

Axel Hörstedt, *Latin Dissertations and Disputations in the Early Modern Swedish Gymnasium: A Study of a Latin School Tradition c. 1620 – c. 1820* (University of Gothenburg, 2018), 502 pp.

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Modern readers tend to associate a dissertation with a longer monograph, in which the scholar presents his or her own findings and which he or she submits in order to obtain an academic degree. The early modern dissertation could be quite the opposite of this definition: it was generally short, at times covering only three to four pages, and did not necessarily contain new research. In addition, university dissertations could be submitted *exercitii gratia* or *pro gradu*. Only the latter type led to an academic degree, viz. that of a master. Dissertations were not only submitted at the university level, but also formed a part of Swedish primary school (*scholae triviales*) and gymnasium education. The same holds true for the act of disputation. These dissertations and disputations from the Swedish gymnasium are the subject of Axel Hörstedt's doctoral dissertation *Latin Dissertations and Disputations in the Early Modern Swedish Gymnasium: A Study of a Latin School Tradition c. 1620 – c. 1820*. Through a survey of almost 800 Latin dissertations and disputations that date from the early seventeenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century, the author lists their main characteristics, such as their topics, paratexts and

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typographical peculiarities, and explains their socio-cultural role in early modern Swedish society.

Hörstedt's dissertation consists of four parts, each of which contains several subsections. Part 1, *Introduction*, accounts for, among other things, the material's historical and pedagogical background. The gymnasiums were located in cathedral cities, and the first three were founded in Västerås (1623), Strängnäs (1626), and Linköping (1627). In university cities, schools continued to be called *scholae triviales*. This was the case of the cathedral school of Uppsala, which never was transformed into a gymnasium. The educational institution of the gymnasium was tightly bound to the church and the consistory. One of its chief purposes was the training of future church officials, but it also served to provide training for students who aimed to pursue university studies. There were several major school regulations issued during the time under discussion. The regulations of 1649, also known as those of Queen Christina, would be the first comprehensive set of these major educational reforms. Even after the adjustments of 1693 and 1724, the 1649 curriculum would remain for the most part unchanged for almost two centuries. The regulations were composed in Latin, which was the language of the gymnasium. The pupils were taught in Latin and had to speak this language during their recesses. Latin was also used in dissertations and disputations. (In addition, there are a small number of dissertations that were written in ancient Greek.) The Latin language in them was based on classical Latin, but could still exhibit significant variations in grammar and style. Furthermore, it was capable of constructing neologisms to describe phenomena not known in antiquity.

Part 2, *Disputations and dissertations in the early modern Swedish gymnasium*, starts with an overview of the act of disputation. Like today, the disputation was the oral defence of a dissertation, whereas the dissertation was the printed text submitted as a prerequisite for such an examination. The tradition had its origin in the scholastic *disputatio*, a discussion that involved at least three participants: a respondent, an opponent and a master who presided over the act. The purpose of this type of medieval disputation was to search for the answer to a particular question or a set of questions, a procedure that differed from that of the dialectic disputation. The latter was conducted as a duel between two opponents who applied dialectic rules to defend a thesis and thus competed against each other.

The next section deals with the different types of the gymnasium dissertations. As mentioned above, the university dissertation could serve one of the following functions: *pro gradu* or *exercitii gratia*. The *pro gradu* type led to a master's degree, whereas *exercitii gratia* dissertations merely constituted an educational exercise. There were no *pro gradu* dissertations at Swedish gymnasiums. What we find in-

stead is the *pro loco* dissertation, which was submitted as a part of an application for a teaching position at a school. In terms of their contents, gymnasial dissertations could take the form of *theses vestitae* («clothed theses») or *theses nudae* («bare theses»). *Theses vestitae* were longer investigative texts, whereas *theses nudae* usually consisted of short propositions and comprised four or eight pages (the length depended on the number of sheets used for the production of the printed item). In the case of the *theses nudae*, the respondent had to elaborate on the hypotheses or assumptions set forth in the propositions and thus to demonstrate his argumentation techniques. Hörstedt makes an interesting observation: while the university dissertation gradually developed into what would later become our modern doctoral dissertation, viz. an in-depth investigation of a problem or phenomenon, the gymnasial dissertation became shorter and less explorative. The title page of the gymnasial dissertation underwent a simplification as well.

A separate section describes one more type of the early modern dissertation, *theses pastorales*. This was instituted for vicars (*pastores*) and was in many ways equivalent to the *pro loco* dissertations used in the case of school teachers.

The section on the dissertations' subjects offers stipulated categorizations. Not surprisingly, a great number of these texts were concerned with theological issues. We also find many philological topics. Some of the subjects seem to overlap. It is easy to understand the problem of coming up with a strict classification of these semi-academic texts, as the title pages of early modern dissertations did not define their discipline explicitly.

The subsequent sections discuss the participants in the disputation and the question of authorship. Quite a few individuals took part in the act of disputation: a respondent (or several respondents), an opponent (or several opponents), the *praeses*, and the audience. The *praeses* was the chairman of the proceeding. The respondent was the student who defended the theses of a dissertation during the act of disputation. Names of both the *praeses* and the *respondentes* are usually indicated on the dissertation's title page. A text submitted as a *pro loco* dissertation was most probably composed by the person who applied for the position in question. *Exercitii gratia* dissertations were usually written by a teacher. The question of who penned the text thus seems to be less tricky than the problem of ascertaining authorship in the case of university dissertations.

Part 3, *Paratexts in the dissertations*, looks at the texts that surround the dissertation proper. These include prefaces, dedications and congratulatory poems and letters. Gérard Genette's theoretical framework, as developed in his seminal book *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, proves very useful for an understanding of the dissertations' intentions and purposes. This part ends with a case study

that corroborates the analysis: Hörstedt examines the career path of the vicar Andreas Hesselius (1644–1700), who was involved in four dissertations submitted to Västerås Gymnasium and two dissertations submitted to Uppsala University. The dissertations' paratexts reveal how Hesselius' contacts and friendships took him from his gymnasium to that renowned seat of learning and then back to Västerås, and what role these played in his professional advancement.

In Part 4, *Summary and conclusion*, Hörstedt recaps his results from the previous chapters. Once again, he stresses how crucial paratexts are for our understanding of the dissertations' socio-cultural functions. He also notes that paratexts gradually disappeared from gymnasial dissertations, which means that they «lost their representational purpose as a medium for social interplay in the eighteenth century».

*Latin Dissertations and Disputations in the Early Modern Swedish Gymnasium* is an informed and thoroughly researched study. The book's descriptive nature is also one of its great assets. Hörstedt makes us aware of a highly interesting text corpus that for a long time remained unknown to the majority of scholars of early modern culture. His observations and categorizations provide an excellent springboard for further research on this understudied Humanist tradition. The same holds true for the monograph's rich bibliography and appendices. Hörstedt's dissertation will constitute a worthy complement to magisterial studies on other Latinate milieus of early modern Sweden such as Emin Tengström's *Latinet i Sverige: Om bruket av latin bland klerker och scholares, diplomater och poeter, lärdomsfolk och vältalare* (1973), Bo Lindberg's *De lärdes modersmål: Latin, humanism och vetenskap i 1700-talets Sverige* (1984), and Hans Helander's *Neo-Latin Literature in Sweden in the Period 1620–1720* (2004).

Hörstedt is a teacher of Latin in the cathedral school of Uppsala and his passion for the teaching profession shines through in his text: the dissertation is written in an engaging and fluid academic prose, which helps the reader absorb the massive amount of invaluable information that it contains.