

# CARDIFF CORVEY: READING THE ROMANTIC TEXT

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### HIGH AND LOW

Some Remarks on the Reading Culture of the  
Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries

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*(Including a Supplementary Bibliography of  
English Translations (with Swedish equivalents) of August Lafontaine's Fiction,  
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## I

THERE are books we look upon with great respect and others we simply consider like any other commodity. Until now this dichotomy has been both fundamental and characteristic of the way the booktrade and the literary system has worked. This paper will examine the turn of the eighteenth century, when this dichotomy came about and will deal with three different components: *novels*, *circulating libraries*, and *readers*. My aim is to draw attention to some of the underlying factors that conditioned that split between high and low which came about at this time and also to pinpoint some of the actors that were involved in this process.<sup>1</sup> Novels will be represented by the works of the German author August Lafontaine, the libraries I shall refer to are the eighteenth-century circulating libraries in Stockholm, and the readers are the early Swedish Romanticists and two women readers with no particular literary connections. The attitudes, judgments and opinions of the Romanticists served as a ferment for the development of a split of the earlier unrestricted literary field into two: one high or élitist where the dominant position was won by means of a symbolic capital and the other low or popular where the economic capital decided who was to dominate. I shall proceed by presenting each of these three entities in order to clarify to what extent they were important to the establishment of the new popular or large field.<sup>2</sup> For alongside the canonization of a national literature and the establishment of a restricted literary field, where authors with a fully aesthetic approach to their work were engaged, another literary field, more commercialized because more dependent upon the judgment of the readers, came into being. Here quantity was decisive, because quantity equalled economic success.<sup>3</sup>

*August Lafontaine (1758–1831)*

August Heinrich Julius Lafontaine's literary production largely exceeds what one would have thought was possible for one man. Dirk Sangmeister, Lafontaine's bibliographer and biographer, counts sixty-three different titles, which is all the more overwhelming considering the number of volumes and pages: 50,815 pages in 146 volumes.<sup>4</sup> Lafontaine's energy seems unequalled: only in 1810 five novels in ten volumes were published.<sup>5</sup> If one also takes into account the number of pirated editions that flooded the bookmarket it becomes obvious that the sheer quantity of Lafontaine volumes on the market had a considerable effect on the growth of the reading public. The ordinary edition has been estimated at 1,500 copies.<sup>6</sup>

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1. See Eva D. Becker, *Der deutsche Roman um 1780* (Stuttgart, 1964; Germanistische Abhandlungen 5), p. 2.
  2. The concept 'field' of course comes from Pierre Bourdieu. I do not, however, use it in a strictly orthodox way. It is actually doubtful whether there was an autonomous literary field in Sweden during the eighteenth century. Literature was, rather, a part of a larger cultural field. Anyhow, I find it helpful for the understanding of the split between high and low to look upon these entities as constituents of two new fields corresponding to what Pierre Bourdieu calls the restricted field and the large field. (Pierre Bourdieu, *Les Règles de l'art. Genèse et structure du champ littéraire* (Paris, 1992). For helpful commentaries on Bourdieu's main concepts, see Patrice Bonnewitz, *Premières leçons sur la sociologie de P. Bourdieu* (Paris, 1998)).
  3. See Friedrich Schlegel: 'Ganz dicht neben einander existieren besonders jetzt zwey verschiedene Poesien neben einander, deren jede ihr eignes Publikum hat, und unbekümmert um die andre ihren Gang für sich geht. Sie nehmen nicht die geringste Notiz von einander, ausser, wenn sie zufällig auf einander treffen, durch gegenseitige Verachtung und Spott; oft nicht ohne heimlichen Neid über die Popularität der einen oder die Vornehmigkeit der andern' (*Friedrich Schlegel 1794–1802. Seine prosaischen Jugendschriften*, ed. J. Minor (Wien, 1882), vol. 1, p. 95. Quoted from Rakefet Shefy, 'The Eighteenth-Century German *Trivialroman* as Constructed by Literary History and Criticism', *Textelrevue de critique et de théorie littéraire* (1992), 197–217; p. 215). For commentary on the underlying reasons for the development of a propensity to consume, including books, see Colin Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism* (Oxford, 1987).
  4. See Dirk Sangmeister, *Bibliographie August Lafontaine* (Bielefeld, 1996; Bielefelder Schriften zu Linguistik und Literaturwissenschaft; Bibliographien zur deutschen Literaturgeschichte). Sangmeister has also published the only modern biography on Lafontaine, in which he analyses the literary activities and works of this once so cherished author: *August Lafontaine oder Die Vergänglichkeit des Erfolges. Leben und Werk eines Bestsellerautors der Spätaufklärung* (Tübingen, 1998; Hallesche Beiträge zur Europäischen Aufklärung 6).
  5. Sangmeister, *Bibliographie*, p. 12.
  6. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

Today readers and even literary scholars scarcely know of any other Lafontaine than the French fabulist of the *grand siècle*. This is by no means surprising. It is not my task to argue for a(n aesthetic) reevaluation of an author who was extremely time-bound. However, in order to understand the implications of that early media revolution which brought about the split between high and low at the turn of the eighteenth century the vicissitudes of Lafontaine's reputation are fundamental. They give us vital insights into the shaping of not only two literary fields but also of a reading culture which today has vanished. Lafontaine cannot be classified as a typical writer of his time—he was acting on too large a scale for that—nor is he totally exceptional. He had colleagues in the same trade, many of them successfully living by their pen. Lafontaine is precious to the literary historian, however, because he gives her the opportunity to study, as through a magnificent magnifying-glass, the effects of his writing on the booktrade, on readers and on the literary field. Therefore, I shall start by briefly discussing this pivotal author.



Lafontaine was born in 1758 in Brunswick, near Hannover.<sup>7</sup> In 1789, his first fictional work was published and from 1800 onwards he lived by his pen. Lafontaine had been to university, he had studied theology, and like so many poor students of the time he had ended up as a private tutor. Colonel Thadden, his employer, was happy to have found not only a teacher for his children but also an agreeable, intelligent conversation partner. During the military campaign against revolutionary France, Lafontaine accompanied Thadden; he was engaged as an army chaplain and stayed out with his regiment from 1792 to 1796. In the field he preached to and raised the morale of the soldiers. The war ended and Lafontaine returned home to Halle where his sermons drew crowds of churchgoers. But he reached still larger crowds with his fictional writing. He wrote a seemingly endless row of sentimental novels, historical novels and novels in contemporary setting. Among the early admirers of his literary work were the Prussian king and queen, Johann Gottfried Herder, and Christoph Martin Wieland. From the beginning of Lafontaine's career there was a large consensus about the value of his work.

