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THE CHANGE OF THE SWEDISH BOOKPRODUCING SYSTEM IN THE SECOND PART OF THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY

Up to the middle of the Eighteenth-century bookproducing and bookselling was dominated by the Church and the State. The literary market — I may use this term even if we can not talk about a market with a lot of sellers and buyers — was based on orders from the Church and the State. It was undeveloped, and far too small for many agents in the literary market to be able to earn their living by producing and selling books. During the second half of the century the literary market in Sweden had a tremendous growth². At the same time as the literary market expanded, its structure changed greatly.

Of course one can say that the change already began in the previous century. And it was in the Nineteenth-century that those publishers, who at the time being dominated the Swedish literary market, formed their companies. But it was during the second half of the Eighteenth-century when the important structural steps to build a literary market — as we know it from our century — took form.

My aim with this essay is to explain some essential features of this change from an older system of producing and selling books to a modern one; but I will also — to make the relations between different kinds of agents clear — include the authors (who used the change to get incomes from it), the literary public (which made the change possible) and the product (so to say the literature itself). Because during this time the whole literary system passed through a structural change in the development from a limited literary system, dominated by the court and the world of learning, to one that is farreaching and independent³.

¹ This essay is a further elaborating of a speech, with the title „The Swedish literary market takes form“, held in the Eighth International Congress on the Enlightenment in Bristol, July 1991.

² For a broad view over development of the Swedish literary market during the Eighteenth-century I will refer to Henrik Schück, *Den svenska förlagsbokhandelns historia II* (Stockholm, 1923). In Gunnar Sahlin, *Författarrollens förändring och det litterära systemet 1770—1795* (diss., Stockholm, 1989), cap. II, one will find references to Swedish research about this item. In the notes of this essay I only make a few references.

³ I will define the literary system as those agents who are involved in the whole literary process and as well their mutual relations as their relations outside the system, for example with the Church and the State. Among the agents one can mention those on the literary market (printers, bookbinders, publishers, booksellers and the reading public), the authors, circulating libraries and reading associations, literary salons and some cultural institutions. The literary system includes books and newspapers as products and of course the text itself.

The literary public and the change of literary taste

The literary public became larger and spread to new groups: not only clergy, teachers, academics and noblemen, but also civil servants, officers and businessmen. During the second half of the Eighteenth-century it also developed new forms of activity for the literary public such as circulating libraries and reading associations.

But even though the literary public became larger and literacy was relatively high in Sweden at that time, the literary public was still a small part of the population. Large numbers of people in country districts, but also in towns, had no chance of buying literature; nor had they the ability to cope with the more than laborious task of reading known texts (in their own language) in the Bible and the Catechism⁴.

The increase of the number of printers and booksellers, as we shall see later, and of the reading public implied of course more printed books. But which literature the printers produced and the booksellers sold was an essential factor in the change of the whole literary system. The production of religious and scientific literature and lawbooks, schoolbooks, etc. was still high during the second half of the Eighteenth-century. The growing reading public, which spread to new groups, had, however, other demands than the public which had consisted of the churchly world. The new public wanted novels, travel books, plays, etc. The new readers also wanted books in their own language. Besides the change in the literary taste another important factor for the increase of the literary market was the breakthrough for the newspapers.

The freedom of the press also settled the amount of printed books and newspapers. There is a clear connection between the amount of printed books and newspapers and the freedom of the press. A large number of new newspapers as well as political and economic publications appeared in the late 60-ies after the liberal presslaw of 1766⁵. Several limitations in the 80-ies stopped the growth of the newspapers, but instead the printers could produce and the booksellers could sell novels, plays, travel books, etc.

Authors

The literary public made the growth of the literary market possible, but the authors took advantage of the change. How the literary system developed from a limited system dominated by the court, the church and the world of learning to one that is farreaching and independent can best be explained through the authors. It was a change from the author

⁴ Egil Johansson had studied the literacy in Sweden. At the end of 1700th at least 80% of the population could read, but only between 10–30% could write. *The history of literacy in Sweden. In comparison with some other countries*, Educational reports Umeå 12 (Umeå, 1977). He also makes a distinguish between limited knowledge of reading and real ability to read. „Läser och förstår“, *Tvårsnitt*, 1982: 1, p. 6 pp.

⁵ About the connection between newspaper production and the press, see Elmar Nyman, *Indragningsmakt och tryckfrihet 1785–1810* (diss., Stockholm, 1963).

dependent on patronage and civil-servant-author to a writer, whose income is based on fees.

