

# Reading and Writing from Below

## Exploring the Margins of Modernity

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# Street Ballads Spreading the Word

## The Case of “The Two Maids Who Married Each Other”

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**ABSTRACT.** This article is based on a court case in 1800 that the local court of Vaksala, a parish near Uppsala in Sweden, did its best to keep from public attention due to its subversive nature. It concerned a major fraud: two young women had managed to marry each other; one of them was cross-dressed and named as a man. Soon after the trial, however, the story was spread and commented on in popular song prints (in Swedish: *skillingtryck*) and thereby reached a wide audience in several parts of the country. In the article, I analyse the production of these prints. Using the court protocol as a source, I discuss the relation between the actual events and their popular representations in songs for the mass audience. Which parts of the complex issue are included, and which are conspicuous by their absence? Who is the narrator, from which perspective is the story retold – and what are the moral implications?

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**KEYWORDS:** broad sides, chap-books, printed ephemera, popular print, folk songs, lyrics, media history, female transvestism, cross-dressing

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Jag borde ej skrifwa som intet är lärd,  
 Ej eller arbetat i Studiers afärd,  
 Men efter den gåfwa försynen mig gifwa  
 Wil jag med en Wisa förtälja och skrifwa  
 Hwad som i dag Bladen man läsa kan få  
 Hur pigor nu ställa til sit giftermål

I ought not to write, since I am not learned  
 and have not studied,  
 but using the gift that Providence gave me,  
 I will tell you a story  
 of what you can read in the papers:  
 how maidens planned their marriage.<sup>2</sup>

("The two maids who married each other", stanza 1)<sup>1</sup>

What can ephemeral song prints, written from below, tell us about the reality of common people, and their experiences? In Swedish, as in Danish and Norwegian, such prints are called *skillingtryck*,<sup>3</sup> an early mass medium for songs and verses addressed to a wide public. The print type goes back to the late sixteenth century, had its heyday in the nineteenth century and finally declined in the 1920s.<sup>4</sup> The print was usually made out of a half-sheet folded twice, making an 8-page booklet containing one or several songs, i.e. lyrics. Instead of melody notes (which very few could use anyway), there are sometimes references to other, familiar tunes that the texts could be sung to. When there is no particular melody specified, one can assume that the salesman in the streets sang it.

Nowadays the term *skillingtryck* is used as a neutral concept in folk song research as well as in archives and libraries to designate prints of this kind. It was, however, probably never used by its sympathetic audience, the many thousands who bought, read and sang from them. The term was coined by its critics as late as in the nineteenth century, referring to the cheapness of the prints in a direct and indirect sense. Although pejoratively encoded, the term points to an essential feature of these texts: they were commercial and affordable products, designed to make a wide appeal to be interesting and to sell widely.

Outside Scandinavia, similar printed ephemera were common all over Europe, but there is no exact equivalent to the *skillingtryck* as a print type. In British culture the closest related artefacts are *broadsides* and *chap-books*; popular prints that certainly contained popular songs but had different for-

<sup>1</sup> Ob 1800d, Kungliga biblioteket Stockholm (KB).

<sup>2</sup> Word-for-word translation: Birgit Sawyer.

<sup>3</sup> The coin value "skilling" was introduced in 1776 in Sweden and in the early nineteenth century one or a few "skilling" was a common price for a song print of this kind. For a discussion on the rise and use of the word *skillingtryck*, see Jonsson 1967:601–606.

<sup>4</sup> A remarkable exception to this decline are the so called *beggar verses*, song prints sold by e.g. blind and unemployed people to earn a living, that flourished in the 1920s and 1930s. C.f. Strand 2013, 2014, 2015a.

mats. The broadside was a single sheet printed on one side only; the chap-book could have anything from 4 to 32 pages and contain any kind of printed folklore in prose or verse (Shepard 1973:26).

The song repertoire of the *skillingtryck* was heterogeneous, presenting all kinds of songs: traditional folk songs, hymns, songs on everyday matters like news and sensational crimes, sentimental love songs, humorous songs, mockery and propaganda.

