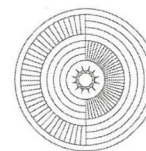


The Moment Is Now

*Carl Bernbard Wadström's
Revolutionary Voice on Human
Trafficking and the Abolition
of the African Slave Trade*

Anders Hallengren
Editor



**SWEDENBORG
FOUNDATION**

West Chester, Pennsylvania

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*"As o'er the past my memory strays, I recall certain
reminiscences of a past generation . . . which may possess
some interest to readers . . . and, therefore, I will record
them, without delay, as my own generation is nearly past,
and the one prior to that, entirely gone, and soon there will
be no one either to tell or to listen with interest."*

From "Some Reminiscences of the Warminster Society" (1914)
by MARY W. EARLY



"The Negro is lashed to death, alas! to sugar your tea."

From "England and France" (1806)
by ESAIAS TEGNÉR



"I sacrificed a tear on the altar of humanity."

From "Resa ifrån Stockholm genom Danmark" (1811–15)
by CARL BERNHARD WADSTRÖM

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From the Preface to Observations on the Slave Trade (1789)

CARL BERNHARD WADSTRÖM

ANIMATED WITH A desire of defending the cause of suffering humanity . . . having been so fortunately situated, as to be enabled fully to inform myself of the nature of the slave trade . . . would I were endowed with powers to represent in colours sufficiently striking, the frightful picture I have formed to myself, of the above-mentioned traffick, and thereby to prove, that these detestable markets for human flesh, constitute the last stage of all false principles; the greatest of all abuses; the inversion of all order; and originate solely in that corrupted system of commerce, which pervades every civilized nation at this day. . . . This detestable abuse may be considered as proceeding from a degenerate love of *dominion*, and of *possessing* the property of others; which, instead of diffusing the genial influence of benevolence and liberty, produces, in their state of inversion, all the horrors of tyranny and slavery. . . .

I am not only ready to devote my own person in this cause, but also to excite all those in whose breast there still remains a spark of humanity, to unite with prudence and activity, to accomplish this grand work, which has for its end the extermination of every *evil* and *false* principle, preparing the way for the reception of *Goodness* and *Truth*, in every human society. . . . pleading at the bar of human sensibility, in favour of the most oppressed nations in the universe. . . .

In exposing to the world the atrocious acts committed in that part of the globe to which I have been eye-witness, it is not improbable, that both the nations and individuals who have countenanced them, may

Knowledge, Silence, and Denial: The Late-eighteenth-century Debate on Slavery and Colonialism in Sweden

FREDRIK THOMASSON, *Uppsala University, Department of History*

THE FIRST LINE of a 1797 review of the Swedish translation of Thomas Clarkson's (1760–1846) abolitionist tract *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* (1786) states: "Here is another important subject, generally less related to the advantageous conditions of our country; however it will not therefore lack the warm compassion of the philosopher and friend of humanity."¹

The reviewer, court poet Carl Gustaf af Leopold, seems oblivious to the fact that since 1785, Sweden itself was a slaveholding nation. Swedish merchants were trading slaves, albeit on a small scale, and Swedish officials at the Caribbean colony of Saint Barthélemy had in the decade prior put in place a draconian justice system that governed the island's black population, both enslaved and free. Nonetheless, Leopold was certainly aware of the debate on slavery and the slave trade, and he joined Clarkson in his condemnation of this sordid business.

Leopold's remark highlights the main question of this essay: how were slavery and colonialism discussed in Sweden during the second half of the eighteenth century? It also reminds us of how Sweden has been silent about its own colonial ventures and participation in the Atlantic slavery system—a silence that to a certain extent is still with us.

While Carl Bernhard Wadström (1746–99) made a significant contribution to the international abolitionist movement, he was also a great

promoter of colonization. My students sometimes have difficulty understanding how these two seemingly contradictory convictions could be part of the same worldview. Wadström studied and began his career in Sweden at a time when both slavery and colonization were being discussed. He was of course not alone in either his distaste for slavery or his enthusiasm for colonization. Most well-known among his fellow abolitionist Swedes was the botanist and physician Anders Sparrman (1748–1820), who not only criticized slavery but also early in his career advocated for Sweden to colonize parts of Australia.

My aim is to show that Swedes like Wadström and Sparrman were participating in a debate that had already been highly prevalent in Sweden. While their joining with the abolitionists, arguably one of the earliest transnational political movements, attested to their position on these issues, many of their opinions were probably already formed before they left Sweden.²

I do not intend, however, to make any detailed comparisons between the international debate on slavery and the Swedish debate in particular, as this would entail a study of much greater scope. I do hope to be able to publish a book-length study on that subject in the future. Since the recent literature on abolition is vast, this essay offers only a brief account of the debate in Sweden during Wadström's lifespan, situating him and other Swedish abolitionists in their Swedish context.

Colonial Propaganda

Sweden never became an important overseas colonial power, but this was not for lack of ambition. The most prominent result of its colonial ambitions was New Sweden (1638–55), which was its attempt to gain a territory in the Americas. The Swedish colony, located in today's Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New Jersey, was a brief interlude in the battle between the more successful colonial powers, Britain and the Netherlands. The Swedish Africa Company's fort at Cabo Corso, located in today's Ghana, was an even briefer episode (1650s–60s).³

Notwithstanding these experiences, a range of more or less realistic plans were discussed and investigated all throughout the eighteenth century. Among the more fantastic projects were the establishments of

Swedish colonies at Madagascar and in the Orinoco delta, located in today's Venezuela.⁴

Swedish merchants and statesmen were inspired by, for instance, neighboring Denmark's more successful ventures in both Africa and the Caribbean. The rise of the Atlantic sugar economy did not go unobserved, and Swedish governmental economic discourse was turning increasingly mercantilist. One of the main professed aims of this new colonial interest was to find new markets for Swedish products. Having made his early career in the Swedish mining sector, Wadström was aware of such economic thinking.⁵ In a 1768 trade manual, for example, among a plethora of goods, slaves were described as a potential form of Swedish merchandise. It was underlined that such Africans were used for purposes of both agriculture and mining.

