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*FORMS OF AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL
NARRATION IN
SCANDINAVIAN LITERATURE*

a cura di / edited by

Massimo Ciaravolo, Sara Culeddu,
Andrea Meregalli, Camilla Storskog

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AGNETA HORN'S *BESKRIFNING ÖFWER MIN WANDRINGESTIDH*.
A WOMAN'S VOICE FROM THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

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Beskrifning öfwer min wandringestidh (Description of the Time of My Wanderings)¹ was written by Agneta Horn, a Swedish noblewoman who lived in the seventeenth century. In this book she recounts the events of her life, from her birth in Riga in 1629 up to the year 1652. Here the narrative stops; Horn died twenty years later, in 1672.

1. The manuscript tradition

The original autograph was found in 1885 by Ellen Fries, a scholar in social history, who discovered it in Uppsala, where it is still preserved. It was classified first as ms. X 240 (Horn), and then as UUB X 240 AH. Very little is known about the history of the manuscript: it had belonged to Bishop Olof Celsius, who lived between the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, after whom the entire collection takes its name. He had probably inherited it from his father-in-law, the bibliophile Anders Anton von Stiernman.

The manuscript consists of ten quires, of which the first seven (a total of forty pages from 1a to 41b) are the autobiography. The last three quires (42a-47b) comprise reworked versions of several passages from the Bible.

These are the principal critical editions: the first one, *En sjelfbiografi från sextonhundratalet* (Horn 1886; An Autobiography from the Seventeenth Century), edited by Ellen Fries, was published in three issues of the Swedish journal «Dagny», the periodical of Fredrika Bremer Förbundet (The Fredrika Bremer Society); the second one, edited by Sigrid Leijonhufvud, *Agneta Horns lefverne* (Horn 1908; Agneta Horn's Life), was published in Stockholm by Norstedt; the third one, *Beskrivning öfver min vandringstid* (Horn 1959), was edited by Gösta Holm. Anne Brügge authored an adaptation into modern Swedish (Horn 2012).

¹ All translations are mine.

Fries's 1886 edition contains only the first seven quires, while the remaining three are not even mentioned. Leijonhufvud's edition does not comprise the three final quires either, just providing a list of contents in the final annotations. Leijonhufvud's edition is, on the other hand, particularly interesting because of the final appendix which, in addition to the notes, also contains some letters by Agneta Horn and her relatives. These precious texts are an important complement to the episodes recounted in Horn's autobiography, shedding light on events not reported in the memoirs. In both editions mentioned the spelling is standardised and punctuation was inserted by the editors, while Holm's 1959 edition faithfully reproduces the original text and has therefore been chosen for this study.

The last three quires were edited and published by Stephen Mitchell (1985: 24-55) in a parallel text featuring the passages from the Bible on one side of the page and the corresponding reworked versions by Agneta Horn on the other².

2. Considerations about the genre

Critics have variously speculated on the possible reasons that prompted the author to write the description of her life story. On the one hand Fries (Horn 1886: 34), Leijonhufvud (Horn 1908: 7-8) and Mitchell (1985: 14-15) see in the book the author's attempt to clarify the origins of her misfortunes and tragedies; on the other, critics such as Magnus von Platen (1959: 32), Sven Stolpe (1973: 95) and Johnny Kondrup (1982: 115-116) emphasise the importance that Horn gives to her own personality and strong temper, and thus judge her work to be the expression of her egocentrism. Eva Haettner Aurelius draws attention to a more practical legal reason for Agneta Horn's endeavours, which many scholars today accept as correct: Agneta Horn is both a devout woman who, though tried by the hardships of her existence, shows her strong faith in God's will; but, at the same time she is proud and aware of her own merits, and eager to struggle for her rights (Haettner Aurelius 1996: 74-75).

