

Fading Images, Fading Realities? Female Merchants in Scandinavia and the Baltic

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The many women who acted as traders in cities and towns along the North German, Baltic, and Scandinavian coasts during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries occupied an ambiguous position. Continuing a tradition begun in the medieval period, women in these ports were often intimately connected to commerce. As wives and widows, they engaged both in retail traffic and, on occasion, wholesale merchandising. Evidence of their activities is scarce, however. Though women kept shops and accounts, inspected merchandise in warehouses, and struck deals for freight, rent, and capital, contemporaries did not see such women primarily as traders but under other rubrics instead. With few exceptions, a woman's commercial contribution was often obscured beneath a wealth of platitudes about her domestic virtues. Ironically, north European women had left the upper echelons of commerce by the mid-nineteenth century, even as business and inheritance laws were changed to make access for them easier. As the merchant's world in the northern ports became increasingly masculinized in the nineteenth century, the widow who continued in business became an oddity.

Les nombreuses femmes qui faisaient du négoce dans les villes et villages des côtes nord de l'Allemagne, des pays baltes et de la Scandinavie aux XVIII^e et XIX^e siècles occupaient une position ambiguë. Perpétuant une tradition médiévale, les femmes de ces ports étaient souvent d'actives commerçantes. Comme femmes et veuves, elles commerçaient souvent au détail et faisaient parfois du négoce en gros. Les preuves de leurs activités sont cependant rares. Bien que ces femmes tenaient boutique et livres, inspectaient la marchandise dans les entrepôts et concluaient des marchés pour les cargaisons, le loyer et le capital, leurs contemporains ne les considéraient pas d'abord comme des négociantes. À quelques exceptions près, l'apport commercial d'une femme était souvent occulté par une multitude de lieux communs au sujet de ses vertus domestiques. Ironiquement, les femmes d'Europe du Nord avaient quitté les hauts échelons du commerce au milieu du XIX^e siècle, alors même qu'on changeait les lois sur les entreprises et les successions pour leur en

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faciliter l'accès. Au fur et à mesure que le monde du commerce des ports septentrionaux se masculinisaient au XIX^e siècle, la veuve commerçante devint chose rare.

“THE MERCHANT’S WIFE”, a porcelain figurine from the Frankenthal and Meissen works, was very popular in Germany in the middle of the eighteenth century.¹ Derived from an engraving of a Chardin painting, the piece depicts a well-dressed young woman seated at an elegant rococo table making entries in an account book, presumably of the wine bottles, sugar loaves, and other parcels at her feet. Her companion piece, “The Merchant”, shows the husband likewise engaged at his writing-table. Superficially, this is a scene epitomizing domestic order and harmony of the best *bürgerlich* sort: the woman is embedded within the household and subordinate by her very designation (“his wife”) to the man. Upon reflection, however, it also suggests other interpretations, ones not disturbing order so much as redefining it. Unlike the many contemporary porcelain scenes of *bergerie* and teasing lovers, for example, the merchant pair do not share the same base, but are instead separate, potentially independent; the emphasis is less on their bonds to each other, perhaps, than on their shared commercial activity. And how can we be so sure that she is “merely” doing the household accounts? The wine and sugar — the sorts of items traded in bulk by the merchants of, say, Copenhagen, Lübeck, and Stettin — might be a visual synecdoche for high-profit, maritime commerce *en toto*, a typical feature in iconographical prints and paintings of the time. (She is not, one notices, recording onions, peas, or mutton in her book.) The more one ponders “The Merchant’s Wife”, the more she seems to conceal, the more ambiguous her position appears to be: merchant’s wife, merchant-wife, wifely merchant, merchant on her own?

A similar ambiguous position was occupied by the porcelain’s flesh-and-blood counterparts, the many women who acted as traders in cities and towns along the North German, Baltic, and Scandinavian coasts during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.² Continuing a tradition begun in the medieval hanseatic period (the Hanse ceased to exist in the early seven-

1 The Museum of Applied Arts (Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe) in Hamburg contains two superb specimens: “Kaufmannsfrau und Kaufmann am Schreibtisch”, Lück model from Frankenthal, c.1765 (Hansing Bequest, inventory nr. 1940.41/42); and “Rechnende Kaufmannsfrau”, Kaendler & Reinicke model from Meissen, c.1750 (Hansing Bequest, inv. nr. 1940.7). For descriptions, see Erika Pauls-Eisenbeiss, *German Porcelain of the 18th Century: Vol. I*, trans. D. Imber (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1972), pp. 98–99; Peter Meister and Horst Reber, *European Porcelain of the 18th Century*, trans. E. Osers (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1980/1983), p. 175.

2 This essay builds upon Daniel Rabuzzi, “Women as Merchants in Eighteenth-Century Northern Germany: The Case of Stralsund, 1750–1830”, *Central European History*, vol. 28, no. 4 (1995), pp. 435–456. For additional background, see Merry Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 95–97, 106–108, and *Gender, Church and State in Early Modern Germany* (London: Longman, 1998), chaps. 8–10; Heide Wunder, “*Er ist die Sonn’; sie ist der Mond*”, *Frauen in der frühen Neuzeit* (Munich: Beck, 1992), pp. 125–130, 183; Ute Frevert, *Women in German History: From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation*, trans. S. McKinnon-Evans et al. (New York: Berg, 1989), pp. 31–72; Grethe Jacobsen, *Kvinder, køn og købstadslovgivning 1400–1600* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanums, 1995); Anita Göransson, “Gender

teenth century), women in these ports were often intimately connected to commerce. As wives and widows, they engaged both in retail traffic and, on occasion, in wholesale merchanting. Little was made of their activity at the time, however; there was little public commentary about it. Though women kept shops, inspected merchandise in warehouses, and struck deals for freight, rent, and capital, contemporaries did not see such women primarily as traders but under other rubrics instead. Much like the porcelain figurine, women in trade were there for all to see yet not to see. References to them in the archival sources are sphinx-like. At some point during the first half of the nineteenth century, women in the North German, Scandinavian, and Baltic ports were excluded altogether from the upper echelons of commerce, though they quietly continued at the petty level. The facts of their earlier presence in wholesale trade and subsequent ouster were then forgotten. Sparse evidence means we can only suggest tentative explanations for their exclusion, but even suggestion can be a partial cure for amnesia.

