Summaries

Lennart Lundmark

Narration and reality in the writing of history

Traditionally the debate about language and reality in historical research has been entirely oriented to the relationship between the author and the true past. During the past decade a new element has appeared in the discussin. What is new is the emphasis put on the text as such. Earlier the text was seen as a relatively unproblematical function of the source's content and/or the author's intentions. Now the text has received a more independent character; its structure, form, linguistic conventions and literary models are given a greater role in the analysis of the relationship between the past's realities and the history writer's product. It is the past decade's intensive debate about language and reality within philosophy and language and literary disciplines that has also had repercussions, during the 1980s, within historical research. In France, the United States and Great Britain in particular the debate has been intensive; within Swedish historical research it has hardly been noticeable.

The question "Is reality a story?" is a suitable point of departure for treating the 1980s' debate around this problem complex. The article takes up five different ways of looking at the question. They are the following:

1. Reality appears to us as stories. One can thus rightfully claim that a narrative presentation also accords with the form of reality. (David Carr)

2. There exists a mutual dependency between a literary narrative form and history writing. Even if reality is not a kind of story, history writing cannot function without loaning that form. (Paul Ricoeur)

3. Reality and a narrative form stand in opposition to each other. Historians have adapted themselves to the narrative patterns of fictional literature and have thus given a distorted view of the past. (Hayden White)

4. Whether historians narrate or not, they in any case strive after coherence of presentation. A coherence so coerced does not correspond to the splintered and contradictory reality which poststructuralist philosophy has lain bare. (Dominick LaCapra)

5. The narrative form is a weapon of oppression. It tries to confine a reality that is free precisely because it lacks coherence. (Sande Cohen)

The core of the problem is the relationship between the content and the form of knowledge. This is a problem which historians have pushed into the background during the past one hundred years. The questions which, for example, Hayden White raise go beyond the traditional debate about realism and relativism in history writing. The debate no longer applies in the first instance to the degree to which the historian is an unconscious prisoner in linguistic forms and models. What White is concerned with is thus a criticism which extends beyound traditional source criticism. He also wants to examine the relationship of the form of presentation to historical reality.

What critics like White and LaCapra underline is that fictional literature has gone on to new forms and that since the nineteenth century philosophy and natural science have come upon new theoretical insights, while historians are still on the same old spot. Even if one can naturally find a number of examples which contradict this criticism, I think it is correct if one views the production of historical research en gros. Further, I think it would be unwise to reject this as a false problem and claim that the defense of the traditional virtues is the historian's most important task today. Instead one ought to adopt a

critical openess and neither bind oneself to traditional forms nor become so easily impressed by just any kind of experiment merely because it is new and different.

Nor should one cock one's revolver as soon as terms like literary, fiction, narrative models, etc., enter into the debate. During the past one hundred years one of the most important tasks of historians has been to draw a clear line of demarcation against everything that has to do with literary fiction. But in order to do so they have also been forced to repress the fact that they themselves are to a very great degree bound by forms of literary presentation which steers the knowledge of the past that historians convey. The linguistically oriented critics now want to take the skeleton out of the closet. Obviously that is not a popular measure, but unfortunately it is a rather necessary one.

Translated by Joseph Zitomersky

Anna Götlind

"Ok at thw skuli thz bätir vndirstanda" — Technical images in St. Birgitta's revelations

The research presented here on the technical images in St. Birgitta's (c. 1302—1373) visions has two points of departure. The one is a number of articles in which researchers discuss one of Birgitta's hell and purgatory visions. Related in the vision are, among other things, a burning oven, bellows and floating, sparkling metal. The metaphor has been interpreted in different ways: as a blastfurnace, a goldsmith's workshop or a kiln. None of the authors questions however that Birgitta, in her depiction of the oven, has conveyed a personal recollecton of a melting furnace.

Nor does the economic historian Janken Myrdal, who, in a relatively recently published dissertation on medieval agrarian techniques in Sweden, makes use of Birgitta's visions, present any fuller discussion of the value of these texts as sources. Instead he notes briefly that the many metaphors in the visions must be seen as being taken from the representational world which surrounded Birgitta. But can we really presume that such was the case?

The other point of departure for the work has been the American historian of technology Lynn White Jr. and his thesis of the Western church's positive attitude to all kinds of new technology. In a couple of articles, and elsewhere, White has discussed how one, in medieval religious picture language, made use modern technology. God the Creator is represented as a medieval master builder with all the tools in His hands accordingly. The Christian cardinal virtue *Temperantia* is accorded a large quantity of apparently irrelevant technical attributes. Another wellknown example, which White treats in several papers, is the mechanical clock, as a symbol for the universe and with God as the great watchmaker. In the religious picture language modern technology came to illustrate virtues and lofty morals.

