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Moors in the Caribbean, Sámi in the Seraglio: Swedish Theatre and Slavery Around 1800

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The pantomime ballet *Mirza och [and] Lindor* was performed at the Stockholm Royal Opera in January 1793. The programme stated that ‘the scene is set on the island of Saint Barthélemy’.¹ Sweden had recently acquired its only Caribbean colony from France. Upon taking possession of the island in March 1785, Sweden became a slave nation for the first time since the abolishment of serfdom in the fourteenth century. The ballet was a localised performance of Maximilien Gardel’s Parisian success *Mirsa*. As its cast list included several enslaved persons, Swedish slaves were thus represented on Stockholm stages. Although this was the first time Saint Barthélemy was used as a stage setting in a Stockholm theatre, it was far from the first time slavery and colonialism appeared on Swedish stages.

Stockholm slavery theatre consisted of plays common to stages all over Europe, as well as originals by Swedish authors. Stockholm stages participated in what Elizabeth Maddock Dillon defines as an ‘Atlantic performative common’, where plays circulated and were adapted to local conditions.² *Mirza och Lindor* is a typical example of such circulation: the year after the Stockholm premiere, it was performed in Charleston by a troop of fugitives from the rebellions at Saint-Domingue, the French colony that became independent Haiti within a decade.

I will give a brief introduction to slavery and colonialism in Stockholm’s Swedish-language theatre during 1774–1816, the same decades in which Sweden’s colonial ambitions reached their apogee. The subject is uncharted territory in Swedish theatre and literary history. The aim of this chapter is to establish an inventory of relevant plays, a necessary step before making a detailed analysis of the Stockholm repertoire.³ In addition to the ‘Atlantic common’, I

¹ Jean-Rémy Marcadet, *Mirza och Lindor: pantomime-ballet uti tre acter* (Stockholm: Kongl. tryckeriet, 1793): ‘Scenen är på Ön S:t Barthelemy.’ All translations are mine.

² Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, *New world drama: the performative commons in the Atlantic world, 1649–1849* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), on *Mirza*, pp. 160–1. The literature on slavery and theatre has grown during recent decades; especially relevant titles to this chapter are: Sylvie Chalaye, *Du noir au nègre : l’image de noir au théâtre : de Marguerite de Navarre à Jean Genet 1550–1960* (Paris, Montréal: L’Harmattan, 1998); Jenna M. Gibbs, *Performing the temple of liberty: slavery, theatre, and popular culture in London and Philadelphia* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014).

³ Many of the plays mentioned in this chapter are listed in Marie-Christine Skuncke’s *Sweden and European drama 1772–1796: a study of translations and adaptations* (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1981). The main bibliographies and performance inventories remain: Agne Beijer and Sven Björkman, *Les troupes françaises à Stockholm, 1699–1792 : listes de répertoire* (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1989); Fredrik August Dahlgren, *Förteckning öfver svenska skådespel uppförda på Stockholms theatrar 1737–1863 och Kongl. theatrarnes personal 1773–1863 med flera anteckningar* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1866); Gustaf Edvard Klemming, *Sveriges dramatiska litteratur till och med 1875: bibliografi* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1863–1879); K. G. Strömbeck, Sune Hofsten and Klas Ralf, *Kungliga teatern: repertoar 1773–1973: opera, operett, sångspel: balett* (Stockholm: Williamssons offsettryckeri, 1974);

include several plays set in the Ottoman Empire in this analysis of the theatre performed in Stockholm, thereby extending the geographical scope into the Eastern Mediterranean.

Slaves in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic

Today, slavery is mostly associated with the Atlantic slave trade and forced labour in the Americas. In eighteenth-century Sweden this perspective was less predominant, as reflected in the large number of plays performed during the second half of the century that introduced elements of Ottoman slavery to the capital's stages. I intentionally avoid making a clear distinction between Mediterranean and Atlantic slavery, as that would be premature in this first effort to establish an overview of the Stockholm repertoire. While such Ottoman-themed plays are now often considered to be examples of orientalisising exoticism, this may not have been so evident to eighteenth-century Swedish spectators. Indeed, Mediterranean and Atlantic slavery was often represented in quite different ways in Stockholm theatre performances, but there are also common themes in plays with Ottoman, American and African settings.⁴

Being enslaved in the Mediterranean was a real risk for Swedish seamen. Between 1650 and 1770, around a thousand Swedes were captured by North African corsairs. Appeals for money to ransom Swedish slaves were common during church services. Sweden eventually signed peace treaties with the North African Ottoman provinces and by the 1760s the risk of capture had diminished. However, the fate of these captives remained an element of the popular imagination; as late as 1773, a bylaw impelled the inhabitants of a provincial town not to trust journeymen collecting ransom money.⁵

The first play discussed here eloquently tackled the relationship between Mediterranean and Atlantic slavery. Sébastien-Roch-Nicolas de Chamfort's *Slafhandlaren i Smirne* [*Le marchand de Smyrne*] was first performed in Swedish in 1774; it was a success, running for 36 performances until 1794. Its Swedish title underlined that the merchant's main goods were slaves.⁶

In the play, several Frenchmen have been captured in the Mediterranean and put up for sale in Smyrna. When a French prisoner criticises the trader, Kaled, for selling him as a slave, he 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.'⁷ What later became viewed as Chamfort's incisive political criticism was already present in the play that was premiered in Paris in 1770.

Dramatens repertoar 1787–1988, repertoire at: https://www.foark.umu.se/sites/default/files/projektarkiv/10/projark010_2.pdf. For a discussion on the accuracy of numbers of performances etc., see Strömbeck, *Kungliga teatern*, pp. 175–83. The Gothenburg repertoire is outlined in Wilhelm Berg, *Anteckningar om Göteborgs äldre teatrar*, 3 vols (Gothenburg: Wettergren and Kerber, 1896–1900).

⁴ For a discussion of this issue in the French context, see Martial Poirson, 'L'autre regard sur l'esclavage : les captifs blancs chrétiens en terre d'Islam dans le théâtre français (XVII–XVIII siècles)', in *Littérature et esclavage (XVIII–XIXe siècles)*, ed. Sarga Moussa (Paris: Desjonquères, 2010), pp. 77–99.

⁵ Joachim Östlund, *Saltets pris: svenska slavar i Nordafrika och handeln i Medelhavet 1650–1770* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2014), pp. 139–86. For an account of the same phenomena encompassing Northern Europe, see Magnus Ressel, *Zwischen Sklavenkassen und Türkenpässen: Nordeuropa und die Barbaresken in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012).