In my present research, I study song prints that deal with current, social matters: beggar verses of the blind and poor; reports in verse and prose of spectacular crimes, and temperance songs (Strand 2016). Many of these texts were written especially for the prints, some had other origins but were well suited for the popular medium. Dealing with different issues, and told from different perspectives, the songs in my study share a general aim to move, inform and influence their audience for certain purposes. To a high degree they do this by using emotional modes, drawing on fear, sensation or sentimentality. The representation of social problems as affective dilemmas can be described in terms of a *politics of affect*: to reach and influence the audience's consciousness through the feelings, the bodily sensations.<sup>5</sup>

The very format of the song and the print as a whole set a distinct limit, as do assumptions about the taste and interests of "the common (i.e. not learned) people". Since there is no room for nuances or problematisation, the narration must be concentrated, effective and comprehensible. Aesthetically and rhetorically, this is realised on the manifest level by features such as moral polarisation and melodramatic plots (Strand 2012).

What particularly interest me are the song prints as interfaces between current, urgent matters and the (heterogeneous) audience implied; the potential buyer in the street and at the market place, wanting entertainment and information. How do the songs present their issues, whose side of the story is told and what is the moral? Which parts of the matter are included and which are excluded? In short: how can we understand the relationship, the "exchange rate" as I like to think about it, between the reality of social exclusion, impairment, crime and misery and their representations in intriguing, versified and singable terms?

To answer such questions, close readings of the printed texts are not enough. Methodologically, we need to enter the socio-historical and cultural context of the songs. More specifically, we also need to uncover the very creation, the birth and fate of the text and explore how, when and why a

<sup>5</sup> See e.g. feminist critic Ann Cvetkovich (1992), who uses the concept more specifically in her analysis of Victorian sensational novels as she problematises the construction of the middle class woman as a by definition emotional (rather than intellectual) being.



particular issue ended up as a printed song for sale. Is there a known author, and were there other sources at the time to build upon?

In this article, I will exemplify this approach by discussing the production of *skillingtryck* on a certain, sensational crime. The matter was of such nature that the local court did its best to suppress any knowledge of it. Nevertheless, the story became widely spread and commented on by distribution in several prints, in verse and prose.

First, let us look at the court case and its background as documented in archives and court records.<sup>6</sup> The event will lead us to a partly hidden, gendered aspect of non-privileged people's experiences.

## The Vaksala Case

In the summer of 1800, just outside the town of Uppsala in Sweden, the local court of Vaksala had to investigate a scandalous matter. The case concerned a crime committed in the parish in 1799 by two young women – one of them dressed as a man – who had managed to marry each other. By obtaining a false medical certificate that the groom was a man, and a priest's certificate that his name (and identity) was "Anders Magnus Åhrman", they had fooled doctors, priests and employers, as well as relatives and friends. The crime was considered both a serious fraud and a violation, a mockery, of the sacrament of marriage and the holy orders of God.

To adopt a false identity and change one's gender, was a serious offence, although there are few examples in legal history where this resulted in a prosecution. Rather, it is the actions that this makes possible that are addressed: frauds, falsifications, disturbance of order. The pretending, the masking of one's "true self", signified fraudulent behaviour in general, causing suspicions of committed or planned crimes. At a time lacking secure evidence of identification, it was of great importance that people really were who they appeared to be.

The crime was revealed when the bride accused her husband a couple of months after the wedding. This was the starting point for the legal investigation. During the interrogation it turned out that the groom Anders Magnus Åhrman, whose true Christian name was Anna Maria Åhrman, had lived cross-dressed as a man for five years before the marriage.

According to her testimony, Anna Maria Åhrman was 17 when she first changed clothes. At that time, she had recently moved to the district from Gävle, a town 100 kilometers from Uppsala, to start employment as a maid

<sup>6</sup> Above all, I refer to the crime record; *Protokoll vid urtima ting, volym 2* (1800–1820) (Vaksala Häreadsrätts arkiv AIII, Landsarkivet in Uppsala) as "VD" and date (day-month). Pages refer to a pdf-copy of the record. E.g: VD 10.9:114.

in the household of Lieutenant Benzelstjerna at Ålbo. During her duty at Benzelstjerna's, and as witnessed in court: by the support of her master, she changed her clothes to a man's outfit and obtained a local midwife's certificate of her manhood. This was stated after only a brief examination outside the clothes; in court Åhrman admits to having folded a piece of cloth and put it in her pants for a "man's sign" (VD 18.8:90). The certificate was then brought to the vicar of the parish, from whom she obtained a priest's certificate of male identity.