These African peoples are bought by Frenchmen, Englishmen, Dutchmen, Portuguese and Danes on the Guinea coast. . . . They are used by the Europeans in their mines and on their plantations in the Americas.⁶

One of the reasons for Sweden's 1757–62 participation in the Seven Years' War was to gain a foothold in the Caribbean; this time, the plan was to acquire the island Tobago, but Swedish diplomats were later instructed to try to obtain several other Caribbean territories, including Puerto Rico.

The colonial discourse can be followed in state papers, an example of which is an undated document (most probably from around 1780) proposing that a colony be established in Africa. The proposal contains a detailed budget, which states that out of the total sum of twenty-five thousand Swedish *riksdaler*, ten thousand were set apart for the purchase of 250 slaves. This was justified in the following way:

As the climate does not permit Europeans to be used for hard work, and the low initial number of them is only sufficient for guarding and supervision, it is necessary to purchase at least 250 negro slaves.⁷

This shows that the purchase of slaves was not a foreign idea in the circles promoting Swedish colonization.

Colonization propaganda was also printed. Ulrik Nordenskiöld's (1750–1810) *Treatise on the Benefits of Commerce and Colonization in the Indies and Africa for Sweden*, which he published anonymously in 1776,⁸ strongly argues on behalf of Swedish colonies, containing budgets and plans for such enterprises. It is clear that Nordenskiöld knew the international literature on the subject. In 1778, Anders Sparrman, who traveled with James Cook (1728–79) around the world in the first part of the 1770s, proposed in print that a part of New Holland's (Australia) southwest coast should be claimed by Sweden, as "it is still unseen by Flag officers . . . [and] an altogether unknown part of our globe . . . which I especially would like to see . . . named after Swedish places and Mæcenases."⁹ Another example of the promoting of colonization was Johan Henric Kellgren's (1751–95) anonymously published *Proposal: On the Founding of Colonies in the Indies and on the African Coast* (1784), which contains an enthusiastic program for Swedish overseas ventures.¹⁰

Wadström's own account, *Observations on the Slave Trade* (1789), was informed by his voyage to Africa. Published in Swedish in 1791,¹¹ the first half of the tract is indeed a critique against slavery and the slave trade, while the second half is an exhortation for establishing African agricultural colonies. How Swedish readers perceived this message is hard to reconstruct, but it is not impossible that Wadström was foremost considered a promoter of colonization. It should also be noted that Wadström and his fellow Swedes' publications in English reached some Swedish readers as well. Of the 284 names in the list of subscribers to Wadström's *An Essay on Colonization* (1794–95), more than 130 of them are Swedish.¹²

Later commentators, including historians, have had problems in taking Swedish colonial ambitions seriously. Indeed, some of the Swedish projects do appear bizarre in their disregard of both geographic and political realities. Nonetheless, the small Antillean island Saint Barthélemy was acquired from France in 1784 in exchange for French trading rights in Sweden. It may well also be possible that pre-revolutionary France considered advantageous the presence of a friendly Swedish island in the highly volatile Caribbean archipelago.¹³ This is not the right context to discuss the history of the acquisition, suffice it to underline that the preceding decades' debate indicates that Swedish government

circles and the upper echelons of society had an abundant interest in and showed a great deal of preparedness for overseas colonial ventures. Sweden took possession of the island in March 1785, becoming the last entrant in the quest for Caribbean colonies (the United States's later forays not included). This also made Sweden a slaveholding nation for the first time, since serfdom, human bondage of ancient date, largely had lost its grip on peasants since the late Middle Ages.

The Debate in the Newspapers

While colonization was being promoted and discussed by litterateurs, merchants, and statesmen, there was a vivid debate going on over this issue in the Swedish newspapers.¹⁴ In 1781, one of the capital's main newspapers—*Stockholms Posten*—bleakly predicted the following:

Yet there are countries on earth to be discovered. . . . Yet there are riches to be stolen, counties to plunder, heads to be baptized, throats to strangle, blood to shed.¹⁵

In 1782, the culprits were specified in another newspaper.

Spaniards, Englishmen, Dutchmen and Frenchmen call themselves Christian, and yet they keep thousands of humans prisoners in this gruesome state [of slavery], and trade them as dumb animals.¹⁶

In 1786, yet another newspaper added economic and demographic rationales to the critique.

It is a shame for the enlightened world that slave trade is still conducted by peoples of the Christian faith. This trade hinders the sciences, industry and population increase.¹⁷

There was great interest in Sweden for the fledgling United States, and opinions were mostly enthusiastic. The praise was not always unconditional, though; several authors did not fail to point out the discrepancy between its constitution, which is probably what the writer here means by the term *religion*, and its practice of slavery:

Yet, in this moment, there is no country where humanity is more humiliated than in America, Mr. Franklin's native land. A friend of

humanity must either close his eyes or shudder at a country, where contrary to its religion that proclaims that all humans are brothers, you can at every plantation see seven to eight hundred humans reduced to servitude, and indeed, counted as members of the animal kingdom.¹⁸

The above quotations summarize the mainstream opinion in the Swedish newspaper debate concerning these issues at that time: colonialism and slavery make up a sordid and exploitative business; hypocritical "Christians" treat slaves like animals; and these practices are not even conducive to the growth of commerce and population.

