

This is the summary of the Ph.D. thesis *God dag, min läsare! Bland berättare, brevskrivare, boktryckare och andra bidragsgivare i tidig svensk veckopress 1730-1773* [Good day, my reader! Among narrators, letter writers, printers and other contributors in early Swedish weekly press 1730-1773] by Tilda Maria Forselius, published 2015 by ellerströms. See <http://www.ellerstroms.se/book/552>.

## English summary

### 1. "Good day, my reader!" Introduction

Addison and Steele's journals *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, published in London in 1709–1712, were soon imitated abroad. In Sweden, the Spectator genre was introduced and flourished in the 1730s. The first example was *Sedolärande Mercurius* [*Didactic Mercury*] (1730–1731), edited by Carl Carlsson [later Carleson] and Edvard Carlsson [later Carleson], two young civil servants. It built largely on translated and reworked material from its precursors in Britain and elsewhere in Europe; but it also contained essays and letters focussing on specifically Swedish concerns. A year after its closure, *Then Swänska Argus* [*The Swedish Argus*] (1732–1734) appeared. Its editor, Olof Dalin, was also a young civil servant. This journal made quite an impact and became a model for other Swedish journals. In the history of Swedish literature Dalin is regarded as the originator of a high quality Swedish prose. By the end of the decade, a further seven similar journals were published in Stockholm, as well as many minor and temporary ones. I use the term 'moral weekly' for this genre.

The moral weeklies of the 1730s had their differences, but like journals of the same genre in Europe they were devoted to the moral issues of the day, such as education, gender roles, the order of life in the city, and other such topics. They generally follow the same model, with a fictitious author/narrator who writes and argues in the first person. Within this framework, different forms of articles appear: essays, dialogues, letters, poems and stories. Since there had been no 'entertaining' periodicals of this kind in Sweden before, and scarcely any Swedish prose fiction, the number of these moral weeklies emerging during this single decade must be regarded as astonishing. What made it possible? The first aim of this study is to suggest answers to this question, by looking into the cultural and technological conditions of the period: such as printing, distribution, censorship practices, and potential audiences. These will form the subjects of chapters 3–6.

Quite a large proportion of the essay material in the moral weeklies was borrowed from journals in England, Holland and Germany. The editors translated and reworked the material

into forms that they assumed were suited to a Swedish audience. However, there was also material not based on translations. Examples are found in *Sedolärande Mercurius* and *Then Swänska Argus*, often in epistolary – or letter – form. My second aim is to describe and contextually interpret the extensive use of this literary device. It appears as essays in the *form* of letters, as well as in pieces that purport to be sent in from readers in response to editorial invitations. Using terms from the media theories of Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin (1999), I term this a ‘remediation’ of the letter form in the journals. Previous research on the Swedish moral weeklies has not paid much attention to the epistolary form. The scholars of the early 20th century who researched *Then Swänska Argus* simply assumed that the letters were made up by the editors/authors. Moreover, they did not ask questions about the meaning of the form. My intention is to consider the rhetorical function of this epistolary material, and discuss it in relation to the potential strength of the literary discourses of the time. Focusing especially on the letters in *Sedolärande Mercurius* and *Then Swänska Argus*, my questions are: What subject matter is presented in these letters? How do the authors/editors interact with the letter writers? Do the letters seem to have special tasks, as compared with other article forms? These questions are discussed and answered in chapters 7 and 8.

My third aim is to follow these trends further in time by looking into the uses of the epistolary form in a couple of journals in the latter half of the 18th century: *Bref Om Blandade Ämnen* [*Letters about mixed subjects*] (1754), edited by Carl Christopher Gjörwell; and *Brefväxling* [*Letter exchange*] (1772–1773) by Catharina Ahlgren. These journals provoked discussions about their uses of the epistolary form. My aim is to describe both the content of the letters, and the discussions about them, relating them to contextual changes in the print market. This is done in chapters 9 and 10.