What made her take this drastic step? According to Åhrman, she was persuaded to the transformation by the daughter of the tenant at Ålbo; a young woman who was pregnant with an illegitimate child, and persuaded Åhrman to father it. In return, the girl and her mother promised to help Åhrman to get a job and a place to stay in Stockholm. The pregnancy as well as the alleged persuasion was emphatically denied in court by the tenant family. Åhrman, however, gave detailed information about the child that was eventually born and placed in an orphanage in the capital (VD 2.8:60f).

Benzelstjerna's explanation for having helped Åhrman with her change of gender was that she had assured him that she actually was a man (VD 10.9:114). Benzelstjerna claimed to have believed the peculiar state since there had been a rumour going around that his maid was a hermaphrodite.

Having obtained a priest's testimonial of her new identity, in the autumn of 1795 Åhrman moved to Stockholm, a city that then had about 75 100 inhabitants.<sup>7</sup> There she worked as a tailor's apprentice for two years, until she was discovered to be a woman (VD 2.8:28). She then moved back to Uppland, still dressed as a man, and got a job as a servant at the Eka mansion. There she met Fredrica Lundmark, an inspector's daughter from a parish nearby who for a period had served as a housekeeper at Eka (VD 2.8:30). Fredrica was the eldest of seven brothers and sisters and was 19 years old at the time.<sup>8</sup>

During their service, Fredrica and Anders Magnus became close friends; so close that they even shared a bed. They both asserted in court that their friendship was completely virtuous and claimed never to have touched or even seen each other without clothes. Eventually the friendship led to the decision to marry. According to Åhrman, the marriage was in the interest of Fredrica and her parents – who were well aware of the true sex of the "husband" – because of a prospect of inheritance. Word against word: according to Fredrica and her family they had all believed that Anders Magnus was a man.

<sup>7</sup> Utrednings- och statistikkontoret, table 2.3, published on <http://stockholmskallan.se/Soksida/Post/?nid=5748> (visited 150220).

<sup>8</sup> Landsarkivet i Uppsala: Vaksala kyrkoarkiv. Husförhörslängder 1793–1799.

## Female Cross-Dressing: A Hidden Tradition

Why did Anna Maria turn into Anders Magnus? Women disguised as men have by definition been quite a hidden phenomenon, but as historians have shown, it was presumably quite widespread in Europe in early modern times.<sup>9</sup> In Holland alone, Dekker & van de Pol (1989) have made 120 case studies of criminal reports, and in a Swedish context Jonas Liliequist (1997a; 1997b; 2002) has pointed out several cases. In at least five of the known Swedish cases, the women in question married other women. It is worth noting that the women we know of today are only the ones that ended up in court, that is: those who were discovered. The real number is, by definition, veiled.

Who were these cross-dressers and what were their motives for adopting a male persona? From a contemporary point of view, with our current scholarly attention on queerness and sexual identity, it is tempting to interpret female transvestism as an expression of transsexual or homosexual identity, of love that had to be disguised. It is true, as Dekker & van de Pol (1989:59–63) have shown, that love for another woman has been *one* motif for transgressing gender boundaries. In societies with complementary (hierarchical) gender roles, where heterosexual marriage was the only conceptualized and acceptable form for love relationships, “turning into a man” was a way to make sense of and live out same-sexed attraction.

More often, however, there have been cruder material reasons for cross-dressing than indecisive gender identity and erotic desire – especially for girls from the lower classes (Dekker & van de Pol, 1989:25–34). Economically, in hard times, men had better chances to earn a living: as soldiers, sailors and tailors for example. Another recurrent motive for women adopting a male disguise was the need to escape: to get away from the law or the family, to escape from their husbands or quite the contrary: to follow them in war or at sea. Some women seem to have done it out of sheer adventurism. In many cases it is hard to discern one single reason.

