Traces of Transnational Relations in the Eighteenth Century

Edited by Tim Berndtsson, Annie Mattsson, Mathias Persson, Vera Sundin and Marie-Christine Skuncke
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Bringing Into the Light, or Increasing Darkness With Darkness: Jacob Wilde’s Rewriting of Samuel Pufendorf’s Account of Swedish Ancient History

Tim Berndtsson

Facts are but the Play-things of lawyers,—Tops and Hoops, forever a-spin... Alas, the Historian may indulge no such idle Rotating. History is not Chronology, for that is left to Lawyers,—nor is it Remembrance, for Remembrance belongs to the People. History can as little pretend to the Veracity of the one, as claim the Power of the other,—her Practitioners, to survive, must soon learn the arts of the quidnunc, spy, and Taproom Wit,—that there may ever continue more than one life-line back into a Past we risk, each day, losing our forebears in forever,—not a Chain of single Links, for one broken Link could lose us All,—rather, a great disorderly Tangle of Lines, long and short, weak and strong, vanishing into the Mnemonick Deep, with only their Destination in common.388

As the quote from Thomas Pynchon’s post-modern eighteenth-century pastiche novel Mason & Dixon suggests, the business of combining the thin, entangled threads of historical facts into a durable cord is a delicate craft. The historian should not aspire to become omniscient, to forge history into a great chain (an image which is perhaps only an illusory forgery?), but rather use the ability of ‘Taproom Wit’ to see behind facts ‘forever a-spin’, and modestly prevent some of the brittle traces of the past from disappearing into the depth of oblivion.

It has long been recognised that historiography, at its roots, is pervaded by the friction between, on the one hand, cold facts and source data, and on the other, politically imbedded story-telling and rhetorical construction; we have, for example, Benedetto Croce’s saying that all history is contemporary history.389 This friction, however, is also historically determined. Croce’s slogan would probably have seemed either obvious or quite meaningless to an eighteenth-century European historiographer steeped in the tradition of historia magistra vitae – history as a teacher of life – according to which
history essentially meant the gathering of historical material for present moral and political purposes. Insofar as the historiographer was employed and supervised by the State, and this was usually the case at least in the early part of the century, those purposes were to advance the historic and legal arguments in support of the state abroad and to foster loyal citizen at home.

Consequently, being a historiographer in the Swedish realm during the eighteenth-century meant working as a state-employed bureaucrat with the task of defending the state’s honour against antagonistic foreign histories, as well as inspiring patriotic pride in the glorious work and days of ancestors among Swedes. At least, that is what Jacob Wilde (1679–1755), Swedish state historiographer (*historiographus regni*) from 1719 to 1755, meant when he stated that the historian ‘is and is held to be a servant of the state, who should watch over and defend its rights and benefits’. Wilde himself was proud to admit that he worked ‘on behalf of his office and by superior order’.

The question explored in this article, can be articulated as follows: What were the pressing motives of a Swedish state historiographer in Sweden’s ‘Age of Liberty’ and how was a Swedish historical work determined by general trends and changes in foreign historiography? I offer some tentative answers to this question by reflecting on the role of Wilde, and specifically by looking at his reworking of the Swedish history written by his well-known predecessor Samuel (von) Pufendorf (1632–1694).

When explaining the nature of his profession, Wilde himself claimed he regarded it as his ‘duty’ as historiographer to:

> write according to the official documents [*acta publica*] and defend the clauses therein to the honour of the nation, with all the reasons that common sense and political constitution and Natural law [*regulæ politices ac juris naturæ*] permits; because a historiographer must not write all what he wants, means and thinks, but [only that] what he finds in the official documents.

The quote highlights Wilde’s two essential ideals for (national) history writing: being loyal to one’s sources and being loyal to the king and/or the state (i.e. one’s employer). A major theme of this article is Wilde’s struggle to reconcile these ideals in his historiographical texts.

Wilde has been a relatively unnoticed figure in previous research. This can be explained by the limited influence his works have had on the reading public outside the walls of academia, as well as their cumbersome literary style. Wilde’s works are indeed somewhat cryptic to the modern reader, but they are nonetheless important sources for understanding the role of history and historiography in early modern Sweden. Among his oeuvre, the Pufendorf edition stands out as an intriguing piece of historiographical rhetoric, but not necessarily a successful one, as I will show in this study.
The Swedish state historiographer Jacob Wilde and his predecessor Pufendorf

Jacob Wilde was born in Courland, in today’s Latvia, and came to Sweden relatively late in life when appointed state historiographer on the recommendation of the privy councillor Gustaf Cronhiehm in 1719. Wilde had earlier held academic chairs in the Swedish provinces of Dorpat and Greifswald, but lost them as the provinces were successively overtaken by Russian armies in the Great Northern War. He did most of his work in the field of legal and constitutional history, and was given an important role in the attempt to give historical legitimacy to the new parliamentary constitution initiated by Arvid Horn and his supporters in the ruling Swedish nobility after the death of the childless Charles XII in 1718 and the abolition of the Caroline autocracy (in which the king had held all executive power).395

However, the publication of Wilde’s first major historiographical work was severely delayed by his reluctance to conform to the political demands of his superiors. His Sueciae historia pragmatica which was ready for publication in 1723 and was intended as the first part of a large project covering the whole of Swedish history, caused a protracted conflict between him and the Chancery College (Kanslikollegium), the institution that employed and censored the state historiographer. First Wilde tried to make this body responsible for the contents of his works, which it refused to agree to. Later the censor Johan Rosenadler argued that Wilde was too apologetic about the legal grounds for the Caroline autocracy; a very sensitive subject in the early times of the Swedish parliamentary ‘Age of Liberty’. Although Wilde clearly opposed the reign of Charles XII and in principle rejected the constitutional notion of a ‘king by God’s grace’, he denied that the king’s reign had formally been in violation of the Swedish constitution, and partly for that reason the publication of his work was prevented until 1731. This feud probably had political grounds, as Wilde undoubtedly sympathised with individuals belonging to the network that would later become the so-called Hat party, who were opponents of Chancellor Horn and less critical of the Caroline rule than Horn’s party.396 However, as Knut Nordlund has pointed out, the conflict also soon took the form of a personal quarrel between Rosenadler, who as censor considered himself above the historiographer, and Wilde, who stubbornly refused to compromise with the historical details.397

Wilde’s main argument for this refusal was that the allegations against Caroline despotism misrepresented the honourable ‘fact’ that Sweden, from the time of its first ancient kings, had an essentially unbroken line of constitutionally legitimate monarchs. This direct and unbroken link to the ancient age, to the Origin, was of vital importance, and it is telling that Wilde described his historical works as an addition to Olof Rudbeck’s grand project on the mythological origins of Sweden. (Rudbeck, to whom we will return,
is now perhaps most (in)famous for his thesis that the Swedish peninsula was in fact the re-emerged island of Atlantis.