In the Eighteenth-century the old system still is dominated by authors producing their works while holding a post in the civil service. Most of the authors were dominated by and belonged to the court, the church and the world of learning. They wished to have an official position, and the civil service wished to have employees who could write in addition to their normal duties — these authors were required to write when so requested. The function of the author in this older society was not to express his own feelings and opinions, but to place his gift at the service of a patron or the civil service⁶.

In the Eighteenth-century authors had no rights in the ordinary sense of the word. Protection from plagiarism and copying was a right enjoyed only by publishers. The author could sell his manuscript to a publisher, but if he did so, he lost all rights to the work and could not claim any form of emolument for subsequent editions. An author could, however, apply for the privilege to publish his book himself — in the Eighteenth-century quite a number of books were published in this way. Acting as one's own publisher often also entailed selling the book by subscription, which for the authors was at intermediate stage in the development from patronage to fees. The subscription came to be used to an even greater extent by booksellers. This form of selling, however, was dependent upon the literary market being limited. When it expanded, the need for this form of selling disappeared.

It is true that, for the majority of authors writing was part of their job, but fees began increasingly to become an accepted form of emolument for authors. Unfortunately, there is very little information about how frequently fees were paid or how large they were. We do know that the system of free copies which the author could sell himself was the most common one up to the middle of the century, and that it was successively replaced by cash fees. Emolument to the author was always in the form of a lump sum, that is to say, he was paid only for the first edition.

The fees became important for the authors who did not have an official position as civil-servants, academics or priests. There were, however, very few authors who earned their living by writing and also few whose income from writing was an essential part of their earning. The presence of this type of author (Grub street-authors as Robert Darnton calls them in his study over Eighteenth-century authors in France)⁷ — different from the civil-servant-authors, which, however, at this time still dominate as an author-type — is an important indication of the change in the literary system in the end of the Eighteenth-century. For the Grub street-authors the book and newspaper publishers replaced the patron as economic supporter.

⁶ About the civil-servant-authors, see **Bo Bennich-Björkman**. *Författaren i ämbetet* (diss., Uppsala, 1970).

⁷ Robert Darnton. *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime*. Mass., USA, 1982.

These authors wrote, as all Swedish authors at this time, occasional poetry, who gave some income or favours. But the most important and new were the creating of plays and the authors writing in the newspapers: literature which the new reading public demanded. (Very few original Swedish novels were created but a lot was translated from other languages. A lot of novels in French and English was imported and sold very well.) These plays who the reading public demanded (and even the theater public) were not the dramatic plays but the comedies. From this time we have the division of literature into two streams: qualitative literature that is highly estimated but difficult to sell, and quantitative mass-literature, popular and easy to sell.

The authors also verify the capital as the cultural metropolis. I will introduce my classification in three „geographic areas“: 1) the cultural metropolis, 2) provincial centres, 3) the periphery.

In Sweden the capital (*the cultural metropolis*; in this case Stockholm) was the centre of 'the cultural life', not only the literary market but the whole literary system; here there were printers, booksellers and publishers, but also newspapers, public and private cultural institutions, literary salons and a far greater reading public than there was in the provinces. There was a fairly well developed literary system in Gothenburg and the university cities but not in the other *provincial centres* (university and cathedral cities, towns with secondary education, provincial capitals and the major commercial towns). In *the periphery* (that is to say, in other towns and country districts) the literary system was still undeveloped at the end of the Eighteenth-century.

Most of the authors were born in the densely populated southern and middle west parts of the country areas but most of them came to live in the central districts — Stockholm and the surrounding provinces of Uppland and Södermanland. Only a few authors were born and lived in northern Sweden and Finland — the outlying areas.

There was a clearly defined move of authors to the cultural metropolis. Authors moved from all parts of the country to Stockholm and all the important authors lived there. Among the provincial cities it was only in Uppsala, the leading university city, where a considerable number of authors lived. In the periphery more than half of the authors were born, but few continued to live there as adults⁸.