⁶ Sébastien-Roch-Nicolas de Chamfort, *Slafhandlaren i Smirne, Comédie uti en act* (Stockholm: Nordström, 1774). The French original was performed four times in Stockholm in 1770. Most French editions elided *esclaves* in the title, except for a 1785 Toulouse print; nevertheless, the play seems to have been known also as *Le Marchand d'esclaves*. to contemporaries, see, e.g., Abbé Galiani's report on theatre in Naples 1773, *Lettres de l'Abbé Galiani à Madame d'Épinay*... (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1881), vol. 2, p. 23.

⁷ Chamfort, *Slafhandlaren i Smirna*, p. 27 (the four periods are in the orig.): 'Hvad vil han väl säga? Säljer Ni icke Negrer? Jag säljer Er på samma grund kommer det intet på et ut? Åtskilnaden består allenast deruti, at de äro svarta, och Ni äro hvita.'

During the same period, colonialism and slavery were frequently reported upon in Swedish newspapers and in a wide range of books – especially travelogues – by both Swedish and translated authors. The majority opinion expressed in print was negative. An article on colonialism dating from 1781 in one of the main Stockholm papers was unambiguous: ‘Yet there are countries on earth to be discovered. [...] Yet there are riches to be stolen, counties to plunder, heads to be baptised, throats to strangle, blood to shed.’⁸ In 1782, the culprits were specified: ‘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.’⁹

Knowledge of colonialism and the conditions of slavery can be taken for granted amongst the wider reading audience in Stockholm. Printed editions of the combined Stockholm newspapers in the 1780s numbered at least 30,000 copies every week, for a population of around 75,000 inhabitants; in addition, a single newspaper copy was often read by several persons. Literacy was comparatively high in Sweden at about 80 per cent in around 1800; the Lutheran Church promoted reading skills at all levels of society.

Yarico and Inkle in Stockholm

The sources of information on slavery were not restricted to news and travelogues. In addition to plays there were also stories about slavery, such as the Inkle and Yarico tale that circulated in the Atlantic world before reaching Sweden, where it served as inspiration for three Swedish plays centring on slavery. The original story introduces a young English trader, Inkle, on his way to the Caribbean to make his fortune. He becomes stranded on the American coast, where he is taken care of by a young Indian woman, Yarico. When a ship eventually saves him, he takes Yarico with him and, upon arrival at Barbados he sells her, happy to get higher price for her as she is pregnant with their child.¹⁰

The tale was first translated into Swedish (1735) from an English version and then twice subsequently from Gellert’s German fables (1767, 1793).¹¹ A 1780 prose version entitled *Den orangeröda flickan: eller Variol och Yaricko* [*The orange-red girl: or Variol and Yaricko*] was printed as a translation of a text by an author given as De Lille, but I have not been able to identify the original (if it even exists).¹² In it, Inkle’s name was changed to Variol, possibly in reference to smallpox as a metaphor for Inkle’s destructive behaviour; this version exposed the cruelty of the slave trade more explicitly than the original story.

⁸ *Stockholms Posten*, 17 November 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.’

⁹ *Upfostrings-Sällskapets Tidningar*, 10 October 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 oskälige djur.’

¹⁰ A few of the Swedish versions are mentioned in Lawrence Marsden Price, *Inkle and Yarico album* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1937). See Frank Felsenstein for Inkle and Yarico’s English-language fortunes: *English trader, Indian maid: representing gender, race, and slavery in the new world. An Inkle and Yarico reader* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999). For German adaptations, see Isabel Kunz, ‘Inkle und Yariko. Der Edle Wilde auf den deutschsprachigen Bühnen des ausgehenden 18. Jahrhunderts’, PhD diss. (Munich: Ludwig Maximilian University, 2006). The tale has been subject to many recent interpretations, e.g.: Peter Hulme, *Colonial encounters: Europe and the native Caribbean, 1492–1797* (London: Methuen, 1986), pp. 224–63; Madeleine Dobie, *Trading places: colonization and slavery in eighteenth-century French culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010), pp. 51–3, 148–54.

¹¹ *Den engelske spectator, verterad af I. discursen*, no. 8 (Stockholm: Nyström, 1734); Christian Gellert, *Fabler och berättelser af C. F. Gellert* (Stockholm: Grefing, 1767); Christian Gellert, *C. F. Gellerts fabler* (Stockholm: Zetterberg, 1793).

¹² De Lille, *Den orangeröda flickan: eller Variol och Yaricko* (Stockholm: Lange, 1780).

Later the in same decade, Claude Joseph Dorat's adaptation set in the Ottoman Empire *Lettre de Zeïla, jeune sauvage, esclave à Constantinople* and its continuation *Lettre de Valcour* were published in Swedish (1789, 1802).¹³ The story was also recounted in Raynal's *Histoire de deux Indes* which, although it was prohibited in Sweden in 1781, gained a wide readership.¹⁴

The first Swedish play to include Inkle and Yarico plot elements is Andreas Hesselius' 1740 *Wänskap och trohet i döden, eller Den indianske printzessan Zaletta* [*Friendship and fidelity until death, or, the Indian princess Zaletta*].¹⁵ Hesselius was born in and spent his first ten years in Delaware. His father was a priest sent out by the government to serve the Swedish-speaking congregations in the area of the former Swedish colony in what today is Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware.

Hesselius' play is based on an episode in the adventures of a British seaman stranded on the Antillean island of Dominica.¹⁶ The shipwrecked Captain Falconer is saved by the Indian princess Zaletta, who falls in love with him. After a complicated intrigue, Zaletta is eventually killed by her uncle and Falconer is left grieving. The beginning of the play, in particular, bears similarities to the Inkle and Yarico tale that had already been published in Swedish.

When Hesselius was a young boy in Delaware, his life had been saved by an indigenous woman named Chicalicka Nanni Kettelev, who cured him with local remedies. His description of Dominica's inhabitants, which is more positive than in the book narrating Falconer's fictionalised adventures, might have been inspired by his own American experiences.¹⁷ *Zaletta* is the first Amerindian-themed Swedish play; it reflects the art of Hesselius' uncle Gustaf, who had travelled with his father to the Americas and in the 1730s painted the first individualised portraits of Native Americans.¹⁸

The next Inkle and Yarico-inspired dramatic work is Bengt Lidner's opera *Milot och [and] Eloisa*, which contains plot elements borrowed from the tale. Set in Dutch Batavia, both protagonists are enslaved after being shipwrecked but eventually freed, together with their enslaved servants.¹⁹ Lidner visited the Cape Colony in 1776 and witnessed slavery and the slave trade. He was critical of colonialism and a firm supporter of American independence. Although *Milot och Eloisa* was never performed, it serves as early testimony to how stories circulating that concerned slavery were used in a Swedish context.²⁰

¹³ Both editions translated by Christine Charlotte Cederström: *Zeilas bref til Walcour och Walcours bref til Zeila* (Lund: Berling, 1789); *Den bedragna, men uprättade oskulden. Eller: Zeilas bref til Walcour, och Walcours svar til Zeila* (1802).

