Mediating Images of Monarchy from Castle to Cottage in Eighteenth-Century Sweden

Nordin, Jonas

Published in:
Media and Mediation in the Eighteenth Century

2023

Document Version:
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Link to publication

Citation for published version (APA):
Nordin, J. (2023). Mediating Images of Monarchy from Castle to Cottage in Eighteenth-Century Sweden. In P. Corfield, & J. Nordin (Eds.), *Media and Mediation in the Eighteenth Century* (pp. 25-71). Swedish Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, Division of Book History, Lund University.

Total number of authors:
1

Media & Mediation in the Eighteenth Century

PENELOPE CORFIELD
& JONAS NORDIN
Editors

SWEDISH SOCIETY FOR EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY STUDIES
DIVISION OF BOOK HISTORY, LUND UNIVERSITY
LUND 2023

CHAPTER 1

Mediating Images of Monarchy from Castle to Cottage in Eighteenth-Century Sweden

Jonas Nordin

In early modern Europe, images of kings and queens, princes and princesses accounted for much of the visual message conveyed in a society. Alongside Christ and other religious figures, royalty were the most depicted persons. Biblical figures, saints, and church fathers belonged to a distant past and were recognized through attributes and distinctive characteristics rather than their facial features. The same often applied to royal portraits even when they depicted actual individuals from the present or the recent past. Among the population at large, people had expectations of how the king was supposed to appear, with his crown and sword and other symbols of power, although they did not necessarily know what he actually looked like. Images of royals and of royalty were powerful symbols in shaping imagined communities in the early modern world.[1]

Leaving all kinds of written communication aside, royals were depicted in painted portraits, statues, wax figures, tapestries, and reliefs, engravings, woodcuts, and drawings, coins, medals, and seals. If we move away from the proper portraits and include symbolic representations of royalty, such as crowns, monograms, and dynastic coats of arms, the pictorial flora becomes even richer. It is often assumed without closer examination that this

1. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communites: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

rich array of representations emanated from the royal propaganda machinery. However, in the communication circuit we cannot focus only on the message but must also consider who is the client, who is the executor, the distributor, the vendor, the consumer, and so on.[2] In doing so we discover that there were often various and entangled interests involved in the image production and distribution. Oftentimes this imagery was part of a transnational circulation, not only through the borrowing of models and patterns, but also through actual reutilizing of pictures in new situations. Book historian Daniel Bellingradt has talked about *media recycling*, *paper echoes*, and *feedback loops*, all of which we will see examples of in the following.[3]

In this essay, I will discuss how commercial forces accounted for large parts of the royal image production in eighteenth-century Sweden, without any official intervention. This indicates that the monarchy was not merely an institution of power but also a normative force in society that shaped people's everyday

2. The 'communications circuit' is a concept famously established by Robert Darnton in 'What is the History of Books?', *Daedalus* (Summer 1982), pp. 65–83. Darnton emphasized that the model was incomplete and it has continued to be developed by other researchers; cf. idem, '"What is the History of Books?" Revisited', *Modern Intellectual History*, 4 (2007), pp. 495–508. Several researchers have supplemented Darnton's model, which primarily pays attention to the book market's internal conditions of production, by introducing external socio-economic factors, see, e.g., Thomas R. Adams & Nicholas Barker, 'A New Model for the Study of the Book', in Nicholas Barker (ed.), *A Potencie of Life: Books in Society* (London: British Library, 1993), pp. 1–15. A recent attempt of widening the focus is Thomas Munck, *Conflict and Enlightenment: Print and Political Culture in Europe, 1635–1795* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), p. 2.

3. Daniel Bellingradt, 'The Dynamic of Communication and Media Recycling in Early Modern Europe: Popular Prints as Echoes and Feedback Loops', in Massimo Rospocher, Jeoren Salman & Hannu Salmi (eds), *Crossing Borders, Crossing Cultures: Popular Print in Europa (1450–1900)* (Berlin & Boston: de Gruyter, 2019), pp. 9–32.

lives on an emotional and sociological level. I will also demonstrate that there was not always a straightforward connection between images of royalty and royalism.

Swedish Monarchy in the Eighteenth Century

My examples will be taken from Sweden's eighteenth century, which began and ended with royal autocracy. The period in-between, or from the violent death of King Charles XII in 1718 to the coup d'état by King Gustav III (1746–92) in 1772, is referred to as the Age of Liberty (*frihetstiden*). During this era Sweden was a republic in all but name. The supreme power rested within the Swedish Diet (*riksdagen*), which convened at least every third year. The Diet consisted of four estates: the nobility, the clergy, the burghers, and the peasantry, which created the widest political participation among any of the major European states. Between the sessions of the Diet, executive power was exercised by the council of the realm with sixteen members. The king was chairman in the council, but since he only had two votes beside the sixteen counsellors, he was easily and often outvoted. In effect, the king became a mere figurehead with little real power, although he possessed a lot of social and cultural capital which was deemed necessary for the realm's reputation and for the tranquillity of society. It should also be noted that, in contrast to many other historical designations, *frihetstiden* is actually a contemporary name which was used already in the eighteenth century.[4]

4. The best introduction in English to this period is still Michael Roberts, *The Age of Liberty: Sweden 1719–1772* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). For the functioning of the Diet, see Michael F. Metcalf, 'Parliamentary Sovereignty and Royal Reaction, 1719–1809', in idem (ed.), *The Riksdag: A History of the Swedish Parliament* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987). See also several of the chapters in Pasi Ihalainen et al. (eds), *Scandinavia in the Age of Revolution: Nordic Political*

It might be assumed that this powerless monarchy would not be subject to much public attention, but the actual circumstance was rather the opposite: as the monarchy's power diminished, its symbolic importance grew stronger and, for instance, some of the most lavish and expensive coronations in Swedish history took place during the Age of Liberty. Coronations were important rituals, but their immediate symbolic effect was limited to the comparatively few people who could attend the occasion. I shall therefore discuss some examples of how the image of kingship was disseminated through other means to wider parts of the population.[5]

A basic requirement for propaganda to be effective is that it reaches the intended audience, and the public – meaning the active citizenry – can be more or less limited depending on the form of government. But even a monocratic government needs to communicate with the public, because its power rests on authority which must be demonstrated, regardless of whether it is exercised through terror or benevolence. In revolutionary and violent upheavals, like the French and Russian revolutions, regimes make a point of abolishing old symbols and language markers, and creating 'a new man', both figuratively and practically. Major non-violent political upheavals, on the other hand, presuppose an evolutionary reinterpretation of ingrained symbols. The classic example is the gradual and careful reinterpretation of political concepts and symbols in Rome's transition from republic to empire, where old representations were given

---

Cultures, 1740–1820 (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), about the monarchy, esp. my own chapter 'The Monarchy in the Swedish Age of Liberty (1719–1772)', pp. 29–40.