Whereas the *reasons* for women to cross-dress have been various or are hidden from us today, there are nonetheless some discernable common denominators for the *persons* taking the drastic step and their social context. As stated by Dekker & van de Pol (1989:13), the vast majority were girls from the lower classes. They were orphans or had severe family problems and were adolescent when they first changed their clothes (Dekker & van de Pol 1989:17–25). Interestingly enough, in many cases it is clear that they were aware of other women who had earlier done the same thing. There has, in other words, been a consciousness of being part of a tradition, be it a

<sup>9</sup> Female cross-dressing has occurred in ancient and medieval times as well, see e.g. Sawyer 2003.

non-official, largely vernacular, tradition (Dekker & van de Pol 1989:41–44). If not through personal acquaintance, the knowledge has been transmitted through sayings, stories – and songs.

Within Swedish folk song tradition, female cross-dressing is quite a recurrent theme, above all within epic genres like the medieval ballad. The case of the two maids in Vaksala is, however, as far as is known, the only reality scandal that ended up in a song print of this kind. How, then, did it become songs for sale?

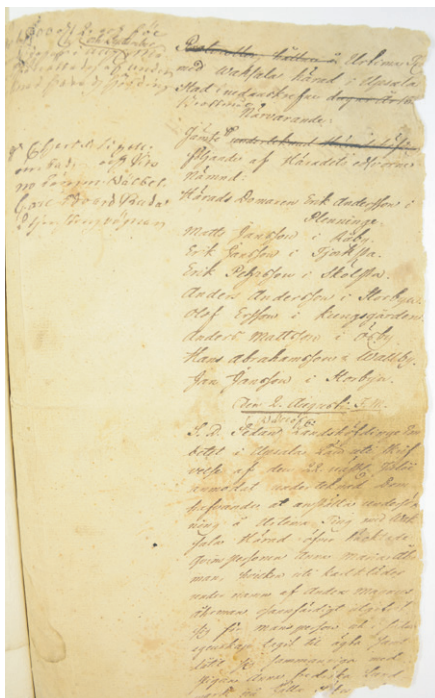
## From Court Room to Song Print

Anders Magnus Åhrman and Fredrica Lundmark married on the 30 December 1799. The scandal, the fact that the groom was a woman, was officially discovered as the bride and her father went to the local priest a couple of months after the wedding and wanted to cancel the marriage. The bride claimed that she hadn't known anything about her husband's true sex until after the wedding. This was the starting point of the investigation that ended up in the local court of Vaksala in the summer of 1800. The trial lasted from 21 July until 10 September.

The case proved to contain betrayal on several levels: false testimonies, disguises, lies. In the trial, as documented in the 121 pages of the protocol, it turned out that not only had the women fooled priests, doctors, family and friends, but they also declared to have been fooled by each other. A fundamental issue concerned false expectations of inheritance: the "groom" was thought to have a fortune of money and land back in Gävle to inherit, but as became evident after the wedding, this was not true. According to Åhrman, as she claimed in court, Fredrica Lundmark had heard rumours about Åhrman's options to inherit, and was, therefore, eager to marry. Fredrica, on her part, asserted that it was Åhrman who had bragged about the forthcoming fortune, but that she didn't marry Anders Magnus for money, but out of love for the person she thought was a man.

The trial in the local court attracted a lot of people. Due to the nature of the matter, though, it was decided from the outset that the interrogation should be kept behind closed doors. The assembled crowd was therefore asked to leave (VD 2.8:25f). In the final phase of the investigation, on September 10, a printer, Johannes Edman in Uppsala, turned to the court and asked for permission to print the protocol (VD 10.9:119f), which was becoming a rather common practice in court cases of public interest at this time. With the explicit reference to the nature of the matter, however, the local court of Vaksala refused printing of documents concerning the case, due to its violation of moral and divine orders. The court stated that the case was not for public knowledge (VD 10.9:120).