Agneta Horn's text is one of the most important prose works of seventeenth-century Sweden. Though it is usually defined as an autobiography, the question of its literary genre is rather complex. In Swedish, the first occurrence of the word *självlbiografi* (autobiography), is found in the journal of the Uppsala

² A short but interesting introduction to Agneta Horn's life and works is provided by Mitchell (1987); as for Agneta Horn's vicissitudes during the Thirty Years' War, see Gösta Holm (1986). Agneta Horn's text has been taken up by modern authors, who have expanded on her narrative. See, for instance, Agneta Pleijel's play, staged in 2014, *Efter mitt eget huvud – en 1600-talsfresk om Agneta Horn* (In My Own Way – A Seventeenth-Century Fresco about Agneta Horn), in which Agneta Horn is presented as a proud, wilful, passionate woman who wants to determine her own destiny.

Romantic movement «Phosphoros» in 1812, two centuries after Horn's *Beskrifning* was written, and carries its own specific semantic value, which is clearly different from that of *biografi*. Previously, the word *levernesbeskrivning* (life description) often followed by the specification *egenhändig* (written with one's own hand) had been used to identify a work whose narrator was also the main character (Haettner Aurelius 1991: 23).

Haettner Aurelius, moreover, points out that Agneta Horn did not display any awareness of the literary genre she had chosen, since she overlooked its stylistic features (such as narrative rhythm) and paid no attention to the characters' psychological traits, as she intended her writing mainly for herself and not for an audience³:

När Agneta Horn någon gång i mitten av 1600-talet skrev sin levnadsbeskrivning *Beskrifningh öfwer min älända och mycket wederwärtiga wandringestidh*, hade hon säkert inga planer på att låta tryckas den. Levernesbeskrivningar hörde inte till de texter man tryckte: de var inte inlemmade i det litterära genresystemet och de hörde inte till den litterära offentligheten. [...] Den som skrev självbiografi före romantiken hade m.a.o. ingen idé om att hon eller han skrev en text som hade särskilda egenskaper vad gällde innehållet (jagets utveckling, personlighetens danande, livsförloppets samspel med personligheten), formen (retrospektiv, sammanhängande och fortlöpande berättelse med början, mitt och slut) och syfte (att visa mig själv, att tolka mig själv och mitt liv). (Haettner Aurelius 1991: 18)

When Agneta Horn wrote her life description *Description of my Misery and Very Tormented Wandering Time*, in the middle of the seventeenth century, she surely had no intention to publish it. Autobiographical writings were not regarded as texts to be printed: they had no function in the literary genre system or in the literary public sphere. [...] In other words, before Romanticism, the authors of autobiographies thought of their works without any definite idea as to content (self-development, creation of a personality, interaction between life processes and personality), form (a retrospective, coherent and continuous narrative with a beginning and an end), and purpose (revealing oneself, interpreting oneself and one's life).

On the other hand, should we wish to attempt a definition of Agneta Horn's text, we could say that it contains elements of autobiography, as she reports personal events chronologically from her childhood to her adult age with an emphasis on introspection, and memoirs, since the narrator is also a witness (cf. Kondrup 1982: 26-28); noticeable sections of the manuscript

³ The fact that authors of autobiographies may not be completely aware of the genre they are employing is an almost unanimously agreed-upon notion. However, as for Agneta Horn's autobiography, a BA dissertation defended at the University of Gothenburg (Claeson 1989) presents an argument that is diametrically opposed to Haettner Aurelius's claim, maintaining that Agneta Horn was in fact using well-established strategies derived from classical rhetoric in her autobiography.

consist of pages recording the military experiences of her husband Lars Cruus in the years 1647 to 1655, as well as those of her father, Gustav Horn, in Agneta's childhood years. The final part consists of pages with quotations from the Bible, in particular the *Book of Psalms* and the *Book of Job*.

3. The quires about military events

As for the language she uses, the second part of the work is undoubtedly the most interesting for modern readers: Agneta Horn describes in detail the journeys with her father when she was a child, and later with her husband (they were both officers in the Swedish army). She refers to the outcomes of the battles and their impact on everyday life, and to the names of the people involved, such as officers and politicians.