5. In a major study, I have investigated the functioning of a monarchy with a powerless king by looking at its constitutional role, the mediation of monarchy through various channels, and how the monarchy and the king was perceived by the subjects: Jonas Nordin, *Frihetstidens monarki: Konungamakt och offentlighet i frihetstidens Sverige* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2009).

a new mythology which almost imperceptibly forged the imagery of power.[6]

The political upheaval after the death of Charles XII has been called a 'revolution' by later historians, and Gustav III himself used this term for his own coup d'état.[7] However, in neither case was the royal imagery changed in any substantial manner, although the polity went from absolutism to republicanism in 1718 and Gustav III, both before and after his coup, had to adapt to the republican language which had developed under the preceding two generations.[8] ('Republic' shall here of course be understood in the eighteenth-century fashion as a free government or *res publica* ruled by law and where the people could exercise a veto in political matters.[9]) The general and former councillor Fredrik Axel von Fersen (1719–94), a political opponent to Gustav III, observed that this not only influenced the king's rhetoric but also limited his room for action:

> The king, who never wanted to admit, neither in public nor to the foreign courts, that he had encroached on national freedom, because his manifesto for the revolution proclaimed, that he had not taken up arms for anything other than to protect the freedom and

6. Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, transl. Alan Shapiro (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1988).

7. Lennart Thanner, *Revolutionen i Sverige efter Karl XII:s död: Den inrepolitiska maktkampen under tidigare delen av Ulrika Eleonora d.y:s regering* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1953); Gustav III, 'Memoires sur la Revolution de Suede en 1772', Konung Gustaf III:s egenhändiga skrifter, 5: Memoirer och Bidrag till Konungens egen historia, tome I: 1756–1778, Uppsala University Library, no 65.

8. Mikael Alm, *Kungsord i elfte timmen: Språk och självbild i det gustavianska envåldets legitimitetskamp 1772–1809* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2002); Henrika Tandefelt, *Konsten att härska: Gustaf III inför sina undersåtar* (Helsinki: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 2008).

9. Cf. Rachel Hammersley, *Republicanism: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020), pp. 1–14.

> rights of his people, who sighed under the oppression of aristocratic abuse […].[10]

But in the same way that the king had to resort to republican rhetoric, republicans too were forced to use the symbols of the monarchy to legitimize or perhaps hide their exercise of power. What this means is that we cannot automatically see an image of a monarch as a mark of royalism and as a means of persuasion emanating from royal circles, much less from the king himself. In the following, we will see examples of images of kingship originating from royal propaganda, but also from businessmen, and from anti-royalists.

The Medium Modifies the Message

The basic function of media is to transmit and spread messages.[11] Various media have different performances but also different symbolic values. The two hostile crowns of Denmark and Sweden both commissioned paintings and tapestries with battle scenes from the Scanian War 1675–79 to adorn the royal palaces in either realm.[12] The engravings, which made up many of the models, naturally had a greater potential for dissemination, but the paintings and above all the tapestries had a higher status.

10. 'Konungen, som aldrig ville erkänna, hvarken offentligt eller för de främmande hofven, att han hade inkräktat på den nationella friheten, emedan hans manifest för revolutionen innehöll, att ej hafva gripit till vapen för annat än att skydda friheten och rättigheterna för sitt folk, som suckade under förtrycket af aristokratiska missbruk'; Fredrik Axel von Fersen, *Historiska skrifter*, 3, ed. R. M. Klinckowström (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1869), p. 132.

11. John Guillory, 'Genesis of the Media Concept', *Critical Inquiry*, 36 (2010), pp. 321–62.

12. Gudmund Boesen, *Christian den Femtes Rosenborgtapeter fra den skaanske Krig* (Copenhagen: J. Jørgensen, 1949), pp. 62–81; Börje Magnusson, 'Lemkes bataljmålningar på Drottningholm och deras förlagor', *Konsthistorisk tidskrift*, 49 (1980), pp. 121–31.

The engravings could inform a larger audience, but the paintings and tapestries could awe a select crowd – it was efficacious communication versus conspicuous consumption. Furthermore, although it was the Swedish crown that was the final victor in the war (after French mediation), it did not prevent the Danish king from highlighting separate victories – you only had to present the story in the right portions.

A common way of displaying royalty was through state portraits with regalia and other marks of kingship (fig. 2.1), but since they were generally confined to the great halls of royal palaces and noble residences their general impact was as limited as the coronations. Versailles was famous for being open to all visitors in theory, and Louis XIV commissioned printed explanations of the allegories in the ceilings to be placed in the grand gallery so that their narrative content would not be lost on uninformed visitors.[13] However, most royal residences in Europe were only accessible to invitees and members of polite society who paid their way in through gratuities to some warden. In either case, the number of actual visitors was very limited.[14]

A way of making the portraits more widely known and of increasing the impact of the message they conveyed, was through engraved copies. Art theorists often talk about the composition in a painting and the movement in the image. Western viewers

13. François Charpentier, *Explication des tableaux de la galerie de Versailles* (Paris: François Muguet, 'Par ordre exprés de sa Majesté', 1684); Robert W. Berger, *In the Garden of the Sun King: Studies on the Park of Versailles under Louis XIV* (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1985), 29; Guy Walton, *Louis XIV's Versailles* (New York: Viking, 1986), pp. 80–91.

14. Joachim Christoph Nemeitz, *Séjour de Paris, oder Getreue Anleitung, welchergestalt Reisende von Condition sich zu verhalten haben, wenn sie ihre Zeit und Geld nützlich und wohl zu Paris anwenden wollen*, second ed. (Frankfurt: Friedrich Wilhelm Förster, 1722), p. 394; Marianna Jenkins, *The State Portrait: Its Origin and Evolution* ([New York]: College Art Association of America, 1947).

FIGURE 2.1. Ulrika Eleonora the Younger (1688–1741), ruling queen of Sweden 1719–1720, painted by Georg Engelhard Schröder (1684–1750). Photo: Erik Cornelius, Nationalmuseum (NMGrh 1359).

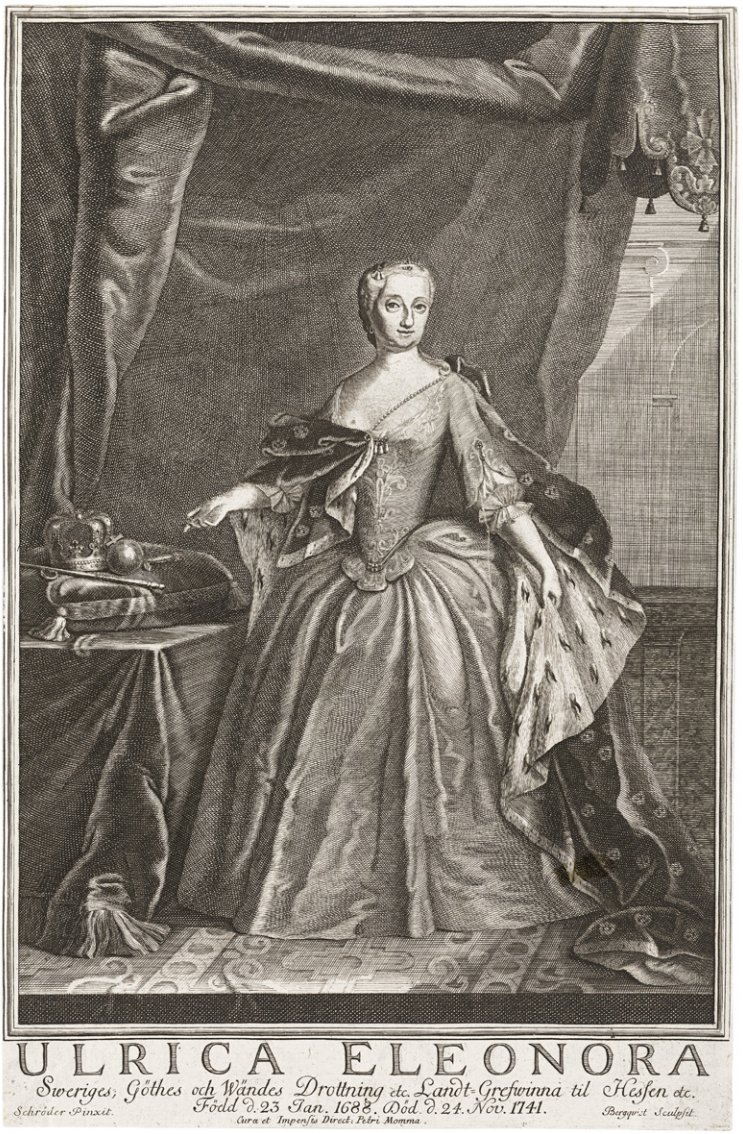

FIGURE 2:2. Queen Ulrika Eleonora the Younger, engraving by Carl Bergquist (1711–1781). Photo: Björn Green, The National Library of Sweden.

