Conclusion

Transnationalism and a Model for Scandinavian Pre-Reformation Book History

In one sense, the scale and character of Scandinavian book culture in the period between 1455 and 1525 hold no surprises. In comparison with contemporary trade elsewhere in Europe, the volume of the Scandinavian book trade was not large. The authors and works that could be found in Scandinavia could also be found elsewhere in late medieval and early modern Europe, along with a similarly limited readership. Whether defined by their religious, academic or ecclesiastical character, our findings follow established patterns. And if we have the traditional picture of cultural development in late medieval and early modern Scandinavia in mind, the scale of Scandinavian pre-Reformation book culture and the prosaic air that characterizes its book trade are unexpected. Scandinavia was part of medieval western Christianity, and the book trade in Scandinavia had much in common with such trade elsewhere in Europe, from its infrastructure to the influence of certain types of institution.

We must be wary of dismissing limitations in scale or variety as simply a result of Scandinavia’s geographically peripheral location. The realities are more complex than such an interpretation allows. Scandinavian printing was commissioned and executed as a result of intellectual and economic interactions with printing, publishing and book trading elsewhere in Europe. Little printing was carried out in Scandinavia itself during the period covered by this study, but the example of Hans Urne suggests that the number of printed works produced before 1525 may be larger than previously documented. Language and intended audience were defining characteristics of printing in all contexts, and works printed in Denmark, for example, were usually either in Danish or had not yet appeared outside Denmark. The small number of printers who moved to Scandinavia, often staying only a short time, the small size of the towns, the very nature of everyday life and political realities may have meant that unlike elsewhere in Europe, printed broadsheets were not a vital form of public communication.

The well-developed continental European book trade provided Scandinavia with high-quality books at competitive prices, making the acquisition of books printed outside Scandinavia a rational choice. That decision could be informed by knowledge of the printed products available in domestic and foreign
markets.\textsuperscript{1} Although institutions might hold multiple copies of a single edition or several editions of a single work, Scandinavian book markets characteristically offered a broad variety of titles in small numbers of units, as analysis of Danish monastery libraries convincingly demonstrates.

Examples from Sweden and Finland indicate that if the time taken to ship books is calculated in seasons, then the route from Lübeck across the Baltic Sea to Stockholm was just as time consuming as the route from Lübeck to Turku/Åbo. We need to change our perception of the concept of the periphery so that it takes into account the complex web created by issues of distance, accessibility, population figures, and intellectual exchange. The circumstances of the Malmö List show the importance of personal acquaintanceships and professional considerations alike for the establishment, maintenance and development of an early modern professional book trade, regardless of distance.

Only at the end of the period addressed by this study did a mass market for printed material take shape. With some delay, Scandinavia followed earlier developments in continental Europe as the products of the printing presses ceased to be the concern only of a scholarly elite studying canonical literature. Printed material now had popular appeal and developed alongside new communication and reading practices that included the appearance of the modern author.\textsuperscript{2} Contemporary comments on the Lutheran literature flooding into Sweden in the early 1520s reveal the existence of an informal, non-professional trade in books, and in particular in pamphlets, a trade that is hard to grasp or quantify today. The distribution in Denmark of political pamphlets printed on behalf of the Danish kings in the early 1520s – material of this kind was previously thought to have circulated only outside Denmark – seems part of this phenomenon.

The book collections belonging to monasteries and churches, universities and individual readers all reveal the presence of not only large numbers of books but also a wide array of authors and works that are in keeping with the reading habits and literary canon found elsewhere in Europe. Provenances show the European character of book acquisition and ownership in

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\item Certain titles and/or authors – Boccaccio and his \textit{De mulieribus}, for example – still did not find their way into Scandinavia; Rhiannon Daniels, \textit{Boccaccio and the Book: Production and Reading in Italy 1340–1520} (London 2009), 154ff.
\item Horstbøll, \textit{Menigmands medie}, a study of popular printing in Denmark from the year 1500, represents a masterly investigation into these and similar questions. In many ways early modern British book history parallels that of Scandinavia; see Kevin Pask, \textit{The Emergence of the English Author: Scripting the Life of the Poet in Early Modern England} (Oxford 1996), 9ff.
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