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‘Aber mein Lieber Schneider’: The Printer as a Media Actor and the Drama of Production in *Then Swänska Argus* (1732–34)

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ABSTRACT

Then Swänska Argus, a weekly journal in the *Spectator* pattern, was published in Stockholm between 1732 and 1734. Whereas the editor and author Olof Dalin (1708–63) has gained much fame for the enterprise, not much is known about the printer Benjamin Gottlieb Schneider (16??–1738). In this essay I focus on the available evidence about the printer and printing conditions, as well as on the fact that several essays and shorter segments in *Then Swänska Argus* are addressed to the printer or deal with printing issues. My thesis is that this content played a part in the identity formation of the medium, as it stands for the editor’s interest in the printer and related technology at a time when the moral weekly was new in Sweden. By displaying the making of the medium and the difficulties around it, these passages enable readers to witness the drama of production where the printer plays a leading role. Furthermore, as the narrator Argus is addressing the readers directly and pleading with them to be loyal followers in spite of the printing errors or other potential problems, Argus is also making them actively aware of their part in this drama. In so doing, an education of the readership in questions pertaining to the production process is taking place.

KEYWORDS

Benjamin Gottlieb Schneider, Olof Dalin, *Then Swänska Argus*, *Sedolärande Mercurius*, *Spectator* genre, eighteenth-century periodicals, eighteenth-century printing houses, history of print, emerging media, Swedish press history.

Joseph Addison and Richard Steele's journals the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*, published in London in 1709–12, set a pattern for a new periodical genre with entertaining and moral aims that quickly spread over Europe. During the following two decades there were followers in, for example, Holland, France, Germany, and Switzerland.¹ In Sweden, the *Spectator* genre was introduced with *Sedolärande Mercurius* [Didactic Mercury] (1730–31) and *Then Swänska Argus* [The Swedish Argus] (1732–34).² By the end of the 1730s, a further seven similar journals were launched, all of them in Stockholm.³ They referred to themselves as 'moraliska veckoskrifter', moral weeklies, and this is the term I use for the Swedish branch of the genre.

To a certain extent, the early moral weeklies in the 1730s built on translated and reworked essays from weeklies published in Britain and elsewhere in Europe;⁴ but they also contained works focusing on specifically Swedish concerns. Like their forerunners, they were devoted to the moral issues of the day, such as education, gender roles, and the order of life in the city. Satire was often used to make the moral topics interesting to the readers. Other frequently used literary forms were allegories, fables, and letters.

Since there had previously been no Swedish periodicals that aimed to entertain, and limited prose fiction, the number of moral weeklies emerging during this single decade is astonishing. What made it possible? One aim of my recently published book (based on my PhD thesis) was to suggest answers to this question by looking into the cultural and technological conditions of the period, such as printing, censorship practices, distribution, and potential audiences.⁵ In this article I intend to further develop and discuss some of the findings about the genre's emergence, this time from the printer's position as a media actor and the issues pertaining to printing. The aim is twofold: first, to paint a picture of the general conditions for the printing production process, as this can be found in sources about the historical context, and second, to suggest a reading of passages about this production process in the essay content of *Then Swänska Argus*. In these passages the editor and author Olof Dalin (1708–63) addressed the printer and reflected on the printing process. My approach is that the subject matter treated is a self-reflective exploration of the conditions of production and, therefore, plays a part in the identity formation of the new medium of the moral weekly. More particularly, these passages deal with the unstable premises for the production of a journal and involve readers in thinking about these issues.

Generally, journalism history and the history of literature have been prone to focus on the textual and intellectual accomplishments of the writers and editors. In Sweden, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century historians of literature took such a focus in their rich and important studies about the genre's development. There are several studies

1 For information about the genre from a European perspective, see, for example, Klaus-Dieter Ertler, 'Moralische Wochenschriften', *Europäische Geschichte Online (EGO)*, www.ieg-ego.eu [accessed 15 March 2016], pp. 21–33.

2 *Sedolärande Mercurius* was published in seventy-two weekly issues from June 1730 to October 1731. The editors were Carl Carlsson (1703–61) and Edvard Carlsson (1704–67) (both later spelt Carleson). *Then Swänska Argus* was published in 104 weekly issues from December 1732 to December 1734. The editor was Olof Dalin (1708–63) (he later changed his name to von Dalin). All the editors and authors of the moral weeklies launched in the 1730s were anonymous. However, the names of the editors (who were in most cases also the authors) were later made public.

