

# The Earliest Account of Swedish Freemasonry?

*Relation Apologique* (1738) revisited

Bro. Dr Andreas Önnorfors

**I**N JULY AND AUGUST OF 1738 A SERIES OF FIVE ARTICLES VINDICATING FREEMASONRY under the heading ‘Fri-Murare’ was published in the periodical *Anmärckningar Wid Swenska Post-Tidningarne* (1734-1760), a literary supplement to the newspaper *Stockholms Post Tidningar* (1720-1820).<sup>1</sup> The first known Masonic activity on Swedish soil had taken place in 1735, when a lodge opened in the capital of Stockholm.<sup>2</sup> Two years later count Carl Friedrich Scheffer (1715-1786) had received a formal constitution together with a complete set of Rules and Regulations, issued in Paris, to establish lodges in the Kingdom of Sweden. Although a dozen or so members were initiated in Stockholm as a consequence of this first institution, there is poor documenta-

<sup>1</sup> The supplement was published on Thursdays in quarto issues with running page numbers 121–140. No. 31: 31 July (p. 121–124); No. 32: 7 August (p. 125–128); No. 33: 14 August (p. 129–132); No. 34: 21 August (p. 133–136); No. 35: 28 August 1738 (p. 137\_140), old style, i.e. differing with eleven days from the Gregorian calendar that was introduced to Sweden in 1753.

<sup>2</sup> On the early history of Swedish Freemasonry, see A. Önnorfors, ‘From Jacobite Support to a Part of the State Apparatus – Swedish Freemasonry between Reform and Revolution’, in C. Révauger, *Franc-Maçonnerie et politique au siècle des Lumières: Europe-Amériques* (Bordeaux: Presses Universitaires, 2006), 203–25.

tion as to the ritual activities of this first Swedish lodge. This lacuna has occupied many Masonic historians, since it might hold the key to the question why the Swedish rite subsequently developed a number of characteristic traits, distinguishing it significantly from other Masonic systems.

When the series of articles in *Anmärckningar* was recovered in the collections of the Royal Library in Stockholm during the 1990s, expectations were high that the first generation of Swedish Freemasonry actually had made a public statement of its purpose and pursuits. In 1997, the series was transcribed and published by Masonic scholar Kjell Lekeby.<sup>3</sup> There is no space for a comprehensive account, but its content can be summarized as follows.

The first article (31 July) sets out with a definition of terms and then describes contemporary anti-Masonic sentiments in continental Europe. Thereafter the 1736 German translation of Prichard's *Masonry Dissected* of 1730 is referred to in descriptions of various rituals and symbols, followed by mentioning Hérault's 1737 Paris exposure as well as a new publication presenting Freemasonry in a considerably brighter light.<sup>4</sup> The second article (7 August) describes the tension between prejudice and reality when judging the concept of a good Freemason. Concerning the age of Freemasonry there is no need for dispute since it is an undisclosed secret. And the secret as such should not be considered dangerous as Freemasons attract eminent members from a wide variety of backgrounds as well as approval from the authorities. That their archives and decisions are kept private may be a cause for envy. Nevertheless, the article mentions some elements of Masonic history as well as its contemporary dissemination in Europe. Operative masonry is described as a craft that requires human cooperation and hence promoting social skills. Some thoughts related to the etymology of the prefix 'free-' in Freemasonry are shared; Greek and Roman precursors are mentioned. On the 14 August, the readers of *Anmärckningar* are informed that the classical roots of Freemasonry relate to its distinctly intellectual and scientific character, but that there was no relationship whatsoever to bacchanalian French fraternities. On the contrary, Freemasonry could 'rightly be called a true brotherhood and pleasant society or an honorable academy'<sup>5</sup> What follows is a scientific manifesto in which Freemasonry is linked to unprejudiced investigation of universe, nature and man. Finally, a few paragraphs describe the physical location of a

<sup>3</sup> K. Lekeby, *Fri-murare 1738: om det tidiga frimureriet* (Uppsala: Forskningslogen C.F.Eckleff, 1997). The revelation of the article series was mentioned for the first time in the membership journal of Swedish Freemasonry, *Frimuraren* 3 (1994). Lekeby's publication was reviewed with further interesting remarks by L.O.Berg, 'Frimurare 1738', in *Acta Masonica Scandinavica* 1 (1998), 204-06, voicing cautiousness in treating the article series as a true account.

<sup>4</sup> For an account on Hérault, see H. Carr, *The Early French Exposures* (London: QC, 1971), 3-5.

<sup>5</sup> 'Fortsättning om Fri-murare', in *Anmärckningar* 33 (1738), 131. All translations from Swedish by the author of this article.

lodge. The fourth article (21 August) continues with an account of the meeting room, claiming that

the only peculiar embellishment is a painting representing *Minerva* or the image of the goddess of wisdom lowered in a light cloud or sky, with some Freemasons visible around her to which she points at the resolution of natural *Phenomena*, beneath the proverb: *Hac Duce, Hac Comite, tot inter aspera firmi* [...]<sup>6</sup>

The reader is informed how scientific problems are resolved in each lodge and the 'supreme lodge', which is followed by an account of organizational culture and various offices. In particular the function of the Secretary is highlighted, responsible for safeguarding the precious resolutions of the lodge since 'Masonic archives can be called wells unable to run dry, out of which can be extracted what brings Sciences and Free Arts to perfection and what otherwise is looked for in vain in other parts of the world'.<sup>7</sup> Among other things, knowledge within Masonic lodges is used in order to rescue people from engaging with alchemy and other bewildering fantasies. To be a member of a lodge also carries an entitlement to paid sick leave together with free medical care. The last article in *Anmärckningar* (28 August) is devoted to a lengthy description of initiation rituals and symbols and denial of accounts in Prichard and Heralut. In conclusion the eminent virtues of Freemasonry are hailed, particularly 'love of sciences and liberal arts'.<sup>8</sup>

All in all, the series of articles in *Anmärckningar*, although somewhat confused in composition, paints a quite favourable picture of Freemasonry, principally highlighting its scientific character. This would require a separate comment; but to follow this would be a diversion. One thing is however very obvious: there is no mentioning of Freemasonry, Masonic meeting places or lodge members *in Sweden* in the articles whatsoever. So why has the text been identified as a source to the history of early Swedish Freemasonry?

### A Narrative of Early Swedish Freemasonry?

Lekeby contends that the text presumably represents the 'oldest Masonic writing' in Sweden, providing insights into 'early Freemasonry during the 1730s' and 'the pre-history to Freemasonry in Sweden'.<sup>9</sup> Highlighting the speculative character of his assumptions, Lekeby furthermore placed the publication of 'Fri-Murare' within the domestic political

<sup>6</sup> 'Fortsättning om Fri=murare', in *Anmärckningar* 34 (1738), 133. See page 15 for a translation of the Latin quotation.

<sup>7</sup> 'Fortsättning om Fri=murare', in *Anmärckningar* 34 (1738), 135.

<sup>8</sup> 'Slut, angående Fri=murare', in *Anmärckningar* 35 (1738), 140.

<sup>9</sup> Lekeby, *op cit.*, 9, 20.

struggles of the year 1738 in Sweden between the two parliamentary factions of 'Hats' and 'Caps' and from which the 'Hats' emerged successfully. Since the first generation of Freemasons in Sweden overwhelmingly belonged to the 'Hats', a pro-French party found among all four estates of the realm,<sup>10</sup> it cannot be ruled out that the continental attacks on Freemasonry, also reported in Swedish press, potentially could have been used by the 'Caps' in order to discredit their opponents.<sup>11</sup> However, no such attempts are known, only an unverifiable allegation, repeated in scholarship ever since and lacking any documentary proof whatsoever, that a royal decree banning Freemasonry was declared in Sweden in 1738. It is altogether highly unlikely that Freemasonry would have been vindicated against the king's declared antagonism given the fact that the secretary in the Royal General Post Office, Anders Rydman, printed *Stockholms Post Tidningar* and its supplement *Anmärckningar* with royal privilege in the royal print office.

More correctly, Lekeby placed this series of articles within the context of contemporary controversies surrounding Freemasonry, following the publication of Prichard's *Masonry Dissected* (1730), that is to say the succeeding stream of exposures, accusations and vindications in articles, pamphlets and books and especially the papal ban of April 1738, *In Eminenti*. Lekeby also noted that huge parts of 'Fri-Murare' in fact 'were translated from an anonymous German vindication', *Gründliche Nachricht von den Freymaurern* (1738).<sup>12</sup> How this might support the claim to represent an account of early Swedish Freemasonry is regrettably not explored further. Freemasonry herein is principally described as a learned institution, an academy guided by Minerva in order to reveal the mysteries of nature. The notion of Freemasonry as an academic body resonated well at the particular point in time of Lekeby's publication. In 1997, the Swedish research lodge *Carl Friedrich Eckleff* was established. Its first prolific Master, professor of Jewish studies Magnus Ottosson, referred in his inaugural address to the presumed intellectual legacy of Swedish Freemasonry, stating that Lekeby's reprint of the article series in *Anmärckningar* had revealed that 'a Masonic academy was not an unknown concept. And it was the establishment of [such an academy] we were dreaming of.'<sup>13</sup> The image of Freemasonry as communicated by the articles in *Anmärckningar* hence was harnessed to an intra-Masonic and quite laudable purpose, to support the foundation of a research lodge. With such a narrative once in place, it is controversial to approach it from another angle.

<sup>10</sup> From the Middle Ages the Swedish Parliament, Riksdagen, was made up of four Estates: Peasants, Towns- men, Clergy and Nobility.

<sup>11</sup> Such as in British domestic politics in the case of the periodicals *The Free-Mason* and *The Craftsman* 1733-34.

<sup>12</sup> Lekeby, op cit., 9.

<sup>13</sup> M. Ottosson, 'Forskningslogen Carl Friedrich Eckleff. Historik och programskrift', in *Invigningskrift för Forskningslogen Carl Friedrich Eckleff den 22 November 1997* (Uppsala: Eckleff, 1997), 26-7.