## 2. Addressing the reader with claims of improvement. The forewords in *Sedolärande Mercurius* and *Then Swänska Argus*

In this chapter, which can be read as an extended introduction, I analyse the prefaces of *Sedolärande Mercurius* and *Then Swänska Argus*, and develop my theoretical framework. Since one of my underlying interests is to see the material in relation to the power processes of the time, I also describe the theories that earlier researchers have presented about the genre’s relation to culture and society. While the scholars Otto Sylwan, Martin Lamm and Karl Warburg, whose studies were made in the early 20th century, saw the genre primarily as a *product* of the political conditions of the time, more recent philosophers and scholars have claimed that literature (in a broad sense) is *part of* an on-going production of values, and in this way,

through ‘discourses’, exerts substantial power in society. I discuss concepts and theories developed by Jürgen Habermas, Michel Foucault, Benedict Anderson and Kathryn Shevelow. Foucault’s concept of normalisation suggests that a new form of power starts to function in society during this period. His description of how this power operates is in line with the claims that are presented in the forewords of *Sedolärande Mercurius* and *Then Swänska Argus*.

The explicit aim of these journals, stated in their prefaces, is to contribute to the reform of manners and morals in society. The authors believe they can accomplish this through entertaining their readers. In *Then Swänska Argus* it is argued that one of the advantages of the periodical form is its lack of completeness, or resolution. In contrast to a book, a journal is not completed when it meets its readers. Argus explicitly states that its coming issues will be created in collaboration with its readers. In this way, not only the content of the essays, but also the actual form of the medium, is directed to the reformation of manners and morals. The journal itself can improve over time, as the argument develops.

The prefaces of *Sedolärande Mercurius* and *The Swedish Argus* thus indicate the desire to find a rhetoric that leads to – in the words of Wolfgang Iser (1987) – “direct co-operation from [...] the reader”. This implied reader is constructed by means of opening phrases greeting him or her, frequent apostrophies (in the rhetoric sense of a direct address) to the reader, and invitations to contribute. The moral questions in the essays are mainly brought up in a conversational tone, thus breaking with the previous more authoritative pattern of public speaking or writing (as in a sermon). This is however mingled with older conventions; for instance, in *Sedolärande Mercurius* we find a preaching style employed too. In both Prefaces, the reader is addressed as a familiar person, a “Du”, and encouraged to see him or herself as a rational subject, and part of an imagined community: “hemma hos Oss” [at Our home]; related to the developing concept of a Swedish nation. Thus the ‘subject’ of the text is not only subjected to moral teaching, but is also expected to moralise him- or herself, by contributing to the journals. By constructing the reader as an important respondent, a reforming mission is performed. Every one included in this reading community becomes a potential writer. Hence, as with many of their European predecessors, *Sedolärande Mercurius* and *Then Swänska Argus* developed their rhetorical potential through reader participation.

### 3. A machinery of actors. Printers, book dealers, readers and writers around 1730

Chapter three describes the cultural and technological preconditions behind the emergence of the genre. Sweden was a highly centralised state and Stockholm was unquestionably its centre. In 1720, after many decades of autocracy and war, a new political framework was developed.

A new monarch, Fredrik I, was enthroned, and the parliament, largely dominated by the nobility, took over substantial power from the court. Among many other things, new opportunities opened up for trade with other European countries, promising a more prosperous situation for the Swedish people. The printing houses went through a substantial change, from having been almost completely controlled by the state, to the development of private enterprises in Stockholm in the 1720s and 1730s. This orientation appears to have been crucial for the materialisation of the genre since they were launched as a kind of 'experiment' on this market. Another important factor was the establishment of permanent bookshops. The printers and booksellers launching the genre were of German origin and established their businesses in the 1720s.