Start with the keeping of accounts, a *sine qua non* of the commercial life. Many eighteenth-century merchants' wives in cities such as Hamburg, Copenhagen, and Lübeck were adept at bookkeeping, if primarily for household management.³ Their lack of training in double-entry accounting would not necessarily have put them at a disadvantage with respect to men since many male merchants in the Baltic region still used single entry until about 1800.⁴ As Olwen Hufton notes about Western Europe generally, "The book-

and Property Rights: Capital, Kin, and Owner Influence in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Sweden", *Business History*, vol. 35, no. 2 (1993), pp. 11–32; Sølvi Sogner and Hilde Sandvik, "Minors in Law, Partners in Work, Equals in Worth? Women in the Norwegian Economy in the 16th to 18th Century", in Simonetta Cavaciocchi, ed., *La Donna nell-economia Secc. XIII–XVIII*, (Prato, Italy: Istituto Internazionale di Storia Economica "F. Datini," Serie II, 1989).

3 Anne-Charlott Trepp, *Sanfte Männlichkeit und selbständige Weiblichkeit: Frauen und Männer im Hamburger Bürgertum zwischen 1770 und 1840* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht, 1996), pp. 246–253; Carol Gold, *Educating Middle Class Daughters: Private Girls Schools in Copenhagen, 1790–1820* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanums, 1996), pp. 19, 41, 125–129; Marie-Louise Pelus-Kaplan and Manfred Eickhölter, "Lübecker Inventare des 16.–18. Jahrhunderts und ihre rechtliche Grundlage. Chancen der Auswertung" in Rolf Hammel-Kiesow, ed., *Wege zur Erforschung städtischer Häuser und Höfe* (Neumünster: Wachholtz, 1993), p. 313; Ida Bull, "Kvinnerens dagligliv I borgerskapet ca 1780–1830", *Historisk tidsskrift* [Norway], vol. 4 (1990). Cf. Margaret Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680–1780* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 86, 89; Amanda Vickery, "Women and the World of Goods: A Lancashire Consumer and her Possessions, 1751–81" in John Brewer and Roy Porter, eds., *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 279–280; Edward Copeland, *Women Writing About Money: Women's Fiction in England, 1790–1820* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 23, 71; Wolfgang Henninger, *Johann Jakob von Bethmann 1717–1792: Kaufmann, Reeder und kaiserlicher Konsul in Bordeaux* (Bochum: Brockmeyer, 1993), pp. 231, 495.

4 For the relationship of women to double-entry accounting in early modern Europe, see Mary Poovey, "Accommodating Merchants: Accounting, Civility, and the Natural Laws of Gender", *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, vol. 8, no. 3 (1996). For accounting and the creation of the self-image of the early modern merchant, see Daniel Rabuzzi, "Eighteenth-Century Commercial Mentalities as Reflected and Projected in Business Handbooks", *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 29, no. 2 (1995–1996).

keeping side of many businesses was, right through our period [1500–1800], very often the work of the wife....”⁵ (Note, too, that accurate single-entry is preferable to confused or sloppy double-entry; the eighteenth-century court records in northern Germany and Scandinavia are full of male debtors and bankrupts whose books were incompetently chaotic or deliberately misleading.) Beyond technical competence looms the important question of for whose account the woman was making her entries in the ledger. “For whose account” leads to “in whose name”, and here the ambiguity begins, since a woman’s name in early modern Europe was seldom fully her own to trade upon.

As a wife, she was bound by various laws of coverture, her identity legally subsumed by her husband’s, her rights to enter into contracts and raise credit virtually non-existent.⁶ Typically, however, a wife had the right to act as her husband’s deputy under certain circumstances, and she usually had rights to — if rarely full control over — certain kinds of property.⁷ In most jurisdictions, moreover, a wife could trade on her own account by waiving her “female rights”, most importantly, the right not to be held liable for debts. A widow could usually assume the deceased husband’s economic rights, even where her scope of action might be curbed by court-appointed male “curators”. This pattern of legal constraint upon women — a baseline male assumption that they were minors at law, with exceptions made for the feme sole trader and the widow — is very well known for early modern Europe and its colonies. Given this onerous pattern, it is not surprising that widows constitute most of the North European examples of women in trade. In theory, a wife’s trade might be no more than a sideline supplementing the husband’s earnings (though there is evidence that it was often more than that). A widow could not, however, afford any hint of dilettantism; for her, trade had to be in deadly earnest because the firm now bore her name. The widow’s decision to continue her husband’s trade was, therefore, as complex and bold as that of any male entrepreneur launching a company. In fact, it may have been even riskier since, while a totally new business has not yet made enemies, it is not unheard of for cabals of creditors or competitors to strike hard at firms in transition. As the firm’s owner of record, publicly trading for and in her own name, the widow had to be vigilant and had to find trustworthy partners and employees. In most cases, she called upon male relatives for capital and expertise; most often, sons or new husbands

5 Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe, 1500–1800* (New York: Knopf, 1996), p. 152.

6 See Rabuzzi, “Women as Merchants”, for discussion of women’s legal status in eighteenth-century northern Germany.

7 Gerda Lerner, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, Martha Howell, Kathryn Reyerson, and many others have documented that these principles were widespread not only in early modern Europe but in times and places as diverse as the ancient Middle East, medieval Cologne and Montpellier, and the British North American colonies.

joined the firm, raising questions once again about whose name the firm in reality represented.