In 2010, renowned Swedish historian Peter Ullgren published a historical overview of Swedish Freemasonry aimed at a broader readership, *Hemligheternas brödraskap* ('The Brotherhood of Secrets').<sup>14</sup> In his chapter on the early history Ullgren heavily drew upon Lekeby's publication and stated that the articles describe actual lodge meetings.<sup>15</sup> He also lent Lekeby's cautious assumptions academic kudos in repeating that the 'Frimurare' series indicated that the earliest Swedish lodge 'had a difficult time in Sweden of 1738 experiencing huge domestic controversies'.<sup>16</sup> Ullgren also voiced the opinion that descriptions of rituals and denial of rumours prove that 'also in Sweden it is mystery mongering around Freemasonry catching the interest of its contemporaries'.<sup>17</sup> In conclusion Ullgren made the assumption:

that despite the fact that the writings in *Stockholms Post-Tidningar* in 1738 emanate from a German original, they still provide us with valuable insights and furthermore are the earliest more comprehensive source to primal Swedish Freemasonry. Among other things we can conclude that there must have been contacts with German Freemasons.<sup>18</sup>

Ullgren was also of the opinion that

we have reasons to suspect that the idea behind the Masonic articles went further than to defend and to reveal parts of Freemasonry. I hold that it to the same extent was a kind of anonymous marketing of this brand-new brotherhood, directed towards the [parliamentary estate of] bourgeoisie in very precarious times of domestic politics and aiming at to attract people within this estate and broaden the basis for recruitment.<sup>19</sup>

According to Ullgren, 'this hidden motif appears even clearer', when taking into account that leading members of the 'Hat'-party and later Freemasons belonged to the wealthy class of townsmen.<sup>20</sup> It is not to be denied that the articles in *Anmärckningar* (as much as their true sources) defend a cosmopolitan and egalitarian ideal of brotherhood, transcending classes and ranks in society. But the assumption that the articles were published on behalf of the tiny Stockholm lodge in order to recruit new members from dif-

<sup>14</sup> P. Ullgren, *Hemligheternas brödraskap: om de svenska frimurarnas historia* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 2010). For a review, see A. Önerfors, 'Mystik och brödraskap i narrativ och arkiv', in *Historisk Tidskrift* 132:1 (2012), 100–03.

<sup>15</sup> Ullgren, op. cit., 70.

<sup>16</sup> Ullgren, op. cit., 72.

<sup>17</sup> Ullgren, op. cit., 73.

<sup>18</sup> Ullgren, op. cit., 78.

<sup>19</sup> Ullgren, op. cit., 78.

<sup>20</sup> Ullgren, op. cit., 78.

ferent societal strata lacks any credible evidence. From my studies into the membership structure of Swedish eighteenth-century Freemasonry it emerges clearly that the first signs of such systematic broadened recruitment occur more than a decade later.<sup>21</sup> Peter Ullgren is a respected Swedish university-based historian with an impressive publication record, so the remarkable lack of source criticism when dealing with the articles in *Anmärckningar* is particularly striking. It is potentially misleading to readership and scholarship alike.

Regrettably, Ullgren to a large extent uncritically adopts Lekeby's ungrounded assumptions of 1997, the speculative character of which is stated by Lekeby himself. This applies in particular to the qualified guess that the 'Fri-Murare' series is a sign of troubles related to the Stockholm lodge in the politically unstable year of 1738. Secondly, Ullgren also appears to believe that the series of articles in *Anmärckningar* are descriptions of real activities on the ground. Furthermore, the author assumes that the readership is keen on the revelation of secrets more than the idea of Freemasonry as an educated academy. Next, Ullgren (in line with Lekeby) holds that the articles, despite the fact that they represent translations from German, are a source to the earliest history of Swedish Freemasonry. And he adds an almost incredibly adventurous conclusion: that from the articles published in *Anmärckningar* we can assume contacts to German Freemasons. This is too much! Which Freemasons in Germany in 1738 when more precisely the first lodge on German territory was established around this year? Where is the evidence? Where are the letters? Where the inter-personal contacts? If this would not be illogical enough, Ullgren concludes that the article series ultimately aimed at the promotion of Masonic membership among wealthy townsmen.

Had Lekeby and Ullgren paid appropriate attention to the small footnote in *Gründliche Nachricht* shortly to be highlighted this unfortunately misguided scholarship would have taken on a different aspect.

### What is the source of the Swedish 1738 articles?

Kjell Lekeby does not mention how he established the similarities between the text in *Anmärckningar* and *Gründliche Nachricht*. We have to assume that this occurred when he trawled for potential contemporary originals. In his brief notes to the Swedish text, he provided some references to the second German 1740 edition, but offered no systematic comparison of the two versions and no close linguistic analysis. I consulted the original 1738 edition in the Library and Museum of Freemasonry in London and found the

<sup>21</sup> A. Önnersfors and J. Andersson, 'Förteckning över svenska 1700-talsfrimurare' in A. Önnersfors, *Mystiskt brödraskap – mäktigt nätverk: studier i det svenska 1700-talsfrimureriet* (Lund: Lunds universitet, 2006), 154–282 and source studies.

beginning of the text presumably translated into Swedish on the top of page 89.<sup>22</sup> From this, one is inclined to believe that the original is an integral part of the running text in *Gründliche Nachrichten*, more precisely a chapter IX on ‘The Fate of the Freemasons in France’, running from page 75–135. However, this is not the case. Turning to page 88 we find the last paragraph to be an introduction to the subsequent text on pages 89–135.

Meanwhile this account occasioned the publication of a French tract (\*) in which the unnamed author not only demonstrates vividly how wrong the former [Herauld’s famous report from 1736] is, but produces such a beautiful outline of the society of Freemasons that we would act wrongly if we not would disclose it to our esteemed readers. It reads in translation as follows.

(\*) The title is the following: *Relation Apologique & Historique de la Societé des Franc – Maçons*, par I.G.D.M.F.M. à Dublin, chez Patrice Odonoko, 1738. 8vo.

In other words: any resemblances between the Swedish and German text are also based upon a French original, the dimensions of which neither Lekeby nor Ullgren were aware. Had either consulted the relevant page in *Gründliche Nachricht*, all speculation that the ‘German’ text is an account of activities in a Swedish lodge (let alone that it hints at contacts with German Freemasons) could have been abandoned before ever reaching print.<sup>23</sup> Consulting various physical and digital copies of *Relation Apologique* leaves no doubt that this is the original source for both the German and Swedish translation. From preliminary inspection it appears that about 75% of the content in *Anmärkningarna* corresponds to either *Relation Apologique* or to *Gründliche Nachrichten*. Possible other sources and the question of translation are discussed below. This leaves us with the impression that the editor of the material in *Stockholms Post-Tidningar*, presumably Anders Rydman himself (who not was a Freemason), also included independently authored passages, drawing from other sources.

But that is not the end of the story. *Relation Apologique* made a remarkable way through the European press. It was the only publication on Freemasonry ever put on the papal index and was burnt at the stake in Rome in February 1739.<sup>24</sup> It deserves to be better known.

As *AQC*, like what was said of ‘the ‘Masonic archives’, is a well never running dry, there is of course an article on the *Relation Apologique* that initially has to be taken

<sup>22</sup> *Gruendliche nachricht von den Frey=maurern, nebst beygefuegter historischen schutzschrifft* (Frankfurt a.M.: Andreae, 1738), Library and Museum of Freemasonry, call number BE 98 SMI.

<sup>23</sup> The 1740 edition of *Gründliche Nachrichten*, consulted by Lekeby, has even the relevant footnote on the same page, 89.

<sup>24</sup> R.F. Gould, *History of Freemasonry*, revised by H. Poole (London: Caxton, 1951), 179–180, 188. Poole’s revision is far easier to use, thanks to its comprehensive index. Carr, op.cit., xiii–xiv mentions the *Relation Apologique* briefly, but it was not included in the edition of early French exposures.



into account.<sup>25</sup> Its author, W. E. Moss, began by recapitulating the historical development of various exposures in Europe. He then tried to place the *Relation Apologique* within the intricate stream of various publications and counter-publications in English and French appearing at the time. Subsequently the question of authorship, treated below at length, was raised. It is sufficient to say that Moss, judging from four quotes in French arrived at the conclusion that the ‘phrases seem to me to flow from an English pen.’<sup>26</sup> He then discussed the peculiar title motto of *Relation Apologique*, alluding to an obscure alchemical author but in reality an altered quote from Tacitus. Moss also made the point that the text is full of references to classical authors like Homer, Virgil and Cicero. He also commented upon the possible borrowing from the writings of Toland (already suggested by previous authors). The reason why the Catholic Church condemned *Relation Apologique* can according to Moss be reduced to two possible explanations. Parts of its content could have been regarded as blasphemous. But also the energy which the Church invested in banning the publication points to the likelihood that ‘its author was known at Rome.’<sup>27</sup> Since Moss assumed Martin Folkes (1690-1754) to be the author he produced a lengthy chain of evidence. His discussion of the content of *Relation Apologique* was sketchy and unsystematic, making no mention, for instance, of an important reference in *AQC* 32 (1919), and concluded with the unsubstantiated assumption that the entire piece represents ‘a learned joke [by Folkes] to muddy still further the streams of mis-knowledge [*sic*]’ produced by other exposures with the intention to annoy the cardinals in Rome. Moss also believed that *Relation Apologique* later ‘was disinterred by industrious German compilers of Masonic miscellanies’, ascribing great importance to it because of the papal ban.<sup>28</sup> Regrettably, Moss authored his article in complete ignorance of substantial evidence related to the dissemination of the text and fatally misjudging the significance of its content.

### Different versions and dissemination of *Relation Apologique*

Before we turn to the important question of authorship, it is necessary to examine the different versions and the dissemination of *Relation Apologique*. A pseudonym and false imprint presumably conceals the publisher (who is presumably the same as the author).<sup>29</sup> There is no person, printer or bookseller known under the name ‘Patrice Odonoko’ and

<sup>25</sup> W.E. Moss, ‘A Note on the Relation Apologique et Historique de la Société des Franc-Maçons.’ in *AQC* 51 (1940), 226–31.

<sup>26</sup> Moss, *op cit.*, 228.

<sup>27</sup> Moss, *op cit.*, 230.

<sup>28</sup> Moss, *op cit.*, 231.

<sup>29</sup> See also M. C. Jacob, ‘Freemasonry and the Utopian Impulse’, in *Millenarianism and Messianism in English Literature and Thought 1650-1800* (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1988), 142–43.



that Dublin could have been the place of printing can be ruled out.<sup>30</sup> The usage of false imprints, title pages, acronyms, abbreviations and pseudonyms is commonplace during the entire eighteenth century, especially for pamphlets, booklets and brochures of a discrediting or apologetic character. The only trace that possibly can be linked to a particular print office is a square-cut tendril ornament on the title page as well as in the form of a horizontal bar of six such ornaments on page 3. Otherwise the print layout on 92 pages octavo format is almost immaculate.

Masonic scholarship has for a long time assumed that the English translation of *Relation Apologique* is represented by 'An Apology for the Free and Accepted Masons'. This is because such a translation from a French original, curiously first published in 1748 in Frankfurt am Main, was inserted from at least 1754 into *The Pocket Companion and History of Free-Masons*. This however is wrong. I have therefore contacted Bro. Michael Taylor (Scunthorpe), author of an article on early French anti-Masonry in *AQC* 124 (2011), asking him to produce a full English translation. We shall shortly be editing this together with a commentary. In this paper I shall be using this translation when making references to *Relation Apologique*. It is from this translation, in its current manuscript state entitled 'An Apology and Account of the History of the Society of Freemasons' that I will quote when making references to *Relation Apologique*.