This discourse was not isolated to only the Stockholm newspapers. Gothenburg journals lambasted the cruelty of Caribbean slave-owners, and they eulogized slaves who, notwithstanding their brutal treatment, preserved their dignity and sense of justice.¹⁹ In a story retelling an event purportedly set on the Caribbean island Saint Christopher (St. Kitts) in 1756, one such noble slave by the name of Quazy had been wrongly accused of theft. During a fight with his owner—a childhood friend—rather than hurting his master, Quazy committed suicide.²⁰ This article is also an example of how such stories circulated in the Atlantic world; it had already been published in the United States in 1788 and might have come from the British press originally.²¹ Swedish newspapers gathered a good deal of their international news and information from foreign newspapers. Sometimes a source is given, but most of the time it is not. Nevertheless, it would certainly be possible to trace the origins of a large number of the Swedish articles in French, British, and German press, the main sources of foreign news in Sweden. And while there were articles in the Swedish press that promoted commerce and took a more sanguine view on slavery, even the authors of these articles felt the need to justify slavery by claiming that it gave slaves the means of survival: "Yes, it is through commerce . . . that we can feed the porcelain worker in China and the despondent slave at the sugar plantation in the West Indies."²²

I do not yet have enough material to ascertain a chronological development of what was published, but it is certainly the case that the number of articles concerning slavery increased during the 1780s–90s. This

might have been a function of the growing foreign abolitionist material, especially in the British press. It should also be emphasized that the distinction made here between newspapers and books is a highly fluid one. Many newspapers and journals were short-lived, as the commercial conditions were difficult on the restricted Swedish market. In addition to economic problems, especially during the late 1780s and the early 1790s, censorship and political circumstances made continuous publishing a challenge. (See "Reporting about Saint Barthélemy" on page 41, below.)

Travelogues and Literature

The second half of the eighteenth century saw an international boom in the publication of travel books and descriptions of foreign lands. Almost all books concerning Africa and the Americas in some way mentioned or described slavery. A number of Swedish authors also endeavored to satisfy the readers' curiosity. Pehr Kalm (1716–79), one of Linnaeus's so-called apostles, visited North America from 1748 to 1751. His comprehensive travel account (1751–63) included detailed descriptions of the conditions of slaves in British America.²³ Anders Sparrman spent almost two years in the Cape Colony in the 1770s. He traveled inland and experienced the almost warlike conditions on the edges of the Dutch colony. The first volume of Sparrman's account of his travels in Africa and around the world was published in 1783. He was highly critical of how the black populations were treated, of slavery, and of the slave trade.²⁴ Botanist and physician Carl Peter Thunberg (1743–1828), another Linnaean, spent three years in the Cape Colony in the 1770s. He also described how the black population was treated; but contrary to Sparrman, he saw colonialism and slavery as a fact, and he was considerably less sympathetic about the Africans' plights.²⁵ Kalm's, Sparrman's, and Thunberg's books were immediately translated into several languages. In *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species*, Clarkson cited Sparrman's account of how the Dutch colonists hunted Hottentots to enslave them,²⁶ which goes to show how quickly knowledge circulated at that time.

Slavery and its terrors were also touched upon in songs and popular literature. The following rhymed example is taken from a travel account by a ship chaplain who visited the Cape Colony on route to China:

"Should we, as slaves, be shipped to an unknown isle, away from homeland, girl and friend, no please, let us rather die!"²⁷

Other scientists who traveled overseas saw the effects of slavery and commented upon it in texts that were predominately directed toward a learned audience. Botanist Olof Swartz (1760–1818), who traveled to the West Indies in the 1780s, made important contributions to the study of the Caribbean flora. But Swartz also wrote about the conditions of the slaves on the islands he visited, and he did not mince words when he criticized slaveowners, referring to them as barbarians and executioners. One of the examples he gave was the following account of an execution, although it seems improbable that he actually had witnessed the scene:

A Negro that had killed his master was executed at Cavaillon at St. Domingue. His thumbs were cut off, and he was put on the breaking wheel without shedding a tear. You could only hear him saying: "When I murdered my master, it was bad for him: now I have to die for his sake, which is bad for me."²⁸

Similar stories were repeated by other Swedish writers, who had not themselves traveled or witnessed atrocities in the Caribbean but instead had picked them up in the foreign literature that reached Sweden. Jöran Fredriksson Silfverhjelms (1762–1819), for example, made the following observation:

If a Negro kills one of the whites, for whatever reason, he is burned alive; but if a white kills his slave, this misdeed is atoned for by an insignificant fine, which is seldom collected.²⁹

A surprising amount of travel literature was translated into Swedish, especially in the last two decades of the century. A great number of the international successes were promptly published in Sweden, often in abridged versions. The strong presence of travelogues in late-eighteenth-century circulating libraries attests to the popularity of the genre at that time. These types of books, as well as novels and biographies, were considered to be part of the "lighter" reading material.³⁰

Sometimes, reviews of travelogues were scathing in their critique of the circumstances that foreign writers described. A passage in the Swedish edition of Mungo Park's (1771–1806) *Travels in the Interior Districts*

of Africa led to an irate comment by a reviewer who condemned the author's compatriots who traded in slaves and human misery.³¹

Forewords were a common place to air opinions or underline the horror of the descriptions in the translated book. C. G. A. Oldendorp's (1721–87) book on the Moravian mission on the Danish Caribbean islands was translated twice into Swedish. In the first abridged version (1784), the editor cited a Swedish informant—just back from the Americas—to prove that Oldendorp's descriptions were not exaggerated:

A Swedish officer who had served with distinction in the entire sea campaign in the most recent war in the West Indies told me that he had seen a French Officer in Martinique who while playing billiards crushed the skull of a negro boy with his cue stick just because of a slight mistake in the marking. The negro collapsed, and the officer said coldly: *I can pay for him.*³²

A few lines from another foreword offer insight into just what a Swede might have known about slavery around the year 1800. Samuel Ödmann (1750–1829), the translator and abridger of John Gabriel Stedman's (1744–97) narrative on the Maroon wars in Surinam, underlined how accessible knowledge about slavery was in Sweden during that time:

The translator imagines that most readers will find the cruelties against Surinam's slaves given account for here exaggerated, against nature, impossible. But he cannot support such a consoling thought. The information he has on the manner which the Dutch and English treat their slaves in the West Indies paints a picture that does not in any sense make these unfortunate beings' fate in Surinam unbelievable.³³

While a list of quotations such as these could be made very long, the above selection gives an idea of the rhetorical strategies that were employed. The books in Swedish that mentioned slavery and the slave trade were critical.