Lafontaine's novels hardly reflect the society of the time, not even when he treated current themes. What he created was a sort of petty bourgeois utopia: in contemporary or in historical settings he pictured a patriarchal society free from conflicts, with a static hierarchy. Virtues like fidelity, obedience and contentment are praised. Love is the core of this utopia and has the redeeming capacity to heal the breaches that sometime come up, if only for the sake of creating an intrigue. Lafontaine was contemporary with the German *Spät-Aufklärung* and his ethos emanates from an exclusive combination of sentimentality and rationality. Among the novels once so much in demand across the whole of Europe, the most popular ones are worthy of closer consideration. *Klara du Plessis und Klairant. Eine Familiengeschichte französischer Emigrierten* (Berlin, 1795) is an example of how Lafontaine caught up with the current political development by treating the theme of French aristocrats forced to exile. *Leben und Thaten des Freiherrn Quinctius Heymeran von Flaming* (Berlin, 1795–6) shows how Lafontaine was able to exploit the new wave of *Ritterromane*, and at the same time could refer to and profit from the already firmly established popularity of *Siegfried von Lindenberg* (1779) by Johann Gottwerth Müller, the so-called 'Itzehoe-Müller', as he critically dealt with the controversial ideas about physiognomy.<sup>8</sup> *Leben eines armen Landpredigers* (1800–1) is another example of how Lafontaine managed to recycle current literary themes and plots. The allusion to Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield* is obvious already from the title. This way of profiting from earlier success stories was one important aspect of Lafontaine's own success. He never aspired to create originally conceived works and did not wait for an inspirational impetus: he was an extraordinarily hard-working man who made his living out

7. For further biographical details see Sangmeister, *August Lafontaine*. Early biographers, less reliable, are Johann Gottfried Gruber, *August Lafontaine's Leben und Wirken* (Halle, 1833) and Hilde Ishorst, *August Heinrich Julius Lafontaine, 1758–1831* (Berlin, 1935; Germanische Studien 162).

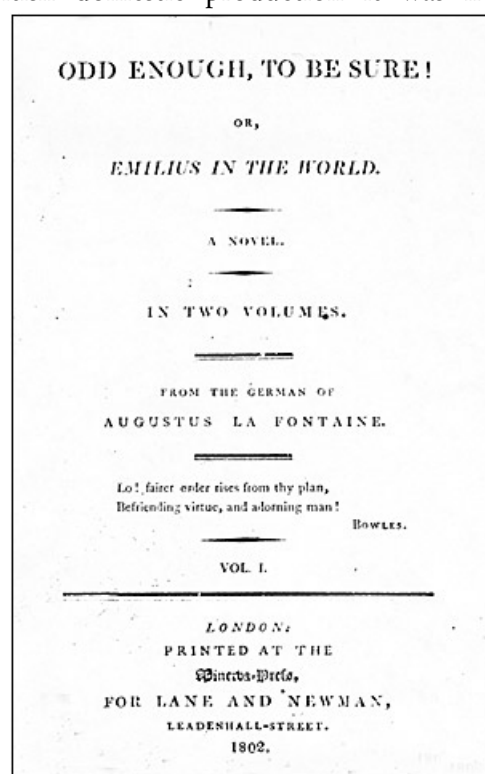
8. Sangmeister, *Bibliographie*, p. 12.

of writing. Furthermore, he made clever use of what was to be one of the fundamental characteristics of the popular literary field: the principle of repetition.

Lafontaine would not have had such a massive impact on so many European reading publics had it not been for the translations. The bibliography of Dirk Sangmeister accounts for translations into no less than fourteen different languages. It is evident that Lafontaine primarily appealed to the North European countries, those where literacy, thanks to the Protestant church, was most deeply implanted. The first translation was Danish and was published in 1794. Next came translations into Swedish and French in 1796, and in 1797 the first English translation was published: *Clara Duplessis, and Clairant: The History of a Family of French Emigrants* in three volumes was published by Longmans in London. That William Lane's Minerva Press became the principal publisher of Lafontaine's novels in English is hardly surprising. Of the twenty-three translations into English published between 1797 and 1813, eight came from Minerva: the character of the Lafontaine novels suited the Minerva Press excellently, and one could easily have expected an even more dominant Minerva participation.<sup>9</sup>

Certainly, twenty-three Lafontaine translations during a period of seventeen years was an important German contribution, but in relation to the total of British domestic production it was not overwhelming. The British market never experienced the same kind of invasion of Lafontaine novels as did, for example, the Danish and Swedish bookmarkets.<sup>10</sup> From 1794 to 1833 there were altogether sixty-seven different works published in Danish. It is obvious that the percentage of the whole production that was made up by works originating from the prolific author was far larger in such a small country as Denmark than in England or France.

Even more eager consumers of Lafontaine's fiction than the Danes, however, were the Swedes. In fact, more Lafontaine titles (sixty-nine) were translated into Swedish than into any other of thirteen languages. Swedish was only surpassed by French, but some of the French translations were actually published in Germany. In Sweden the first translation came in 1796, and even though the most intensive publishing period was right at the turn of the century (1799 nine titles, 1800 fifteen titles—counting titles published over spans of two or more years) there were only four years between 1796 and 1823 that were totally 'free' from Lafontaine publications (1797, 1811, 1812, 1814). The last publication in Sweden by this favourite author came in 1827; by then the reading public had discovered a new favourite: Sir Walter Scott.<sup>11</sup> I shall not expand on the reasons that conditioned this extraordinary interest in the German author, but wish to point to the lack of contemporary Swedish domestic prose fiction. From the readers there was a growing demand for entertaining literature, which



9. *The Rake and the Misanthrope* (Lafontaine's fourteenth novel) was published by Lane, Newman and Co (1804); it should properly be counted as a production of the Minerva Press although Sangmeister omits this detail (*Bibliographie*, p. 124).
10. The highest number of Lafontaine translations were Dutch. Seventy-one of Lafontaine's works were published between 1799 and 1815.
11. For further information on the position of Lafontaine in German circulating libraries during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries see Alberto Martino, *Die deutsche Leihbibliothek. Geschichte einer literarischen Institution, 1756–1914* (Wiesbaden, 1990); in Swedish eighteenth-century circulating libraries see Margareta Björkman, *Läsarnas nöje. Kommersiella länbibliotek i Stockholm 1793–1809* (Uppsala, 1992), with a summary in English; in Swedish nineteenth-century circulating libraries see Sven Melander, 'Författare och böcker i Stockholms länbibliotek 1816–1840 och E. T. A. Hoffmann i Sverige. Två studier i svensk prosalitteratur från 1800-talets förra del' (unpublished master dissertation, Department of Literature; Uppsala, 1965); and in nineteenth-century Denmark see Erland Munch-Pedersen, *Romanens århundrede. Studier i den mæseleste oversatte roman i Danmark 1800–1870*, 1–2 (København, 1974).