¹⁴ Fredrik Thomasson, 'Raynal and Sweden: royal propaganda and colonial aspirations', in *Raynal's Histoire des deux Indes: colonialism, networks and global exchange*, edited by Cecil Courtney and Jenny Mander, Oxford University Studies in the Enlightenment (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2015), pp. 201–15.

¹⁵ Andreas Hesselius, *Wänskap och trohet i döden, eller Den indianske printzessan Zaletta, tragoedia; i fem öpnningar. I swänske rim författad, från engelskan. Af Andreas Hesselius Americanus* (Stockholm: Grefing, 1740). It was probably performed in Stockholm in 1740: Tryggve Byström, *Svenska komedien 1737–1754: en studie i Stockholmsteaterns historia* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1981), pp. 63, 116.

¹⁶ [W. R. Chetwood], *The voyages, dangerous adventures and imminent escapes of Captain Richard Falconer: containing the laws, customs, and manners of the Indians in America; his shipwrecks; his marrying an Indian wife; his narrow escape from the island of Dominico, &c...* (London: Chetwood, 1720).

¹⁷ Andreas Hesselius, 'Magister Andreæ Hesselii anmärkningar om hans resa till Amerika och vistande där 1711–1724: ett Delawareminne', edited by Nils Jacobsson, *Svenska Linnésällskapets årsskrift* 21 (1938): 124; Gunlög Fur, *A nation of women: gender and colonial encounters among the Delaware Indians* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), p. 44.

¹⁸ On Gustaf Hesselius, see Elisabeth L. Roark, *Artists of colonial America* (Westport, VA: Greenwood, 2003), pp. 107–25.

¹⁹ Bengt Lidner, *Samlade skrifter*, edited by Harald Elovson (Stockholm: Svenska vitterhetssamfundet, 1932), vol. 1, pp. 105–35.

²⁰ Christina Svensson, 'Lidner och det främmade: det försvunna kulturmötet i Lidners opera Milot och Eloisa', in *Poetens monopolium: Bengt Lidner 250 år (1757/1759–2007/2009)*, edited by Anna Cullhed and Otto Fischer (Lund: Ellerström, 2009), pp. 261–75.

A closer adaptation of the core narrative of the Inkle and Yarico story is *De Mexikanska Systrarne* [*The Mexican Sisters*], first performed in October 1789 (running for eleven performances up to January 1791). It was written by the Stockholm litterateur and sometime theatre employee Nils Birger Sparrschöld. As with many of the plays discussed here, it was never printed but two manuscript copies are extant in the Royal Swedish Opera Archives. The tone is set from the first scene, in which the colonial overlords are lambasted: 'Odious Europeans! When you brought death in the form of foreign thunder, when you destroyed our altars and trampled our freedom, you also brought formerly unknown vices to our country.'²¹

The plot is transplanted to Mexico, shifting the original story's denunciation of British greed and cruelty to blaming Spanish colonisers for the same misdeeds. Yarico is given a sister, Zelda, who is in love with the Spaniard, Don Estrados, who in turn desires Yarico, who is herself in love with an indigenous man, Zamor – all of which complicates the romantic intrigue considerably.

The play criticises the slave trade and the enslavement of both the indigenous population and Africans. An elderly Spaniard admits: 'Because they are purchased they are treated very cruelly by some [of the owners], they hardly get any fresh air to breathe. [...] They are forced to do hard and laborious work day and night, and they are not given enough food to appease their hunger.'²² In addition to the behaviour of the perfidious Spanish colonisers, the greedy Dutch bounty hunter van der Kaas betrays both his employer and the play's 'good' Spaniard, who tries to protect enslaved Indians. Don Estrados eventually captures Zamor to entrap Yarico, but when he is called back to the court in Madrid he finally concedes Yarico and Zamor their freedom, accepts Zelda's love and takes her with him to Spain.

De Mexikanska Systrarne was performed without announcing the author's name and there were even rumours that the Swedish king himself had written it. Swedish theatre and cultural history has traditionally placed Gustav III (r. 1771–92) in a predominant role.²³ Cultural life circled around the court and the institutions founded or promoted by the king included the Stockholm Royal Opera, inaugurated in 1782 with the colonial-themed production *Cora och Alonzo*. It was based on an episode from *Les Incas, ou, La destruction de l'Empire du Pérou* (1777) that Marmontel had dedicated to Gustav, whom he had met in Paris. The Swedish version was sanitised and only contained very vague criticisms of Spanish colonialism.²⁴ Gustav III, often called the 'theatre king', was an ardent promoter of Swedish expansion. The acquisition of Saint Barthélemy was to a large extent a result of his desire to gain a foothold in the Americas.

Gustav III was a frequent visitor to Stockholm theatres – a royal protégé who attended a performance of the *Mexican Sisters* flattered him: 'Les deux Américaines [i.e. the Mexican sisters] a des morceaux d'une touche charmante digne de V[otre] M[a]jesté. L'auteur est encore très inconnu.' Another commentator wrote to the king: 'I have seen *The Mexican Sisters*, it is

²¹ Stockholm, Royal Swedish Opera Archives, MS M.033 [Nils Birger Sparrschöld], 'De Mexikanska Systrarne': 'Förehatelige Europeer! Då ni hitförde döden i en främmande åska, då ni förstörde våra Altar och trampade vår frihet, Så medförde ni tillika Laster i vår bygd, förut Okände.'

²² Ibid., 'Emedan de äro köpte handteras de af en del mycket illa; knappast hafva de litet fri luft att andas. [...] Dagar och nätter äro de tvungna till hårda och mödosamma arbeten, knapt hafva de tillräckelig föda att stilla sin hunger.'

²³ Overviews in English: Inger Mattsson, ed., *Gustavian opera: an interdisciplinary reader in Swedish opera, dance and theatre 1771–1809* (Stockholm: Royal Swedish Academy of Music, 1991); Bertil H. van Boer, Jr., ed., *Gustav III and the Swedish stage: opera, theatre, and other foibles* (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen, 1993).

²⁴ [Gudmund Jöran Adlerbeth], *Cora och Alonzo: opera i tre acter* (Stockholm: Kongl. tryckeriet, 1782); Marie-Christine Skuncke and Anna Ivarsdotter, *Svenska operans födelse: studier i gustaviansk musikdramatik* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 1998), pp. 95–6.

in the same genre as *La Jeune Indienne*, a play that I could not like despite its pleasant traits introduced by Mr. Champfort [*sic*].²⁵

He was right, Chamfort's *La Jeune Indienne* (1764) is indeed one of the more famous theatrical adaptations of the Inkle and Yarico theme. The play had been performed in French in Stockholm twelve times during the 1766–1789 period and the Swedish translation, *Den indiska flickan*, was performed twice in 1794. The translation was never printed and no manuscript is extant.

