornamental decoration and fashionable items such as *tonnelets* and hoops (indeed the *tonnelet* does not appear in the costume inventory for this opera). However, it was still not considered appropriate to show naked skin like in the paintings, so long sleeves, breeches, stockings and draperies etc covered performers' arms and legs. The fact that Boquet's work was known in Stockholm during this period can be proved by the presence of many copies of his designs in the Royal Swedish Opera archive. Some of them probably served as models for concrete productions: e.g., twelve preserved anonymous drawings for the opera *Aline, drottning av Golconda* (1776) – a Swedish adaptation of the French piece by Sedaine and Mosigny *Aline, reine de Golconde* (designed by Boquet and premièreed at the Paris Opera in 1766) – are almost identical with Boquet's originals (compare Figs. 8–9 and 10–11).

Given Gustav III's personal involvement in the production of the performing arts in Stockholm, and his familiarity with the French stage, there is little doubt that he directly encouraged such inspiration and the purchase of design models. Therefore, while he actively criticized the imitation of French fashion in everyday dress, following French trends in terms of stage design was more than welcome.

³² Dotlačilová, *Costume in the Time of Reforms*, pp. 108–65, 221–97.

³³ *Habit à la grecque* was a new variety of 'serious' costume, used in tragedies and pastorals inspired by classical mythology, that appeared in the second half of the eighteenth century. It was an alternative to *habit à la romaine*, worn by male and female that were not warriors, but for instance princes, princesses, kings, gods. Its main feature was the fastening of the coat/tunic across the chest, completed with a sash around the waist.

³⁴ These costumes are also described in detail in the inventory from 1792: Orpheus's tunic was made of gold atlas with red paillon, decorated with silver lace and sequins, cape of *feu* (flame-red) atlas with blue paillon and with the same decoration as the tunic; Eurydice's dress was in white silk atlas, veil in gauze from Italy, bodice and petticoat of silver fabric. See Eriksson, *En Kostymhistorisk Studie*, pp. 58–59.

³⁵ Dotlačilová, *Costume in the Time of Reforms*, pp. 221–97.



Fig. 8: Anonymous, costume design from *Aline, Drottning av Golconda*, 1776, Royal Swedish Opera archive.

Fig. 9: Louis-René Boquet, *'Zélie. Dame de la Suite de la Reine de Golconde'*, *Aline reine de Golconde*, 1766, BnF-Op D216 VII-5

Fig. 10: Anonymous, costume design from *Aline, Drottning av Golconda*, 1776, Royal Swedish Opera archive.

Fig. 11: Louis-René Boquet, *'Officiers golcondois'*, *Aline reine de Golconde*, 1766, BnF-Op D216 VII-4

However, the king ‘inherited’ Rehn from his mother, so to speak, and he was always looking out for new talents which he could foster and instruct according to his own vision. Therefore, it did not take long before he tried to engage a new designer as well.

The first Swedish hero enters stage: comédie-ballet Birger Jarl

So, in 1774, a foreign designer was summoned to create sets and costumes for the *comédie-ballet Birger Jarl*.³⁶

This work represents an important milestone in Swedish theatre history because it became the first music-theatrical piece on a subject from Swedish history. While authors Gustaf Fredrik Gyllenborg and Gudmund Jöran Adlerbeth wrote the final version of this play, the first draft was written by Gustav III and preserved among his personal manuscripts.³⁷ This document, written in a mix of Swedish and French, informs the reader not only that the king sketched the story of the play in great detail, including the dialogues, but that he also had ideas about the scenography, stage movement/choreography, and some of the costumes.

Birger Jarl provides an illuminating example of how it combined the old and the new, the French and the Swedish.³⁸ First of all, it took the form of a *comédie-ballet*, or a play with music and dance – a genre which had its heyday in the time of Louis XIV and Molière. More precisely, Gustav took inspiration from Voltaire’s *comédie-ballet La Princesse de Navarre* (1745)³⁹ – this piece was written for the wedding of Louis, dauphin de France to the Spanish Infanta Maria Teresa.⁴⁰ The gen-

³⁶ *Birger Jarl, skådespel i tre akter med sång och dans*, text by Gustaf Fredrik Gyllenborg and Gudmund Jöran Adlerbeth. After Gustav III, music by Henrik Philip Johnsen and Francesco Antonio Uttini, with inserts by Jean-Philippe Rameau, première at Bollhuset 7 July 1774. While the Swedish printed libretto defines the piece as a play with songs and dance, the first draft by Gustav III in French refers to it as a *comédie-ballet*. The title role was performed by Carl Stenborg, and Queen Mechtild by Elisabeth Olin.

³⁷ Gustav III, *Birger Jarl* (1774), in *Konung Gustaf III:s egenhändiga skrifter. Dramatiska arbeten*, vol. 3, pp. 251–85.

³⁸ Although, duchess Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotta, a meticulous commentator of the court life who also performed in the production of *Birger Jarl* in 1783, judged the piece ‘not very interesting’ and even ‘boring’. Cf. Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotta, *Hedvig Elisabeth Charlottas Dagbok*, vol. I 1775–1882 (Stockholm: P. A. Norstedt & Söner, 1902), 438 and vol. II, 1783–1788 (Stockholm: P. A. Norstedt & Söner, 1903), pp. 1–2.

³⁹ *La Princesse de Navarre, comédie-ballet en un prologue et trois actes avec trois divertissements*, text by Voltaire, music by Jean-Philippe Rameau, première at Versailles, 23 February 1745. The inspiration has been already pointed out in Skuncke & Ivarsdotter, *Svenska operans födelse*, pp. 72–80.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

re was already quite out of fashion by the mid-eighteenth century, but Voltaire used it specifically to pay tribute to the reign of the Sun King. Both the occasion and the mission of *La Princesse de Navarre* might have inspired Gustav III in his choice, because he commissioned it for his brother Duke Charles' wedding. The king-dramaturge adopted the form of Voltaire's piece – a spoken play of three acts with music and dance divertissements, and also some elements of the original plot, including the rescue of a princess/queen, a false identity, and a love story. However, he changed the place and characters: *La Princesse de Navarre* takes place in fourteenth-century Spain, and tells the story of Spanish princess Constance and French noblemen Duke de Foix; Gustav's play is also set in medieval times (around 1261, as the king writes), but recounts the story of Swedish nobleman Birger Jarl (1210–1266), legendary founder of the city of Stockholm, and the Danish queen Mechtild. She hated Birger Jarl out of principle, because he was the enemy of her husband, the Danish king. However, after her husband's death, Mechtild was threatened by the Norwegian king, and Birger Jarl offered her refuge in his castle. During this time, he did not reveal his true identity because he was in love with her, but he also knew how much she hated him. Therefore, the main plot of this *comédie-ballet* is all about seduction: Birger Jarl deploys several strategies to impress Mechtild and make her fall in love with him. In the first divertissement, Mechtild encounters several allegorical and mystical characters who enter the stage through different doors: Venus, Amor and the Graces together with a chorus of Pleasures and Games, who try to convince her of the pleasures of love. After that, a group of Sámi soothsayers and fortune tellers arrive to predict a happy future for her. Here, we can see a parallel with the first divertissement of *La Princesse de Navarre*, where Astrologers and Gypsy ('Bohémien') soothsayers sing and dance. In the second divertissement, Birger Jarl proposes that they perform a little opera together, *Aglé*, in which he plays Apollo dressed as a shepherd, courting the incognito Mechtild as Aglé. This play within play mirrors the main plot and was inspired by another French piece – *Eglé* by Pierre Laujon.⁴¹ In *La Princesse de Navarre*, the second divertissement features Cupid, three graces, and shepherds. Finally, Mechtild falls in love, Birger Jarl reveals his true identity and their happy union is celebrated by all Swedes. In the third divertissement, we see both representatives of the court and of the people: peasants from the central Swedish region of Dalarna and the village Vingåker in Södermanland. This divertissement draws a parallel with the French original, where French, Spanish, Neapolitan and Milanese people rejoice at the union of Constance and Duke de Foix.

⁴¹ *Eglé, ballet héroïque en un acte*, text by Pierre Laujon, music by Pierre Lagarde, premiered at Versailles, 13 January 1748.

In the creation and plot of this *comédie-ballet* we can see both clear inspiration from the French examples and trends and their adaptation into a Swedish / Nordic context. The choice of Birger Jarl was of course symbolic from a patriotic perspective, but it also provided an opportunity to explore the medieval theme, which had become popular on the French stage at the time. During his French stay, the then-prince Gustav not only attended several plays set in the Middle Ages, but also performed himself in a private staging of the new chivalric drama *Gaston et Bayard* (1771) by Pierre Laurent de Belloy.⁴² Furthermore, *Birger Jarl* put various people from across the Swedish kingdom on stage for the first time. All these aspects were a challenge for the stage and costume design which was in dynamic development at the time.

And while it would perhaps have been logical to choose a Swedish designer for this task, such as Jean Erik Rehn, Gustav III decided otherwise. He invited the Italian architect Carlo Galli Bibiena (1728–1778) from the famous scenographic dynasty, who was probably on his way from Italy to Russia, where he was supposed to work for the court theatre of Catherine the Great. Rehn was apparently extremely upset about the employment of this foreigner, and as one courtier wrote in a letter, his angry curses echoed in the castle throughout the entirety of the Italian designer's stay.⁴³ While Bibiena's designs for Birger Jarl were not preserved, one of his designs representing a gothic interior can be found in the Hermitage museum.⁴⁴ Although of an earlier date, we can assume that Bibiena could have created a similar design for *Birger Jarl*, since Gustav III's instructions for the set design in the first act explicitly demanded 'a salon, splendidly decorated in the Gothic taste'.⁴⁵

The costume designs for the play were not preserved either, however, a few notes of the king's handwritten instructions, and most importantly, two inventories survived to inform us about the material substance of the garments.⁴⁶ The first

⁴² Agne Beijer, 'Le Théâtre de Charles XII et la mise en scène du théâtre parlé au XVIIe siècle', in *Revue de la société d'histoire du théâtre*, huitième année, II-III (1956), 197–214.

⁴³ Holger Nyblom, *Gustaf III:s opera. Minneskrift utgiven med anledning av Kungl. Teatern 150-årsjubileum 1773–1923* (Stockholm: G. Tisells tekniska förlag, 1923), p. 74.

⁴⁴ Carlo Galli Bibiena (1721–1784), 'Interior in Gothic style', pen and brush with Indian ink and bistre, 29x43 cm, The Hermitage Museum, inv.n. OP-202. See in museum's digital collection: <https://www.hermitagemuseum.org/wps/portal/hermitage/digital-collection/02.+Drawings/219372/?lng=de>

⁴⁵ 'Le théâtre represente le sallon principale au château de Bielbo orné dans le goût gothique...', Gustav III, *Birger Jarl* (1774), in *Konung Gustaf III:s egenhändiga skrifter*, vol 3, p. 255 (original spelling); 'Theatren föreställer en salon, präktigt utsirad i Göthisk smak.' [Gyllenborg] 1774:1.

⁴⁶ *Inventarium på de kläder som tillhöra piecen Birger Jarl*, MS sig. T.12, Swedish National Library; *Inventarium öfver Kongl. Mindre Theatrens klädes och attributs magazin År 1813*, MS sig. D6C, Royal Swedish Opera archive.

inventory features names of courtiers in most roles, which suggests that it does not record the première in 1774, but a later performance in a private setting (possibly in 1786)⁴⁷; the second, entitled 'Inventarium öfver Kongl. Mindre Theatrens klädes och attributs magazin' was composed in 1813, and lists the costumes for several pieces without indicating the names of the performers. In any case, reading these documents, connecting them with drawings and paintings from the time and with preserved garments from a later period, we can start to decode how these first Swedish characters were dressed on the royal stage.

The entry for Birger Jarl in the first of the inventories mentioned discloses that its performer wore two different costumes in the play: one rather conventional royal garment in red and white, lined with ermine, and the second imitating a knight's armour:

Baron Armfeldt [as Birger Jarl]

1° A costume consisting of crimson silk serge mantle, lined with white taffeta and trimmed with ermine and gold galloons. Coat of silver fabric striped with crimson atlas and golden galloons, trimmed with ermine. Vest of silver fabric with crimson rosettes and golden galloons. Belt of crimson atlas trimmed with ermine. 2° A harness of steel fabric, trimmed around the neck with blue taffeta, yellow vest lined with blue taffeta. Trousers of yellow cloth with cuissards of the same fabric like harness, boots of steel cloth and leather tracks. Uses the same mantle as above.⁴⁸

The second inventory features potentially three costumes for this character, the two detailed above, plus another one which was perhaps the most sumptuous, made mainly from golden cloth, blue silk, silver lace and sequins. The second type of costume – the harness – is made from 'steel cloth', a fabric with silver threads

⁴⁷ A production of *Birger Jarl*, performed by the courtiers, was also staged at Gripsholm Castle in January 1783, and recorded by Duchess Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotta in her diary; however, the cast of this performance was different than the one noted in the mentioned inventory (in 1783, duke Charles played Birger Jarl and princess Sophia Albertina played Matilda). In 1786, the duke was injured, and the king was very close to G.M. Armfeldt, who then played Birger Jarl. Furthermore, the inventory also contains a list of roles (with a cast of professional actors) for the comedy *Tom Jones*, dated 30 August 1786. See Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotta, *Hedvig Elisabeth Charlottas Dagbok*, vol. II, pp. 1–2, 87–106, 464–65.

⁴⁸ 'Baron Armfeldt / 1° En klädning bestående af cramoisie siden sarge kappan, doublerad med hvit taft garnerad hermeliner och guldgalonger. Ofver råken av silfvertyg randad med cramoisie atask och guldgalonger. Hermelins hem. / Under råken av silfvertyg med cramoisie bonsetter och guldgalonger. Ceinturet cramoisie atask med hermelins hem. / 2° Ett harnesk af ståltyg garnerat kring halsen med blått taft, gul klädes väst doublerade med blått taft. / Byxorna af gult kläde med cuissarer af samma tyg som harnesk, stål tygs stoffletter och spår läder. / Nytjar samma kappa som til foregående klädning.' *Inventarium på de kläder som tillhöra piecen Birger Jarl*, MS sig. T.12, Swedish National Library.

imitating the luster of steel, which was in French called *moire acier*. Over the harness he wore a vest in Swedish colours – yellow and blue. This costume form could be compared, for instance, with the designs by Leonardo Marini (1737–1806), a regular collaborator of Carlo Bibiena in Turin. Marini’s concept of costume was strongly influenced by the costume reform initiated in France, and he even quotes the reformer Jean-George Noverre in his short treatise on costume *Ragionamento intorno alla foggia degli abiti teatrali*.⁴⁹ In his costume drawings (Fig. 12) a new, more faithful version of knight’s harness appears, with ‘armour’ covering the entire body including legs, without the conventional *tonnelet*, and instead featuring a tunic or vest to bear the knight’s coat of arms. Two Swedish costumes from the late eighteenth century, made according to the drawings of Frenchman Louis-Jean Desprez (1743–1804), show how the harness was imitated through fabric, also using silver sequins and the application of papier mâché (Fig. 13).⁵⁰

The second main character of the *comédie-ballet* – the Danish Queen Mechtild – wore a costume appropriate for her status as a widow – a black taffeta dress with a black veil.⁵¹ This, again, corresponds to the requests of costume reformers, who wanted to adapt the garments not only to the geographical and historical provenance of the characters, but also to their dramatic situation, which should be thus more important than their social status. Whilst a black dress for a widow was a common custom in the eighteenth century, it was rather a new phenomenon on the operatic stage. One of the first instances of this mourning dress in opera was that of Thélaïre in 1770 production of *Castor et Pollux*, designed by Boquet (Fig. 14).⁵²

⁴⁹ Leonardo Marini, *Abiti antichi di diverse nazioni di d'Europa e d'Asia, inventati e disegnati da Leonardo Marini Torinese ed eseguiti al Reale teatro di Torino* (Turin: Stamperia reale, 1771).

⁵⁰ For a detailed description of these garments and plays for which they were designed, see Eriksson, *En Kostymhistorisk Studie*, pp. 123–29, Rangström, *Modelejon*, pp. 191–94, Maarit Kalmakurki, ‘The King and his Costumes’, *Theatre Design & Technology*, 53, 4 Fall (2017), 38–51.

⁵¹ ‘Hennes Kongl. Höghet Princessan / En svart atlask klädning. Armarne med crevasser och hvita flors bonsetter. Korseten och kappan garnerade med svart flor.’ [HRH Princess / A dress of black atlas with slashes and white gauze puffs (?). Stays and cape garnished with black gauze.] *Inventarium på de kläder som tillhöra piecen Binger Jarl*, MS sig. T.12, Swedish National Library.

⁵² The drawing is not dated, and *Castor et Pollux* has been restaged at the court and at the Paris Opera several times in 1754, 1763, 1764, 1770, 1772, 1774, 1777, 1778, 1782. The costume list for the performance of 1763 at Fontainebleau prescribes for Thélaïre a typical ‘princess’ dress in white satin with golden embroidery, while the list from 1770 features the black mourning dress. *Programe de Castor et Pollux opera représenté devant leurs Majestés à Fontainebleau le 5 Octobre 1763* and *Programe de Castor et Pollux opéra en 5 actes représenté devant sa Majesté à Versailles le 9 Juin 1770*, Archives nationales O/1/3266. Cf. *Dictionnaire de l'Opéra de Paris sous l'Ancien Régime (1669–1791)*, ed. by Silvie Bouissou, Pascal Denécheau and Françoise Marchal-Ninosque, (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2019), vol.1, p. 715.



Fig. 12: Leonardo Marini, Ubaldo, *Armida*, ca 1771, Biblioteca Reale Torino.

Fig. 13: Anonymous, Gustaf Wasa's 'Steel cloth harness' from the opera *Gustaf Wasa*, 1786, & Ubaldo's costume from opera *Armida*, 1787, The Archive of Swedish Royal House.

Fig. 14: Boquet, 'Thellaire en habit de deuille', *Castor et Pollux*, after 1770, BnF Op D2160-6 (28).

Fig. 15: Boquet, 'Fontainbleau 1765 / Mlle Lany suivante des plaisirs dans Eglé', 1765, BnF Op D2160-6 (61).

The first divertissement was introduced with the entrance of Venus, Amor, Graces, the Pleasures and Games. They were dressed in a rather conventional manner for these characters, in pink, white and blue taffeta dresses, adorned with gauze decoration and flowers. Such allegorical characters appeared often in the French baroque opera, including *Eglé*, which served as one of the inspiration sources for the production of *Birger Jarl*. Drawings by Boquet, created for *Eglé* in 1772 feature similar colour combinations and decorations and might also hint at the way these characters appeared on the Swedish stage (Fig.15). After this tableau, the divertissement featured the entrance of Sámi (or ‘Lapp’, as these characters were called in the libretto) soothsayers.⁵³ Therefore, here we can observe an adaptation of the French model (in *La Princesse de Navarre* Astrologues and ‘Gypsy’ soothsayers appear [Fig. 16]) to the local context. This adaptation shows the alignment of the *Lapp character* with the stereotypical representation of ‘the Other’ or ‘exotic’ characters such as *Gypsy, African, Chinese or Turkish characters* on the European theatrical stages.⁵⁴ However, in *Birger Jarl*, there is no sign, from what can we read in the available sources, that these characters are depicted in a negative or ridiculous way, as was the case in the Finnish theatre in the following century.⁵⁵ In fact, this piece seems to be the first Swedish play where the Sámi people were represented, and the costume inventory shows a certain effort to reflect their typical garments:

Ballet of Lapponians [...]

Costumes consist of grey silk taffeta coat, lined with red, buttonholes trimmed with small silver ribbon, collar of blue taffeta trimmed with 2 rows of silver ribbon. On the sleeves red cuffs (?) with silver galloons. A bodice of skin coloured taffeta, which is tied in the back.

Wide red taffeta trousers.