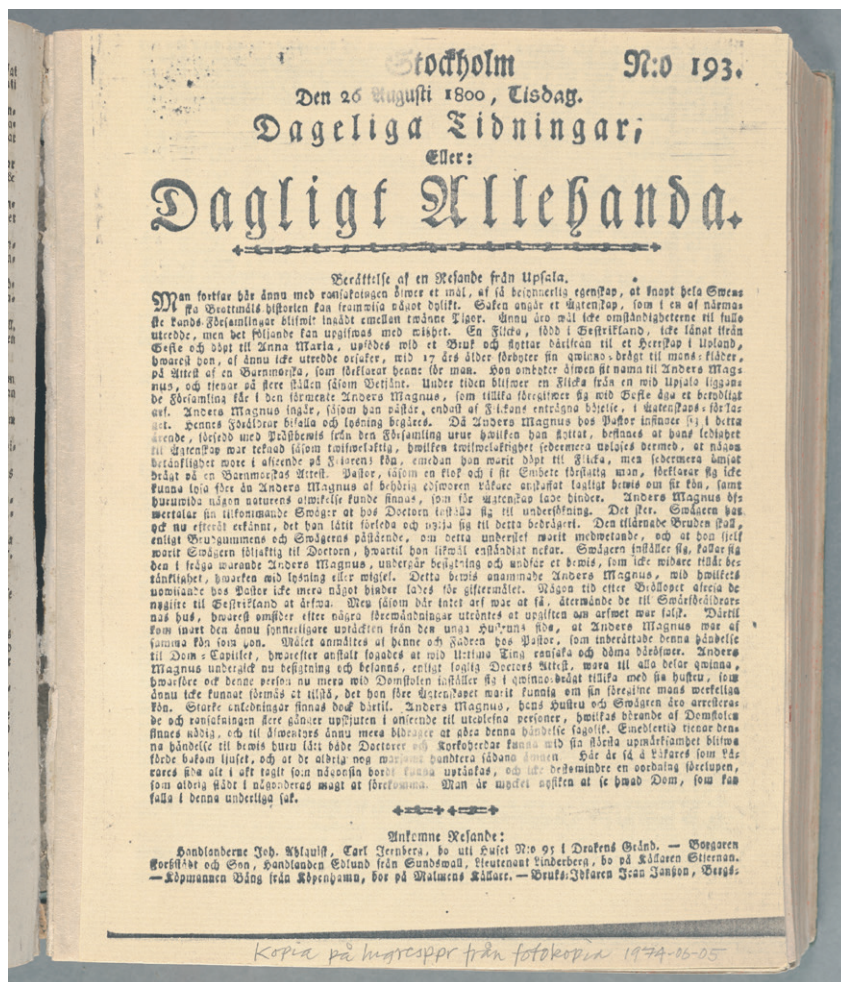


One of the 121 pages of the court record, *Protokoll vid urtima ting 1800–1820, Vaksala häradsrätt*. Photo: Bo Danielsson, Landsarkivet i Uppsala.

At that point, however, the word was already about to be spread to an audience far outside Vaksala. Two weeks before Edman's proposal, there was an anonymously published article in the Stockholm paper *Dagligt Allehanda* that reported from the investigation. The *Dagligt Allehanda* was an advertisement-based paper, known for publishing gossip and scandal issues. The signature "A man travelling from Uppsala" informs the readers: "This ongoing investigation is of a case so remarkable that it hardly has any equivalent in Swedish legal history. It concerns the marriage, in a nearby parish, of two girls. The circumstances have not yet been fully investigated but the following can be asserted for sure."<sup>10</sup> Then a quite well-informed summary of the case follows. It is obvious that the writer had either read the records, had personally attended the interrogation, or had an inside informant. The article ends: "One is truly curious about how things will turn out in this strange case".

After the article was published, it was soon printed in *skillingtryck* as well, and eventually gave rise to two different songs on the matter. To copy and use items from newspapers was a common practice for the producers of

<sup>10</sup> The *Dagligt Allehanda* 26 August 1800 (translation from Swedish: Birgit Sawyer). Less than a month later, 20 September, the same article was published in the *Fahlu Wecko-blad* (KB).



