

den som har lämnat efter sig de mest explicita beskrivningarna av hur läsningen har påverkat läsaren själv. Ahokas studerar också i det sammanhanget bland annat professor Henrik Gabriel Porthans syn på upplysningen, men det Porthanska materialet innehåller inte samma mått av självreflektion.

I avslutningen konstaterar Ahokas att upplysningen i hennes källmaterial visar sig på tre olika sätt. Med termen upplysning kunde man referera till vissa franska filosofer och deras verk. Men termen sammanfördes också med den tyska upplysningsdiskussionen – något som Ahokas dock behandlar mycket lite. För det tredje kunde man förbinda upplysningen till ett mera allmänt framstegstänkande och krav på samhällliga förändringar. Upplysningen var ljus, kunskap och vetande.

Avhandlingens styrka är i det bokhistoriska betraktelsesättet och användningen av olika slags bokhistoriska källor. För de läsare som är intresserade av spridningen av 1700-talslitteratur i Finland, erbjuder avhandlingen gott om värdefull information. Behandlingen visar på vilket sätt den europeiska litterära kulturen var närvarande också i Norra Europa, i Sveriges östra riksdel. I hög grad handlar det om läsning och ägande av litteratur som ingick i en upplysningslitteratur i bred bemärkelse, men inom den läsande gruppen fanns också debattörer som kommenterade och diskuterade litteraturen. Ur upplysningsforskningens synpunkt är resultatet mera tvetydigt. Man kunde ha förväntat sig lite tydligare definitioner, men också en fördjupning av den idéhistoriska behandlingen av upplysningsfenomenet. Ahokas knyter "det finska fallet" till händelser och förändringar i hela riket, men hon kunde ha gjort det mer eftertryckligt. Texten är dock njutbar och klar, även om den ställvis innehåller några skönhetsfel. Trots dessa anmärkningar har Ahokas gjort en värdefull och ny insats för den finska 1700-talsforskningen.

*Heli Rantala*

Per Pippin Aspaas, *Maximilianus Hell (1720–1792) and the Eighteenth-Century Transits of Venus: A Study of Jesuit Science in Nordic and Central European Contexts* (Tromsø: University of Tromsø, 2012), 490 pp. [<http://munin.uit.no/bitstream/handle/10037/4178/thesis.pdf?sequence=2>]

The recent years have seen a revived interest in the historical study of "scientific travel", explored as one among the many negotiated social and cultural practices that have shaped the character of "modern science". This book – the author's doctoral dissertation – is a welcome contribution to this vibrant field. It is a piece of rigorous scholarship, based on an unusually extensive and profound inquiry into hitherto untapped primary sources, engaging in a bold confrontation with, but at the same time offering a sound revision of, a substantial amount of received wisdom on its subject. The central character of the book, an important but still under-studied figure in the eighteenth-century universe of learning, is best known on account of an expedition to observe the 1769 transit of Venus between the Earth and the Sun in northern Scandinavia. Here, however, his whole career and achievements are turned to establishing and fruitfully exploiting a meaningful comparative framework for the assessment of processes in the production and circulation of knowledge in the Age of Enlightenment.

The protagonist of the book was a Central European Jesuit of immigrant German stock, raised in peripheral environments of the Kingdom of Hungary, but attaining the status of Imperial and Royal Astronomer in Vienna and international fame thanks to his exploits as a *savant*, and as the leader of one of the (many) emblematic scientific expeditions of the eighteenth century. He is an almost obvious subject for the kind of contextualized and transnational study attempted in Aspaas' book. Yet, until recently, Hell's life and work has been investigated predominantly in an

apologetic (quasi-'hagiographic') and nationalistic vein, hailing his contributions to the universal progress of knowledge, vindicating him against anti-Catholic polemic and professional jealousy, and enshrining him as a member in a scientific canon (whether Hungarian, Slovak and/or international). This simplistic historiographical representation is challenged by Aspaas through an ingenious combination of biographical reconstruction and the "relocation" of European and global astronomical knowledge as pursued in relation to the 1761 and 1769 transits of Venus.