3 In this study I count as a journal any periodical that published at least ten issues. Projects with fewer issues are hence not considered.

4 Martin Lamm has made comparisons that show such influences from the precursors in *Sedolärande Mercurius* and *Then Swänska Argus*. See *Olof Dalin: En litteraturhistorisk undersökning af hans verk* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1908).

5 Tilda Maria Forselius, *God dag, min läsare!: Bland berättare, brevskrivare, boktryckare och andra bidragsgivare i tidig svensk veckopress 1730–1773* (Lund: Ellerströms, 2015). This work is based on a doctoral dissertation submitted to Gothenburg University in 2013. A summary in English is available at se.academia.edu/TildaMariaForselius [accessed 10 June 2016].

about the young men who wrote, translated, and compiled content material — and especially about Olof Dalin, the young civil servant who anonymously authored and edited *Then Swänska Argus*.⁶ While these studies focusing on the editors and their work remain essential to any scholar dealing with this periodical, it is also clear that they address the intellectual accomplishments first and the craft and technological issues as secondary topics. The craftsmen are, at best, background players in the narratives about the prerequisites for the genre.⁷ Another set of studies on the history of printing has dealt with technical development or the shifting social and political conditions affecting printers, but rarely on the printers' roles in relation to, for instance, the emergence of a specific genre.⁸

Since the 1990s, the increasing interest in the study of the history of media has broadened the approaches for research in the area. One of the approaches attends to the more or less forgotten contribution of those in the workshop, such as print shop workers, proofreaders, and illustrators, to the making of a medium.⁹ From a theoretical media perspective, scholars have focused on the interaction between technology and human networks, acknowledging that a medium is developed through complex social practices and differently in different contexts.¹⁰ Looking at it in this way, one may recognize that actors — or categories of actors — whom historical studies previously saw as secondary, or completely ignored, played a prominent role and developed strategies for success based on their given environment.

Archival findings show the relevance of these considerations to eighteenth-century Swedish moral weeklies. The picture that develops from my enquiry into the conditions of printing — primarily concerning Benjamin Gottlieb Schneider, the printer of *Sedolärande Mercurius* and *Then Swänska Argus* — shows that the printer was not seen as a secondary player, but appreciated as an important professional in the emergence of the genre. Records about the practices of the time, as well as the printed material itself, support this view. A first example is that the printers' names were published in every

6 See, for instance, Otto Sylwan, *Sveriges periodiska litteratur under frihetstidens förra del (til midten av 1750-talet)* (Lund: Gleerup, 1892), pp. 120–234; Karl Warburg, *Olof Dalin: Hans lif och gerning* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1884); Lamm, *Olof Dalin*; Ingemar Carlsson, *Olof von Dalin: Samhällsdebattör, historiker, språkförnyare* (Varberg: CAL-förlaget, 1997).

7 For instance, Warburg, pp. 167–69, briefly notes that the production of *Then Swänska Argus* was a good business for the printer, but that the journal was not well made in a typographical sense, mainly because of the many printing errors. In a recent history of the Swedish press, Schneider's contribution to the journal is mentioned in ten lines, with the focus being on his economic interests. See Ingemar Oscarsson, 'Med tryckfrihet som tidig tradition (1732–1809)', in *Den svenska pressens historia*, ed. by Karl Erik Gustafsson and Per Rydén, 5 vols (Stockholm: Ekerlids förlag, 2000–03), I (2000), pp. 98–215 (p. 104). Sylwan is somewhat more attentive to Schneider's role. From an interest in the censorship intervention, he takes up occurrences where the printer was involved (pp. 151–57, p. 161).

8 A standard work about the early history of printing in Sweden is Gustaf Edvard Klemming and Johan Gabriel Nordin, *Svensk boktryckeri-historia 1483–1883: Med inledande allmän öfversigt* (Norstedt: Stockholm, 1883). In a recent study, Kristina Lundblad argues that in 'bokvärlden' (the world of books, similar to what others may call the literary world) the status of the early printers was reduced over time and in retrospect misconceived from the nineteenth century onward as the publishing houses became more established. Publishing and mediation moved up the hierarchy and became separated from the printing process. See Kristina Lundblad, 'Föreställningar om förlag: Gränser mellan produktion och förmedling i den svenska bokvärlden, 1600-tal till idag', *Bibliis*, no. 72 (Winter 2015/16), 3–11.