Red belt with silver galloons and ribbon

⁵³ From the fourteenth century, the Swedish kingdom gradually occupied parts of Norrland (so-called ‘lappmarkerna’), inhabited by the indigenous Sámi people, in order to gain territory and natural resources. Until the mid-twentieth century, the Sámi were generally referred to as ‘Lapps’. See e.g. Lennart Lundmark, *Stulet land. Svensk makt på samisk mark* (Fill in city: Ordfront 2008); Gunlög Fur, ‘Kolonisation och kulturmöten under 1600- och 1700-talen’, in *De historiska relationerna mellan Svenska kyrkan och samerna: En vetenskaplig antologi*, band 1, ed. by Daniel Lindmark & Olle Sundström (Skellefteå: Artos & Norma bokförlag, 2016), pp. 241–82.

⁵⁴ Cf. Joanna Weckman, ‘Creating a “Lapp” Character: Sámi Dress Utilised as Costume in Early Finnish theatre’, *Ethnologia Fennica*, 48, 2 (2021), 41–72 (p. 45). Following Weckman’s example, I use the term *Lapp character* (and equivalent for the other ‘exotic’ characters), in order to highlight the fictional nature of these characters.

⁵⁵ Weckman describes that in the nineteenth- and early twentieth century, ‘Sámi people connoted laziness, dishonesty, and lack of self-discipline... and dirtiness’, *ibid*.

Grey taffeta cap with blue taffeta rim, trimmed with black (?) and sequins.
A chain with medals
6 Sámi drums and sticks⁵⁶

The *Lapp* characters dancing in *Birger Jarl* wore grey coats and hats with a red trim, that could correspond, for instance, to Carl Linnaeus' (1707–1778) 'Lapp' costume, in which he had made his portrait in 1737 (Fig.17),⁵⁷ or to the dress worn by the Sámi man in a Hilleström painting from 1782. They also wore a belt, chain, and medals, and during the dance they played the drum, clearly referencing the rituals which became more widely known thanks to a publication by German scholar based in Sweden, Johannes Schefferus (1621–1679).⁵⁸ Perhaps these drums could have been similar to the one depicted in Linnaeus' portrait. On the other hand, we can also detect a certain elevation in style. The whole garment was made in silk taffeta, adorned with silver ribbons and galloons, while the Sámi original dress of the time featured less luxurious, but warmer and more practical materials such as leather and fur (as described by the Linnaeus), decorated with simple ribbons on the cuffs and hem (as visible on the paintings). The lack of fur in fact distances these characters from a stereotypical representation of 'Lapps' as 'barbaric' and 'wild' people, present in some of the oldest visual sources such as Vecellio's *De gli abiti antichi et moderni di diversi parti del mondo* (1591).⁵⁹

Finally, the last divertissement featured courtiers and people from the Swedish region of Dalarna and the village Vingåker, represented for the first time in this play. The courtiers were all dressed in 'blue and golden costumes', promoting

⁵⁶ 'Balett af Lappar [...] Kläderna bestå af en grå tafts rock i sidorne, röra revens, knapphålen garnerade med smala silfverband, kragen af blått taft garnerad med 2r rader silfverband. På armar röda uppvark med silfver galoner. Ett couleur de chair tafts lif, som knytes på ryggen. / Vida röda tafts byxor. / Ceinturet röft med silfver galon och band garnerat. / Mössan af grått taft med blå tafts kantning, garnerad med svarta ..ljer och pailletter / En kedja med medaille.' *Inventarium på de kläder som tilhöra piecen Birger Jarl*, MS sig. T.12, Swedish National Library.

⁵⁷ Carl von Linné, *Iter Lapponicum = Lappländska resan: 1732, Dagboken; utgiven efter handskriften av Algot Hellbom, Sigurd Fries, Roger Jacobsson* (Umeå: Skytteanska samf., 2003); Carl von Linné, *Lapplandsresan; översättning av latin: Mikael Mosesson & Sara Anvestad* (Göteborg: Mimer bokförlag, 2015); Nellejet Zorgdrager, 'Linnaeus as Ethnographer of Sami Culture', *Tijdschrift voor Skandinavistiek*, 29, 1 & 2 (2008), 45–76.

⁵⁸ Joannis Schefferi Argentoratensis, *Lapponia, Id est, Regionis Lapponum et gentis nova et verissima descriptio* (Frankfurt: Christian Wolff, 1673); Håkan Rydving, *The End of Drum-time: Religious Change Among the Lule Saami, 1670s–1740s* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1995).

⁵⁹ Weckman, 'Creating a "Lapp" Character', p. 63, referring to Cesare Vecellio, *Vecellio's Renaissance Costume Book. All 500 Woodcut Illustrations from the Famous Sixteenth-Century Compendium of World Costume by Cesare Vecellio* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1977 [1591, 1598]).

Swedish national colours.⁶⁰ Peasants showing their love for the king is a trope that reappears regularly in poetry and performing arts in general, and so with the first play on the Swedish topic, people from these concrete regions materialize on stage. It should be mentioned that by this period, the region of Dalarna was considered the cradle of the Swedish nation, the home of *pater patriae* Gustav Vasa, and its inhabitants were thought to maintain the ‘natural character’ of their ancestors.⁶¹ The representatives of the two regions are summarized in the inventory under one heading as ‘Peasants’:

Ballet of the Peasants [...]

Ladies’ costumes consist of small blue vests without sleeves, trimmed with silver ribbon. Bodice in red taffeta. Gauze shirt with short sleeves. Red taffeta skirts with blue taffeta stripes, silver ribbon and sequins around the bottom hem. Blue taffeta apron.

Men’s costume consists of white gauze shirts, blue taffeta vests without sleeves, trimmed with silver ribbon. White taffeta trousers, black taffeta apron lined with pink taffeta, black taffeta hat.⁶²

Here too, the inventory suggests a certain elevation in style, differentiating true folk dress from the theatre costume worn at the court theatre. The main fabrics are again silk taffeta, fine gauze, and silver ribbons (while the folk dress would be made of wool, linen and leather). On the other hand, the composition of the costume is clearly different from court dress. The women wear white shirts with short sleeves, red skirts, red bodices, and over that a small vest, which might correspond to the garments depicted in the images of regional folk dress from the period (e.g. Pehr Hilleström’s painting of two women in a festive dress from Vingåker, Fig.18). They also have striped skirts, which is another element of the folk dress, and of course an apron, the universal marker of a peasant woman. More concrete reference to regional dress appears in a later inventory from 1813. Here we find the dress of a performer who sang the solo of a girl from Vingåker, consisting of

⁶⁰ ‘Höfmännen och Hofjungfrurne äro alla i blått och guld klädda men hafva röda och blå band’, Gustav III, *Birger Jarl* (1774), in *Konung Gustaf III:s egenhändiga skrifter*, vol. 3, p. 281.

⁶¹ Berlova and Kroetch, *Performing Power*, pp. 158-159; Ekström, *Att styra genom känslor*.

⁶² ‘Balett af Bond folk. [...] / Damernas kläder bestå af små tafts tröjor utan armar til couleuren blå, garnerade med silfver band. Röda tafts lif. Flors sjtor med korta armar. Röda tafts kjortlar garnerade med blå tafts rander, silfver band och pailletter nedan omkring. Blå tafts förkläder. / Cavalierernes kläder. Af hvita flors sjtor, blå tafts tröjor utan armar, garnerade med silfver band, hvita tafts byxor, svarta tafts förkläder doublerade med rosen rödt taft, svarta tafts hattar.’ *Inventarium på de kläder som tilhöra piecen Birger Jarl*, MS sig. T.12, Swedish National Library.



Fig. 16: Boquet, 'La Princesse da Navarre Fontainebleau 1769 / Chœurs Astrologue', BnF-Op D216 VIII-16.
Fig. 17: Martin Hoffman, 'Carl von Linné in Sámi dress', oil on canvas, 1737, Linnémuseet, Uppsala.
Fig. 18: Pehr Hilleström, 'Two women in festive dress from Vingåker, Södermanland, 1782, Nordiska Museet.
Fig. 19: Pehr Hilleström, 'Orpheus och Euridice in 1786, Drottningholm theatre.

a white silk rasé skirt, a 'Wingåkers' jacket – also in white silk rasé, and a woollen braid around her head.⁶³

Featuring both 'modern' trends in contemporary European costume design and their adaptation to the local theme and context, the *comédie-ballet Birger Jarl* stands at the beginning of Swedish national theatre and design. While at this early stage, we cannot speak about the faithful imitation of the folk or regional dress on stage, and particularly the presence of Sámi people can be seen more as a case of exoticism than of anthropological representation, the design for *Birger Jarl* can be interpreted as a genuine effort to give them the symbolic visibility, and also to take an interest in their way of dressing. It is thus the earliest case in Sweden of using theatre costume as a tool – and indeed an indispensable one – to create or reinforce patriotic feelings in the spectators, visualizing both famous historical figures and Swedish people of all classes. The next section will show how this aspect was developed in Gustav III's subsequent theatrical projects.

Desprez and the second wave of costume reform

Gustav III continually developed his project of Swedish national theatre in the following years, with increasingly bolder projects, both in scale and in form. While *Birger Jarl* featured a national hero, the plot largely revolved around a love story, and did not focus so much on his heroic actions. The subsequent operas and plays such as *Drottning Cristina* (1785), *Gustaf Wasa* (1786), *Gustaf Adolf och Ebba Brahe* (1788), *Siri Brahe och Johan Gyllenstjerna* (1788), *Gustaf Adolfs ädelmod eller Märta Banér och Lars Sparre* (1789), *Helmfelt eller den återfunne sonen* (1788) were dedicated to other famous kings, queens, and important events in Swedish history, while pieces like Leopold's and Åhlströms' *Frigga* (1787) addressed a subject from Nordic mythology.⁶⁴ At the same time, several other productions proved that

⁶³ 'B. En kjortel av hvidt rask C. En Wingåkers råck av hvidt rask D. En ylle valk kring hufvudet.' *Inventarium öfver Kongl. Mindre Theatrens klädes och attributs magasin År 1813*, MS sig. D6C, Royal Swedish Opera archive.

⁶⁴ *Drottning Christina, dram i fyra akter*, by J.H. Kellgren after Gustav III, premièred at Gripsholm in 1785; *Gustaf Wasa, lyrisk tragedi i 3 akter*, libretto by J.H. Kellgren, based on Gustav III's draft, music by J.G. Naumann, premièred at the Opera in 1786; *Gustaf Adolf och Ebba Brahe, lyrisk dram i 3 akter*, libretto by J.H. Kellgren after Gustav III, music by Vogler, premièred at Opera in 1788; *Siri Brahe och Johan Gyllenstjerna, drama i 3 akter* by Gustav III, premièred at Bollhuset in 1788; *Gustaf Adolfs ädelmod eller Märta Banér och Lars Sparre, dram med sång och dans i 3 akter* by Gustav III, premièred at Bollhuset in 1789; *Helmfelt eller den återfunne sonen, dram i 5 akter* by Gustav III, premièred at Bollhuset in 1788; *Frigga, opera i 1 akt*, libretto by C.G. Leopold, music by O. Åhlström, premièred at Opera in 1787. The costumes for these pieces are studied in Eriksson, *En Kostymhistorisk Studie*. For a dramaturgical analysis of plays by Gustav III, see e.g. Levertin Oscar, *Gustaf III som dramatisk författare*, 4th ed. (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1920); Nell, 'The Royal Rhetor'.

the Swedish opera was in touch with current trends in European theatre. This tendency is represented by the aforementioned staging of Gluck's reform operas *Orpheus och Euridice* (1773) and that of *Iphigenie i Auliden* (1778) and *Alceste* (1781), but also by productions such as *Aline, drottning av Golconda* (1776), *Electra* (1787), and *Soliman den andre eller De tre sultaninnorna* (1789).⁶⁵

From 1784, the design of the Swedish national theatre was entrusted to the hands of French Louis-Jean Desprez, whom Gustav III hand-picked during his travel in Italy.⁶⁶ According to the contract signed on 28 April 1784 in Rome, Desprez would obtain two assistant scenographers in Stockholm; these were young Swedish artists Carl Johan Hjelm (1771–1826) and Per Estenberg (1772–1848).⁶⁷ With Desprez, a second wave of costume reform arrived in Sweden, practically at the same time as it was introduced on the Parisian stages.⁶⁸ This new style required careful study and closer imitation of historical sources for costumes. Thanks to the large collection of clothes belonging to past Swedish kings, preserved at the Royal wardrobe, Gustav III and his designers were able to take concrete inspiration for the costumes in these historical plays.⁶⁹ Furthermore, they always looked for inspiration abroad as well, which can be demonstrated by the presence of the then-fresh publications *Costumes et annales des grands théâtres de Paris* (1786–1789) and *Recherches sur les costumes et sur les théâtres de toutes les nations, tant anciennes que modernes* (1790) by Jean-Charles Levacher de Charnois in Gustav III's personal library. These publications can be considered as the main medium for the second wave of costume reform, offering extensive visual material for inspiration.

⁶⁵ *Iphigenie i Auliden, tragediopera i 3 akter*, libretto by Du Roullet, translated by C. Manderström, music by Ch. W. Gluck, premièred at Bollhuset in 1778; *Alceste, opera i 3 akter*, libretto by R. Calsabigi, translated by Hertzehjelm, music by Gluck, premièred at Bollhuset in 1781; *Aline, drottning av Golconda, opera i 3 akter*, libretto by Sedaine, translated by C.B. Zibet, music by F. Uttini, premièred at Bollhuset in 1776; *Electra, tragediopera i 3 akter*, libretto by N.F. Guillard, music by J.C.F. Haeffner, premièred at Drottningholm in 1787, and *Soliman den andre eller De tre sultaninnorna*, komedi på vers i 3 akter, by Favart, translated by Oxenstierna, music by J.M. Kraus, premièred at Bollhuset in 1789.

⁶⁶ Barbro Stribolt, 'Louis Jean Desprez. An Introduction' and 'Desprez's Urban Scenes', in Mattsson, *Gustavian Opera*, pp. 123–38; Magnus Olausson, 'Desprez, Louis-Jean' in *Grove Art Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). Accessed 5 April 2023.

⁶⁷ Fredrik-August Dahlgren, *Anteckningar om Stockholms Theatrar. Förteckning öfver Svenska Skådespel uppförda på Stockholms Theatrar 1737–1863 och Kongl. Theatrarne Personal 1773–1863 med flera anteckningar* (Stockholm: P. A. Norstedt & Söner, 1866), p. 426.

⁶⁸ Dotlačilová, *Costume in the Time of Reforms*, pp. 157–63, 286–96.

⁶⁹ See Eriksson, *En Kostymhistorisk Studie*; Kalmakurki, 'The King and his Costumes'; Anna Kjellsdotter, 'The Royal Swedish Opera Costume Collection and Gustavian Dress', *Dance Body Costume. Prospektiven 2*, ed. by Petra Dotlačilová & Hanna Walsdorf (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2019), pp. 187–212.

When it comes to costuming work on subjects from Antiquity, the development of style can be best observed in the well-known painting by Hilleström, capturing the revival of *Orpheus och Euridice* in 1786 (Fig.19). Compared with the painting from 1773, we can see that the characters now wear a new form of 'Antique' dress, consisting of simple tunics and ornamental decoration *à la grecque*. The new Greek and Roman costume can be observed in detail in copies of Desprez's designs for *Elektra* from 1787 or those for the revival of *Thetis och Pelée*, probably from 1791.⁷⁰ We can see the 'reformed' style of the costumes, which is expressed through the limited decoration of garments and diminished volume of skirts, the generally vertical line of the silhouette and simple headdresses. In fact, such costume differs considerably from what Kalmakurki described as the 'conventional theatrical heroic costume', because it does not contain the seventeenth-century invention of the *tonnelet*, hoops and a high feather panache.⁷¹

As mentioned above, Gustav III was interested in historical dress well before the arrival of Desprez; it could be even said that he was in step with the first wave of costume reform when it came to applying its call for putting historically more accurate costumes into practice. The most typical expression of this interest was the invention of the so-called Burgundian costume. Kalmakurki found that the earliest example of the Burgundian costume dates from 1760, when the king ordered a 'Burgundisk karouselldräkt' for one of his plays.⁷² Later visual sources, such as Alexander Roslin's painting of a scene from the play *La Partie de chasse de Henri IV* (1770) or Hilleström's depictions of the famous carousels, organized by Gustav III in the 1770s, show the form of Burgundian costume: slashed doublet, short baggy breeches with silk pulled through the slits, and a cape, in various colour combinations (grey and white; gold and blue; green and pink). Several examples of this garment were even preserved in the Swedish Royal Armoury archive, including the luxurious version in golden cloth and blue satin worn by Gustav III for the famous carousel at Adolph Fredrick Square (today's Mariatorget) in 1777;

⁷⁰ These drawings are collected in the so-called Nordfors's album, preserved in the Opera's archive. Even if anonymous, Rut Eriksson showed that they are most probably copies of Desprez drawings made by C. J. Hjelm. See Eriksson, *En Kostymhistorisk Studie*, p. 20. Maarit Kalmakurki attributed these drawings to Jean Erik Rehn (see 'The King and his Costumes', pp. 38–40), but Eriksson's attribution seems more likely, considering the style and the period.

⁷¹ Besides, Kalmakurki's full description of this garment is 'conventional theatrical heroic costume seen across Western Europe since the late Renaissance', by which she dismisses the development of costume in ca 300 years, during which the heroic costume in fact took several forms – especially during the eighteenth century. While the original inspiration for the Roman soldier's uniform might be the same, the expression of this costume onstage differed in the shape, materials, amount and kind of decorations and accessories.

⁷² Kalmakurki, 'The King and his Costumes', pp. 43–44.



Fig. 20: [after Louis-Jean Desprez], costume drawings for Gustaf Wasa and Severin Norrby in *Gustaf Wasa* (1786), Royal Swedish Opera archive.

this garment was in the event programme, written by the king, and referred to as ‘old Swedish’ (*‘gammalt Svenska’*).⁷³ The Burgundian – but really old Swedish – costume thus has several similarities with the Swedish national dress, introduced in 1778 and discussed above: the slash-like details on the sleeves, or the wired collars. This is certainly not a coincidence; the historical points of reference were the same – the periods of Gustav Vasa and Gustav II Adolph – developing the project of building a sense of Swedish national identity through visual references to Sweden’s famous history.

This project continued in the following period in a more direct way; when Gustav III staged the aforementioned plays and operas on an event from Swedish history, he required the appropriate costuming. Rut Eriksson has analyzed Desprez-

⁷³ Rangström, *Kläder för tid och evighet*, pp. 145–46; Kalmakurki, ‘The King and his Costumes’, pp. 43–45.

rez's designs and inventory notes, which show the use of the Burgundian costume for all productions with Swedish heroes, from *Gustav Vasa* to *Helmfelt*.⁷⁴ At the same time, the designer differentiated between various characters through cuts and colours used. For instance, in the opera *Gustaf Wasa* (Fig. 20), which features Swedish and Danish courtiers and knights, the knights wore armour executed in steel fabric, while the courtiers wore a Burgundian costume; furthermore, all the Swedish representatives wore (apart from black) yellow and blue detailing, while the Danish wore red and black. In these designs, we can observe the female variant of the historical costume, featuring stripes, slashed sleeves, and lace-wire collars.

Gustav III's project of building national identity through opera and theatre ended abruptly, with his assassination at the ball at the Opera on 9 March 1792. After that, theatrical activity decreased rapidly, and several of the artists protected and proclaimed by the king suddenly lost their privileged position. Louis-Jean Desprez's contract as 'director of decorations' at the Royal Theatre expired in 1798, after which it was not renewed and he died in poverty six years later. However, his contribution to Swedish design – bringing contemporary design trends to Sweden and their adaptation in convergence with the patriotic ideas of Gustav III – cannot be denied. His pupil Carl Jacob Hjelm (1771–1827) continued Desprez' legacy as a designer for the Royal Swedish Opera in the following decades.

Conclusion

Through his cultural policy, the Swedish king Gustav III aligned himself with the long tradition of European rulers using theatre as an important tool for promoting both their political and personal agendas. Using costume as a means to communicate his ideas was clearly a conscious choice by the king, considering how he tried to fashion himself – and his subjects – through ceremonial and national garments, how he wrote costume lists for performances and carefully chose his designers.