The question of who stood behind the name of the firm is, of course, hardly gender-specific in early modern Europe (or elsewhere, for that matter). Partnerships are strange creatures which typically bear the names of the founders long after the founders are dead, sending business historians on chimerical searches for the latter-day principals. Thus, only in-depth archival investigation will allow us to determine which of the many early modern North European firms with the word “widow” in their line-up actually housed a female owner at a given time. For example, the venerable firm of Johann Lange Sohns Witwe & Co. (“Johann Lange’s Son’s Widow & Co.”), which existed for 300 years in Bremen, apparently included both the founder’s widow and a descendant’s widow (hence the odd construction of the name) at various times, but for at least 150 years the company bore the name without answering to any woman.⁸ In other cases, there really was a woman among the partners, but she clearly played a subordinate role despite lending her name to the enterprise. A good example of this situation is the Copenhagen firm C. S. Blachs Enke & Co. (“C. S. Blachs Widow & Co.”), one of Denmark’s leading international trade houses in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries with particularly strong interests in the East Indies.⁹ Johanne Blach’s husband, the firm’s founder, died two years before Johanne remarried; her second husband, Erich Erichsen, was her husband’s lieutenant in the firm, and immediately became chief of the company he was to run for 52 years (33 of those after her death). Likewise, the widow in the leading Elsinore firm Arent van Deurs Enke & Co. appears to have been only a passive investor; after her death, the remaining (male) partner continued the business but kept her name in the company title.¹⁰ On the other hand, a widow like Catharina Gustmeyer, born Sprich, truly ran the Copenhagen firm left by her late husband (a migrant from Stralsund).¹¹ She took her son-in-law on as a partner, and between 1756 and c.1766 the new firm of Gustmeyer & Bargum was the largest timber supplier to the sizeable Danish

8 Walter Barrett (pseudonym for Joseph Scoville), *The Old Merchants of New York* (New York: Doolady, 1872), vol. 1, pp. 224–225; Karl Schwebel, *Bremer Kaufleute in der Freihäfen der Karibik von den Anfängen des Bremer uerberseehandels bis 1815* (Bremen: Staatsarchiv, 1995), p. 213. Founded perhaps as early as 1642 and in business until the 1970s, J. Lange Sohns Witwe & Co. spanned the globe.

9 Johannes Werner, *En dansk storkøbmand fra den glimrende handelsperiode* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1927), pp. 40–41, 46, 62, 198, 207, 241, and *Dansk biografisk leksikon* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1980), vol. 4, p. 205.

10 M. Galschiøt, *Helsingør omkring midten af forrige aarhundrede* (Copenhagen: Nytt Nordisk Busck, 2nd ed. 1960; original 1921), pp. 62–63, 66. Elsinore was a hugely important toll and provisioning stop for all Baltic traffic. The van Deur firm began c.1765, and the widow was gone no later than 1792. At least 5 of the 35 ship-chandler firms in Elsinore in 1850 included “widow” in their names (pp. 31–32), but it is impossible to know the extent of actual female involvement without archival research.

11 Maria Ekberger, “Andreas Bodenhoff, leverandør til Søetaten I det 18. aarhundrede”, *Maritim Kontakt*, vol. 13 (1989), pp. 37–38; *Dansk Biografisk Leksikon* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1979), vol. 1, p. 455, and *Dansk Biografisk Leksikon* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1980), vol. 5, p. 396.

Navy. “Madame” Gustmeyer was also among the founders of the Danish Guinea Company, a slave-trading operation established by son-in-law Bargum, but quickly backed out and broke with her partner.¹²

Further archival work will almost certainly uncover more Madame Gustmeyers, women who operated at the highest levels of trade and who unquestionably exerted control over their firms, whether as managers or as active investors. In his memoirs, for example, Copenhagen merchant Nicolai Jonathan Meinert recalled that his aunt Else Fenger, born Brock, lost her merchant husband at a young age in 1774.¹³ Her brother, also a merchant, insisted that she sell out and restrict herself to raising her many young children, but she steadfastly refused. Instead she continued her husband’s business — wholesale trade in flax, coal, and wine for her own account besides soap manufacturing, ship owning, exchange, and general agency — and was very successful at it. As Meinert, who had known her when he was a boy before her death in 1810, put it, “she knew how to exploit the favorable times [the European trade boom of the late 1700s], she carried on her own correspondence and reviewed the accounting, she was alert, enterprising, careful”. This litany of the commercial virtues is especially convincing coming as it does from a merchant. Copenhagen merchant Marcus Christian Bech likewise remembered the prowess of another late-eighteenth-century businesswoman, his godmother Karen Svendsen.¹⁴ Widow of his father’s partner, Svendsen was an active member of the firm from 1787, so much so that her financial decisions seem to have controlled it. Bech describes the Sunday drive with his father to Madame Svendsen’s villa outside Copenhagen, where the father always presented her with two large packages containing the week’s bills of exchange which she immediately stored in her bed-chamber. In 1805, a few years after she had left the firm, she agreed to write off 20,000 of her remaining 60,000 *riksdaler* investment in the firm (very substantial sums), since her godson was the joint heir for both her and Bech the father’s estates. In short, memoirist Bech owed at least as much to his savvy godmother as he did to his father in getting a good start in business.

Surely he was not alone, though few male merchants were as candid or as grateful in acknowledging their debts to female influences. Hans Knudtzon was another who deeply valued the assistance he received from a powerful woman. Knudtzon emigrated from Schleswig to Trondheim in 1767 at age 16, where he clerked in the expanding firm run by another Schleswiger, Broder Lysholm. Just five years later, however, Lysholm died, leaving Knudtzon very uncertain as to his fate. Lysholm’s widow Catharina, daugh-

12 If we go looking for women in eighteenth-century business, we must be prepared to find more such connections to the sordid side of merchant capitalism.

13 “Københavnliv omkring 1800: Grosserer Nicolai Jonathan Meinerts Erindringer ved Redaktionen”, *Historiske Meddelelser om København* (1970; memoirs written 1846, first appeared 1861), pp. 85–86.