9 For instance, Barbara Onslow, *Women of the Press in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000). Onslow's study provides insights in what she calls the 'back-room activities' (p. 149) in the production of periodical literature, a sphere where many anonymous women and men worked on tasks such as proofreading or typesetting. A Swedish study that adds to the knowledge about eighteenth-century printing houses is Anna-Maria Rimm, *Elsa Foug, Kungl. boktryckare: Aktör i det litterära systemet ca. 1780–1810* (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2009).

10 For theoretical and historical perspectives embracing this view on media as a social and cultural practice (as opposed to a purely technological approach), see, for instance, Asa Briggs and Peter Burke, *A Social History of the Media: From Gutenberg to the Internet*, 3rd edn (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), and William Uriccio, 'Historicizing Media in Transition', in *Rethinking Media Change: The Aesthetics of Transition*, ed. by David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), pp. 23–38.

issue, while the editors and authors remained anonymous, both to the readers and to the authorities. The naming of the printers was a regulatory requirement — as a means for the authorities to control print production — and it naturally focused the public on the printers. A reader who referred to an actual person producing *Sedolärande Mercurius* or *Then Swänska Argus* necessarily chose Schneider, because he was the only individual publicly known to be involved at the time of publication. Even more thought-provoking is that in some of the moral weeklies of the 1730s there are articles that in different ways bring the printers and the printing processes to the fore. This is most frequently seen in *Then Swänska Argus*. As far as I can see, these items have not previously attracted much research interest, and certainly not from the perspective I apply here.

I start with a brief description of the circumstances that laid the ground for the Swedish branch of the *Spectator* genre, with a focus on the endeavours of the printers. Thereafter, I describe and discuss how textual content in *Then Swänska Argus* enlightens us about the printer’s role and issues connected to print production.

A Printer in Stockholm

The appearance of the moral weeklies in the 1730s is associated with a political change that had a huge impact on the printing business. Until the early eighteenth century, the print shops in Sweden had primarily served the church and universities, and printers were highly dependent on and controlled by the state. This started to change in the 1720s when autocracy was abolished and parliament, largely dominated by the nobility, took on much of the court’s power. Peace treaties ended wars that had been going on for decades. These treaties opened up new opportunities for trade with other countries and for the economy. These developments affected Stockholm printing businesses. As Stina Hansson has shown, during the 1720s and 1730s, the printers showed some market orientation as they often took their own initiatives and financial risks.¹¹ To use Benedict Anderson’s terminology, an early ‘print-capitalism’ opened up, and this comprised the beginning of a transition from Latin to the vernacular as the dominant language of print.¹² The reading audience was still very limited, but the growth of the city population and the appearance of new university-trained professional groups provided increasing numbers of readers.¹³ These are some of the significant factors that, taken together, were crucial for the advancement of the moral weeklies in the 1730s. Even though the printing technology itself was neither new nor notably improved at the time, it became more powerful as it connected to other structures, such as economic and distribution systems, new consumption, and career interests.

Benjamin Gottlieb Schneider (16??–1738) was like many printers in Sweden of German origin. He arrived in Stockholm in the early 1720s, supposedly attracted by the new possibilities for printing ventures. After working for a colleague’s print house for a few years, he established his own business in 1726. The shop was one of eight in Stockholm at the time, and evidently successful. During only a few years Schneider and his co-workers built up a substantial and broad production base. They manufactured handbooks on subjects such as cattle-breeding, English grammar, and exchange rates, as well as translations, primarily of religious allegorical literature. Some of the projects, such as the Swedish hymn-book, were safe cards to play as they had huge audiences

11 Such a tendency was notable also in the 1690s, but soon stalled. About these market tendencies, see Stina Hansson, *Afsatt på Swensko: 1600-talets tryckta översättningslitteratur* (Gothenburg: University of Gothenburg, 1982), pp. 159, 185.

12 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edn (London: Verso, 1991), p. 43.

13 The premises are described in Forselius, pp. 58–62.

and were financed with state subsidies. However, some individual undertakings carried a certain economic risk; for example, the moral weeklies that Schneider started in June 1730 with *Sedolärande Mercurius* and that continued with *Then Swänska Argus* two and a half years later.