However, as theories of cultural mobility and transnational history have taught us, cultural identities are usually hybrid, formed by 'the complex "flows" of people, goods, money, and information' that are 'endlessly shifting social landscapes'.⁷⁵ This becomes strikingly clear in Gustav III's national opera and theatre project, which was directly inspired by foreign and especially French models, theories and practices, yet with the pronounced ambition of creating new Swedish theatre. The first opera in Swedish *Thetis och Pelée*, and the first music-theatrical piece on a

⁷⁴ Eriksson, *En Kostymhistorisk Studie*, pp. 123–32.

⁷⁵ Greenblatt, *Cultural Mobility*, p. 1.

subject from Swedish history *Birger Jarl*, were created based on the French *tragédie en musique* and *comédie-ballet* model, and with music composed by the Italian Francesco Uttini (1723–1795), who came to Sweden in 1754 with an Italian opera company. Later on, the king brought new musicians to Sweden from Germany such as Johann Gottlieb Naumann (1741–1801) and Joseph Martin Kraus (1756–1792), to develop his Swedish opera project. Hybridity in music, taking inspiration from and merging Italian, French, German and Austrian styles, seems to be typical for early Swedish opera.⁷⁶ Scenographers were also invited from Italy, but in terms of costume design, the French style was the most influential in Europe, and Gustav III followed the reform developments in this area, applying the new principles of costume design to his theatre. The choice of collaborators and of repertoire often shows that the king was well up-to-date with the latest developments on the European art scene; Gluck's reformed operas, as well as the new genre of *opéra-comique*, were performed in Stockholm rather early on in a European context.

At the same time, it was important for the new national opera and theatre to take their subject matter from Swedish history, putting on stage peoples from various parts of the Swedish kingdom, and considering Swedish historical and regional clothing. Admittedly, we cannot speak about the anthropological representation of these people and their dress on stage, since Gustavian theatre applied a certain degree of aesthetic stylization, as used on the European stages, more or less, until the late nineteenth century.⁷⁷ However, the historical figures and people of Sweden were given a visibility through these stage works, and were thus included in the narrativity of the nation.

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⁷⁶ Cf. Mattsson, *Gustavian Opera*.

⁷⁷ Veronica Isaac, "'Re-Dressing The Part": The Scenographic Strategies of Ellen Terry (1847–1928)', in *Scenography and Art History: Performance Design and Visual Culture*, ed. By Astrid von Rosen and Viveka Kjellmer (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2021), pp. 141–164.

Jonas Thorup Thomsen, *Danish Clergymen and their Book Collections. An investigation into Clerical Libraries, Book Distribution, and Knowledge Circulation in Denmark, c. 1685-1810* (Aarhus: Aarhus University, 2022). 272 s.

Jakob Evertsson, Uppsala universitet

Vad innehöll danska prästers boksamlingar under 1700-talet? Hur etablerades och cirkulerade kunskapen vid de prästerliga biblioteken? Detta är frågor som Thorup Thomsen söker besvara i sin avhandling med hjälp av att noggrant studera ett föga utforskat källmaterial, nämligen inventeringar av prästers bouppteckningar. Denna källa är välvald eftersom den kan förse oss med detaljerad kunskap om den bokliga bildningen hos prästerna vid en viss tidpunkt. Bouppteckningarna kan också ge oss en uppfattning om hur dessa kunskapsresurser varierade mellan olika präster och mellan landsbygd och stad. Den metodologiska diskussion som förs om bouppteckningarna (se kap 8.3) bidrar även till en ökad förståelse av hur denna källa kan användas i andra historiska forskningsstudier. Avhandlingen utgår teoretiskt från begreppen bokhistoria, kunskapshistoria, materialitet och «multiple temporalities». Genom att anknyta till dessa övergripande perspektiv sätts den i huvudsak empiriskt inriktade studien in i ett större tolknings-sammanhang.

Avhandlingen är indelad i fyra övergripande delar som i sin tur innehåller tolv kapitel. Den första delen ger en bakgrund till studien, relaterar till olika forskningstraditioner, ger ett metodologiskt ramverk och en historisk kontext. Den andra och tredje delen utgör själva den empiriska undersökningen där Bølling respektive Slagelse kontrakt studeras i relation till ett antal olika teman. Källmaterialet begränsar dock möjligheterna att studera exakt samma teman för vart och ett av kontrakten. I det senare kontraktet fästs exempelvis större vikt vid transnationell kunskaps-cirkulation än i det förra. Även om upplägget är logiskt givet förutsättningarna så blir det samtidigt en aning svårare för läsaren att se de båda geografiska områdena som en analytisk helhet. Vidare kan inte jämförelser mellan

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regionerna göras «rakt av» till följd av hur analysen har genomförts. I den fjärde delen diskuteras de olika resultaten, de kontextualiseras och slutsatser dras av undersökningen. En detalj som behöver påpekas är att fontstorleken i brödtexten är mycket liten vilket gör texten en aning svårläslig för den närsynte.

Avhandlingen utgör ett i många stycken imponerande arbete och bidrar med flera centrala resultat till det större forskningsområdet. Ett viktigt sådant är förståelsen av den allmänna kunskapsprofil som kan sägas ha präglat prästers boksamlingar över tid. Ett annat resultat är att den tonvikt som lagts vid böckernas författare, språk och ursprung har möjliggjort analyser av boksamlingarnas internationella sammansättning och hur de skilde sig åt mellan olika grupper. Den noggrant genomförda empiriska undersökningen i delarna två och tre bidrar därmed till ny och detaljerad kunskap om prästernas boksamlingar och hur lärdomen cirkulerade i det tidigmoderna Danmark. Författaren har här tagit sig an ett delvis svårläsligt material och lyckats extrahera en omfattande mängd information ur källan. Avhandlingen har också en betydligt bredare ansats än vad titeln först ger vid handen. Den handlar inte bara om det danska prästerskapet och dess boksamlingar utan även om klockares, skolmästares och kvinnors boksamlingar. En av avhandlingens främsta förtjänster är att den relaterar till dessa övriga grupper eftersom de i endast begränsad utsträckning har granskats tidigare. På s. 111 nämner exempelvis författaren att kvinnor aktivt förvärvade böcker i samband med auktioner. Denna aspekt är viktig och bidrar till senare genushistorisk forskning som visat att kvinnor var betydligt mer aktiva i lokalsamhället på 1700-talet än vad man tidigare trott.

Analysen är i allmänhet väl underbyggd och presenteras i både kvalitativ och statistisk form vilket är en metodologisk styrka i relation till ämnet som studeras. Särskilt värdefull information ges om boksamlingarnas sammansättning genom de tabellariska sammanställningar som frekvent förekommer i huvudkapiteln. Här ges läsaren en god och tydlig förståelse av boksamlingarna och deras innehåll över tid. De många välvalda bilderna illustrerar också prästens roll i samhället specifikt i relation till synen på boklig bildning. En anmärkning jag har mot avhandlingen är att empirin tenderar att bli så central att man som läsare riskerar att förlora sig i detaljerna snarare än att få syn på allmänna tendenser och de övergripande slutsatser som kunde dras av materialet. Det är fullt rimligt att källorna bereds ett stort utrymme i texten men de används i många fall för att dra slutsatser som är alltför empirinära och där läsaren förväntar sig svar på frågor som: vad betydde då detta i förlängningen? Något som bidrar till detta är skrivsättet genom vilket tidigare forskning endast till viss del används för att löpande kontextualisera källorna och tydliggöra de egna resultaten. Den kontext som separat ges i kapitel tre är värdefull för förståelsen av både period och område för studien men kunde ha

inkorporerats i huvudtexten. Även om jag å ena sidan uppskattar den källnära presentationen efterlyser jag å andra sidan ett mer diskuterande upplägg där författaren löpande återkom till kontexten och andra forskares resultat både i Danmark och i andra länder. Därigenom skulle de egna resultaten kunna framträda ännu tydligare. Visserligen görs viktiga och goda jämförelser med motsvarande forskning i Norge och Holland men dessa resultat presenteras inte förrän på s. 239.

Eftersom en längre tidsperiod undersöks vore det värdefullt om den historiska utvecklingen av prästers utbildning och bildning hade diskuterats närmare. Nu är inte professionshistoria avhandlingens tematik men innehållet i prästernas bibliotek kunde åtminstone ha satts in i en kontext av prästutbildning i Danmark och dess förändring över tid. I min egen forskning har jag exempelvis visat att det svenska högre prästerskapets teologiska utbildning och praktik gradvis förändrades under perioden 1780–1880 (Evertsson 2011). I relation till sådana utbildningsmässiga förändringar uppvisar de danska prästernas boksamlingar en form av konstans genom att äldre böcker fortsätter att användas parallellt med de nya – något som på ett intressant sätt förklaras med begreppet «multiple temporalities» (s. 183). Vad betydde det dock för den prästerliga *professionen* och prästen som försvarare av bildning på lokalnivå? Thorup Thomson kunde avslutningsvis ännu tydligare ha skrivit fram vad studien bidragit med till det större fältet i relation till den fylliga genomgången som görs av tidigare forskningsinriktningar. Han uttrycker sig nämligen väl försiktigt när han i slutsatserna på s. 252 skriver att han «hoped to have contributed to the cultural history of local clergy in early modern Denmark» och «hoped to have contributed to the history of knowledge in the long eighteenth century». Det är alldeles uppenbart att denna avhandling verkligen bidragit till dessa områden på flera olika sätt.

Janne Palkisto, *Säveltäjä-klarinetisti Bernhard Crusellin ammatillinen toiminta ja vuorovaikutus Ruotsissa 1795–1833* (Turku: Turun yliopisto). 83 pp.

Markus Mantere, Sibelius Academy, Helsinki

Janne Palkisto's PhD dissertation, a thesis consisting of four previously published peer-reviewed articles and a substantial theoretical and methodological introduction, focuses on the professional musical life of one of the few Finnish-born internationally known composers of the turn of the 19th century, Bernhard Henrik Crusell (1775–1838). Crusell was a musical cosmopolite in his time, which in itself is remarkable as his family background was relatively modest. A son of a book-binder, he studied the clarinet in the military band of Sweaborg and finally ended up as one of the leading musicians of the Royal Chapel in Stockholm and a musical professional of great renown in Europe. During the four decades of his life that Palkisto discusses, Crusell was, of course, also much more than a well-known musician: a composer, teacher, philanthropist, husband and father. All this becomes clear over the course of Palkisto's work due to his holistic approach to his topic.

Palkisto, in his own words, situates Crusell and his public musicianship within various contexts of agency: newspaper debates, charity institutions and Freemasonry (p. 13). Theoretically Palkisto subscribes to the new cultural history of music, in which music is discussed as a cultural practice, agents' adherence or resistance to conventions and norms, as well as a social interaction. In addition to this well-articulated framework grounded in cultural history, Palkisto bases his argumentation on Irma Sulkunen's theory of action biography, together with neo-hermeneutic musicological criticism, mostly elaborated by scholars such as Lawrence Kramer.

As indicated above, Palkisto does not, in spite of his focus on a person, aim at a biography in and of itself. Rather, the four research articles present themselves to the reader as theoretically diverse cross-sections, snapshots as it were,

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to Crusell's public musical life. For the most part, these takes on Crusell are innovative, interesting and convincingly establish new knowledge about the composer. For this reader, the fourth article "Säveltäjä-klarinetisti Bernhard Crusell vapaamuurarina 1800-luvun taitteessa: uusia tuttavuuksia, hyväntekeväisyyttä ja musiikillista symboliikkaa" [Composer-clarinetist Bernhard Crusell as a freemason around the turn of the century 1800: new acquaintances, philanthropy and musical symbolism]] (*Musiikki* 4/2020, 8–42) was, however, less convincing than the others. The essay, that in many ways was a highly pleasurable reading experience, would have benefitted from a more elaborated theoretical grounding regarding the relationship between musical texture and ideology, together with probing of the epistemology of neo-hermeneutic criticism that Palkisto practices in the essay. Finally, I would have wished to read some contextualizing background to previously known Freemasonry-affiliated music. In practice, as the essay was published as early as 2020, the kind of after-the fact (self)-reflection called for here could have taken place in the Introduction, had Palkisto regarded it as relevant.

For the most part, Palkisto's command of the theoretical framework and the research methods – primarily context-sensitive close reading – is laudable. Particularly valuable for future scholars are the new sources to Crusell's life that he has managed to unveil through his research. Previous research literature on Crusell is scarce, and the obvious, often the only, target for Palkisto's arguments is the earlier work by prof. emeritus (Åbo Akademi) Fabian Dahlström. Other previous research on Crusell is referenced by Palkisto throughout the work only briefly.

Questions regarding nationalism and transnationalism are discussed only briefly in the conclusion, which I find a little surprising, as Palkisto briefly discusses the well-known early articulations of the "Finnish composer Crusell" by Topelius and Reinholm in the Introduction (p.18). Crusell is a great example of how multifaceted and flexible our conception of a "Finnish composer/musician" has to be from a modern transnational standpoint. As recent scholarship inspired by transnationalism (e.g. Vesa Kurkela, Helena Tyrväinen, Olli Heikkinen, Tomi Mäkelä) has highlighted, "Finnish music" plays itself out in many instances as an ideological nationalistic formation, and cosmopolites such as Crusell should be regarded as no less "Finnish" for our music history than his peers whose careers unfolded mostly on Finnish soil and whose musical idioms were more inspired by the vernacular. In Crusell's time, transnationalism and mobility were, perhaps more than today, rather the norm than the exception in the daily life of a capable musician and the identity of Crusell and many of his contemporaries seems to have been constructed locally, independent of an imagined community or a

nation-state. “Finnish” and “Swedish” were not seen as mutually exclusive epithets, nor were they, as perhaps today, grounds for identity formation.

The few research questions related to transnationalism that Palkisto does return to in the concluding stages of the work are highly important. For instance, the question of Crusell’s historiographical position in Finnish music history is certainly worthy of further scrutiny in the future beyond the scope that Palkisto could afford in the present work. Why, Palkisto seemingly innocently probes, was German Fredrik Pacius (1809–1891), rather than Crusell, established as the “Father of Finnish music” through his tenure as the music teacher at the university in Helsinki 1834 onwards? Pacius and Crusell were colleagues at the Royal Chapel in Stockholm for six years prior to Pacius’s appointment in Helsinki, but according to existing documents and research, I am under the impression that no one at the time seems to have considered Crusell eligible for the position. It is likely that the elder, already ailing composer was not seen as up to the challenge and the expected workload and thus not suitable for the post. In retrospect, this can only be a partial answer to questions of music and national identity. Viewed from a broader, historiographical aspect, Crusell’s near absence from the canon of “Finnish music” has to do with the classical-romantic musical style that he represented as well as with his cosmopolitan profile of musical agency. His international continental music idiom and musicianship were not something that could not have been seen as truly “Finnish”. However, in lieu of a more realistic, transnational and plural account of our musical past, the official historical narrative of “Finnish music” was written as a mythical, nationalistic story in which Sibelius’s *Kullervo* as late as in 1893 was heard as the “birth”, and everything before that as solely “maturing” of the musical life into a state of development where that became possible in the first place. It is a Hegelian grand narrative pure and simple, and it is remarkable that it has been questioned and interrupted as late as the recent two decades.

As Palkisto emphasizes throughout his dissertation, he is more interested in structures, institutions and the professional agency of Crusell than the actual living person. This abstinence from a more micro-historical approach is well justified and leaves open some highly interesting Crusell-related research areas to which I hope Palkisto returns in his future work.

Palkisto’s doctoral dissertation is a welcome addition and corrective to earlier research on the composer. His thesis reminds us that there is a lot to research in the life and music of Crusell – as well as, in my opinion, his contemporaries such as Thomas Byström (1772–1839) and Fredrik Lithander (1777–1823) – which has mostly been left outside the nationalistic music historiography in Finland. The thesis is a successful and theoretically sophisticated grasp into a rich research area to which I hope Palkisto returns with new questions in the future.

Are Bøe Pedersen, «*En Knude, som ved Menneskelige Raisons og historiske Exempler ikke kand løses*» : *Hebraisk mytologi og forsvar mot religionskritikk i Ludvig Holbergs Den jødiske Historie (1742)* (Bergen: Universitetet i Bergen, 2022). 499 s.

Karen Skovgaard-Petersen, *Det Danske Sprog- og Litteraturselskab*

Et af de mest upåagtede værker i Ludvig Holbergs vidtfavnende forfatterskab er *Den Jødiske Historie* fra 1742. I to tykke bind i kvartformat beretter Holberg her om jødernes historie fra skabelsen op til tæt på sin egen tid. Første bind strækker sig frem til Det Gamle Testaments maccabæere, og andet bind fortsætter med maccabæerne over romernes ødelæggelse af Jerusalem, jødernes derpå følgende 'Adspredelse' og senere forfølgelser i Europa. Værket har tilsyneladende ikke vakt senere tiders Holberglæseres nysgerrighed, men blot efterladt dem med en mild undren – i visse tilfælde ligefrem uvenlighed. "Den er tung å komme igjennem, virker i høy grad som et kompilasjonsarbeid, og er det eneste av alle Holbergs større verker som overhodet aldri er blitt trykt opp på nytt", skrev Francis Bull således i 1958 (citeret efter afhandlingen s. 51).

Den situation har de seneste årtier ændret på. Som led i to projekter ved Universitetet i Bergen, 'Holbergs Ideologier' og det dermed forbundne udgivelsesprojekt 'Ludvig Holbergs Skrifter' er der blevet rettet fornyet opmærksomhed på Holbergs historiske værker, og særlig har Torgeir Skorgen og Jørgen Sejersted brudt nyt land i studiet af *Den Jødiske Historie*. Og nu har Are Bøe Pedersen gjort værket til genstand for en lærd, perspektivrig og læseværdig afhandling, som han forsvarede for ph.d.-graden ved Universitetet i Bergen i marts 2022: «*En Knude, som ved Menneskelige Raisons og historiske Exempler ikke kand løses*» : *Hebraisk mytologi og forsvar mot religionskritikk i Ludvig Holbergs Den jødiske Historie (1742)*. Det er lykkedes ham at kaste nyt lys over det forsømte og udskældte værk og udbygge vores forståelse af Holbergs intellektuelle ståsted i den tidlige oplysningstid.

Titlens 'knude' henviser til de ord hvormed Holberg afslutter det store værk:

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Thi, at see et adspreedet, forhaanet, og med Sverd og Ild forfuldt Folk endnu at udgiøre et Antall af nogle Million Mennesker, der have conserveret deres gamle Sprog, Love, Sæder, Religion og Ceremonier, er et Paradox, som ikke kand begribes, og en Knude, som ved Menneskelige Raisons og Historiske Exempler ikke kand løses, saa at man ikke kand reede sig ud heraf, uden at erkiende GUDs Finger. (*Den Jødiske Historie* 2, s. 746)

– altså, at jøderne trods alle forfølgelser ikke bare har overlevet, men også formået at bevare deres religion og kultur, er et paradoks hinsides menneskelig fornuft. Det kan kun forklares med Guds indgriben. I Bøe Pedersens øjne har denne resignerede kapitulation over for forsynet i alt for høj grad fået lov til at dominere forskningens bedømmelse af værket. Man har betragtet kapitulationen – og dermed hele *Den Jødiske historie* – som et af ”Holbergs desidert svakeste øyeblikk som kritisk, årsakssøgende historiker” (s. 14).

Men det bør, erklærer han, ”byttes ut med en mer presis forståelse både av hva en «jødehistorie» egentlig er, hvilken opplysningskontekst Holberg tenker og skriver innenfor, og hvilke kontinentale diskusjoner det er Holberg trer inn i og ønsker å bringe til et dansk-lesende publikum med denne utgivelsen” (s. 14). En viktig pointe er således at Holberg ikke var den første der skrev om jødernes historie. Han bygger på tidligere behandlinger, ikke bare den antikke historiker Josefus’ to værker, *Den jødiske oldtid* og *Den jødiske krig* (1. årh. e.Kr.), men også værker tæt på hans egen tid, såsom Jacques Basnage’s *Histoire des Juifs* (1706). Ja, langt hen ad vejen er Holbergs værk en kompilation af disse forgængere. Det er således en af afhandlingens pointer at Holbergs *Den Jødiske Historie* tilhører en etableret protestantisk lærdomstradition.