14 Marcus Christian Bech, “En kjøbenhavnsk Grosserers Ungdoms-Erindringer 1787–1816”, in J. Clausen and P. F. Rist, eds., *Memoirer og Breve* (Copenhagen: Bangs, 1968), vol. 12, pp. 7, 22–24, 70–72.

ter of yet another transplanted Schleswig merchant, retained Knudtzon and continued the business; five years after that, she made him a partner, and eventually he took over the firm, which became one of Trondheim's most important (it lasted until the 1870s). In his diary, Knudtzon confided that without her protection he would have been at a loss: "I do not deserve a tenth of what she has done for me, since I do not know of anything that has earned me her favor...."¹⁵ More often, however, the woman's commercial contribution was obscured or ignored, often beneath a wealth of platitudes about her domestic virtues. For example, down the Norwegian coast in Bergen, the tombstone over Birgitha Friele, born Morup (1766–1826), praises her for "womanly virtues" and "quiet, unostentatious conduct", notes that she bore 18 children, and asserts that "[d]omestic pleasures and a peaceful heart were the payment you sought for your extraordinary industriousness". Nowhere in the epitaph is there any mention of her key role in helping to establish one of Norway's leading merchant-houses, B. Friele and Sons, whose coffee remains today a household name in that country.¹⁶ At least as early as 1794, she kept shop in Bergen's main marketplace, selling a wide variety of imported groceries and other items, some of which presumably her sea-captain husband brought in. Around 1800 her husband left the sea, bought larger quarters for the shop, and became a wholesale merchant, but Birgitha appears to have paved the way. Similarly, Anna Cramer used her acumen to enhance the material fortunes of her brothers' business in Narva and St. Petersburg. Serving at the Czar's court in the early 1700s, she climbed from chambermaid to Court-Mistress (*Hofmeisterin*), and helped Cramer Brothers & Co. win trade concessions and estates that would make the firm one of the Baltic's most important for a hundred years.¹⁷

Birgitha and Anna were not unique. In Bremen, Catharina Pundsack, born Faye, lost her merchant husband in 1735 but continued to run the firm for 30 years, importing wine and tropical goods in bulk from France; she made her son (born in 1733) a partner in 1764.¹⁸ He went on to become one of the most important merchants of Bremen in the late eighteenth century ... and

15 Hans Jørgen Knudtzon, "Knudtzon I Trondhjem- merkantilt og kulturelt" in *Norsk Købmandskultur fra Thorvaldsens Tid* [no named editors] (n.p., Denmark: Greens/Oregaardsmuseets Vener, 1993), p. 22. Many of the leading Trondheim merchants in the eighteenth century came from Schleswig and Holstein; the Widow Lysholm was born into the Meincke family, one of the most prominent. She hosted Malthus when he visited Norway in 1799; he described her as "a very agreeable old woman ... [who] talked a good deal in middling French". See Patricia James, ed., *The Travel Diaries of Thomas Robert Malthus* (Cambridge U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1966), pp. 150–151, also 167, 175–176, 283, 285.

16 A. M. Wiesener, *Stamtavle over Slekten Friele* (Bergen: Byers, 1934), pp. 29, 134. The epitaph was printed in the local paper, *Bergens Adresse-Contoirs Efterretninger*, November 22, 1826.

17 Erik Amburger, "Deutschbaltische Unternehmer in Russlands Handel und Industrie", *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung*, vol. 40, no. 4 (1991), p. 524. Cramer Bros. was a major timber exporter and dealt extensively with American merchants in the early nineteenth century.

18 Karl Schwebel, *Aus dem Tagebuch des Bremer Kaufmanns Franz Böving (1773–1849)* (Bremen: Historische Gesellschaft Bremen, 1974), pp. 113–114.

presumably owed his position in no small measure to his mother's lessons on the "Change" and at the quay. In Flensburg, the widow Catharina Feddersen was one of the three most important businesspeople in the late eighteenth century, a period during which that city was a major centre for transatlantic trade. Her husband died in 1773, and she was still among the owners of a very profitable sugar refinery around 1800.¹⁹ In Stockholm, the widow Anna Maria Brandell appears to have been the largest overall importer by value in 1760 and the tenth largest in 1772; she appears regularly in the customs records between 1756 and 1796, importing large quantities of sugar from Bordeaux, London, and Copenhagen, as well as salt from Cagliari and coffee from Bordeaux. In 1796 she seems to have accounted for 5 per cent of Stockholm's total sugar importation from just three cargoes alone. The tenth largest owner of real property in the city c.1800, she was also a major creditor to other merchants and shopkeepers.²⁰ In Königsberg, the widow Anna Elisabeth Saturgus, born Kayser, outlived her husband by 46 years, during which time she was the matriarch of the richest merchant firm in the city; her two sons led the company but she is credited with amassing the huge real estate holdings that provided the logistical support for their extensive trading.²¹ In Christiania (today Oslo), the vitally important timber trade to Great Britain and the Netherlands was in the hands of families which repeatedly produced female leaders: Karen Leuch, born Müller, who continued and expanded her husband's business after his death for nearly 40 years (1717–1756); Karen Ancher, born Elieson, who was partner between 1765 and 1783 in a very successful firm bearing her name as widow and led by her son; Martine Christine Collett, born Elieson, who continued her husband's firm at his death in 1810 under direction of their foster-son.²² Marie Elisabet Hackman, born Laube, took over her husband's business in Wiborg (now Vyborg in Russia) at his death in 1807 and ran it with great success until she

19 Theodor Link, *Flensburgs Ueberseehandel von 1755 bis 1807* (Neumünster: Wachholtz, 1959), pp. 122, 129, 239.

20 Presumably widow of Elias (d.1754), she may well have worked with her son, who became an important merchant in turn. Paul Meijer Granqvist, *Stockholmskt Borgarfolk* (Stockholm: Gernandts, 1902), p. 134; Kurt Samuelsson, *De stora köpmanshusen i Stockholm 1730–1815* (Stockholm: Ekonomisk-Historiska Institutet, 1951), p. 235; *Handelstidning* (Stockholm), January 7, 1801; Stockholms Stadsarkiv (hereafter SSA), *tolagsjournal*, 1756 import entries 148, 233, 314; 1765 import entries 188, 354; 1786 import entries 69, 106, 542; 1796 import entries 345, 390, 407; SSA, *bouppteckning 1787/1:274* ("Peter Pomp"); SSA, *Magistratens och Raadhusrättens Arkiv, konkursakt 1792 nr. 79* ("Fredrich Bergman"). My thanks to Prof. Johan Söderberg (Stockholm University) for letting me use his notes on the *Brandvaktskasseadm./Taxl*.