As a publishing project, a weekly journal was a greater risk than a book. A periodical that depends on subscriptions needs a constant readership and such a readership is hard to gain — especially when the medium is a new invention, as these weeklies were in Sweden. Furthermore, censorship legislation was in force, so the manuscripts for every issue had to be read and approved by the censor before printing. Because the editors and authors of the moral weeklies were anonymous, the responsibility for this censorship procedure was primarily that of the printers. Indeed, the *Then Swänska Argus* printer did not seem to have known who the editor was.¹⁴ This secrecy was a precaution to protect the editor and authors from pressure from the authorities. Each Friday during *Then Swänska Argus*'s publication period, a go-between took the manuscripts to the censor, who made changes and remarks before the typesetting commenced on Mondays.¹⁵ The conditions — as described by Sylwan — were not only practically complicated within the limited timeframe, there was the constant threat that the censor would refuse to allow an issue to be printed, or might even stop the whole project. Some issues of *Then Swänska Argus* were stopped before or just after printing, either by the censor or another powerful official. On one occasion in March 1733, further publication of *Then Swänska Argus* was banned. However, Schneider wrote to the government office asking to continue publication. Because several readers — high-ranking members of society — also conveyed this wish to the administration, publication was permitted to continue.¹⁶

Why Schneider, the newest printer in Stockholm, took a chance on introducing the first Swedish moral weeklies is not known. A couple of clues are that he had contacts in the Hamburg region where *Der Patriot*, an influential German journal in the *Spectator* genre, was fruitfully published from 1724 to 1726, and that he, when establishing his printing house, initiated a large number of translations from German to Swedish.¹⁷ These facts suggest — admittedly rather vaguely — that he was familiar with the *Moralische Wochenschriften* (the German *Spectator*-type publications) and that he not only served as the printer but also worked actively on bringing the genre to Sweden.

In any case, the *Then Swänska Argus* undertaking turned out to be a fortuitous decision, both for Schneider and for Swedish literature. According to Schneider's letter of March 1733 (mentioned above), the weekly had around 500 subscribers and most likely the number grew by a couple of hundred thereafter.¹⁸ The audience was, of course, much larger than the number of subscribers; the sheets were shared by several readers, they were read aloud at different kinds of social gatherings, and several of them were pirated in print or copied by hand. It is highly likely that the popularity of the journal was the reason why other printers soon followed in Schneider's footsteps. By the end of the 1730s as many as six of the eight printing houses in Stockholm had printed at least one moral weekly. Schneider's print shop was the most productive; in addition

14 Schneider himself ensures that this is the case in a supplication to the government administration, quoted by Sylwan, p. 161.

15 This routine is described in *Then Swänska Argus*, 2.51, and the interaction is confirmed by notes in the handwritten manuscript, which is available at the National Library of Sweden in Stockholm.

16 Sylwan, pp. 151–57; p. 161.

17 Wolfgang Martens, ed., *Der Patriot: Nach der Originalausgabe Hamburg 1724–26 in drei Textbänden und einem Kommentarband* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1969–84). When Schneider started his print shop, he fetched his printing press from Lübeck, according to Johan Elers, *Stockholm*, 4 vols (Stockholm: Nordström, 1800–1801), IV (1801), p. 247.

18 Sylwan, p. 161.

to *Sedolärande Mercurius* and *Then Swänska Argus*, the shop made *Skuggan Af den döda Argus* (1735).¹⁹ These early enterprises had a huge impact on the Swedish periodical press. During the eighteenth century, around thirty journals followed the moral weekly pattern, and aspects of it — included in the wider concept that Ingemar Oscarsson has called 'essay journalism' — spread to all kinds of publications, including novels and newspapers.²⁰

The Printer in the Text

Dalin was the editor of *Then Swänska Argus* and, as far as is known, also the author of almost all the sheets. Through a narrator named Argus, he paid much attention to Schneider, who appears as an addressee and a character in these sheets. Questions to the printer and about the printing process were repeatedly raised, indicating significant interest in the issues of the production and in Schneider as an important person for the journal's existence. In my brief description of the journal's structure, I refer to the volume number (1–2) and the issue (1–52) of the volume.