It is an interesting question to ask when exactly the *Relation Apologique* was published. Taking the Swedish translation as the latest point in time during the year of 1738 (because of the remote and peripheral location of Stockholm on the map of the European book market at the time), the latest possible date is about a month before publication, i.e. at the beginning of July. We know that communications with the Swedish capital from the literary hubs of Hamburg and Stralsund in northern Germany usually took no more than three weeks during summertime and we need to count in a couple of days for translation, editing and printing. If *Gründliche Nachrichten* was the Swedish source, then the same calculation applies, it must have appeared during the first half-year. Through meticulous research however it has been possible to narrow down the publication date further, potentially locating the accurate source of the Swedish article series. Between 1704 and 1794 the monthly periodical *La Clef du Cabinet des princes de l'Europe* was published in Luxemburg. From 1714–94 this was within the Austrian Netherlands, an area roughly comprising the Belgium and Luxemburg of today, divided by the diocese of Liege.<sup>31</sup> This periodical was aimed at a domestic, but also French read-

<sup>30</sup> Ironically, the brain behind one of Nigeria's largest fraud scams is a certain A. Odonoko and there is also a city with an identical name in the same country.

<sup>31</sup> [www.luxemburgensia.bnl.lu/cgi/luxonline1\\_2.pl?action=info&sid=clefcabinet](http://www.luxemburgensia.bnl.lu/cgi/luxonline1_2.pl?action=info&sid=clefcabinet) [accessed 22 May 2014]. See also R. Hilgert, *Les journeaux au Luxembourg* (Luxemburg: Service information et presses, 2004), 11–19 and *AQC* 121 (2008), 234–238 on a mixed French chivalric fraternity related in *La Clef*.

ership in Lorraine, each edition running to as many as several thousand copies, distributed throughout the region. *La Clef* provided monthly reviews of recent political developments in European affairs and those in the rest of the world.

In April 1738, *La Clef* published an article ‘Contenant le Portrait & une Relation apologique de la Societé des Francs-Maçons.’ The first part was concerned to correct a piece in the March issue of *La Clef*, where Masonic ritual had been exposed in accordance with the Hérault version.<sup>32</sup> In its place the author inserted the famous Masonic song ‘Apologie des franc-maçons’, first published in 1737 and composed by the prolific Parisian Freemason and physician Procope.<sup>33</sup> This was followed by a reproduction of *Relation Apologique* (using almost the same division of sections as in the original printed booklet) continued over into the May and June issues.<sup>34</sup> Theoretically it is thus possible that *La Clef* served as the main source for the Swedish translation.

This conclusion is supported by the fact that the first Swedish article inserted in *Anmärckningar* (31 July) did not begin immediately with the text of *Relation Apologique*. Instead, we find parts of the exposure published in the preceding March edition of *La Clef*.<sup>35</sup> The Swedish text thus refers to a ‘recent columnist who last March was of the same opinion that the earlier mentioned author of the German tract [Prichard] related to the peculiar ceremonies of the Freemasons, but now revokes everything in a later published account.’<sup>36</sup> This fits of course perfectly with the account in *La Clef* and does not correspond to anything similar in *Gründliche Nachrichten*. Moreover, the change of mind of this ‘recent columnist’ is explained by ‘his’ verses preceding the historical account ‘with the idea of a righteous freemason, that he is a good citizen, a zealous and complaisant subject for his king and fatherland as well as entirely charitable towards his fellow human being.’<sup>37</sup> The line in the poem reads: ‘Qu’est ce qu’un Franc-Maçón? Et voici le portrait:/ C’est un bon Citoyen, un Sujet plein de zèle,/A son Prince, à l’Etat fidèle,/ Et de plus un ami parfait.’ Since Procope’s name and the (wrong) information given on the title page of *Relation Apologique* were omitted in *La Clef*, the Swedish translator assumed that the same person had authored both poem and subsequent account.

<sup>32</sup> ‘Article II. Qui comprend la reception des Francs-Maçons’ in *La Clef du cabinet* 3 (1738), 166–170 and an important ‘Remarque’ on page 235.

<sup>33</sup> ‘Apologie des franc-maçons’ in F. Naudot, *Chansons notes de la tres venerable confrérie des maçons libres* (1737), p. 4–6. A number of Swedes were initiated in Procope’s lodge in Paris.

<sup>34</sup> *La Clef du cabinet* 4 (1738), 341–349 covers pages 3–25 in *Relation Apologique*; 5 (1738), 417–430 covers pages 25–61 and 6 (1738), 493–504 covers pages 62–92 respectively.

<sup>35</sup> Both summaries and direct quotes such as a footnote in *Anmärckningar*, p. 123, almost identical to *La Clef*, p. 169.

<sup>36</sup> Lekeby and Ullgren did not spend any considerable thought on who this ‘recent columnist’ might have been, since they never consulted *La Clef*. Lekeby, op.cit., 20 contends that his name ‘not is revealed’.

<sup>37</sup> *Anmärckningar*, 125.

Is it possible that copies of *La Clef* reached Sweden? To the best of my knowledge, no issues from 1738 are preserved in Swedish public libraries. However, Sweden and France were interlinked in tight cultural encounters, not at least through Swedish noblemen serving in the regiment *Royal Suédoise*, mostly garrisoned in northern France.<sup>38</sup> Hence it is possible to envisage that *La Clef* as a major European news outlet was read in Stockholm among the francophone nobility.

Although it seems improbable that *Gründliche Nachrichten* indeed was the source of the Swedish translation, it is curious as to why the author of the article in *Anmärckningar* initially referred to a German translation of Prichard's *Masonry Dissected* and not to a French or the original English version. This points to the thought that he might have used different sources. When it comes to *Relation Apologique*, the German translation was also summarized in the periodical *Acta historico-ecclesiastica* in the same year.<sup>39</sup> Contemporary reference was also made to the *Relation Apologique* in *Mercur et Minerve*, a French periodical published in Berlin by the Huguenot Formay.<sup>40</sup> Another comprehensive summary appeared in early 1739 in *Die neue europäische Fama*.<sup>41</sup> But in this journal (one similar to *La Clef* communicating mainly political news from different European countries) an article on Freemasonry had already been published in 1737.<sup>42</sup> It referred to the German publication of Prichard's exposure, followed by an account of the edition of Anderson's 1723 *Constitutions*. Furthermore the anti-Masonic sentiments of the British periodical *The Craftsman* were conveyed, followed by news on Freemasonry in Holland, France and Italy.<sup>43</sup> The reader also received a complete prose translation of Procope's above-quoted song, as in the Swedish version. This leads me to the conclusion that the

<sup>38</sup> Önnerrfors, 'From Jacobite Support' (2006) as quoted above.

<sup>39</sup> *Anhang zu den Actis historico-ecclesiasticis und derselben zweyten Band* (Weimar, 1738), 1062–1071. Here also the first mentioning of a Swedish prohibition of Freemasonry, that ever since has been repeated in the literature, void of substantiating evidence. Freemasonry was already treated in the appendix to the first volume 1736 *Anhang zu den Actis historico-ecclesiasticis und derselben Ersten Band* (Weimar, 1736) "Von den berufenen Frey-mäuerrern, Francs-Massons, Free-Masons oder Frey-Metzeler", 105–119. This is certainly one of the first printed references to Freemasonry in a German context. See G. Kloss, *Bibliographie der Freimaurerei und der mit ihr in Verbindung gesetzten geheimen Gesellschaften* (Frankfurt am Main; 1844), 8, (no. 81 in his bibliography). *Die neue europäische Fama welche den gegenwärtigen Zustand der vornehmsten Höfe entdeckt* 44 (1739), 670–77.

<sup>40</sup> *Mercur et Minerve, ou Choix des Nouvelles politiques et litteraire, les plus interessantes* (1738), 73–76, 83 and 150. Unfortunately I have been unable to consult this reference. See [dictionnaire-journaux.gazettes18e.fr/journal/0936-mercur-et-minerve](http://dictionnaire-journaux.gazettes18e.fr/journal/0936-mercur-et-minerve) [accessed 22 May 2014]: 'Les principaux centres d'intérêt sont l'incrédulité, le spinosisme, les francs-maçons, les moralistes anglais, surtout *The Craftsman*', which promises interesting reading. For an attempted overview over the dissemination of *Relation Apologique* see Mossdorf, op. cit., 558–9.

<sup>41</sup> *Die neue europäische Fama welche den gegenwärtigen Zustand der vornehmsten Höfe entdeckt* 36 (1738), 1014 reports on the publication of *Gründliche Nachrichten* as well as of the translation of *Relation Apologique*.

<sup>42</sup> *Die neue europäische Fama* 23 (1737), 986–994.

<sup>43</sup> *Die neue europäische Fama* 23 (1737), 1045–1046 relates the growing anti-Masonic position of the French government.

first article inserted in *Anmärckningar* (31 July 1738) used both *La Clef* and *Die neue europäische Fama* as its source.

To summarize the most probable chain of diffusion: *Relation Apologique* was in all likelihood printed in spring 1738 and first communicated in April in *La Clef* (Luxemburg). A full translation into German was published in *Gründliche Nachrichten* (Frankfurt) and a comprehensive summary in *Acta historico-ecclesiastica* (Weimar). We find references in *Die neue europäische Fama* (Leipzig) and in *Mercur et Minerve* (Berlin). Finally, during summer 1738, a Swedish translation appeared in *Anmärckningar* (Stockholm). This is a quite remarkable and quick dissemination across European space and it occurs at just the same time as the communication of the papal condemnation of April 1738. It appears as if *Relation Apologique* and its message was particularly appealing to authors and editors across Europe and could be used as an argumentative counterbalance to growing anti-Masonic sentiments. So what does the text actually say about Freemasonry?

### The Structure and Content of *Relation Apologique*

Each of the ninety printed pages of *Relation Apologique* consists of twenty-one lines, containing between four and seven words per line. On average the entire text consists of about ten thousand words, which is consistent with the English translation produced by Taylor. Unlike its Swedish translation, the text is not subdivided into particular sections, neither numerically nor thematically. Thus it is not easy to formulate a summary of structure and content, which explains why Moss might have got lost in his attempt to capture its significance.<sup>44</sup> For the sake of clarity in discussing the text I have subdivided it into 89 sections, principally following its division into paragraphs with indented inceptions. While it would take too much space to present the content comprehensively, there are certain recurring topics that can be summarized using section numbers in brackets.

First, in sections 1–4, the topic concerns the reputed secret of Freemasonry, causing people to view it as suspicious and dangerous. Against this it is argued that Freemasonry is an egalitarian fraternity, cutting across different layers of society from which illustrious members are recruited. Furthermore, the meeting places of Masons are well known, while processions and tributes to sovereigns demonstrate that Freemasonry has nothing to hide and not is suspicious in any way. This opening of the text is typical of the genre of ‘apology’; the tension between opacity and transparency is addressed. The next sections (5–7) are used for an argumentative analysis, appealing to the critical capacity of the reader to make his own judgments (which happens throughout the text): What is plausible to conceive? Which kind of argument is consistent? For instance: how is it

<sup>44</sup> Moss, *op.cit.*, 231.

possible to credit the sudden contemporary exposure when the fraternity has existed for such a long time and gathered so many different members? This is an issue the author frequently returns to and which we may call an attempt to explain the ‘psychology of prejudice’: why are people inclined to believe in the marvelous, when the truth lies open? A topic that constitutes a real thread throughout the entire *Relation Apologique* is introduced in paragraph eight: that Freemasonry is modelled on Greek and Roman precursors, something that is discussed at length in later paragraphs (27–33). The author highlights the English origin of Freemasonry and its contemporary dissemination throughout Europe. He then fervently attacks anti-Masonic writers, yet another constitutive topic of the entire *Relation* (8–9). In contradistinction to the lies spread, the key concepts of Freemasonry are introduced ‘shrouded in a cloud with Minerva’ (Minerva here mentioned for the first time)<sup>45</sup>: Reason, Truth, Natural Desire for Happiness and a ‘fight against so-called fate to escape its tyranny’ (10). These key concepts are constantly repeated throughout the text.