Lafontaine—and also his German colleagues—responded to: they filled the void of the domestic production. Swedish readers, eager to gain access to the world of fiction, had the choice between novels translated into Swedish or foreign novels in their original language. Lafontaine's novels, like many of the other German novels, were also read in French translations. This state of affairs made the presence of Lafontaine and his German colleagues on the Swedish bookmarket even more noticeable.

The high number of translations into so many different European languages support the former widely accepted but today sometimes contested idea of a reading revolution that started during the last decades of the eighteenth century.<sup>12</sup> The apparently unending number of translations meant that readers of different social backgrounds, nationalities, and mother tongues took part of the same reading materials at the same time. In fact, these readers, although they were hardly aware of it themselves, formed an early European community. Other questions that to mind when confronted with the figures of translation are: Why did Lafontaine never fully convince the English readers of his entertaining qualities? How does it come that the French, though in most respects belonging to that other Catholic part of Europe, were so quick to translate Lafontaine fiction thus giving their readers access to a Lafontaine universe?

But the 'phenomenon' of Lafontaine must also be related to the important growth of the contemporary bookmarket. Lafontaine himself supplied this market with his works. At the same time, however, there was a parallel growth of distributors—more books were distributed by more booksellers—and of readers, who were from then on also recruited from new social groups. The community of readers extended into lower-middle social ranks. This led to a breakthrough for light reading: it was the one of the first manifestations of that leisure civilization, which later became so typical of the societies of the western hemisphere.

### *Circulating Libraries*

The booksellers alone, however, did not swallow the large production: the great quantities of books called for new and efficient systems of distribution. A new institution for distribution of books was established in all those countries where reading had become—if not a necessity of life—at least a highly favoured pastime. The circulating libraries very soon turned into establishments with a suitable capacity for delivering books to readers demanding new entertainment. Circulating libraries meant a new concept for the distribution of books. These were commercial enterprises which aimed at making a profit by lending books for a fee and they were open to the public. In fact, the study of circulating libraries—the institution in itself and their stocks—offers unequalled opportunities to understand the vanished reading culture of the turn of the eighteenth century. These libraries occupy a key position within the literary system of the time. Before public libraries, they offered access to books to that expanding group of readers of fiction. Being commercial, the libraries had to supply the books their borrowers asked for, at least in the long run.

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12. First to declare the revolution in reading habits was Rolf Engelsing, 'Die Perioden der Lese-geschichte in der Neuzeit. Das statistische Ausmass und die soziokulturelle Bedeutung der Lektüre' (*Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens*, Bd X (Frankfurt am Main, 1970), cols. 945–1002); and *Der Bürger als Leser. Lesergeschichte in Deutschland 1500–1800* (Stuttgart, 1974). Engelsing invented the concepts 'intensive' and 'extensive' reading. Intensive reading was the manner of reading that was used during a period when books were still scarce, and non-professional reading almost exclusively meant reading devotional books. The reader came back to the same text and his/her reading became meditative. Extensive reading presupposes access to larger quantities of books which can be read for sheer pleasure. As the production of such books grew rapidly during the last decades of the eighteenth century this made it possible to larger groups of people to change their reading habits in order to read as much as possible. The facts of a growing production of light literature and the development of more efficient ways of distribution cannot be denied. But what has been questioned is whether the transition from intensive into extensive reading was as decisive as has sometimes been argued. Robert Darnton has discussed this problem in two important articles: 'First Steps Toward a History of Reading' (*The Kiss of Lamourette. Reflections in Cultural History* (London and New York, 1990), pp. 154–87) and 'Rousseau and his Readers' (*The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (London, 1984), pp. 215–56). He argues that intensive reading was sometimes practised also by those who read novels during the last decades of the eighteenth century. There are famous examples of intensive reading of novels: *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* were read over and over again.

The first Swedish circulating library was founded in 1757.<sup>13</sup> The extant catalogues reveal a library which offered a wide variety of genres. There were learned books, religious books, manuals and novels; this early library can be called encyclopaedic. This was still the case with the library that was set up by the academic bookseller Magnus Swederus in 1784. Unfortunately extant loan registers are almost non-existent, so that it is hard to tell with absolute certainty what was actually loaned out. However, in my doctoral thesis, *Läsarnas nöje. Kommersiella lånbibliotek i Stockholm 1783–1809* (1992; 'The Joy of Reading'), I have made as much as possible out of the extant catalogues from the Stockholm libraries of the late eighteenth century. By examining the catalogues, it has been possible to discern the changing character of these libraries. Proprietors of the circulating libraries soon abandoned an original ambition to supply all sorts of books and specialized in light literature: novels, travel literature, memoirs and biographies. In the library owned and run by Friedrich August Cleve, also a teacher and cantor at the German grammar school in Stockholm, entertaining literature prevailed by 1790. One of the earliest mentions of Lafontaine's name in Sweden can be traced to Cleve's library: in a catalogue from 1793 there is an entry for a German magazine, *Zeitschrift für Gattinnen, Mütter und Thöchter*, which was edited by the famous Dr Bahrtdt (1740–92).<sup>14</sup> There it was announced, in German, that Lafontaine was to take over the magazine. Judging from the wording, it is obvious that the name of Lafontaine was supposed to have an even greater appeal than that of Dr Bahrtdt.<sup>15</sup> Soon, however, Lafontaine's prose narratives were for hire in Mr Cleve's library, first in German editions and French translations. A decade later the existence of Swedish translations made Lafontaine's name even more predominant in the catalogues of the circulating libraries. Carl Conrad Behn's library offered no less than 148 volumes of Lafontaine's publications in his Swedish catalogue dating from the first years of the nineteenth century.<sup>16</sup> All of the titles were available in at least duplicate copies, some of them had been quintupled—a sure indicator of popularity among the borrowers.