Men som Bøe Pedersen fremhæver, er Holberg ikke blot kompilator, han er også, og nok så vigtigt, kommentator. Gennem hele værket indfletter han refleksioner over det han netop har berettet, og det er disse passager Bøe Pedersen særlig retter sin opmærksomhed på. Det er hans overordnede synspunkt at Holberg med *Den Jødiske Historie* ønskede at forsvare en traditionelt luthersk kristendomsforståelse mod religionskritiske angreb i samtiden. Det der står på spil for Holberg, er ”selve fundamentet for kristendommens historiske autoritet” (s. 19). Langt hen ad vejen er værket i Bøe Pedersens øjne at betragte som et indlæg i en løbende debat, ja ligefrem som et polemisk værk. Dens tematik til trods er *Den Jødiske Historie* således, som sine umiddelbare forgængere, helt og holdent skrevet på kristendommens præmisser.

Centralt i afhandlingen står spændingen mellem Holbergs ønske om at fastholde den gammeltestamentlige historie som reel historie på den ene side og, på den anden side, den omstændighed at mange intellektuelle på Holbergs tid i stigende grad betragtede mange af Bibelens hændelser – og særlig de ældste gam-

meltestamentlige begivenheder – som mytologi snarere end historie. Forsynets rolle i *Den Jødiske Historie* er således et gennemgående tema i afhandlingen. Bøe Pedersen viser at hvor forsynet ellers i Holbergs historiske værker blot fungerer som ramme og ikke direkte påvirker den historiske fremstilling, er det i *Den Jødiske Historie* i langt højere grad et konkret led i historiske årsagsforbindelser. Det betyder også at Holberg går ind i samtidens diskussioner af forsynets natur, dvs. om det virkede ved prædestination eller om Gud greb direkte ind gennem mirakler. Bøe Pedersen underkaster disse spørgsmål en nuanceret diskussion og er blandt andet i stand til at udpege signifikante forskelle i Holbergs syn på forsynets rolle i urhistorien, i patriarkernes tid og i senere tid.

Afhandlingen er klart struktureret og både veloplagt og velskrevet, fuld af prægnante formuleringer. Men den læser der er nysgerrig efter at stifte bekendtskab med Bøe Pedersens analyser af *Den Jødiske Historie*, må ruste sig med tålmodighed. De første 5 kapitler gennemgår den intellektuelle kontekst for *Den Jødiske Historie* og afhandlingens teoretiske forankring hos Mieke Bal, Gérard Genette og Paul Ricoeur, som alle præsenteres kompetent og særdeles grundigt. Også kapitel 5's diskussion af myte og mytologi fortjener at fremhæves. Det er tydeligt at Bøe Pedersen i sine egne analyser i kapitlerne 6-9 – og måske især i det vigtige afsluttende og opsamlende kapitel 10 – har glæde af sit omfattende teoretiske begrebsapparat. Men tilløbet er langt. Først på s. 239 kommer vi i gang med afhandlingens værkanalyser, hvor Bøe Pedersen demonstrerer et fintmærkende blik for de retoriske strategier Holberg benytter sig af.

Mens Holbergforskningen traditionelt har været optaget af at trække tematiske tråde rundt i Holbergs store *oeuvre* – idet man dog altså som oftest er gået uden om *Den Jødiske Historie* – afstår Bøe Pedersen fra et sådant fokus på forfatterskabet. I stedet kaster han blikket videre ud i samtidens idéhistoriske landskab. Det er en klog og forfriskende prioritering. Men dermed får han ikke peget på de interessante forbindelser der er mellem den *Den Jødiske Historie* og Holbergs helt samtidige roman *Niels Klims underjordiske rejse* (1741), der ligesom *Den Jødiske Historie* rummer et opgør med deismen. Og helt særligt ville det have været relevant i højere grad at læse Holbergs *Almindelig Kirkehistorie* (1738) sammen med *Den Jødiske Historie*. Også Holbergs *Heltehistorier* (1739) – og ikke mindst Kristoffer Schmidts analyser af Holbergs kompilatoriske fremgangsmåde i dette værk (se Ludvig Holbergs Skrifter, holbergsskrifter.no, holbergsskrifter.dk) – havde været oplagte at inkludere. Her er der stof til opfølgende studier. Til gengæld tilbyder afhandlingen en både bredspektret og indsigtfuld diskussion af Holbergs forhold til samtidens bibelkritik, deisme, naturet, politisk teori m.m.

Af og til kan diskussionerne dog føre lidt langt væk fra læsningen af *Den Jødiske Historie*. Det er fx ikke helt indlysende hvorfor Herders refleksioner over mytebe-

grebet i slutningen af 1700-tallet skal fylde så meget. Her har man fornemmelsen af at Bøe Pedersens bredere idéhistoriske interesser – som han formidler både smittende og kyndigt – har taget overhånd. Disse lange linjer får lov at dominere på bekostning af en nærmere diskussion af hvilket publikum Holberg skrev for. Holberg skrev på dansk, men i Bøe Pedersens øjne er værket et polemisk indlæg i en europæisk debat. Det kalder på en diskussion af hvordan polemikken blev kommunikeret og modtaget.

I det hele taget ligger boghistorie, ligesom editionsfilologi, uden for afhandlingens interessefelt, som Bøe Pedersen selv gør opmærksom på. Det er naturligvis helt legitimt. Men hans manglende interesse for disse emner kan nok siges at afspejle sig i en noget skødesløs omgang med bibliografiske oplysninger. Det kan der imidlertid rettes op på, for man kan kun håbe at Bøe Pedersen får mulighed for at udgive sin væsentlige, indsigtfulde og velskrevne afhandling i en lidt strammere, lidt mere trimmet bogform.

Agneta Helmius, *Mode och hushåll. Om formandet av kön och media i frihetstidens svenska små- och veckoskrifter* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensia, 2022). 237 s.

Gudrun Andersson, Uppsala universitet

Frihetstiden var en på många plan turbulent period för Sverige, då det agrara ståndssamhället så sakteliga ersattes av ett kapitalistiskt klassamhälle. Övergången kan också beskrivas i termer av att det tidigmoderna samhället övergick till ett modernt. Där de politiska, ekonomiska och sociala studierna av frihetstiden är många har färre studerat de kulturella förändringarna och det konsumtionssamhälle som till sist gjorde sitt intåg även här i den europeiska periferin. Agneta Helmius avhandling *Mode och hushåll. Om formandet av kön och media i frihetstidens svenska små- och veckoskrifter* utgör därför ett välkommet bidrag.

Reinhart Kosellecks begrepp *Sattelzeit* får sätta agendan för avhandlingen, för att fånga skiftet från det tidigmoderna till det moderna. Koselleck menar att tidigare erfarenheter ställdes mot och övergavs till förmån för nya förväntningar under perioden 1750–1850. Helmius syfte är att fånga den förändringen genom att med utgångspunkt i olika typer av tidskriftsmaterial undersöka ”vilken betydelse de nya medierna hade för formandet av denna moderna kultur; hur nya moderna identiteter och sociala relationer skrevs fram och förändrades” (s. 16).

Ett av avhandlingens huvudresultat är att de nya medierna bidrog till en könsdikotomisering, bland annat genom att marginalisera hushållet och att etablera ett könskodat språk där skillnaden mellan könen kunde upprätthållas. Snarare än att se fruntimmerstidningar som ett sätt för kvinnor att ta del i offentligheten menar Helmius att de istället marginaliserades. Samtidigt framhåller hon, i allra sista stycket, att det är angeläget att inte ”reproducera dikotomier mellan könen” (s. 214), utan också se till alternativ och motbilder.

Ämnena idéhistoria, som är Helmius akademiska hemvist, och historia, som är min, har många gemensamma forskningsområden, och i Uppsala erbjuder

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de båda ämnena tillsammans med ekonomisk historia ett historikerprogram (på kandidatnivå). Men läsningen av Helmius avhandling har också fått mig att se de många skillnader som finns mellan ämnena, och jag kommer att fokusera på dessa avseende dialog med tidigare forskning, källmaterial, analys och resultat samt struktur.

Helmius avhandling präglas av ett tvärvetenskapligt forskningsläge, där historiker och litteraturvetare har en framträdande plats. Källmaterialet kan därmed tolkas ur flera perspektiv och visa en nyanserad bild av mediernas roll i samhällsutvecklingen. Samtidigt begränsas den tidigare forskningen till en dryg handfull namn, som återkommer väl ofta, med namn i brödtexten. Här kan historikerna Maria Ågren, Karin Hassan Jansson och Jonas Liliequist och litteraturvetarna Ann Öhrberg och Mats Malm nämnas. Mer allvarligt är dock att den tidigare forskningen till övervägande del handlar om Sverige. Det finns ett omfattande internationellt forskningsfält som analyserat liknande material, ofta med fokus på just mode och genus. Jennie Batchelors forskning, framför allt om engelska *Lady's Magazine*, kan särskilt nämnas, men det finns mycket att hämta även för tyska, franska, italienska och österrikiska förhållanden, för att nämna några.

Vidare hade jag gärna sett en tydligare *dialog* med tidigare forskning. Omnämningarna i brödtexten är som sagt frekventa, men förhållningssättet ofta väl passivt. Som stöd för att inkludera texter som inte är politiska refereras till Maria Ågrens begrepp "skandaloffentlighet", det vill säga att rättegångshandlingar publicerades (s. 18, 58, 59, 67, 118). Någon närmare beskrivning av hur denna "skandaloffentlighet" såg ut, hur den framställde tiden som varit och den som komma skulle ges inte. Det hade annars kunnat ge ytterligare perspektiv på Helmius egen undersökning.

Ett annat exempel är den tydliga polemik som Helmius för mot Karin Hassan Jansson. Redan i inledningen fastställer Helmius att "Medan Karin Hassan Jansson beskriver delar av det material som åberopas här som att debatten 'did not regard gender relations as such', är min mening att den gjorde också det" (s. 29). Det upprepas i det närmaste ordagrant i inledningen till kapitel 3 (s. 109). Någon förklaring till deras olika tolkningar ges inte. Så tydliga ställningstaganden, med uttalad så polemisk udd mot en annan forskare, bör, menar jag, utvecklas. Vad baserar Hassan Jansson sina slutsatser på? På vilka grunder håller Helmius inte med? Vilka motargument stödjer Helmius tolkning?

En bit in i kapitel 3, i analysen om frihetstidens manlighetsideal, återkommer polemiken. *Sincerus* (berättaren i *Samtal Om Qwinno-Wäldet*) säger bland annat att "hustrun må ha lika magt med mig" (s. 120). Detta kan, säger Helmius, tolkas i enlighet med det Hassan Jansson "hävdar", alltså att idealet var en ärlig man med en god hustru vid sin sida. Den tolkningen stöds även i *En ärlig svensk*. Helmius

fortsätter: ”*Men viktigare* än att tolka fram manlighets- eller kvinnlighetsideal, eller för den delen äktenskapsideal, är att undersöka på vilket sätt kön användes i mediala beskrivningar av samhällets förändringar. I *En Ärlig Svensk* lyser kvinnor, med få undantag, med sin frånvaro” (s. 120, min kursivering) Vad som är ”viktigare” ifråga om tolkning hänger förstås samman med vilket syfte man har med sin undersökning. I Helmius fall stämmer påståendet, men med en annan fråga – som kanske Hassan Jansson har – gör det det sannolikt inte. För att komma vidare i de diametralt olika ståndpunkterna hade Helmius gärna kunnat presentera Hassan Janssons argument närmare och förhålla sig till dem.

I dessa, och andra, fall hade Helmius analys tjänat på en tydligare och mer aktiv dialog med tidigare forskning. Det gäller inte minst den internationella forskningen, som jag återkommer till nedan.

När det kommer till källmaterialet ska Helmius ha en eloge för att ta sig an ett så ”trivialt” material (s. 28). Det har, konstaterar hon, använts tidigare, men jag vill betona att det svenska tidskriftsmaterialet från 1700- och 1800-talen är oerhört underutnyttjat, inte minst för den typen av frågor som Helmius ställer.

Helmius material redovisas kortfattat, och inkluderar ett tiotal främst moraliska veckoskrifter från 1730-talet, ekonomisk-politiska och historiska veckoskrifter, dikter, roande småskrifter från 1750-talet samt Anna Maria Rückerschölds *Det Olyckliga Svenska Fruentimrets Böne-Skrift til Allmänheten*, kok- och rådgivningsböcker och fruntimmerstidningar från 1770-talet. Materialet presenteras också i dispositionen (s. 35f). Möjligen är det i källbehandlingen som skillnaden mellan en idéhistoriker och en historiker är störst; ingenstans framgår det på vilka grunder Helmius valt just dessa skrifter och, kanske än viktigare, vilka hon valt att inte inkludera. En översiktstablå över tänkbart och utvalt material hade varit klagörande, inte minst som materialet är tämligen disparat.

Inte heller finns det någon diskussion om urvalet av innehållet i tidskrifterna, eller om kontexten och innehållet mer generellt. Vilka delar av innehållet har analyserats, och på vilka grunder har valen gjorts? Vad mer innehåller tidskrifterna? Hur många belägg finns det som styrker Helmius tolkningar? Står de oemotsagda, eller innehåller materialet också alternativa motbilder? Min erfarenhet av arbetet med Boijes magasin (*Konst- och nyhetsmagasin för medborgare af alla klasser* utgiven 1818–1822 respektive *Magasin för konst nyheter och moder* utgiven 1823–1844) är att innehållet är synnerligen disparat och mångskiftande, och att man ofta kan hitta empiriska belägg för diametralt olika åsikter, normer eller identiteter i samma utgåva. Måhända är ett källkritiskt resonemang inte av nöden, men jag hade gärna sett ett avsnitt med källvärdering, där materialets potential för syftet lyfts fram.

Avsaknaden av systematik går igen i analysen. En mer detaljerad diskussion av metoder saknas, annat än att det är en ”begreppshistorisk metod” och att kön i

enlighet med Joan W. Scott används som analytisk kategori. Det hade varit värdefullt att få veta hur Helmius arbetat med materialet, vilka nyckelord hon letat efter, hur hon "taggat" materialet. Det hade till exempel kunnat visa hur vanliga vissa uttryck eller värderingar var, och om de användes som en förebild eller som ett avskräckande exempel. Är begreppen offentligt och privat respektive kön analytiska begrepp, eller empiriska? När Helmius nämner att de är sällsynta i materialet (s. 20 respektive s. 33) måste väl det syfta på de empiriska begreppen, men samtidigt presenterar hon dem som analytiska begrepp.

I likhet med tidigare forskning hade jag önskat en mer ingående argumentation av källmaterialet och tolkningarna därav. Avhandlingen är mycket rik på citat från källorna, men de får ofta stå för sig själva. Ett exempel återfinns i kapitel 3. Där presenteras flera kortare berättelser ur två skrifter, och citat blandas med återberättande av handlingen, men någon mer ingående tolkning eller resultatmarkering görs inte. Stycket avslutas med "På ett annat håll [i *Tragedie-Comedien*] sägs: 'Härlig syn, antingen i tankar eller sielfwa wärket!'" (s. 115). Hur ska den meningen förstås? Vad i den är centralt för Helmius argumentation?

I analysen hade jag även önskat en tydligare närvaro av den europeiska kontexten, särskilt den engelska. Helmius är tydlig med att de moraliska veckoskrifterna modellerats efter de engelska *Tatler* och *Spectator* både till utformning och genom inlån, innehåll (s. 41). I diskussionen om en förändrad livsstil (kapitel 2), fastslår hon att "föreställningar om samtiden hämtats bland annat från brittiska tidskrifter. Rimligen fanns tendenser att tolka eller stävja också i Stockholm" (s. 79). Så var det säkert, men inlånen från framför allt England nämns ofta utan att konsekvensen för de svenska veckoskrifterna problematiseras. Vid ett par tillfällen refereras den brittiska litteraturvetaren Emma J. Clery i text, båda gånger för att bekräfta att ett könskodat språk användes i såväl den engelska som svenska debatten (s. 109 och 125f.). Med tanke på den vikt Helmius lagt vid just frihetstiden blir jag nyfiken på om det fanns några drag som var specifika för svenska förhållanden. Vad var i så fall mer allmänt förekommande i Europa och inlånat till Sverige? Detta har sannolikt betydelse för hur de förändrade identiteterna och sociala relationerna ska tolkas i relation till sin nationella kontext, eller kanske internationella kontext.

Jag tror att en anledning till att analysen blir mer av ett konstaterande hänger samman med avhandlingens tydliga förändringsperspektiv. Helmius utgår från att en förändring skedde under perioden (frihetstiden) och syftet blir att visa *hur* det gick till snarare än att ställa en mer öppen fråga huruvida en förändring ägde rum eller, kanske, vad som förändrades och vad som uppvisar kontinuitet. Det blir alltså mindre av analys, och mer av att lyfta in belysande exempel på de föregivna förändringarna. En sådan tesdrivande undersökning hade vunnit på att disku-

tera exemplen utifrån olika större sammanhang (såsom källor, samhällsutveckling och tidigare forskning), där argument för *och emot* en förändring presenterats och vägts mot varandra.

Även om Helmius på goda grunder begränsat sin undersökning till frihetstiden, hade ett utsträckt tidsperspektiv kunnat nyansera omfattningen av förändringar. I kapitel 3 visar Helmius att 1750-talets medier lånat form och tilltal från de äldre moraliska veckoskrifterna, men att de inte var lika ”mästrande” och istället föreslog konkreta åtgärder (s. 121f). I det tidigare nämnda Bojjes magasin är moralisering ständigt närvarande, med kvinnor som måltavla. Moraliseringen tog sig där olika uttryck, såsom rättframma råd, satir, sedelärande berättelse och avskräckande exempel. Det tycks alltså ha funnits en viss kontinuitet i en mot kvinnor moraliskt riktad mediediskurs in på 1800-talets första hälft. Även bakåt i tiden föreligger en kontinuitet i att lasten – i betydelsen lystnad efter det nya – ända sedan antiken varit kvinnligt kodad (s. 93f.). Det här betyder inte att Helmius betoning av förändring är fel, men att den kanske inte var lika genomgripande som hon gjort gällande. Man kan vidare tänka sig att den marginalisering av hushållet som Helmius menar ägde rum hade olika genomslag i olika samhällsgrupper. Med mediekulturens borgerliga förtecken i åtanke kan marginaliseringen ha varit tydligast i en borgerlig kultur men bibehållit sin betydelse (som metafor för samhällsordningen) för allmogen.

Det finns således flera punkter där jag, som historiker, hade arbetat på ett annat sätt än Agneta Helmius gjort. Det ska dock inte förta den stora forskningsinsats som hon genomfört. Hennes uttalat och konsekvent genomförda tvärvetenskapliga arbetssätt ska särskilt lyftas fram, liksom att hon genom sitt källmaterial visat vilken oerhörd potential det innehåller för att studera den tidigmoderna epoken på väg in i moderniteten. Här finns inspiration och uppslag till ytterligare många tvärvetenskapliga studier och samtal.

Nanna Eva Nissen, *Forensic Theology and the Evaluation of Blasphemy Offences. The Prosecution of Written Pacts with the Devil in Denmark-Norway between 1634 and 1754* (Köpenhamn: Det Teologiske Fakultet, 2022). 383 s.

Anton Runesson, *Stockholms universitet*

I sin avhandling i kyrkohistoria – försvarad vid Köpenhamns universitet 2022 – undersöker Nanna Eva Nissen ett urval fall av djävulsförskrivning i Danmark-Norge från 1634 till 1754 (men med tygdpunkt på 1700-talets första hälft). Det är en sammanläggningsavhandling bestående av en kappa, tre artiklar, ett avslutande kapitel samt ett omfattande appendix med transkriberade utdrag ur de undersökta källorna. Vid tiden för disputation hade en artikel publicerats i *Scandinavian Journal of History*, en accepterats för *History of Psychiatry*, medan det i avhandlingen inte specificeras var den tredje kan väntas publiceras.