Again, anti-Masonic writers and their exploitation of credulity are attacked, mocking that information is gathered from ‘Cabalistic spell-book’, ‘the chaos wrought by the Templars’ or ‘the very authentic History of the Vampires of Hungary’ (11–13). These deviations from reason are the opposite of Freemasonry. Freemasons’ archives are presented as a metaphor of pure knowledge (a motif that returns later in section 63). The secret of Freemasonry is placed within the (Lockean) ‘bounds of what is natural’, repeating neither the errors of Ikaros nor Prometheus, and only reaching as far as reason carries (14–16). This should be enough to quieten those who ‘make up puerile tales about’ Freemasonry. The author promises to treat its etymology, organization, ‘aims and its value, their rules, their customs and the ceremonies they observe in the reception of new members and in the every-day meetings’ (17–18). Unfortunately this structure was not followed. Again the author returns to the fact that fiction and truth are opposed to each other (19) and develops in a few paragraphs (20–22) an interesting meta-comment on epistemology, where he concedes that ‘conversation is the best way of learning’. Man is in need of the ‘words of long dead writers or the living word of fruitful discussion’ (this figure of thought recurs later in the text, for example in 36 and 70).

When treating the etymology of the word ‘Freemasons’ the author attacks genealogical writers and hence long historical accounts (23). Instead, he engages in an intriguing metaphorical argument (24–26). Construction and building is at the centre of the formation of human society since they require cooperation, labor division and mutual assistance. Masonry is thus to be understood in its concrete social context, as a craft bringing about civilization. The prefix ‘free’ is a marker to distinguish from the workmen

<sup>45</sup> See also 55 and 82.

those 'whose work is noble, liberal and has no other aim than to improve and enlighten the mind'. Here is introduced yet another major theme of the entire *Relation Apologique*, a dichotomy of a Platonic sort between the physical world and the realm of ideas, of body and soul, within which Freemasonry is placed: 'Masons work to improve human physical conditions . . . Freemasons . . . work towards the improvement of the mind.'

A substantial part of the text is devoted to outline the ancient precursors of Freemasonry (27–32). These are, however, neither the mystery cults nor Bacchanalia. In the societies after which Freemasonry was modelled, 'food for the body was never as abundant or rich as that for the mind'. The author inserted a quite lengthy quote from Cato, where the pleasant nature of these communities is outlined. Clear references are made to stoic philosophy on a number of occasions where the ideal is hailed of 'living in such a way as to have no fear of death and not to be disdainful of life' (33). The next paragraph (34) is worth quoting in its entirety:

All things in the Universe are but one; and this one is everything in all things. That which is all in all is God, eternal, immense, and wise. It is the All that we exist and live and move. It is through the will of this All that every being is created and it is to him that all beings must return. He is the beginning and the end of all things. And this is the solid principle upon which all their arguments rest.

The origin of this remarkable quote has not been established yet, but it communicates a pantheist, potentially holistic worldview, quite radical for its time. Of course the ideas expressed resonate well with the concept of a 'Great Architect of the Universe' and Newtonian science alike. The next paragraph (35) outlines the basis of a research program (developed further in 46–48) in line with Virgil's motto *felix, qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas*.<sup>46</sup> Within the landmarks of stoic harmony, the Freemasons 'endeavor to confirm the theory by accurate and convincing experiments'. Masonic equality in practice is called 'true Christian Charity' (36). This brilliant image of 'the latest generation of Freemasons' is again contrasted to those who rather believe in Cabala and engage in necromancy or astrology, 'devoid of all sound judgment and common sense' (37). The author returns to the dichotomy between soul and body and makes a distinction between simple enjoyment that 'satisfies the senses and passions' and 'purer and more enduring pleasures' (38). Masonic self-esteem is created through a higher form of pleasure, its 'happiness is not dependent on events, nor on things they have to look for outside themselves', with other words, it rests within each freemason. The purpose of Masonic ceremonies is to bring about this inner and introspective content and 'to moti-

<sup>46</sup> Virgil, *Georgics* II, 490. This has been adopted as a motto by the University of Sheffield, among other institutions of higher education and research.



vate each other to concentrate on it, like coals on a fire that keep their heat better when close together than when they are spread about' (39). This Epicurean ideal is further developed in the following paragraph (40), the true sage lives happily detached from the profane world, on a wise distance from the mass and its trivial goals in life.

After a lengthy quote from Cicero (41), the author continues to explain what it means to 'live a peaceful life indifferent to worldly things' (42), which in principle is to rise above the forces that appear to determine your life (fear, chance and fate), lose the dread of death, accept your lot, understand the laws of nature. In Freemasonry 'all feelings and passions are subdued', it offers 'shelter from the tyranny and falsehood of the world under the wings of liberty and truth' (43). Again, the author returns to the image that lodge meetings have nothing in common with bacchanalia, French drinking fraternities and other excesses: 'it is nothing other than a true Brotherhood, a pleasant Society or, to speak the truth, a celebrated academy', where truth is established in harmony between body and mind (44). This dichotomy is developed in the next paragraph (45), arriving at the classical Platonic image of Soma Sema, 'the body [a]s a kind of prison in which the spirit is held'. True Freemasons feed the body as much as needed in order to be able to use their full intellectual capacities, the 'freedom to think and to judge rationally'. Thus the mind is empowered to break 'the chains that bind it to the earth' and to explore the astronomic wonders of the universe, 'inconceivable manifestations of an infinite power' (46).

As much as Epicurean moral philosophy was hailed in a previous section (40) its atomic theory is now dismissed since in it 'chaos and chance' determine the processes underlying the physical world. The author thus reveals himself rather as a Newtonian, which is an interesting statement in a scientific debate that characterized the period. After having contemplated the heavenly orders, the Freemasons now (47) 'descend to the centre of the earth', where the creation of metals and rocks is observed, 'prodigious results of the same principles of which they are all composed', again a potential reference to Newtonian physics. From the mineral realm, now they 'rise to the surface' (48) in order to explore both the botanical and the animal world (through dissections) and finally studying oceans and climate. To this quite all-encompassing research program is added 'moral teaching', politics foremost (49):

which they believe to have been formed of the government of the Universe whose separate parts are in constant movement for the conservation of the whole and whilst the whole, with the aid of an infinite intelligence, provides for the harmony of the separate parts for their own conservation.

This sounds like a cosmopolitan application of Newtonian principles to the art of government. The author admits that it is impossible to provide any proof for his state-



ments (50), but contrasts in the following (51–52) his glossy image of Freemasonry with Hercul's exposure and what I earlier called the 'psychology of prejudice', a readiness to accept simple explanations. The bad is 'quickly accepted' whereas the best 'is never enough to win the argument for the good. . . . Vice is more attractive than truth' – a conclusion that of course still holds true for media psychology of our own age. Again playing with the possibility that his account on Freemasonry might be completely fictional (53), a 'product of my imagination', 'a novel', he strongly argues that the mere 'idea of the society . . . put before the reader is splendid'. And what does it matter, he says, 'if it leads to virtue and as a consequence of that, to happiness'. The following paragraphs are devoted to an exhaustive description of meetings, meeting rooms and certain rules observed among Freemasons (54–70). But this account has some striking features that are worth being particularly highlighted. First the reader is informed (55) that

the only decoration visible [in the lodge room] is the goddess of wisdom, a painting of Minerva [see 10], shrouded in the cloud through which can be perceived Freemasons to whom she is explaining the mysteries of Nature with this motto: *Hac duce, hac comite, tot inter aspera firmi*. Which is: Guided and Accompanied by Wisdom we can never be overcome even on the most rugged of pathways.<sup>47</sup>

One paragraph (58) is devoted to a description of how solutions to proposed matters are reached. If there is no agreement within a lodge, the issue is sent to the Grand Lodge who then circulates copies to other lodges, however each lodge 'is filled with men of such wide-ranging knowledge that it is difficult to raise a matter which they find themselves unable to resolve.' A related method, searching and sharing knowledge through a network of written correspondence, is also described later (63). The office of the Secretary (61) is crucial to this form of Freemasonry because he is 'writing down in hieroglyphics or abbreviations the essence of what is said in order to aid his recollection'. All the items discussed are gathered in an annual volume (62), containing 'an infinite number of problems resolved . . . learned men and artisans have there a resource and font of help that cannot be found anywhere else in the world.' It is possible to get free access to this vast network of information 'submitting a written request' (63). At no cost for the users, 'artisans and all manner of people are equally entitled to use the facility'. Archives of Freemasonry 'are an inexhaustible source of all sciences and where all arts can be perfected' (see 15 above).

The egalitarian character of Freemasonry is again stressed (64–65), there are no ranks adopted from external society, Freemasonry accepts 'men of all nations and reli-

<sup>47</sup> This motto is important since it provides us with yet another key to the source of the Swedish translation in *Anmärckningar*.

gions', creating a communitarian spirit of mutual benefit. The nature of knowledge that is requested is explained in a later paragraph (66), workmen 'raise matters concerned with the perfection of their craft', 'chemists and alchemists speak of the problems they encounter in work'. Interestingly it is explained how the enlightening knowledge communicated by Masonic lodges contributes to turn practitioners away from their alchemical labor. The author then makes the extraordinary claim that lodges 'have contributed towards the fines imposed on several freethinkers [*libertin* in the French original]'. And Masonic charity includes both a form of debt insurance, as well as paid sick leave and free medical care for members (66–67). The account of organizational practices ends with another statement (69) that Freemasonry 'is a learned academy of members with different talents which . . . form, incontestably, the most knowledgeable body in the Universe.' Any problem and difficulty can be resolved and decided upon, 'the reputation of both the living and the dead is never blackened' (70).

Another set of paragraphs (71–78) is devoted to a potentially realistic description of initiation rituals, quite different from the known exposures and practices of the time.<sup>48</sup> There is no space to discuss the possible sources of this account at length, however some facets deserve to be highlighted. The master (73) requests the lodge to 'follow the teaching of Cato who exhorts us to be wholesome, happy and content' whereupon the lodge members reply: 'Let us pray and imitate Cato, let us honor Plato, Socrates and Xenophon'. To my mind, such an invocation of ancient philosophers is unique to this version of imagined or real ritual. The very last part of *Relation Apologique* (79–89) attacks and ridicules Hercul's and others' exposures and yet again the credulity of readers. In particular the author casts heavy irony upon the account of the 'two columns from the ruins of King Solomon's Temple' (83–85) and a predilection for triads (88).