Almost all the journals of the 1730s were edited, written, printed and sold in Stockholm, and it is highly likely that most readers were also residents of the city. The growth of the state bureaucracy after 1720 provided a special opportunity for a young generation of university-educated men. In this context skilled reading and writing, including letter writing, were highly valued abilities, and useful for careers. Carl Carlsson, Edvard Carlsson and Olof Dalin are examples of young men training in "vittra idrotter" [pursuits of the literati]. The general reading ability in Sweden at the time is considered to have been high by comparison with other countries. However, the kind of reading skills implied by the language employed by the journals was only available to an elite. This elite was located within the five percent of what in Swedish is referred to as "ståndspersoner" (the nobility, priests, bourgeoisie and other people of the standing). Consequently although it might have popular pretensions, the genre was in fact largely produced and consumed by the elite of society.

#### *4. Veiled free speakers. Reflections on the functions of anonymity and censorship*

The establishment of the 'moral journal' genre cannot be explained by any changes in censorship legalisation. After the 1720s the same laws were in force as during the previous autocracy. However, the censor who was in charge in the early 1730s used might what be termed 'kid gloves' when he dealt with *Then Swänska Argus*. This can be seen by his remarks on the hand-written manuscripts, which still largely survive. From time to time the censor's superiors criticized him for being too liberal, and on one occasion they decided to ban the journal. As *Then Swänska Argus* had many important readers who complained about the withdrawal of the publication, the decision was soon reversed. Another sign of liberal attitudes is that the authorities permitted questions about censorship to be raised in the journals. The journals themselves took no clear or consistent stance on this matter. Sometimes they wrote in

favour of censorship and sometimes against. However it is clear that censorship enjoined caution in the journals. For instance, in order to pre-empt it, editors could locate certain politically sensitive subjects on the moon, or in the country of the dead.

The journals were all published anonymously. When it comes to *Then Swänska Argus*, there is evidence that not even the censor or the printer knew who was behind the allegorical narrator 'Argus'. Later, scholars like Lamm (1908) would downplay the fact – which they also acknowledged – that the production of journals depended on collaboration. Different hands have taken part in writing pieces in the manuscript of *Then Swänska Argus*, and it is also known that Carl Carlsson assisted Olof Dalin in starting up the journal. Carlsson wrote essays and helped with contact with the printer. Such collaborations were without doubt an essential condition for the emergence of the journals.

Judging from the debates in the journals, anonymity was regarded as a premise for their publication. To hide behind a mask served as a personal protection, as well as being a well-founded historical convention. With anonymity to protect them, editors and contributors could be "frispråkare" [free speakers], with regard to both their audience, and the authorities. On at least two occasions the censor or his superiors called the people in charge of a journal in for interrogation about certain articles, threatening to ban the publication concerned. As the editors were unknown, it was the printers who showed up, to argue for the continuation of their projects. The mask of anonymity can also be regarded as a part of a performance, that later bestowed credit on the editors. When the projects were finished, most of the editors let their names be known, and apparently this helped to boost their careers as civil servants. Many of those who edited a moral weekly in their youth would later reach top positions in their fields.

##### *5. Luxury, bildung, big-talking and liquor drinking. Stories about the coffee houses*

In his influential 1962 work *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*, Jürgen Habermas makes a claim for the importance of the early coffee houses in the creation of a bourgeois public sphere. He maintains that the *Spectator* genre grew directly out of the coffee houses in London, and he extends this as a model for other European countries. Although my interpretation here does not go along with Habermas's, it is worthwhile to ask whether the coffee houses in Stockholm can be associated in any way with the emergence of the Swedish moral weeklies. It is clear that the two phenomena shared a common geographical base, and involved similar privileged groups of the population. Coffee drinkers and the journals' readers are both found among the elite in society, and most of the

Swedish coffee houses in the 1730s were located in the Old Town in Stockholm, where the journals were also produced, sold and distributed. There were several hundred taverns in the capital in the 1730s, and roughly around 25 coffee houses, which latter figure is a large one considering the price of coffee. It can be explained by the fact that not only coffee was sold there, but also hard liquor. A relevant question is whether the Stockholm coffee houses of the 1730s differed from the taverns, in providing places for the discussion of present-day questions and publications. My general evaluation based on contemporary documents is that liquor drinking, illegal gambling and acts of violence were recurring activities at the coffee houses of Stockholm, as well as the taverns; which would surely make them uncondusive to the moral weeklies. However, there were differences among coffee houses and some may have served the purpose.