Dagligt Allehanda 26 August 1800. Photo: Jens Östman, Kungl. Biblioteket.

song prints (c.f. Enefalk 2015). In this case it is clear that the songs are based on the prose text, since details from it appear in the lyrics as well. In different combinations these three texts were printed and spread in song prints from the year of the trial until 1847. There are at least 12 unique prints on the matter, printed in six different towns in Sweden.<sup>11</sup>

The more frequent of the two songs on the matter is "Jag borde ej skriva som intet är lärd" ("I ought not to write since I am not learned") which was published in 10 different prints between 1800 and 1847. The song obviously

<sup>11</sup> KB: A 5, A 37, E 1801 e, E 1805 c, E 1813 f, E 1843 m, E 1847 b, Ob 1800 a, Ob 1800 b, Ob 1800 c, Ob 1800 d. Uppsala universitetsbibliotek: UUB FV:52.





The first song print on the matter: Wisa om de twänne pigor som gifte sig med hwarandra ("Song about the two maids who married each other"), printed in 1800. Photo: Jens Östman, Kungl. Biblioteket.

took root in the oral tradition and got a life outside the prints as well, as for example is shown in a transcription from Gotland in the early twentieth century.<sup>12</sup>

As is often the case with crime report prints of this kind, the author of the lyrics is anonymous. There is evidence that several authors within the genre of "crime prints" were professional publicists and newspaper journalists; writers for whom the contribution to song prints was a side-line occupation about which they obviously did not wish to display their names. At any rate the anonymity was hardly motivated by any challenging qualities of the texts: the lyrical point of view of these songs takes almost exclusively the side of law and order, in populist terms.

The textual subject of "Jag borde ej skriva" stages a man of the people narrating, a person who lacks education but despite (or because of?) this makes use of common sense:

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<sup>12</sup> Fredin 1909:28, "after the widow Hafström, Dala i Burs". This version of the song, "Täu pääkar umtaläs sum giftä si vill", only has 3 (out of the original 9) stanzas, but the moral and the perspective are essentially the same.