Typical of the genre, the content of most issues is an essay, voicing the reflections of a fictitious first-person narrator. The narrator is named after the mythological giant Argus with a hundred eyes, some of which are always open. In this context these eyes are imagined to watch over events in society. Argus addresses the reader using the familiar 'du' [you] and uses satire or allegory to raise moral concerns. In the satirical sketches of life in the city, Argus uses as examples the vain woman, the lazy young men hanging around the coffee houses, the orator who loves to hear his own voice, and so on. By contrast with earlier conventions of such moral anecdotes, the narration has realistic traits. For example, often the settings of the narrated events are actual places in Stockholm. Argus also frequently addresses fictional characters or discusses issues with, for instance, the (potentially pretend) senders of letters-to-the-editor. In addition to these discourses with or about fictional characters or pen names, Argus also talks to or about a handful of recognizable people in the small-city context of central Stockholm²¹ — King Fredrik and Queen Ulrica, the Censor (which was how the censor was referred to), and book printer Schneider.

'Schneider' is referred to or directly addressed by Argus in eighteen of the 104 journal issues.²² The length of these references varies from just a sentence to a large part of the essay. Some of them are highly appreciative: Argus praises the printer for being a good craftsman (2.40), for his loyalty, not revealing the author (2.52), and wishes Schneider luck in the future (2.50, 2.52). Other mentions briefly revolve around everyday matters where the printer is involved. Argus describes activities such as that a letter-to-the-editor will be returned to the sender via Schneider (2.10) or, as in the following quote that opens 2.32, how Argus is anonymously visiting the print shop: 'Jag war nyligen i min Boktryckares Boklåda, när en ung Skiönhet kom inskyndandes ur sin Wagn: Hon såg sig först omkring, gaf sedan et Bref åt Schneider, och hwiskade åt honom några ord i skygden af sin Solfiäder, wändandes Ögonen oförmärkt på mig: Hon skall ha frågat honom, om jag icke woro den bekanta Obekanta! men ej fått något wisst swar.' [I was recently in my book printer's bookshop, when a young Beauty came hurrying out of her

19 [Olof Gyllenborg], *Skuggan Af den döda Argus* (Stockholm: Schneider, 1735).

20 Oscarsson, p. 100.

21 In 1720, Stockholm had around 45,000 inhabitants. The number rose to 60,000 by the middle of the century. See Sten Carlsson, 'Landet och folket efter Karl XII:s krig', in *Den svenska historien*, ed. by Jan Cornell, Sten Carlsson, Jerker Rosén, and Gunvor Grenholm, 3rd edn, 15 vols (Stockholm: Bonnier lexikon, 1992–93), VIII (1992), pp. 112–17 (p. 115).

22 I disregard the printer's own notifications to subscribers, which often follow after the essay content.

wagon; she first looked around, then gave a letter to Schneider, and whispered to him a few words in protection of her fan, turning her eyes stealthily on me: She would have asked him, if I was not the known Unknown! but was not given a certain answer.]²³ After this short narrative, Argus presents the letter note from the 'Beauty' (signed 'Lydia') and the rest of the sheet contains his critical reflections on language and pretence. The reference to Schneider and his print shop might seem insignificant, as it is just a short opening in an essay that develops into different subjects. Nevertheless, as scene-setting it has a suggestive function. It anchors the content in the everyday context of production and gives the readers an impression of how the anonymous editor/Argus interacts with the printer and the readers, so as to find inspiration for his ideas.

The majority of the sections where the printer is mentioned concern worries about the production. The main problems that are raised are that there have been proof errors in a previous issue (for example, in 1.26, 2.40, 2.50), that too much space has been used for advertisements (2.28, 2.42), that Schneider requires more subscribers for the sake of the economics of publication (1.52), that the production has been delayed or that there is a risk of delay; for instance, because Schneider's apprentices have been busy attending prosecutions (2.40) or because of the censor's demands being handed to Argus via the printer (1.33). In this case, Argus tells the reader how difficult it is to maintain the quality of a sheet when he has to answer to different requests: the censor demands changes, the printer wants to produce on the agreed schedule, and the reader is entitled to a well-written and meaningful sheet as usual:

Jag hade et Ark färdigt, som skulle upmuntra dit sinne til Böndags andackt, men förrän jag visste Ordet utaf, feck jag en liten Sedel af min Ärliga SCHNEIDER, hwarutinnan han berättade mig at jag börjat gå in i Theologiska twister och at sådant intet kunde mig effterlätas. Jag måste tro at wederbörande hade skiäl, men huru blef jag icke utkommen som i sådan hastighet skulle skaffa et annat Ark? Somlige hafwa nog nöije däraf at deras dåliga samlingar få tryckas, hade jag et slikt sinnelag, snart slarfwade jag ihop en Nummer af min Argus: Men nu tilstår jag, at jag giärna wil hafwa Tid. [I had a sheet completed, that would encourage your mind to worship on prayer day, but in next to no time, I got a small note from my Honest Schneider, where he told that I started to go into theological disputes and that such could not be tolerated. I have to believe that the person in question had reasons, but how was I not affected that in such a haste would provide another sheet? Some may have pleasure in printing their bad collections, if I had such a mind, I would soon scamp a sheet together of my Argus: But now I admit, that I eagerly want time.]