⁸ Sahlin, cap. IV. The dissertation is a study over Swedish authors and their changing role during the last three decades of the Eighteenth-century. I will also add some statements about the social background. The majority of authors came from a very limited section of society. Noblemen, the clergy, teachers, civil servants and officers formed only a small percentage of the population of Sweden and Finland, yet 80% came from these backgrounds. These were also the groups that generally sent their sons to university. (24% of the authors were of noble blood. The remainder, the commoners, consisted of clergy, teachers and academicians [38%], civil servants and officers [18.5%], businessmen and their employees [17%]. The last 2.5% came from the peasant population. If no account is taken of the estate from which authors came, the largest single group was the clergy [34%], followed by civil servants [26%] and officers [12%]. Ibid, cap. IV.

Printers

In the beginning of the Seventeenth-century there was only one printer in Sweden. A lot of new printers were established during this century, first in the university and cathedral cities and then — during last decades — in the capital. In the year 1700 there was 17 printers (six in Stockholm and eleven outside the capital). Fifty years later there was 22 (eight in Stockholm and fourteen outside the capital). During the second part of the century the number of printers doubled and at the end there was 39 (sixteen in Stockholm and twenty-three outside the capital)⁹.

The total number of printers increased continuously in provincial centres, but in the capital the growth was different. This irregular development in the capital depended on its role as cultural metropolis. Here the agents on the literary market were more influenced by political, social and economic factors.

The competition was hard among the printers. There was enough work for those printers who had special license to print bibles, lawbooks, and so on, and those who printed for a university or for the state. But sometimes there were problems even for them or nearly all the time for the other printers. Certainly the number of books increased but also the number of printers. So it became necessary for the printers to find new activities.

The early printers were solely craftsmen. But a new type — who first can be noticed in the middle of the Eighteenth-century — had a broader view (some of them with academic studies) and they realised the new possibilities. They widened their companies from printing production to publishing, bookselling and even circulating libraries.

The decisive occurrence for the printers was the change in permission to sell Swedish-printed books. Prior to 1752 only bookbinders had permission to sell books. They had, however, no ideas about how to confront the situation of a larger public and new genres. The bookbinders still sold only religious books and some profane books as lawbooks, schoolbooks, etc. After 1752 also the printers got the right to sell books. It was a very important step to develop the Swedish literary market.

Among the printers who also became important booksellers and publishers was Salvius, Momma, Fougth in the metropol, and in the provincial centres: Edman in Uppsala, Norberg in Gothenburg and Franckell in Abo. Normally the printers had one or two printing-presses. Those printers I have mentioned had between four and seven¹⁰. The most important among them was Lars Salvius, and he was no doubt the most important of all the agents on the Swedish literary market during the Eighteenth-century.

⁹ Ibid. P. 17.

¹⁰ Ibid. P. 18.

A short presentation of Salvius can illustrate this new type of printers. After an academic education he became a civil-servant and newspaper publisher. Furthermore Salvius was an occasional poet. Then he married the widow of a printer and took over the firm. (Normally a printer either inherited the firm or was an employee who married the widow.) Salvius widened the firm to include printing, bookselling, bookpublishing, newspaper publishing and circulating library. He had a lot of new ideas and he is called the reformer of the literary market. When he died (1773) he was a successful and wealthy manufacturer, and he belonged to the higher bourgeois¹¹.

Booksellers

The number of booksellers also increased and, at the same time, the selling system changed. Before the presentation of this change I will display the bookselling up to this time.

During the Seventeenth-century and the beginning of the Eighteenth-century most of the foreign books were sold by travelling german booksellers. Some of them came to live in the university towns and a few other provincial centres as booksellers. In the other provincial centres and in other towns the big publishers — who, with few exceptions lived in the cultural metropolis — sold by commissioners. This system was very much used during the second half of the Eighteenth-century, and the commissioners sold Swedish and imported books. Outside the capital also a lot of swedish-printed books were sold by printers.

In the capital the printers sold their "own" books (after 1752). But also a lot of books were sold by bakers, chemists and other small shopkeepers, and also by private persons. In Stockholm there were also booksellers with a larger stock before 1750, but they sold only imported books¹².

In Stockholm there were 10 booksellers in the middle of the Eighteenth-century, 1770 there was 18, 1780 — 19, 1790 — 15, and in the year 1800 there were 21 booksellers¹³. We can see that the press-law also influenced the bookselling. The biggest growth of the number of booksellers was in the late 60-ies, but during the 80-ies, when it was several limitations in the freedom of press, we can note a regression.

Most of the booksellers had, however, only a small business and couldn't live only as booksellers. Some of them were civil-servants and they had bookselling as a complement to their office.