As far as biography is concerned, Hell's life and career is presented in a substantial chapter that goes beyond anything hitherto attempted on the subject in breadth and depth. Aspaas mobilizes virtually all of the secondary literature on Hell, and significantly expands the source base on which that literature has been established, in advancing a convincing argument, distinguished by a great deal of sensitivity towards changing context and historical contingency. The chapter offers a nuanced and empathetic presentation of Hell's personal itinerary. It begins with his training and early career as a scholar and educator in Jesuit institutions at the northern and eastern fringes of the Kingdom of Hungary, and continues with his rise to international recognition as court astronomer in Vienna. The high point of his career was certainly the prestigious expedition on Danish-Norwegian royal sponsorship to the North. At the end we meet Hell as an ex-Jesuit exposed to assaults at his professional integrity, which to a considerable extent hinged on his affiliation with the Society of Jesus. In this narrative, Hell emerges as a scientific arch-strategist. At first, he adeptly exploited the fact that until the late 1760s his order, for which his scientific agenda was of central importance, enjoyed the sympathy of the Habsburg dynasty and government (a "pro-scientific" Jesuit order meeting "pro-Catholic" Habsburgs). This pattern changed

radically shortly after the pinnacle of Hell's career had been reached with the Transit of Venus expedition, when, with the suppression of the Society of Jesus in 1773, his loyalties became split, and he found himself in need of fighting new battles and forging new alliances in order to maintain his own standing as well as the heritage of Jesuit science in Central Europe. The fact that these were predominantly uphill battles, with outcomes that our posterior knowledge deems predictable, does not in the least undermine or diminish their value as tools in interpreting the problem of agency in the history of scientific knowledge production. This nuanced interpretation is the result of the author's ability to critically reassess the established narrative on the subject by bringing new evidence and examine it in the light of recent approaches.

"Relocating science" – i.e., shifting the attention of the historical study of the progress of "modern science" from the putative centres of the European West to geographic regions formerly regarded as peripheral but now recognized as engaged in a productive negotiation with the metropolis – is performed in the book through focusing on the contributions of Hell and the expeditions in "Fennoscandia" (the Arctic regions of Denmark-Norway and Sweden-Finland), in conjunction with the Russian Empire, to the global Venus Transit enterprise of 1761 and 1769. Thanks to meticulous work with a great amount of newly explored material in archives and libraries across Europe, Aspaas not only successfully asserts the important contribution of these geographic regions, hitherto somewhat neglected in comparison with the "mainstream" British and French undertakings. He also employs a useful comparative framework for establishing typological differences within this region, notably, among Sweden, Denmark-Norway and Russia, according to several criteria. These include the degree of permanence and the level of consistency in pursuing the "transit

enterprise" throughout the 1760s, the commitment and ability of the chief protagonists to provide leverage and unity for the relevant activities, the involvement of "amateurs" etc. Besides thus pointing to the important differences of the conditions of astronomical research in each of the countries of the region, the chapter also reassesses Hell's 1769 observations at Vardø, together with their results, the surrounding exchanges and controversies, their apparent ebbing away and subsequent resumption by posterity.

Part III consists of the critical edition and English translation of primary sources: the call for subscriptions to Hell's planned but never published multi-volume account of the Vardø expedition and its results, and the draft introduction to the same work. The presentation of the Latin original of these texts answers the highest standards (not surprisingly, given the fact that the author's original training was in classical philology); while the English translations are not only accurate but also elegant, idiomatic and highly readable (let it be mentioned here that these are merits that also distinguish the academic prose in the first two parts).

In their own ways – by cultivating contextualized biography and comparative history of science, and by making available documents for further research – each of the three parts of the dissertation significantly expand our knowledge of the field. Yet, as all good books, this one too may have been further improved in a few aspects. First, it is a bit too obviously the achievement of an eminent philologist who relishes work with neo-Latin texts, and confronts the significant challenges they pose with enthralling ease. Pronounced by a historian, this judgement is an expression of admiration, but also of a slight dissatisfaction at some missed opportunities for achieving greater theoretical rigour and analytical depth. Aspaas does make an effort to frame the dissertation in tune with recent advances