### Readers

August Lafontaine might thus have been the first modern fiction author. His activity as an extremely prolific author had repercussions on the book trade and on the reception by readers. It would be false to claim a linear cause-effect process with the author/producer as a starting point: I would rather stress the closely interrelated connections, going both back and forth, between these instances. It is now worth turning to the readers themselves. Memoirs from this period often give evidence of reading of novels and if authors are named at all one can be almost certain of coming across the name of Lafontaine. I mentioned above that when Lafontaine's first narratives appeared they were received favourably by a practically unanimous reading public. Among those who eagerly read his novels were the Swedish Romanticists, and they devoured them while young. As they belonged to a generation born during the last decades of the eighteenth century these novels belonged to their youth: the books had at one time roused their literary appetites. Their memoirs and letters bear witness of enthusiastic and excited reading of such authors as Lafontaine, Kotzebue, and Spiess; but the constitution of a new Romantic concept of an autonomous literature also meant that they dissociated themselves from those novels. According to their ideals literature sprang from the original creation by individuals to whom literature was a manifestation of art.<sup>17</sup>

13. See Björkman, *Läsarnas nöje*.

14. A biography in English has been written by Sten G. Flygt, *The Notorious Dr Bahrtdt* (Nashville, 1963). See also Gerhard Sauder and Christoph Weiss, Hrsg., *Carl Friedrich Bahrtdt: 1740–1792* (St Ingbert, 1992; Saarbrücker Beiträge zur Literaturwissenschaft 34).

15. [Friedrich August Cleve], *No 23, Verzeichniss Deutscher, Französischer u. Englischer Lesebücher, welche von Mir für eine geringe Abgabe ausgeliehen werden* (Stockholm, 1793), nos. 6162–3.

16. [Carl Conrad Behn], *Catalog på Carl Conrad Behns Lån-Bibliothek [...]* (Stockholm, 1801).

17. See Margareta Björkman, 'August Lafontaine and his Swedish readers', *Transactions of the Ninth International Congress on the Enlightenment*, Münster 23–9 July 1995 (Oxford, 1996; Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century 346–8), pp. 752–5.

These young men met at the University of Uppsala to pursue their studies when Swedish literature was at an interregnum. Most of the Gustavian poets had died.<sup>18</sup> Those who still survived were particularly odious to the young because of their conservatism in literary matters. Theirs had been a period of strict classicism: genres, metres and formalities set strict limits to literary creation. The new generation reacted violently against all sorts of outer restraint and planned for what was to become known as a Romantic upheaval. When one of the young members of their group bought the Academic printer's shop, they were in possession of the most strategic of all arms, when it comes to making literature. They henceforward became independent of the arbitrariness of outside publishers, and the idealistic aim to raise literature from the sphere of daily humdrum was pursued by every means available, which meant that all sorts of trivial schemes had to be considered.<sup>19</sup>

In 1818 one of the Romanticists, Lorenzo Hammarsköld (1785–1827), wrote a history of Swedish literature, in which he gave his view on the influence of Lafontaine on the Swedish reading public. According to Hammarsköld the following vital change had taken place: Kant had first inspired young Swedish students to study German, with the Swedish translator of Kotzebue novels, Gabriel Eurén, paving the way for Lafontaine. In the books of the German novelists the readers had imbibed the demagogic ideals proclaimed by the French Jacobins, where all of high rank were vicious and 'virtuous thinking and acting could be sought only within those circles to which corporals and foresters belong'. The leap from Kant to Kotzebue and Lafontaine may seem vertiginous, but in fact the way Hammarsköld connected philosophy and entertaining reading indicates that in that past he referred to there had been only one field where philosophers and novelists competed for a dominant position. However, when Hammarsköld wrote his history, the Romanticists were already victorious; they had their own press and they took advantage of the situation and wrote the history of Swedish literature. Now they were merciless when they looked back on the reading they had cherished during their first youth. The Swedish Romanticists followed their German brothers in condemning the novels of their youth. The general attack on Lafontaine, launched by August Schlegel in the *Athenäum* of 1798, was published in Swedish translation in one of the Romantic periodicals in 1811.<sup>20</sup>

One outcome of the victorious Romantic concept of literature was thus the splitting of the literary field into two: one high, élitist sphere where the national canon was singled out, where literature and literariness were discussed by members who never really bothered to make their arguments known beyond their own circles. Their field became a restricted one. What had been discarded from the élitist field then made up another field: low, popular for large scale production, where non-professional readers decided the hierarchy, and their preferences were quite obvious—novels. But as there were not yet any Swedish novelists around, they read translations and often originals in German and French.

What happened during the first decades of the nineteenth century was not exclusively the effect of the questioning by the Romanticists. It is a well-known fact that the status of the novel has been the subject of many a heated debate during the whole of the eighteenth century. But the imperative claims raised by the Romanticists for aesthetical originality gave a new turn to the discussion; novels and other genres of light literature were, as mentioned above, guided by a principle of repetition. And the majority of those who were eager readers of light literature preferred recognition to surprise; they were mainly indifferent to new subject-matters, new techniques, and they were also mostly indifferent to the aesthetics of their reading.

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18. The Gustavian era has its name after Gustavus III who reigned 1771–92, and his son Gustavus IV Adolphus whose reign came to an end in 1809. In 1792, Gustavus III, a patron of the arts who had become an enlightened despot, was shot. Gustavus III had encouraged both theatre, opera and literature in Swedish. His son, who was overthrown in a *coup d'état*, manifested no interest at all in cultural issues. So, strictly speaking, the Gustavian era has two opposite sides: the first great period when Swedish literature had important productive poets followed by a time of barrenness usually called the iron years, when, nevertheless, one of the most outstanding of the Gustavian poets, Carl Gustaf Leopold, still defended his position as the leading personality in the literary field. Around him there were other minor poets. They either already had their seat in or aspired to the Swedish Academy.

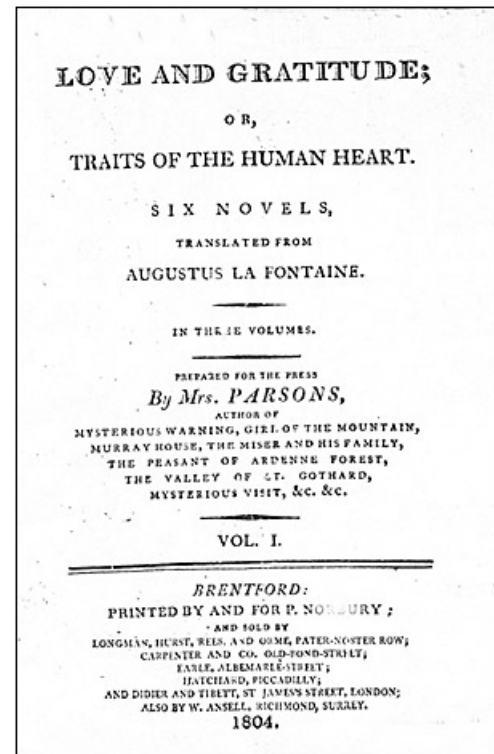
19. See Petra Söderlund, 'Romantik och förnuft. V. F. Palmblads förlagsverksamhet 1810–1830', forthcoming doctoral thesis (preliminary date May 2000), Department of Literature, Uppsala University.