Slavery on the Stage and in Poetry

While reading through newspapers in search of the above material, my attention was drawn to an advertisement for a play that was staged at

one of Stockholm's theatres. Entitled *The West Indies Traveler, or Virtue's Reward* [*Westindiefararen, eller Dygdens Belöning*], with the author given as Herr Björn (i.e., the playwright Didrik Gabriel Björn [1757–1810]), the play was an adaptation of Louis-Sébastien Mercier's (1740–1814) *L'Habitant de la Guadeloupe*, which was first staged in Paris in 1786 and premiered in Stockholm in 1791. I immediately started to peruse bibliographies and Swedish theatre history. Plays with slavery either as a central theme or in some way touched upon turned out to be common on Swedish stages, and several of them were successes. *Westindiefararen* was performed more than 170 times. Other plays included abolitionist dramas, such as August von Kotzebue's (1761–1819) *Die Negersklaven* [*Neger-slafvarne*], which premiered in 1796. In the foreword to his play, Kotzebue underlined that many events had been omitted from the performance in order to spare the audience. Such cruelties would be too gruesome to portray on the stage, but in the printed version, he was truthful in his depiction of the slaves' terrible fate.³⁴

Some plays were set in the Orient, and the slavery depicted was thus Ottoman, or Oriental. But this did not stop the playwrights from referring to issues of the Atlantic world as well. Sébastien-Roch Nicolas de Chamfort's (1741–94) *Le Marchand de Smyrne* [*Slafhandlaren i Smirna*] was first staged in Stockholm in 1775, exactly a year after its Parisian premiere. Significantly, the Swedish translation of the title underlined that the goods traded were slaves. In the play, when the slave trader Kaled is criticized by a French prisoner for selling him as a slave, Kaled retorts: "But what do you mean? Do you not sell negroes? I sell you for the same reason. . . . Is it not all the same? The only difference consists in that they are black, and that you are white."³⁵

We have little information about the theatrical performances, but judging from some of the preserved role lists, black characters were played by white Swedish actors, as using white actors only was the rule in European theatre at that time. Similarly, there is scant information on how these exotic settings were represented on the stage. Fascinatingly, the 1793 "pantomime-ballet" *Mirza and Lindor*, which was set in the newly acquired Swedish colony ("The scene is the island St. Barthélemy."³⁶), included several slaves on its role list. Swedish slaves were thus represented on Stockholm stages for at least some productions.

The bibliography concerning slavery in theatre has recently grown, but there is no Swedish work treating the subject.³⁷ The large number of such plays and their performances, however, is just another confirmation of the importance of slavery in public debate. It is difficult to estimate readership of books and newspapers, but the commercial success of some of these plays is tangible proof that the slavery question was ever-present in society and, importantly, not only among the upper classes. The Stockholm theatres catered to a fairly varied audience, including the middle class and lower classes of city workers, such as shop assistants and craftsmen.³⁸

Learned poetry could not be claimed to be a popular art form, as it was printed in small editions that catered to an educated and highly literate audience. A typical exponent of this tradition was Count Johan Gabriel Oxenstierna (1750–1818), who along with a career in government also wrote poetry. Among his most famous poems is his 1796 epic poem "The Harvests" [*Skördarne*], in which he in the sixth song eloquently criticizes the greed of plantation owners and merchants, pitying the African slaves who can never benefit from their own work. Nils Lorents Sjöberg (1754–1822) expressed similar thoughts in his 1791 poem "Commerce" [*Handeln*]. While commerce is hailed as the fount of contemporary riches, he criticizes the excessive greed that has created inhuman slavery, its worst aberrations being the slave trade and the plantation system in the Americas. Oxenstierna and Sjöberg are prime examples of how the antislavery rhetoric was expressed in poetry.

Reporting about Saint Barthélemy

Court poet and litterateur Carl Gustaf af Leopold (1756–1829), the reviewer of Clarkson's abolitionist tract, was a central figure in the capital's literary scene.³⁹ When he stated that slavery and slave trade were "generally less related to the advantageous conditions of our country," was he at the same time saying that Sweden had no connection to Atlantic slavery? It is impossible that he was not aware of the Swedish Caribbean colony. The acquisition of this colony in the 1780s was celebrated by King Gustav III (1746–92), who had been instrumental in the negotiations with France, and it was hailed as a triumph for Sweden. This message was repeated in Swedish newspapers. In 1785, the island was

declared a free port, granting merchants the freedom to come to trade at the island. Both this and other royal ordinances were read in churches; and as a result, especially poor peasants from the Finnish part of Sweden started to inquire about the possibility of moving there. A rumor about a possible future in the Swedish colony started to circulate. So to stymie these rumors, another royal proclamation was issued, this time prohibiting moving to Saint Barthélemy without royal permission.

This episode made it clear that the dissemination of information about the new colony could have unforeseen consequences. Censorship had become progressively stricter during Gustav's reign; and though there is no tangible proof that news either from or about Saint Barthélemy had been censored, there are many examples of self-censorship by writers, journalists, and editors during these years.⁴⁰ It appears highly likely that any Swedish litterateur would have known that writing about the colony might displease the king or a member of his entourage. The public opinion was, as shown above, critical of slavery; and the many nobles and important merchants who were shareholders in the Swedish West India Company were aware of this fact. The company was instituted in 1786, and one of its professed goals was to trade slaves using Saint Barthélemy as a transit harbor. The king encouraged merchants to join this lucrative commerce. In *An Essay on Colonization*, Wadström succinctly summarizes not only his own interests but also those of both his colleagues and royalty: "But the truth is, that the King loved gold, my worthy companions loved natural science, and I loved colonization."⁴¹

Silence is difficult to interpret; however, the fact remains that after the flurry of publications celebrating the acquisition, there was very little news arriving from Saint Barthélemy. A brief period of freedom of the press followed the assassination of the king in 1792, but censorship was again introduced in 1794. The 1790s was a tumultuous decade in Swedish politics; and while the international campaign against the slave trade grew in intensity, it seems that the implicit prohibition on writing about Swedish involvement was observed. In 1793, news from France was restricted; and in 1794, it was prohibited to report on anything concerning the United States or French constitutions. The political reporting only restarted in earnest in 1809, when the Swedish constitution went through radical change and a modicum of freedom of the press

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was reintroduced.⁴² During these two decades—sometimes called "the iron years"—the only news reported in Swedish newspapers about Saint Barthélemy were shipping and commercial news.