The text is not a simple chronicle focusing on episodes of war only, but also pays attention to other aspects of Horn's life, against the background of the Thirty Years' War. In particular, Horn emphasises how she endured the same difficult conditions, privations and diseases, as the Swedish soldiers:

24 ginge wi ifrån kamnitz om mårgan mädh krutwagnana och hela partiet och ginge forbi kurforsten af saxens lusthus, som liger strax vnder bernerwal, der di hafwa den mykna swarta stenen, och til skopa til natan. 25 ginge wi der ifrån och kome på bernerwäldh. Och låge om natan i en liten fläk vnder anenbärg. Och war der et träflig högt bärg, som wi skule vp före. Och krutwagnana skule först vp. Och iag hölt der nere i dalen. Och skafwer sade, när den 3 krutwagen war vpkomin, til min man: "H[är] öfwerste, han skule läta sin fru koma åp mädh sin karet, tÿ thet blir hene alt för långt til at bida, heler om någon wagen ginge sönder, så kan hon inte koma fram i nat". Tÿ lät min man befala, at iag skule koma åp for bakan. Och iag gorde så. Män som iag war komin in i byn och min man steg afsin häst och sate sig på bänken hos mig, kom en hen ofwerstelögtnant kläm så het in och sade, at han har set 6000 man vnder anenbärg, som kome til oss marszerandez. (Horn 1959: 98-99)

On the 24th [of May] we departed from Chemnitz in the morning with the gunpowder carts and the whole division, and went past the Elector of Saxony's summer house, which was immediately beyond the Bohemian Forest, where there are very black rocks, and arrived at Zschopau in the evening. On the 25th we left there and reached the Bohemian Forest, where we slept in a dirty little place near Annaberg. There was a really high mountain that we had to climb. The gunpowder carts had to go up first. And I stopped down in the valley. And Schäffer told my husband, when the third cart had made it to the top, "Colonel, you should let your wife come up with your cart, otherwise it will be too much for her, or, if any cart should crash, she will not make it before morning". So my husband commanded that I go up the slope. And so I did. But as I arrived at the village and my husband dismounted from his horse and sat on the bench next to me, Colonel Klemm arrived, saying he had seen six thousand men, under Annaberg, marching against us.

What she writes about is documented by historical evidence and, despite some inaccuracies relating to the place names, her narration is faithful and reliable. The accurate descriptions of journeys and daily occurrences, such as the lack of supplies or the capture of an alleged spy, might suggest that the author used her father's and her husband's war diaries.

This section is also interesting insofar as it contains a number of new words, belonging to the semantic field of war, which first appeared in Swedish during the seventeenth century. Other words, already attested in common usage, here acquire a more specific meaning: for example the word *krut* (Horn 1959: 98, 100, 101, 110), both on its own and in the nominal compound *krutwagn* (gunpowder cart) of Low German origin, meaning «herb», synonym of the Swedish *krydda*, here used to indicate «gunpowder»; or *amt* (Horn 1959: 92; administration), also of Low German origin, which became part of the Swedish lexicon in the same period, used as an equivalent and etymologically similar word for the local term *ämbete*.

There are also many loanwords, generally terms that define roles and ranks in the army or weapons. They are taken from French, either directly or through the mediation of Low German, like *armmen* (Horn 1959: 4, 6, and 32 more occurrences; army); *dragoner* (Horn 1959: 46, 96, 97, 98; dragoons), specialised horsemen whose corps had been inserted into the Swedish Army by Gustav II Adolf at the beginning of the seventeenth century; *general* (Horn 1959: 101, 107; general) in nominal compounds; *generalisemus/generalizimus* (Horn 1959: 94, 95, 98, 99, 101, 102, 103; generalissimo), referring to Charles X Gustav; *gubernör* (Horn 1959: 74, 107; governor), generally with military powers; *komendant* (Horn 1959: 96, 101; commander); *kompeni* (Horn 1959: 112; company)⁴; *komfåj* and *löjtnant* (Horn 1959: 98; convoy and lieutenant); *musketerare* (Horn 1959: 46, 93, 94; musketeer); *ofitzirare/åfiserare* (Horn 1959: 93, 94; officer); *patrulien* (Horn 1959: 93; patrol); *såldat* (Horn 1959: 12, 51, 54, 55, 56; soldier). Words directly borrowed from Low German are also present, like *öfwerste/överste/överst* (Horn 1959: 96, 98, 109, 110; colonel), or *regemänte* (Horn 1959: 83, 101, and 32 more occurrences; regiment).