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| <p>1. Jag borde ej skrifwa som intet är lård,<br/>Ej eller arbetat i Studiers afärd,<br/>Men efter den gåfwa försynen mig gifwa<br/>Wil jag med en Wisa förtälja och skrifwa<br/>//: Hwad som i dag Bladen man läsa kan få ://<br/>//: Hur pigor nu ställa til sit giftermål ://</p> <p>2. Twå pigor omtalas som gifta sig wil,<br/>Har det och fullbordat med alt som hör til,<br/>Men missnöjda båda när de sig besinna,<br/>När de sedermera fick se och befinna,<br/>At skapnaden woro på jämlika sätt,<br/>Å båda war qwinkön som icke war rätt.</p> <p>3. Som straxt gafs til känna til lagfarna män,<br/>Å alla bekänna at detta som hänt,<br/>Fins icke beskriwit från urgamlä tider,<br/>Å ej något annat som warder det liker,<br/>Men förmodligt blef Flickan som hade fin dräkt,<br/>Bedragen på Mannen som har sig förklädt.</p> <p>4. Hur skal man utgrunda dess upsåt för sann,<br/>At Flickorna börjar så narra hwar ann,<br/>Men troligt den ena för kärleken lider,<br/>Den andra til pängar och arfwedel fiker,<br/>Ty så kallade Flickan sad sig ega arf,<br/>Som wore betydligt uti Gästrikland.</p> <p>5. När sanning war klädt i sin rätta gestalt,<br/>Så fans där als intet at få uti arf,<br/>Då missnöjet gjorde fullkomligt den saken<br/>At pigorna blefwo ock står under under lagen,<br/>Men ingen än weta hwad dom de kan få,<br/>Ty bråtmåls historien det knappast förstår.</p> <p>6. Men war för den flickan som sig har förklätt,<br/>Wid sjutton års ålder förbyt it sin dräkt,<br/>Wil hon ej bekäna i allmän het lämna,<br/>Ty hon lærer blygas, för Skaparen rysa,<br/>At hon har misbrukat hans händer och makt,<br/>Å lika som gjort utaf honom förakt.</p> <p>7. Wi bör alla wara förnöjda med det,<br/>Som utaf försynen är blifwit beskjärd,<br/>Å ingen ting söka at wrida och wända,<br/>Ty sådant får säkert ej någon god ända,<br/>De båda twå pigor det röna får,<br/>Som nu i arästen båd ligger ock står.</p> | <p>1. I ought not to write, since I am not learned<br/>and have not studied,<br/>but using the gift that Providence gave me,<br/>I will tell you a story<br/>of what you can read in the papers:<br/>how maidens planned their marriage.</p> <p>2. Two maidens wanted to marry<br/>and went through with it all,<br/>but they were both dissatisfied<br/>when they found<br/>that they were shaped in the same way;<br/>they were both women, which was not right.</p> <p>3. What soon was known to men, learned in the law,<br/>and to everyone else,<br/>nothing similar had ever happened<br/>or anything like it,<br/>but presumably the girl who was finely dressed<br/>was lured by the "man" who appeared in disguise.</p> <p>4. How can we understand the intention as truth,<br/>when the girls started to lure each other?<br/>Probably one of them suffered for love,<br/>and the other longed for money and inheritance;<br/>the latter claimed an inheritance,<br/>important enough in Gästrikland.</p> <p>5. When Truth was dressed in its right form,<br/>there was nothing to be inherited.<br/>This was fully declared, and the disappointed maids<br/>were found guilty,<br/>Nobody can know how they will be punished;<br/>a criminal story we cannot understand.</p> <p>6. But why the girl in disguise had<br/>– at 17 years old – dressed like a man,<br/>she did not want to confess but left to be forgotten.<br/>She felt shame before our Creator,<br/>whose wish, hands and power she had abused<br/>and treated with contempt.</p> <p>7. We all ought to be satisfied<br/>with what Providence has given us,<br/>and not try to alter things,<br/>because that will never end well.<br/>Both maidens will experience this,<br/>when they are now in prison.</p> |
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8. Wi böra besinna at det ej är rätt,  
 at ställa til giftermål på sådant sätt  
 Att skämta med hela Gudomens praktikär,  
 Och säga sig wara på ärligt sätt giftär,  
 Mån Gud som är wärd både ära ock pris,  
 Han bringar fram sanning på alla de wis.

9. När andra har syndat så har funnits dom,  
 I Bråttmåls historien at lesa därom,  
 Man nu blifwer ämnen på synder förökad,  
 At knapt dom beslutit i werlden kan sökas,  
 Mån himmelska Dommaren gör dom wäl rätt  
 Om di sökte synder på tusende sätt.

8. We ought to remember that it is not right  
 to organize a marriage like this;  
 to joke with Divine practices  
 and claim to be properly married.  
 But God who is worth both honour and praise  
 can bring forward truth in all ways.

9. When other people have sinned, they have been  
 judged, as we can read in history.  
 But now the forms of sin will increase,  
 and it is uncertain what the judgements will be,  
 but the heavenly Judge will do right,  
 even if the sins are thousand-fold.

The narrator tells the story of the actual event by its main features: the scandalous couple, the marriage and the disappointment; and adds speculations about motifs and who might have been betrayed by whom. The tone might be perceived as mocking or indignant, but the explicit moral judgement is clear: this is a violation of God's order: it is not right "to joke with Divine practices".

As expressed, there is a certainty about the uniqueness of the matter: "Nothing similar had ever happened or anything like it". As a preferred understanding of the matter, the declaration is significant *per se*, although, as discussed, female cross-dressing was quite a recurrent phenomenon in early modern times. From the point of view of the producers, the exceptional and sensational state is an immediate argument for buying the print. At a deeper social level, the message can be understood as a moral imperative in the interests of the church and the law, pointing out the action as a vicious abnormality.