It is in the context of the political reorientation after the end of Caroline autocracy, as well as of the changing preconditions for the historical genre on the international scene, that the works of Wilde stand out as interesting artefacts of the intellectual conflicts of their time. After the publication of the first part of *Sueciae historia pragmatica*, the Chancery College gave no support to the further work by the author on this Swedish history. Instead, after a time he was set to work on a revised and translated edition of the former Swedish historiographer Samuel Pufendorf’s work on Swedish history called *Continuirte Einleitung zu der Historie der vornehmsten Reiche und Staaten von Europa*, worinnen des Königreichs Schweden Geschichte, [. . .] insonderheit beschreiben werden from 1686.\(^{398}\)

This history was an additional volume to Pufendorf’s *Einleitung zu der Historie der vornehmsten Reiche und Staaten von Europa*, published in German in 1682.\(^{399}\) In that volume, the history of Sweden unfolds over roughly the same textual space which the eleven other kingdoms (and the whole history of the ancient world) were given in the *Einleitung* volume. Wilde’s edition of the Swedish history was called *Fordom Sweriges historiographi friherrens Samuelis von Puffendorff Inledning til swenska statens historie* med wederbörlige tilökningar, bewis och anmerkningar, and was published in two volumes in 1738 and 1743.\(^{400}\) However, the first of these, called ‘The Preparation’ (*Förberedelsen*), actually features many discussions with no direct connection to Pufendorf, although some points do have implications for Pufendorf’s text. The second volume comprises Wilde’s translation of Pufendorf’s history up to the middle of the twelfth-century, together with an overwhelming commentary apparatus, which constitutes a historical account of its own, aside from the main text.

Why, then, was Pufendorf’s history relevant in the eighteenth-century? Today, Pufendorf may, outside a circle of specialists, only be ‘remembered as an obscure German with a funny name, who followed Grotius in the development of international law’.\(^{401}\) However, during the early eighteenth-century, he was a central figure in the discourse of natural law, which at that time was a vital concern for almost everyone engaged in the Republic of Letters.\(^{402}\) Thus, when Pufendorf became professor in Lund in 1668 and later accepted the position of Swedish state historiographer in 1677, it was something of a triumph for the young Swedish empire, comparable to Queen Christina’s recruiting of Descartes a few decades earlier.\(^{403}\)

In his treatises in jurisprudence, Wilde was deeply influenced by the system of natural law that had been codified in Pufendorf’s work *De jure naturae et gentium* (1672). This should come as no surprise. Pufendorf dominated the university curriculum in both law and history from the late seventeenth-century onwards, not only in Sweden but throughout northern Europe.\(^{404}\) (Wilde himself had also been professor in Jus Naturae et Gentium

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Pufendorf’s works on Swedish history were obvious points of reference for anyone dealing with the subject, and his narratives might, from an international standpoint, be taken as representing the “official” Swedish history of Sweden at that time. However, with his interest in constitutional law, political philosophy and contemporary international diplomacy, Pufendorf was comparatively uninterested in issues of ancient history, and seems to have had but little contact with the antiquarian speculations of his Uppsala colleague Rudbeck.405

Wilde was connected with the works of both these iconic scholars of the seventeenth-century. But the views of Pufendorf and Rudbeck conflicted – and Wilde, as will be seen, did not fully approve of either. His rendering of Pufendorf’s Swedish history must be regarded not only as a way of dealing with Swedish history, but also as an attempt to get to grips with the Swedish historiographical tradition. By studying Wilde’s historiographical methods as they were practiced in his edition of Pufendorf’s history of Sweden, and by examining the communicative situation in which the work was published, it is possible, almost synecdochically, to recognize the conflicting trends in the writing of history during this period.

Wilde’s revision of Pufendorf in editorial context

When Wilde embarked on his project of translating and commenting on Pufendorf, it was not to be the first version of Pufendorf’s Einleitung in Swedish. Already in 1680, the first volume had appeared in that language (two years before the ‘original’ German text was published), translated by the poet and historian Petrus Brask. In 1688, Brask had also translated the second volume, containing Pufendorf’s Swedish history. If there was a need for a new edition, it was not because of any corruption in Brask’s translation of the ‘original’, as it is both complete and faithful in relation to the German text. The need felt by the Chancery College to publish a new version of Pufendorf in Swedish was prompted, rather, by political and ideological considerations. Also, the old one had long been out of print. Moreover, there was a need to produce an up-to-date, comprehensive and stylistically more pleasing history of Sweden for a new generation of readers. Yet another motive was the diffusion of modified editions of Pufendorf’s history in Europe and the threat that this supposedly posed to the national honour. To elucidate the last point, I will highlight the editorial and publishing practices applied in other European editions, before proceeding to the discussions in the Chancery College that preceded the one Wilde now produced.

For the kind of revisionary procedure that Wilde undertook on Pufendorf’s text was not unique at the time. The principles of text editing were more permissive in the early modern period than they are today (to put it mildly), and although some writers had a clear sense of ownership of their
texts, institutionalised copyright was non-existent. Indeed, both the German
Einleitung and Brask’s hastily made translation of it were initiated by
Pufendorf himself to forestall a pirate edition of notes taken at his lectures,
issued by some of his former students at Lund. Pufendorf’s reputation in
general, and the widespread popularity of his Einleitung in particular, gave
rise to a vast number of later editions of the work. When Wilde published the
first part of his Inledning in 1738, there existed more than fifty editions of
the Einleitung, published in German, English, French, Latin, Dutch and Rus-
sian. These editions vary significantly in relation both to the ‘original’
German and to each other, which makes the transformations of this work a
first-class example of early modern publishing procedure. To illustrate this
point, a few examples from the European continent may be given.

A common feature of the editions from the eighteenth-century is the in-
corporation of contemporary history, continuing (and altering) the out-dated
accounts of contemporary politics given in the original text by Pufendorf.
The title of a German edition (of both volumes) from 1718–1719, published
by Gottfried Frankenstein, to which we will shortly return, gives an indica-
tion of this practice. The first volume is called: Einleitung [. . .], von neuem
gedruckt, und biß auf den Baadischen Frieden abermahl fortgesetzt und
vermehrt, deßgleichen mit neuem Vorbericht versehen, darinnen des Au-
thoris Politische Anmerckungen nach dermahligem geänderten Zustand der
Sachen erläutert sind. On the title page of a French edition (Introduction à
l’histoire générale. . .) from 1721, the editor likewise declares the work to be
a new ‘version’, to which he has attached ‘Memoires pour servir à la vie de
Mr. le Baron de Pufendorf”. The different editors thus updated Pufendorf’s
history, just as one winds up an old inherited clock. The importance attached
to the fact that Pufendorf wrote the history indicates how his name (like that
of a good clockmaker) signified reliable authority.

Another common practice was to make offprints of certain parts of the
Einleitung. Especially popular was the chapter on the Vatican, which Pufen-
dorf, positioned in arch-Lutheran Sweden, dared to give a secular and frank
depiction of and make several critical remarks about. In connection with
these offprints, mention may also be made of the curious anonymous pam-
phlet A short account of the union betwixt Sweden, Denmark and Norway,
which commenced about the year 1396, and was broke about the Year 1523.
Taken from Puffendorf’s History of Sweden. . . Fit to be perus’d by Scotsmen
at this juncture. Published in Scotland in 1706, it is a four-page summary of
Pufendorf’s rather long account of the Kalmar Union, compiling the negative
reflections on Denmark in order to make a horrifying analogy that might
discourage Scotsmen from the impending union with England. Political mo-
tives are also evident in the debut work of the later famous Danish writer
Ludvig Holberg, Introduction til de fornemste Europæiske Rigers Historier,
from 1713. Although Holberg himself considered that his work differed a
great deal from Pufendorf’s, his contemporary colleague Andreas Hojer
dismissed it as a mere copy. The most notable differences between Holberg and Pufendorf appear in the chapters on Sweden and Denmark. In Pufendorf’s account, the Danes are to blame for almost all wars and disagreements between the countries. In Holberg’s account, the histories have an almost entirely inverted moral.