The Instability of the Medium

I am not concerned here with to what extent the passages reflect actual events. Even if they depict experiences of the editor, they are integrated in essays, written with rhetorical skills, and designed for the specific context. Like the content in general, the segments should not be taken at face value. For instance, in 2.29 the reference to proof errors could be an ironic gesture, cryptically referring to the sensibilities at the time. 'Comet i mitt sidsta Ark är intet tryckfel utan i stället för Comet, Läses: Cometer. För Cometer, läses, Cometer.' [Comet in my last sheet is not a proof error but instead of Comet, read

23 I have translated the quotations myself with no further ambition than to catch the basic meaning of the quoted content. If some words sound unfitting for the English language in the early eighteenth century this is due to my limitations as a translator.

Comet. For Comets, read Comets.] However, sentences as these do bring up problems familiar to anyone involved in the production of a periodical, and they are obviously supposed to be of interest to the readers.

Regarded as a theme, the references to Schneider and the printing constitute what I call *the drama of production* — a drama that makes the production of the medium understandable to the readers. I draw here on several theories about emerging media in a historical context. For instance, Lisa Gitelman and Geoffrey B. Pingree write that 'new media, when they first emerge, pass through a phase of identity crisis, a crisis precipitated at least by the uncertain status of the given medium in relation to established, known media and their functions'.²⁴ One aspect of such an identity crisis is that new media, in the words of David Thornburn and Henry Jenkins, 'engage in a process of self-discovery that seeks to define and foreground the apparently unique attributes that distinguish them from existing media forms'. In keeping with this thinking, I consider the text segments about the printing of *Then Swänska Argus* as self-reflective pieces, which play a vital part in the identity formation of the medium. Evidently, such a process of exploration and identity formation is highly complex. Emerging media are, as Thornburn and Jenkins also underline, 'inevitably and centrally imitative, rooted in the past, in the practices, formats and deep assumptions of their predecessors'.²⁵ These traits are apparent in *Then Swänska Argus* in several ways, not least as the types of text in the journal, as well as in the other weeklies in the 1730s, and are deeply embedded in the oral tradition.²⁶ It was this older tradition of orality — rhetoric — that the editors and authors mastered when they, with the printers, started the experiment of producing weeklies. Whereas handwriting had been a tool for the rhetorical arts since antiquity, the transition process into print involved the transcription from handwritten manuscripts to the typeset sheets, which the authors had to entrust to the typesetters. In my approach, these are some of the circumstances that explain why the drama of production gains momentum in *Then Swänska Argus*, and why the issues and the loss of control are emphasized in this story.

One could argue that the drama of production in *Then Swänska Argus* does not only concern the printing. For instance, pieces about the efforts of writing were also included, given that the scope of the analysis was wide. However, in this article I have limited my consideration to where the printer and the printing process are involved, and hence this is what I refer to as producing or production below.

The drama entails self-reflections as well as calls for reader engagement. I will develop this point, taking as an example 1.26, where almost half of the essay is addressed to Schneider. A complaint about proof errors opens the exchange: 'Ney, min ährliga Schneider, detta går intet an. Ett och annat litet Tryckfel kan tåhlas, när Läsaren kan rätta det self; Men at mina Arck blifwa så wanskapade, som det sidsta, lider jag ingalunda.' [No, my honest Schneider, this is not appropriate. One or two minor printing errors can be tolerated, as the reader can correct it himself; but that my sheets are so malformed, as the last one, I cannot stand.]

Argus continues arguing that because of the proof errors his text might be misunderstood. It might seem either ridiculous or too deep. If this were the case, Argus

24 Lisa Gitelman and Geoffrey B. Pingree, 'What is New about New Media?', in *New Media, 1740–1915*, ed. by Lisa Gitelman and Geoffrey B. Pingree (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), pp. xi–xxi (p. xii).