are generally assumed to read a motif from left to right in the same way that we read text. However, the conscious choice that each artist was expected to make was not more binding than that an engraver readily thought that he could reverse a motif without ruining the composition; it was a consequence of the production process where the motif directly copied onto a printing plate would give a mirrored impression. There were certainly techniques to reverse the motif during the transfer to the plate, but it involved an extra step in the work process that was obviously often not considered worth the effort.

An engraving made by Carl Bergquist (1711–81) after Georg Engelhardt Schröder's (1684–1750) full figure portrait of Queen Ulrika Eleonora (1688–1741; fig. 2.2) is admittedly not very skilfully executed, but its expected audience were nevertheless nobility, clergy, and better-off citizens rather than simple commoners. The commissioner was not the court, but judging from the inscription on the engraving it was a matter of economic speculation at the 'care and expense' of the printer and publisher Peter Momma. Berquist was employed as engraver by the Swedish Academy of Sciences, and Momma was licensed royal printer, but in both cases this did only guarantee a basic revenue and did not make them disinclined to other sources of income.[15] There are no records of the production of this engraving, but it seems likely that it was executed in the spring of 1742 in connection with the queen's death and burial. Engravings of this kind would be collected in portfolios or occasionally framed and hanged on the walls of, for instance, a rectory or a courthouse.[16]

Most common people had to make do with cheap woodcuts.

15. The system with the privileged royal printer is discussed in detail in Anna-Maria Rimm, *Elsa Fougt, Kungl. boktryckare: Aktör i det litterära systemet ca 1780–1810*, diss. (Uppsala: Avdelningen för litteratursociologi, 2009).

16. Cf. Sonya Petersson, *Konst i omlopp: Mening, medier och marknad i Stockholm under 1700-talets senare hälft* (Göteborg: Makadam, 2014), e.g. pp. 214–24.

This fragile and inexpensive material has been very poorly preserved, but we can say with great certainty that religious motifs were by far the most common sort – judging from Swedish collections, religious images made up for between 70 and 80 percent of the total.[17] Far behind, in second place, came images of royalties. These images were used to decorate the inside of the coffers where maids and farmhands kept their few belongings, and they could replace wallpaper in simple dwellings; this latter circumstance sometimes caused problems because it involved an infringement of the wallpaper makers' guild rights.[18] Having an enduring or semi-permanent place in the modest equivalents to galleries among common people, they needed to represent something important and lasting to their owners.

When it came to popular royal portraits, likeness with the portrayed person was of secondary importance. Very few people who owned these kinds of images ever saw the portrayed persons

---

17. There are extensive studies on popular woodcuts in Sweden, see esp. Nils-Arvid Bringéus, *Skånska kistebrev: Berlingska boktryckeriet, N. P. Lundbergs boktryckeri och F. F. Cedergréens boktryckeri* (Stockholm: Carlssons, 1995). For an overview, see idem, 'Massmedium i minformat: En översikt över den svenska kistebrevsproduktionen', *Rig: Kulturhistorisk tidskrift*, 2008/3 (2008), pp. 129–39. For the Danish production, which was a communicating vessel with the Swedish market, see, esp. V. E. Clausen, *Det folkelige danske træsnit i etbladstryck 1565–1884* (Copenhagen: Foreningen Danmarks Folkeminder, 1985). On the popularity of religious motifs, cf. Andreas Würgler, '"Popular Prints in German" (1400–1800)', in Rospocher et al., (eds), *Crossing Borders*, pp. 64–6.

18. Gunnar W. Lundberg, 'Formskärar Hoffbro', in idem, *Bellmansfigurer: Kulturhistoriska tidsbilder och personhistoriska anteckningar till Fredmansdikten* (Stockholm: Gebers, 1927), pp. 102–3; Clausen, *Det folkelige danske træsnit*, pp. 15–16; Elisabeth Berglin, 'From Chest Prints to Painted Wall Hangings: Context and World of Ideas in the Transformation Process', in Nils-Arvid Bringéus & Sten Åke Nilsson (eds), *Popular Prints and Imagery: Proceedings of an International Conference in Lund 5–7 October 2000* (Stockholm: Vitterhetsakademien, 2001), pp. 425–44.

in real life and could compare the resemblance, a circumstance which facilitated media recycling.[19] Two other things were important, on the other hand. Firstly, in contrast to the more exclusive engravings, popular prints were almost always colourized. In order for them to brighten up everyday life, the cheerful colours, often applied with the use of templates, seem to have been almost as important as the motif itself – they were sometimes called 'paper paintings' (*målade papperstavlor*). Secondly, although likeness with the portrayed person was of secondary importance the motif nevertheless had to be simple to understand. In a woodcut (fig. 2.3) copied from Carl Bergquist's engraving of Queen Ulrika Eleonora we therefore have not one, but *two* crowns so that there should be no mistaking of the represented person's royal lineage.[20] Furthermore, the portrayed person has also changed identity from Ulrika Eleonora, who died in 1741, to Princess Sofia Albertina, born in 1753 – that closed crowns were reserved for kings and queens and not to be worn by princesses was a technicality that hardly bothered customers. This print was subsequently copied by the printer in Gävle, Ernst Peter Sundquist, in 1801, but the identity had now shifted once more, to Princess Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotta

19. Cf. Bellingradt, 'The Dynamic of Communication and Media Recycling', pp. 10–11, 24–31.

20. A similar example is a double portrait from Karlskrona around 1780 depicting Gustav III and Sofia Magdalena dressed in the 'Swedish costume' that the king had introduced. As was common in official portraits, both the king and the queen point to a crown lying on a podium. The Swedish costume was a sort of national uniform intended to create a standardized dress code for different circles, not least the court. A king wearing the Swedish costume and regalia simultaneously was therefore almost a self-contradiction, but this clarification was required in popular graphics, especially since the Swedish costume also existed in a version for the common people – a certain precision was therefore necessary to avoid mistakes. See reproductions in Nils-Arvid Bringéus, 'Kistebrev trycka i Blekinge', *Blekingeboken: Årsbok för Blekinge Hembygdsförbund och Blekinge Museum*, 76 (1998), pp. 28–9.

(1759–1818), sister-in-law to Sofia Albertina (fig. 2.4). The double crowns remained also in this rendition.