Thus, rather than thinking of Pufendorf’s German text from 1682 and 1686 as a fixed ‘original’, one should perhaps see it as a body of textual material, a general historical testimony carrying the name of Pufendorf, which later publishers and editing authors could use as it suited their own purposes (didactic, political, economic etc.). In the next section, we will look at the purposes of the Swedish Chancery College.

The political motives prompting Wilde’s edition of Pufendorf

On 25 May 1733 it was explicitly stated in the minutes of the Chancery College that the state historiographer Wilde should write a continuation of, and make changes to, Pufendorf’s Swedish history, to be published in a new edition. The next day, Wilde was called to the parlour outside the Chancery College meeting room, where

His Excellency Councillor and President Count Horn asked him [Wilde] if he did not want to undertake the task of continuing with Pufendorf’s Introduction to Swedish History. To which he said yes. He [Wilde] thereafter raised the question whether the chapter on Sweden’s interests could not be changed and 2 members of the Royal Council be appointed as censors of the work, namely the Royal Councillors [Gustaf] Celsing and [Joachim] Neres. Which was granted, whereupon he [Wilde] took his leave.

As all of this was granted without discussion, the entry suggests that Wilde either had the trust of Horn, or at least was not regarded as a troublemaker. The chapter on Sweden’s political interests that Wilde mentions is probably the concluding section of Pufendorf’s Swedish history.

In the Einleitung the history of each of the kingdoms described ends with relatively short sections commenting on the people, the (economic) geography, and the political relations of the kingdom in question. It is probably the last of these sections that Wilde (and apparently his political associates) wanted to see changed. For example, Pufendorf’s assertions that Narva and Nöteborg formed a safe Swedish line of defence against possible Russian attack, which he thought unlikely, no doubt rang hollow after the loss of those strongholds to the Russians in the Great Northern War. Thus, Wilde set about his task, submitting parts of his work to examination by the censors as he proceeded.
Beside the historical changes that had overtaken Pufendorf’s account of contemporary Swedish politics, there was also a political threat posed by foreign editions of the *Einleitung*. The second volume of the aforementioned Frankfurt edition, the history of Sweden, came with a newly written prefacing chapter on recent Swedish history, with a particular focus on the political intricacies after the death of Charles XII. The preface put forward arguments against the claim to the throne of the dead king’s younger sister Ulrika Eleonora and her husband Friedrich of Hessen-Kassel (who ultimately ascended the Swedish throne), and argued in favour of the son of the dead king’s deceased older sister Hedvig Sophia, Charles Fredrick of Holstein, thereby casting suspicion on the actions of the Swedish nobility, who became the actual rulers after Ulrika Eleonora’s coronation. The case made in the preface was supported by references to passages in Pufendorf’s history describing Sweden’s constitution.412 Needless to say, such an account was regarded as a challenge by the statesmen in the Chancery College.413

A minute from 28 January 1737 mentions a refutation of the Frankfurt preface:

Secretary Wilde has inserted a refutation of several passages regarding Sweden in the preface to Pufendorf’s Swedish history that was published in German in the year 1719 in Frankfurt; both the preface and the refutation were read [to the members of the Chancery College, who] decided that the secretary should leave out the Frankfurt preface from the Swedish edition of Pufendorf’s history with its remarks, and when he got to the period of the Swedish history on which the German writer erred, refute this in general terms in his remarks.414

A few months later, in May, Wilde was called back to receive further instructions on the refutation. It is evident that the Chancery College had current issues in mind when it instructed Wilde to make a new edition of Pufendorf – not least the still delicate question of governmental authority after the death of Charles XII.415 But Wilde, the historian, also attended to issues of a historiographical nature, as will be demonstrated in the next section.

**Wilde’s criticism of Pufendorf’s historiographical method**

The first volume of Wilde’s Pufendorf edition, *Förberedelsen*, starts with a disclaimer. For the greater pleasure of the reader, Wilde says, he would rather have written Sweden’s history from scratch:

without scrutinising, criticising and changing the work of my celebrated predecessors and other learned men; but I have stood by my duty to revere and
obey the will of those concerned [the Chancery College] and hope that the critique will not hinder the history from being to the taste of wise and prudent readers, as trustworthiness replaces what is lacking in likeability.416

Wilde was evidently using a style of humility that was conventional in pref-aces. But one may also suspect that, at the very beginning of this large undertaking, he was already having some real doubts as to its fruitfulness.

Perhaps Wilde felt insulted because he had been ordered to issue an edition of a fifty-year-old history, rather than continue with his own Sueciae historia pragmatica? However, as a loyal servant he did his duty: ‘Notwithstanding all the troubles that have faced me, [I] have spared no diligence or cost, in doing my duty and, according to the desires of those concerned, in explaining, improving and fulfilling what is lacking in Baron Pufendorf’s Introduction to the History of the Swedish State.’417

As noted in the introduction of this paper, Wilde speaks of himself not as a neutral scholar, but as a dutiful subject, following not his own wishes, but orders given from above, by the state. Notwithstanding the close institutional ties between state interests and historiography previously discussed, this attitude is also absolutely central to Wilde’s ethos as historiographer. He does what he does because that is what he is obliged and ordered to do.

But in general, the contemporary political issues, evident in the Chancery College minutes and Wilde’s proposal to ‘change the chapter on Sweden’s interest’ were only vaguely touched upon in his edition. And when it comes to the actual commentary on Pufendorf, the political motives are not as evident. The mentioned refutation of the Frankfurt edition is not published in Förberedelsen because, as we saw, the Chancery College did not want it to be inserted into the work. Instead, it was only referred to as being made public for the ‘persuasion of foreigners’ in a forthcoming Latin translation (by Anders Wilde, published in 1741) and as being ‘already known’ to the Swedish public from a previously published separate print.418 The Frankfurt edition was, however, attacked en passant in a long discussion on the topic of whether Sweden, in ancient times, had had an elective or hereditary monarchy (probably an attempt to carry out the instruction to ‘refute [it] in general terms’). In Förberedelsen, the critique of Pufendorf’s historical narrative at large is rather expressed in historiographical terms, and relates partly to structure and partly to content.

Beginning with the structure, Wilde argued that Pufendorf’s narrative was chronologically vague and unconcerned with epochs. In memorials to the Chancery College, where Wilde reported on his on-going work, he excused the considerable length of his attached manuscript with reference to ‘the great disorder, regarding events, as well as geography, genealogy and chronology’ in Pufendorf’s text.419 Patrik Hall has, somewhat wittily, likened Wilde to a historiographical Linnaeus.420 It is a comparison that hits the mark, as Wilde’s work is full of systematic orders and series.421 He would
indeed have made a fitting example in Michel Foucault’s study of the taxonomic gaze in the sciences of the Classical Age.\textsuperscript{422}

Wilde’s initial operation was thus to order the material in a systematic, chronological form. The central argument behind his enforcement of a new timeline is as follows: (1) History is like a ‘chain’ or a ‘body’ whose parts cannot be moved without causing (providentially guided) movements in the totality.\textsuperscript{423} (2) On that basis, the ‘man well versed in history’ can make ‘prognostica politica or guesses about issues of the state, based on probability’ through a ‘comparison of past and present’ (i.e. the \textit{historia magistra vitae} formula), and he increases his accuracy by gaining more knowledge about the moving forces of history.\textsuperscript{424} (3) Such forces he learns about by reading histories with distinct timelines that supports explanations of causal connections between separate events in the history constituted by the historian’s narrative. Wilde’s belief in the historiographer’s ability to reveal the underlying causality, the connections ‘beneath the surface’ of events, is to be seen in the light of the overarching theory of the moral and political \textit{functionality} of history – the historian reveals the connections between events and puts them into a chain, as a basis for predicting the future. The connections between ‘time, things and persons’ were not clearly marked by Pufendorf, according to Wilde, who therefore intended to make them explicit.\textsuperscript{425} This criticism prompted the insertion of a new epochal chapter division in Pufendorf’s text (which lacked such a division), based on Wilde’s schemes.