20. See *Polyfem* 9 (1811).

Märta Helena Reenstierna (1753–1841) kept a diary between 1793 and 1839 where she annotated her reading.<sup>21</sup> She lived with her husband, a captain twenty years older than her, in a manor house just outside Stockholm. She gave birth to seven children of whom only one survived to adult age. The family belonged to the Swedish nobility, lived on the revenues of the agriculture and led a simple and rustic life on their estate, where they continually received friends and relatives on visit from Stockholm. Mrs Reenstierna was forty years old when she started to write down her daily annotations. Her living conditions allowed her to organize her time which meant that she was free to read when she wanted to do so. Her sex and her social belonging made her a typical representative of these non-professional readers, who realized that reading could be for pleasure. In 1798 she read her first Lafontaine novel, the newly published *Skämta icke med kärleken* ('Don't Play with Love'). She noted: '[a]n amusing novel' (9 Sep 1798). (Her annotations are always very matter of fact.) She read *Famillen von Halden*, which she had borrowed from a bookseller. Her enthusiasm was great enough to infuse her diary: she wrote that she had read 'in the splendidly beautiful piece *Famillen von Halden*, which, in the highest possible degree was written according to my liking' (29 Jan 1801). From then on, her reading of Lafontaine reached its highest peak during the first years of the nineteenth century: in 1801 she read six different novels by Lafontaine, in 1802 four, in 1803 only one. Although she had fairly solid knowledge of French and German, she preferred to read these novels in their Swedish translations. The frequency of her reading of Lafontaine's novels accurately reflects the publishing speed. It is obvious that she wanted to read what was new and also that she managed to keep pace with the publishers. It is also evident that Mrs Reenstierna made reading a source for recreation. Reading could thus be used as a pretext for withdrawing for a while from the tiresome chores of the household work. It is interesting to see that Mrs Reenstierna did not read any of the canonized literature—neither from the early Gustavian period nor from Romanticism. Although she had been sent to school, learnt languages, and as a young girl of the upper circles of society had been received as a member of exclusive fellowships, she never seemed to aspire to be a 'literary' person. She made reading her favourite pastime and chose her books from the popular range of the lending shelves of her bookseller. There was another genre, however, apart from the light literature, which she kept reading all her life. That was, of course, religious literature: she studied catechisms and devotional manuals with increasingly intensive attention towards the end of her life.

There are interesting observations about intensive and extensive reading that can be made from Mrs Reenstierna's diary. When she started *Famillen von Halden* she did not have all the volumes at hand. While waiting for the last volumes to arrive, she began rereading the first two parts before she got hold of the continuation thus practising intensive and extensive reading at the same time (5 Feb 1801).

In Denmark a young Anna Christine Drewsen (b. 1776), married at the age of fifteen to a man of forty-seven, wrote down what books she read between 1796–1802.<sup>22</sup> She was then in her early twenties. Her rate of reading exceeds that of Mrs Reenstierna but follows the same order of



21 See Sara Rönn, *Årstafrun och hennes böcker*, Uppsala 1998 (Litteratur och samhälle, 33:1). A selection of the diary has been published: Märta Helena Reenstierna, *Årstadagboken. Journaler från åren 1793–1839*, ed. Sigurd Erixon, Arvid Stålhane, and Sigurd Wallin, selection and explanations Gunnar Broman, 1–3 (1946–53; Stockholm, 1993). The manuscripts are at Nordiska museets arkiv och bibliotek, Stockholm.

22. 'Kvindælæsning for hundrede Aar siden. Af Anna Chr. Dor. Drewsens Dagbok', *Vor ungdom. Tidsskrift for Opdragelse og Undervisning* (1896; 5 hefte), pp. 563–89.



progress. Mrs Drewsen also favoured the same genres of light literature, and like Mrs Reenstierna she was a devoted fan of Lafontaine. Of all the books she read between 1796 and 1801, twenty-one were works by Lafontaine. There was practically no canonized literature among her reading: although some Schiller plays were read, and in 1801 it is possible to trace a tentative interest in Danish Romanticism with representatives like Oehlenschläger and Rahbek. No religious books were noted, presumably because Mrs Drewsen noted books she had read, not books she had read into.

These are but two examples of female reading; however the results of other studies, such as for instance Erich Schön's *Der Verlust der Sinnlichkeit oder Die Verwandlungen des Lesers. Mentalitätswandel um 1800* (Stuttgart, 1987), support the view of female readers as addicted to reading for pleasure. As such they inhabited the large popular field and very seldom dared to venture into that other high sphere of literature.<sup>23</sup>

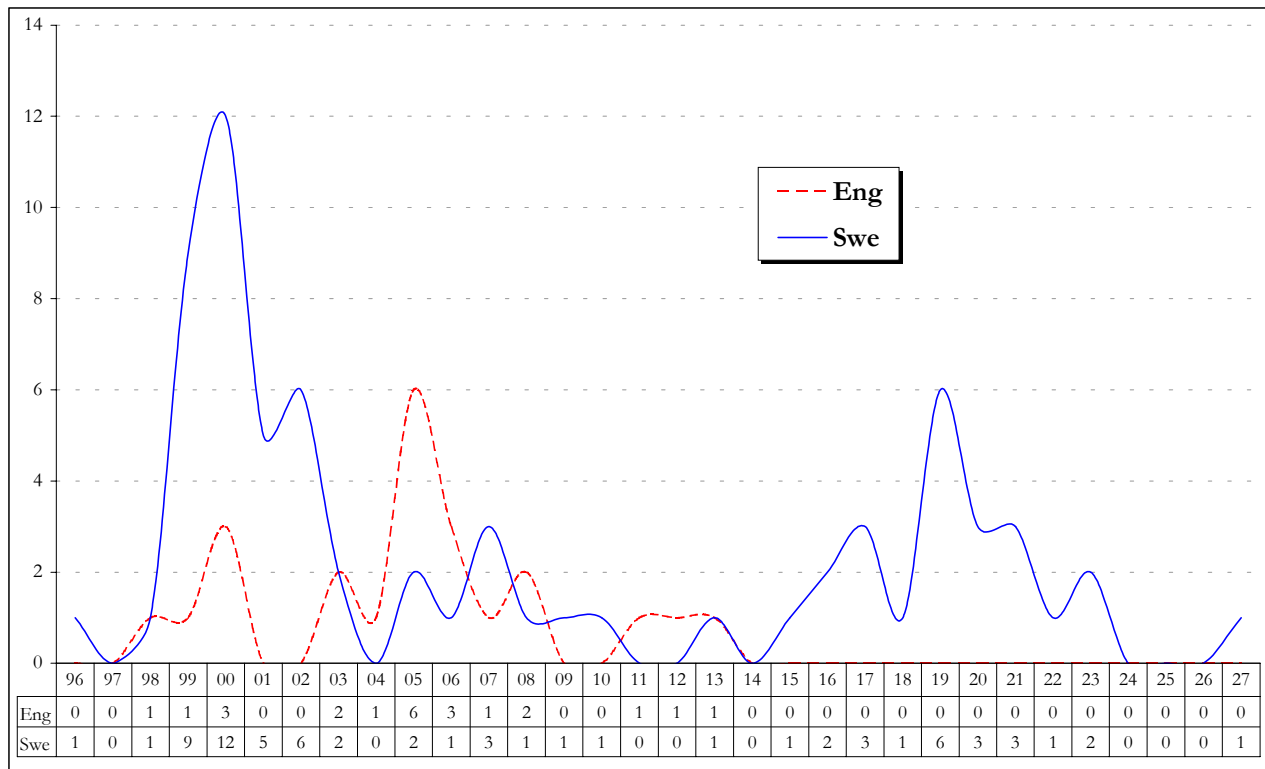
My sketches of Lafontaine, circulating libraries and readers around 1800 can only give hints of how three domains, essential for the establishment of the reading culture, converged. Novels (and related genres) were at the centre, the circulating libraries became efficient distributors of light literature, and the greatest consumers of these genres were the non-professional readers: namely, young people and women.