Till att börja med formuleras undersökningens syfte: att undersöka hur företrädare för kyrklig rätt bedömde djävulsförskrivningar för att nå ny kunskap om själva brottet och varför bestraffningen av det varierade över tid. Fenomenet ska vidare studeras ur tre perspektiv – rättshistoriskt, medicinhistoriskt, kyrkohistoriskt – för att komma åt både medicinska resonemang om mentala tillstånd och teologiska resonemang om förtvivlan och förtappelse. Mot bakgrund av detta är en ambition med undersökningen att åstadkomma «a reassessment of the grounds for the prosecution of written pacts with the Devil» (s. 21) i förhållande till tidigare studier av djävulsförskrivningar i det tidigmoderna Danmark-Norge, men också Sverige.

Diskussionen av tidigare forskning, som är sällsynt detaljerad, tar således avstamp i undersökningar av samma eller likvärdigt källmaterial utförda av Gustav Henningsen, Tyge Krogh, Bent Holm samt, för svensk del, Soili-Maria Olli. I diskussionen av de anfördas alster är kritiken av dem vare sig särskilt tydlig eller övertygande. En hel del rör hur dessa har definierat trolldom respektive djävulsförskrivning, där det är svårt att helt förstå vad som är problematiskt med definitionerna. På vilket sätt författaren själv definierar dessa annorlunda framgår inte

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heller så tydligt som vore önskvärt; överlag är det också fattigt med definitioner av teoretiska och metodologiska begrepp. Studier av amerikanska, tyska och brittiska historiker finns upptagna i litteraturlistan, men ges mycket liten plats i både brödtext och fotnoter. Det är förstås olyckligt. Det tämligen lilla sammanhang av relevant tidigare forskning som mejslas fram verkar hämmande och bidrar – tillsammans med det något snävt formulerade syftet – till att resonemangen för det mesta rör sig på en detaljerad nivå.

Men vad kommer författaren fram till i sina undersökningar? Några resultat som framhävs i slutdiskussionen är att djävulsförskrivning primärt bedömdes vara ett slags variant av blasfemi. Bedömningar av de anklagades utsagor om uppsåt underbygger slutsatsen. Detta kontrasteras mot tidigare forskning, som har tolkat den som en variant av trolldom. Vidare påvisas att bedömningar av de anklagades uppsåt och deras tal om melankoli och huvudsvaghet vittnar om att de kyrkorättsliga företrädarna intog ett slags «pastoral perspective and emphasized their [de anklagades] obstinacy» (s. 102). Avslutningvis omformuleras en i inledningen (s. 14) postulerad ambition – om att revidera «any narrative equating the end of sorcery prosecution by the end of the seventeenth century with a fundamental rejection of magical beliefs» – som ett resultat (s. 105). Vem som har påstått att magiska föreställningar övergavs efter 1600-talets trolldomsrannsakingar anförs emellertid inte. Påståendet verkar heller inte trovärdigt (och kan på vissa sätt tolkas som en motsägelse i förhållande till vad de tidigare undersökningarna av djävulsförskrivningar handlar om).

Att på detta sätt lyfta blicken ifrån källmaterialet och ställa de egna resonemangen i kontrast till mera övergripande studier av tidigmodern magi och religiositet – istället för till tidigare studier begränsade till just nordiska djävulsförskrivningar – skulle ha lyft avhandlingen. Dessvärre framstår de anaytiska bidragen oftast som justeringar till Kroghs slutsatser. Undersökningen skulle alltså ha vunnit på att ha varit vägledd av syfte och frågor formulerade mera självständigt i förhållande till denne. En möjlighet skulle ha varit att förankra studien i nyare forskning om konfessionell kultur. Författaren påpekar själv detta i inledningen, för att sedan nöja sig med att anförtro den uppgiften till framtida forskning. En annan möjlighet skulle ha varit att jämföra utredningarna av djävulsförskrivningar – i vilka främst män figurerade – med utredningar av kvinnor som antingen stod anklagade för magisk skadegörelse eller för trolldom och färder till Blåkulla. Kanske kunde likheter och kontraster på så vis ha möjliggjort slutsatser av mera övergripande karaktär? En tredje möjlighet, slutligen, hade kunnat vara att anlägga ett välmotiverat teoretiskt perspektiv, varigenom frågor om vilka krafter som uppfattades verka i världen kunde ställas. Helst skulle alla tre möjligheter ha bejakats. På så vis skulle de dansk-norska djävulsförskrivningarna ha kunnat visa på något väsentligt nytt om tidigmodern tid.

Alvar Blomgren, *The Hurricane of Passion. Popular Politics and Emotion in Late Georgian England 1792-1812* (Stockholm: Stockholms universitet, 2022). 255 s.

Peter K. Andersson, Örebro universitet

Alvar Blomgren's doctoral thesis focuses on the political events in a number of English cities during the Georgian period, arguing that emotions were being increasingly politicised and recruited in political campaigns in the wake of the French Revolution. Treading into territory that has been studied from numerous angles over the last two centuries, his venture is a daring one, and it is certainly difficult to apply new perspectives and make new observations to the political turmoil of post-revolutionary Europe. However, Blomgren manages to fulfill his task and shed new light, both on a general and specific level.

The context of the study is the politically sensitive situation in England following the French Revolution, and the conflict between insurrectionary forces calling for reforms also in England, and politicians who sought to preserve the existing political order. Often referred to as "Pitt's Terror", after Prime Minister William Pitt, who has been designated to represent the severe ways in which rebellions were crushed, the period predates what is seen as the "Age of Reform" in the 18XXs and XXs. Pitt issued a series of repressive laws, banning trade unions and all other forms of political organisation among the laboring classes. A number of clashes between opposing political camps ensued, putting further strain on a country caught up in a drawn-out war with Napoleonic France.

A period of British history that has long been dominated by the generations of historians working in, or in dialogue with, a Marxist interpretation, Blomgren joins the group of scholars who, in recent decades, have sought to apply a different viewpoint in order to reach new conclusions. With historical events such as riots and uprisings, this is particularly pertinent, but also particularly challenging. Blomgren stresses how many of the most prominent historians dealing

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with this period, including George Rudé and Charles Tilly, sought to lessen the emotional aspect of the crowds' actions to emphasise their political rationality. Taking earlier generations of historians to task for ignoring emotions is certainly apposite, although in his effort to accentuate the originality of his own contribution, he perhaps overstates the case somewhat. As he acknowledges, many later historians have made wide-ranging studies of changes in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century concerning conceptions of emotions and sensibility, including Colin Jones, Philip Carter and Ute Frevert, but focusing on the political world, he does not engage with this type of research as much as previous work on the era's politics. The effort to imbue political history with an emotional perspective is an important step towards combining different strands of scholarship, but one gets the feeling that the political is the overarching theme, while emotions is just a way of getting at it. Thus, Blomgren spends much time discussing the concept of emotions, whereas "politics" is considered to be a fairly unproblematic concept.

This is, however, a common problem in works that seek to infuse a new perspective into an old subject, and perhaps one that can never be entirely avoided. As Blomgren gets going with his close study of a number of political uprisings, his skills as a historian are admirably displayed. The first two chapters deal with events in Nottingham and examines how both government supporters and reformers employed emotions in order to make the community side with them. Several interesting events are discussed, including the burning of effigies of the prominent republican Thomas Paine, a hero in Revolutionary France but identified as an enemy by anti-revolutionary currents in England, and the practice of "pumping" and "ducking", where crowds seized representatives of their enemy and lowered them into a body of water. In the detailed accounts and analyses of such phenomena, Blomgren manages to tease out many revealing and relatively unexplored aspects of the emotional and behavioural life of the turn of the nineteenth century. Especially fascinating is his examination of various ways in which rioters tried to humiliate their opponents by cutting off pieces of their clothes. Rituals known as "cropping" and "docking" consisted of cutting the tails off tailcoats, using terminology originally referring to the cutting of dogs' ears and tails. The related custom of "spencering" was another means of shortening a coat, but this term derived, interestingly, from the word for a woman's item of dress, the spencer, thus effectively symbolising an emasculation, or even castration.

Moving on from Nottingham, in his last two chapters, Blomgren deals with events in London and Liverpool – the mass protests against abuses of prisoners in the Cold Bath Fields house of correction, and clashes between anti-slavery activists and workers dependent on the slave trade, respectively. By combining these varying but fundamentally related events, he manages to include many of the main

themes underlying political struggles at the time. In the process, several interesting and understudied primary sources are employed, such as letters to the Home Office from government spies infiltrating groups of radical workers, and minutes from so called controverted election cases, challenged elections where witnesses from various walks of life were called to testify, thus providing a rare case of plebeian voices taken down verbatim.

So, what does Blomgren bring, in the end, to the study of these pivotal political events? In his meticulous work with a wide variety of source material, he supplies new aspects and shades to the picture of the age, perhaps especially concerning a diversity of groups, voices and customs that has hitherto only been partly glimpsed. But his main contribution is doubtlessly his application of theoretical tools from the school of the history of emotions onto these occurrences. Trying to find a new perspective is often a difficult task, and any study that foregrounds a particular concept will inevitably be criticised for the limitations of that concept. This means that when one is reading a monograph which tries to persuade its readers that almost everything the historical actors do or say betray certain emotions, one often asks oneself: Is this really “emotions”? Is “emotions” the best term to convey what they were doing? In correlation with this, there is a danger of allowing the concept to encompass too much, so that one begins to wonder if all political actions are emotional, and whether emotions, then, is the best word for narrowing down the focus.

But Blomgren manages to steer clear of such pitfalls for the most part, and provides a solid and convincing new picture of the age. His use of the theoretical framework is innovative enough so that he even concocts a theory of his own, by combining the notion of everyday tactics as devised by Michel de Certeau, and the theory of emotional regimes formulated by William Reddy. Consequently, Blomgren’s monograph is the first work investigating the subject of “emotional tactics” within the field of history. Not bad for a dissertation.

Jón Kristinn Einarsson, *Jón Steingrímsson og Skaftáreldar*
(Reykjavík: Sögufélag, 2022). 264 pp.

Margrét Gunnarsdóttir, National Archives of Iceland

This book is about human existence in exceptionally adverse conditions. Volcanic eruption on the immense scale of the Laki eruption (in Icelandic named ‘Skaftáreldar’) which broke out in 1783 was extremely destructive. Earthquakes and eruptions are a perennial threat in Iceland past and present. The catastrophe striking the country during the years 1783–1785 was by far the severest experience the islanders have faced from the period of the settlement in the late ninth century.

The times were testing and one of the most pressing questions was how to bring aid to the people who were abandoning their farms in flocks in the area near the Laki volcano. This was the task officials in Iceland were faced with during the summer of 1784.

Jón Kristinn Einarsson has written a detailed account of a dispute which lead to public charges against one of the royal officials, the provost in the South, Jón Steingrímsson (1728–1791). His work, *Jón Steingrímsson og Skaftáreldar*, is in two parts, first a historical essay (pp. 21–119) and then primary sources (letters and Steingrímsson’s monograph) in an appendix skillfully introduced and edited by Professor Már Jónsson (pp. 121–236).

In his essay, Einarsson puts events into context and discusses the case against Steingrímsson. The essay is divided into three main chapters. The first chapter is an introduction describing the circumstances and historical perspective, the administrative system and the royal officials involved in the Steingrímsson case. The Laki eruption and its effects on people and livestock is also discussed (pp. 41–47) as well as the historical context of disaster relief in the eighteenth century (pp. 28–34). A fundamental objective of the administration was to prevent people from vagrancy. The second chapter (pp. 51–61) describes the response of the adminis-

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tration in Copenhagen during the winter of 1783–1784 when a fundraising was carried out in Denmark and Norway. It is informative to read about the European and Danish context of proposed humanitarian aid. Einarsson stresses that the nature of the Laki catastrophe was different from more common disasters such as crop failures caused by bad weather or epidemics (p. 59).

These two introductory chapters lead to the main chapter titled 'The Jón Steingrímsson Case' (pp. 65–108). Steingrímsson, the provost in the South, where the fires were burning, is the person 'who is most closely associated with the Laki eruption in the minds of most Icelanders', as Einarsson writes (p. 239). In historical writings during the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century Steingrímsson was much admired and even idealized for his courage and powerful prose. The tale of the Fire-Priest and the Fire-Mass is a familiar one to Icelanders young and old. On 20 July 1783 Steingrímsson's preaching miraculously stopped the flow of lava when it was approaching his church in Kirkjubæjarklaustur (p. 65). However, as events unfolded in 1784, Steingrímsson faced enormous challenges. The lava flow was very destructive and the eruption was traumatic for himself and his flock. To make matters even worse Steingrímsson was charged with unlawfully distributing public money from a government fund to destitute farmers during the summer. This puzzling case is at the heart of Einarsson's narrative.

In May 1784, the Governor of Iceland, Lauritz Andreas Thodal, handed over to Steingrímsson a sealed parcel (containing 600 rdl.) which he was supposed to deliver to the County Magistrate in Vestur-Skaftafellssýsla, Lýður Guðmundsson, who was meant to distribute the money to farmers on the brink of destitute in the county. The aim was to able the farmers to buy new livestock and stop them from abandoning their farms. But on the way back home from the Seat of the Governor (Bessastaðir) Steingrímsson met many of his parishioners fleeing their farms. He (and to make the case more complicated, Sigurður Ólafsson, the monastic proprietor at Kirkjubæjarklaustur, who was accompanying him) decided to start the distribution of the relief money immediately. Steingrímsson was thus in breach of official regulations but he felt it was his duty in these extraordinary circumstances to act in an hour of need.

Einarsson's research gives a fresh perspective on the Steingrímsson case. The case is well-known. Hitherto in historical studies Steingrímsson's explanations of his actions have not been questioned (p. 9–10, 241). Steingrímsson's autobiography discusses the case in details. There he claims that the charges against him were orchestrated by his adversaries and that he had been treated unjustly (chapter 42).¹

¹ In English translation: Jón Steingrímsson. *A Very Present Help in Trouble. The Autobiography of a Fire-Priest*. Translated by Michael Fell (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2002).

Einarsson introduces varied sources to shed light on this strange case, i.e. letters of officials, receipts and reports which are preserved at the Icelandic National Archive (pp. 17–18). Einarsson shows that the money Steingrímsson received from the Governor was not, as Steingrímsson has claimed, relief aid sent from Copenhagen in the spring of 1784 where funds had been raised during the winter. Sources reveal that no aid was sent to Iceland in the year 1784. It was Governor Thodal himself who provided the money from a public fund he was in charge of (*Jústitskassi* or the Judicial fund) (pp.77–78).

The detailed information revealed by Einarsson's sources are skilfully presented (pp. 80–103) and his readers can follow Steingrímsson's every step and communications while the money was in his keeping. Furthermore, Einarsson's neatly woven narrative of transactions between officials gives a thorough account of what took place in government circles and what was at stake in Iceland during those pressing times.

The narrative gives the reader the impression that the whole affair in its complexity was a case of misunderstanding and a falling out between the officials involved. Steingrímsson tells the story from his point of view in his autobiography as well as in his monograph on the eruption, which is printed in the appendix 'Ein fullkomin relation og skrif um jarðeldinn í Skaftafellssýslu' (pp. 175–236).² It is informative for the reader to be able to read interchangeably Einarsson's essay and the primary sources which his work is based on. In Steingrímsson's monograph, for example, we learn that his parishioners were torn by strife before the eruption ('eldkveikjur á milli nágranna við upphaf eldanna') and some of them turned on him because of disagreements about a new land survey (pp. 235–236).

Einarsson concludes that Steingrímsson's autobiography can not be regarded as a reliable source about the process of distributing public relief money during the summer of 1784. Steingrímsson skips some essential facts, most importantly that the monastic proprietor, Sigurður Ólafsson, had sealed the money-parcel before the two of them left Stórólfsvoll (the farm of the County Magistrate in Rangárvallasýsla), a seal Steingrímsson later broke (p. 117).

However it should not be over-looked that the honour of a dutiful royal official was at stake here. Einarsson writes that Steingrímsson was not as well known amongst his contemporaries as he is today (p. 24). It is true that his fame grew after his death but he was nevertheless a much respected royal official during his time. His great concern for his flock and cultivation of his farm (royal estate) had been noticed in high places before the charges were made against him. Steingrímsson was amongst the exemplary patriotic persons described in Ove Mallings'

² In English translation: Jón Steingrímsson. *Fires of the Earth, the Laki Eruption 1783–1784*. Translated by Keneva Kunz (Reykjavík: University of Iceland Press, 1998).

book, *Store og gode handlinger* (pp. 415–420).³ The charges brought against him were obviously hard to bear as well as the final verdict. In his autobiography he uses impassioned words to describe his disgrace. Having to apologize publicly for what he himself regarded as false and misleading accusations by his adversaries must have been a heavy cross to bear for Steingrímsson who was by heart a loyal and dutiful royal official.

Einarsson attempts to put Steingrímsson's case into political context by observing prioritisation and interactions in the government circles of the officials involved in the case (p. 15). Lack of confidence had been felt between Icelandic officials and Governor Thodal and in the administration in Denmark voices of distrust towards Icelandic officials were noticed. Einarsson suggests that Steingrímsson's case could be seen as part of a 'deep-seated conflict between Icelandic officials and the governor representing the Danish central government' (p. 241). This interpretation is well argued with references to official sources, but the reader is nevertheless left with the feeling that the Steingrímsson case is not only political but also personal with various interests involved.

Jón Kristinn Einarsson's first work is highly interesting and thought-provoking. The book reveals that officials were confronted with pressing questions regarding their duties during the summer of 1784 when the effects of the Laki eruption were really starting to bite. It sheds light on the difficulties facing people and local officials in Iceland and gives insight into the hardship and traumatic situation evolving during the Laki eruption.

³ See: Ove Malling, *Store og gode handlinger af Danske, Norske og Holstenere* (København 1777), pp. 521, 526–528. As well in the edition from 1783, pp. 415–420.

Thomas Daltveit Slettebø, Ola Teige and Øystein Lydik Idsø Viken (eds.), *Fredsårene. Norge i fred 1720–1807* (Oslo: Dreyers förlag, 2022). 439 s.

Dorothee Goetze, Mid Sweden University

While continental Europe did not see any change, as it continuously experienced a multitude of wars throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, the period following the Great Northern War until the Napoleonic Wars is described as an era of peace (*fredsårene*) both for Danish-Norwegian and Swedish history. The anthology published by Thomas Daltveit Slettebø, Ola Teige and Øystein Lydik Idsø Viken revisits the Norwegian experience of peace between 1720 and 1807 in twelve chapters which discuss political, economic and military aspects as well as memory culture of peace. However, it must be critically noted that only two of the twelve authors who contributed to this book are female.

Although not stated in the table of contents, the book is implicitly divided into two parts: the first part deals with political, economic, military, and legal aspects, while the second part looks at memory-cultural issues. This division is in line with the two main objectives for the anthology which the editors explicate in the introduction: to examine the prerequisites for this era of peace and its perception by the Norwegian population. However, the first seven articles are not limited to prerequisites for this era of peace in a narrow sense, but describe how economic, military, and legal conditions change during peacetime, thus, debunking the judgement of earlier research which interpreted this era as an age of stagnation.

Øystein Rian and Michael Bregnsbo take a closer look at the political framework for the Norwegian era of peace. Bregnsbro deconstructs the narrative of the peaceful Danish-Norwegian foreign policy in the second half of the 18th century. He shows that the experience of peace is only true when it comes to the territories of Denmark and Norway themselves, while other parts of the Danish-Norwegian empire have been involved in conflicts in the North of the Holy Roman Empire

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as well as outside Europe. Neither was the Danish-Norwegian military downsized during these years, nor did the kings and their governments pursue a peaceful and revanchism-free foreign policy. The fact that Denmark and Norway did not get involved in wars was most likely a matter of chance.

The article by Jonas Nordin and Oskar Sjöström on Sweden during the period of peace following the Great Northern War completes the Norwegian perspective and comes to similar conclusions as Bregnsbo's. Furthermore, Nordin and Sjöström show how hostility to war arose not only among the Swedish social and intellectual elites from the mid-18th century onwards, but also in the public at large, and that the arguments gradually shifted from pragmatic and economic considerations to moral ones.