21 The house of Saturgus dominated Königsberg's commerce during the first half of the eighteenth century. Fritz Gause, *Die Geschichte der Stadt Königsberg in Preussen* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1968), vol. 2, p. 184.

22 A. Collett, *Familien Collett og Christianialiv I gamle Dage* (Christiania [Oslo]: Cappelen, n.d. but c.1925), pp. 24, 133, 295; Hilde Sandvik, "Umyndige" *Kvinner I Handel og Haandverk: Kvinner I bynaeringer I Christiania I siste halvdel av 1700-tallet* (Oslo: Tingbokprosjektet, 1992), pp. 34–35.

retired in the 1850s; under her guidance, Hackmans became the leading timber exporter in Finland and expanded into shipping and general trade (today it is one of Finland's leading multinational companies).²³

Many more examples can be found scattered throughout the archives in ports around the Baltic and North Seas. We can catch glimpses of eighteenth-century women both in retail and in what appears to be wholesale business in Bremen, Glückstadt, Altona, Hamburg, Husum, Aarhus, Flensburg, Kiel, Neustadt, Lübeck, Wismar, Rostock, Stralsund, Wolgast, Danzig (today Gdansk), Elbing (Elblag), Memel (Klaipeda), Stockholm, Riga, Reval (Tallinn), and St. Petersburg.²⁴ It is possible that women dealt with women at the wholesale level: for example, in 1782 the widow Louise Catharina Harkort, leading a prominent Westphalian iron-goods firm, corresponded with the Rostock company Johan Bernhard Mann's Widow about large car-

23 Jari Ojala (University of Jyväskylä), letter dated February 16, 1999, based in part on published research of Professor Markku Kuisma. Her oldest son took over daily operations in 1829, but she reportedly continued to make the final decisions until she retired.

24 Schwebel, *Bremer Kaufleute*, pp. 174, 184–186, 197, 206, 208, 219; Peter Höfer, *Deutsch-französische Handelsbeziehungen im 18. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1982), pp. 38, 46, 54–58; Kersten Krüger and Stefan Kroll, eds., *Die Sozialstruktur der Städte Kiel und Altona um 1800* (Neumünster: Wachholtz, 1998), pp. 60, 75, 150, 203, 227, 283, 289; Lars Henningsen, "Handel und Manufakturen in Schleswig und Holstein 1775", *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Schleswig-Holsteinische Geschichte*, vol. 116 (1991), pp. 68–69, 77–78, 85; Copenhagen, Landsarkiv Sjaelland, Privatarbiver-Andreas Buntzen Kopibog over udgaaende breve (1802–1804), s.v. Lögstrup; Ulrike Albrecht, "Flensburg und die Christiansens: Kaufleute, Reeder und Unternehmer in der Frühindustrialisierung", *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Schleswig-Holsteinische Geschichte*, vol. 120 (1995), p. 116; Pierre Jeannin, "La clientèle étrangère de la maison Schröder et Schyler, de la Guerre de Sept ans à la Guerre d'Indépendance", *Bulletin du Centre d'histoire des espaces Atlantiques*, new series 3 (1987), pp. 24, 43, 55, 72–74, 82; Kersten Krüger, "Norddeutsche Hafenstädte um 1800: Altona, Kiel, Rostock und Wismar. Ein sozialgeschichtlicher Vergleich", *Historical Social Research*, vol. 23, no. 3 (1998), pp. 103–107 (I thank Dr. Stefan Kroll, University of Rostock, for this and the next reference); Hanna Haack, "Frauenerwerbsarbeit in Rostock am Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts" in *Rostock im Ostseeraum in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit* [no ed.] (Rostock, 1994), pp. 99–100; Helga Schultz, *Soziale und Politische Auseinandersetzungen in Rostock im 18. Jahrhundert* (Weimar: Böhlau, 1974), p. 69; Stefan Kroll, *Stadtgesellschaft und Krieg: Sozialstruktur, Bevölkerung und Wirtschaft in Stralsund und Stade 1700 bis 1715* (Göttingen: Schwartz, 1997), p. 180; Andrzej Groth, "Die Wirksamkeit der Familienhandelsfirma de Jonge in Memel in den Jahren 1664–1722", *Studia Maritima* [Szczecin], vol. 10 (1997), p. 54; Gustav Otruba, *Europäische Commerzreisen um de Mitte des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Linz: Trauner, 1982), pp. 196, 216, 234; Vasilij Dorosenko, "Die Einwohnerschaft Alt-Rigas im Jahre 1786", *Hansische Geschichtsblätter*, vol. 111 (1993), p. 102; SSA, bouppteckning 1805/3–276 ("Carl Gustaf Ekholm"; see J. Wretmans Enke & Söner), bouppteckning 1798/3–121 ("Claes Claesson"; see Wretmans); *Dagligt Allehanda* [Stockholm], November 3, 1810; April 8, 1811, May 30, 1811 (bankruptcy of Wretmans); SSA, tolagsjournal 1756 import entries 229, 252, 507, 516 (for Lucia Dorothea Starbus); Carl Forsstrand, *Köpmanshus I Gamla Stockholm* (Stockholm: Gebers, 1917), p. 157; Raimo Pullat, *Die Stadtbevölkerung Estlands im 18. Jahrhundert* (Mainz: Zabern, 1997), pp. 139–143; E. I. Indova et al., eds., *Vneshniaia torgovlia Rossi cherez Peterburgskii port vo votoroi polovine XVIII-nachale XIX v. Vedomosti o sostave kuptsov I ikh torgovykh oborotakh* (Moscow: Akad. Nauk, 1981), pp. 138, 165. For other examples, see Rabuzzi, "Women as Merchants," p. 441.