\textbf{Wilde’s Rudbeckian criticism of Pufendorf’s (lack of) ancient history}

Wilde also had a good deal of criticism in store for Pufendorf’s account of the ancient history of Sweden. Since this critique seems to have consumed most of his editorial energy, it is worthwhile dwelling upon the main thrust of it: Pufendorf’s general avoidance of interpreting myths in a Euhemeristic mode. Euhemerism (named so after the ancient Greek philosopher Euhemerus) was originally a method applied by the early Christian missionaries in order to account for the heathens’ polytheistic beliefs by interpreting them as allegorical myths. It made its way into the Scandinavian historiographical tradition in Snorri’s \textit{Edda} and \textit{Heimskringla}. According to Snorri, the \textit{Aesir} were not gods but mighty chieftains of a Scythian people, with one called Odin or Woden as their patriarch. The \textit{Aesir} impersonated gods to create a myth around themselves in order to gain power. By invoking Snorri’s basic idea and method, Wilde was able to explain away the old false beliefs of the Swedish ‘ancestors’. He also hinted that the original inhabitants of Sweden, before the warrior Scythians under Odin came from Asia
and seduced them, were a kind of noble heathens – perhaps even proto-
Christians of sorts.

The Euhemeristic method was certainly a powerful tool, as it enabled his-
torians to make legible historiographical accounts (and arguments) out of
myths, having first ‘translated’ them. It is this method that Rudbeck used on
an almost cosmic scale, as he tried to find hidden references to the Nordic
past in myths from all around the ancient world, by means of etymological
acrobatics and a peculiar kind of archaeological method. In this way, the
history of the current Swedish nation could, via Odin and the Swedes’ al-
leged Gothic heritage, be connected to the foundations of universal history,
or to be more exact: the histories of the Greco-Roman ancients and the
Bible. Thus it was possible for the Swedish state, which by the middle of the
seventeenth-century had suddenly become a great power, to sport a history
that seemed appropriate to this role. It was this method of ‘deepening’ the
past by translating myths that Wilde found wanting in Pufendorf’s history
and that he wished to impose upon it. In Wilde’s summary of his method of
procedure in *Förberedelsens*, his commentary on the history is equated to an
application of Rudbeck on Pufendorf’s text:

Especially the outstandingly profound and learned Doct. Rudbeck in his
*Atlantica*, in which he revealed with great distincton his learning, diligence
and zeal for the Fatherland, and also so well paved the way for me, that
nothing is wanting there but milestones, which could then also, where
accounts differ, serve as signposts. Furthermore I have taken pains to find the
most notable changes, and assign them to their own ages, which then seem to
be reasonably sufficient, in a comparison of domestic and foreign accounts,
to remedy most of the disorder and misunderstandings. And so I have now
used this historical method as a basis for my commentary on Baron von
Pufendorf’s introduction, which I have otherwise left unchanged in its former
shape and order, in accordance with the wishes of His Royal Majesty and the
Chancery College of the realm.426

However, when we turn away from what Wilde said that he wanted (or
rather, was obliged) to do, and instead try to examine what he actually did,
things get more complicated. Not only was Wilde less of an orthodox
Rudbeckian than he claimed to be. In addition, his patriotic ambition to
‘publicly with the pen defend the right of the State, the honour of the
Kingdom and the inviolable customs of the people, with the reliability of
history itself’ was undermined by his manner of establishing ‘historical
reliability’ with an almost fanatical interest in details and historical
curiosities – what we loosely could call his ‘scholarly’, or ‘fact-fetishistic’,
side.427

In the next section we will see how Wilde struggled to get Pufendorf’s
summarising account of Sweden’s ancient history to conform to his own
basically Rudbeckian view. We will also note how a conflict between
different modes of writing and conceiving history is displayed in Wilde’s reworking, which in effect destabilises Pufendorf’s text from within.

The arguments in Wilde’s critical commentary on Pufendorf’s ancient history

Wilde’s habit of plunging into seemingly secondary issues is clearly present already in the first volume and its preparatory theoretical discussions. This volume not only outlines Wilde’s general historical approach and the grounds for the Swedish monarchical constitution. It also presents several ancient and early medieval lineages, discusses Odin and the Scythian heritage, and contains an appendix setting out ‘Leibniz critique of Newton’s thoughts on the problems of the old chronology’, all in quite a confused fashion. The ‘scholarly’ strain in Wilde’s writing becomes all the more evident in confrontation with Pufendorf’s rather sparing account of Swedish ancient history.

Did Pufendorf offer a rival, and perhaps less glorious, explanation for the origins of the Northerners? Not at all; the very first sentence of his Swedish history, contains a claim in true Rudbeckian tradition: ‘That Sweden is the oldest kingdom in Europe cannot be doubted by anyone, who has any knowledge of the old monuments in this land.’ This wording very closely resembles that found in Gustavus Adolphus’s instruction to the College of Antiquities in 1630, which stated that: ‘No nation has older or more famous monuments than we [Sweden]. That proves that we are the oldest people, and that our tongue is the oldest.’ It is thus probable that Pufendorf was here consciously demonstrating his Swedish loyalty. Indeed, the first chapter of the Continuirte Einleitung reads almost like a schoolboy essay on the genesis of Sweden, in the manner in which it had been taught for decades: the first immigrants were a group led by Magog (a grandchild of Noah), who out of curiosity went to follow the North star, and ended up in Uppland. From them there sprang a Gothic people, who migrated to Asia but returned, during the age of Alexander the Great, in the shape of Scythian warriors.

However, already in the second paragraph, Pufendorf relativized this history: ‘But who the first immigrants of Sweden were, and what year after the flood they came, is left for others to search for, as we believe that nothing unambiguous can be found in such ancient things.’ Although he does not actually go against the Swedish antiquarians’ grain, Pufendorf takes the Pilatean way out, clearing his own intellectual conscience (and his international reputation) from some of their wild speculations. It is this tendency to avoid the problems of mythological origins that Wilde cannot accept.

In a note on the sentence by Pufendorf, Wilde remarks with disfavour:

Reason may investigate everything, and hence put it in doubt, but not leave it aside as the Sceptics wanted. History is based on traditions, oral as well as
written, from the dark, mythic and historical age. All of them [the histories of ancient times] are certainly not beyond doubt, but rather, according to the character of their time, more or less probable, and should by the writer be gathered, evaluated and put before the reader for examination, whereupon they might be approved or disapproved. . .432

Indeed, it may be thought that Wilde is actually right in this criticism of Pufendorf, who instead of critically examining the old histories, was content to accept some, reject others, and refer the question of source validity to the old historiographers. (This was also Pufendorf’s weak spot, as he knew nothing about runes and only a little of the Swedish language.) But more interesting from the perspective of this article is to note how Wilde, as a counter-move, engaged in the antiquarian activity of bringing heaps of historical evidence together for the readers to examine.