Once again: very few people were able to assess the resemblance with the portrayed persons and recycling of the woodblocks was therefore common. With only small adjustments and a new text, the Danish King Christian VII and Queen Carolina Mathilda could, for instance, be turned into Swedish King Gustav III and Queen Sofia Magdalena, or the latter could be turned into her daughter-in-law Queen Fredrika Dorothea Vilhelmina.[21] This circulation of stock images and reuse of woodblocks was all about economy and making use of the cheapest originals available. The transnational trade is also proof that the crown had little to do with this kind of image production, which was purely based on economic speculation on behalf of the producer.

More important than likeness to the portrayed person was distinct signs of royalty that explained the subject. Representative art moved towards a higher degree of informality during the eighteenth century, which coincided with a domestication of royalty. In a movement that became even stronger in the nineteenth century, the public image of royalty was transformed from that of an elevated dynasty exalted above the subjects, to a bourgeois family ideal to inspire citizens.[22] This attracted above all the bourgeois circles who aspired to be drawn closer into the royal networks and national development, but it had little meaning for commoners who would never come into intimate contact with the royal family, but at best could glance at them from a distance during public ceremonies.

---

21. See Bringéus, *Skånska kistebrev*, pp. 174–5; Nordin, *Frihetstidens monarki*, pp. 144, 149.

22. Simon Schama, 'The Domestication of Majesty: Royal Family Portraiture, 1500–1850', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 17 (1986), pp. 155–83; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), ch. 5.

FIGURE 2:3. Princess Sophia Albertina (1753–1829), colourized woodcut by unknown artist. Photo: Björn Green, The National Library of Sweden (Kistebrev 63:11).

FIGURE 2:4. Princess Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotta (1759–1818), woodcut printed by Ernst Peter Sundqvist 1801. Photo: Björn Green, The National Library of Sweden (Kistebrev 37:5).

FIGURE 2:5. 'Gustavus Adolphus' (1594–1632), king of Sweden. Eighteenth-century woodcut by unknown artist. Photo: Björn Green, The National Library of Sweden (Kistebrev 63:17).

Painted parade portraits with the king in full regalia thus became less common, and the most exalted royal image of them all, the equestrian portrait, all but vanished in Sweden in the eighteenth century. But the genre thrived in popular woodcuts. In these contexts, one could even dispense with the otherwise necessary royal attributes: a person sitting on horseback was by himself sufficient sign of kingship.[23] In an image almost certainly produced from an imported and recycled woodblock, a cavalier dressed in eighteenth-century fashion has unconcernedly been transformed into the seventeenth-century hero-king Gustavus Adolphus (fig. 2.5). One may imagine a producer of popular prints getting hold of a recycled woodblock of some unknown nobleman or military commander. By simply adding the name of a national hero this anonymous figure was elevated to something meaningful in the same way as a depiction of a bearded man in robes could be designated as Jesus Christ or a biblical Patriarch without any requirements for likeness.

Kings in Profile

Religious motifs were in popular demand, and it was a short leap between God in Heaven and Gods on Earth. An image of Christ and the Apostles made by the German wood engraver Albrecht Schmid (1667–1744) was minutely copied by his younger Swedish colleague Peter Lorentz Hoffbro (1710–59; figs 2.6–7).[24] In

23. For other examples, see Lundberg, 'Formskärar Hoffbro', pp. 105, 109; Clausen, *Det folkelige danske træsnit*, pp. 91, 93, 99, and Bringéus, *Skånska kistebrev*, pp. 172–90.

24. Hoffbro's copying of Schmid's print was first observed by Maj Nodermann, 'Kistan från Forssa', *Fataburen: Nordiska Museets och Skansens årsbok* (1994), pp. 150–1. About Hoffbro, see Lundberg, 'Formskärar Hoffbro', pp. 99–117; Sten Åke Nilsson, 'Petter Lorens Hoffbro och frihetstidens bildmanipulationer', *Vetenskapssocieteten i Lund årsbok 1976* (1976), pp. 5–34; idem, 'On heroes and traitors: The first popular prints in Sweden", in Bringéus & Nilsson (eds), *Popular Prints and Imagery*, pp. 169–80.

FIGURE 2:6. Albrecht Schmid, 'Christ the Lord with his holy Apostles and Evangelists', colourized woodcut. Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nürnberg, HB 24408.

FIGURE 2:7. 'The Lord Christ with the four Evangelists and twelve Apostles', woodcut by Peter Lorentz Hoffbro, after 1744. Nordiska museet, NM 0310791.

FIGURE 2:8. 'Recollection of Sweden's kings, together with their birth, age, and year', woodcut by Peter Lorentz Hoffbro, after 1744. Photo: Björn Green, The National Library of Sweden (Kistebrev 43:2).

1744 he began his business as the first domestic producer specializing in broadsheet woodcuts in Sweden and his influence was such that long after his demise 'Hoffbro's manner' was attached to all types of unsophisticated images, both printed and painted. His recognition was strongly enhanced by the production of playing cards that he started in the 1750s.[25]

The composition with Christ and the Apostles obviously inspired Hoffbro to widen his range of motifs, and he used a similar design, probably of his own invention, to depict the ruling King Fredrik (1676–1751) in the centre surrounded by his predecessors from the early 1500s onwards (fig. 2.8). It has a very crude execution and only the varying beards and hairstyles lend some personal features to the depicted monarchs.

The idea, however, had potential, and Hoffbro developed the theme in no less than three large folio sheets with all 153 Swedish kings from Magog, son of Noah the patriarch, to the ruling monarch (fig. 2.9).[26] This time Hoffbro relapsed to the copying of a model: the original was a intaglio print by the Nürnberg engraver Johann Georg Puschner (1680–1749; fig. 2.10).[27]

---

25. Most famously, songwriter Carl Michael Bellman (1740–95) sang about a harp decorated with cherubs 'in Hoffbro's beautiful manner' (*utaf Hoffbros wackra rön*) in Fredman's Epistle no. 44 (published 1790). For other examples, see *Dagligt Allehanda*, 21 April 1774; *Stockholms Posten*, 13 March 1783; *Örebro Weckoblad*, 14 February 1784. About playing cards, cf. John Bernström, *Spelkort* (Stockholm: Nordiska Museet, 1960). Bernström does not mention Hoffbro in the historical overview, pp. 59–64, but only in the list of Swedish playing card manufacturers, p. 83.

26. This inventive list of kings traced its origin to the half mythological patriotic chronicle written by the exiled Catholic archbishop Johannes Magnus in the sixteenth century: *Historia Ioannis Magni Gothi sedis apostolicae legati Svetiae et Gotiae primatis ac archiepiscopi Vpsalensis de omnibvs Gothorvm Sveonvmqve regibvs qui vnquam ab initio nationis extitere, eorúmque memorabilibus bellis late varieqve per orbem gestis, opera Olai Magni Gothi fratris eiusdem autoris ac etiam archiepiscopi Vpsalensis in lucem ędita* (Rome: Giovanni de Viotti, 1554).

27. Puschner's engravings are treated in a revised dissertation by

FIGURE 2:9. 'Brief description of all Swedish and Gothic kings' reigns from Magog to our most gracious King Adolf Fredrik', woodcut by Peter Lorentz Hoffbro, around 1750. Photo: Jens Gustafsson, The National Library of Sweden (KB, 1700–1829, Liggfol., 82 Aa, 243/50c).