25 David Thornburn and Henry Jenkins, 'Toward an Aesthetics of Transition', in *Rethinking Media Change: The Aesthetics of Transition*, ed. by David Thornburn and Henry Jenkins (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), pp. 1–16 (p. 4; p. 7). What I call the drama of production is a paraphrase of 'the drama of the telling' that Thornburn and Jenkins use with reference to self-reflective passages in Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (p. 5).

26 Some examples of such traits are the use of allegory, the direct address to the readers (as in a public speech), and the redundancy of words.

fears that his enemies would be provided with ammunition against him, and that the sales of the journal would be at risk: 'om min Boktryckare så utspökar mig, som på et par ställen i sidsta Arket, så lærer jag stå mig slätt. Ja, k. Schneider, I kunnen dermed ställa både mig och Ehr sielf illa ut.' [If my book printer overdresses me, as was done at a couple of places in the last sheet, I might fall flat. Yes, d. Schneider, you could hereby make both me and you a bad situation.]

The passage may, quite rightly, appear as a smartly formulated wish to dissociate himself from the flaws. However, from my perspective here, it is not primarily the proof errors per se that are most significant, but that the discourse about them makes the production of the medium visible to the readers and informs them about its instability. The narrator too appears to be learning about the complications of production and he repeatedly pleads to the readers to be supportive. Problems and advantages of the periodical nature of the medium are intensely discussed in the first issue (1.1). Argus claims that because of the handy size of the periodical sheet, it creates a format which encourages more critical engagement than the reading of a book would do. He fears that if the reader dislikes the first issue, this could lead to that 'hela vårt omgenge bli skiämt. Och af det första Arket kan du dömma om det öfriga'. [Our entire relation becomes spoiled. And by the first sheet you can assess the rest.] To prevent this feeling from developing, the reader is asked to have patience and to trust that the quality of the weekly will improve. Moral progress is hence a matter not only for the less-respected people in society, but also for Argus and his medium: 'Det är rätt löyeligit, at man wille neka Folck bättra sig, ty på det sättet skulle wij intet få lof at skrifwa bättre längre fram, än nu i begynnelsen; Men wi skole ändå giörat, om wi kunne.' [It is rather ridiculous, that people are denied to amend, for in the same way, we would not be allowed to write better in the future, than now in the beginning; but we will still do it, if we can.]

This monologue is a reflection, in the sense that Thornburn and Jenkins suggest, about the implicit questions: What is special about this medium? How will it develop? It is also an educational negotiation with the reader. By addressing the problems of periodicity *to* the readers, they are discreetly made responsible for the outcome of the publication. Here, just as in the discourses addressed to Schneider, the readers are reminded of the fact that this is a new media form, a medium in the making, and that this may mean unpredictable errors. Thus, while the passages about the printing process might on the surface appear as a kind of jargon about technical questions, they have much wider functions. By displaying the production process of the medium and the difficulties around it, these passages enable readers to witness the drama of production. And by addressing the readers directly and pleading to them, Argus is also making them actively aware of their own part in this drama.

Mutual Dependency and Competition

The analysis does not exclude the possibility that a negotiation with Schneider, as a professional person, was also taking place in these passages. The explicit purpose of the moral weeklies was to educate readers on morals and norms for social interaction, and naturally this included the relation between the editor and the printer. Argus repeatedly emphasizes their mutual dependency and the shared responsibility in the undertaking of the experiment — *Then Swänska Argus*. Some material indicates a degree of competition between them. The use of the space in the sheets is one of those highly visible matters that Argus addresses. The last page often contained advertisements and announcements, and when the journal's popularity increased, so did the number of advertisements. In 2.42, Argus criticizes the number, using a simile: 'Aber mein Lieber Schneider, af mitt sidsta Klåde skuren I alt fördrygt stycke åt Ehr sielf. Jag unnar Ehr gerna något; men

I togen så mycket, at jag deraf kunde fått en hel Tröija.' [Aber mein Lieber Schneider, from my last cloth you cut yourself too ample a piece. I gladly allow you something; but you took so much, that I could have had a whole sweater out of it.]

After two years of publishing *Then Swänska Argus*, Dalin decided to end the journal, probably because of the effort to write a sheet every week. At the end of 2.50, just before production of *Then Swänska Argus* ceased, Argus/Dalin encouraged Schneider to have faith in the future despite the loss of the journal.