From these two points of departure, Birgitta's much discussed purgatory vision and White's thesis, the object of the article is formulated. Can Birgitta's vision really say anything about the technical conditions in medieval Sweden, or are the technical images which appear in the visions only religious stereotypes, popular pictures which Birgitta took from a general Christian European imagery world?

What do we know of the sources of inspiration for Birgitta in her authorship? What can she have read of other writers? One researcher who has exhaustively investigated the matter is Birgitta Klockars in her dissertation *Birgitta och böckerna* (Birgitta and the Books). Klockars tries to trace the sources of Birgitta's texts. She notes, after an impressive detective work, that Birgitta must have been a well-read woman who drew inspiration from a good number of different sources. Besides other literature she also let herself be inspired by preachings, representational art and naturally her own experiences and undertakings. Klockar's dissertation contains a number of registers of visions, among them one which refers to all the pictures and allegories that appear in the visions. This index has been the principal means of help for searching in the visions in the investigation here.

After an exhaustive presentation of the source material, in which, among other things, the origins of the Latin and Swedish textual versions and their relations to each other are discussed, there follows a closer examination of four technical pictures: the glass

master, the mechanical clock, the magnet/compass, and the much discussed melting-oven. For each of these phenomena the question is put as to whether Birgitta took the picture from the surrounding reality of from other literature or art.

In one of the visions Birgitta likens Christ to a glass master. Nothing suggests that Birgitta would have seen a glass master in Sweden, and hardly that she learned through reading how glass production was done. It is likely enough that here Birgitta made use of a common religious metaphor: that of representing God/Christ as an artisan of different kinds. There exists other examples of this in Birgitta's visions.

In another vision Birgitta uses a metaphor with a suspended weight in an *horologium.* In Birgitta's time the mechanical clock was a relatively new invention, and Birgitta can hardly have seen any clock in Sweden. Nor is it particularly likely that she could have seen herself, when abroad, the clock mechanism in a mechanical clock — it was usually hidden behind calendar boards and clock tables. My belief is instead that the details of the suspended weight is one of the details added by the father confessors in connection with their translation/editing of the visions. We know that such changes took place.

As regards a couple of metaphors with a magnet that draws to it iron and a magnet compass, there is nothing that says that Birgitta cannot herself have had personal experience of the technology. But there also exists contemporary literature, both religious and profane, in which magnets are discussed. It is impossible here to determine if it is a matter of personal experience or literary loan.

Finally the oven cited above is discussed. Earlier reseachers are criticized for their lack of source criticism and a dubious use of the visions. A closer examination of the text shows that it is probably a question of a metaphor in which Birgitta has mixed in ingredients from different sources to create her very personal hell and purgatory vision. To use the vision as proof of one or another specific metal working process shows itself to be impossible.

The result of the detailed examination of these four technical images is that we can *not* generally claim that it is a question of literary or artistic loans, known religious metaphors. A couple of the technical phenomena discussed in the article, Birgitta can have seen with her own eyes, in Sweden or abroad. At the same time they also appeared in other, contemporary literature and art. The conclusion is that as historians in search of daily material culture one must be very careful when using Birgitta as a source and that one must carefully analyze each place in the text for itself.

Translated by Joseph Zitomersky

Kenneth Johansson

Lords and peasants. On jurisdiction in some baronies in Småland in the seventeenth century

This article deals with some of the problems associated with jurisdiction by the nobility in the seigneurial courts of the counties and baronies that were established in the seventeenth century. Two issues, which have also been treated by previous researchers, are of central importance: (1) the question of whether the seigneurial courts passed judgement according to the same judicial principles as the local courts, or if the former had a different view of the relation between *law* and *justice*; (2) the question of whether aristocratic jurisdiction was integrated in the judicial system which took on an increasingly permanent form with the development of the courts of appeal, or if the exclusive jurisdiction in the counties and baronies represented a tendency that went contrary to this development. The latter question is answered by means of a concret study of the aftermath of some judgements from the seigneurial court of Bergkvara, and by an analysis of correspondence between the barons of Bergkvara and Göta Hovrätt, the court of appeal.