These examples clarify the fact that Agneta Horn's autobiography refers to the time span of the Thirty Years' War as characterised by linguistic exchanges and assimilations, since the Swedish army and the Protestant German army came into close contact as allies against a common enemy. This also explains why so many lexemes introduced into Swedish belong to the military semantic area. Not only does the large use of these loans in *Beskrifning öfwer min wandringestidh* bear witness to a significant

⁴ According to Hellquist 1948: 338 this word was first used in the military field at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

linguistic change, but it also stands as an important example of the changes occurring in the Swedish military world, on the model of the French army.

4. The third section: the Bible in *Beskrifning öfwer min wandringestidh*

The third section of the text is the least analysed by scholars, although it is of considerable critical and historical importance. As mentioned before, in 1985 Mitchell edited the text, which consists of reflections and prayers that the author wrote by adapting the biblical passages from the *Book of Job* and the *Psalter* to her private life. In this section Agneta Horn features the subject (herself) as a 'type', i.e. she chooses a biblical character to stand for herself; this subject is thus part of the divine order.

This section, though not easy to read, is of crucial importance since it reflects an actual trend in seventeenth-century Swedish literature, and particularly in women's literature. In a later study Mitchell maintains that, after the Reformation, literary self-analyses grew popular especially among women writers. Women's literary ambitions were legitimised by the writings of St. Bridget, who, despite her Catholic matrix, was a sort of *auctoritas*, a model to refer to (Mitchell 2002: 271-273). Estelle Jelinek has already pointed out how the autobiographical writings of seventeenth-century women were characterised by an intense introspective vision and strong religiosity, as opposed to men's autobiographies, such as Jesper Svedberg's or Gustav II Adolf's, conceived as narratives of *res gestae* (1986: 24). In this portion of the text, Agneta Horn presents her own life in a lyrical, epic and baroque style characterised by circumlocutions which imitate seventeenth-century preaching (Mitchell 1985: 77).

Probably Carl Carlsson Gyllenhielm's *Nosce te ipsum*, an autobiographical poem in *knittelvers* published as an appendix to the 1644 edition of *Schola captivitatis* (1632), served as a model for Agneta Horn, who in 1657 wrote a poem, a collection of thoughts in verse on her own life, in the *stambok* (a family register) of her friend Kerstin Posse (contained in ms. UUB Y 117k)⁵.

There is no evidence which links AH [Agneta Horn] to this work. Certain characteristics of Gyllenhielm's *Nosce te ipsum* strengthen the bond between it and *AH:s leverne*: the verbal echoes between their complete titles, the use of selected biblical quotations to form a continuous thought (a feature found on the verso of the title page of *Nosce te ipsum*), the 'intertextual' nature of the autobiographical poem with appropriate corresponding verses of the

⁵ The poem, also written in *knittelvers*, is to be found in Horn 1908: 208-209; a critical edition, followed by a translation into English, is given in Mitchell 2002: 281-283.

Bible cited in the margin, and the use of theme headings for the translated psalms. (Mitchell 1985: 78-79)

Agneta Horns Lefverne therefore fully reflects the emphasis on autobiography and self-analysis which was prominent in Protestantism and well-expressed in the literary production of the time. Yet it also deals with other matters, as can be seen in those sections of the text focusing on the account of her personal life and the war campaign she was involved in. Moreover, this section is also a resource for the study of language history: Agneta Horn copies passages from the Bible, but edits and alters the original material according to the spoken Swedish of her day. According to Mitchell, «her intentional changes of the quotations are at the level of meaning», while changes at the level of syntax and phonology are «presumably unintentional» (1985: 56).