The descriptions of coffee houses found in the weeklies of the 1730s are made in the literary manner of a realistic report. By that I mean that they use literary means that give the impression of saying something about the society of the time. References to the names of well-known coffee houses in Stockholm of the day corroborate this impression. However, these narratives cannot be used as evidence for what happened at these locations, as Habermas's argument suggests. They build upon the conventions of the genre, and upon literary, satirical methods. In these ways they imply a critique of the activities of the coffee-houses, rather than a close relationship. According to *Sedolärande Mercurius* and *Then Swänska Argus*, the coffee houses are inhabited either by lazy, fashionable and money wasting young males, or by pretentious big-talkers airing their prejudices. None of these types seems to care for literature and reading. These narratives imply that as a medium, the moral weekly stands for something nobler than the time killing and bragging that flourish in the coffee houses. The techniques that the journals build upon – writing, printing and reading – bring out other qualities, and fit different groups from the coffee-house set, according to *Then Swänska Argus*. Its readers are the reticent, noble and thoughtful people of the city.

#### *6. News with the post. Printed and handwritten news papers and their readers*

In this chapter the focus is on news media, as forming part of the context in which the moral weeklies appeared. I describe how the practice of personal letter writing grew in Sweden from the late 17th century on. The letter was to a large extent used as a vehicle for spreading news, and there were also many forms of hand-written newsletters produced in Sweden that resemble letters. Generally these were produced at the big post offices whose staff had access to news coming in from different places. The only printed news-sheet in Sweden between

1645 and the 1740s, *Posttidningar*, was run by the state, and the selection of news was made with regard to the regime's political needs. Hence it contained short reports from European countries and hardly any domestic news at all. These selective principles led elite people to subscribe to the hand-written news services, which could provide other kinds of information.

One such hand-written newsletter was regularly sent to Madame Eva Insenstierna, who belonged to a wealthy family in the iron manufacturing business. I describe and compare the subject matter of this hand-written paper with that of *Posttidningar* for one month, January 1728. The comparison shows that reports about Russia often appear in the hand-written news-sheet, but not at all in the printed one. There is some background information suggesting that this could have been at Madame Insenstierna's request. In 1719 Tsar Peter had tried to intimidate the Swedish regime into signing a peace treaty to Russia's advantage, by sending soldiers to attack the populations in coastal areas. The soldiers burned down several small villages where Eva Insenstierna's family had mining interests. These negative relations between the Swedish regime and Russia provide an explanation for both the silence in *Posttidningar*, and the occurrence of such reports in the hand-written news-sheet.

Furthermore, Eva Insenstierna was sent far more domestic news than was provided by *Posttidningar*. In January 1728 this news was mostly about high appointments in the civil service. Belonging to a family of importance and having an address in the countryside, these reports are also in line with what she probably would have wished to know. However, even if the contents differ, the design of the news presentations in Madame Insensternas tidningar and *Posttidningar* is similar. In both, the news is narrated in short notes, and in a non-personal, factual manner. This means that they differ a lot from the moral weeklies, where the reader is repeatedly addressed as part of an on-going letter exchange, and where a personal style of debate is developed.

#### 7. "by an unknown hand...". Letters as an article form in the moral weeklies of the 1730s

In this chapter I briefly describe the pattern of epistolary material in the nine moral weeklies published during the 1730s. To separate its various forms, I use three concepts. The term *remediated letters* is used for letter-like texts that are presented in the textual form of real letters (with date, place of sending, greeting phrase, signature). Essays and other pieces are said to have an *epistolary* character when taking up some of the traits of letters. Usually these are a greeting phrase, combined with addressing the reader within the body of the text. Finally, the term *letter references* refers to all sorts of writing about letters, as when the author of an essay

informs the reader that a letter has arrived, or that he has not had time to answer his many correspondents.