FIGURE 2:10. Johann Georg Puschner, *Verzeihnüß und Conterfeÿen aller Könige in Schweden, wie solche Ordentlich nach einander gefolget, von den Ersten biß auf kden jetzt Regierenden*, engraving, detail omitting descriptive text. Photo: Björn Green, The National Library of Sweden (KB, 1700–1829, Liggfol., 82 Aa, 243/54).

FIGURE 2:11 A–D. Swedish kings and queens from Magog, grandson of Noah, to the eighteenth century. Original etching by Johann Georg Puschner and three woodcut renditions by Peter Lorentz Hoffbro (details). Mythical and medieval rulers are depicted in three-quarter profile, while modern rulers have been copied in pro-

file from coins. Some of the more recent rulers have been depicted in three-quarter profile before coins with their likenesses were available, but their portraits have been updated in later versions. Photo: Björn Green and Jens Gustafsson, The National Library of Sweden.

What is striking is that almost all the mythical and medieval kings are depicted in three-quarter profile, which gives a vivid impression. The modern monarchs, on the other hand, are invariously portraited in full profile. The reason is without doubt that both Puschner and Hoffbro has used coins as models. Since antiquity it was established practice to always depict the ruler in full profile on coins and these became some of the most widespread images of the sovereign.

There are a few exceptions to this rule in Hoffbro's line-up (figs 2.11a–d), but they can all be explained and thereby substantiate the hypotheses. Ulrika Eleonora only reigned for one year and although an unusually large number of coins were struck during that time, the total number with her profile remained at only 217,000 pieces, all in higher denominations.[28] Their circulation was limited, and they were probably difficult to come by two decades later. Adolf Fredrik (1710–71) was first portrayed by Hoffbro as crown prince before coins with his features were in circulation. In a later stage, when he had become king, his portrait was replaced, now with a profile portrait similar to the ones on the coins. The future Gustav III, however, only ascended the throne after Hoffbro's passing and the original depiction was kept also in later executions.

Kings in Circulation

Coins have by far been the most prevalent royal portraits throughout history. It is a well-known story how the fleeing Louis XVI was captured in Varennes after having been recog-

---

Gerhild Komander, which I unfortunately have not been able to get hold of in writing this essay: *Der Wandel des 'Sehepuncktes': Die Geschichte Brandenburg-Preußens in der Graphik von 1648–1810* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 1995).

28. Bertel Tingström, *Svensk numismatisk uppslagsbok: Mynt i ord och bild 1521–1972*, third ed. (Stockholm: Numismatiska bokförlaget, 1972), pp. 265, 287.

nised through his portrait on the French assignats. Admittedly, the assignats were paper money, but they still had the profile of the king printed on them.[29] But exactly how widespread were portraits on legal tender?

Sweden, like revolutionary France, had paper currency for much of the Age of Liberty, but the bank notes did not carry the king's portrait, and much of the coinage only had the royal monogram or some other official marker. Thanks to careful records we can calculate that there were about 2,4 million coins carrying the king's profile minted between 1719 and 1772.[30] The Swedish population at the middle of the century was about 2,5 million people, which means that there was not even one single portrait coin for each subject in any given year during this period. Furthermore, these coins were often withdrawn from circulation because the actual metal value was higher than the nominal value. A conservative guess would be that most subjects probably encountered portrait coins at least occasionally during their lifetime, but it was nothing they handled on an everyday basis. From estate inventories from deceased parish priests, we can deduce that they sometimes kept portrait coins as a sort of museum objects which they would display for visiting parishioners, perhaps as a way of upholding their cultural status in the local community.[31]

Ever since antiquity the minting of coins was regarded as part of the *jura majestatica*, the regalian rights that befell the sovereign as the symbolic agent of state power.[32] That the king's

29. Timothy Tackett, *When the King Took Flight* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 72–3; Mona Ozouf, *Varennes : La mort de la royauté* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), pp. 136–7.

30. See lists of minted coins in Tingström, *Svensk numismatisk uppslagsbok*, pp. 265–7, 281–2, 287.

31. Nordin, *Frihetstidens monarki*, pp. 178–80.

32. See, e.g., 'Monarch', in *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste, welche bishero durch menschlichen Verstand und Witz erfunden und verbessert worden*, 21: Mi–Mt (Leipzig & Halle:

portrait or symbolic representation on the coins could arouse emotions is also evident from contemporary court cases. In 1731, the tailor Jonas Norlin from a small country town refused to accept coins carrying King Fredrik's name because of his depravity and bad qualities as a regent: 'To the devil with the king's money', Norlin exclaimed at a tavern. He did indeed need money, but not the king's money! King Fredrik 'is not good for anything but to sleep with old hags; he's not fit to wage war since he is not born of Swedish blood'.[33] A generation later, in 1757, the sight of the royal monogram embossed in a coin conversely gave the parish blacksmith Johan Petter Råbock from the Åland Islands reason to praise King Adolf Fredrik. 'God bless you', he cried while kissing the coin, 'you too have many slanderers.'[34] Although the coins of lower denominations that these two provincials handled only carried the king's monogram, and not his profile, they were immediately associated with the sovereign in Stockholm who in the ultimate instance guaranteed the currency's worth.

Kings in Metal

Statues in public places is a form of medium on permanent display and with the potential to communicate with large audiences. The earliest public statues of kings in Sweden were raised in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century: Gustav I was set up in 1774; Gustavus Adolphus was put in place in 1791, but not unveiled until 1796; and Gustav III was inaugurated in 1808. I shall concentrate here on the first statue, portraying King

Johann Heinrich Zedler, 1739); and 'Droits régaliens", in *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, 5: Do–Ety (Paris: Briasson et al., 1765), p. 144.

33. The Judicial Audit (Justitierevisionen), grievances and appeals, 27 April 1731, no. 44, The National Archives, Stockholm.

34. The Judicial Audit, grievances and appeals, 20 July 1757, no. 37, The National Archives, Stockholm.

Gustav I, who ruled 1523–60. Historically, he has been the great national hero of Sweden and in romantic historiography he was depicted as the liberator who ended the medieval union between the three Scandinavian kingdoms and created the independent Swedish realm.

King Gustav had no royal origin but descended from Swedish aristocracy. The statue of King Gustav was commissioned by the noble estate in 1757 to be erected in front of their assembly place, the House of Nobility. This was the political centre of Stockholm during the Age of Liberty and the nobility liked to see themselves as the pillar supporting the realm. The idea with the statue was thus that the king would be represented leaving the House of Nobility and moving, or at least gazing, toward the Royal Palace a few hundred metres away.[35]

Due to lack of funding, the statue took almost twenty years to complete, and when it was time to unveil it in 1773 King Gustav III had staged his coup d'état and restored royal power. In this new political situation, and although he was not the commissioner, the king planned for a wholly different framing which instead would highlight the union and mutual love between the sovereign and his people. He planned the event for Midsummer's Day, which had a certain significance.