goes of scythes for the Baltic markets.²⁵ Women seem to have been particularly involved in ship owning and ship management, perhaps in part because the sea-captain's wife had often taken care of the books and other land-based business while her husband was on the water. Ships were, of course, essential for a port city's economy and also represented one of the only sizeable investment opportunities other than land in a pre-industrial society. Small investors, including the classic "widows and orphans", pooled their money with the merchant or sea-captain; one among these latter acted as the "corresponding shipowner", managing the books for all participants in the venture. Recalling the porcelain figurine, one wonders how many male shipowners had a wife or daughter helping with the correspondence. In any event, women or at least firms with women's names in them can be found as shipowners during our period at various harbours in East Frisia, at Lehe in the Wesermarschen near Bremen, and in Glückstadt, Buxtehude, Hamburg, Bergen, Aabenraa (today Apenrade), Stralsund, Karlskrona, Karlshamn, Königsberg, Gamla-Karleby (Kokkola), Jakobstad (Pietarsaari), and Aabo (Turku).²⁶ Consider how much we do not know about female participation in ship owning in light of the following: Berend Roosen I was the most important shipowner of the eighteenth century in Hamburg, and thus one of the leading mercantile figures for all of northern Europe, yet he started as a partner with his (unnamed) mother-in-law in 1736 and was not an independent operator until 1759.²⁷ He is well known; she is unknown, yet how much might he have owed initially to her capital, connections, and expertise?

Of course, not all merchants' daughters, sisters, wives, and widows were commercially minded; the business world was foreign for many, perhaps

25 Elisabeth Harder-Gersdorff, "Eisenwaren aus der Grafschaft Mark auf dem Weg zu den Märkten des Ostseeraums: Struktur der Transport- und Vertriebsformen des Hauses J.C. Harkort in der Mitte des 18. Jahrhunderts" in H.-J. Gerhard, ed., *Struktur und Dimension: Festschrift für K.H. Kaufhold* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1997), vol. 1, p. 183; see also pp. 175–176. Mann was a collateral relative of the Lübeck Manns.

26 Karl-Heinz Wiechers, *...und führen weit übers Meer: Zur Geschichte der ostfriesischen Segelschifffahrt* (Norden: Soltau-Kurier, 1989), vol. 1, pp. 185, 224, 351; Claus Tiedemann, *Die Schifffahrt des Herzogtums Bremen zur Schwedenzeit (1645–1712)* (Stade: Stader Geschichts- u. Heimatverein, 1970), pp. 49, 61; Walter Kresse, *Materialien zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Hamburger Handelsflotte 1765–1823* (Hamburg: Museum für Hamburgische Geschichte, 1966), pp. 133, 152, 154, 157, 163, 175, 179, 190, 198; Bernt Lorentzen, *Bergen og sjøfarten* (Bergen: Rederforening/Sjøfartsmuseum, 1959), vol. 1, p. 437; entries 109 and 153 s.v. "Schröder" in *Udenrigsministeriet (Kommercekollegiet) Samlede Sager (1762)–1866/Sager til Konsulatsjournal* (Copenhagen: Rigsarkiv, 1963); H. H. Worsøe, "Tiden 1721 til 1814" in J. Hvidtfelt and P. K. Iversen, eds., *Aabenraa Bys Historie*, vol. 2 (n.p.: Danske Boghandleres Kommissionsanstalt, 1967), p. 140; Hilding Rosengren, *Karlshamns historia 1664–1914* (Karlshamn: Johanssons, 1928), Part II, pp. 222ff; Janrik Bromé, ed., *Karlskrona Stads Historia* (Karlskrona: n.p., 1934), Part II, pp. 125–129; Andrzej Groth, "Die Handelsflotte von Königsberg, Pillau und Memel in den Jahren 1725, 1732 und 1781" in Heide Gerstenberger and Ulrich Welke, eds., *Das Handwerk der Seefahrt im Zeitalter der Industrialisierung* (Bremen: Temmen, 1995), pp. 28–30; Aulis Alanen, *Der Aussenhandel und die Schifffahrt Finlands im 18. Jahrhundert* (Helsinki: Annales Acad. Sci. Fennicae, 1957), p. 42; Jari Ojala (University of Jyväskylä), letter dated February 9, 1999.

27 Kresse, *Materialien*, p. 43. The firm continued until 1849 and owned a total of 60 ships during its life-

most, of these women. Their ignorance is evident in many of the bankruptcy cases in northern European archives, when wives discovered too late that their dowries and all else had been lost by their husbands. Antoinette Buddenbrooks, cruelly kept unaware of the parlous state of her first husband's finances, epitomizes this ignorance in Thomas Mann's masterpiece about Lübeck's nineteenth-century merchant society. Tony's domestic existence was the lot of many. For example, the Danish historian Peter Fredrik Suhm described his wife Karen's upbringing as daughter in one of Norway's wealthiest merchant households during the 1730s and 1740s: "she was especially taught by her mother to run a good, orderly home ... she particularly learned patience, perseverance, and concern for the sick during her father's long, hard illness...."²⁸ The wives of Copenhagen's merchant grandees were described around 1800 in terms familiar to any student of that period (and other eras as well), for example, "in domesticity, propriety, and wisdom [she] was a tribute [literally, 'an ornamentation'] to her sex".²⁹ They were painted in accordance with the clichés of the time, depicted at the centre of swarming children in well-appointed interiors or sitting quietly next to oversized bird cages with their knitting or embroidery.³⁰ Mary Wollstonecraft in 1795 called them "simply notable housewives; without accomplishments, or any of the charms that adorn more advanced social life" and characterized their husbands as "domestic tyrants, coldly immersed in their own affairs".³¹ Writing to a Scottish friend in 1764, a leading member of the influential British merchants' colony in St. Petersburg summed up what was expected of wives there: "all the Women breed fast."³² A partner in a major Dutch firm, investigating business opportunities in St. Petersburg in 1812, felt it important to mention his contacts' wives but only as incidental subjects: "Meyer & Bruxner. An excellent house ... Bruxner is rich and not happily married.... Bagge & Co. A good firm. The manager, Tesche, has a pleasant wife. ... Kirchner. A poor head for business.... A nice man. His wife is one of the most remarkable and striking women in St. Petersburg."³³

28 Collett, *Familien Collett*, p. 78. Suhm's wife was from Trondheim's elite; her mother was also the daughter of a wealthy merchant.