Explicit invitations to readers to participate are given in five of the nine journals. These invitations are in some cases included in an essay, or sometimes in a special announcement. Readers are in most cases asked to send letters or contributions to a bookshop, sometimes to the printer of the journal. The general pattern is that after some time the letters appear in the journals where the invitations appeared..

There are remediated letters in all but one of the moral weeklies published in the 1730s. The first two, *Sedolärande Mercurius* and *Then Swänska Argus*, stand out as containing most such letters: 35 and 30 respectively. Recurring themes in the epistolary material are manners, morals and marriage, as well as the nation's economy. Parts of them have an entertaining character, often satirical, and give the impression of being fictitious. Other pieces appear to have been sent in with the intention of setting off or taking part in debates. However, it is not possible to work out a clear division between these categories. Fictive letters use the signs of authenticity, and letters from readers can be satirical and allegorical. What I primarily want to stress is the broad range of the material, and the signals that invite different kinds of reading. A letter of celebration addressed to *Thet Swenska Nitet* (nr 26), written in verse and signed "Then Swenske Karborren", gives more signs of entertainment value and fiction; than a piece under the signature "Sincerus Patriota", taking up problems of the Swedish economy (*Sedolärande Mercurius* II:16). The first example might very well be a letter from a reader simply taking up the lighter narrating style of the journal; while an editor, or someone in his close circle, could have written the second. Just as is the case with epistolary literature in other languages, the weeklies profit from a lack of clarity about this.

The many letter references also have an important function, in conveying that the weeklies are part of, and coined by, a surrounding epistolary culture. In all but one moral weekly the narrators report that they have received letters from readers, and comment on their contents. In *Then Swänska Argus* the narrator Argus repeatedly thanks his correspondents and gives some short comment – for instance explaining why the letter in question cannot be printed, or asking the letter writers to have patience – answers will come. In I:51 Argus describes and comments on more than fifty letters that he has received, "större delen af mina obeswarade Correspondenter" [the lion's share of my unanswered correspondence].

Another point is that the 'letter references' borrow characteristics from the epistolary style. Those that introduce remediated letters in particular often give a strong indication of an event taking place in present time. One example is where the narrator in *Sedolärande Mercurius*

confides to the reader: "Nu är jag illa utkommen: Se på hwad jag fått för ett Bref" [Now I am in trouble. Look what a letter I have received]. This kind of narrating, where something is told about events here and now, Samuel Richardson in the 1750s would call a special quality in letter-form: namely, writing "to the Moment, while the Heart is agitated by Hopes and Fears, on Events undecided". Referring to letters that are arriving there and then, Mercurius shares such a moment of the as yet unconcluded, the 'becoming' in the present, with the reader. The reader is placed in the midst of the process where the handwritten letter is received and remediated in print. When the journal uses the "to the moment" aspects of the letter it can, as a new medium, give a forceful impression of transparency.

#### 8. Letters about trade and morals in *Sedolärande Mercurius* 1730–1731 and *Then Swäniska Argus* 1732–1734

In the epistolary material in *Sedolärande Mercurius* and *Then Swäniska Argus* two prominent themes stand out. One is the national economy; the other is marriage problems, with special emphasis on women's virtues and vices. These themes have previously been the foci of research, but no closer analysis has yet been done on how the epistolary form contributes to them.

I start by describing how a national-economic subject-matter is gradually built up in letters from readers in *Sedolärande Mercurius*. This weekly was published in three volumes, each containing 24 issues. Although the invitation to readers to participate is made as early as the Preface, the first volume does not contain any letters. In the second volume national economical subjects are taken up in one of Mercurius' essays (based on a piece in the German Spectator-type journal *Der Patriot*). Thereafter, several readers' letters take up the debate. The third volume also contains such letters.

Many of the writers argue for restricting imports, in line with the contemporary theory of mercantilism. According to this theory, which was under much debate at the time, a country's imports should not exceed its exports. Many of the letters in *Sedolärande Mercurius* claim that exported Swedish iron is worth more than the useless luxury stuff imported from abroad. It is no coincidence that the epistolary debate about this takes place at the same time as the opening of the 1731 Parliament.