To the first ‘chapter’ of Pufendorf’s text, which is four pages long (the chapter division, as we recall, is solely Wilde’s construction), Wilde has added fifteen notes, which extend over thirty-four pages. The longest of these, note five in the first paragraph, stretches from page 10 to page 36. It is interesting in that it does not engage with Pufendorf, but with Rudbeck. The discussion begins with some general remarks about Noah, Odin and the people of Troy (all held to be connected, in some way, to the origins of Scandinavia) as well as a short catalogue of foreign praise of Rudbeck. The note then develops into a general critique of Rudbeck’s time-schemes in *Atlantica*. A long digression on Rudbeck’s faulty etymological derivations of the roots of the Christmas celebration in Scandinavia (pp. 27–31) is the tour de force of Wilde’s criticism. The structure of the first chapter is not untypical. The second chapter of Pufendorf’s text is also four pages long, and is provided with Wilde with twenty-three pages of notes; the third has two pages of text and eleven pages of notes, and so on.

Wilde is seemingly trying to outdo Pufendorf’s narrative with a competing narrative in his notes, which not only argues against the main text, but also gives an alternative full-scale account, with a vast amount of source material, often displayed in long quotations. As we have seen, Wilde also argues against other historiographical accounts of Sweden’s ancient history, accounts which Pufendorf either took for granted or cautiously ignored. The rhetorical effect of these notes is of course that the ‘authorial voice’ of Pufendorf is undermined, and his authority (which at the level of direct statements, Wilde claimed to hold in high esteem) is subverted. The abundance of his commentaries indicated that there were two different historiographical discourses in play at the same time.
Different early modern modes of historiography

As Arnoldo Momigliani has pointed out, one cannot easily equate antiquarian studies and historiography during the early modern period. Although they sometimes overlapped (as in the case of Rudbeck), the fabrication of historical narratives on the one hand and academic studies in, and publications of, ‘antiquities’ on the other were generally regarded as two distinct activities with separate traditions. State historiographers were as a rule grounded in a narrative tradition, which often focused on more or less contemporary history in its political (martial, diplomatical, dynastical, economical) aspects. Pufendorf is an almost paradigmatic example of this.

Antiquarianism, in contrast, primarily revolved around gathering sources, be it manuscripts, monuments or oral tradition. This endeavour was intensely supported by the state during the second half of the seventeenth century, when, for rhetorical purposes, the Swedish state apparatus developed a strong interest in national origins. The results of antiquarian activity were used in patriotic propaganda of the Swedish war-state, during the ‘Age of Greatness’. However, in the reign of Charles XII, the state’s interest in national antiquities diminished (along with its finances). In the eighteenth century, after the death of the king in 1718 and the old state antiquarian Johan Peringsköld in 1720, ideological antiquarianism was marginalised. But antiquarianism as a historiographical attitude did not cease to exist, and we see how it reveals itself in Wilde’s commentaries on Pufendorf. Like the antiquarians, Wilde is deeply engaged in the project of erecting the nation’s present honour on the international stage on the foundation of its glorious origin and past.

Swedish antiquarian studies were directly connected to the ideology of ‘Gothicism’, a discourse occupied with legends of the Goths, especially the one that claimed that they became the ‘conquerors of Rome’ and therefore, in some sense, the rightful heirs of the Romans. Despite Wilde’s critical scrutiny, and his strikingly harsh judgment of the sixteenth century Gothicist historians Johannes and Olaus Magnus, he operated within the tradition of Gothicism. As the Goths were believed to have arisen from ‘the north’, Swedish Gothicist historians judged that this must have been the Swedish region of Götaland, and the antiquarians’ interest in finds of ‘Gothic’ monuments inside the kingdom’s borders, such as rune stones, and also traces of Gothic myths in the oral traditions among the peasants, was motivated by this alleged heritage. Although Rudbeck was not formally appointed as an antiquarian, his Atlantica became, itself, the very monument of the collective endeavours to gather the remainders of yore under the Gothicist banner.

This ethno-cultural heritage not only bestowed prestige, but was also relevant in a political discourse. A general Gothicist idea was that of a once existing Gothic German-Scandinavian realm, which Wilde called the ‘Odinian Empire’. This was later split into the kingdoms of Denmark and
Sweden, and Wilde went to great lengths to prove that the ‘Danish prelates’ pretensions to primacy in the North were based on a misunderstanding of the Danish annals; the kings listed there were really the kings of Sweden, who in fact also ruled Denmark, following a decision by Odin. Denmark was thus, in origin, only a ‘province’ of Sweden. Wilde sees in Odin the very initiator of the Gothic lust for brave warrior deeds, and as an imperial ruler he is both a moral exemplum and a precursor of later Swedish ‘warrior kings’, such as Gustavus II Adolphus.

Pufendorf was of course aware of the political need to claim ancient legitimacy, not least in the context of territorial conflicts. However, he was sometimes rather careless in his treatment of details in the early periods, something Wilde never failed to point out. In one note, Wilde discusses Pufendorf’s deviation from the source Eric Messenius, which resulted in him confusing King Inge with two other kings both named Frey. Wilde concludes, almost with a sigh: ‘Few words, but much disorder, which might rather be ignored than corrected: but what will then become of historical reliability, which should above all be searched and cared for?’

This gives us a clue of one of the reasons for Wilde’s massive commentaries: as a historical thinker and writer, he was very keen on and particular about ‘hard facts’. Being schooled in the Swedish variant of Gothic antiquarianism, Wilde regarded it as his duty to comment upon historical documents and even more so to compile them and ‘bring them out into the daylight’, to use his own favourite catchphrase. History, then, became reliable only when backed with solid sets of documents. But how was this received by the non-academic Swedish public, which Wilde was surely meant to address?

The fate of Wilde’s Pufendorf edition

It is again crucial to remember that the position of state historiographer was not an academic one, but an appointment in service of the state. Pufendorf was the first Swedish state historiographer who wrote history in the vernacular, and also the first to be translated into Swedish. Pufendorf embodies a sort of shift, which he himself can be said to have inaugurated when, in the preface to the Einleitung, he identified the intended readership of this introductory work, not as learned clerks and scholars, but as politically active nobles and state servants in spe.

We must also remind ourselves that, in Pufendorf’s days, Latin was the default language of learning. Even if the Swedish eighteenth-century witnessed an enduring and emotionally charged debate about the need for academics to write in the national language, Latin still dominated the academic scene. The success of the Einleitung is partly explained by the fact that it was accessible outside the universities, i.e. not written in Latin or adorned with a bulky apparatus of facts and legal argumentation. When Wilde was
instructed to edit a new Swedish translation of Pufendorf, this edition too was most likely intended, not for academic purposes, but – like other European vernacular editions – for a contemporary public, involved in the political practicalities of the state. The main purpose of foreign editions of Pufendorf’s *Einleitung* was to update, and possibly revise, it in the light of contemporary politics. In contrast, Wilde’s edition essentially consists of a colossal critique of Pufendorf’s lack of meticulousness and does not even remotely touch on recent historical events.