The Swedish adaptations of the Inkle and Yarico tale dealt more explicitly with slavery than the original. Lawrence Marsden Price concludes in his excellent Inkle and Yarico study that the extension of the original story resulted in a loss of its literary impact: 'what it gained in breadth it lost in depth'.²⁶ Nevertheless, the adaptations are eloquent on how colonialism and slavery were represented in a Swedish context. These plays are also testimony to the geographical interests of Swedish authors who set their versions in America and the Far East.²⁷ The Swedish versions were never localised; one of the main attractions was, after all, the exotic setting. This was not the case in plays whose plots were based on fortunes made in the West Indies and their repercussions on European societies.

Caribbean fortunes in Sweden

An example of a play where Caribbean enrichment is central is *Det vestindiska arfvet* [*The West Indian Inheritance*], performed nine times between 1796 and 1799. This play also indicates the dearth of sources for theatre history in Sweden: several plays had similar titles in their Swedish translations, and sometimes no author or original title was given. We often lack texts – as in the case of the Swedish version of *La Jeune Indienne* – and sometimes it is only possible to infer the original source play through circumstantial evidence.

Det vestindiska arfvet was most probably a translation of Richard Cumberland's London success *The West Indian* (1771).²⁸ Indeed, Cumberland's play has a West Indian inheritance – and the audience is told that this fortune was made through Jamaican slave plantations – as a major plot component. It was translated by Eric Ulric Nordfors (translator of *La Jeune Indienne* two years earlier), who also knew English. He was well aware of the cruelties of the Caribbean plantation economy and vehemently criticised the practice of slavery and the slave trade in other contexts.²⁹

It is likely that the staging of Cumberland's play in Stockholm (if we accept the attribution) was inspired by the localisation of Louis-Sébastien Mercier's *L'habitant de la Guadeloupe*. The Swedish version, entitled *Westindie-fararen: eller Dygdens belöning* [*The West Indies Traveller: or the Reward of Virtue*], was a great success, performed on forty-seven occasions during 1791–1799.³⁰

²⁵ Both quotations, the first (in the original French) 18 August 1789 by Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt and the second 14 October 1789 by Nils von Rosenstein, in Eugène Lewenhaupt, *Bref rörande teatern under Gustaf III, 1788–1792* (Uppsala: Akademiska Boktryckeriet, 1894), p. 115: 'Jag har sedt de Mex S. Den äro i den genre som La Jeune Indienne, hvilken piece jag ej kunnat omtycka oagadt de fina traits Mr. Champfort deruti infördt.'

²⁶ Price, *Inkle and Yarico*, p. 138.

²⁷ It can also be mentioned that the theme of love between European men and non-European women was exploited in other plays performed in Stockholm during the eighteenth century, most famously in Saint-Foix's *L'Isle sauvage*, printed in Swedish translation 1748 and performed in the 1770s.

²⁸ August von Kotzebue translated and adapted Cumberland's play in German in the 1810s and this version was performed in Stockholm in 1816 under the title *Indianen* (no text available).

²⁹ [Eric Ulric Nordfors], *Bukoléon: blandad läsning för olärde* (Stockholm: Kumbinska tryckeriet, 1799), pp. 91–2.

³⁰ Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Westindie-fararen: eller Dygdens belöning: drame i 3 akter* (Stockholm: Kongl. tryckeriet, 1791). There is no evidence that Mercier's 1794 revolutionary *nouvelle édition* reached Sweden or influenced the later productions of the piece. Martial Poirson, 'Introduction', in *Le théâtre sous la Révolution : politique du*

The Stockholm production of *L'habitant de la Guadeloupe* was a 'free translation' [fri översättning] and adaptation of the French original by Didric Gabriel Björn, one of the major Swedish actors, translators and theatre entrepreneurs of the 1780s–1790s. The play was itself based on an episode in Frances Sheridan's novel *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* (1761), and is a telling example of how stories of Caribbean enrichment travelled throughout the Atlantic world.

The protagonist, Swedish merchant Nordengren, returns from the Caribbean to Stockholm, proclaiming himself ruined. In reality, he had made a fortune but wanted to know which of his relatives would help him without knowledge of his wealth. Not surprisingly, his poorer relatives are more sympathetic to his plight than his rich kin. The play struck a chord with Stockholm audiences, and it was often mentioned in diaries and letters. Following the success of *Westindie-fararen*, Björn localised August von Kotzebue's *Papegojan* [*Der Papegoy*], in which the lost son, Georg, returns to Sweden accompanied by a free black man called Neri, after having made and lost a fortune on Caribbean slave plantations (this play was performed thirty times during 1794–1798).³¹ The play is critical of slavery and the character of Neri, who had been George's slave in the Caribbean, was the play's third-biggest part and present on stage throughout the drama. Neri gives, for example, an account of his childhood in Africa, his enslavement by Portuguese slave traders and the conditions of plantation work in Jamaica.

Competition was cut-throat on the Stockholm stage: another less successful translation of *Der Papegoy* premiered the night before Björn's version (this one ran for seventeen performances during the period 1794–1798).³²

Plays staged in Stockholm touching upon Caribbean enrichment also include Voltaire's *Skottländskan eller Caffehuset i London* [*Le Café, ou, L'Écossaise*, 1760] in which rich British merchant Friport [*sic*] gives away a tenth of the money he has made in Jamaica (the play ran for twenty-nine performances during the period 1783–1794).

Several Swedish merchant houses participated in the colonial trade, and some also in the slave trade. Enrichment in the Caribbean was on many people's minds – this was, after all, the main reason for the Swedish acquisition of Saint Barthélemy in 1784. A large number of the Stockholm merchant aristocracy invested in the Swedish West India Company, which was chartered to run commerce and the slave trade on the island. The royal family was the company's largest shareholder.³³

News about advantageous trade was trickling in from the colony and so advertising also played a role in fuelling commercial ambitions. Close to the capital of Gustavia – named after the king, and a name it still retains – a 'cotton plantation with all necessary buildings and with a very pleasing view over the neighbouring islands' was advertised in Stockholm papers.³⁴ The small island of La Fourchu off Saint Barthélemy was also put up for sale. After

répertoire, 1789–1799, edited by Martial Poirson (Paris: Desjonquères, 2008), p. 37. Mercier's play was performed in French in Stockholm four times over 1788–1790.