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23. For further investigation of actual reading habits it is worth examining a publication of inventories after death where books are mentioned: Henrik Grönroos and Ann-Charlotte Nyman, *Boken i Finland. Bokbeståndet hos borgerskap, hantverkare och lägre sociala grupper i Finlands städer enligt städernas bouppteckningar 1656–1809* (Helsingfors, 1996). Other sources are publications of catalogues of important libraries in Sweden and Finland such as Magnus Björkenheim, *Äldre fransk litteratur på herrgårdar i Finland* (Helsingfors, 1929); and E. G. Lilljebjörn (ed.), *Katalog öfver Leufsta bruks gamla fideikommissbibliotek* (Uppsala, 1907).

FIG 1. ENGLISH &amp; SWEDISH TRANSLATIONS OF LAFONTAINE'S FICTION, 1796–1827



In the case of Swedish translations, some of the publication dates for titles span two or more imprint years: for the purposes of this chart, they are included in the yearly total for the earliest date of publication for the first volumes. These spreads occur in the following spans (no. of such titles given in parentheses): 1799–1800 (3) = 1799; 1800–1 (3), 1800–7 (1), 1800–8 (1) = 1800; 1801–2 (2) = 1801; 1802–3 (1) = 1802; 1803–4 (1) = 1803; 1805–6 (2) = 1805; 1815–16 (1) = 1815; 1816–17 (2) = 1816; 1817–18 (1), 1817–19 (1) = 1817; 1818–21 (1) = 1818; 1820–2 (1) = 1820. For English translations, data has been collected from the forthcoming *Bibliography of Fiction Published in the British Isles, 1770–1830*, general editors Peter Garside, James Raven, and Rainer Schöwerling (Oxford, forthcoming; 2 vols.). The source for Swedish translations is Dirk Sangmeister, *Bibliographie August Lafontaine* (Bielefeld, 1996; Bielefelder Schriften zu Linguistik und Literaturwissenschaft 7).

## II

AUGUST LAFONTAINE, 1758–1831:

## BIBLIOGRAPHY OF ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS, WITH SWEDISH EQUIVALENTS

Below is a chronological listing of English translations of the fiction published by August Lafontaine, to which are appended any details of Swedish translations when possible. Entries are prefixed with ‘E:’ for information about English translations, and with ‘S:’ for Swedish versions (whenever located). Details include full title, year of publication, publisher, and for English translations details in brackets of holdings listed in the *Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Short Title Catalogues* [ESTC/NSTC]. The presence of copies in the Corvey Microfiche Edition (CME) is also indicated when possible. The letters BI before a list of holding libraries denotes that they are to be found in Britain and Ireland, and similarly the letters NA denote libraries in North America. For the purpose of consistency the abbreviations for holding libraries are the same as those used in the ESTC, even when the source of the holding is the NSTC. Also note that only principal holding libraries listed in the ESTC and NSTC are given below—for a comprehensive listing of other depositories, please consult the catalogues as appropriate. Where the edition which provides the entry does not appear in the ESTC or NSTC, this will be denoted by a preceding ‘x’ (e.g. xESTC).

As far as Swedish translations of Lafontaine’s work are concerned, the degree of interest in particular titles by Lafontaine was virtually identical to that in Britain. The works listed below can be taken as the ‘bestsellers’ of the Lafontaine canon, although the enthusiasm of the Swedish market was more intense and more translations were made than in the British Isles. The source for details of Swedish translations is the *SB17 (Svensk bibliografi 1700-1829)*, which serves as the national bibliography of Sweden for 1700–1829.

Information about the source text appears at the end of each entry, preceded by an asterisk.

1. E: *Clara Duplessis, and Clairant: The History of a Family of French Emigrants. Translated from the German. In Three Volumes.* (London: Printed for T. N. Longman, 1797). 3 vols. 12mo. [ESTC t166559 (BI C, L; NA CLU-S/C, ViU)].  
S: *Clara du Plessis och Clairant. Tvenne älskande emigranterns historia. Af August Lafontaine. Öfversättning af Pär Wahlström.* (Stockholm: C.F. Marquard, 1800–1). 3 vols. 8vo.  
\* Trans. of *Klara du Plessis und Klairant* (Berlin, 1794).
2. E: *Saint Julien; or, Memoirs of a Father. By Augustus la Fontaine. Translated from the German.* (London: Printed for J. Bell, 1798). 1 vol. 12mo. [ESTC t101310 (BI L, O; NA CLU-S/C, IU)].  
S: *Saint Julien och hans familie; roman af Aug. La Fontaine. Öfversättning.* (Strengnäs: A. J. Segerstedt, 1799–1800). 3 vols. 8vo.  
\* Trans. of *Familie Saint Julien*, vol. 3 of *Familiengeschichten* (Berlin, 1797–1804; 11 vols.).
3. E: *The Family of Halden: A Novel. By Augustus la Fontaine. Translated from the German.* (London: Printed for J. Bell, 1799). 4 vols. 12mo. [ESTC t099903 (BI C, L; NA IU, ViU)].  
S: *Familien von Halden. Roman af Aug. La Fontaine. Öfversättning.* (Stockholm: A. Zetterberg, 1799–1800). 6 vols. 8vo.  
\* Trans. of ‘Familie von Halden’, 1st published as vols. 1 and 2 of *Familiengeschichten* (Berlin, 1797–1804; 6 vols.).
4. E: *The Man of Nature or Nature and Love from the German of Miltenberg by William Wennington. (After the Edition Bauer 1797) with Notes Illustrative Comparative by the Translator.* (London: Printed for the Translator, for Joseph Gerold, in Vienna, 1799). 1 vol. 8vo. [ESTC t100448 (BI C, L; NA CSmH)].  
S: *Naturmänniskan. Af August Lafontaine. Öfversättning.* (Linköping: D. G. Björn, 1799–1800). 4 vols. 8vo.  
\* Trans. of *Naturmensch* (Halle, 1792).