One of the very few publications about the colony was naturalist Bengt Anders Euphrasén's (1756–96) description of the island published in late 1795. Euphrasén visited the island in 1788, on behalf of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, and he was instructed to investigate its flora and fauna. But as in other scientific travelogues, he included many passages on the island's population. Euphrasén wrote several pages on the island's legal system, which, as in all slave colonies, differed substantially from the public law of the mother countries. As soon as the Swedes arrived in 1785, they began adapting to the surrounding archipelago's traditions of controlling the black population, both enslaved and free. The first major Swedish slave law was proclaimed in 1787. Euphrasén was a perspicacious observer, who in 1788 already understood perfectly how this system functioned. He described it over several pages in his book, writing in plain terms about how slaves were punished:

The punishment is usually executed in the following manner. The criminal is laid with face down tied to the wheels of a cannon and his legs stretched out and tied to two poles in the ground, his clothes are removed until he is nude, the one that hits him has a whip with a short handle, but the whip is 6 to 7 ells [c. 3 meters], he hits the nude slave violently from some distance, each lash sounds like a pistol-shot and big pieces of skin and flesh often come off the back. The slave has to endure 30, 50, or 100 such lashes according to the nature of his crime.⁴³

In the beginning of the Swedish period on the island, slaves were punished at one of the island's forts, which explains the detail about how slaves were "tied to the wheels of a cannon."

Knowledge in Sweden of the black population's conditions on Saint Barthélemy was certainly not widespread during this period. Newspapers did not write about it, and Euphrasén's travel account probably never gained a broader audience. The only way for those in Sweden to assess the situation would be to apply what they knew about conditions in other colonies to the situation at Saint Barthélemy. This is what

Ödmann, the translator of Stedman's work, did when he commented upon the terrible fate of the slaves in Surinam.

Conclusion

During the late eighteenth century, due to the relatively high Swedish literacy rate, readers of newspapers—and sometimes books—were more common in Stockholm than they were in many other European towns and cities. The reading public there at that time could easily inform itself about both the cruelty and the economic significance of slavery and colonization. In addition to this group, we may add the theatre audiences, who albeit in a different and often less direct way, were introduced to some of the facets of slavery, both Atlantic and Oriental.

This demographic consists only of those who had access to sources in Swedish. The Swedish upper classes, where knowledge of German and French was common, could also become informed by reading the international literature on the subject. An example of this is French writer Abbé Raynal's (1713–96) famous colonial history, which although eventually banned in Sweden was nevertheless widely read.⁴⁴ While knowledge of English was less common, it was increasing during the period.

People like Wadström and Sparrman, for example, would have had ample opportunity before leaving Sweden to inform themselves about slavery and the situation facing black populations in Africa and the Americas. I have provided examples only from 1750 onward; but of course previous literature, such as geographic manuals, earlier travelogues, and so forth, was also available to the capital's educated inhabitants.

While the opinions voiced in the majority of newspaper articles and other writings were predominately against slavery, this critique never seems to have been addressed in conjunction with the fact that Sweden had its own slave colony. Censorship and the protection of political and commercial interests are certainly part of the explanation for this silence. Even more intriguing is how this silence remained the state of affairs at least until the debate on the Swedish abolition of slavery started in the 1840s, but that goes beyond the scope of this essay.

44 The Moment Is Now

There were, of course, people who did know what was happening—first and foremost, the Swedish colonial officials in the Caribbean and the administrators of colonial affairs in Stockholm. The judges of the Swedish Supreme Court were also aware of the situation, as they had to confirm the island's legislation and sometimes preside in court cases that involved slaves.

It is probably unrealistic to pretend that the general reading population in Sweden could have connected their Caribbean colony, about which they knew very little, to the antislavery propaganda that had been present for decades. But Anders Sparrman could certainly have made the same analogous conclusion as did Ödmann in his foreword to Stedman's book. In Sparrman's case, though, it would have been based on personal experience. In 1784, when he was offered the position of government doctor at Saint Barthélemy and declined, it is possible that he did not want to partake in the foundation of the Swedish slave colony.⁴⁵ ~

9. See Robert Booth, "Children lost from care in human trafficking cases, says Council," in *The Guardian*, October 18, 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2011/oct/18/children-lost-human-trafficking>.
10. Anonymous child-safeguarding practitioner, in evidence to the CSJ.
11. See George Arbutnott, "The slaves in your weekly shop," in *The Sunday Times Magazine*, October 6, 2013, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/the-slaves-in-your-weekly-shop-swhpxlhxp2s>.
12. CSJ/YouGov polling, November 2012.

Knowledge, Silence, and Denial

1. *Läsning i blandade ämnen* 1 (1797), 91: "Se här åter et viktigt ämne, väl i allmänhet mindre nära beslägtadt med vårt lands fördelar; men som visserligen ej derföre skall sakna filosofhens och mennisko-vännens varma deltagande."
2. For Wadström's and Sparrman's contributions to the British debate, see Klas Rönnbäck's article, "Enlightenment, Scientific Exploration, and Abolitionism: Anders Sparrman's and Carl Bernhard Wadström's Colonial Encounters in Senegal, 1787–88, and the British Abolitionist Movement," on pages 63–85 of the present volume.
3. For a bibliography and insightful discussion on how these episodes are treated in Swedish historiography, see Gunlög Fur's chapter, "Colonialism and Swedish History: Unthinkable Connections?", in *Scandinavian Colonialism and the Rise of Modernity: Small Time Agents in a Global Arena*, eds. Magdalena Naum & Jonas M. Nordin (New York: Springer, 2013), 17–36.
4. Carl Sprinchorn, "Sjuttonhundratalets planer och förslag till svensk kolonisation i främmande världsdelar," in *Historisk tidskrift* (1923): 109–62.
5. Jonas Ahlskog, "The Political Economy of Colonisation: Carl Bernhard Wadström's Case for Abolition and Civilisation," in *Sjuttonhundratalet: Nordic Yearbook for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 7 (2010): 146–67.
6. [Carl Magnus Könsberg], *Kort anvisning på in- och utrikes handelswahrör* . . . (Norrköping, 1768), 41: "Detta Africanske folkslaget upköpa Fransoser, Engelsmän, Holländare, Portugiser och Danskar på Guineiska kusten. . . . Brukas af Europerne wid deras Bergswärk och plantager uti America."
7. Utrednings Förslag för en Colonie bestående af 80 Personer, vol. 1, Saint Barthélemysamlingen, Swedish National Archives [Riksarkivet], Stockholm: "Såsom Climatet icke tillåter at Europaer nyttias vid svåra arbeten, och deras ringa antal i begynnelsen icke förslår til annat än bewakning och tilsyn, ty är uphandling af Negerslafvar en nödvändighet til et antal af 250 st åtminstone."; Holger Weiss, "Ett utkast i fel mapp? Några randanmärkningar rörande svenska kolonialplaner i Västafrika under 1700-talets senare hälft," in *Svärdet, ordet och pennan. Kring människa, makt och rum i nordisk historia. Festskrift till Nils Erik Villstrand den 24 maj 2012*, eds. Christer Kujava & Ann-Catrin Östman (Åbo, 2012), 561–83.
8. [Ulric Nordenskiöld], *Afhandling om nyttan för Sverige af handel och nybyggen i Indierna och på Africa* (Stockholm, 1776).