Geographically the study is confined to the siegneurial courts that were established in various periods in different baronies in Allbo Hundred in southern Sweden. The baronies were: Virestad, Härlunda, Nya Bergkvara, Gamla Bergkvara, and Kronoberg. Seigneurial courts were held in these baronies in the seventeenth century. The peasant homesteads which were under the control of each barony had formerly been part of the traditional jurisdictional sphere of the hundred. The seigneurial court replaced the hundred court as the social arena where conflicts were to be resolved and crimes prosecuted, where peasants met not only other peasants but also their lords.

By contrasting the practice of the seigneurial courts with doctrines and legal institutions which were of great value for the hundred courts in their administration of justice, I seek to understand what the manorial courts were and how they were perceived by seventeenth-century peasants.

There has only been summary treatment in Swedish research of aristocratic jurisdiction in the seventeenth century and its relation to the traditional justice that was chiefly the province of the hundred courts. Whereas earlier research took the part of the peasants, arguing that the freeholding peasants in the seventeenth century were on the way to losing their relative freedom in both juridical and actual terms, recent studies have raised several objections to this view. As regards the topic covered by this article, recent research has claimed that the jurisdiction of the seigneurial courts was well integrated in the traditional administration of justice in two important respects: (1) like the hundred courts, their judgements followed the national law; (2) also like the hundred courts, their judgements could if necessary be altered by the courts of appeal.

In this article I present a different view of this complex of problems and try to emphasize other aspects of the social reality. Applaying the law and judging according to it was no guarantee that justice would be done. The relation between law and justice was more complex than this. The following points deserve special emphasis:

1. It was through Roman law in particular that the seventeenth-century aristocracy attempted to legitimate its thrusting ambitions. In some counties and baronies — especially Gamla Bergkvara — there were serious challenges to the ontology of traditional justice in various spheres.

2. In the traditional perception of justice, a judgement founded on what was right and fair took precedence over a judgement that was based solely on the law. A judgement founded on what was right and fair was considered more just in any individual case.

3. In the seventeenth century the rules of Roman law were continually invoked against the rules of traditional justice. In everyday practice people had many opportunities to witness and evaluate these to application of justice. Although Roman law in many areas was to surpass traditional law in the seventeenth century, it did not for that reason eliminate customary law. Decrees that sought to overrule customary law were heeded only if they were based on power. But this did not make for justice. It was merely an expression of a power that was feared; a power that was maintained by force of arms and the word. There was (and is) a difference between law and justice.

4. The lords of Bergkvara did *not* subject the judgements of the seigneurial court to the court of appeal, as previous historians have argued. On the contrary: after many vicissitudes they acquired complete rights for Bergkvara, which even included exclusive judicial control. The aristocratic programme from the end of the sixteenth century can be said to have been realized at Bergkvara by the middle of the seventeenth century, although they were not granted their demand to be able to legislate freely within their counties and baronies or to establish special courts for the manor.

5. This was a challenge to the local community and its peasants. Their sense of justice gave a central place to customary law and the common good. In the aristocratic sense of justice it was instead personal good, the privileges of an aristrocrat, which guided the activities of the seigneurial courts. This difference paved the way for conflicts.

Translated by Alan Crozier

Sven Lilja

Urbanization in a long-term perspective. Some theories and an empirical example

One of the purposes of this article has been to demonstrate the social complexity behind the term "urbanization". This complexity makes it necessary to analyze the urbanization process at different levels of change. It also contradicts any attempt to define "urbanization" as a theoretical object. The reality of urbanization should instead be looked upon as one of several indications of social change in general. Any necessary definition should as a consequence be restricted to operational criteria. As suggested in the article, aggregated urban population size in relation to the total population of any specified area would be useful as an operational definition of the urbanization process. This type of definition has in international literature been labeled "demographic urbanization."

Demographic urbanization can be analyzed at three different levels of change. At the bottom level the continuity aspect is stressed. According to the Dutch scholar Jan de Vries, European urbanization has in many aspects been a continuous process of growth, with no clearcut breakpoint between the medieval, the preindustrial and the industrial periods. The same kind of continuously accelerating urban growth can be confirmed in the long-term Swedish urbanization process from about the year 1000 until today. The development curve in fact approximates an exponential growth parabel towards infinite urban population size. The probable explanation behind this phenomena is a permanent need for higher productivity and rationalization in a situation of continuous social change and expansion. Centrality thus appears as a solution to a social organization problem.