In *Then Swäniska Argus* the epistolary material has a more varied content, and does not function as an on-going debate with readers taking part. Several of the remediated letters are a variant of family and friends' letters, where the writer asks for advice in a personal matter, or takes up a problem that he or she cannot solve. These include worries about moving to the

countryside (II:25), and questions about how one should use punctuation in a written text (II:46). In some cases descriptions of personal circumstances take the form of satirical warnings. In these letters, the writers throw light on problems to do with gender and marriage. In several of them, representing a common theme, women are portrayed as pleasure seeking and not taking responsibility for families and households. Also in the debate letters of *Sedolärande Mercurius*, women are portrayed as problematical, spending money on the imported vanity goods: a consumption habit which is weakening the Swedish economy.

These themes of trade and women's vice are connected by the concept of virtue, which was central to economic thinking in the 17th and 18th centuries. As Runefelt has shown in several studies, society was seen as an organism where household and national economies were analogous. To be virtuous was to follow a set of rules for the common good. For women, obeying their husbands was central. As virtue was – according to Runefelt – tied in with utility in the hegemonic thinking of the time, it is implied that the women's subordination was essential for a well working economy. In the moral weeklies, the epistolary form enhances this message. The material has a special rhetorical power because it gives the impression of involving and representing readers. It creates what Benedict Anderson has called a 'virtual community'. In the virtual community created in the journals through the epistolary material, there is an implied dualism between, on the one side, the male, the rational, the Swedish nation, and the raw material (such as iron) exported from Sweden; and on the other side the female, the vain, consuming imported goods, like fashionable clothes; and the foreign.

*9. The question of "brefs gränsor" [the limit of letters]. A struggle in writing in and around Bref Om Blandade Ämnen 1754*

*Bref Om Blandade Ämnen* [Letters about a variety of subjects] (founded in 1754) is the first Swedish weekly that uses the epistolary form all through. The editor was Carl Christopher Gjørwell, at the time a young man of 23. The narrator signs himself " = = = ". His letters are written to a recipient called "Min Herre!" [Dear Sir!]. The intention to entertain is not so apparent, either in the journal's expressed intention, or in its appearance. As no answering letters are presented, it takes on the character of a monologue. Furthermore, they are not very convincing as letters, as they are constructed like lectures, and do not give the impression of addressing an actual reader. The letters deal with subjects like morality, religion, philosophy, language and politics, and are written in a rather solemn manner. There is an invitation to readers to send in letters or other contributions, and some letters, seemingly from readers, are inserted as well as answers from " = = = " to those readers. There were also a number of separate publications

taking up discussions with *Bref Om Blandade Ämnen*. There were six minor prints of this kind, all written in epistolary form and published anonymously the same year, 1754. Three of them were addressed directly to the publication; two were replies to these three from the journal's contributor; and the sixth was a response to them.

One topic taken up in one of the separate publications, *Svar på Brefwen om blandade ämnen* [*Answers to letters about a variety of subjects*] was the rhetoric in Gjörwell's journal; more precisely, the charge that the letter form was used in an unconvincing manner. The anonymous writer was later revealed to be Abraham Sahlstedt, a diligent language critic of the day, working for the purification of Swedish of foreign influences. I relate the discussion started up by Sahlstedt to the shift in epistolary rhetoric during the 18th century, and show how these questions about literary forms and their status in print were connected with concepts such as Swedish national identity, utility, and bourgeois values. One conclusion regarding the media is that the problems of Gjörwell's journal were connected with the difficulties of combining a personal discourse – in letters to a certain person – with addressing the public – when such letters are remediated in a printed journal.