9. Anders Sparrman, *Tal om Den tilväxt och nytta, som Vetenskaperna i allmänhet, särdeles Natural-Historien, redan vunnit och ytterligare kunna vinna, genom undersökningar i Söder-hafvet* (Stockholm, 1778), 17: "Är ännu af Flaggmän osedd, samt en til fina Hamnar och Naturalier aldeles okänd del af vår glob . . . Den önskade jag i synnerhet skulle, till Sveriges heder . . . på alla chartor teknas med namn af Svenska Länder och Svenska Mæcenater!"
10. [Johan Henric Kellgren], "Förslag, Til Nybyggens anläggande i Indien, och på Africanska Kusten," in *Nya Handelsbibliotheket* (Stockholm, 1784): 65–80.
11. *Anmärkningar rörande slaf-handeln på kusten af Guinea; upsatte af Carl Bernhard Wadström* . . . (Norrköping, 1791).
12. Carl Bernhard Wadström, *An essay on colonization, particularly applied to the western coast of Africa, with some free thoughts on cultivation and commerce* . . . (London, 1794–95; n.p. at the end of the work).
13. Sture Waller, "Det svenska förvärvet av St Barthélemy. Huvuddragen av de svensk-franska förhandlingarna och parternas syften," in *Historisk tidskrift* 73 (1953): 231–55.
14. I have tried to survey newspapers and periodical publications, but the investigation is by necessity restricted to the reading of a few titles from selected years. Books on the press of this period have been of great assistance: J. Viktor Johansson, *Extra Posten 1792–1795. Studier i 1790-talets svenska press- och litteraturhistoria* (Gothenburg, 1936); Harald Elovson, *Amerika i svensk litteratur. En studie i komparativ litteraturhistoria* (Lund, 1930); Magnus Nyman, *Upplysningens spegel. Göteborgs allehanda om Frankrike och världen, 1774–1789* (Stockholm, 1994); Åke Holmberg, *Världen bortom västerlandet. Svensk syn på fjärran länder och folk från 1700-talet till första världskriget* (Gothenburg, 1988).
15. *Stockholms Posten*, 17 Nov. 1781: "Ännu finnas länder på jorden at upptäcka. . . . Ännu finnas rikedomar att röfwa, Landskaper at plundra, hufwud at döpa, halsar at strypa, blod at utgjuta."
16. *Upfostrings-Sälskapets Tidningar*, 10 Oct. 1782: "Spaniorer, Engelsmän, Holländare och Fransoser kalla sig Christna, och hålla ännu många tusend Menniskor uti detta grufliga tilstånd fångna, samt handla därmed såsom med oskäliga djur."
17. *Dagligt Allehanda*, 16 Nov. 1786: "Det är en skam för den uplysta werlden, at slafhandel ännu drifwes äfwen utaf de folkslag, hwilka bekänna sig til Christendomen. Detta bruk hindrar wettenskaper, slögder och folkökningen."
18. *Tryck-Friheten den Wälsignade*, 15 Jan. 1784: "Ändå ges i denna stund intet land, där menskligheten är wärre förnedrad än i America, just i Herr Franklins Fädernesland. En mensklighetens wän måste wara antingen utan ögon eller och rysa för et land, där, twärt emot Landets Religion, som förklarar alla människor för Bröder, man får i hwar plantage, se sju til åttahundra människor sänkta i trälldom, ja rent af räknade til Djur-Riket."
19. *Göteborgs Allehanda*, 12 Mar. 1780; *Hwad Nytt? Hwad Nytt?*, 1 May 1778.
20. "Upträden ur Mänsklighetens historia. Drag af caractér hos en Slaf," in *Telegraphen*, 28 Mar. 1798.