29 Werner, *En dansk storkøbmand*, p. 207, from an unspecified archival document.

30 For typical examples, very beautifully executed, see portraits done by Wilhelm Bendz, Christoffer Wilhelm Eckerberg, and Wilhelm Marstrand in Kasper Monrad, *The Golden Age of Danish Painting* (New York and Los Angeles: Hudson Hills and Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1993), pp. 61–62, 97–101, 192–194.

31 Mary Wollstonecraft, *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*, ed. Carol Poston (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976), pp. 151–152. Wollstonecraft's acerbic sketches (she found the merchants' wives in Tønsberg, Norway, to be "a mixture of indolence and vivacity ... [with] no pretensions to elegance", p. 78) should be tempered with the recognition that she was only in Scandinavia briefly and often lacked a tongue common with her hosts. Note, too, that she was acting as a "deputy husband" on this trip, empowered by her lover Imlay to be his business agent.

32 Anthony Cross, *By the Banks of the Neva: Chapters from the Lives and Careers of the British in Eighteenth-Century Russia* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 84.

33 Marten Buist, *At Spes non Fracta: Hope & Co. 1770–1815; Merchant Bankers and Diplomats at Work* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1974), p. 511.

What is striking, however, about all of the descriptions above is that none was made by the subjects themselves. Like the porcelain merchant's wife, women in mercantile circles were almost always portrayed by others, almost invariably by men; like the porcelain (a reproduction of a model based upon an engraving derived from a painting), records of women's involvement in trade are elliptical, ambiguous, derivative. North European women during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries wrote little self-reflectively about their commercial activities or even about their attitudes towards commerce generally, at least scholars have not yet found much of that genre. (The towering exception that underscores the rule is the memoir produced in the 1690s by Hamburg merchant Glikl bas Judah Leib.³⁴) We have a fair amount of autobiographical material from the daughters and wives of merchants (for example, Fanny Lewald, Johanna Schopenhauer, Margarethe Milow, and Meta Klopstock) who did not engage in commerce, but virtually nothing from counterparts who did.³⁵ Thus, as is so often the case, the history of women in business has been written — or not written — almost exclusively on the basis of male testimony and male-derived categories. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century men in northern Europe might see the woman with pen in hand sitting down to do the books, but they did not register the fact because it fell outside what they deemed to be the real and essential activities of womanhood. That woman would be lauded instead exclusively for her maternal conduct, her obedience, her piety.

Perhaps the steadfast refusal to recognize women's commercial contribution was one factor that led to women surrendering even their modest handhold within the upper echelons of trade. By the late nineteenth century (if not earlier), north European women almost never continued in large-scale enterprise. Where designations such as "Schmidt's Widow & Co." or "Schultz Widow & Son" remained at all, they were curiosities, a faded name on a dusty door to which no one paid any attention. The wives of merchants and industrialists did not pore over the ledgers — that was *kleinbürgerlich*, something for women who stood behind shop-counters and haggled over fish, little blue bags of sugar, and half-bolts of cloth. (In 1907 one-third of Bremen's shops were run by women, but women who were wives and widows of fac-

34 *The Memoirs of Glückel of Hameln*, trans. M. Lowenthal (New York: Schocken, 1977); Natalie Zemon Davis, *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth-Century Lives* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), chap. 1.

35 Lewald, *Meine Lebensgeschichte*, ed. Gisela Brinker-Gabler (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1980; original 1862); Rita Bake and Birgit Kiupel, "Margarethe Milow geb. Hudtwalcker — Das Leben einer ganz 'normalen' Bürgersfrau im 18. Jahrhundert", and Marianne Schuller, "Aus den Tagen der Briefe: Meta Klopstock", both in Barbara Vogel and Ulrike Weckel, eds., *Frauen in der Ständegesellschaft: Leben und Arbeiten in der Stadt vom späten Mittelalter bis zur Neuzeit* (Hamburg: Krämer, 1991); Johanna Schopenhauer, *Jugendleben und Wanderbilder* (Braunschweig: Westermann, 1839). See Trepp, *Sanfte Männlichkeit und selbständige Weiblichkeit*; Katherine Goodman, *Dis/Closures: Women's Autobiography in Germany between 1790 and 1914* (New York and Bern: Lang, 1986).

tory workers and the like.³⁶) Symbolic of the shift is the Widow Worse in Alexander Kielland's 1880 tale of Norwegian merchant families Garman & Worse, a novel that influenced Thomas Mann.³⁷ Taking place in a fictionalized Stavanger, the story introduces the widow as she faces the bankruptcy bequeathed her at her merchant husband's death. She is as ignorant of her husband's affairs as Tony Buddenbrooks, but, unlike Tony, she learns what she needs to know, staves off the creditors, and sets up in business for herself. Although she succeeds as an independent businesswoman, the novel emphasizes that she loses considerable status because she runs a shop peddling sundries to the labouring poor. Clearly, going into business at all is considered very strange and beneath one's dignity: she is known as one of the city's "characters". Women's exit from high-level business is usually as obscure as their original presence in it. Only rarely is their departure as widely announced as it was in 1802 by the merchant B. Schweighauser in Nantes, who informed trade correspondents by printed circular of the death of his mother, the Widow Schweighauser, "also associate of my aforesaid house".³⁸ Only meticulous research into company registration and property transfer records will reveal when ownership changed, and only painstaking review of surviving correspondence, diaries, and court transcripts will shed light on why it changed.