5. E: *Romulus, a Tale of Ancient Times, Translated from the German of Augustus Lafontaine, by the Rev. P. Will, Minister of the German Congregation in the Savoy.* ([London]: Printed for R. Phillips, by T. Adlard, and T. Gillet, [1799]). 3 vols. 12mo. [ESTC t200762 (BI L; NA CLU-S/C)].  
S: *Romulus. Af August Lafontaine. Öfversättning af S.M.* (Stockholm: C. Deleen and J. G. Forsgren, 1800–1). 2 vols. 8vo.  
\* Trans. of vol. 2 of *Sagen aus dem Alterthume* (Berlin, 1799). Eng. trans. by Peter Will.
6. E: *Odd Enough, to Be Sure! Or, Emilius in the World. A Novel. In Two Volumes. From the German of Augustus la Fontaine.* (London: Printed at the Minerva-Press, for Lane and Newman, 1802). 2 vols. 12mo. [Corvey; CME 3-628-47470-1; NSTC L161 (BI L)].  
S: *Den besynnerlige. Af Aug. Lafontaine. Öfversättning.* (Strengnäs: A. J. Segerstedt, 1802). 7 vols. 8vo.  
\* Trans. of *Der Sonderling; ein Gemälde des menschlichen Herzens* (Vienna and Prague, 1799). Eng. trans. by John Hemet.
7. E: *The Reprobate. A Novel. In Two Volumes. Translated by the Author of the Wife and the Mistress, &c. The Original by Augustus la Fontaine.* (London: Printed at the Minerva-Press, for Lane and Newman, 1802). 2 vols. 12mo. [NSTC L159 (BI L)].  
S: *Carl Engelmans dagbok, utgifven af August Lafontaine. Öfversättning.* (Stockholm: C. F. Marquard, 1801). 2 vols. 8vo.  
\* Trans. of *Carl Engelmanns Tagebuch* (Berlin, 1800). Eng. trans., by Mary Charlton, from French trans. entitled *Tableaux de famille, ou journal de Charles Engelmann* (Paris, 1801).
8. E: *The Village Pastor and His Children. A Novel. In Four Volumes. From the German of Augustus la Fontaine.* (London: Printed at the Minerva-Press, for Lane and, 1803). 4 vols. 12mo. [NSTC L152 (BI L)].  
S: *Den fattige landtprästen. Famille-målning af Aug. La Fontaine. Öfversättning.* (Stockholm: A. Zetterberg, 1801–2). 8 vols. 8vo.  
\* Trans. of *Leben eines armen Landpredigers* (Berlin, 1802).
9. E: *Baron de Fleming; or, the Rage of Nobility.* (London: Lane, Newman, and Co., 1804). 3 vols. 12mo. 12s. [xNSTC (no copy located)].  
S: *Quinctius Heymeran von Flaming; af August Lafontaine. Öfversättning af A. Wistrand.* (Stockholm, 1800–8). 8 vols. 8vo.  
\* Trans. of *Leben und Thaten des Freiherrn Quinctius Heymeran von Flaming* (Berlin, 1795–6).
10. E: *Baron de Fleming, the Son; or the Rage of Systems. A Novel. In Three Volumes. From the German of Augustus la Fontaine.* (London: Printed at the Minerva-Press, for Lane, Newman, and Co., 1804). 3 vols. 12mo. [NSTC L154 (BI L)].  
S: \_\_\_\_\_.  
\* Trans. of *Leben und Thaten des Freiherrn Quinctius Heymeran von Flaming* (Berlin, 1795–6). The *English Catalogue of Books and Edinburgh Review* 4 (July 1804), 498 both describe this title as ‘a continuation’ of *Baron de Fleming* (see entry 9, above).
11. E: *Henrietta Bellmann: or, the New Family Picture. A Novel. By Augustus la Fontaine. In Two Volumes.* (London: Printed for Vernor and Hood in the Poultry, 1804. By T. Gillet). 2 vols. 12mo. [NSTC L151 (BI L)].  
S: *Henriette Bellmann. En målning af ädla hjertan. Af Aug. Lafontaine. Öfversättning af N. Nordqvist.* (Stockholm: C. F. Marquard, 1802–3). 6 vols. 8vo.  
\* Trans. of *Henriette Bellmann* (Berlin, 1802).