Finn Erhard Johannessen and Trond Bjerckås focus on economic aspects of peace. Discussions about costs are often limited to the context of wars. Historical peace research has so far not asked about the costs of peace. Like Bregnsbo, Johannessen is able to show that peace did not automatically lead to a reduction of the military sector. It was only after the establishment of the union between Sweden and Norway in 1814 that the Norwegian military, which had been enlarged around the middle of the 18th century, was downsized. The military was a significant economic factor, stimulating Norway's economic and infrastructural development even in peacetime.

Peace as a driving force for change becomes even more evident in the article by Trond Bjerckås, who argues that peace changed the state's economic framework. After the end of Great Northern War, the Danish-Norwegian government had to find new sources of income. While the new tax register was withdrawn because it could not satisfy the government's expectations due to changed conditions for tax revenues as a result of peace, when special taxes from wartime were no longer acceptable, the sale of churches was considered a success that helped to balance state finances. Although here too the effect was rather small. From this situation, a transformation in the state's economic thinking developed towards cameralism, as Bjerckås argues.

Knut Dørum's and Ola Teige's contributions scrutinise deviant behaviour on a local and a transnational level, respectively. Knut Dørum compares two cases in which peasants and soldiers deny military service and the supply of soldiers in 1752 and 1799. The fact that these refusals took place in peacetime make them particularly interesting. He interprets the behaviour of the peasants and soldiers as expressions of compliance with legal norms and conflicts of interests. Ola Teige's article examines how Denmark-Norway and Sweden have dealt with the problem of extraditing criminals to the authorities of the other state and contextualises these measures with discussions on the natural law and sovereignty. The Great

Northern War serves as a *caesura* for identifying changes in the extradition practice. Teige's contribution is the longest in the entire book and, at 70 pages, more than twice as long as most of the others, which leads to a slight imbalance.

A third of the contributions in this anthology deal with aspects of the culture of remembrance and explore the question of whether and how it has changed in peacetime. Thomas Dalveit Slettebø describes how Fredrikshald, the town, where Charles XII of Sweden was killed at Fredriksten fortress, developed into a memorial during the 18th century era of peace. Ina Louise Stovner and Finn Erhard Johannessen contribute with an art-historical perspective when discussing Nicolai Abildgaard's historical paintings at the Riddersal at Christiansborg Palace and comparing war and peace time medals, respectively. Inga Henriette Undheim explores how war and peace are represented in Ludvig Holberg's historical works.

The anthology is concluded by Øysten Lydik Idsø Viken's article on how thoughts about war and peace changed in the public discourse in Norway. Increasingly, peace became an identifying factor in political rhetoric during the 18th century. While war symbolised the strength of the ruler and demanded discipline of the subjects in the beginning of the century, peace opened the ways for immoral behaviour. Gradually, peace was reinterpreted as a value in and of itself. As such it was an expression of the king's and his subjects' close connection to God.

Combining these different perspectives on peace, the anthology draws a wide picture of the era of peace in Norway. The fact that neither the introduction nor the articles included in the anthology tie in with theoretical or methodological discussions from the field of (historical) peace research reflects the state of the art of historical peace research not only in Norwegian, but also in Scandinavian early modern history and cannot be held against them. Rather, the anthology might serve as a point of departure and stimulus for further research and discussions on historical peace in Norway and Scandinavia.

Bo Lindberg, *Disputation, dissertation, avhandling. Historien om en genre* (Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, 2022). 248 s.

Per Pippin Aspaas, UiT Norges arktiske universitet

Idéhistoriker Bo Lindbergs siste bok har undertittelen *historien om en genre*. I denne historien, om genren vi i dag kaller avhandling, ligger tyngdepunktet i analysen på perioden fra cirka 1650 og fram til 1852, da en større reform i svensk høyere utdanning førte til at den tradisjonsrike dissertasjonsteksten endret karakter. Det er vel å merke ikke tale om en teoretisk-litteraturvitenskapelig studie, snarere en utdanningssosiologisk og begrepshistorisk.

Å lese en bok av Lindberg er alltid givende. Ikke minst når han, som i denne boken, har samlet fruktene av år med fordypning i svensk og europeisk lærdomshistorie. Referansene til egne arbeider går helt tilbake til 1973; vi har med andre ord å gjøre med en ekte nestor. Referansene til andre forskeres arbeider på svensk, engelsk, tysk og ikke minst latin er strødd utover en periode på mer enn fire århundrer.

Som Lindberg påpeker, var genren i tidlig nytid innbakt i et komplekst sett av ritualer som kulminerte med selve disputasen, *disputatio*. I denne høytidelige tilstelningen ble kandidaten – *respondens* – utsatt for en serie med kritiske spørsmål. Her gjaldt det å svare godt for seg, på latin. Det var *preses* – typisk en høyt merittert professor – som sto ansvarlig for innholdet i teksten som skulle forsvares, *dissertatio*. Denne forelå trykt før den akademiske akten fant sted (begrepene *disp.* og *diss.* ble i praksis brukt om hverandre, men Lindberg gjør det lettere for oss ved å reservere det ene for akten og det andre for teksten). Ofte, kanskje oftest, hadde ikke respondenten skrevet noe som helst av selve teksten, til tross for at han figurerte på tittelbladet side om side med preses. Imidlertid kunne dissertasjonsteksten være ledsaget av dedikasjoner eller andre paratekster (svensk: kringtekster), eksempelvis dikt på svensk, fransk eller latin. Pussig nok blir aldri preses

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takket i forord eller lignende, slik skikken er i dagens doktorgradsavhandlinger. På 1700-tallet var det derimot vanlig at respondenten lovpriser av medstudenten eller sambygdingen, eller han inntok selv rollen som den som lovpriser andre, men da gjerne velgjørere utenfor academia.

Å ta utdanning var dyrt. Skulle man fullføre studieløpet måtte man disputere to ganger, først *pro exercitio* (for øvnings skyld) og dernest, gjerne lenge etterpå, *pro gradu* (for graden). Foruten livsopphold i universitetsbyen, det vil si Uppsala, Åbo (Turku) eller Lund, måtte studenten betale en særlig avgift til preses. I tillegg var det studenten som skulle dekke trykkekostnadene. Og når akten vel var over, måtte han betale for promosjonsseremonien (doktorkreeringen) og spandere disputasøl på sine studiekamerater. Ikke alle studenter kom seg gjennom alle disse stegene. Et dokumentert høyt frafall skyldtes trolig primært økonomiske problemer. Samtidig var det faktisk mulig å gjøre karriere uten å ha tatt eksamen, eksempelvis som privatlærer eller ingeniør. Selv innen den viktigste mottakeren av uteksaminerte kandidater på 1600- og 1700-tallet, det kirkelige systemet, var det ikke helt uvanlig med «halvstuderte røvere». Den kulturelle kapitalen ved å overhodet ha vært immatrikulert var betydelig.

Det har vært vanlig å se ned på dissertasjonen som genre. Litteratur- og lærdomshistorikere har bladd forbi den rike floraen av dissertasjoner og isteden konsentrert seg om den nasjonalspråklige litteraturen fra tidlig nytid. Tekstene var angivelig rene pliktløp, formalia uten vitenskapelig eller innholdsmessig verdi. På dette punktet er Lindberg ambivalent. Listen over fremragende lærde i stormaktstidens og frihetstidens Sverige er lang. En stor andel av de mest kjente navnene – som Rudbeck, Celsius, Ihre, Linné – var svært aktive i rollen som preses. Like fullt, skriver Lindberg: «De nämnda personernas idéer har i regel uttryckts även i andra skrifter än dissertationer; i några fall [...] är det påfallande att deras viktigaste idéer *inte* tagits upp i dissertationer» (s. 195f). Enda sterkere står dette uttrykt i åpningskapitlet, hvor det heter at de tidlig-moderne dissertasjonstekstene «avspeglar tidens vetenskap, mer sällan den avancerade forskningsfronten utan snarare dess ordinära standard» (s. 10).

Slike uttalelser om innholdet i dissertasjonstekster er nedslående, ikke minst i lys av de store ressursene som nylig er anvendt på digitalisering av samtlige dissertasjoner fra Åbo Akademi perioden 1642–1828 (med privatfinansiering fra Ulla og Ilkka Paatero) og Uppsala Universitet perioden 1602–1855 (med statlige midler). Samtidig motsier Lindberg seg selv, jamfør kapitler som «Författarskapet», «Censur och akademisk frihet» og «Innehållet». I et appendix («Bihang») har Lindberg gjort ikke-latinkyndige lesere en tjeneste ved å oversette en lang rekke dissertasjonstitler til svensk, ordnet etter tema. Empirisk vitenskap og opplysningstankegods preget utvilsomt dissertasjonstekstene mer og mer ut over på

1700-tallet. At statsvitenskap-professor Johan Ihre måtte gjennom rettssaker for synspunkter han hadde fremlagt i dissertasjoner sier sitt.

Et særlig hyggelig innslag på 1700-tallet er de mange dissertasjonene om topografi. Lokal- og regionalhistorie ble løftet fram innenfor akademias høyborger – på latin. Dette trekket har muligens sammenheng med den tilsynelatende særsvenske skikken å inndele studentene i «nationer», altså studentforeninger gruppert etter hvilken del av landet man kom fra. Kan hende er en god del av disse lokallistoriske tekstene skrevet av respondentene selv, i samarbeid med nationen. Og apropos særsvensk: De komparative perspektivene i Lindbergs studie går mest til Tyskland, herunder Greifswald (naturlig nok, siden Vorpommern var under svensk styre). Til Danmark-Norge og universitetet i København vendes blikket aldri.

Det nesten totale fraværet av dansk-norske paralleller, både faglitteratur og primærkilder, er påfallende. Står det så dårlig til med lærdomshistoriografien hos oss, at Lindberg ikke har funnet noe å referere til? Jeg frykter at svaret er ja. Det er uten tvil mengder av primærkildemateriale å ta fatt på også her. For fremtidige forskningsprosjekter kan vi lene oss på tunge forskningstradisjoner i både Tyskland og Sverige, inklusive Finland. Men først må dissertasjonstekstene løftes fram. Kongelige Bibliotek, som jo er fusjonert med Københavns universitetsbibliotek, har alle forutsetninger for å gjennomføre et like ambisiøst katalogiserings- og digitaliseringsprosjekt som de som nå er kommet i havn i Åbo og Uppsala. Med primærkildene på plass, kan forskningen følge etter. Her vil Lindbergs bok være en trygg og inspirerende veiviser.

Rebecka Lennartsson, *Ulla Winblad. Liv och legend* (Stockholm: Stockholmia förlag, 2021). 158 s.

Henrika Tandefelt, Helsingfors universitet

Ulla Winblad är inte bara en fiktiv gestalt som Carl Michael Bellman har gett ett diktat liv i otaliga sånger och epistlar där många av oss har mött henne som kärleksnymf, Venus prästinna, eldig, yster och skön, bland rumlande, festande gestalter och klingande buteljer. Vid sidan av denna diktade gestalt, som hos Bellman rör sig på gränsen mellan mytologisk och verklig tid, fanns en riktig kvinna, nästan jämnårig med Bellman själv, som levde i Stockholm och Norrköping 1744–1798. Hon hette Maria Christina Kiellström, kallades sannolikt Maja Stina, och hon verkar själv i sin ungdom stundvis ha använt namnet Ulla Winblad när hon rörde sig i Stockholms sociala marginal som en publik kvinna, utan laga försvar eller fast anställning.

Maja Stina var yngsta barnet till föräldrar som hörde till Stockholms fattigfolk. Fadern Jöns var hjälpkarl vid artilleriet, om modern Maria vet vi att hon avled i rödsot när barnen var små. Ett fattigbevis uppsattes efter hennes död som intygade att hushållet var skuldsatt och utan medel. Fadern förlorade sitt arbete vid artilleriet på grund av fallandesot (epilepsi) och försörjde familjen genom att sopa gårdar, hugga ved och utföra andra enkla sysslor. Jöns gifte om sig med pigan Catharina Elisabeth Winblad som han fick en son med. I denna familj växte Maja Stina upp i Stockholms utkanter tills hon lämnade hemmet vid 15 års ålder.

Det är Maria Christina, eller Maja Stina Kiellströms liv som Rebecka Lennartsson berättar om och undersöker i boken *Ulla Winblad: liv och legend*. Det är den verkliga Maja Stina som spåras i ett ofta fragmentariskt källmaterial där delar av hennes liv har dokumenterats, särskilt i befolkningskällor och i domstolsprotokoll.

Maja Stinas liv är både typiskt och unikt. Genom henne kan Lennartsson undersöka och måla fram den fattiga stadsbefolkningens villkor, miljöer och lev-

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nadsomständigheter. I kapitlet "Fragment från en fattig barndom" beskriver Lennartsson barnet Maja Stinas värld runsligt, sinnligt, socialt och ekonomiskt, i ett Stockholm där samhällets välbeställda och utblottade levde närmare inpå varandra än senare, men där det fanns klara sociala gränser och misär. Maja Stina blir här ett slags exempelfall vars liv delvis tänks fram genom den kunskap som finns om staden och befolkningen. Hennes levnadsöde som vuxen, både som ogift och gift, belyser på samma sätt på ett allmänt plan de obemedlade kvinnornas försörjning och möjligheter i 1700-talets stad. Det är brokigt och oklart, gränserna mellan det lagliga och olagliga, sedliga och osedliga flyter.

Lennartssons bok om Maja Stina Kiellströms liv är ändå inte bara berättelsen om en av de många. Det är också berättelsen om människan och individen Maja Stina. Bellman vävde in namnet Ulla Winblad i sitt poetiska universum och Maja Stinas liv och rykte var därefter för evigt knutna till de både lyriska och snackiga skildringarna av den villiga och kåta Ulla Winblad som "tillhörde alla". När hon 1772 gifte sig med tullvaktmästaren Eric Nordström antog Maja Stina hans efternamn och följande år flyttade paret till Norrköping. Som Lennartsson visar lyckades besökarhustrun Maja Stina Nordström ändå inte bli av med sitt rykte även om paret uppnådde ett visst materiellt välstånd. Visorna i *Bacchi Orden* samt *Fredmans epistlar* och *Fredmans sånger* hade fått stor spridning och var välkända även om de på 1770-talet inte ännu hade tryckts. Epistlarna gavs ut i tryck 1790 och sångerna 1791, men då hade de redan sjungits och blivit bekanta för en växande publik under minst två decennier. Bakgrunden till den fiktiva Ulla Winblad var bekant också för 1800-talets Bellmanforskning så inte ens i döden har Maja Stina blivit av med sin poetiska skugga.

Maken Nordströms våldsamma och spritdränkta leverne verkar inte ha bidragit till hans hustrus möjligheter att inte väcka uppmärksamhet. Lennartssons läsning av kämnärsrättens protokoll, där makarna förekommer mer än en och två gånger, visar att Nordström utsattes för elaka skämt och skymfer på grund av hustruns tidigare liv i dikt och verklighet, men därtill att han var okänd i Norrköping som en våldsam och oregerlig drinkare och slagsbult som var opålitlig och orättfärdig i sitt jobb som sjötullsbesökare. Han dog i arresten 1781, 36 år gammal.

Också Maja Stinas andra äktenskap, med hallrättsbetjänten Eric Johan Lindståhl, präglades i hög grad av oro, våld och rapporter om olovlig utskänkning av sprit, lösaktig levnad och grannar som angrep makarna Lindståhl. De kom ändå att leva ett materiellt sätt mer ordnat liv än Maja Stina haft som barn, och när hon dog 54 år gammal var hon och maken bosatta i en gård som de hade köpt på Timmermansgatan på södra malmen i Stockholm.

Maria Christina Kiellström begravdes 1798 på Maria kyrkogård på Södermalm, men hennes alter ego Ulla Winblad levde vidare och lever än i dag. I Re-

becka Lennartssons bok lever de båda, ständigt intrasslade i varandras verkligheter. Lennartsson har gjort ett grundligt arbete med att belysa och diskutera Maja Stina och hennes liv i ljuset av samtidskällor och dikt, och hon är väl inläst både i litteraturvetenskaplig och historisk forskning. Boken dokumenterar och diskuterar nyanserat Maja Stinas val och villkor i 1700-talets ståndssamhälle och hennes relation till dikten, liksom diktens relation till en ofta rätt så hård verklighet.

Rebecka Lennartsson har skrivit en bok som bygger på gedigen forskning, men är avfattad med ett flytande och inlevelsefullt anslag. Det är en mycket välskriven bok som är fint formgiven med ett bildmaterial som är genomtänkt både estetiskt och innehållsmässigt. Maria Christina Kiellström hade kanske inte önskat att människor 225 år efter hennes död fortfarande skulle begäpa hennes utsatt-
het, men Lennartsson har gett henne en fin och värdig behandling samtidigt som Kiellström också framstår som påstridig, eldfängd och besvärlig. Alla facetter av hennes liv kan vi ändå inte nå, och det är bra så. En del av sig själv har alla människor rätt att få ta med sig i graven.

Mia Skott, *Tapetmakerskor. Självständiga yrkeskvinnor i 1700-talets Stockholm* (Stockholm: Stockholmia förlag, 2022). 159 s.

Paul Borenberg, *Stockholms universitet*

Mia Skott undersöker i sin bok tapetmakerskornas villkor som yrkesverksamma kvinnor i 1700-talets Stockholm. Det är en bok som till lika delar är en historisk undersökning och ett sorts socialhistoriskt feministiskt hjältepos, om än utifrån en ganska tunn empirisk bas.

Huvuddelen av boken utgörs av en närstudie av tapetmakerskorna Maja och Marias verksamhet. Skott har, så gott som det låter sig göras, följt de båda kvinnornas liv från vaggan till graven genom husförhørs- och mantalslängder. Studiens huvudberättelse kan summeras som följer: Maria var Majas moster och båda var födda i Stockholm på Södermalm. Majas familj drabbades hårt av krig och pest. Maria gifte sig med en orgelmakare i Jönköping, blev änka och sjuklig och flyttade därefter in tillsammans med Maja i Stockholm. De säkrar tillstånd att producera papperstapeter, och dessa säljer bra. Två gånger dras verksamheten inför Hallrätten. Den första gången får den fortsätta med hänvisning till Överståthållarens näringstillstånd. När Maria dog 1746 fortsatte Maja verksamheten men anmäldes åter till Hallrätten av Tapetmakarsocieteten, som då fann att tillståndet ej längre gällde då hushållsföreståndaren dött. När Maja fortsatte produktionen togs hennes verktyg i beslag. Hon överklagade beslutet till Kommerskollegium som tvärt emot Hallrätten dömde att hon hade rätt att fortsätta verksamheten. Trots det så försvinner här Maja ur källorna, kanske sadlade hon om till krögerska, eller gifte sig, eller flyttade.

Närstudien av Maja och Maria följs av en kort studie av tapetmakerskor i Stockholm åren 1739–1759. Skott finner elva kvinnliga tapetmakerskor, vilket bör ha utgjort ungefär en fjärdedel av alla tapetmakare i staden. De förestod både små och stora hushåll och producerade tapeter i en volym som stod i paritet med deras antal.

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Studiens största förtjänst är att Skott lyckas skildra en hel arsenal av knep som togs till av människor i näringslivets marginaler. Ett exempel är namnen och titlarna. Maria hade visserligen varit gift med en orgelmakare, men kallades ibland för tapetmakareänka i källorna. Maja i sin tur gick under många namn – hon använde både sin mors släktnamn och sin fars men framställdes (eller framställde sig) ofta som dotter till änkan Maria. Ett sådant dribblande med titlar och namn kan mycket väl ha varit hjälpsamt för att säkra tillstånd från myndigheterna att fortsätta tapetmakarverksamheten.

En annan förtjänst med studien är givetvis att den lyfter fram kvinnor som aktörer inom tapetmakeriet – och dessutom visar på hur framgångsrik denna verksamhet var. Av allt att döma verkar tryckandet av papperstapeter ha varit en försäljningssuccé i staden.