It was rather difficult to buy books before the 70-ies. The booksellers sold foreign books, works that they published themselves and books

¹¹ Henrik Schück wrote a biography over him: *Lars Salvius. Minnesteckning*. Stockholm, 1929.

¹² Schück 1923, p. 86 pp; Isidor Adolf Bonnier, August Hanell. *Anteckningar om svenska bokhandlare intill år 1935 II*: Stockholm och Uppsala. Stockholm, 1920.

¹³ Erik Hamberg. *Olof Knös och 1770-talets lärda samlarkultur* (diss., Göteborg, 1985). P. 123.

they had obtained by exchange. But with Salvius came the wind of change. He started in the 50-ies what he called a "universal bookshop" with imported books, his own printed and published books, and even books of other Swedish publishers. He was, however, not so successful with his bookshop. He met with resistance from other agents on the literary market. Not until some decades later it was time for this kind of bookseller.

Newspaper advertisements and book catalogues show that at the end of the century one and the same book was to be found on sale at most booksellers, which retailed the products of a great many other Swedish publishers¹⁴. The growing literary public was an essential factor in this important step to change the literary market. The buyers no longer only belonged to the churchly world and the learned world. The old public's demands for literature depended upon the literature's usefulness for the work. The new buyers demand for literature depended upon the pleasure. This demand was not as certain, and they wouldn't go round to a lot of bookshops to find the same book, but called for a better selling system, so to say a new kind of bookshop.

At the same time as the change in the selling system, we can note a new type of bookseller, here exemplified by Johan Christopher Holmberg. He was younger than Salvius (he died 1810). He was an assistant in a bookshop before he, at the age of 23, opened a bookshop in Stockholm. He widened his firm to include bookpublishing, newspaper publishing, printing and circulating library¹⁵. His experience from bookselling led him to start a bookshop and then to other activities on the literary market. His knowledge came from selling and Holmberg always did business well aware of the public's demand. At the end of the century we found more of this type of booksellers in Stockholm, and outside the capital Johan Lundblad in Lund had a similar development.

Newspaper advertisements and book catalogues also show that the book market had developed to a considerable extent by the end of the century. During the last three decades of the Eighteenth-century there were several important bookshops with a large and varied stock. But this new type of bookseller, like Holmberg, only existed in the cultural metropolis.

Conclusion

As I have mentioned, the change in the bookproducing system can be divided into two steps. The first step, from the middle of the century, shows all the printers extending their companies to publishing and book-selling. The next step during the 70-ies and the 80-ies shows the booksellers expanding to publishing and printing. It was booksellers which

¹⁴ I have studied booksellers and publishers catalogues in the Swedish Royal Library.

¹⁵ Hans Gillingstam, *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon* 19. Stockholm, 1971. P. 233--235.

were educated to sell and therefore were well aware of the demand of the literary public.

Printers and booksellers became publishers as a complement to their main occupation, a very important complement. Only one of the great agents on the literary market, Carl Christopher Gjørwell, started as a publisher. It was not until the next century the great publisher's houses took form.

The growth of the literary public made the change and expanding of the literary market possible. During the 80-ies and the 90-ies there also developed new forms of activity, important for the spread of literature, such as circulating libraries, reading salons and reading associations. Some of the authors made use of the new situation. The expanding literary market gave them possibilities to earn their living by writing, and it was an early step to make the authors free from patronage and from a necessary position as civil-servant.

Among the printers, publishers and booksellers there were some great entrepreneurs. They were found in the the cultural metropolis but also in some provincial capitals. The demands from the reading public gave new possibilities to those printers and booksellers who had the ability to satisfy new desires. A few entrepreneurs, who dominated the literary market, became the most important agents in the change of the literary market. They had visions about the literary market which corresponded with liberal economic ideas, and they contributed to underminig the mercantilism.

Finally, a more individualistic society with liberal economic ideas are going to supersede mercantilism and the old political society. Common interest between the state, the court and the church, as well as unit on all levels, governed the old society. From the end of the Eighteenth-century the society is going to split up. Some connections and parallels between changes inside and outside the literary system can be noticed. Economic freedom instead of intervention from the state started to be put in practice in the bookproducing system as well as in other economic fields. In the literary text the authors started to express the feelings of the subject instead of the old objective literary text, and in the beginning of the next century the romantic epoch is going to supersede the classicism. Furthermore the authors emancipation from patrons was a sign that an old political system, built on privilege, was going to be replaced by a society built on freedom.

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