To summarize: the *Relation Apologique* castigates frequently in quite rough and biting irony anti-Masonic publications, authors and readers of the time, for being prejudiced and referring to non-trustworthy sources (such as hermetic writings). Freemasonry on the contrary is likened to a learned society guarded by Minerva, where problem-oriented systematic research is carried out and new knowledge produced and shared without cost, following the principles of truth, reason and free inquiry. It is deeply rooted in the intellectual and literary traditions of antiquity, similar to associations flourishing among Greeks and Romans and solidly embedded within the philosophical ideas of Platonism, Stoicism and Epicureanism (lacking its atomic theory), stressing ideals of happiness, concealment and harmony. Good life is achieved through a sound balance between body and mind and distanced from any excesses and desires of the masses. Free-

<sup>48</sup> Carr, *op.cit.*, xiv concedes: 'there are a few notes which seem to touch on ritual matters by way of criticism and correction of certain items in *Réception d'un Frey-Maçon*; but the corrections are quite absurd and the notes are so vague as to be of no value at all in our present study.'

masonry's quest for knowledge takes place within Locke's 'limits of human understanding', defined by 'nature'. The principles underlying the entire creation are characterized by a Newtonian and potentially pantheist understanding that also can be applied to politics of a cosmopolitan sort. As for the 'Christian' charity of Freemasonry it encompasses support for freethinkers with the provision of insurance against financial troubles and the ill health of its members. Moreover, Freemasonry promotes social egalitarianism among its ranks. What we learn about the organizational culture and rituals of Freemasonry is not unrealistic, but has few connections to known practices at the time.

Rather, *Relation Apologique* communicates the image of Freemasonry as primarily a scientific institution. The repeated mentioning of Minerva as a Masonic attribute might be a marker. It may refer to what Elizabeth Eisenstein has branded 'a special 'Minerval' branch of Masonry'. She claims: 'The figure of Minerva, often in conjunction with Mercury and other special symbols, occurs frequently in frontispieces of works favoured by freethinkers of a certain kind.'<sup>49</sup> Margaret C. Jacob also is of the opinion that Freemasonry, aligning itself to radical enlightenment, frequently chose Minerva (and her owl) as a symbol: 'The cult of Minerva in the eighteenth century was a symbol of the Enlightenment . . . It is not accidental, therefore, that in the course of the century the figure of Minerva when combined with certain symbols took on decidedly Masonic associations.'<sup>50</sup> From there it was of course not so difficult to develop a particular degree or ritual, as happened four decades later in the 'Minerval stage' of the Bavarian order of Illuminati, 'assuming the character of a scientific academy'.<sup>51</sup> It is also indeed not far fetched to identify the *Relation Apologique* as the first manifesto for the establishment of research lodges, such as the *Minerva zu den drei Palmen* in Leipzig (1741), *Neuf Soeurs* in Paris (1776) or *Zur wahren Eintracht* in Vienna (1781).

I have elsewhere argued that *Relation Apologique* can be read as the blueprint for a striking and peculiar visual print product of the period, a diorama displaying a Masonic lodge, produced by Engelbrecht in Augsburg, Germany possibly between 1740 and 1750.<sup>52</sup> As with *Relation Apologique* the diorama has little in common with contemporary exposures in text and image. Engelbrecht's print displays Freemasons engaged in mathematical calculation, reading books, discussing globes and astrolabes, measur-

<sup>49</sup> E. L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 143, where the involvement of Freemasons in the encyclopaedic project is discussed.

<sup>50</sup> M.C. Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans* (Los Angeles: Temple, 2003), 30–1, 36, 176–177, 179. See also by the same author *Living the Enlightenment* (Oxford: OUP, 1991), 65 (where explicit reference is made to the *Relation Apologique*), 81, 118, 153.

<sup>51</sup> See the articles 'Illuminaten', 'Minerval', 'Minerval illuminatus', 'Minervalkirche' in *Internationales Freimaurer Lexikon*, Eds. E. Lennhoff, O. Posner, D. A. Binder (München: Herbig 2006), 409–11 and 569.

<sup>52</sup> A. Önnorfors, 'Secret Savants, Savant Secrets: The Concept of Science in the Imagination of European Freemasonry', in André Holenstein, Hubert Steinke and Martin Stuber (Eds.), *Scholars in Action. The Practice of Knowledge and the Figure of the Savant in the 18th Century* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2013) 433–458.

ing rocks or listening to instructions.<sup>53</sup> The centerpiece is made out of a table at which learned items are deliberated, potentially resolved and recorded. I am convinced (but cannot prove) that Engelbrecht has borrowed the motifs from the German versions of *Relation Apologique* that circulated at the time and that it was a conscious choice not to display fanciful rituals, but rather to elaborate the scientific character of Freemasonry. The strong association of early Freemasonry with the scientific culture of its time is well known, so both the *Relation Apologique* and the diorama can be read as another and very programmatic and passionate statement of this link.

To uncover potential sources (of inspiration) for *Relation Apologique* would require meticulous scientific work that for the purpose of this article so far only has been carried out on a rudimentary level. It is obvious that Herault or at least extensive accounts of it (like published in the Luxembourgian *La Clef*) were known to the author. Picart's above mentioned work has two pages of a rarely observed commentary to the engraving that in its tone and some details is very similar to the *Relation Apologique*.<sup>54</sup> One striking analogy is the mentioning of alchemy and chemistry ascribed to Freemasonry. Picart also appeals to the capacity of judgment of 'thinking men' and the weak plausibility of certain negative accusations. Herault's account of Freemasonry is likewise ridiculed, 'containing as it does little more than gross exaggerations and serious errors' on the same level as the publication 'la Clavicule de Salomon', that also is mentioned in the *Relation Apologique*. A substantial part of the text has been adopted from Toland's *Pantheisticon* (1721) as Moss rightly assumed. However he never followed up the trace already hinted at by earlier authors. In a future edition of *Relation Apologique*, the obvious references (about twenty) will be commented upon extensively.<sup>55</sup>

Another potential source of inspiration could have been the appearance of the first printed version of Ramsay's famous *Discours* in The Hague in 1738. They both emerged in the spring of that same year. There is the slight possibility that a manuscript version had been available.<sup>56</sup> In fact, as we will see, the *Relation Apologique* has been ascribed to

<sup>53</sup> Several images are copied from the engraving included in Picart's *Cérémonies et Coutumes*. See below.

<sup>54</sup> Bernard Picart, *Cérémonies et Coutumes Religieuses de tous les Peuples du Monde* (Amsterdam: Bernard, 1736), vol. IV, 251–52, the engraving is paginated 252a-d. The entire chapter (226–58) is curiously titled 'Dissertation sur les sectes mystiques' and Freemasonry treated in connection with the Pietist movement of 'Labadistes'. Thanks are due to Bro. Michael Taylor for his fine first translation into English of this extremely important footnote to Picart's work.

<sup>55</sup> 'Vertheidigung' in F. Mossdorf, *Encyclopädie der Freimaurerei* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1828), 558. The original 1794 source for this claim has been consulted and has led to a fruitful investigation of the original publication by Toland.

<sup>56</sup> A. Bernheim, *Ramsay et ses deux discours* (Paris: Editions Têlètes, 2011), 21, 42. G. Eckert, 'True, Noble, Christian Freethinking': *Leben und Werk Andrew Michael Ramsays (1686-1743)* (Münster: Aschendorff 2009), 551–90 is one of the best accounts of Ramsay's relationship to Freemasonry. See also M. Baldi, *Philosophie et politique chez Andrew Michael Ramsay* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2008), 130–139.

Ramsay. The cosmopolitan tone of Ramsay's oration is one similarity. Another is that a number of classical authors (but with a preference for Horace) are cited in order to characterize the nature of Freemasonry. For Ramsay, ancient mystery cults were precursors of Freemasonry while for the *Relation Apologique* they were not. Ramsay also hails the 'love of liberal arts', philanthropy, tranquillity, equality and temperance within the lodge. One striking similarity between the manuscript version of Ramsay and the *Relation Apologique* is the intimate connection of building activity to the civilizing and social effect of Masonry: 'C'est par notre art que les mortels ont trouvé le secret de bâtir des maisons et des villes pour rassembler les grandes sociétés.'<sup>57</sup> I have elsewhere argued that Ramsay in his oration expresses what can be branded 'encyclopaedic cosmopolitanism' since he outlines the vision of a free and universal transfer of knowledge.<sup>58</sup> Ramsay states that by bringing about an 'universal dictionary of all liberal arts and useful science', 'all nations might increase all knowledge' or in the original manuscript 'all nations may borrow sound knowledge' from each other ('toutes les nations peuvent puiser des connaissances solides').<sup>59</sup> This is of course a figure of thought that resonates well with the passages in *Relation Apologique* where the author describes how knowledge is shared within and across a trans-territorial network. The passages in Ramsay that hint at his fascination for the construction of a heroic and chivalric genealogy coupled to hermetic traditions of a 'prisca sapientia' handed down to Freemasonry and apocryphal accounts of biblical events, certainly would not have accorded particularly well with the author of *Relation Apologique*. So the question remains, if not Ramsay or Folkes, who can this author have been?

### The authorship of *Relation Apologique*

The most obvious clue to authorship would normally be found in the title page. But as already stated, information on printer and place of printing are falsified and the title motto can simply be read as a learned joke directed towards hermetic traditions. Moss was certainly right ascribing the correct origin to Tacitus as follows: 'Rara temporum felicitate, ubi sentire quae velis, quae sentius dicere licet', which is translated as 'These times having the rare good fortune that you may think what you like and say what you think.' This freethinker's motto is written on the tomb of an obscure hermetic writer, 'Calid. Arab. in Tumolo Hermet.' and thus hermeticism altogether.<sup>60</sup> So given the slip-

<sup>57</sup> Bernheim, *op.cit.*, 78.

<sup>58</sup> A. Önnersfors, 'Cosmopolitanism and what is 'Secret': Two Sides of Enlightened Ideas concerning World Citizenship' in *The Idea of Cosmopolis: History, philosophy and politics of world citizenship*, Ed. Rebecka Lettevall and My Klockar Linder (Södertörn: Södertörn Academic Studies, 2008), 65–86.

<sup>59</sup> See the translation by Georges Lamoine, 'The Chevalier de Ramsay's Oration 1736–37', *AQC* 114 (2001), 230–3.