The overt rejection and condemnation of the gender masquerade and the false marriage is an apparent message that works on the manifest level. As an effect, however, there is also a quite opposite meaning. Considering the court's explicit ambition to censor the matter from public knowledge, the very spreading the word about the women's criminal actions is potentially empowering. The statement of the song can thus be said to be ambiguous, two-folded: "This is terrible!" But: "Listen to what poor girls of the common people are capable of!". As Dekker & van de Pol (1989:41–44) have pointed out, the hidden tradition of female cross-dressing has depended on the awareness of predecessors.

It is interesting to note that the song's open end, the depicted situation before the case was closed and the punishments declared, continued to be printed long after the trial was over. There was never a follow up-story, an updated version, but this frozen, suggestive uncertainty.

## Concluding Remarks

To return to the initial question about what vernacular song prints, the *skillingtryck*, as a source material can tell us about the lives and experiences of ordinary, non-privileged people. Taking this particular criminal case and its life in song prints as an example, it is obvious that the prints could tell their contemporary audience quite a lot about (other) ordinary people, at least more than the authorities wished to. For researchers of today, they do lead us to popular phenomena of their time, verified as in this case, or fictive. In either way, the issues of popular song prints were by definition matters of their time. To appeal to potential buyers they needed to be interesting and relevant for the experiences and imaginations of yesterday's men, women and identities in between.

Finally: here I have only discussed the fate of the story, but what about the protagonists, the girls? In short, the interrogation process proved them both to be equally involved in and guilty of the fraud. They were judged to lose their honour and to pay 50 *daler* each, which they obviously did in December 1800 as is confirmed by a signed receipt attached to the final verdict of the higher court.<sup>13</sup> It doesn't say who paid the penalty, but most likely it was Fredrica's father. Anna Maria Åhrman was then banished from the parish and the traces of her end here.

What happened to her next and where she might have gone can, unfortunately, only be a matter of speculation. A possible scenario is that she moved back to Stockholm where she, as mentioned, had lived and worked before as a tailor apprentice in the name of Anders Magnus. As compared to the villages and parishes outside Uppsala, the bigger city might have offered better opportunities to start anew, as a man or as a woman.

In whatever guise, it is intriguing to picture that she one day, among the street peddlers and song print sellers of the city, might have come across one of the prints about her and Fredrica, "the two maids who married each other". How did she feel about it? Was she ashamed; did it hurt; or was it, quite contrary, an adventure to brag about in the taverns, something that possibly led to further events? We will never know. What we do know is that she by then was only 23 years old, and that her life, as opposed to the song's story, was not yet finally written.

## SOURCES AND LITERATURE

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KB = Kungliga biblioteket

Song prints (skillingtryck): A 5, A 37, E 1801 e, E 1805 c, E 1813 f, E 1843 m, E 1847 b, Ob 1800 a, Ob 1800 b, Ob 1800 c, Ob 1800 d.

Dagligt Allehanda

Fahlu Weckoblad

### Landsarkivet i Uppsala

*Vaksala Häradsrätts arkiv:*

A:III Protokoll vid urtima ting, volym 2 (1800–1820) (VD).

*Vaksala kyrkoarkiv:*

A:I Husförhörslängder 1793–1799 (vol. 3).

E:I Lysnings- och vigselböcker 1794–1836 (vol. 1).

<sup>13</sup> Uppsala Länsstyrelse: Landskansliet. Skrivelser från K.M:t samt vissa centrala myndigheter. 1800. D I: 130. [Brev] 62, (ankom 1800-11-07).

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A:I b Koncept (gemensam serie) (vol. 153). Dnr 1639 (ankom 1800-09-25).  
 D:I Skrivelser från K.M:t samt vissa centrala myndigheter (vol 130) [Brev] 62,  
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**SVAR/Digitala forskarsalen:***Valbo Kyrkoarkiv:*

B:I In- och utflyttningslängder 1752–1817 (vol. 1).  
 C:2 Födelse- och dopböcker 1741–1801.  
 F:I Död och begravningsböcker 1753–1826.

**UUB = Uppsala universitetsbibliotek**

Song prints (skillingtryck): FV:52.

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