³¹ *Papegojan eller Älska Far och Fosterland; Drame i Tre Acter, Af H:r v. Kotzebue. Översatt och Förändrad af D: G. Björn* (Stockholm: Kongl. Tryckeriet, 1794). On Kotzebue's anti-slavery plays, see Sigrid G. Köhler, 'Ein "historisches Gemälde" gegen Sklaverei: Kotzebues dramenästhetische Bildpolitik und die Abolition im ausgehenden 18. Jahrhundert', in *The black diaspora and Germany/Deutschland und die Schwarze Diaspora* (Münster: BDG Network, 2018), pp. 67–83.

³² Stockholm, Royal Swedish Opera Archives, MS P.013, *Papegojan – Komedi i tre akter*, translation by E. S. Koersner. Both Stockholm versions are rather faithful to the original but the differences between them would be worth analysing, an example being the naming of Xury (in the German original) who in Björn's version became Neri, obviously a reference to his skin colour, while Koersner's version used Sury.

³³ Ingegerd Hildebrand, *Den svenska kolonin St. Barthélemy och Västindiska kompaniet fram till 1796* (Lund: PH. Lindstedt, 1951), pp. 312–14.

³⁴ *Dagligt Allehanda*, 13 October 1790: 'Bomulls-plantage med all därå stående Bygnader, som har en mycket behagelig utsigt till kringliggande Öar.'

the abolition of the slave trade, this island would gain fame as a place where illicit trade in captives occurred far into the 1820s.

The success of *Westindie-fararen*, based on Mercier's *L'Habitant de la Guadeloupe*, spread to smaller towns. It was performed in Norrköping in January 1792. Due to audience demand it was performed again a few days later, now together with *Slafhandlaren i Smirne*. Atlantic and Mediterranean slavery were thus combined in this double bill.³⁵

Censorship, revolution and colonial propaganda

Gustav III's reign became increasingly autocratic in the 1780s and the theatre became subject to censorship. Censors particularly edited plays that questioned royal authority.³⁶ Following the murder of the king in 1792, print censorship was considerably relaxed for a brief period, yet theatrical censorship remained in place. Johan Henrik Kellgren, an important poet and playwright himself, had been appointed theatre censor by the king and retained his appointment after Gustav's death. *Feodor och Lisinka, eller Det räddade Novogrod* [*Féodor et Lisinka, ou Novogorod sauvée*, 1787], written by Pierre Jean Baptiste Choudard (Desforges) and translated by Björn, was submitted for approval in 1793.³⁷ The play contains a depiction of a peasant revolt, led by the serf Petruska, which is then suppressed and Petruska sentenced to death. Russian serfs – usually referred to as thralls [trälär] in Swedish – were instead called slaves throughout the play, as they had been in the French original. Although the original play dated from pre-revolutionary times, a few years later in Stockholm its contents were immediately associated with the revolution. Kellgren wrote to a colleague: 'It does appear to me that it has a little odour of sans-culottism, as all of its content is against domestic servitude and threatens the *masters* with the threat of revolt, murder and arson, and the only reason to perform it at a Swedish theatre is to let the viewer believe that there is domestic servitude in Sweden, and that our farmhands are *slaves* and their masters *tyrants*, words that are repeated in every line.' To associate farmhands with slavery and rebellion was controversial, but Kellgren found it pointless to censor the play as that would create more commotion than letting it be staged. It was performed four times from March to June 1793. Kellgren concluded that the theme was so foreign that the play was not to be feared and concluded his judgement with a general observation on the Swedish political situation: 'even considering all that has been done in this country, intentionally or by foolishness, to sans-culottise the populace, it has not been possible, and probably never will be, to push this good and honest populace to go further than to – use invectives.'³⁸ Nevertheless, the populace's knowledge of revolution and rebellion was regarded as problematic. To put this in context, the Swedish king had been shot at the Stockholm Opera in March 1792 and news about Louis XVI's execution in January 1793 had only reached Stockholm a few days before Kellgren sent his letter of 3 March.

³⁵ *Norrköpings Tidningar*, 11, 14 January 1792.

³⁶ Stig Boberg, *Gustav III och tryckfriheten 1774–1787* (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1951), pp. 216–36; Skuncke, *Sweden and European drama*, pp. 99–129.

³⁷ Pierre Jean Baptiste Choudard Desforges, *Feodor och Lisinka: eller det räddade Novogrod: drame i tre acter* (Stockholm: Kongl. tryckeriet, 1793).

³⁸ *Johan Henrik Kellgrens bref till Abraham Niclas Clewberg*, edited by Henrik Schück (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 1894), p. 9, italics in the original: 'Nog tycks mig, att den har någon liten odeur af Sans-culotism, så vida hela dess innehåll, som är att ifrå mot den domestika trälldomen och att hota *Herrarne* med faran om resning och mord och mordbrand, icke synes kunna äga någon rimlig afsigt på Svensk Theater, om icke att låta Åskådaren tro, att en domestik trälldom i Sverige finnes, att våra Drängar äro *slafvar* och deras Husbönder *Tyranner*, ord, som upprepas i hvar rad [...] emedan oaktadt hvad alt man gjort här i Landet, af Politik eller oförstånd, att sans-culottisera pöbeln, man likväl ej lyckats och skall sannolikt aldrig lyckas att få denna goda honnetta pöbel att gå längre än till – skällsord.'

Kellgren was very much au fait with the king's Caribbean ambitions and had published a tract promoting Swedish colonisation in 1784.³⁹ He was also an editor of the capital's main newspaper publishing foreign news, *Stockholms posten*, which reported extensively on the slave rebellions in the French colonies, on the revolution on Saint-Domingue and Haiti's subsequent independence.⁴⁰ Kellgren was a fierce critic of religious mysticism, including the Christian Swedenborgian movement. The Swedish abolitionists Carl-Bernhard Wadström and Anders Sparman were connected to this movement. They visited Senegal in 1787 to investigate possibilities for Swedish participation in colonising projects meant to supplant American slave plantations' products with African-grown sugarcane and other colonial goods. Such idealism generated satire and Kellgren reputedly wrote a play mocking the Swedenborgians' African projects, which was staged at the royal Drottningholm Palace in 1791.⁴¹

Stockholm litterateurs and the town's upper classes were generally well informed about both slavery and colonialism, as well as Swedish colonial ambitions. The theatre discussed here is yet further proof of how slavery and colonialism were present in society in manifold ways. Stockholm theatres catered to a varied audience, including the middle classes and also, for instance, shop assistants and craftsmen.⁴² The plots of Mercier's *Westindie-fararen* or Kotzebue's *Papegojan* were based on fortunes that had been made in the Caribbean and presupposed knowledge of plantation slavery and exploitation. Other plays, such as *Slafhandlaren i Smirne* and *De Mexikanske systrarna*, their happy endings notwithstanding, conveyed the brutality of European colonisation and the vicissitudes of the slave trade in both the Mediterranean and the Atlantic.