<sup>60</sup> Moss, *op.cit.*, 229.

perty character of the title page it is no surprise that the author states his name as an acronym riddle, 'J.G.D.M.F.M.'. Let us now examine the different possibilities:

(1) *André Michel de Ramsay (1686-1743)*

According to Kloss the first attribution to Ramsay was made in the above mentioned *Mercure et Minerve* 1738 (Berlin).<sup>61</sup> This has not been verified since the volumes of this periodical are very rare. Kloss states without further explanation: 'All factors speak for Ramsay being the author.'<sup>62</sup> It is easy to understand this attribution, since the *Gentleman's Magazine* in April 1739, following the burning of *Relation Apologique* by the papal executioner, inserted the notice:

*Rome.* There was lately burnt here with great Solemnity, by order of the Inquisition, a Piece in *French* wrote by the Chevalier *Ramsay* (Author of the *Travels of Cyrus*, &c.) entitled an *Apologetical and Historical Relation of the Secret of the Free Masons*, printed at *Dublin* by Patric Odonoko. This was published at *Paris*, in answer to a pretended Catechism printed there by Order of the Lieutenant *de Police*, (See Vol. VIII., p.54.) much like *Pritchard's* in *English*.<sup>63</sup>

Gould is unfortunately not entirely consistent when treating Ramsay in this regard. On the one hand he states that Ramsay's above quoted oration was printed as the *Relation Apologique* and gives a wrong date (1738) for the quote in the *Gentleman's Magazine*.<sup>64</sup> On the other hand, Gould is very aware of the fact that it is quite unsafe to attribute the authorship to Ramsay. It is worthwhile to read the entire quote:

Many ingenious attempts have been made to prove the truth of this statement and to show the community of style and ideas between Ramsay's Oration and the *Rélation*. As long as there was reason to suppose that the Oration was delivered in 1740, it was difficult to decide why Ramsay should have been selected to father this production and the very audacity of the assertion carried conviction with it. It could only be assumed that the correspondent of the *Gentleman's Magazine* was possessed of certain private information. But if the Oration was delivered in 1737, it is easy to conceive that the *Rélation* might well have been attributed to the same hand in 1738. A mere guess at the hidden authorship. This fact tends to corroborate the Oration's date of 1737, for it may safely be affirmed that Ramsay did not write the *Rélation*. Its

<sup>61</sup> G. Kloss, *Bibliographie der Freimaurerei und der mit ihr in Verbindung gesetzten geheimen Gesellschaften* (Frankfurt am Main: Sauerländer, 1844), 22, no. 251 and 252.

<sup>62</sup> For the discussion of Ramsay as author, see also G. Kloss, *Geschichte der Freimaurerei in Frankreich* (Darmstadt: Jonghaus, 1852), 29–30, 34 and 39.

<sup>63</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine* 9 (1739), 219 under 'Foreign Affairs'. See also *Boston Weekly News Letter*, 14 June 1739 where a slightly different text was inserted.

<sup>64</sup> Gould, op. cit. 179–80.



style is far less pure than his, the orthography is totally distinct. Ramsay doubles all his consonants in such words as *apprendre, combattre, difficile*; the author of the *Relation* writes *aprendre, combatre, dificile*, etc. The initials of the author, J. G. D. M. F. M., might perhaps be read as J. G., Dr. Med., Free Mason.<sup>65</sup>

It is striking that Gould making this comparison did not pay attention to the differences in content, but at least he attempted a plausible suggestion as to how to solve the acronym. None of the recent scientific works on Ramsay have paid any attention to the wrong attribution of authorship and have hence also not brought forward any proof for it.<sup>66</sup> The only evidence supporting Ramsay's association with the *Relation Apologique* may be the overlaps in content.

## (2) Martin Clare (1688/89–1751)

The attribution to the famous London Freemason Martin Clare (1688/89–1751) as author of *Relation Apologique* owes its origin to a profound confusion. It has been loosely assumed that Clare was the author of a tract entitled *The defence of Masonry*. This was published in 1731 by James Roberts and also printed in the 1738 edition of the *Constitutions*.<sup>67</sup> Oliver claims that

in 1739 a pamphlet, written in French, was published in Dublin, under the title of 'An Apology for the Society of Freemasons.' It appeared in the same year in an English form, translated, as was generally supposed, by Martin Clare. It created a great sensation, and promoted the translator to the office of D. G. M.' The reference is given as follows: '“An Apology for the Free and Accepted Masons, occasioned by their persecution in the Canton of Berne; with the present State of Masonry in Germany, Italy, France, Flanders, and Holland. By J. G., D.M.F.M.” Dublin, Patrick Odoroko [*sic*], 1739.'<sup>68</sup>

Unfortunately, a short digression is required. In 1736 there was published a *Free-Masons Pocket Companion* (with a second edition 1738) which was fully translated into German in the *Gründliche Nachrichten*.<sup>69</sup> In 1754 the *Pocket Companion* was revived in a new edition.<sup>70</sup> Here, for the first time, a text was printed with the same reference as Oliver

<sup>65</sup> Gould, op. cit., 188.

<sup>66</sup> Eckert, op. cit.; Baldi, op. cit.

<sup>67</sup> D. Knoop, G.P. Jones, D. Hamer, *The Early Masonic Catechisms* (Manchester: MUP, 1943), 160. See also A. Prescott, 'Clare, Martin' in *Le Monde maçonnique des Lumières*, eds. Charles Porset and Cécile Révauger (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2013), vol. 1, 808–816.

<sup>68</sup> G. Oliver, *The revelations of the Square* (New York: Masonic Publishing, 1866), 42–3. The wrong spelling 'Odoroko' occurred for the first time in *The history of the Learned April* (1739), 311–2, where the papal condemnation also is inserted. See also W.E. Moss, 'Freemasonry in France in (1725-1735); (Part I) The Sources, and the first Paris lodges' *AQC* 47 (1938), 56–61.

<sup>69</sup> Kloss, op. cit., 11 (no. 129), 12 (no. 131).

<sup>70</sup> Kloss, op. cit., 13 (no. 141).



gives, without the attribution to 'J.G.D.M.F.M.' and the false imprint, instead stating 'Translated from the FRENCH, by a Brother / Printed at Frankfort. M.DCC.XLVIII [1748!]'.

This information was for some reason omitted or misread by Oliver. Since the 'Apology' is reproduced in the 1754 *Pocket Companion* under a separate title page it gives the impression that it represents an original print. This is probably not the case. A work with this title is not listed in the authoritative bibliographies or library catalogues. Although it would be highly significant to determine the source for the text in the 1754 *Pocket Companion* this must be left aside. The content of 'An Apology' refers clearly to events after the appearance of *Relation Apologique* in 1738 and presents for instance an English translation of the papal decree against it from February 1739.<sup>71</sup> Apart from its vindicative character there is nothing in common between the two texts. It is hard to imagine how Oliver could have attributed the 'Apology' to Clare and at the same time identified it as the same text as *Relation Apologique*. This confusion was repeated in his *Golden Remains* (1847), where 'An Apology' (of 1754) is reproduced.<sup>72</sup> Possibly Oliver was tricked by the subsequent text inserted in the *Pocket Companion*, an 'Address' to Grand Lodge from 1735 ascribed to Clare, 'translated into French and German and annexed to the foregoing APOLOGY', which is of course illogical: how can the annex to an apology from 1748 allow conclusions about the author of a work that obviously was published in 1738 and burnt a year later in Rome?<sup>73</sup>

It is obvious that Oliver profoundly failed to identify the author correctly and thus has misled later generations of research.<sup>74</sup> One aspect remains however striking: that the form of Freemasonry as practised by Clare (for instance scientific lectures and demonstrations at lodge meetings and a deep interest in experimental sciences) fits perfectly well to Masonic academic culture as advocated by the *Relation Apologique*. As we will see, there might be a chance that the true author indeed might have known about this important overlap between Freemasonry and science as practiced in some London lodges at the time.

<sup>71</sup> *Pocket Companion* (1754), 255–7. Together with the papal bull called 'abominable infractions upon human Liberty'.

<sup>72</sup> G. Oliver, *The Golden Remains of the Early Masonic Writers* (London: Spencer, 1847), vol. 1, 33 repeats the wrong attribution, in vol. 3, 78–133 the reproduction. To confuse the matter even more, the COPAC entry (British library catalogue) ascribes the authorship of the 'Apology' to Ramsay!

<sup>73</sup> *Pocket Companion* (1754), 282. Prescott, op. cit, 813 where it is said that the 1759 edition clearly attributes the address to Clare.

<sup>74</sup> See for instance A. Wolfstieg, *Bibliographie der freimaurerischen Literatur* (urg bei Magdeburg: Verein deutscher Freimaurer, 1912), 575 (no. 34500) where Oliver's claim is iterated.

(3) *Martin Folkes (1690–1754)*

Neither contemporary attribution nor confusion lies behind the claim of Moss that Martin Folkes is to be identified as author of the *Relation Apologique*.<sup>75</sup> It is mere conjecture. Moss maintained that the acronym on the title page should be resolved 'J(adis) D(eputé) G(rand) M(aire) F(olkes) M(artin)'.<sup>76</sup> As proof of his statement, Moss drew on the 'queer' French spelling (from a couple of quotes he concluded that the author must have been English). He considered that Folkes would have been capable of copying the style of Toland whose influence on the *Relation Apologique* had been assumed. As already stated above, Moss claimed, without presenting any credible evidence, that the controversial author must have been known to the papal authorities, and thus causing the prohibition and incineration. Folkes was in Rome in 1735 and 1736 and while there may have been involved in the production of a possibly provocative medal, struck, 'repute says,' at the papal mint. I think this suffices to demonstrate that Moss's attribution has no substance at all. Again, as in Clare's case, Folkes is a representative of the affinities between Freemasonry and Newtonian thought and hence could have been known to the true author of *Relation Apologique*.

(4) *The true author*

Unlikely as it might seem, it is the title page of *Relation Apologique* that holds the key to a proper identification of the author. Gould proposed that the last four letters should be resolved as D(octeur) M(édecin) F(ranc) M(açon). So who is then J.G.? To the best of my knowledge, it was Jean Sgard who presented the first correct attribution as long ago as 1968. In his book on the French author Prévost, Sgard claimed that it was a certain Jean Gautier de Faget 'des Malines' (date of birth and death unknown) who was responsible for the *Relation Apologique*.<sup>77</sup> How is it possible to arrive at such a conclusion? Gautier was also editing a periodical titled *L'Argus de l'Europe*, of which only two volumes seem to have been published, both in Amsterdam in 1742. It was very similar in style to *La Clef* or *Neue Europäische Fama*. Faget, who called himself 'Argus', presented a list of his publications in which we find the *Relation Apologique* listed.<sup>78</sup> We do not

<sup>75</sup> V. Capdeville, 'Folkes, Martin', in *Le Monde maçonnique des Lumières*, eds. Charles Porset and Cécile Révauger (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2013), vol. 2, 1182–5.

<sup>76</sup> Moss, op. cit., 229.

<sup>77</sup> J. Sgard, *Prévost romancier* (Paris: Corti), 122–24, 354–5. See also by the same author *Vie de Prévost* (Laval: PUL, 2006) 158. Unfortunately, these two publications have hitherto not been consulted. See also C. Opsomer and P. Gason, 'Présence de l'encyclopédisme dans les bibliothèques liégeoises' in F. Tilkin (ed.) *L'encyclopédisme au XVIIIe siècle* (Liège: Université de Liège, 2008), 119–20. Gason, with whom I am in correspondence, has promised a future publication with the title 'Une franc-maçonnerie radicale à Liège en 1738: Gautier de Faget, Ramsay et l'héritage de Toland'.