21. Richard Bell, "Slave Suicide, Abolition and the Problem of Resistance," in *Slavery & Abolition* 33:4 (2012): 525–49.
22. *Medborgaren*, 27 May 1789: "ja, det är handeln . . . genom hwilken wi kunna föda Porcellaines arbetaren i China, och den modfäldte slafwen wid socker planteringen i Westindien."
23. Pehr Kalm, *En resa till norra America* . . . (Stockholm, 1751–63), 2:477f.
24. Anders Sparrman, *Resa till Goda Hopps-udden, södra pol-kretsen och omkring jordklotet, samt till hottentott- och caffer-landen, åren 1772–76* . . . (Stockholm, 1783–1818); Gunnar Broberg, David Dunér, and Roland Moberg, eds., *Anders Sparrman. Linnean, världsresenär, fattigläkare* (Uppsala, 2012).
25. Carl Peter Thunberg, *Resa uti Europa, Africa, Asia, förrättad åren 1770–1779* (Stockholm, 1788–93); Marie-Christine Skuncke, *Carl Peter Thunberg: botanist and physician. Career-building across the oceans in the eighteenth century* (Uppsala, 2014).
26. Thomas Clarkson, *An essay on the slavery and commerce of the human species, particularly the African* . . . (London, 1788), 46; in the Swedish edition: *Afhandling om slafveriet och slafhandeln, särdeles rörande negerne, så väl i Africa, som West-Indien* . . . (Stockholm, 1796), 59.
27. Jacob Wallenberg, *Min son på galejan, eller En ostindisk resa* . . . (Stockholm, 1781), 98: "Sku vi, som slafvar, dras till någon okänd ö? Från hembygd, flicka, wän? Nej, lät oss helre dö!"
28. Olof Swartz, *Inträdes-Tal Innehållande Anmärkningar om Vestindien* (Stockholm, 1790), 17: "En dag aflifvades en Neger vid Cavaillon på St. Domingo, som hade mördat sin Herre. Tummarne afhöggos, och han krokades under hjulet, utan at fälla en enda tår. Man hörde honom endast säga: Då jag mördade min Herre, var det illa för Honom: nu måste jag dö för hans skull, det är illa för mig."
29. Jöran Fredriksson Silfverhjelms, *Samlingar för hjertat och snillet* (Stockholm, 1789), 54: "Om en Neger ihjälslår en af de hvita, det må vara för hvad orsak som helst, så brännes han lefvande; men om en hvit dödar sin slaf, så försonas denne ogering genom en ganska obetydelig plikt, och som man sällan utfodrar."
30. Margareta Björkman, *Läsarnas nöje. Kommersiella lånbibliotek i Stockholm 1783–1809* (Uppsala, 1992).
31. [Eric Ulric Nordforss], *Bukoléon. Blandad läsning för olärde* (Stockholm, 1799), 90.
32. Christian Georg Andreas Oldendorp, *Tillförlätlig underrättelse om negerne på Gvinea kusten, samt de derifrån hämtade slafvars närvarande belägenhet, medfart, seder och sinnelag* . . . (Uppsala, 1784), n.p. foreword (ital. in original): "En Svensk Officerare, som med utmärkt heder gjort hela Sjö-Campagnen under sist slutade kriget i Vestindien, berättade, det han på Martinique sedt en Fransk Officerare på Billarden, med sin queue krossa huvudskålen på en Neger-gosse, blott för en ringa försummelse vid marqueringen. Negren stalp, och Officeraren sade dervid helt kallt: *Jag kan betala honom.*"

33. J. G. Stedman, *Capitain Johan Stedmans Dagbok öfver sina fälttåg i Surinam* . . . (Stockholm, 1800), n.p. foreword: "Öfversättaren föreställer sig, at de fläste läsare skola anse många här förekommande och emot Surinams slafvar utöfvade grymheter öfverdrefna, naturstridiga, omöjliga. Men en så tröstelig tanke vågar han dock icke understödja. De underrättelser han äger om Holländares och Ängelsmäns sätt att handtera sina slafvar på Wästindiska öarna, gifva sammanlagde en tafla, som gör desse olyckliga varelsers medfart på Surinam för ingen del otrolig."
34. August von Kotzebue, *Neger-slafvarne. Dramatiserad historie-målning* (Stockholm, 1796).
35. Sébastien-Roch Nicolas de Chamfort, *Slafhandlaren i Smirna* (Stockholm, 1774), 27 (the four periods are in the orig.): "Hvad vil han väl säga? Säljer Ni icke Neger? Jag säljer Er på samma grund. . . kommer det intet på et ut? Åtskilnaden består allenast deruti, at de äro svarta, och Ni äro hvita."
36. Mirza och Lindor, *Pantomime-Ballet uti Tre Acter. — Sammansatt af Herr Marcadet, Premier-Danseur vid Kongl. Operan* . . . (Stockholm, 1793), n.p.: "Scenen är på Ön St: Barthelemy."
37. Jenna M. Gibbs, *Performing the Temple of Liberty: Slavery, Theater, and Popular Culture in London and Philadelphia, 1760–1850* (Baltimore, 2014); Sylvie Chalaye, *Du Noir au nègre: l'image de Noir au théâtre: de Marguerite de Navarre à Jean Genet (1550–1960)* (Paris, Montréal, 1998); Franca Dellarosa, *Slavery on Stage: Representations of Slavery in British Theatre, 1760s–1830s* (Bari, 2009).
38. Marie-Christine Skuncke & Anna Ivarsdotter, *Svenska operans födelse. Studier i gustaviansk musikdramatik* (Stockholm, 1998), 28f.
39. Kerstin Anér, *Läsning i blandade ämnen. Studier i 1790-talets svenska press- och litteraturhistoria* (Gothenburg, 1948), 211; Karin Dovring, "Till författarfrågan i Läsning i blandade ämnen," in *Scandia* 19:2 (1948): 284–98.
40. Stig Boberg, *Gustav III och tryckfriheten 1774–1787* (Stockholm, 1951); Elmar Nyman, *Indragningsmakt och tryckfrihet 1785–1810* (Stockholm, 1963).
41. Wadström, *An essay on colonization* . . . , 2:187.
42. Harald Elovson, *Amerika i svensk litteratur 1750–1820. En studie i komparativ litteraturhistoria* (Lund., 1930), 247.
43. Bengt Anders Euphrasén, *Beskrifning öfver svenska vestindiska ön St. Barthelemi, samt öarne St. Eustache och St. Christopher* . . . (Stockholm, 1795), 52–53: "straffet går merendels för sig på följande sätt. Den brottslige läggs framstupa på jorden, bindes med händerna fast vid hjulet under en Canon, fötterna utsträcker och fastbindes vi 2:ne pålar, som blifva nedslagna uti jorden, kläderne blifva borttagne, at kroppen blifver bar, den som skall slå honom, har en piska med kort skaft; men snärten och smällen är 6 eller 7 alnar lång; han ställer sig på något afstånd och med piskan slår knäppsmällar på slafvens bara kropp; hvarje slag smäller som et pistol-skott och stora skin- samt köttstycken följa ofta med ifrån kroppen; Slafven får uthärda 30, 50 eller 100 sådane slag, alt efter större eller mindre brott."