Abolitionist drama

Plays performed in Stockholm at this time also included abolitionist dramas such as Kotzebue's *Neger-slafvarne* [*Die Negersclaven*]. In the foreword, the author underlines that, to spare the audience, many events had to be omitted in the theatrical performance as such cruelties would be too gruesome on stage.⁴³ The play was performed nineteen times during 1796–1798.

The play, set in Jamaica, was outspoken on the inhuman treatment of Caribbean enslaved populations and mirrored the information that Swedish readers could have gained from the press and travelogues. A book about Swedish Saint Barthélemy published in Stockholm the year before *Neger-slafvarne* premiered described the punishments meted out by the colonial government and confirmed that the mistreatment of slaves was also a fact in the Swedish colony:

The [enslaved] criminal is placed face-down on the ground [...] the clothes are removed so that the body is bare, he who hits him has a whip with a short handle but the lash is 6 or 7 ells long [about 4 metres] and stands some distance away with the whip and hits the slave's naked body and the whip cracks every time sounding like a pistol shot

³⁹ [Johan Henrik Kellgren], 'Förslag, til nybyggens anläggande i Indien, och på africanska kusten' [A proposal to establish colonies in [West] India, and on the African coast], *Nya Handelsbibliotheket* (Stockholm: Nordström 1784), pp. 65–80.

⁴⁰ Fredrik Thomasson, 'Sweden and Haiti 1791–1825: revolutionary reporting, illicit trade and the fall of Henry Christophe', *Journal of Haitian Studies* 24 (2018): 4–35.

⁴¹ Uppsala University Library, MS G 180a, Letter from Carl Fredrik Bergklint to August Nordenskjöld, 4 March–7 April 1791; Robert Sundelin, *Svedenborgianismens historia i Sverige under förra århundradet* (Uppsala: W. Schultz, 1886), pp. 260–1.

⁴² Skuncke, *Svenska operans födelse*, p. 28.

⁴³ August von Kotzebue, *Neger-slafvarne: dramatiserad historie-målning* (Stockholm: Eurén, 1796). On the German reception, see Sigrid G. Köhler's afterword in: Kotzebue, *Die Negersklaven: ein historisch-dramatisches Gemählde in drey Akten* (Hannover: Wehrhahn, 2019).

and often it takes away large pieces of skin and flesh. The slaves are made to suffer 30, 50 or 100 such lashes, according to major or minor crimes.⁴⁴

Further plays were similarly forthright about the conditions endured by black populations, and not only in the Atlantic world. Edmond Guillaume François Favières' play based on Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's novel *Paul et Virginie* set on Ile-de-France [Mauritius] was adapted by the ubiquitous Björn (it ran for eleven performances during 1794 and 1795).⁴⁵ The treatment of the black protagonist Zabi is such that there can be little doubt that a Swedish audience would have seen the play as critical of slavery. Its setting confirmed that the mistreatment of enslaved populations was also the rule in Indian Ocean colonies.

Another play touching on the slave trade and its motivations was an adaptation of Jean-Pierre Claris de Florian's *Selico, nouvelle africaine*. The novella was translated twice into Swedish, but the story reached Stockholm stages as *Seliko och Berissa eller Kärleken bland Negrerne* [*Seliko and Berissa, or Love among the Negroes*] via Gustav Hagemann's 1798 adaptation *Seliko und Beriða, oder die Liebe unter den Negern*, which in turn had been inspired by Guilbert de Pixérécourt's French theatrical version (no text preserved, but it ran for eight performances during 1807 and 1808).⁴⁶

Black roles – white actors

The black roles in Stockholm were generally performed by white actors, but there were exceptions. One of the most famous black eighteenth-century Swedes was Adolf Ludvig Gustav Fredrik Albert Badin (c.1750–1822). He was probably born enslaved in the Danish West Indies and was subsequently brought to Sweden as a child, where he grew up with the royal family at Drottningholm Palace. During the 1770–1771 season, he played the main role in Louis-François Delisle de la Drevetière's *Arlequin sauvage* where a man 'tiré des forêts de l'Amérique' arrives in Marseille and mocks French customs and civilisation, mirroring his own history of arriving in Europe as a captive.⁴⁷ (Figure 1)

A play in which a white Swedish actor played an African was the less than successful *Den hvita Negren* (two performances in 1794).⁴⁸ This was a localisation of Louis-François

⁴⁴ Bengt Andersson Euphrasén, *Beskrifning öfver svenska vestindiska ön St. Barthelemi, samt öarne St. Eustache och St. Christopher* (Stockholm: Zetterberg, 1795), pp. 51–2: 'Den brottslige läggas framstupa på jorden [...] kläderna blifva borttagne, at kroppen blifver bar, den som skall slå honom, har en piska med kort skaft; men snårten 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.'

⁴⁵ Edmond Guillaume François de Favières, *Paul och Virginie: comedie med sång i tre akter* (Stockholm: Holmberg, 1794). Cécile Champonnois, 'Échos de l'océan Indien dans les adaptations musicales et chorégraphiques de Paul et Virginie', in *Bernardin de Saint-Pierre et l'océan Indien*, edited by Angélique Gigan, Chantale Meure and Jean-Michel Racault (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2011) pp. 519–34.

⁴⁶ J. P. Florian, *Smärre samlade skrifter af J.P. Florian* (Stockholm: Nordström, 1798), pp. 181–200; Florian, *Selico, afrikansk novell af Florian* (Gothenburg: Wahlström, 1828). On Hagemann's version, see Barbara Riesche, 'Schöne Mohrrinnen, edle Sklaven, schwarze Rächer: Schwarzendarstellung und Sklavereithematik im deutschen Unterhaltungstheater (1770–1814)', PhD diss. (Munich: Ludwig Maximilian University, 2007).

⁴⁷ Louis-François Delisle de la Drevetière, *Arlequin sauvage* (Paris: Briasson, 1752), p. 80; Joachim Östlund, 'Playing the white knight: Badin, chess, and black self-fashioning in eighteenth-century Sweden', in *Migrating the black body: the African diaspora and visual culture*, edited by Leigh Raiford and Heike Raphael-Hernandez (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017), pp. 71–91; Kim Solga, 'The savage ambivalence of Delisle de la Drevetière', *Eighteenth Century* 43 (2002): 196–209.