Gif Ehr tilfredz, min k. Boktryckare; fast Argus slutar, så blir här wäl något annat, som gier Ehr Bröd: De Swenska pennarne bli wäl flitigare här effter. Dessutan, ho wet? Kanskie Höga Wederbörande torde lämna Ehr nya Lagboken at trycka: Ja, det woro wäl för Ehr, k. Schneider. Jag önskar Ehr den lyckan. [Be at ease, my d. book printer; although Argus finishes, there will be something else that provides you with bread: the Swedish pens will be more diligent hereafter. Furthermore, who knows? Maybe a prominent person should give you the new statute book to print; yes, that would be good for you, d. Schneider. I wish you that luck.]

Dalin could not refrain from adding a sarcastic note to these good wishes: 'om den Nåden skier Ehr, så lät see, at I trycken wår Lag rent och tydeligt. Ett tryckfel i Lagen, skun I tro, har mer at säija, än et tryckfel i Argus. Beware oss: Det kan ödelägga en hel familia.' [if that grace is given you, then see to it that you print our law cleanly and clearly. A print error in the law, you should believe, means more than a print error in Argus. Save us: it can destroy a whole family.]²⁷

The drama of production also contains praise. The very last issue (2.52) indicates how highly Dalin valued the printer. Following a convention at the time, Argus expresses gratitude to individuals and groups of (real or imagined) people who have helped him in his publishing endeavour. These are, in the following slightly satirical order: the four constituents of the parliament (nobility, priests, burghers, and peasants), God, the King, highly ranked state officials, the male reader, the Queen, the female reader, the correspondents, the censor, the invented co-authors, and finally the printer. In this hierarchy, the printer is at first not visible, according to Argus. 'Schneider' stands in the background, in a nook:

jag såg intet Ehr, min Boktryckare, I stoden så i en wrå: = = = nå, farwål, min ährliga Schneider. I ären en braf Man. Jag kan berömma Ehr trohet, Ehr tystlätighet, och Ehr ringa förwetenhet, at förnimma hwem jag warit eller huru jag hetat. [I did not see you, my book printer, you were standing in a nook; = = = well, farewell, my honest Schneider. You are a good man. I can praise your loyalty, your taciturnity, and your low curiosity, to find out who I have been or what my name is.]

These words indicate that the challenge and the responsibility that Schneider took on when he printed moral weeklies were not solely about technical matters. Virtues such as loyalty and taciturnity were significant personality traits that played a part in the production of *Then Swänska Argus*. Finally, I would emphasize that the passages that I have discussed, whether they are critical or not, highlight the printers' significance. The early undertakings by Schneider and other printers are worth recognition as they opened up a new era of periodicals in Sweden.

27 Because of this alert, Warburg speculates that the passage was a personal note from the editor to Schneider in the manuscript and not intended for printing (p. 169).

Conclusion

The purpose of this article has been to address the role of the printer and the printing process, both in the context of the time and in the texts of *Then Swänska Argus*. My intention was to emphasize the printer, as well as certain subject matter in the journal — messages addressed to the printer and other passages concerning the printing process. This content played a part in the identity formation of the medium, as it indicates the editor's interest in the printer and the technology.

I described how, after 1720, there was a substantial development that affected the conditions of the printers and paved the way for the emergence of moral weeklies in the 1730s in Sweden. Whereas the state previously had been involved in almost all print productions, at around this time printers in Stockholm started to stimulate an early 'print capitalism' by taking on their own projects and thereby promoting the incipient book market. The first moral weeklies were individual undertakings entailing risk-taking of various kinds, not least since they represented a new medium — the weekly that aimed to entertain. The German-born printer Benjamin Gottlieb Schneider produced three of the nine journals launched during the 1730s, among them the very successful *Then Swänska Argus*. The available information about his accomplishments shows that he played a crucial role in the realization of these projects, not only as a print producer, but also in relation to the authorities, especially the censor.

When it comes to the enquiry into the texts, I have selected and described pieces in *Then Swänska Argus* where 'Schneider' is addressed or where concerns about the printing process are raised. On one level, these pieces can be seen as messages to the printer and implicit excuses to the readership for flaws in previous issues. However, taken together and seen from the perspective that I have applied, they constitute a theme with wider functions. Through the suggested reading, the segments about the printing process come into view as self-reflections about the implicit questions: What is special about this medium? How will it develop? By displaying the making of the medium and the difficulties around it, these passages make the readers take part in *the drama of the production* in which the printer plays a leading role. Furthermore, as he is addressing the readers directly and pleading with them to be loyal followers, *Argus* is also making them actively aware of their part in this drama. In so doing, he is educating his readers about the production process.

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