Tyvärr så förekommer ingen diskussion av forskningslitteraturen. De hänvisningar som görs består av referenser till sakupplysningar kring olika fenomen. Det är synd. Inte minst för att fallstudien har potential. När Maria och Majas tillstånd att bedriva tapetmakeri diskuterades inför Hallrätten kan man i praktiken se det som att det var två samhällsmodeller som stod mot varandra: å ena sidan den tidigmoderna korporativismen, företrädd av Tapetmakarsocietetens vilja att värna sitt skråprivilegium, å andra sidan myndigheterna som ogärna ville dra in någons födkrok. Skotts studie visar hur dessa intressen kolliderar med varandra, och hur flexibelt systemet i praktiken kunde vara. Men Skott väljer istället att försöka skriva en berättelse där Tapetmakarsocieteten (och ibland Hallrätten) är skurken och tapetmakerskan Maja är hjältinnan.

Det feministiska hjälteperspektivet överskuggar studiens uttalade frågeställningar och syfte. I bokens första kapitel beskrivs den röda tråden vara frågan om vilka aktörer som erkände och vilka som underminerade tapetmakerskornas verksamhet, och vilka deras motiv var (s. 14). Då samhället och societeterna antas vara kvinnofientliga så verkar Skott ha bestämt sig på förhand om svaret på sin huvudfråga.

Som läsare får jag också intrycket av att författaren har gjort sitt bästa för att dryga ut ett tunt manus till en hel bok. Exempelvis har berättelsen om Maria och Majas liv drygats ut med spekulativa funderingar – om Maja log när hon gick ned för trappan, om Tapetmakarsocieteten satt på krogen och skrattade åt henne, eller om hur Maria och Maja kände inför varandra. Men tre saker är Skott säker på, trots att det är svårt att se hur detta ska kunna beläggas i källorna: För det första att Tapetmakarsocietetens företrädare drivs av misogyni och missunnsamhet. För det andra Majas driftiga, ihärdiga, djärva personlighet och för det tredje vädret. Blandningen av detaljerad källredogörelse utdrygad med spekulationer ger en text som varken är hackad eller malen: för torr för att vara underhållande men för spekulativ för att framstå som vetenskaplig.

Mary Wollstonecraft, *Brev från en resa i Sverige, Norge och Danmark*. Translation, introduction and notes by Elisabeth Mansén (Lund: Ellerströms, 2022). 302 s.

Martina Reuter, University of Jyväskylä

Mary Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (London: J. Johnson, 1796) has a long history of translations into Swedish. As early as January–March 1797 *Åbo Tidningar* published a four-part series of translations from Wollstonecraft's descriptions of Sweden with the translator's comments on her often quite critical views. The series begins with a short introduction, presenting Wollstonecraft as one of England's many fine living female authors and mentioning her previous works on the rights of woman as well as the French revolution (*Åbo Tidningar* 2/1797, p. 2). The story is published anonymously, but Frans Michael Franzén is a likely translator and author. He wrote regularly for *Åbo Tidningar* at the time, he had returned from a one and a half years traveling around Europe in November 1796 after spending that spring and summer in Britain, he owned the 1796 edition of Wollstonecraft's *Letters* at the time of his death, and his unpublished travel notes mention Wollstonecraft twice.¹

The series in *Åbo Tidningar* is particularly important, because the first book-length Swedish translation of these letters, *Bref. Skrifna under et kort wistande i Sverige, Norrige och Danmark* (Stockholm: J. C. Holmberg, 1798) is not only anonymous, but also lacks a preface or afterword to tell the story of how Wollstonecraft and her works were perceived in Sweden in the late 1790s. The next Swedish translation of *Letters*, *Brev skrivna under en kort vistelse i Sverige, Norge och Danmark* (trans. Jane Lundblad; Stockholm: Tiden, 1978) almost two centuries later,

¹ For a detailed discussion of the evidence for Franzén's authorship see Martina Reuter, 'Mary Wollstonecraft, Frans Michael Franzén och *Åbo Tidningar*', *Sphinx*, Yearbook 2022–2023 (Helsinki: Societas Scientarium Fennica, 2023), forthcoming.

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introduced Wollstonecraft to a modern Swedish readership and participated in the revival of works by female authors. At the end of the twentieth century, it was followed by *Till försvar av kvinnans rättigheter* (trans. Ingrid Ingemark; Stockholm: Ordfront, 1997), the first Swedish translation of Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (London: J. Johnson, 1792).

Elisabeth Mansén wrote the introduction to the first editions of *Till försvar av kvinnans rättigheter* and is now continuing her persistent work on Wollstonecraft's writings with a third full Swedish translation of the *Letters*. In her introduction, Mansén discusses the need for a new translation. Her first reason, that the translation from 1997 is out of print, is not so much grounds for a new translation as for a new edition. However, Mansén's second reason is important. She points out that language has changed since 1997. One might add that this issue is particularly urgent in the case of translations, which age faster than works in their original languages. A good translation requires a certain transparency that must not be interrupted by unintended anachronisms. Mansén has done a decent job. Her translation successfully balances the need to stay close to the original against the need not to get caught up in English expressions, but rather rewrite in good Swedish.

Mansén's third reason for retranslation is the fact that much has happened in Wollstonecraft scholarship and more notes needed to be added to the text. Her notes are in many respects excellent and tell the reader a lot about the historical context as well as Wollstonecraft's sources. The book includes a useful list of relevant scholarly literature, but unfortunately the introduction and notes do not engage in critical dialogue with previous interpretations. The reader learns little about what Wollstonecraft scholars have discussed or of how Mansén positions her own interpretations in relation to the rich scholarly literature.

However, scholarly readers will be interested in Mansén's discussion of who may have been the anonymous translator of the 1798 translation. Her argument is briefly summarized in the introduction and expanded elsewhere.² Based on a critical study of information primarily from the database of Swedish translators *Svenskt översättarlexikon* and the library catalogue Libris, Mansén draws the conclusion that Carolina Weltzin (born Rutström) is the most likely candidate. Weltzin was a productive translator, who translated from English, and she translated travel literature as well as books on and by women. Mansén's hypothesis is strengthened by my hypothesis that Frans Michael Franzén is a likely translator and author of the series in *Åbo Tidningar*. Franzén was a close friend of Weltzin's brother Carl

² Elisabeth Mansén, 'Jakten på den anonyma översättaren av Mary Wollstonecraft's resebrev', *Biblis* 98 (Summer 2022), pp. 32–43. The article is completed after Mansén became aware of the series in *Åbo Tidningar*, which is not mentioned in the introduction to her translation.

Birger Rutström, he knew both siblings well and he belonged to the same literary circles in Stockholm. *Åbo Tidningar* motivates the publication of translated passages ‘Til dess boken hinner bli öfversatt’ (*Åbo Tidningar* 2/1797, p. 2), indicating that the author of these words may have been aware of or even involved in the plan to translate the whole book. However, a comparison of the 1797 and 1798 translations shows it to be unlikely that they are translated by the same person.³ If Franzén translated for *Åbo Tidningar*, we can with great likelihood exclude him as translator of the *Bref*.

Many interesting questions about the early Swedish reception of Wollstonecraft’s works remain. Mansén is quite right to quickly exclude Thomas Thorild from the list of likely translators, but Wollstonecraft’s possible influence on his *Om Qvinnökönets naturliga höghet* (Copenhagen: Johan Rudolph Thiele, 1793) is still seriously understudied. His argument that a woman must first be considered as a rational being with corresponding rights and dignity, second as a human being with corresponding rights and dignity, and third as a citizen with corresponding rights and dignity, strongly resembles Wollstonecraft’s argument in *Rights of Woman*. When we know more about who read Wollstonecraft in Sweden during the 1790s, we may be better equipped to determine the identity of the anonymous translator(s) of *Bref* and of Wollstonecraft’s posthumously published novel, translated into Swedish as *Maria, eller Missödet at vara qvinna* (Stockholm: J. C. Holmberg, 1799). Mansén assumes that the two works are by the same translator, but she does not present evidence for this claim. A digital comparison of the two texts would with great likelihood be able to solve this part of the puzzle.

³ For an example, see Reuter, ‘Mary Wollstonecraft, Frans Michael Franzén och *Åbo Tidningar*’.

Hans Egede, *Dagbog 1721–36*. Bearbejdet til nudansk og med forord af Ane Martine Lønneker (Aarhus: Forlaget Atlanten, 2021). 454 s.

Lis Norup, Aarhus Universitet

I koloniseringens historie gælder overordnet, at en effektiv kolonisering ikke kan basere sig på militærmagt alene, men må hvile på antropologisk og sociologisk viden om de folkeslag, kolonimagten ønsker at underlægge sig. I hvert fald den type, der ikke udrydder de lokale folkeslag.

Det gælder også Grønland, hvis kolonisering tog sin spæde begyndelse 3. juli 1721 med missionæren Hans Egedes landgang på nogle forblæste klipper, han navngav Håbets Ø. Her boede han i syv år sammen med hustruen Gertrud Rasch, deres fire børn, tre kvinder til hjælp med husholdningen, en apoteker og en bogholder, også kaldet købmand, samt skibsfolk, tømrere, bødkere, snedkere, murere, kypere og fiskere.¹ I 1728 flyttede *desseinet*, som foretagenet som helhed blev kaldt, til Godthaab, det nuværende Nuuk.

Hans Egedes Grønlandsfærd havde i udgangspunktet et trefoldigt sigte. Det første var at finde efterkommere af ”vore gamle norske kristne” og sikre dem deres salighed. Rekognosceringsrejser aflivede dette projekt. Tilbage fra nordboernes tid var alene tomter af kirker og gårde. Til gengæld gav rejserne Hans Egede mulighed for at foretage kartografiske opmålinger, der udbedrede de eksisterende fejlbefængte kort.

Det andet mål var udbredelsen af Guds ord til de ”arme vanvittige” grønlændere. Nøje forbundet hermed var et tredje projekt, som gennem ”profitabel handel med de vilde” – Hans Egedes alternerende betegnelse for landets indbyggere – skulle sikre, at foretagenet var rentabelt for de kompagnier, den danske krone

¹ Oplysning fra Louis Bobé: *Hans Egede. Grønlands Missionær og Kolonisator*. Kbh.: C. A. Reitzel, 1944, s. 38. Heri også inventarlistor, bl.a. over antal knapper, syringe, maller og tylvter brædder, skibet var lastet med.

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tildelte privilegier på handelen. Egede var sig pinligt bevidst, at fremgangen for "det åndelige [...] værk, ikke kunne blive fortsat og vedligeholdt, med mindre man også lykkeligt kunne have fremgang i de verdslige ting". Derfor forsømte han "ingen lejlighed [...] for at få al den oplysning, som hertil kunne tjene." Det være sig informationer om landets beskaffenhed og rigdomme, viden om grønlandernes årstidsbestemte nomadiske og bofaste samfundsform, deres naturel, familie- og autoritetsstrukturer samt sæder, riter og kosmologi. Den erhvervede kundskab optegnedes i tjenstlige embedsdagbøger, såkaldte *Relationer*, som årligt nedsendtes til Missionskollegiet i København.

I 1738 lod Hans Egede disse indberetninger fra årene 1721 til 1736 udgive i forkortet form under titlen *Omstændelig og udførlig RELATION, angaaende Den Grønlandske MISSIONS Begyndelse og Fortsættelse, Samt hvad ellers mere der ved Landets Recognoscering, dets Beskaffenhed, og Indbyggernes Væsen og Leve-Maade, er befunden*. Det er denne udgave, forlaget Atlanten har gjort tilgængelig på nudansk.

Ud over den sproglige bearbejdning og ændring af titlen til *Dagbog 1721-36* har forlaget fravalgt den tidstypiske dedikation til monarken, fortalen til de "Vel-Dømmende Kristne Læsere" og "Kort Beretning om den grønlandske Missions Beskaffenhed".

I forhold til læservenligheden er det intet savn at slippe for den sidelange panegyrik, hvormed Hans Egede fordrister sig til i "allerdybeste Underdanighed [...] at *Dedicere* Deres Kongelige Majestæt nærværende *Relation*". Udeladelsen ændrer dog delvist værkets perspektiv. Dedikationen er nemlig mere end en tilegnelse, den er også en supplik, hvor Hans Egede "bede og ønske, at Deres Kongelige Majestets *glorieuse* Iver for den Grønlandske Missions Fortsættelse fremdelis maatte *continuer*".²

At en sådan anmodning efter femten års virke som missionær var nødvendig, skyldtes den katastrofale koppepidemi, der 1733-35 udslettede en stor del af den grønlandske menighed. Nedtrykt over at se sit livsværk lagt øde forlod Hans Egede 9. august 1736 Grønland. I København genvaktes hans iver efter "den Grønlandske Missions Fortsættelse", således som dedikationen og fortalen til læseren viser. Datidens læsere var således, inden de gik i gang med *Omstændelig og udførlig Relation*, erkyndiget om, at Hans Egede frygtede at have fortæret sin "Kraft forgieves og forfængeligen", hvis ikke de greb til lommerne og støttede arbejdet med at hjælpe "de arme Mennsker [...] udaf deres Elændighed og store Vankundighed".³

At indramningen er udeladt, ændrer ikke ved, at *Dagbog 1721-36* er en såre interessant udgivelse. Den består af en forhistorie om årene 1708-1721, hvor Hans Egede, dengang præst i et fattigt sogn i Nordnorge, arbejdede på at skaffe støtte til sit grønlandske projekt. Efter udnævnelsen i marts 1721 til Kgl. Missionarius

² *Omstændelig og udførlig Relation...* Kjøbenhavn: trykt hos Joh. Christ. Groth, 1738, upagineret

³ *Ibid.*, upagineret.

med 300 rigsdaler i årlig understøttelse, følger optegnelserne fra det femten år lange Grønlandsophold. Påfaldende er det, i hvor høj grad de viser, hvor usikkert et fundament, foretagenet hvilede på.

Det hele kunne have været slut, inden det var begyndt. Den 24. juni 1721 stødte skibet med grønlandsfarerne ”på en isskosse og fik et hul forrest i boven”, og kaptajnen ”sagde til min stakkels hustru og små børn, at de måtte befale sig i Guds vold og berede sig til døden”. Hans Egede overvejede, om katastrofen skyldtes, at han var hjemfalden til Guds vrede. Men i så fald kunne han ikke forstå, hvorfor Gud lod ”de uskyldige mine undgælde for mine synder”. Efter at have eftertænkt sagen, sker der noget højst bemærkelsesværdigt. Hans Egede, Herrens Tjener, ”formanede [...] Herren, at han ville redde sin ære” ved at frelse skibet. – Mandskabet stoppede ”hullet med klæder og hvad de havde forhånden”, og alle takkede Gud for ”denne forunderlige og uforhåbentlige redning.” Det skulle ikke blive sidste gang, Hans Egede gik i rette med Gud, når Herrens veje forekom ham for uransagelige.

På land var tilværelsen heller ikke betrygget. I flere omgange befandt kolonien sig på sultegrænsen, bl.a. fordi sælhunde ”skyede at gå ind i garnet”, og ”mine folk (hvilket var at undre)” i modsætning til grønlænderne ”slet intet kunne fange med deres fiskeredskab”. Bedre gik det, når de brugte grønlændernes fiskesnøre, ”som er lange og tyndtskårne remme af hvalfiskebarder og bedre at fiske med end vores hampesnøre.” I det hele taget, understregede Hans Egede, var det at ”lære noget af de Wilde, [...] hverken Skam eller Skade”.⁴ Koloniens ”sikkerheds og livs ophold” vedblev at være afhængig af tilførsel af levnedsmidler med det årlige skib.

Skralt stod det også til med indhandling af især skind og spæk til sikring af koloniens rentabilitet. Grønlænderne var nemlig ”så træske, at de ikke har villet handle med os”, men foretrak de hollandske hvalfangere, der gav dem ”et langt bedre og billigere køb, end vi kan give, og tilmed er forsynet med bedre og skønnere handelsvarer.” Det bliver en genkommende anke i Hans Egedes *Relationer* til Missionselskabet, at kvaliteten af de tilsendte byttevarer var for ringe.

Ud fra et kolonipolitisk perspektiv kunne den forventede lukrative handel ikke blive til virkelighed, før hollænderne enten var udkonkurreret eller fordrevet med magt. I 1728 blev derfor en division soldater og en kohorte straffefanger, som i hast var smedet i hymnens lænker med prostituerede, opsendt. Alt endte i druk, skørbug, forråelse og død. I 1731 hjemkaldte Christian VI de overlevende og lukkede *desseinet*. Hans Egede og familie tilstedes dog den nåde at forblive sammen med ti (u)frivillige medhjælpere. I 1733 genoptoges besejlingen sammen med en kongelig gunstbevisning til missionens fortsættelse.

⁴ Optegnelsen, der er fra 10. oktober 1723, er udeladt i 1738-udgaven. Her citeret fra Hans Egede: *Relationer fra Grønland (1721–36)* og *Det gamle Grønlands ny Perustration (1741)*. Udgivet af Louis Bobé. København, Bianco Luno, 1925, s. 106. For henvisning: Lone Klem: ”Grønland civiliseres”, i: *M/S Museet for Søfarts Årbog*, 25, (2007), s. 159.

Det holdt hårdt for Hans Egede at få gang i kristningen. Det store problem var sproget. For at få fremgang heri tog han sammen med sine to sønner ophold i vinterhusene for gennem "idelig og stedsevarende omgængelse med grønlænderne" at lære "dette vanskelige sprog". I 1725 var hans sprogbeherskelse så fremskreden, at han "med mine børns hjælp" kunne oversætte årets evangelietekster og efterfølgende foretage en opbyggelig overhøring.

Det var Hans Egede en stadig kilde til misnøje, at grønlænderne, der var så behændige i "at opfinde adskillige midler til deres næring og livsophold", udviste "fæisk dumhed og uforstand", når det gjaldt guddommelige ting. En afgørende årsag hertil var deres "omstrejfen og ustadige levemåde", som forsinkede "kristendommens forplantning iblandt dem". Løsningen herpå var uddannelse af grønlandske kateketer, der kunne undervise dem under sommerrejserne. Hertil krævedes læsefærdighed. "Det varede ikke ret længe, førend de havde lært alle bogstaverne at kende". Måske fordi de opvakte poger fik en fiskekrog for hvert indlært bogstav. Det faldt dem i hvert fald svært at begribe, "hvortil det nyttede at sidde om dagen og råbe A, B, C etc. fra et stykke papir", eller som Hans Egede "at sidde og male med en pen og kigge i en bog den hele dag". Derimod var det "at fare ud på søen og jage efter sælhunde og at skyde fugle [...] både nytte og fornøjelse." Det gav Hans Egede anledning til en modstilling af en nyttig, hartad fornøjelig realviden, bundet til praktiske forhold og livssituationer, med en viden, der fastholdt i skriften hinsides tid og sted gjorde det muligt, "at man kan give fraværende [...] sin mening til kende" og – i et kosmisk perspektiv – at himmelens og jordens skaber i "skrifter og bøger" kan "give os sin vilje tilkende".

Allerhelst ville Hans Egede, at grønlænderne blev bofaste. Vel at mærke uden de glæder, der hørte vinterhusene til. Såsom den skændige horeleg, hvor gifte mænd og kvinder samledes "til et assemblé" og gantedes med hinanden uden at blues. Som straf lod Hans Egede "dem katte [piske] på deres bare krop". Indterpningen af Guds ord og aflæringen af kulturelle sæder gik således hånd i hånd. Det gjaldt i særlig grad den verbale og korporlige bekæmpelse af angakutterne, de grønlandske åndelige ledere og helbredere.

Forholdet til grønlænderne var dog ikke kun paternalistisk og autoritært. Gang på gang opdagede Hans Egede, at hans medbragte forestillinger dementeredes af virkeligheden. Således den hjemmekartede teori om, at grønlænderne "aldeles ingen varme havde i deres huse [...]. Men nu måtte vi erfare, at der var langt varmere i deres huse end i vores." Vigtigere var, at Hans Egede i sin fremstilling vekslede mellem to kolonial-antropologiske stereotypier. På den ene side ansuede han grønlænderne som færisk stupide og koldsindige. På den anden fremskrev han dem som "uskyldige Hedninge", der levede i en ideal naturtilstand: "Her er ingen Lofv, som lærer og foreskrifer, intet Sverd, som truer Misdædere, intet Riis,

som tuchter de ulydige, og dog har Volds Mænd, Røfvere, onde og skalchagtige Menniske iche Sted i dette Land, men Kierlighed og Ærlighed, Kyskhed og Ærbarhed, ja alle udvortis Dyder er her i fuldkommen Øfvelse". Det i modsætning til "alle vel *politiserede* og *civiliserede Nationer*, ja, disverre! Christne",⁵ hvor lov og tugtende øvrighed var nødvendig. Ikke desto mindre måtte de "arme vanvittige" grønlandere aves under det himmelske og jordiske åg for at træde ud af deres "store vankundighedsmørke".