The next level of urbanization displays a cyclical pattern of change. In European urbanization three "secular waves" have been identified, and they have also been connected to the larger waves of economic and demographic conjunctures. According to two English scholars, Paul M Hohenberg and Lynn Hollen Lees, Europe from the 14th centry on has gone through a sequence of successive rural and urban waves, which were mainly determined by variances in some basic economic/demographic indicators such as prices, rents and salaries. Jan de Vries agrees in general about the chronology of these cyclical movements, and he also links them to what he calls the process of urban integration in Europe. Europe became during the early modern period an integrated urban system.

This European integration is probably one explanation for the cyclical urbanization pattern that can be confirmed even in such a peripheral area as Sweden. The chronology of the Swedish urbanization waves are roughly the same as in the larger area of the northwest of Europe. On the top of a continouos urban expansion the cyclical movements are displayed phases of rising and falling paces of change. Thus during the 13th and 17th centuries there were urbanization booms followed by setbacks in the late medieval period and in the 18th centuries, respectively.

The third level of urbanization is the level of historical unicity. Swedish urbanization could not be understood without the context of, for example, the 17th century imperial experiment and its breakdown in the early 18th century. This level of change is strongly influenced by politics and power relations. However this is a power strongly conditioned by structural determinants. Anthony Giddens has spoken about the dualistic nature of power to grasp this immanent contradiction in social change. Thus the main powerful

actor in Swedish urbanization, the crown, was both strong and weak in its aspirations to control and change the urban system. But there is an undisputable fact that the policy of this restricted absolute power during the centuries *did* contribute to the development of the Swedish urban system, and this has to be explained at the level of historical actors and more or less arbitrary events.

Lars Edgren

Artisans, Working Class Culture, and Class Formation

'Culture' has in the past decade become an increasingly popular concept in Swedish historical research. In labor history too more attention has been given to cultural aspects. This paper attempts to assess this development and to offer some reflections on the interplay of culture and class formation among craft workers in the city of Malmö from 1850 to 1890.

The first part of the paper discusses some important contributions to Swedish labor history stressing the importance of culture (Mats Lindqvist, *Klasskamrater*, Birgitta Skarin Frykman, *Från yrkesfamilj till klassgemenskap*, and Lars Magnusson, *Den bråkiga kulturen*). While an attention to the subjective side of historical processes is clearly a positive contribution, these in many ways differing studies also suffer from some weaknesses. In Lindqvist's study culture is insufficiently rooted in material processes of change, and conflict takes place on a mental level. All studies pay insufficient attention to the ongoing processes surrounding the micro or local level which is under scrutiny. Thus all studies ought to have – according to the present author – a more comparative perspective, linking the local level to major societal changes. It is suggested that such an approach will be easier to achieve in practice if 'class' is retained as the integrating concept of labor history. This is not unproblematic, but will mean that material processes and conflict will remain at the heart of labor history. Culture ought to be studied in its relation to class formation.

The second part of the paper gives some preliminary results from an ongoing study of the craft workers in Malmö. It is argued that it is necessary to relate changing consciousness and differing interpretations of social reality to actual changes in the social relations.

After a few attempts in the 1870s, the first permanent trade unions in Malmö were formed in the 1880s, most of them in artisanal trades or in industries with skilled workers. These unions rapidly became socialist, and Malmö became an early center of Swedish Social Democracy. In the 1850s and 1860s liberal ideology had been dominant among craft workers in Malmö.

These rapid developments can only be understood against a background of changing economic and social relations in the crafts. At mid century a traditional structure still predominated with small work shops. Workers were either apprentices or young, unmarried journeymen who usually lived in the households of their masters. The journeymen's chances to become independent were fairly good. In such a situation it is understandable that middle class appeals to *education* as a solution to social problems, and to class harmony, was attractive to craft workers.

The guilds were abolished in 1847 and full freedom of trade was established in 1864. These political changes were accompanied by a deterioration of the old social system. The unity of masters and workers in the households disappeared. In 1880 few journeymen and almost half of the apprentices lived outside the households of their masters. At the same time more and more journeymen married, and had to accept to stay on as dependent workers. The social differences between artisans and other workers thus were diminished. This is one aspect of the formation of a working class in Malmö. The radicalization and growing independence of workers must be seen in this light.

The essay also draws attention to the importance of struggles over different attempts to define the borders between social groups, and to the tensions within different interpretations of society. The relations between the socialism of craft workers and the official socialism of the labor newspaper of Malmö, *Arbetet*, cannot have been quite harmonious. These tensions, but also what was attractive in the socialist message, are analyzed in the last part of the essay.