Wilde was repeatedly criticised for his complicated and demanding style, and even a reader like the publicist Carl Christoffer Gjörwell, well known for his fondness for antiquarian studies, remarked that his ‘style did not possess all the clarity and likeability that cursory readers demand’.444 Wilde was indeed conscious of this criticism but chose not to heed it. On the contrary, he attacked historiographers who gave in to the demands of lazy, cursory readers:

That the disorder [in Swedish ancient history] has hitherto not been cured stems mostly from the fact that writers have conformed to the reader’s inclination and taste. Most [readers] seek entertainment and diversion: truthful investigations into the correct chronology, and the adjusting of confused, dark and entangled accounts, give them a headache.445

However, says Wilde, ‘this [critique] is necessary for the reliability of history, which serves the honour of the realm and its people’.446

It is hard to tell how Wilde’s employers in the Chancery College viewed the result of his historiographical struggle for patriotic honour. On the one hand, his Pufendorf edition was obviously published with their approval. On the other, the expected third part, on modern history, which was promised on the last page of the second part of Wilde’s edition, was never written; the part which, at least judging from the minutes of the College, was supposed to be politically the most significant one.447 As the Pufendorf edition is not mentioned after 1743, as far as I have been able to find, it is possible that the Chancery College may simply have lost interest in the project. Wilde’s criticism had taken its time, and the political needs of 1743 were not the same as those of 1733. It is probable that Wilde’s task became politically obsolete, or that the project was successively aborted after Wilde became blind in 1741.

The first page of Anders Wilde’s Swedish translation of *Suecia historia pragmatica* (titled *Swenska statsförfattningars, eller almänneliga rätts historia*) published in 1749, may shed some light on the issue.448 Here Anders writes that his father had had to interrupt his work on commenting Pufendorf as he felt that he must once again defend the ‘old history’, which had been called into question. This is a reference to a work called *Svea rikes historia* (‘The History of Sweden’), published in 1747 by Olof Dalin, which triggered
an infected debate about Sweden’s ancient past. From this conflict, I will try to derive a kind of poetic moral.

Bringing into the light, or increasing darkness with darkness: a concluding moral

In 1744, the year after the now sightless Wilde had finally published the second volume of Pufendorf’s Swedish history, Olof Dalin – not a man of the university, jurisprudence or antiquities, but a writer of a satirical periodical, state official and royal courtier – was given the task of writing an entirely new Swedish history from scratch. Dalin, for sure, was strongly influenced by Wilde’s conception of history and the rigour of his proofs, and followed him in many details, as he also politely admitted, praising the ‘incomparable utility’ of Wilde’s work and his great ‘erudition’. However, in the preface to the first part of *Svea rikes historia*, Dalin, in witty prose inspired by the Dane Holberg, claimed that the search for indubitable facts in the dimness of ancient history was ‘more than childish, it is to increase darkness with darkness, a vain quarrel, in which none may be judge’.449 A strike directed at the Rudbeckian antiquarians, among them Wilde. In addition, Dalin, supported by friends engaged in the natural sciences, drastically claimed that Sweden lacked any mythical ancient history, at least before Christ, as the land had been totally covered in ocean water. The water had only subsided centuries later, which put the origin of ancient Swedish history nearly 1000 years later than in Wilde’s version.450

Wilde, as one might expect, did not take this well. With his son Anders as a (somewhat unreliable) ghost writer, Jacob composed a diatribe against Dalin, which was inserted in *Swenska Swenska statsförfattningars [. . .] historia*. In the foreword to this work, Anders recounts his father’s credentials in terms we have heard before – ‘dutifulness’, ‘historical reliability’, ‘having made many rare documents public’ etc. – before accusing Dalin of humiliating the fatherland in the eyes of foreigners and finally calling for censorship of Dalin’s work if he did not retract his claims.451 In order to refute Dalin, Jacob and Anders also furnished the Swedish translation of Jacob’s work with a vast number of footnotes. These pointed out every deviation Dalin’s account had made from true (i.e. Wilde–Rudbeckian) history and provided painstakingly detailed counterarguments against his theses in roughly the same manner as earlier in the Pufendorf edition.452

Nevertheless, Dalin did not retract. Fate also had a last ironic twist in store for Wilde, as neither Dalin’s slightly blasphemous theory, nor his factual mistakes (meticulously catalogued by Wilde) could prevent the controversial courtier from taking over the position of *historiographus regni* after Wilde’s death in 1755. Moreover, Dalin’s *Svea rikes historia* became the
first historical work of the eighteenth century that was able to replace Pufendorf and Rudbeck, as a standard Swedish history; a national epic read by an emergent ‘public’. Now, the moral is not that Dalin, being the more ‘modern’ of the two, ‘defeated’ Wilde and that historiography progressed as a discipline. If modernity comes down to scholarly rigour and methodology, Dalin did not take historiography any further than Wilde – rather the contrary. If it is taken to mean source criticism and scepticism towards myths, Dalin, too, often indulged in highly romanticised stories about the first inhabitants of Sweden, whom he supposed to be not Scythian warriors, but shepherding ones, with a rococo-pastoral lifestyle.

What I am proposing, rather, is this: during the eighteenth century Wilde’s model of historiography – the scrutinizing ‘scrapbooking’ of old texts in the archive of the state in order to bring the material ‘into the light’ for the benefit of a few judicious readers who sought to ground the nation’s sovereignty in its ancient myths – was challenged. The challenge came from the popular type of rhetorically effective, ‘literary’ historiography, which relied more on emotionally appealing picturesque episodes, from the politically important events of recent history, and less on the detailed investigations of mythical accounts in old manuscripts, which only ‘increase[d] darkness with darkness’. Wilde’s antiquarian model might be said to have been ‘static’ in its displaying of sources, relying strictly on the logos inherent in a ‘reliable history’. Dalin’s significantly more frequent use of rhetorical figures and narration, inspired by recent continental histories, could instead be seen as intending the rhetorical effect of movere, the arousing of emotions.

This ‘narrative turn’ towards a public readership of historiography was supported by the concise and politically oriented works of Pufendorf; not least the Einleitung and the Swedish history – the very work that Wilde turned into a hotchpotch of antiquarian speculations! Thus, Pufendorf’s Swedish history, after Wilde’s editing, became an infertile hybrid, partly self-contradictory, as Wilde tried to transfer his predecessor’s text into a tradition from which it had originally diverted. Struggling to conjoin the historiographical poles of ‘facts’ and ‘construction’, Wilde sided with the antiquarians, and a sort of ‘fact-fetishism’, when the type of history favoured in the ‘Republic of Letters’ was instead politically embedded storytelling. Wilde did indeed do his duty, but he miscalculated the rhetorical purpose. One is left with a picture of the isolated old historiographer cloistered among the documents of the state archives, working on his history, year after year, while outside, international political settings and ideas on the intellectual scene were rapidly changing – history itself was revolving.

Pufendorf has come to be hailed as a leading figure of the German Früh-Aufklärung, and Dalin as one of the few vindicators of Enlightenment in Sweden. Of the blind Jacob Wilde, not even a single portrait remains. His name may not have vanished into the darkness; rather, it has been doomed to
linger in the dusk of academic footnotes. If not fair, it is at least poetically apt.