<sup>78</sup> See also by J. Sgard, 'L'Argus de l'Europe' in *Dictionnaire des journaux 1600–1789* (Paris: Universitas, 1991), 122.

know much about Faget's life and career.<sup>79</sup> He was trained as a medical doctor in Paris in the 1710s and then lived during twenty years in major European cities, being found at the end of the 1720s in London. Here he was in contact with the exiled French author Prévost and followed him to Holland as his secretary. Eventually they split up and Faget started publishing different works in Brussels, Amsterdam and Liège, among them a medical dictionary. It is said that the papal condemnation of *Relation Apologique* forced him to publish clandestinely, but a slight contradiction appears to be that Faget then publicly admitted the authorship of a book burnt at the stake in 1742.

He is described as follows:

Protestant réfugié, il défend le déisme et l'esprit de 'tolération' dans sa critique de *La Henriade*. Violente attaque contre J.B. Rousseau dans les *Mémoires de Ravanne* (t. III, p. 79-80). La *Relation apologique* de 1738 défend la maçonnerie anglaise sous sa forme déiste, académique et épicurienne. Dans l'*Argus*, il s'en prend violemment au *Magazin des événements* de Rousset de Missy. Les *Mémoires du marquis de Langallerie*, rédigés par lui, exposent un système de réunion de 'toutes les sociétés religieuses sous un même gouvernement'.

In other words the *Relation Apologique* is judged to represent a 'defence of English Freemasonry under its deist, academic and epicurean form'.

Why would Faget write a defence of Freemasonry at all? My conjecture, needing research, is that during his time in London he was in contact with people belonging to academically oriented lodges belonging to scientific and French Protestant circles. When in 1737 or early 1738 he witnessed a new stream of anti-Masonic sentiments sweeping over the continent he saw his opportunity not only to publish a statement in support of this form of Freemasonry, but also – with his knowledge of the European print and press market – to disseminate his general philosophical ideas in an effective way. If this indeed was his intention, he managed remarkably well. The first identifiable version of *Relation Apologique* was printed in Luxembourg. Faget was in contact with printers in France as well as in the Austrian and Dutch Netherlands, he published in Paris, Amsterdam, The Hague, Brussels and Liège. This suggests that the article in *Le Clef* could possibly have appeared on Faget's own initiative. Maybe he knew the editor. The imprimatur of other works suggest that he spent the years 1738–40 in Paris. Taken together, the evidence points beyond reasonable doubt that Faget is the true author of *Relation Apologique*. Yet neither he nor his writings sit within the most radical anti-religious camp of the Enlightenment, so what incited the Vatican to condemn and burn his obscure pamphlet?

<sup>79</sup> 'J. Gautier de Faget' in *Dictionnaire des journalistes*, dictionnaire-journalistes.gazettes18e.fr [accessed 28 May 2014].

## Why did the Catholic Church put *Relation Apologique* on the Index?

The reasons behind the condemnation carried in the papal bull *In Eminentissimi* of 1738 range from pragmatic politics to ideology. But in this respect the disapproval of *Relation Apologique* as a heretic publication is much more intriguing and problematical. It is therefore important to quote the full text of the papal decree against it:

DECREE.

The 18th Day of *Feb.* 1739,

THE Sacred Congregation of the most Eminent, and most Reverend Cardinals of the Holy *Roman See*, and Inquisitors-Generals in the Christian Republick against heretical Pravity, held in the Convent of *St. Mary Supra Minervam*, thoroughly weighing that a certain Book, written in *French*, small in its Size ; but most wicked in Regard to its bad Subject, entitled, *The History of, and an Apology for the Society of Free-Masons*, by J. G. D. M. F. M. printed at *Dublin*, for *Patrick Odo[n]oko*, 1739, has been published to the great Scandal of all the Faithful in *Christ*, in which Book there is an Apology for the Society of Free-Masons, already justly condemned by the Holy See : After a mature Examination thereof, a Censure, and that published by our most Holy Lord, Pope *Clement XII*; together with the Suffrages of the most Eminent and most Reverend Lords, the Cardinals, by the Command of his Holiness, condemns and prohibits, by the present Decree, the said Book, as containing Propositions and wicked Principles [*‘principia impia’* in the original].

Wherefore, that so hurtful and wicked a Work may be abolished, as much as possible it can, or at least that it may not continue without a perpetual Note of Infamy, the same sacred Congregation, by Command as above, has ordered that the said Work shall be burnt publicly by the Minister of Justice in the Street of *St. Mary Supra Minervam*, on the 25th of the current Month, at the same Time, the Congregation shall be held in the Convent of the same *St. Mary*.

Moreover this same sacred Congregation, by the Command of his Holiness, positively forbids and prohibits all the Faithful in *Christ*, that no one dare by any Means, and under any Pretence, whatsoever, copy, print, or cause to be copied or printed, or retain or presume to read the said Book, in any Language, and Version now published, or (which God forbid) may be published hereafter, and now condemned by this Decree, under the Pain of Excommunication to be incurred *ipso Facto* by those that shall offend therein ; but that they shall presently and effectually deliver it up to the Ordinaries of such Places, or to the Inquisitors of heretical Pravity, who shall burn it, or cause it to be burnt, without Delay.

Twenty-fifth of *February*, 1739. *Paul Antinus Capellorius*, Notary Publick of the Holy *Roman* and Universal Inquisition.

The Places of the Seal.

*Upon the 25 of February, 1739, the above cited Decree was fixed and published at the Gates of the Church of the Prince of the Apostles, at the Palace of the Holy Office, and at the other accustomed Places within the City, by me Peter Romolatus, Officer of the Holy Inquisition.*

*At Rome, from the Printing-Office of the Reverend Apostolick - Chamber, 1739*<sup>80</sup>

The decree remains very sweeping as to the reasons of censure, it mentions that the book is ‘small in its Size ; but most wicked in Regard to its bad Subject’, that its content has been carefully examined and deemed to contain impious principles. It appears as if the main problem was its support of Freemasonry, already condemned a year earlier. But this begs the question why not other works also were disapproved and why – out of the steady stream of other vindications – *Relation Apologique* was the one targeted. I am not an expert on papal decrees, but possibly the reference to different and translated versions now published points out that the dissemination of the content of *Relation Apologique* was seen as particularly dangerous. We do not know how a copy of the text reached the papal congregation, but it might have been by the original, by *Le Clef* or the German versions. The false imprint of ‘Dublin’ might have been intended as a ironical hint against Catholicism. Benimeli has treated the *Relation Apologique* in his monumental work on the relationship between church and Freemasonry during the Enlightenment.<sup>81</sup> He conceives that it is the obvious spirit of religious tolerance and ecumenical sentiment that might have stirred up the Inquisition. I find this argument quite inconclusive since there must have been many other works on Freemasonry falling under the same category. As Benimeli notes it is quite ironic that *Relation Apologique* was prohibited and burnt and not the second edition of Anderson’s *Constitutions* which also included a defence of Masonry. Moss’s argument can of course not be dismissed entirely; maybe the author *was* known to the papal authorities (but not Folkes, as suggested by Moss) and Faget might have been a good target, given his general radical and rational heresies. But unless further evidence is unearthed we must live with an unsatisfactory conundrum as to why *Relation Apologique* assumed such an ambiguous status of fame.

## Conclusion

In this article I have examined a Swedish source from 1738 which previous research on false grounds has believed to represent a factual account of ideology circulating and practised within Swedish and German Freemasonry at that period. Furthermore, the ‘Fri-Murare’ series in *Anmärckningar* has been reviewed against the contemporary

<sup>80</sup> The text as translated in the *Pocket Companion* 1754, 255–257. The original Latin text in *Appendix Novissimae Appendicis ad Indicem Librorum Prohibitorum a Mense Maii MDCCXVIII usque ad totum Julii MDCCXXXIX* (Rome: Mainard, 1739), 509.

<sup>81</sup> J. A. F. Benimeli, *Masoneria, Iglesia e Ilustracion* (Madrid: FUE, 1983), vol. 1, 233–236.

Swedish domestic political struggles. It assumed yet another intra-Masonic function within Swedish Freemasonry of the year of its re-edition, 1997, serving as a historical legacy of a newly established research lodge. However, by closely examining the original source, I have been able to demonstrate that 'Fri-Murare', when correctly understood, takes on a different meaning. In demonstrating that *Relation Apologique* of 1738 with its various associated accounts is the source, the Swedish article series deserves a significant place within European press history, provoking papal condemnation and burning at the stake in Rome in 1739. It has been necessary to closely examine the content and dissemination of *Relation Apologique* in order to bring out its significance that previous scholarship had overlooked. Not only does the *Relation Apologique* defend a particular academic form of Freemasonry, it communicates central motifs of enlightenment of a more radical type, hinting at cosmopolitanism, pantheism and universal communication of knowledge in order to promote human felicity.

The remarkable journey of the *Relation Apologique* across the surface of Europe, from Liège, Paris or Luxemburg to Rome and Stockholm, renders it one of the most intriguing pieces concerning Freemasonry published during the early eighteenth century.





**Dr Andreas Önnorfors**

Andreas Önnorfors, born 1971, was raised in Trier, Germany, leaving secondary school in 1990 with the diploma Abitur (special subjects English, History and Latin). After a period of travel and initial studies at the University of Trier, he conducted his military service in Sweden 1993–94. Immediately thereafter, he worked as German-Swedish translator at a Swedish information company. Having registered for undergraduate studies in the History of Sciences and Ideas at the Uni-

versity of Lund, Sweden, he began training at the School of Interpreters of the Swedish Armed Forces in Uppsala (language: Russian) in 1995–96, receiving further training for international missions in 1998. During this time he was awarded his BA and MA degrees in the History of Sciences and Ideas, receiving the former in 1999. Subsequently, he was admitted to Lund University in order to begin PhD studies. He subsequently taught History of Sciences and Ideas as well as cultural studies between 1999 and 2007. From 2000 to 2003 Bro. Önnorfors also received doctoral education at a German graduate school at the University of Greifswald and defended his dissertation successfully in June 2003. During his post-doctoral period at the University of Lund (2003–07), Andreas Önnorfors conducted research into Freemasonry and other fraternal organizations in Sweden during the Enlightenment and specialized in trans-national press history. He also worked as coordinator at the Centre for European Studies between 2004 and 2006. After post-doctoral studies at the University of Freiburg (Germany) and the University of Nice Sophia-Antipolis (France), he was contracted to the University of Sheffield (UK), where between 2007 and 2010 he worked as Director of the Centre for Research into Freemasonry and Fraternalism and as a Senior Lecturer in The Department of History. Between 2010 and 2011 Andreas Önnorfors was employed as a researcher in a project on provenance in the rare book collections of Lund university library. Between February 2011 and June 2014 he worked also as a senior lecturer in various subjects at the Department for Global Political Studies, University of Malmö. In 2012 he was awarded the title of 'docent', which corresponds to Reader or Associate Professor in the History of Sciences and Ideas. Since July 2014 he has been teaching the History of Sciences and Ideas at the Universities of Gothenburg and Lund, Sweden. In 2014 he was elected a member of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts, Salzburg, Austria.