As for the phonological aspects there are several lexemes that are worth noticing: the spellings she uses help us figure out how the spoken language of the time sounded. There are several cases of assimilation, like *ld>ll*, for example *elen* from *elden* (Horn 1959: 47, 57; fire), *herewäle* from *herravälde* (Horn 1959: 80; domination); *nd>nn*, *han* from *hand* (Horn 1959: 56; hand), *stun* from *stund* (Horn 1959: 16; while); *tn>n(n)*, *dråning(h)* from *drottning* (Horn 1959: 14; queen); *dn>n(n)*, *råna* from *rodna* (Horn 1959: 78; to blush); *ts>s(s)*, *masäken* from *matsäcken* (Horn 1959: 25; provision-bag); *ds>s(s)*, *gos* from *gods* (Horn 1959: 111; estates). Certain consonants are lost in consonant clusters, for example *tjysland(h)* instead of *tyskland* (Horn 1959: 4, 24, 85; Germany); final postvocalic *d* is lost both in stressed and unstressed position, for example *beske* instead of *besked* (Horn 1959: 98; information), *brö* instead of *bröd* (Horn 1959: 70; bread), *hva* instead of *vad* (Horn 1959: 60; what), *gärtru* instead of *Gertrud* (Horn 1959: 38), *hufe* instead of *huvud* (Horn 1959: 74; head). There is notable difficulty in the perception of the different pronunciations of voiced and voiceless plosives (labial and velar), which are often interchanged: *benningar* for *penningar* (Horn 1959: 11; money), *bart* for *part* (Horn 1959: 78; part), *kig* for *gick* (Horn 1959: 16; went). Moreover, the cluster *rd* turns into *l*, *gål(en)* for *gården* (Horn 1959: 30; backyard). The bilabial voiced stop and the bilabial voiceless stop function as epenthetic consonants in words such as *bekumptra* for *bekymra* (Horn 1959: 84; to worry), *gambla* (Horn 1959: 11) or *gampla* (Horn 1959: 21) for *gamla* (old), *onämpnd* for *onämnd* (Horn 1959: 63; unnamed)⁶.

⁶ For further details about linguistic aspects in Agneta Horn see Wessén 1926, Larsson 1927, and Gösta Holm's observations in his introduction to *Beskrivning över min vandringstid* (Horn 1959: xi-xxvii) and Holm 2000.

5. The autobiographical matter

Although political and military issues are interesting and peculiar in this noblewoman's life story, they are not the most prominent topics addressed; on the contrary, Swedish and European history both serve as a mere background for Horn's personal memories. The first and most conspicuous part of the text is in fact purely autobiographical, simply recounting events from the author's private life. Although Horn, as the granddaughter of Axel Oxenstierna (Lord High Chancellor of Sweden in the first half of the seventeenth century), had access to precise and detailed information, she just includes it tangentially in her narrative, focusing instead on the history of her family. The events are narrated in annalistic form, on the model of the *släktböcker*, collections of historical events arranged in chronological order, with an annalistic approach, which recorded the crucial events of a family's private life: births, marriages, deaths. A literary precedent, in the late Middle Ages, were the genealogical catalogues collected by ecclesiastical institutions; the most famous one in Sweden is the *Chronicon genealogicum*, compiled in the early sixteenth century by Anna Fickesdotter Bülow, abbess of Vadstena (Bülow 1718).

Furthermore the *släktböcker* recorded business transactions, land purchases, sales, inheritances, transfers of ownership, activities in which the ecclesiastical institutions had some economic interest. After the Reformation, church authorities no longer dealt with this kind of writing, and noblewomen were in charge of it (von Platen 1998: 104). A parallel evolution of the *släktböcker* can easily be hypothesised: the collection of family annals was gradually assuming a more intimate and introspective aspect, the genre itself gradually turning into autobiographical writing. Between 1500 and 1600 several samples of *släktböcker* can be listed. Sigrid Bielke, Agneta Horn's stepmother, wrote an autobiographical text in the form of annals (Bielke 1900): the date is written first, then the name of a person, the date of his/her birth or death, or other significant events (Haettner Aurelius 1996: 81). Another example is the work of Maria Christoffersdotter Stenquist, *Personalia*, whose manuscript is preserved in Uppsala (UUB X 255 ab, Cederhjelmiska Samlingen). Here the author refers to the text as an «underrättelse om herkomst och mina sallige föräldrars affkomst» (Mitchell 2002: 277; «information about my blessed parents' lineage and progeny»).