391 ‘[. . .] är och hålles för en Statens Sysloman, som bör bewaka och försvara des rätt och förmåner [. . .]’; ‘skrifver å embetets wägnar och på befallning.’ Both quotations are taken from an article by Patrik Hall, ‘Jacob Wilde – den glömda svenske statsteoretikern’, *Statsvetenskaplig Tidsskrift* (1997), pp. 275–96 (p. 285), to which I am indebted. Hall also emphasises the extent to which Wilde regarded himself as a civil servant. All citations given in English that are taken from Swedish sources are my own translations. I have tried to make these translations ‘readable’, i.e. to convey the meaning rather than the style. The original text is included in the note following the quotation(s), as here.
393 ‘[A]tt skrifva efter acta publica och defendera de däruti befintliga satserna till nationens heder med alla de skäl, som sunda förnuftet och regulæ politices ac juris naturæ vid handen gifva, ty en historiographus får icke skrifva all det han vill, menar och tänker, utan det han i actus publicus finner.’ Quoted from Knut Nordlund ‘Om censureringen af Jacob Wildes “Historia Pragmatica”’ *Historisk Tidskrift* (1902), pp. 263–92 (p. 279).
As mentioned Wilde was recruited by Gustaf Cronhielm, and he had defended Georg Heinrich von Görtz and Carl Gyllenborg (later leader of the Hat-party) after they had been arrested in England, in a book called De jure et judice legatorum diatribe (1717, under the pseudonym Stephanus Cassius). Wilde also corresponded with the two devout Hat-party members Carl Gustaf Tessin and (the elder) Eric Benzelius, who supported him in the conflict in the Chancery College (Nordlund, ‘Om censureringen’, pp. 274–75, 283). The letters do not, however, contain any explicit political discussion.

Nordlund ‘Om censureringen’, p. 280. Wilde also insisted that his censors should burden themselves with examining all his sources in extenso, something that evidently annoyed them. Nilsén, Att ‘stoppa munnen’, p. 124.

Translates as: ‘Continued introduction to the history of the principal kingdoms and states of Europe, in which especially the history of the Kingdom of Sweden is described.’

Translates as: ‘An introduction to the history of the principal kingdoms and states of Europe.’

Translates as: ‘The former Swedish historiographer Baron Samuel von Pufendorf’s ‘introduction to the history of the Swedish state’ with appropriate additions, evidences and comments.’

Leonard Krieger, The Politics of Discretion: Pufendorf and the Acceptance of Natural Law (New York, 1965), p. 3. This is an important work, as Krieger was one of the first modern scholars to discuss Pufendorf. A somewhat dated, but still very valuable survey of Pufendorf’s research can be found in Detlef Döring, Pufendorf Studien: Beiträge zur Biographie Samuel Pufendorfs und zu seiner Entwicklung als Historiker und theologischer schriftsteller (Berlin, 1992), Döring himself being the contemporary scholar who has worked and published most extensively on Pufendorf. Another central scholar in contemporary research on the German lawyer and historian is the American Michael J. Seidler, who has commented and translated several of Pufendorf’s works into English. Most research on Pufendorf concerns his writings on natural law. A good introduction to the research on Pufendorf’s role in this tradition is Knud Haakonsen’s Natural Law and Moral Philosophy: From Grotius to the Scottish Enlightenment (Cambridge, 1996).


Little is known about the contact between Pufendorf and Rudbeck. As Döring points out, Pufendorf had books by Rudbeck in his library, which he had been given by Rudbeck himself. (Döring, Pufendorf in der Welt des 17. Jahrhunderts, p. 347.) However, in 1685, Pufendorf joined a group from the College of Antiquities

406 The Swedish pirated edition was called *Politica inculpata*. See Pufendorf, *Gesammelte Werke. Band 1*, No. 84, p. 119. The lectures also form the base of the authorised Einleitung.

407 The number increases greatly if we count the sequels separately (mainly the volume with the entire Swedish history), the appendices and offprints of single chapters. For a comprehensive list of editions, see the bibliography elaborated by Michael J. Seidler in Samuel von Pufendorf, *An Introduction to the History of the Principal Kingdoms and States of Europe*, tr. J. Crull, ed. M. Seidler (Indianapolis 2013) – a list which has served as basis for this study on different Einleitung editions.

408 Translates as: ‘Introduction. . . reprinted and continued and amplified up to the Treaty of Baden, likewise supplied with a new preface in which the author’s [i.e. the editor’s], political remarks about the changed situation of things is presented.’


411 RA, Kanslikollegium serie: A II a: 46: 26 Apr. 1733. ‘Hans Excelence Riksrådet och Prasidenten greffe Horn honom förestälte, om icke han will sig påtaga, att con-
tinuera med Puffendorfs Inledning till Svenska Historien. Hwartill han bejakade. Men derhos påminte om icke det Capitlet öfver Sweriges Interesse kunde blifwa ändrat. och att 2ne af Kungl. Collegi Ledemöterne kunde förordnas det samma att censurera, nemligen herrar Kungliga Råden Celsing och Neres. Hwilket Bifölls, hwarmed han tog sitt afsked.’ The neat political balance between the censors indicates that Wilde was simply asking for something which Horn probably already intended to grant him. The censors, Neres and Celsing, belonged to opposing factions of the College and thus, as a pair, represented a political counter-balance to each other.


413 It seems to have taken quite some time for the Swedes to discover the Frankfurt edition, or at least the political threat it represented. The first time I have found the issue mentioned is in 1733, when Rosenadler reports to the College of a translation of Pufendorf’s history, which it decides to forward to Wilde. This reference, though, is somewhat unclear, as no names or titles are stated. RA, Kanslikollegium serie: A II a: 46: 30 Mar. 1733.

414 RA, Kanslikollegium serie: A II a: 54: 28 Jan. 1737. ‘Har secretären Wilde insatt en Refutation af åstkillige passager angående Sverige, som finnas i företalet
til Puffendorfs Swenska historia, som på Tyska utkommit året 1719 i Frankfurt, så upplästes både Föraltelet och Refutationen [sic] Fand godt at Secretarens i den Swenska editionen af Puffendorfs historia med des anmärkningar utlema det Frankfurtska föraltlet, samt när Han kommer till den Perioden af Swenska Historien, i hwilken den tyska scribenten fehlat, han då i sina anmärkningar sådant i generella termer wederlägger.’

415 Pufendorf’s Swedish history, written during the absolutist ‘Age of Greatness’, also had a general tendency to praise absolutist rulers, a tendency which the Chancery College, one of the organisational bases for Swedish parliamentary rule during the ‘Age of Liberty’, probably wanted to tone down.


418 Wilde Förberedelsen, pp. 1, 370.


421 At times, these systems confuse the modern reader much more than they help. However, while most of his systematisations are nowadays happily forgotten, Wilde can still be credited with introducing one of the most enduring epochal systems of Swedish historiography ever made: the threefold division of Sweden’s past into a prehistoric age, medieval age, and a new (modern) age.


423 Wilde, Förberedelsen, p. 2.

424 ‘han kan, medelst jämförande af forna och närwarande tids omständigheter, upstålla sina så kallade prognostica politica eller giffningar om Statssaker, på en sanolikhets grund. . .’ Wilde, Förberedelsen, p. 4.