Midsummer was and is one of the most important holidays in Sweden, but in this context, it also had political implications. In 1756, King Adolf Fredrik and Queen Lovisa Ulrika, Gustav III's parents, had attempted a poorly planned coup to restore royal power. The coup was foiled, several of the accomplices executed, and the royal family threatened with dethronement and expatriation.[36] The attempted coup had taken place around

35. Gunnar Mascoll Silfverstolpe, 'Riddarhuspalatset', in Carl Hallendorf (ed.), *Sveriges Riddarhus: Ridderskapet och adeln och dess riddarhus* (Stockholm: Historiska förlaget, 1926), pp. 179–81; Johan Cederlund, *Skulptören Pierre Hubert L'Archevêque 1721–1778* (Stockholm: Nationalmuseum, 2003), pp. 153–67; Nordin, *Frihetstidens monarki*, pp. 166–70.

36. Elise M. Dermineur, *Gender and Politics in Eighteenth-Century*

FIGURE 2:12. The Riddarholm Canal, The House of Nobility, and Ryning's Palace in Stockholm. The statue of Gustav Vasa is visible just to the right of the centre of the picture. *Midsummer's Eve at Munkbron, an old custom from time immemorial*, colourized etching by Martin Rudolf Heland (1765–1814). The National Library of Sweden (KoB, Sv. Uts. Stockholm, Staden B. 38).

FIGURE 2:13 A–B. Silver medal struck in celebration of the averted royal coup in 1756. The obverse shows the goddess of liberty and the text *Libertas manens*, 'lasting freedom'. The text on the reverse reads: 'The decree for public thanksgiving to God Almighty, who averted the disasters in Sweden, along with the annual Thanksgiving celebration in 1756.' ∅ 78 mm. Uppsala University Coin Cabinet.

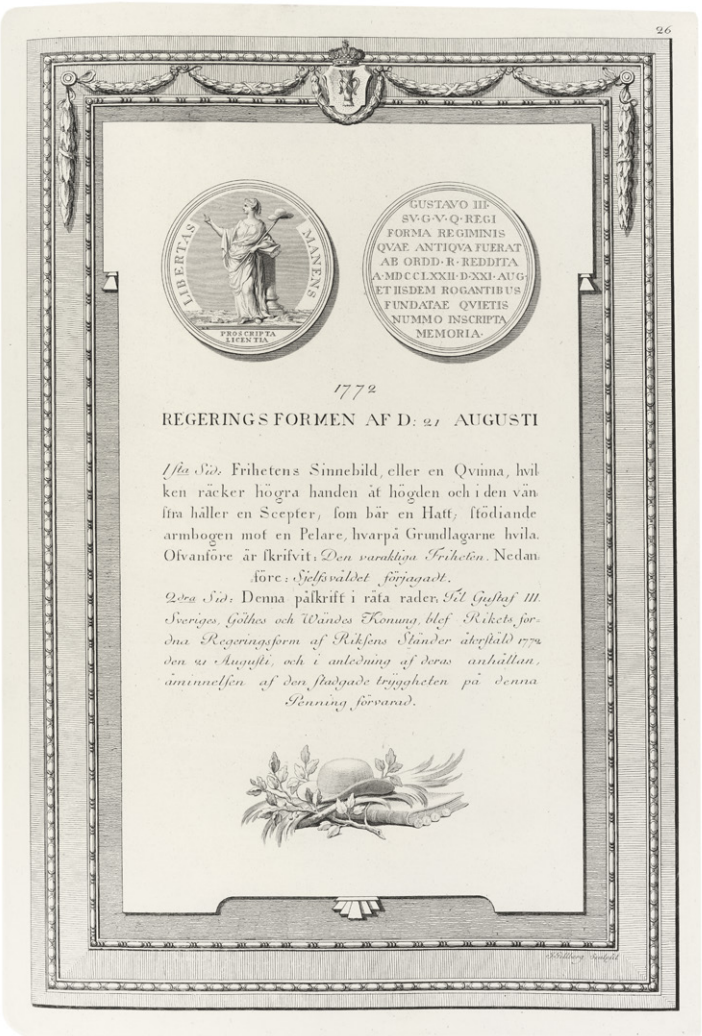

FIGURE 2:14. Jacob Gillberg, engraving from *Skåde-penningar öfver de förnämsta händelser som tillhöra konung Gustaf III:s historia* (Medals depicting the most significant events belonging to the history of King Gustav III), executed before 1793. Uppsala University Library.

Midsummer, and the Diet declared that henceforth Midsummer's Day should be celebrated as a national holiday for the preservation of liberty. Gustav III's desire was to eradicate the memory of this embarrassment for the monarchy and reconnect with his subjects, but his plans were never realized. The statue was finally unveiled on Midsummer's Day 1774 but in the king's absence and without any ceremony early in the morning (fig 2.12). The monument nevertheless became an attraction that was admired by Stockholmers and temporary visitors alike, and it continued to be an important political symbol for both conservative and radical forces.[37]

Another metallic medium, less democratic but strongly symbolic, was medals. After the thwarted coup, the Estates had a commemorative coin struck showing Libertas, the Goddess of Liberty, with one arm raised and the other resting on the Constitution sealed by the four Estates (fig. 2.13). In her left hand, she holds a staff with the liberty cap (*pileus*). The inscription on the obverse reads *Libertas manens* (lasting freedom), and on the reverse is proclaimed the establishment of an annual thanksgiving festival to God who had averted the disasters in Sweden.

After his coup d'état, Gustav III reused this motif on a medal of his own invention, which hailed the new constitution as a triumph for freedom (fig. 2.14). The inscription *Libertas manens* remained, but with the addition of *Proscripta licentia* (license banned). The reverse describes how the Estates restored the old form of government to the king. This was a misrepresentation:

Sweden: Queen Louisa Ulrika (1720–1782), (London & New York: Routledge, 2017) ch. 4.

37. Gustav III to Carl Fredrik Scheffer, 18 October 1773, in *Gustave III par ses lettres*, ed. Gunnar von Proschwitz (Stockholm: Norstedts/Paris: Jean Touzot, 1986), pp. 145–51; Gustaf Fredrik Gyllenborg, *Mitt lefverne 1731–1775*, ed. Gudmund Frunck (Stockholm: Seligmann & C:is, 1885), pp. 127–8, 134; Carl Christoffer Gjörwell's letters in Otto Sylwan (ed.), *En Stockholmskrönika ur C. C. Gjörwells brev 1757–1778* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1920), pp. 74, 83, 126.

in reality, this was the first Instrument of Government that had been dictated from the throne to the Estates instead of the other way around; it was a frequent political strategy of the king to dodge opposition by subtly twist a familiar message to give it a different interpretation. Inspired by Louis XIV, Gustav III wanted to give further dissemination to all the remarkable events of his reign in a series of engravings copying the medals that told of his deeds. And just as Louis le Grand, Gustav did not want his message to escape anyone, so all inscriptions were reproduced in Swedish translation. As this was history written in real-time, both projects progressed continuously throughout the reigns of the two monarchs and were only published after their deaths.[38]

Mediation From Metropolis to Smalltown

When Gustav III ascended the throne in 1771, he was widely celebrated as the first Swedish-born king in nearly a century. His popularity continued to rise when he made his coup and restored royal power a year later. In the following period the printer Eric Hasselrot (active 1767–79) in the small town of Nyköping, some 90 kilometres from Stockholm and with a population of just over 2,000 people, started to produce woodcuts with members of the royal family.[39] One image was made in the same style as Alexander Roslin's portrait of Gustav III, painted in Paris in 1771 and

38. For Gustav III's printed medal history, see Alm, *Kungsord i elfte timmen*, on these medals esp. pp. 132–42. The king's immediate inspiration was *Médailles sur les principaux événements du règne entier de Louis Le Grand avec des explications historiques* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1723).