⁴⁸ Stockholm, Royal Swedish Opera Archives, MS H.017, Dorvigny, 'Den Hvita negren'; Louis-François Archambault dit Dorvigny, *Le nègre blanc : comédie en un acte et en prose, étude et présentation de Sylvie Chalaye, texte établi par Vanessa Boulaware* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2019); Roger Little, *Between totem and taboo: black man, white woman in Francographic literature* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2001), p. 31.



Figure 1: Gustaf Lundberg, Portrait of Adolf Ludvig Gustaf Albert Badin, 1775, NMGrh 1455, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

Archambault's (Dorvigny) *Le nègre blanc* (1774), which had enjoyed certain success in Paris. Dorvigny was well equipped to write about the subject as it was said that he himself had been enslaved by corsairs.

The far-fetched premise of the play is that the Swede, Wårne, returning from the Americas, masquerades as a mute African albino – the white negro of the title – to win back his fiancée, Lovise, by wooing her guardian. During his absence this guardian, Madam [fru] Simplex, the only name retained from the French original, has promised Lovise to another man. Wårne, masquerading as the white negro, was played by Lars Hjortsberg, one of the period's most famous Stockholm actors. He was furnished with a quiver and supposedly African jewellery. Madam Simplex eventually buys the albino man and promises not to make him work too hard. Eventually, the fake albino and his beloved Lovise admit to the fraud and are allowed to marry. The play mocked prejudices against black people and, again, its translator was Nordforss.

Swedish Moors in the Caribbean

Many of the plays discussed here contained musical elements. In the case of *The Mexican Sisters*, an aria by the composer Johan Martin Kraus is the only reason the play's name is ever mentioned today.⁴⁹ Dance performances were also common and the pantomime ballet *Mirza och Lindor*, mentioned in the introduction, was first performed in 1793. Its author Maximilien Gardel was one of the early promoters of *ballet d'action*, which was introduced on Stockholm stages by French dancers. Jean-Rémy Marcadet staged *Mirza*, setting it in Swedish Saint Barthélemy and playing the lead male role of Lindor.⁵⁰

The original had been a success in Paris in 1779. It was set 'dans une [French colonial] Isle de l'Amérique' during the American War of Independence, when French and American troops were allies. The Stockholm version faithfully followed the original's love story plot between local girl Mirza and the Swedish Colonel Lindor, who ends up in a duel with a rival corsair captain. Mirza arrives at the abandoned scene of the fight and believes, like Pyramus or Juliet, that Lindor has perished. She intends to kill herself but is saved and marries Lindor.

The localisation to Swedish Saint Barthélemy is tantalising but there is no detailed information on the decor as with the Mexican setting in *De Mexicanska Systrarne* ('The stage is a wild but beautiful forest by the ocean beach') or on the Indian ocean island in *Paul och Virginie* ('The scene is on a wild part of the island by a wide creek [...] the surroundings should appear wild and picturesque with several banana trees').⁵¹ We know of elaborate stage decors from these decades, but there are no images of the sets of the plays discussed.

The original Frenchmen were replaced by Swedes allied with Americans. Following the French revolution it became impossible to present France as a Swedish ally. The translator of the ballet's French scenario mainly followed the original and used the word *slott* [chateau] for the governor's house, a building type that did not exist on Saint Barthélemy in the early 1790s. More points like these could be made, but it is clear that the translator knew little about the Swedish colony, or intentionally depicted the island as more prominent than it was in reality.

The main black role is filled by the female protagonist Mirza's servant, *une négresse*, who in the Stockholm version is Mirza's moor confidante. The other black roles were unnamed and while called 'nègres' in the original they were termed 'moors' in the Stockholm version. These black people were obviously enslaved in the French original, and though called moors in Swedish the Stockholm audience would have recognised them as slaves given the common knowledge that most black people in the Caribbean were indeed enslaved. Thus, the first time Swedish slaves were represented in the metropole they were mute.

The Stockholm production of *Mirza* appeared a year before its American debut in Charleston, where the ballet took on yet another meaning as it was performed in a slaveholding society and in the context of the rebellions on Martinique and Saint-Domingue.⁵² However formulaic, the Stockholm version represented a new Swedish colonial society. Many of the plays with slavery themes staged in Sweden belonged to a repertoire that migrated between European

⁴⁹ Kraus' aria *Du i hvars oskuldsfulla blick* is recorded: Naxos CD 8.572865.

⁵⁰ Maximilien Gardel, *Mirza, ballet en action* (Paris: Les marchands de pièces de théâtre, 1779); Alexandre Dratwicki, 'Gossec et la danse : ou les premiers pas du ballet-pantomime français. Autour du succès de Mirza (1779)', in *François-Joseph Gossec (1734–1829)*, edited by Benoît Dratwicki (Versailles: Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles, 2002), pp. 101–16.

⁵¹ Sparrschöld, 'Mexicanska Systrarne': 'Theatern föreställer en vild men wacker skog vid hafstrandén'; Favières, *Paul och Virginie*: 'Theatern föreställer en vild del af Ön, och stränderna af en bred bäck [...] Trakten bör föreställa en vild och pittoresk målning; flere Bananas-träd äro kringspidda.'

⁵² Dillon, *New world drama*, pp. 160–1; Joellen A. Meglin, 'Sauvages, sex roles, and semiotics: representations of native Americans in the French ballet, 1736–1837, part one: the eighteenth century', *Dance Chronicle* 23 (2000): 87–132, on *Mirza* 115–27.

and sometimes American stages. This was also true for the plays representing Mediterranean slavery that were performed in many European theatres.

Sámi in the seraglio

Jean-François Sedaine de Sarcy's *Le Sérail à l'encan* (1781) was staged in Stockholm in 1796 as *Den bort-auktionerade serailen*, running for four performances. A key scene in any slavery theatre set in the Mediterranean is the slave sale, as seen in Chamfort's *Le Marchand de Smyrne*. Sedaine takes this to the extreme, as the entire play represents a slave auction at which an Ottoman vizier sells off his harem after losing his office and becoming exiled. The manner of enslavement of the females being auctioned in the play was sometimes specified. The Italian singer Leonora Vanina had, for instance, been captured by an Algerian corsair. Among the female slaves put up for sale at the auction were women from Circassia, France, Georgia, Mingrelia, Peru, Poland, Spain and Venice.