12. E: *Lobenstein Village. A Novel. In Four Volumes. Translated by Mrs. Meeke, from the French of Augustus la Fontaine.* (London: Printed at the Minerva-Press, for Lane, Newman, and Co., 1804). 4 vols. 12 mo. [NSTC L162 (BI L)].  
S: *Theodor. Roman af August Lafontaine. Öfversättning.* (Stockholm: A. J. Nordström, 1801–2). 4 vols. 8vo.  
\* Trans. of *Theodor, oder Kultur und Humanität* (Berlin, 1802). Eng. trans., by Mary Meeke, from French trans. entitled *Le Village de Lobenstein, ou le nouvel enfant* (Geneva and Paris, 1802).
13. E: *Love and Gratitude; or, Traits of the Human Heart. Six Novels, Translated from Augustus la Fontaine. In Three Volumes. Prepared for the Press by Mrs. Parsons, Author of Mysterious Warning, Girl of the Mountain, Murray House, The Miser and His Family, The Peasant of Ardenne Forest, The Valley of St. Gothard, Mysterious Visit, &c. &c.* (Brentford: Printed by and for P. Norbury; and Sold by Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme; Carpenter and Co.; Earle; Hatchard; and Didier and Tibett, London; also by W. Ansell, Richmond, Surrey, 1804). 3 vols. 12mo. [Corvey; CME 3-628-48396-4; NSTC L145 (BI L, O)].  
S: [Probably] *Smärre romaner af August Lafontaine. Öfversättning.* (Stockholm: A. J. Nordström, 1801). 8vo.  
\* Trans. of *Liebe und Dankbarkeit* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1799); the other five novels mentioned in the title-page of the English edn. are translated from *Die Geralt der Liebe* (Berlin, 1791–4). Eng. trans. by Eliza Parsons.
14. E: *The Rake and the Misanthrope. A Novel. In Two Volumes. From the German of Augustus la Fontaine.* (London: Printed at the Minerva-Press, for Lane, Newman, and Co., 1804). 2 vols. 12mo. [xNSTC].  
S: \_\_\_\_\_.  
\* German original not discovered. Eng. trans. by Mary Charlton.
15. E: *Dolgorucki and Menzikof. A Russian Tale. In Two Volumes. From the German of Augustus la Fontaine.* (London: Printed at the Minerva-Press, for Lane, Newman, and Co., 1805). 2 vols. 12mo. [NSTC L148 (BI L)].  
S: *Feodor och Maria, eller Troheten i döden, af A. Lafontaine. Öfversättning af A. Wiborg* (Stockholm: C. F. Marquard, 1803). 2 vols. 8vo.  
\* Trans. of *Fedor und Marie, oder Treue bis zum Tode* (Berlin, 1802).
16. E: *Herman and Emilia. From the German of Augustus la Fontaine.* (London: Lane, Newman, and Co., 1805). 4 vols. [xNSTC (no copy located)].  
S: *Herrman von Lange. Roman af August Lafontaine. Öfversättning.* (Stockholm, 1800–7). 7 vols. 8vo.  
\* Trans. of *Herrmann Lange* (Berlin, 1799). Eng. trans. from French trans. entitled *Herrmann et Emilie, traduit de l'allemande* (Paris, 1802).
17. E: *Rodolphus of Werdenberg. Translated from the German of La Fontaine. In Two Volumes.* (London: Printed by D. N. Shury; for J. F. Hughes, 1805). 2 vols. 12 mo. [NSTC L160 (BI L)].  
S: *Rudolf von Werdenberg, en riddare-historia från Helvetiens revolutionstid. Af August Lafontaine. Öfversatt efter sista och förbättrade upplagan.* (Stockholm: H. A. Nordström, 1800–1). 2 vols. 8vo.  
\* Trans. of *Rudolph von Werdenberg* (Berlin, 1793). For an alternative, professedly far more complete Eng. version of the German source title, see *The Monk of Dissentis* (entry 20, below).
18. E: *The Village of Friedewalde: Or, the Enthusiast. A Novel. Translated from the Original German of Augustus Lafontaine, by J. Powell. In Three Volumes.* (London: Printed for J. F. Hughes, by R. Wilks, 1806). 3 vols. 12 mo. [NSTC L155 (BI L)].  
S: *Nålsögat, eller: Adolph och Louise. Af August Lafontaine. Öfversättning af A. Wistrand.* (Stockholm: C. Deleen and J. G. Forsgren, 1800). 2 vols. 8vo.  
\* Trans. by James Powell. The *British Library Catalogue* lists as a trans. of *Das Nadelöhr, oder die Schwärmerei*; but no further information concerning an original source title has been discovered. Eng. trans. by James Powell.

19. E: *Edward and Annette. A Moral Tale, from the German, of A. Lafontaine. With a Frontispiece.* (London: Printed for J. F. Weise, 1807). 1 vol (illustrated). 12 mo. [NSTC L147 (BI L)].  
S: \_\_\_\_\_.  
\* German original not discovered.
20. E: *The Monk of Dissentis: A Romance. Founded on the Revolutions of Switzerland, in the 13th and 14th Centuries. Translated from the Original German of Augustus Lafontaine. By J. Powell. In Three Volumes.* (London: Printed by J. G. Barnard, for B. Crosby and Co., 1807). 3 vols. 12 mo. [xNSTC].  
S: See entry 17, above.  
\* Eng. trans., by James Powell, of *Rudolph von Werdenberg* (Berlin, 1793).
21. E: *Family Quarrels. A Novel. In Three Volumes. By Augustus Lafontaine, Author of "Lobenstein Village," "The Rake and the Misanthrope." "Baron de Fleming," "Hermann and Emilia," "Rodolphus of Werdenburgh," "Saint Julien," &c. &c.* (London: Printed and Published by John Dean: Sold by All Booksellers, 1811). 3 vols. 12 mo. [NSTC L150 (BI L)].  
S: *Huset Bärburg, eller Famille-tvisten. Af Aug. Lafontaine. Öfversättning af J. Wetterbergh.* (Stockholm: P. Sohm, 1807). 3 vols. 8vo.  
\* Trans. of *Das Haus Barburg, oder der Familienzwist* (Berlin, 1805). The present title of the Eng. trans. more closely matches *Les querelles de familles* (Paris, 1809), itself from the German.
22. E: *Raphael; or Peaceful Life. In Two Volumes. Translated from the German of Augustus Lafontaine. By Mrs. Green. Author of The Royal Exile; Romance Readers and Romance Writers; Reformist; Private History of the Court of England &c. &c.* (London: Printed by T. Wallis, for James Taylor, and Co.; and Sold by All Booksellers, 1812). 2 vols. 12 mo. [NSTC L157 (BI L)].  
S: \_\_\_\_\_.  
\* Eng trans., by Mrs Sarah Green, of *Raphael, oder das stille Leben* (Halle and Leipzig, 1809).
23. E: *Age and Youth; or, the Families of Abenstedt. A Novel. In Four Volumes. From the German of La Fontaine, Author of The Family of Halden; The Reprobate; Hermann and Emilia; Dolgorucki and Menzikoff, &c.* (London: Printed at the Minerva-Press, for A. K. Newman and Co., 1813). 4 vols. 12mo. [NSTC L146 (BI L)].  
S: \_\_\_\_\_.  
\* German original not discovered.
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## CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS

Margareta Björkman (PhD, Uppsala, Sweden, docent Uppsala) is a Researcher in the Department of Literature at Uppsala University. A 'dix-huitémiste', her research focuses on the material aspects of the eighteenth century Swedish publishing world: *Lasarnas nöje. Kommersiella lånbibliotek i Stockholm 1783–1809* ['The Joy of Reading'] (Uppsala, 1992) examines the circulating libraries of Stockholm during the late eighteenth century.

Other published works include a study of two translations of novels by Restif de la Bretonne, in which their development is analysed from original publication to later diffusion amongst Swedish readers, as well as articles on Swedish translations of novels published during the latter part of the eighteenth century. Her latest book is a reader in book history, *Böcker och bibliotek* (Lund, 1998), which includes her survey of Swedish research in this field. She is currently working on a monograph on Catharina Ahlgren, best called a 'learned woman' of the eighteenth century, who published a women's magazine, translated a number of novels, and led a turbulent life always threatened with complete destitution.