425 Wilde, Förberedelsen, p. 6.

426 ‘Serdeles den öfwer måttan diupsinnige och lärde Doct. Rudbek uti sin Atlantica, därutii med stort beröm å daga sin lardom, flit och nit för Fäderneslandet, samt så wäl banat wägen för mig, at intet mera därwid felas, än milestolpar, de där och, vid efterrättelsernas skiljachtighet, kunde tiena til wägwisare. Därtill har jag nu äfwenwähl winlagt mig at utleta de merkeligaste förändringar, och at föra dem til sina egna tidehwarf, som tyckas någorlunda kunna göra til fyllest, wid in- och utländske efterrättelers jämkande, til mästa oredans och mißförståndets afhielpande.

at offentligen med pennan förswara, Statens rätt, Rikets heder, och folckets ostraaffelige seder, med siefwa historiens tillföritlighet.’ Quoted from Jacob Wilde, Sweriges historiographi Jacob Wildes svenska statsförfattningars, eller almänne-liga rätts historie (Stockholm, 1749), preface.


Wer aber die ersten Einwohner von Schweden gewesen, und in welchem Jahre nach der Sündfluth sie allidar angelanget, wollen wir anderen lassen nachsuchen, weil wir glauben, Daß in solchen uhralten Dingen nichts unzweifelhautes zu finden zey.’ Pufendorf Continuirte Einleitung, p. 4.

This reservation did not, however, stop a writer such as Holberg from making fun of Pufendorf’s assertion that Sweden was the oldest kingdom in Europe. Was it reasonable to assume that Europe’s first settlers really travelled all the way through the beautiful continent and then decided to live in the coldest land in the north? Holberg asked his readers rhetorically in the first paragraph in the chapter on Swedish history in his Introduction, a paragraph which is formed as a sardonic answer to Pufendorf. Ludvig Holberg, Introduction til de fornemste Europeiske Rigers Historier (1711), in Carl. S. Petersen (ed.) Ludvig Holbergs samlede skrifter I (Copenhagen, 1913), p. 313.


Widenberg, Fäderneslandets antikviteter. See also Mattias Legné, Fädernesladnets rätta beskrivning: Möttet mellan antikvarisk forskning och ekonomisk nyttokult i 1700-talets Sverige (Helsinki, 2004).
435 For the history of the state antiquarian and the College of Antiquities, see Henrik Schück’s massive work *Kgl. Vitterhets- historie- och antikvitetsakademien*, 8 vol. (Stockholm, 1932–44).


439 See Wilde, *Inledning: Andra delen*, p. 71. Wilde’s fascination with Odin is also noted by Hall, *Den svenskaste historien*, p. 88 *et passim*.


441 In a long memorandum to the Chancery College from 1740, in which Wilde recounts his merits as a historiographer in order to secure a salary for his amanuensis, he repeats the phrase ‘brought into the daylight’ numerous times, almost in every sentence. Although the phrase was not unconventional, its conspicuous recurrence clearly signifies that he conceived his work as a historian as an activity of ‘bringing forth’ the unseen and unnoticed. See RA, Kanslikollegium E. IV. 16: 30 Jan. 1740.


444 ‘hans skrifart ej ägde al den tydelighet och behagelighet, som flygtiga Läsare fodra.’ Carl Christoffer Gjörwell, *Den swänska Mercurius*, 3:2 1757:10, p. 457. See also Nordlund, who mentions several complaints made about Wilde’s complicated style in *Sueciae historia pragmatica* ‘which’, said censor Johan Brauner, ‘is unsuitable for a history, and in which one much desires a perspicuity that is the principle of true style’ [*hvilken är otjänlig til en historia, och hvaruti man mycket desiderar en perspicuitet, som är præcipua virtus styli*]. Nordlund, ‘Om censureringen’, p. 283.


448 Wilde, *Swenska statsförfattningars, eller almänneliga rätts historie*, preface.

This claim was seen as an attack on both the national and the biblical history of origin and thus sparked an infected debate that raged for almost the rest of the century. See Tore Frängsmyr, Geologi och skapelsetro: Föreställningar om jordens historia från Hiärne till Bergman (Stockholm, 1969). Dalin defended his thesis in the second part of Svea rikes historia.

Wilde, Svenska statsförfattningars [. . .] historie, preface.

Cf. Hall ‘Jacob Wilde’, pp. 277–78. Hall has remarked on the strangeness of these footnotes directed at Dalin’s work. Penned by Anders Wilde, the notes do not only often repeat many of the arguments in Jacob’s main text, but also sometimes draws conclusions that are not supported in the main text – like a strange dialogue between father and son.


An indication of this is the memorandum Dalin wrote before starting to work on his Swedish history. In that work, he says, he will focus mainly on ‘the clearer and more confident time, in the same manner as Daniel wrote l’Histoire de France, that is, each and every king’s history, one after the other.’ (‘den klarare och säkrare tiden, på samma sätt som Daniel har skrivit l’Histoire de France näml. vars och ens konungs historia, den ena efter den andra’). Quoted from Ingemar Carlsson, Olof von Dalin: samhällsdebattör, historiker, språkförnyare (Varberg, 1997), p. 88.
Contributors

MATHIAS PERSSON holds a Ph.D. in the history of science and ideas. His doctoral dissertation dealt with German images of Sweden in the eighteenth century and he is currently a researcher in the Department of Economic History at Uppsala University, where he is working on a project about the political dimension of Stockholm’s Royal Academy of Sciences in the 1700s.

ANNIE MATTSSON holds a Ph.D. in Literature. Her doctoral dissertation dealt with libels against the Swedish king Gustaf III and she is currently a researcher in the Department of Literature at Uppsala University, where she is working on a study of the archive of the Royal Police Chamber of Stockholm 1776–1791.

PHILLIP SARGEANT is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the History Department at the University of Liverpool. Utilising themes concerning domestic, economic and foreign policy, his research centres on producing a new history of the administration of Sir Robert Walpole.

FREDRIK KÄMPE holds a degree of Master of Arts with history as a primary field of study. His main research interest is maritime history, particularly early modern Swedish long-distance shipping and its conditions. He is currently working as a guide at the Swedish Naval Museum in Karlskrona.

KARIN BERNER is an MA student in the Department of History at Uppsala University and works as a teacher in secondary school. Her field of research is contacts between Sweden and the Ottoman Empire during the eighteenth century, with a focus on direct contacts involving different groups living in Istanbul.

ANNA BACKMAN holds a degree of Master of Arts in Literature and works as assistant curator at The Linnaean Gardens of Uppsala. For her master’s thesis she studied Academy Equerry Johan Leven Ekelund’s manuscripts on horsemanship and she is currently working on broadening the perspective of equestrianism in the long eighteenth century.

HELGA MÜLLNERITSCH is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures at the University of Liverpool. Her thesis focuses on
the Frauenkochbuch (woman’s cookery book) as object, female authorship and ownership, and the recipes with their variations and their symbolic significance.

TIM BERNDTSSON is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Literature at Uppsala University. He is currently working on a dissertation on the establishment of Freemasonic archives during the eighteenth century.

VERA SUNDIN is an MA student of Literature at Uppsala University and is currently working on a master’s thesis on the Swedish poet Hedvig Charlotta Nordenflycht, the précieuses and protofeminism. Her research interests include the history of emotions, Francophilia, gender studies and the pastoral mode.
38. Torbjörn Gustafsson Chorell, Fascination (2008)

Beställningar gällande nr. 1–32 skall ställas till:
   Inst. för idé- och läromeshistoria
   Uppsala universitet
   Box 629
   751 26 Uppsala

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   Uppsala universitetsbibliotek
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   751 20 Uppsala

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