39. Nils-Arvid Bringéus has published a short overview and a catalogue (incomplete) of Hasselrot's production in 'Kistebrev tryckta i Nyköping', *Sörmlandsbygden: Södermalnads hembygdsförbunds årsbok*, 74 (2006), pp. 19–38. A handful of the woodblocks bears the signature 'C.H.', which may or may not signify Eric Hasselrot's son and successor Carl.

GUSTAF III.

Sweriges, Göthes och Wendes Konung ꝛc. ꝛc. ꝛc.

Här skåda nu en GUSTAFS bild,
Som Swer'ge för sin Konung wördar
Och under hwars Regering mild,
Det tusend' Sällhets fruckter stördar!

Här skåda Adolph Friedrichs Son,
En Stor Monarch, En Vasars like,
En Hulder Far i samma mohn
Som de, för Folk och Foster-Rike.

Bewara Honom Himlen blid
Han länge frid och lycka njute!
Hans dagar warda mång, Hans tid
Med Glädje Himlen sidst beslute!

Tryckt i Nyköping, 1773.

FIGURE 2:15. King Gustav III, colourized woodcut printed by Eric Hasselrot in Nyköping 1773. The National Library of Sweden (Kistebrev 62:8).

showing the king clad in armour and draped in an ermine-brimmed mantle (fig. 2.15).

Gustav had travelled to Paris as crown prince and arrived on 4 February 1771. It was a matter of course for him to take this opportunity to sit for Swedish-born Roslin, who was one of the most celebrated portraitists in France. On 1 March the prince received the message that his father had died and he himself had become king. Gustav remained in Paris and Versailles for another three weeks before returning to Stockholm. Although we do not have all the details, we can be certain that he did not spend this time sitting for more portraits. Instead, Roslin replicated Gustav's countenance from a group portrait of the crown prince and his brothers, which he had begun already before all three had arrived in Paris and finished only after their departure. To the single portrait Roslin added some standard royal paraphernalia to illustrate Gustav's elevation to king.[40]

There was naturally a demand for depictions of the new monarch and the painting was transported to copperplate by the French engraver Charles-Étienne Gaucher in 1772. This engraving was reproduced as frontispiece to Johan Busser's description of Uppsala printed in the first half of 1773 in the Swedish university town, and the book would have been readily accessible to Hasselrot (fig. 2.16).[41]

Historians Daniel Bellingradt and Massimo Rospocher have stressed how:

> intermediality was integral to the communication flows and the media ensemble of Pre-modern Europe, as communication was

40. Gunnar W. Lundberg, *Roslin: Liv och verk*, 1: Biografi (Malmö: Allhems, 1957), pp. 126–38.

41. Johan. B. Busser, *Utkast til beskrifning om Upsala*, 1 (Uppsala: Johan Edman, 1773); Lundberg, *Roslin: Liv och verk*, 3: Katalog och bilagor, no. 319; *Alexander Roslin*, ed. Magnus Olausson (Stockholm: Nationalmuseum, [2007]), no. 59. Busser's book was advertised in *Dagligt Allehanda*, 19 July 1773, and *Stockholms Post-Tidningar*, 22 July 1773.

> conveyed in and to countless combinations of intended and actual publics, meanings, and effects, and in myriad forms, including images […][42]

The circulation of Gustav III's likeness in various apparitions is a fine case in point of what Bellingradt in another context has called 'inspirational echoes'.[43] It took about two years for the echo of Roslin's painting to travel from the salons of Paris over Uppsala and to reach the common dwellers of smalltown Nyköping as a decent and affordable rendition of their sovereign. In much the same way as the ecclesiastical year and the royal proclamations read aloud from the pulpit created a sense of contemporaneity all over the realm, such images of the ruling head of state helped to create a sense of community where everyone felt included from castle to cottage.

Judging from the preserved material, the printer Hasselrot found his niche in producing block prints with royalties. In a similar cut he copied another of Roslin's well-known portraits of Gustav III, also in armour and mantle. This print exists in various editions with both Gustav III's and his father Adolf Fredrik's names under the image, which was a way to maintain demand (fig. 2.17) – surely father and son had to resemble each other, and who among the customers would be able to tell the difference? Other of Hasselrot's woodcuts show a half-length study of Queen Sofia Magdalena (1746–1813) sitting at her dressing table; full-length portraits of the king and queen, respectively, standing next to tables with royal regalia; a full-length illustration of the king's brother Prince Charles, 'duke of Södermanland', the region where Nyköping is situated; the same prince on horseback with a raised marshal's baton (fig. 2.18, the

42. Daniel Bellingradt & Massimo Rospocher, 'The Intermediality of Early Modern Communication: An Introduction', *Cheiron: Materiali e strumenti di aggiornamento storiografico*, 2/2021, pp. 5–29, here p. 16.

43. Bellingradt, 'The Dynamic of Communication and Media Recycling', p. 21.

UTKAST
TILL
BESKRIFNING
OM
UPSALA.

FÖRSTA DELEN
OM
UPSALA STAD,
DESS ÅLDRE OCH NYARE ÖDEN,
SAMT
FÖRNÅMSTA MÅRKVÅRDIGHETER,
FÖRFATTAD
AF
JOH. B. BUSSER,
Histor. och Moral. Lector i Linköping.

PÅ Bokhandl. JOH. C. HOLMBERGS Bekostnad utgifven,
och med många Koppärstick förfedd.
UPSALA,
Tryckt hos JOH. EDMAN, Kongl. Acad. Boktr.
År 1773.

FIGURE 2:16. Johan B. Busser, *Utkast till beskrifning om Upsala*, 1 (Uppsala: Johan Edman, 1773). Title page and engraved portrait of King Gustav III by Charles-Étienne Gaucher after Alexander Roslin's painting. Photo: Magnus Hjalmarsson, Uppsala University Library.

FIGURE 2:17. 'King Adolf Fredrik', in reality a portrait of Gustav III after Alexander Roslin's original painting. Woodcut printed by Eric Hasselrot, Nyköping, 1770s. The National Library of Sweden (Kistebrev 63:8).

FIGURE 2:18. Prince Karl of Sweden on horseback. Woodcut printed by Eric Hasselrot in Nyköping, 1775. The same woodblock was also used to represent Prince Charles of Hesse-Kassel, governor of Norway. The National Library of Sweden (Kistebrev 62:3).

Döden,

Gör mig intet häpen, ändock han är faselig; ty han
af Christo dräpen och kan intet skada mig. Domen fru
tar jag ej stort, fast jag hafwer illa gjort; ty den tröst
jag ej glömmer, at min Broder JEsus Dömmer.

Gefle, tryckt hos Ernst Peter Sundqwist 1800.

FIGURE 2:19. 'Death.' Woodcut printed by Ernst Peter Sundquist, Gävle, 1800. The verse reads: 'Death, do not astonish me, although he is dreadful; for he [is] slain by Christ, and cannot do me harm. I do not greatly fear the judgement, though evil I have done; for the comfort I do not forget, that my Brother Jesus will judge [i.e. is the judge].' The National Library of Sweden (Kistebrev 37:1).

same image was also used to represent Prince Charles of Hesse-Kassel, governor of Norway); King Gustav III on horseback in front of a naïve rendition of the Royal Palace in Stockholm, which would give associations to the coup staged in the capital and hailed in the accompanying verse.[44] The full-length representations show little or no likeness with the persons they portrayed – their attraction lay in the stately presentation of what was supposed to be royalty, but which may have been copied from any stock image of high society.