#### *10. Signs of emotion. Brefväxling 1772–1773*

Censorship was abolished in Sweden in 1766, but reintroduced in 1772 when the new king Gustaf III came to power. During the years 1766–1772 the press flourished, with many new journals and pamphlets appearing. Some of the journals were addressed especially to women. One of these was Catharina Ahlgren's *Brefväxling* [*Letter exchange*] published in three volumes (24, 24 and 20 issues) in 1772-1773. It took up certain aspects of the genre of the 1730s, but also differed in ways that indicate profound changes in the print market and in culture. In contrast to the early moral weeklies, where the narrators receive and publish letters but are not letter writers themselves, the narrator Adelaide presents herself as a genuine letter writer, using the conventions of family- and friendship letters. The main part of the journal consists of letters that she writes to and about different persons with whom she has varied relations. A translation of an English novel is also published in the journal as a serial. I pay attention to how Adelaide's letters are formed by the relations with the different recipients and what kinds of themes and language they produce. In the letters, the main themes are the celebration of the virtues of friendship and good acts. Marriage relations are discussed in several letters, and male rule often criticized. However, the patriarchal system clearly determines Adelaide's attitudes; one example being the rhetoric of gratitude and subordination that informs her writing about a well-doer who has helped her in a difficult situation. Her letters to close friends

are couched in an intimate emotional language. In a letter to her daughter, Adelaide seeks to exert power over the young lady by drawing attention to her publication of the letter. She claims that many people will see the letter, and so be witnesses to the daughter even after Adelaide's death. This is as an illustration of Foucault's description of the emerging societal power as a normalization process, where people adapt their behavior by being observed by others.

The language in Adelaide's letters is related to ideas about the body and the more profound sense of self that grew up during the period of Enlightenment. She often refers to emotions and reactions that the act of letter writing creates in her body, and an impression of authenticity, spontaneity and immediacy is generated by a high level of emotional expression, interrupted speech and ellipses that indicate the inner state of the writer. These ways in which Ahlgren produces a concept of the body are most likely influenced by the contemporary British and French epistolary novel. In the background during this period are also the ideas of the leading epistolary rhetorician of the day, the German Christian Fürchtegott Gellert. In his *Briefe, nebst einer praktischen Abhandlung von dem guten Geschmacke in Briefen* of 1751, he idealises uneducated bourgeois women as letter writers. They were able to write in a direct and tasteful manner, he claimed, rejecting the educated style. In this way he clarifies the norms for a bourgeois woman letter writer of the day; norms that had an impact on many epistolary novels, as well as on the letters in Ahlgren's journal.

### *11. Closure*

After a short resumé, I emphasise three conclusions that are of special interest. They all show how the weeklies and their remediation of letters in different ways were part of the power processes of the day.

The first one relates to the transition from an oral-rhetorical culture to a more literary one, which occurred in the eighteenth century. The material shows clear indications of the growing domination of the latter in the media and its consequences for language as well as for mentalities. The narrators of the journals in the 1730s, *Sedolärande Mercurius* and *Then Swänska Argus*, are allegorical and well anchored in the principles of oral culture and the traditional rhetoric. In my example from the 1770s, *Brefwäxling*, however, the narrator is characterised as a 'real' woman who writes letters. The implied body-concepts differ profoundly. The orientation towards literacy in *Brefwäxling* is also underlined by more introvert reflections, an interest in the self, and a higher degree of emotionality.

The second finding is that the weeklies were exclusive. Although invitations are given to readers in general, the narrators and letter writers that appear in the texts are from the elite. The discourses produced were about the values of the nation, the need to purify the language, the ideal of a well-ordered bourgeois life, and 'useful' female subordination. Threats were seen in terms of the foreign, the fashionable, the unproductive, and people who transgressed the social norms. Such contents indicate the weeklies' functions as part of the process of normalisation. They were part of on-going discourses that would in time form the value system of a modern bourgeoisie.

The third conclusion I want to emphasize is that the published letters had a special rhetorical function. They *represented* contact with the readership, and so were not only or primarily a means for readers to participate with their views. The participation had parameters and functions that went beyond the content matter of what was uttered. The letters in the Swedish moral weeklies legitimized the medium, and gave it the glow of a virtual community opening up for society.