in the history of science (Ch. I.I.2.I, "Analytical approach"). His reminder that the distinction between "professionals" and "dilettantes" should be borne in mind in this period of arising disciplines is important, and well utilized in the unfolding argument. However, his fully justified stress on the need for the comparative perspective (and then his successful resorting to this perspective in the bulk of the thesis) is not combined with the realization that what he is executing is transnational history as much as comparative; and the two approaches, while complementary, are not the same, nor necessarily smoothly compatible. (I would also contest the claim that the comparative – and transnational – approach has been uncharacteristic of recent investigations in the field, p. 33.) Most important, the "new history of science" in the author's representation appears overwhelmingly a matter of scale, a move from grand narratives ("big histories", in his words, p. 29) to contextualized case studies (among which the seminal micro-historical work of Carlo Ginzburg is somewhat oddly mentioned on p. 30, while a whole range of more pertinent literature is neglected, including the entire range of studies in the highly relevant "science and empire" branch). This is a rather simplified representation of the substantive (as against merely scalar) turn towards a history of science as social and cultural practice – the exploration of the determinants, motivations, intentions and goals of cultivating knowledge that derive from outside the narrow field of "science" itself: loyalties, sympathies, agendas, institutions, power relations, and so forth. In developing his argument, Aspaas deals with such questions extensively. But a more reflexive and extensive confrontation with a wider range of the relevant literature in the introductory part, and subsequently a more consistent application of the conceptual apparatus and vocabulary which is employed in this literature, would have resulted in greater analytical tightness.

A second aspect in which more reflexivity on recent historiographical and theoretical developments would have been commendable, is the phenomenon of the Enlightenment, especially enlightened absolutism, which are crucial for locating Maximilianus Hell and his work in the quadrangle of the Habsburg court, the republic of letters, the Society of Jesus and Hell's Hungarian "*patria*". The Enlightenment, including its relationship with the *ancien régimes* of Europe and Christianity (both of these being central to the issues just mentioned), has been undergoing thorough reassessment, and while there continues to be a tendency in the scholarship that reasserts its essentially secularist commitment and radical, subversive potential, there is also a very powerful, partly also "cultural practice-oriented" approach suggesting that the Enlightenment's basic message was simply concerned with "happiness": the imperative of collecting and systematizing useful knowledge about man's natural, social and moral environment for the sake of making it better – improvement in this world regardless of the beliefs one held about the "next". Thus, the anti-Christian and anti-clerical edge of the Enlightenment, as well as its often asserted association with the primacy of abstract reason, is somewhat attenuated. When it comes to enlightened absolutism, such humanitarian endeavours were coloured by (and were often instrumental in achieving) goals of power politics, i.e., enhancing the internal efficiency and international competitiveness of the state. While, for instance, the anti-clericalism of radical *philosophes* was not unknown to rulers as an inspiration, their intention in suppressing the Jesuit order was chiefly to eliminate a powerful challenge to the integrity of the state government and an obstacle to territorial-administrative consolidation (cf. pp. 136 ff.) More than anywhere else in Europe, in the Kingdom of Hungary the privileges and exemptions of the nobility constituted an even more serious challenge of the same kind, ma-

king that estate indeed a potential ally for the ex-Jesuit Hell after 1773 – but the chances of such an alliance were undermined by the fact that an influential segment of the Hungarian nobility violently rejected the linguistic-ethnographic results of the Vårdø expedition ("Lappianism"), supposedly antithetical to the discourse of ethnic origin on which the social and political ideology of their distinctive status rested. The tensions and paradox-ridden relationships that result from such complexities are not directly relevant to the Transit of Venus enterprise, but they certainly are to Hell's biography, including the possibilities that remained to him open for the pursuit of astronomical and other knowledge after 1773. A more nuanced contemplation of the topics of Enlightenment, enlightened absolutism and "noble Enlightenment" in Central Europe would have added (even) more sophistication to the work of contextualization performed in this important piece of sound and erudite scholarship.

László Kontler

Helene Castenbrandt, *Rödsot i Sverige 1750–1900: en sjukdoms demografiska och medicinska historia* (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 2012). 234 s.

Sommaren 1857 kom koleran till Kristianstad. Var femte invånare insjuknade och av dessa dog mer än hälften, 595 personer. Det var Sveriges tredje värsta koleraepidemi om man ser till andelen avlidna i en enda stad. Det utgör också 15 % av samtliga koleradöda i hela Sverige under det året. Samtidigt härjade rödsoten på andra håll i riket. Jönköpings län var hårt drabbat och enbart där dog under samma år fler i rödsot än i hela Sverige i kolera. I flera av socknarna insjuknade mer än hälften av befolkningen och i Mo glest bebyggda härad