Agneta Horn's autobiography, too, can be related to the genre of the *släktböcker*, because it shares the same characteristics, both in structural and thematic terms: 1) events are arranged in chronological order, so as to highlight the current year first, then the month and the day, the day of the week and sometimes even the hour; 2) in this text, especially in the first part, the author collects all the key events of her family's life, such as births, christenings, engagements, marriages, deaths; 3) the recounting of the events is often supplemented by religious reflections, such as prayers or

supplications, in which the author invokes the protection of God, health for her children, and grace for the dead. This is how she reports her birth:

Anno 1629 den 18 Agusti och om en måndagsmårغان klåkan 7 år jagh, Agneta horn gustafdater, födh hit til dāna onda och förmigh mjuket mödosama och bedröfweliga wården vti staden riga, mig siälff til al som största sårgh och wederwärtighet. Here min gudh, hiälp migh thena min swāra wårdh i thena min barndom och sedan. (Horn 1959: 3)

1629, 18 August, on a Monday morning, at seven o'clock I, Agneta Horn Gustafsdotter, was born here, in this evil and for me very hard and miserable world, in the town of Riga, to my great sorrow and displeasure. Oh my Lord, help me in this hard world during my childhood and after.

As previously suggested, Agneta Horn probably wrote her autobiography not completely aware of the genre she had chosen and with no interest in formal refinement; it is also arguable that she was influenced by existing models in producing an original autobiography, by merging the annalistic and genealogic genre, together with religious reflections.

Agneta Horn probably conceived her work as an annalistic text, with the simple aim of recording events with practical, not literary, purposes. It can therefore be assumed that the first readers of her writings were her children, to whom she intended to offer a detailed picture of the financial situation of the family. It is thus reasonable to assume, as suggested by Haettner Aurelius, that Horn's decision to write an autobiography derives from the contrasts with her stepmother Sigrid Bielke about inheritance, after the death of Gustav Horn, Agneta Horn's father and Sigrid's husband, in 1657 (Haettner Aurelius 1996: 91). As a matter of fact, Agneta Horn experienced a complex economic situation after her father's death. In Sweden, in the seventeenth century, the ancient custom of *morgongåva* was still in force, a tradition according to which noblemen had to give their wives a generous dowry in order to guarantee financial security in case of their own premature death. In 1627 Gustav Horn gave Kristina Oxenstierna, Axel Oxenstierna's daughter and Agneta's mother, a considerable dowry. In 1631 Kristina fell ill and died, leaving her husband and two children, one of whom died soon after. Agneta Horn was the only heir, and thus entitled to inherit her mother's dowry after her father's death. When she married Lars Cruus, Agneta Horn was still Gustav Horn's only heir, but in 1650 Gustav Horn and Sigrid Bielke had a child, Carl Gustav, who lived until 1654. In 1651, after Carl Gustav's birth, Gustav Horn gave his late wife's entire *morgongåva* to Agneta, on the condition that she would inherit it only after his death, so as to make it clear that Agneta was the only heir.

Gustav Horn died in 1657, without male heirs, and left an unsigned will, which considerably reduced Agneta Horn's inheritance: without this document Agneta would have obtained her mother's *morgongåva*

together with her father's inheritance, to be shared with her two half-sisters. According to Gustav Horn's unsigned will, instead, Sigrid Bielke would receive all housing and movables, and Agneta Horn be granted the sum of 8000 *riksdaler*. This reduction depended on the fact that Agneta had already and unduly benefited from the maternal dowry, at the time still owned by Gustav Horn, during her father's eight-year captivity. Sigrid Bielke vehemently accused Agneta Horn of taking advantage of dramatic circumstances (her father's captivity and her brother's death), and also of not having respected her father's will. The legal charge of pillaging was accompanied by an ethical condemnation, Agneta Horn being reproached as a greedy woman, who had shown no respect for her father's authority.