These royalist woodcuts did not emanate from central authorities but were the product of a printer's speculation in popular demand. Ethnologist Nils-Arvid Bringéus has conjectured whether it was the proximity to Stockholm that made Hasselrot invest in royal motifs. At any rate, the import, recycling, and circulation of stock images were not the province of royal intervention. In a curious image recycling, Ernst Peter Sundquist used an anonymous queen to illustrate 'Death' (fig. 2.19), accompanied by a soothing verse: 'Death do not astonish me, although he is dreadful …' Perhaps it was her gloomy stare that gave the association, but it also illustrates the closeness between *majestas divinæ* and *majestas humanæ*.[45]

---

44. See reproductions in Bringéus, 'Kistebrev trycka i Nyköping', pp. 27–38, and Nordin, *Frihetstidens monarki*, pp. 150–1, 157. Hasselrot was the only printer in Nyköping at the time and that he is the anonymous producer of these woodcuts is confirmed by a comparison with other works from his printshop. The same types and decorative elements have been used in, e.g., *Upmuntran til en glad efterlefnad af Kongl. Maj:ts allernådigste förordning emot yppighet och öfwerflöd, för innewarande år 1767*. I största hast sammanfattad af Carl Friedric Wadsten. Sjunges som sparfwesången (Nyköping, tryckt af factoren Eric Hasselrot, 1767).

45. The complete verse reads: *Döden, Gör mig intet häpen. ändock han är faselig: ty han [är] af Christo dräpen och kan intet skada mig. Domen fru[k]tar jag ej stort, fast jag hafwer illa gjort; ty den trös[ten] jag ej glömmer, at min Broder Jesus Dömmer*.

Kings as Negative Role Models

Despite his political shrewdness, Gustav III's initial popularity soon turned into widespread discontent. The king liked to equal himself with his admired namesakes Gustav I and Gustavus Adolphus, and this was done also by the opposition, but in those cases the comparison did not turn out in Gustav III's favour.[46] A woodcut depicting the statue of Gustav I is a fine example of how outwardly royalist expressions could hide positions critical of the regime (fig. 2.20). It was executed at the expense of the printer Lars Wennberg, who published some of the most radical pamphlets during the press-freedom era in the last years of the Age of Liberty, and who was subjected to several unlawful harassments when Gustav III soon after his coup d'état began to curtail the freedom of the press.[47]

The image is a simple and rather ordinary popular woodcut of Gustav I's statue, complete with bright colourization. What makes it special in this context is the way it is framed in the accompanying description. The text gives a short account of King Gustav's reign and portrays him as a ruler with a special bond to the common people of Sweden.

> [King Gustav] tried to rally the nobility to throw off the Danish yoke, but when he was rejected, he entrusted his cause to the commoners of Dalecarlia, who at first hesitated, so that Gustav set off out of the kingdom; however, the Dalecarlians came to their senses, gathered, and without a leader they defeated a Danish squad and

46. Annie Mattsson, *Komediant och riksförrädare: Handskriftscirkulerade smädeskrifter mot Gustaf III* (Uppsala: Uppsala University Library, 2010), e.g. pp. 155–9.

47. Stig Boberg, *Gustav III och tryckfriheten 1774–1787* (Stockholm: Natur & kultur, 1951), pp. 97–100; Bengt Åhlén, *Ord mot ordningen: Farliga skrifter, bokbål och kättarprocesser i svensk censurhistoria* (Stockholm: Ordfront, 1986), p. 118; Bengt & Agneta Åhlén, *Censur och tryckfrihet: Farliga skrifter i Sverige 1522–1954* Stockholm: Ordfront, 2003), nos. 17.254, 17.256, 17.258, 17.261, 17.266.

FIGURE 2:20. 'King Gustav I's monument, erected on the Square of the House of Nobility in Stockholm, in commemoration of his great services to the Fatherland.' Woodcut published by Lars Wennberg, 1782. The National Library of Sweden (Kistebrev 43:16).

> sent cross-country skiers, who urged Gustav to return […] Within soon Sweden was cleared of all Danes. […] His motto was, *God and Sweden's Peasantry*.[48]

In this interpretation, King Gustav I was neither an aristocrat nor an autocrat, but rather a popular leader who was rejected by the nobles and instead rallied the commoners, the *true* people, to cast of the Danish yoke. It is a story of brave commoners, indolent nobility, and a virtuous monarch – as opposed to the ruling one. Needless to say, Wennberg's claim about the king's motto was a fabrication. King Gustav I's actual motto was 'Blessed is he who fears the Lord', but few of those who purchased the print would have had the historical knowledge to challenge the fake information. In this context, and without spelling it out, it served the purpose of presenting the qualities and political loyalties of a good prince, which anyone for himself could contrast with those of the current ruler. The fabricated slogan also had the positive attribute that it could not be questioned. Anyone who might have suggested that it was false would have to explain what was wrong with aligning oneself with God and the common people.

Royalism was deeply imbedded in the Swedish population, as in most other European nations, but it was not insensitive to the personal characteristics of the monarch. As an idea, people wanted to be loyal to the king, but if the monarch was incapable of carrying out his royal task properly, they would turn against him. Gustav III was assassinated in 1792, and his son and successor was dethroned and exiled in 1809.

---

48. '[Gustav] sökte upwigla Adelen at afskudda Danska oket; men sedan han fick afslag, anförtrodde han sit wärf åt Dall-Allmogen, som i början twekade, så at GUSTAF gaf sig på wägen ur Riket; då imedlertid Dalkarlarne besinnade sig, samlades, och utan Anförare slogo en Dansk Trouppe, samt skickade Schidlöpare hwilka återhämtade GUSTAF […] Sedan blef Swerige inom kort tid ränsadt ifrån alla Danskar. […] Hans Wahlspråk var, *GUD och Sweriges Allmoge*.'

Conclusion

During the eighteenth century, there was a growing variation in the depiction of royals with an increasingly diverse range of motifs. For consumers in the higher echelons of society, the traditional parade portraits were appended with motifs featuring more informal settings. However, for the broader population, the representative images with royal symbols were predominant. Similar to religious art, the depicted individuals were primarily identified through various symbolic attributes, and the physical resemblance in popular imagery was negligible.

Popular depictions often took official portraits as their models, but many times the same templates were used to portray different persons. Trade and exchange with the woodblocks knew no national boundaries. This was a purely commercial process where printers tried to meet expected popular demand. The authorities did not intervene in this process, and the value of these images was deemed negligible to the extent that they do not seem to have been included in the legal deposit to the national archives and the royal library – at least those institutions did not bother to save them, and the random collections that exist in Swedish libraries today have been assembled in modern times.

Popular graphics sometimes reflected current political events, but more commonly conveyed stable sociological impressions. The royal family was a natural part of ordinary peoples' everyday life, just as religion or the seasons. Rulers could be ascribed with both positive and negative qualities, but in any case, they were a fixed point when people looked at the world around them. Kings were powerful symbols since almost everyone had a relation to them, and even when they were not part of official propaganda, the mediation of images from the royal salons to the peasant's cottage helped to forge the nation.