They were valued differently according to their sexual attractiveness. Virginity commanded a high premium in the case of the fifteen-year-old Circassian Nedoua. Six female dancers were sold as one lot, followed by 'un des plus jolis pettis bijoux, le seul enfin de son espèce qu'on ait pu conduire jusqu'ici des confins [de] la Laponie'.⁵³

I first read the Swedish version, where this women put up for sale was defined as a *lappska* [une lapone], that is, a woman from the northern Scandinavian indigenous Sámi population. After having read innumerable plays set in the Ottoman empire and staged in Stockholm during the eighteenth century, I thought this might be an example of a partial localisation. Sámi – or rather actors dressed as Sámi – occasionally appeared on Stockholm stages. They were both part of the cast lists of Swedish plays and used for localised substitutions. A few years earlier, the Swedish librettist of a localised Piccinni *Roland* parody had replaced the librettist Marmontel's *orientaux* with Sámi.⁵⁴

Although added female roles did appear in the Swedish version, *La lapone* was in fact part of Sedaine's original cast list. *Lappska* criticises the slave buyers and manages to convince a judge to purchase her as a daughter, instead of as a concubine, at the auction's highest price. Her exotic background is matched by her ingenuity and persuasive powers. Ideas about northern Scandinavia had been disseminated through travelogues, scientific accounts and even by Sámi people and their reindeer being sent as 'gifts' to European courts.⁵⁵ Indeed, Chamfort used Sámi to underline both geographical and cultural differences: 'Quel est l'être le plus étranger à ceux qui l'environnent ? Est-ce un Français à Pékin ou à Macao ? Est-ce un Lapon au Sénégal ?'⁵⁶

In the play, *La lapone* is the last woman to be sold at the auction. A messenger arrives while the auction is adjourned; after a long day of selling sex slaves, a declaration is made that the sultan has reinstated the vizier in all his offices and the buyers of his female slaves

⁵³ Ibid., p. 49: 'Det är en af de små täckaste jouveler, den enda i sit slag, som man kunnat fördt hit ifrån Laplands yttersta gränser.' Original French from the 1786 Paris edition (Cailleau), p. 43.

⁵⁴ Skuncke, *Svenska operans födelse*, pp. 277–98; Stockholm, Kungliga Biblioteket, MS S149 [Johan Gabriel Oxenstierna], 'Dårland. Parodie af Roland le Furieux'.

⁵⁵ Gösta Berg, 'Lapland och Europa: några anteckningar om renar som furstegåvor', in *Scandinavica et Fenno-Ugrica: studier tillägnade Björn Collinder den 22 juli 1954*, edited by Dag Strömbäck (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1954), pp. 221–44; Gunnar Broberg, 'Lappkaravaner på villovägar: antropologin och synen på samerna fram mot sekelskiftet 1900', *Lychnos* (1981/1982), pp. 27–86; Martin Wåhlberg, 'L'altérité des Lapons : une difficulté dans l'Europe des Lumières', in *À l'ombre des lumières : littérature et pensée françaises du XVIIIe siècle*, edited by Trude Kolderup and Svein-Eirik Fauskevåg (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008), pp. 241–59.

⁵⁶ Chamfort, *Œuvres de Chamfort*, edited by Pierre-Louis Ginguené (Paris: Impr. des sciences et des arts, 1794), vol. 4, p. 99; Gérard Lahouati, '“Un lapon au Sénégal ?” Chamfort lecteur de Levaillant', *Dix-huitième siècle* 44 (2012): 221–35.

subsequently flee. The slaves praise the vizier as they are restored to his property; he frees the Peruvian Nadine and marries her.

The buyers' comments on the female slaves cut through time, but it is difficult to hypothesise what the 1790s' audience might have felt when observing the auction. The similarity to slave auctions in the Atlantic world is obvious to us, but would a Stockholm spectator have perceived such connections? That enslavement in the Mediterranean still was a risk soon became clear again when the Swedish peace treaty with the Bey of Tripoli collapsed the year after the play was performed in Stockholm. By 1800 more than 130 Swedish seamen had been taken prisoner in North Africa.⁵⁷

The Swedish version of *Le Sérail à l'encan* is an example of how where the play was staged mattered. The French exotic *lapone* took on another meaning in a Stockholm setting where Sámi were both present in the city's streets and markets and occasionally appeared on theatrical stages.⁵⁸

Slavery, colonialism and theatre in Stockholm

The quantity of plays and the number of performances confirm that issues around slavery and colonialism were topical and often found an interested audience in Stockholm. Several Swedish authors used tales that were criss-crossing the Atlantic world at this time. Hesselius', Lidner's and Sparrschöld's pieces, which borrow elements from the Inkle and Yarico story, are the most revealing examples.

Translators and companies engaged in the quick uptake of first French, and later German and British plays. A few translators and adaptors were instrumental in bringing several slavery-themed plays to Stockholm stages. In the case of Nordforss' translations and adaptations, I believe he chose plays that criticised slavery and mocked racism. Although such a stance is less apparent in Björn's adaptations, his choice to stage Kotzebue's *Papegojan* after Mercier's *Westindie-fararen* did, however, go from presupposing Caribbean slavery as a means to enrichment in the French play to explicit criticism of the Atlantic slave trade in the German play. It should be noted, too, that Björn, after the turn of the century, came to be considered a radical who espoused revolutionary sympathies.

The suggestion in this chapter is also that the geographical space of analysis may benefit from including Ottoman-themed plays. The Swedish case poses the question of to what extent can plays touching upon Mediterranean slavery broaden the perspective on how slavery and bondage were seen and elaborated upon in theatre and literature in countries yet to be included in the slavery theatre research field.

French theatre had traditionally been the major source for Swedish productions, but it is not surprising that some of the most famous French plays touching upon slavery never reached Stockholm stages during the 1790s. For instance, Olympe de Gouges' dramas would not have passed the censors – not just because of their content but also with regard to the author being a female revolutionary. Hence, both the diminishing importance of genre rules and the impact of the French Revolution gave space to German and British plays. Growing awareness of the conditions of slavery and increased knowledge in both Germany and Sweden about the British abolitionist movement led to the staging of plays that were explicitly critical of slavery.

Research on slavery and theatre is a growing field, but there is no work treating the subject in the Swedish context. This chapter may resemble a catalogue aria, but such an exercise is necessary before a critical analysis of the Swedish plays in particular can be undertaken. The connections between Swedish Caribbean colonialism and theatre are likewise unexplored.

⁵⁷ J. H. Kreüger, *Sveriges förhållanden till barbaresk staterna i Afrika* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1856), vol. 1, p. 422.

⁵⁸ Jonas M. Nordin, 'Center of diversity: Sámi in early modern Stockholm in the light of European colonial expansion. A Historical archaeological approach', *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 22 (2018): 663–85.

This can be compared to the increasingly investigated history of Sámi people and culture in Sweden and Scandinavia. Swedish historiography is still struggling with contextualising Swedish participation in Caribbean colonialism. As this chapter testifies, taking the step that connects metropolitan colonial discourse and culture with the Swedish slave colony is still proving difficult.

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