Den 27. august 1733 "afgik ved døden en grønlandspige på kolonien ved navn Sara". Hun var det første offer for den koppevirus, som grønlænderdrengen Carl, der var vendt hjem med årets skib fra København, var smittet med. I løbet af kort tid bredte den dødbringende sot sig. Den 6. april 1734 noterede Hans Egede, at af "mere end 200 familier, som havde deres sædvanlige ophold i omegnen af kolonien [...], var der nu næppe 30 familier tilbage i alt". Den "Bedrøvelse", han følte over at "maatte see over 2000 af de arme Grønlander elendelig af Børne-Pokkerne bleve henrevne 1734",⁶ fik ham til at tvivle på Guds miskundhed. For selv om han som kristen måtte formene, "at Gud har villet straffe og hjem søge dem, fordi de ikke rettelig havde taget hans ord og tilbudte nåde til hjerte", så bød tanken ham imod. Hvorfor skulle Gud lægge det grønlandske "værk, som jo var begyndt i hensigt af Guds ære [...] øde"? Den 11. marts 1736 kunne Hans Egede ikke være i sig selv for "melankoli og bekymmerlige tanker". Han følte "et sådant had til Gud og afsky og lede ved at høre hans ord", at han måtte gå afsides. Om aftenen blev han ramt af "en hård og farlig paroksysme", inden "den gode Gud [...] forbarmede sig over mig og hørte min formanelses røst og gav mig livet".

Det liv, han fik givet, brugte han til at grundlægge Det Grønlandske Seminarium i København. Herfra udgik kateketer og missionærer til missionsmarken i Grønland.

Selv om stort set alt, hvad der kunne gå galt, gik galt, mens Hans Egede var i Grønland, lykkedes koloniseringen og kristningen alligevel. Der oprettedes handels- og missionsstationer, hollænderne ophørte med at drive handel på Grønland, og grønlænderne blev i stigende tal kristne og bofaste.

I 1921, 200 året for ankomsten, blev Hans Egede hædret som Grønlands apostel med en statue i Kolonihavnen i Godthaab. Hundrede år senere bliver statuen i Nuuk overmalet som et monument over tvangskristning og kolonisering.

Hans Egedes *Dagbog 1721-36* med informativt forord af Ane Martine Lønneker være hermed anbefalet til gavn og glæde.

⁵ "Kort Relation om Grønland og dets Indbyggeris Beskaffenhed" saa vitt vi endnu til Datum kand hafve Opliusning (1722), i: Bobé 1925, op.cit., s. 37.

⁶ "Kort Beretning om den grønlandske Missions Beskaffenhed" , i: *Omstændelig og udførlig RELATION...* (1738), upagineret.

Ludvig Holberg, *Rettskunnskap (1751)*. Oversatt av Anderas Harald Aure (Oslo: Vidarforlaget, 2021). 463 s.

Sören Koch, Universitetet i Bergen

Andreas Harald Aure har tatt på seg den viktige, men vanskelige oppgaven å oversette Ludvig Holbergs lærebok i natur- og folkerett til moderne norsk. Den nye oversettelsen er utstyrt med en innledning av Arild Sæther, der leseren opplyses om Holbergs bibliografi og kilder, med særlig vekt på forfatterens relasjon til den tyske filosofen Samuel Pufendorfs verk. Oversettelsen baserer seg på den femte utgaven av Holbergs lærebok, publisert i 1751, som også er den versjonen som finnes gjengitt i F. J. Billeskov Jansens samlede «værker i tolv bind» (1969).

Aures oversettelse følger originalens struktur med tanke på inndelinger i bøker og kapitler samt avsnitt. Gjennom grafiske grep får leseren imidlertid opplyst hvilke avsnitt Holberg har tilføyet i andre og tredje utgave av læreboken sin. Variasjoner i teksten til de ulike utgavene kommer derimot ikke frem i oversettelsen. Med tanke på leservennlighet er dette fullt forsvarlig, men en del relevante språklige og materielle endringer i teksten kunne med fordel blitt kommentert i notene.¹

Man kan uten videre være enig i Aures påstand om at all oversettelse kan kritiseres for å være enten for tekstnær eller for fri.² Dette er en vanskelig balansegang. Aure skal roses for å treffe denne balansen godt i sin oversettelse. De aller fleste

¹ En slik endring gjelder eksempelvis tittelen. I første utgave av bok 2 finner vi fortsatt 'Moralske Kjerne' på tittelsiden, som ble trykket i 1715. Videre heter boken frem til tredje utgave: 'Introduksjon til Naturens- og Folkerettens Kundskab, uddragen af de fornemste Juristers besynderlig Grotii, Pufendorfs og Thomasii Skrifter – illustreret med Exempler af de Nordiske Historier og confereret med disse Rigers saa vel som gamle og nye Love.' Mulige grunner for endringene i tittelen nevnes ikke av oversetteren. Sæther nevner derimot at undertittelen ble endret og at Holberg fjernet referansen til Grotius, Pufendorf og Thomasius, jf. Forord s. 24.

² Se Aure, *Rettskunnskap*, Forord s. 9.

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formuleringene gjengir Holbergs tankegods på en presis og godt forståelig måte. Norske lesere er i dag vant til korte setninger uten mange innskutte leddsetninger. Det var derfor hensiktsmessig å splitte opp Holbergs ofte lange og kronglede setninger. Holbergs særegne bruk av komma, kolon og punktum er med hell rensket ut i oversettelsen. Fint er også at det i notene finnes korte forklaringer eller referanser til ulike forfattere eller verk som Holberg nevner og/eller bygger på. Ellers fremstår oversetterens metodiske valg hensiktsmessige og gode. Ved usikkerhet om hva et ord eller uttrykk betyr, har Aure valgt å konsultere *Holbergordbog* og Billeskov-Jansens anmerkninger til teksten (1969), samt sammenlignet med den tyske og svenske oversettelsen. Enkelte steder har oversetteren dessuten kommet med egne anmerkninger og brukt en kontekstualiserende metode for å identifisere tekstens mening.

Ut over å sammenligne med Holbergs originalverk, er det hensiktsmessig å sammenligne oversettelsen med Holbergs hovedkilde – nemlig den tyske filosofen Samuel Pufendorfs hovedverk i åtte bind, *De Jure Nature et Gentium* (1688).³ Holberg har brukt denne teksten som forbilde for svært mange formuleringer i *Moralske Kiærne*, det vil si førsteutgaven av læreboken i natur og folkerett (1716).⁴ Ved å identifisere kildetekstens ordlyd på latin ville det vært mulig kartlegge betydningen av enkelte uklare termer, som Holberg bruker i sin kompilasjon av Pufendorfs tanker. Der Pufendorfs ordvalg er uklare, hjelper som regel Barbeyracs anmerkninger til fjerde utgave av *De Jure* som igjen har blitt oversatt til engelsk av Basil Kenneth (1729).⁵ Selv om Holberg trolig ikke fikk lest Barbeyracs anmerkninger til Pufendorf før han publiserte sin andre eller tredje utgave av læreboken sin, kan vi gå ut fra at Holbergs kompilasjoner av Pufendorf bygger på en rimelig lik forståelse av Pufendorfs naturrettslære. Når Aure derfor beholder Holbergs formulering 'evner' i avsnittet om forstanden (Kap. I, avsnitt 3) og kommenterer at «Frie *evner* antar jeg handler om menneskets vilje»⁶, ville et blick på Pufendorfs verk vært opplysende. Her bygger Holbergs tekst på en oversettelse av DJNG Lib. I Cap. 3 § 2, og Barbeyrac forklarer i sin anmerkning til Pufendorf hva 'naturlige

³ I min doktoravhandling (publisert i 2015) har jeg argumentert for at det er andre utgave av dette verket, som fantes i Reitzers bibliotek, Holberg brukte under arbeidet med sin egen lærebok i natur- og folkerett.

⁴ Sören Koch, *En naturlig rettsorden for det dansk-norske Kongeriket – en retthistorisk analyse av Ludvig Holbergs lærebok i natur- og folkerett*, Bergen 2015, s. 56 f.

⁵ Samuel Pufendorf, *The Law of Nature and Nations, eight books, Written in Latin by the Baron Samuel Pufendorf, Counsellor of the State to his late Swidish Majesty, and the late King of Prussia, Done into English by Basil Kenneth, D.D. late President of Corpus Cristi College in Oxford, to which we added all the Large Notes of Mr. Barbeyrac, translated from the best Edition, ... 4th ed.* London 1729, reprint Clark 2005, i det følgende DJNG.

⁶ Jf. Aure, *Rettskunnskap*, note 74 (min uth.)

evner' (*natural faculties*) er og hvordan disse skiller seg fra 'frie evner' (*free faculties*).⁷ Barbeyrac forklarer at frie ferdigheter skiller seg fra de naturlige ved at de kan læres gjennom erfaring (for eksempel et objekt betegnes som et eple), mens naturlige ferdigheter er passive, det vil si ferdigheten å ha en forestilling eller et inntrykk (*impression*) av et objekt. Denne ferdigheten kan ikke påvirkes eller modifiseres. Derfor er de naturlige og ikke frie. 'Frie evner' har altså bare i begrenset grad noe med menneskets vilje å gjøre.

Oversetteren har videre valgt å beholde en del ord og uttrykk som i dag er lite brukt. Det kan diskuteres om dette grepet er hensiktsmessig. Aure hevder at hensikten er å «fornye og styrke dagens norsk».⁸ Denne virkningen kan nok diskuteres. Viktigere synes det imidlertid at en oversettelse bør gjøre det enklere for dagens lesere å forstå den historiske teksten og konteksten. I forordet bruker Aure et konkret eksempel som illustrasjon: Han har valgt å ikke omskrive 'umælende dyr' med dyr som mangler språkferdighet.⁹ Det kan innvendes at en oversettelse ville ha bidratt til en bedre forståelse av teksten. På 1700-tallet hadde man begrenset forståelse for dyrenes mentale og intellektuelle evner. Den empiriske observasjonen om at dyr mangler språk for å kunne kommunisere på lik linje med mennesker, ble ansett som et tilstrekkelig bevis på at dyr manglet ferdigheten til å handle moralsk – eller i datidens filosofiske terminologi: manglet 'moralisk kvalitet'.¹⁰ Mennesker ble med andre ord oppfattet som unike fordi de kunne formidle og diskutere tanker, og innrette sine handlinger slik at de var i samsvar med gjeldende moralforestillinger.¹¹ Den bakenforliggende tanken var at kommunikasjon var en forutsetning for å handle basert på begrunnede og veloverveide beslutninger. Aures valg om å bruke 'umælende dyr' som moderne lesere vil kunne slite med å forstå, kan bidra til å gjøre det vanskelig å reflektere over 1700-tallets moderne rasjonalistiske og empiriske verdensbilde, som kommer så tydelig frem i denne teksten og Holbergs andre skrifter.

Videre er det påfallende at oversetteren nesten utelukkende baserer seg på eldre kommentarlitteratur og kildetekster. Nyere tekstkritiske utgaver og kommentarer til Holbergs (*Introduction til Naturens og Folkerettens Kundskab* nevnes, men brukes i liten eller ingen grad i oversettelsen eller kommenteringen av teksten. Dette er overraskende all den tid en annotert versjon av teksten, kommentert og en introdusert av idéhistoriker, naturrett- og Holberg-ekspert Knud Haakonssen er åpent tilgjengelig på nettsiden Holbergsskrifter.no/dk.¹² Her finnes det også en

⁷ DJNG (n 3), s. 25.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Aure, *Rettskunnskap*, s. 53

¹⁰ DJNG Lib I, Cap I § 1 «entia moralia».

¹¹ Tanken har Holberg nesten ordrett skrevet av fra DJNG Lib I Cap 3 § 2.

¹² [Om Natur- og Folkeretten "part1"](http://Holbergsskrifter.no) (holbergsskrifter.no)

versjon av teksten til første utgaven (1716) i moderne dansk rettskriving, som kan sammenstilles med Holbergs originaltekst på denne onlineversjonen av teksten.¹³ Eiliv Vinjes og Jørgen Magnus Sejersteds antologi (2012) om Holbergs naturrettslærebok,¹⁴ samt min rettshistoriske analyse (2015) av Holberg nevnes i bibliografien, men nesten alle referanser i fortalen og i kommentarer til oversettelsen relaterer til eldre litteratur med Kåre Foss, Erik Solem og Fredrik Julius Billeskov Jansen i spissen. Dette medfører at oversetteren overser relevante tolkninger av Holbergs tekst som ligger til grunn i nyere Holberg-forskning.

Et eksempel på det sistnevnte er Holbergs uttalelse om forholdet mellom naturrett og folkerett.¹⁵ Holbergs påstand om at folkeretten regulerer menneskets handlinger i samfunnet illustrerer hans kompilerende metode. Mye tyder på at Holbergs hensikt var å syntetisere Hobbes' og Pufendorfs syn på forholdet mellom natur- og folkerett. Dette oppfatter Aure.¹⁶ Derimot oppfatter han ikke at Holberg misforstod begge to. Allerede i 1934 påpekte Kåre Foss at en setning Aure oversetter ordrett, og dernest refererer til i sitt forord, mildt sagt er misvisende.¹⁷ Selv har jeg identifisert ulike tekstfragmenter og tanker Holberg prøvde å kombinere her.¹⁸ Holbergs tette forhold til Pufendorfs tekst kan forklare Holbergs merkelige, ja nær sagt meningsløse avgrensning mellom natur- og folkerett. Han bygger på et avsnitt i *DJNG Lib. II Cap 3 § 23*. Her diskuterer Pufendorf spørsmålet om det finnes en særegen *positiv* folkerett ved siden av den *uskrevne* naturretten. Med dette antyder Pufendorf, helt i samsvar med oppfatningen fremmet av Hobbes, at naturrett og folkerett er én og samme sak, men at folkeretten er naturrett anvendt på forholdet mellom stater. Forskjellen er altså bare rettssubjektet, men materielt sett finnes det ikke noe forskjell på natur- og folkerett.

Dette er altså allerede i utgangspunktet noe annet enn 'Den Forskjæll der er' mellom natur- og folkerett, som Holberg konstaterer innledningsvis i læreboken sin. I min avhandling (2015) har jeg skissert den bakenforliggende rettsteoretiske debatten, samt Pufendorfs og Hobbes' holdning.¹⁹ Tolker man Holbergs uttalel-

¹³ [Introduction til Naturens- og Folke-Rettens Kundskab "0" \(holbergsskrifter.no\)](http://holbergsskrifter.no)

¹⁴ Eiliv Vinje og Jørgen Magnus Seiersted (red.), *Ludvig Holbergs naturrett*, Gyldendal 2012.

¹⁵ Jf. Aure, *Rettskunnskap*, s. 77: «Angående forskjellen mellom naturens rett og folkeretten kommer de rettslærde ikke til enighet. Hobbes kaller den første for menneskenes, den andre for bystatenes og samfunnens rett. Etter denne synsmåten styrer og regjerer naturens rett menneskes handling betraktet hver for seg, mens folkeretten styrer det samme menneskets handling for så vidt det opererer i samfunn og i samkvem med andre. Dette er en mening som Pufendorf tiltrer.»

¹⁶ Aure, *Rettskunnskap*, Forord s. 12 f.

¹⁷ Foss 1934 s. 463.

¹⁸ Koch 2015 (n 3) s. 214 ff.

¹⁹ Koch 2015 (n 3) s. 214-225.

ser ordrett, er folkerett det som gjelder mellom naturlige personer som lever i et samfunn – eller etter datidens terminologi: i den borgerlige standen. Foss konstaterer derfor korrekt at Pufendorf «hverken kunnet samtykke eller underskrive noe slikt.»²⁰ Holbergs skille mellom natur- og folkerett gir i lys av dette ikke mening, hverken i dag eller i Holbergs samtid. En slik villfarelse kunne leseren av Aures oversettelse med fordel ha blitt gjort oppmerksom på.

Oversetterens valg av tittel, *Rettskunnskap*, fortjener også en kommentar. Aure begrunner valget med at bokens originale tittel er «kronisk dunkel».²¹ Det er nok riktig at innholdet i det en har lagt i begrepet «naturrett» har blitt omdiskutert i Holbergs samtid (og frem til i dag). På 1700-tallet henger dette sammen med at naturrett var mer enn bare 'rett' i moderne juridisk forstand. *Jus nature* var både et språk og en litterær sjanger, en filosofisk strømning, et akademisk fag, en idealrett og forbilde for lovgiveren og en sekundær rettskilde.²² Holberg var selv bevisst begrepets mangfoldige innhold, og tok sikte på yte et bidrag til nesten alle dets aspekter. I fortalen til boken forteller han derfor en historie om fremveksten av den sekulære og rasjonalistiske naturrettstradisjonen som Hugo Grotius – en av Holbergs store forbilder – gjerne ble ansett som idéhistorisk far til. 1700-tallets naturrettssdiskurs dreide seg følgelig om langt mer enn bare *rettskunnskap*. Holbergs lærebok er ment å være del av denne moralfilosofiske diskursen, hvilket kommer langt tydeligere frem i den opprinnelige tittelen til verket: *Moralske Kjerne*.

Med det sagt er det likevel hevet over enhver tvil at boken formidler noen grunnleggende rettslige normer og prinsipper, og at den fort ble populær blant samtidens jusstudenter, særlig etter innføringen av en juridisk eksamen i 1736. Slik sett formidlet boken kunnskap om rett og juridisk metode. Dette er i seg selv grunn til å understreke læreboken betydelige rettshistoriske interesse i dag.²³ Samtidig må en ikke glemme at Holberg ikke var jurist. Formålet med boken var like mye å forklare og legitimere det filosofiske, statsrettslige og politiske fundamentet til det dansk-norske eneveldet. Holbergs lærebok rettet seg dessuten ikke spesifikt mot jusstudenter, men mot den 'studerende ungdom'. Den var følgelig en del av Holbergs utdanningsprogram for unge mennesker, som inkluderte kunnskap om språk, historie, geografi, politikk og rettens idéhistoriske og filosofiske fundament. Det var heller ikke Holbergs primære intensjon å formidle konkret kunnskap om *gjeldende* dansk-norsk rett. Som tittelen uttrykker, sammenlignet Holberg gamle så

²⁰ Foss 1934 s. 463.

²¹ Aure, *Rettskunnskap*, Forord s. 13.

²² Marit Halvorson, *Streiftog i Naturretten*, *Jussens Venner* Nr. 5/2008, s. 275 ff.; Knud Hakonssen, *Natural Law and moral Philosophy, From Grotius til Scottish enlightenment*, Cambridge University Press 1996; Koch (n 3) 2015 s. 110-145.

²³ Derfor har Holbergs lærebok i natur- og folkerett også blitt analysert av rettshistorikerene som Erik Solem, Lars Bjørne, Dag Michalsen, Jørn Øyrehagen Sunde og Sören Koch.

vel som nye lover med de universelle prinsippene som springer ut av den rasjonnelle naturretten. Formålet var å vise at danske og norske lover var i samsvar med naturrettens prinsipper og derfor materielt sett 'gode' lover. I tillegg kan hele boken leses som et forsvar av det dansk-norske eneveldet. Ut fra disse refleksjoner kan oversettelsens tittel: *Rettskunnskap* virke noe upresis og i verste fall misvisende. Jeg kan riktignok forstå Aures motivasjon bak valget, men mener at 'Innføringen i Natur- og Folkerett', ville vært mer presis.

Avslutningsvis vil jeg imidlertid understreke at all kritikk og spissfindigheter jeg her har kommet med på ingen måte forringer verdien av Aures oversettelse og dens betydning for fremtidens generasjoner av elever og akademikere som prøver å sette seg inn i Holbergs tankeverden og hans tid. Boken er en velkommen berikelse i ethvert humanistisk bibliotek.