**BRO. GORDON W. S. DAVIE, WORSHIPFUL MASTER, SAID:** I found the paper very interesting and well presented, with an the facts being explained very well but I had some trouble with the use of the word pantheism which did not seem to gel with my understanding of the word: that the Universe is God or contains a multiplicity of Gods. Perhaps if Bro. Andreas Önnorfors would be so kind as to give us his definition of the word pantheism my own understanding of his talk would be improved. [*This Bro. Önnorfors proceeded to do – Editor*]

Having heard his definition that pantheism is a fraternal system based upon the Rule of Law and Morality I can now comprehend his argument and I understand how this pamphlet, *Relation Apologique* came to be seen as a Masonic paper rather than a paper on the concept of Fraternalism. Fraternalism was a potent political French idea in the eighteenth century which culminated in the French Revolution and it is in this context that *Relation Apologique* should be read. I think Bro. Andreas has proved at least to my satisfaction that its connection with Freemasonry was very tenuous and it is really a French polemic.

Fraternalism in England at that time was more concerned with aiding the individual overcome their problems and providing help to those who had fallen on hard times. It was based on the concepts of brotherly, love, relief (in the form of charity and self-help) and truth as can be seen by the rapid growth both of the Friendly Societies movement and Freemasonry at that period. The concepts of law and morality were taken for granted, unlike in France, which was seen to be as less than satisfactory under the Bourbons.

I would like to thank Bro.. Andreas Önnorfors for his paper which has added greatly to knowledge of panthesim in Europe in the eighteenth century.

**BRO. CHRISTOPHER POWELL, SENIOR WARDEN, SAID:** It gives me great pleasure to second the Master's vote of thanks to Bro. Andreas Önnorfors for his excellent paper on the *Relation Apologique*.

Some forty years ago, one of our lodge's most distinguished members, the late Bro. Harry Carr, referred to the period between 1730 and 1760 as the 'great 30-year gap' about which very little was known concerning the history of Freemasonry. Recently, a number of Masonic historians have made discoveries that have increased our knowledge of Freemasonry during that period. Today, Bro. Önnorfors has given us a thorough account of the *Relation Apologique* published in 1738.

Brother Önnorfors poses a number of questions in his paper. He asks how the book found its way to Rome from Paris. I would suggest that it was probably sent by Cardinal Fleury who was, more than anyone else, in France involved in advising the Holy See on

Freemasonry and whose advice ultimately led to the papal bull *In Eminenti* (1738) condemning Freemasonry.

Brother Önnersfors wonders why the *Relation Apologique* was publically burnt in Rome in 1739 when other Masonic books escaped the flames. First, the Vatican actually possessed a copy of it and it is unlikely the Holy See possessed copies of other Masonic books or they would have had a similar fate. Secondly, its probable author, Dr Jean Gautier de Faget, was known to the Holy See as an enemy of the Church. Thirdly, his book promotes deism which is itself heretical. There is no doubt the Church was also concerned with the rapid spread of Freemasonry in the 1730s and saw it as a political threat. Freemasonry is *au fond* Protestant in its theology and during the 1730s it was spreading rapidly from England throughout Catholic Europe. No wonder the pope issued his bull in 1738 condemning the craft. *Relation Apologique* was very popular and translations of it into various European languages were appearing which helped that spread. So the Church probably felt that a dramatic public gesture was required to try and halt the spread. If so, it failed.

Brother Önnersfors mentions the research done on the *Relation Apologique* by one of our Founders, Robert Freke Gould. Bro. Gould attempted to analyse the work stylistically in order to prove that Chevalier Ramsay was not its author as was claimed by the *Gentleman's Magazine* in April 1739. Computer programs now exist, developed within the academic discipline of biblical studies some thirty years ago, which make stylistic analysis much easier and more accurate and I commend them to Brother Önnersfors if he wishes to pursue this aspect further, although he seems happy with his identification of Dr Jean Gautier de Faget as the work's author.

Lastly, I should like to repeat my congratulations to Brother Önnersfors for a most thorough piece of work that adds to our understanding of Freemasonry during the 1730s and thus helps fill the late Bro. Carr's '30-year gap'.

**BRO. JAMES W. P. CAMPBELL, JUNIOR WARDEN, SAID:** Firstly, I would like to echo the Senior Warden's comments of appreciation for this paper. Indeed I have no doubt many here tonight share my admiration for a scholar who can work in French, Swedish, Latin, German and English with equal facility. The subject of the paper is a reminder of how in the eighteenth century French was the great literary language of Europe, but how even then translation provided considerable challenges. I had only one terribly minor question. You say in the text that Gould said the abbreviation of the author's initials (J.G.D.M.F.M) stood for J.G. D(octeur) M(édecin) F(ranc) M(açon) and then you go on to say that actually Jean Sgard had made a more likely attribution of the work to Jean Gautier de Faget 'des Malines'. Here I presume you meant to point out that his initials in French were JGDfM but you don't explicitly say this, presumably taking it as obvious.

Instead you go on to say he was a medical doctor, implying that Gould's abbreviation held true. The fact that Jean Gautier was a medical doctor was mere coincidence wasn't it, or am I missing something? Also I am not quite clear what led Jean Sgard attributing the book to him. How did he come across the idea? Perhaps he doesn't say or I am not reading your text closely enough. I suppose what I am really asking is: is Sgard's attribution guesswork or do you really believe Gautier is the author?"

**BRO. HELGE BJØRN HÖRRISLAND SAID:** What influence has the Royal Arch had on the development of Freemasonry in Sweden?

**BRO. E. JOHN T. ACASTER SAID:** I am delighted that the subject of the intriguing treatise *Relation Apologique* has, after such a long time since W. E. Moss's essay in 1940, now been raised in Quatuor Coronati Lodge.

I gladly join in congratulating Bro. Önnersfors for his detailed research in proving convincingly that the previous interpretations of the *Fri-Murare* articles as relating to early Swedish Masonry are wrong. This clearly is an important advance in Masonic studies.

But how are we to regard *Relation Apologique* itself? When I first came across the booklet in our Grand Lodge Library here a couple of years ago I was transfixed with astonishment. I had never read anything like it. It seemed to be based upon high Masonic ideals, firmly linked to classical authors. It was imbued with spirit; despite the learning, the text was not ponderous but flowed with life and charm. Its description of Freemasonry, however, was not recognizable. It matched nothing hitherto known in Europe, even though it gave passing mention to 'more than 200 lodges in London', and to lodges being located in Rome, Venice, Cadiz, Lisbon, Amsterdam and Paris. The last twenty pages, in particular, purporting to ridicule those who sought to know about two columns, the letters J and B, triplicities and other matters common within 'normal' Freemasonry, seemed to strike a different tone, one of flippancy and of even seeking to mock the reader himself. For, as we know, those supposedly-ridiculed elements are typical within the lowest common denominator of Freemasonry. What could be the meaning behind this enticing yet apparently misleading confection?

In short, brethren, I have come to regard *Relation Apologique* as being in the same genre as the Rosicrucian *Fama Fraternitatis*. I consider it to be a *ludibrium*, an elaborate joke, based nevertheless upon serious aspiration. I cannot think that we should try to treat the *Relation*, the *Account*, seriously as giving insight into any actual Masonic activities anywhere. At one point the author says:

*Quoiqu'il en soit; & que la Relation que je donne soit meme forgee & sortie de mon cru; il est toujours vrai que l'idee de la Societe que je donne au Lecteur, est belle, sage & digne de l'homme. C'est un Roman si l'on veut. Qu'importe, des qu'il conduit a la vertu, & par consequent a la felicite.*

(However it may be; and even if the Account I present is a complete falsehood, a product of my imagination: it is nevertheless true that the idea of the Society which I put before the reader is splendid, wise and worthy of men. It is, if you will, a romance. What does that matter if it leads to virtue, and consequently to happiness.)

How might we know that the document is a fable? Because its descriptions are fabulous! A seriously-ill member, provided he has not brought the debility upon himself, receives from his lodge two guineas a week. The services of a doctor, a surgeon and an apothecary are retained by the lodge, and given without charge at the point of use. Freemasonry is 'a learned academy of members with different talents which when united forms incontestably the most knowledgeable body in the Universe. Whatever problem or difficulty may be put to it, it is competent to decide, and that decision is regarded as an oracle,' says the author. Who could believe all that? It is an ideal, and such idealisations are scattered throughout.

The picture painted is seductive. There are enough elements reflective of genuine Masonic practices to hold the attention and suspend the disbelief of any curious reader. Its idealisations even speak to the condition of Freemasonry today:

*Les Franc-macons admettent indistinctement dans leur Societe des Sujets de toutes les Nations & de toutes les Religions. Ne voulant exclure personne de la beatitude naturelle, civile et morale, ils etablissent un commerce d'esprit avec toutes sortes de gens, ainsi que toutes sortes de gens sont ensemble un commerce de fortune. La diversite des Religions n'y met aucun obstacle. Ils trouvent que quand on n'est point oblige d'en rendre compte, il est mieux de la croire en silence & bien vivre, que de mal vivre & en bien parler. C'est ainsi qu'on surprend les esprits louches. On les eblouait aisement. Les hipocrates se croient autorises a nuire aux hommes, pourvu qu'ils parlent bien de Dieu. Je m'assure que tout le monde adopter ce sentiment non moins chretien que judicieux.*

(The Freemasons accept into their Society men of all nations and all religions. Not wishing to exclude anyone from natural, civil, and moral goodness they create a coming-together of minds so that all kinds of men can work towards mutual benefit. Religious differences do not form a barrier of any kind. They find that when there is no requirement to declare any religious adherence it is better to believe in silence and live well than to live badly and speak well. In this way suspicious minds are caught out. They are easily blinded. Hypocrites think that they have the right to hurt others so long as they speak well of God. I am convinced that everyone will come to share this opinion which is no less Christian than judicious.)

But I wonder whether Bro. Onnerfors would care to give some further thought as to why the Roman Catholic Church might find it so particularly alluring and offensive, or

to use their words, 'so wicked and hurtful', that the *Relation Apologique* should be prohibited and burnt in Rome? I would suggest that the details of the initiation ceremony would, of themselves, be sufficient. But that is really a topic inviting another reflective paper.

The Rosicrucian phenomenon inspired idealisms which continue to leave their effect 400 years later. It may be difficult to discern the fruits of *Relation Apologique* though its influence, in my opinion, can surprisingly be traced within the original intentions of the Moderns' version of the Royal Arch under the Grand and Royal Chapter of Jerusalem (which I will make clear at a later date). But, if I am right in believing it to have been a *ludibrium*, or romance, the author must have been delighted in his amusement that his book, 'small in its size', had achieved such status in the world so as to have been taken sufficiently seriously to warrant severest execration at the hands of the Roman Inquisition.

If the *Apologetic Account* served to ignite minds across Europe to the possibilities of Freemasonry taking up the serious cause of idealizing reason, truth, equality, liberty and happiness as tangible goals to be obtained within society it was, after all, in the stratified conditions of 1738, only 'un Roman'!

Thank you, Bro. Onnerfors, for directing us towards this intriguing topic.

**BRO. ÖNNERFORS REPLIED:**