44. Fredrik Thomasson, "Raynal and Sweden. Royal Propaganda and Colonial Aspirations," in *Raynal's 'Histoire des deux Indes.' Colonialism, networks and global exchange*, Oxford University Studies in the Enlightenment (previously SVEC), eds. Cecil Courtney & Jenny Mander (Oxford, 2015), 201–15.
45. Ingegerd Hildebrand, *Den svenska kolonin S:t Barthélemy och Västindiska kompaniet fram till 1796* (Lund, 1951), 57.

Labor and Money

1. Erik W. Dahlgren, "Carl Bernhard Wadström: Hans verksamhet för Slafhandels Bekämpande och de samtida Kolonisationsplanerna i Västafrika," in *Nordisk Tidskrift för Bok- och Biblioteksväsenden* (1915): 24–25. In other contexts, Nordenskiöld has presented the ideas that reappear in *Plan for a Free Community*. For example, they appear in *Afton-bladet: en vecko-skrift utgiven af et sällskap i Stockholm*, nos. 3 and 4 (Stockholm: Carlbohm, 1784); and they appear in Nordenskiöld's *Församlingsformen uti det Nya Jerusalem* (Copenhagen, 1790).
2. Ellen Hagen, *En frihetstidens son: Carl Bernhard Wadström* (Stockholm, 1946). See also Erik W. Dahlgren's bibliographic comments in his 1915 article in *Nordisk Tidskrift för Bok- och Biblioteksväsenden*.
3. August Nordenskiöld was born in 1754 on the Eriksnäs estate in the region of Nyland in Finland, then a Swedish province. He died in 1792 in the city of Freetown in Sierra Leone. For further information on him, see A. E. Arppe, "Anteckningar om Finska Alkemister," in *Bidrag till Kännedom om Finlands Natur och Folk* 16 (Helsinki/Helsingfors, 1870): 15–17. See also Gösta Bodman, "August Nordenskiöld, en Gustaf den Tredjes Alkemist," in *Lychnos: Årsbok för Idé- och Lärdomshistoria* (1943), as well as Ronny Ambjörnsson, "Guds Republique," in *Lychnos* (1975).
4. *Afton-bladet*, nos. 3 and 4; and Arppe, "Anteckningar om Finska Alkemister," 20.
5. Bodman, "August Nordenskiöld," 215.
6. Arppe, "Anteckningar om Finska Alkemister," 87.
7. August Nordenskiöld, *An Address to the True Members of the New Jerusalem Church, Revealed by the Lord in the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg* (London, 1789), 7.
8. Martin Lamm, *Upplysningstidens romantik: den mystiskt sentimentala strömningen i svensk litteratur*, Part 2 (Stockholm: Geber, 1920), 43.
9. Swedenborg's pronouncements on Africa have been collected by J. J. G. Wilkinson, *The African and the True Christian Religion: his Magna Charta* (London, 1892). See also Sten Lindroth, "Adam Afzelius: en Linnean i England och Sierra Leone," in *Lychnos* (1944–45): 32.
10. Henry Smeathman, *Plan of Settlement to be Made near Sierra Leona, on the Grain Coast of Africa, Intended more particularly for the service and happy establishment of Blacks and People of Colour, to be shipped as freemen under the direction of the Committee for Relieving the Black Poor, and under the protection of the British Government* (London, 1786).
11. Martin Lamm, *Emanuel Swedenborg: The Development of His Thought*, translated by Tomas Spiers and Anders Hallengren (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2000), 290–319.
12. *Afton-bladet*, no. 3, 10. Author's translation.
13. *Ibid.*, 11.
14. August Nordenskiöld, Carl Bernhard Wadström, Colborn Barrell, and Johan Gottfried Simpson, *Plan for a Free Community upon the Coast of Africa, Under the Protection of Great Britain; But Intirely Independent of all European Laws and Governments. With an Invitation, under certain Conditions, to all Persons desirous of partaking the Benefits thereof. . .* (London: R. Hindmarsh, printer 1789), chapter 11.
15. *Ibid.*, chapter 8, 32ff. Nordenskiöld's underlining; author's translation.
16. *Ibid.*, 20.
17. Carl Bernhard Wadström, *An Essay on Colonization, Particularly Applied to the Western Coast of Africa, with Some Free Thoughts on Cultivation and Commerce; also Brief Descriptions of the Colonies already Formed or Attempted in Africa, Including those of Sierra Leone and Bulama*, Part 1 (London: Darton and Harvey, 1794), 70.
18. *Ibid.*, 72.
19. Granville Sharp, *A Short Sketch of Temporary Regulations (until Better Shall Be Proposed) for the Intended Settlement on the Grain Coast of Africa, near Sierra Leona* (London: H. Baldwin, 1786), 13.
20. Carl Bernhard Wadström, *Quelques Idées sur la Nature du Numéraire et sur la Nécessité de Combiner l'Intérêt du Cultivateur avec celui du Négociant au Moment où l'on Établit un Nouveau Plan de Finances* (Paris, 1796), 4.
21. Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (London: J. M. Dent, 1910), 110.

Enlightenment, Scientific Exploration, and Abolitionism

1. Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 17.
2. Brycchan Carey, *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility: Writing, Sentiment, and Slavery, 1760–1807* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).
3. Sverker Sörlin and Otto Fagerstedt, *Linné och hans apostlar* (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 2004), 175.
4. "Anders Sparrman," in *Biographiskt lexicon* 15 (1848); Sörlin and Fagerstedt, *Linné och hans apostlar*, 152–83; Kenneth Nyberg, "Anders Sparrman," in *Svenskt Biografiskt Lexikon* 33 (2007); Tony Rice, *Voyages of Discovery: A Visual Celebration of Ten of the Greatest Natural History Expeditions* (London: Natural History Museum, 2010 [1999]), 172–73.
5. "Carl Bernhard Wadström," in *Biographiskt lexicon* 19 (1852); Ellen Hagen, *En frihetstidens son. Carl Bernhard Wadström* (Stockholm: Gothia, 1946); Robert Rix, *William Blake and the Cultures of Radical Christianity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 91–98.