It is, therefore, clear that Agneta Horn's memoirs had a practical purpose: that of protesting her innocence, as Stefan Inderwies suggests (2009), arguing that Horn's *Beskrifning* cannot be associated with only one genre. Agneta Horn emphasises her absolute lack of greed and her will to assert and pursue her own rights and her need to protect her children's future capital. Moreover, in the text Agneta Horn intends to demonstrate that she is not a bad daughter and, for this reason, she never deals with the conflicts with her father: her enemies are aunt Ebba and aunt Karin, described as perfidious and envious women. For example, in the passages in which Agneta Horn narrates the events of Erik Sparre, a nobleman of ancient lineage and a suitor that Agneta rejected, she attributes exclusive blame to aunt Ebba, who wanted to arrange the match and fomented discord; thus Agneta emphasises the harmony that presumably existed between herself and her father. The latter would probably have been happy if Agneta had married Erik Sparre but, being presented here as a peaceful, docile man, he easily accepts his daughter's will (Haettner Aurelius 1993: 273), as the following passage clearly shows:

[...] och sade han åt mig: "Efter hans [Erik Sparres] syster är här, så wet iag wäl, at hon wil weta swar af mig och digh. Och säg mig nu, huadh iag skal svara". Der på iag swara kårt näy. Då sade min h[är] f[ar]: "Di swaran wil iag inte säya häne, vtan du må siälf säya. Tÿ iag wil ingen owän hafwa för din skul, som iag har tänkt til at skafwa mig wäner mädh". (Horn 1959: 60)

[...] and he told me: "As his [Erik Sparre's] sister is here, I know very well that she will want to get the answer from me and you. Now tell me what I have to answer". Then I briefly answered: "No". So my father said: "I do not want to give her these answers, but you can tell her yourself. I do not want enemies because of you, since I thought I would acquire friends thanks to you".

For these reasons, Agneta Horn's text can be considered as part of the tradition of autobiographical writings with an apologetic purpose, that is, works that aimed at justifying and motivating the author's behaviour and actions. There is also a coeval testimony in 1682, belonging to the same genre, *Egenhändig Lefwenes-Beskrifning* (Life Description, Written with my Own Hand) by Maria Eufrosyne, Countess Palatine, Queen

Christina's cousin and King Charles X Gustav's sister (De la Gardie 1789). Haettner Aurelius compares the two cases:

När det gäller Agneta Horns och Maria Eufrosynes texter kan man anta att de har skrivits inom en juridisk offentlighet, i Maria Eufrosynes fall gränsande till en politisk. Båda texterna kan knytas till rättsliga tvister – i Agneta Horns fall till en mellan henne och hennes styvmor, i Maria Eufrosynes fall till reduktionens och förmyndarräfstens härjningar av hennes och makens Magnus Gabriel de la Gardies egendomar 1681. (1991: 20)

As to Agneta Horn's and Maria Eufrosyne's texts, they were probably written in a legal context, and, in Maria Eufrosyne's case, in an almost political one. Both texts can be related to legal controversies – in Agneta Horn's case, to the one between her and her stepmother; in Maria Eufrosyne's case, to the loss of her and her husband Magnus Gabriel de la Gardie's properties in 1681, due to the *reduktion* and *förmyndarräfst* [economic measures of the time].

According to Haettner Aurelius, both Agneta Horn and Maria Eufrosyne's writings have a male 'predecessor', the poet Lars Wivallius, whose long letter to the court of appeal on the charges levelled against him had been elaborated and edited as an autobiography, *Lars Wivallius leverne* (Wivallius 1957; cf. Haettner Aurelius 1991: 21).

6. Conclusions

To sum up, Agneta Horn's work must, first of all, be analysed and classified according to the literary standards of the time when it was written. It also needs to be scrutinised in relation to Horn's private life, as well as to the social and historical events and customs of seventeenth-century Sweden. The text's introspective approach clearly reflects a trend of its time, common to most of women's writings. This is the reason why, by the same token, this work cannot simply be defined as a family chronicle or *släktbok*, though possessing most of the traits that characterised the *släktbok* genre, such as the collection of biographical and genealogical records and the annalistic form. In a modern perspective, Agneta Horn's book appears thus as an autobiography, a memoir and an annalistic, factual, chronicle-like text, whose function is not only that of a personal diary, as it also contains useful, practical bits of information. In this respect, the work bears important witness to a crucial shift in seventeenth-century Swedish culture and literature: after the Reformation, annalistic and registry writings, in the past the prerogative of the clergy, began to be compiled privately by aristocrats, especially noblewomen. This shift interestingly accounts for the transition, as for the process of data collection, from the public to the private sphere, and also for the fact that women were in charge of it.

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