Until such research is done, however, we can only speculate as to the causes of women's departure from wholesale trade. It does not appear that the (perennial) rise of capitalism *per se* was responsible for driving women out; as the examples above suggest, many women were quite at home in the market prior to the mid-nineteenth century. The separation of business from the household, a linchpin of capitalistic development as Weber saw it and at the heart of the public sphere/private sphere dichotomy debated since Habermas, is not a wholly convincing explanatory factor when it comes to women's exclusion from modern enterprise.³⁹ On one hand, a business run from an office in the family residence was no guarantor of women's involvement: many merchants' wives in Hamburg, Stockholm, and Danzig were ignorant of what went on in the Comptoir on the ground floor, as were their counterparts in London, Philadelphia, Bahia, Buenos Aires, and a great many other places.⁴⁰ On the other hand, physical separation did not necessarily diminish

36 David Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century: A History of Germany, 1780–1918* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 328–329.

37 Martin Swales, *Buddenbrooks: Family Life as a Mirror of Social Change* (Boston: Twayne, 1991), pp. xii, 109. Kielland is one of Scandinavia's most important novelists.

38 Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Sylvanus Bourne Papers, vol. 12, circular [in English] from Schweighauser & Dobrée, Nantes, August 26, 1802. Nantes, like Bordeaux, had a sizeable German merchant colony in the eighteenth century.

39 Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. T. Parsons (New York: Scribner's, 1958), pp. 21–22.

40 David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735–1785* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 90–104; Leonore

the woman's role, as the female merchants and shipowners in eighteenth-century La Rochelle — where home and countinghouse were separate — make clear in principle (more research on German commercial micro-logistics is needed to see whether this French example can be extended).⁴¹ The idea that women were squeezed out due to increased occupational specialization in larger urban centres is not fully persuasive either, because trading women were found in many of the North's largest cities, for example, Altona and Copenhagen, and were absent from some of the smaller, less differentiated ports such as Libau and Windau.⁴² Nor does industrialization alone seem the most plausible culprit. For one thing, women were sometimes involved in running large industrial sites: the widow Anna Johanna Grill ran the ironworks at Söderfors, Sweden, between 1767 and 1778, borrowing large sums from leading Amsterdam bankers to make improvements in production techniques; the widow Koch and later her three daughters ran a large brick and tile factory in Aabenraa, Denmark, during much of the eighteenth century; Meta Oltmann, born Heissenbüttel, took over her husband's sizeable shipyard on the Weser as late as 1865; and the Widow Fack ran a shipyard in Töning until 1910.⁴³

A possible cause, which Pam Sharpe suggests may also have affected English women, may have been the demographic changes of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The secular increase in population beginning around 1750 increased the demand both for child and elder care, a demand that men insisted women must and should meet.⁴⁴ In any event, the

Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 359; Thomas Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), pp. 21, 32–36; Catherine Lugar, “Merchants” in Louisa Schell Hoberman and Susan Migden Socolow, eds., *Cities and Society in Colonial Latin America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986), p. 59.

41 John G. Clark, *La Rochelle and the Atlantic Economy During the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), pp. 67, 72, 79–80.

42 I thank Markus Luks (University of Riga) for information on Windau (today Ventspils) and Libau (Liepāja).

43 Leos Müller, *The Merchant Houses of Stockholm, c. 1640–1800* (Uppsala: Historiska institutionen/Uppsala University, 1998), pp. 192, 217; Worsøe, *Aabenraa Bys Historie*, vol. 2 (1967), pp. 98–99; Peter-Michael Pawlik, *Von der Weser in die Welt. Die Geschichte der Segelschiffe von Weser und Lesum und ihrer Bauwerften 1770 bis 1893* (Hamburg: Kabel, 1993), p. 39 (also see pp. 146–147 for the Widow Lange in Vegesack); Wolfgang Jonas, *Schiffbau in Nordfriesland* (Husum: Nordfriesisches Schiffahrtsmuseum, 1997), p. 19. Cf. Jill Liddington, “Gender, Authority and Mining in an Industrial Landscape: Anne Lister 1791–1840,” *History Workshop Journal*, vol. 42 (1996), pp. 59–86.

44 Assuming that falling mortality was the main cause of German and Scandinavian population increase between 1750 and 1900. See Neil Tranter, “Population, Migration, and Labour Supply” in D. Aldcroft and S. Ville, eds., *The European Economy 1750–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 38–40; Roger Schofield, “British Population Change, 1700–1871” in R. Floud and D. McCloskey, eds., *The Economic History of Britain since 1700*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1994), vol. 1, pp. 71–72 (ref. Sweden).

“cult of domesticity” in Germany predated corporate capitalism and industrialization, since the German industrial take-off began c.1850 at the earliest (Biedermeier first, then the Gründerjahre). The same is true for Scandinavian countries. Ironically, women left big-league commerce even as business and inheritance laws were changed around the middle of the nineteenth century to make access for them easier. For example, the Danish inheritance laws were revised in 1845 so that wives with children could inherit directly from the husband, and not solely via the offspring: how did this affect female ownership of businesses or individual commercial assets such as ships?⁴⁵ In Norway in 1842 unmarried women and widows were given more rights to operate a business; although many women took advantage of this liberalization, most were shopkeepers and peddlers, while female presence in wholesale merchanting appears to have continued its decline.⁴⁶ It is almost as if Scandinavian men felt they could relax the law once it appeared unlikely that their daughters or widows would exploit the change.

The merchant’s world in the northern ports increasingly masculinized in the nineteenth century.⁴⁷ The widow who continued the business was increasingly described as an oddity, perhaps an embarrassment. The she-merchant dwindled into a creature of folklore, cutting a curious figure in social memory. One memoirist recounted the tale of “Kari Bondekone”, a widow in eighteenth-century Christiania who carried out “a not insignificant commerce” even when she was 80.⁴⁸ Her name is a nickname: “Kari” is used in Norwegian to signify “Jane Everywoman” and “Bondekone” is no surname at all but means literally “Farmer’s Wife”. She reportedly married her clerk when she was 80 and he was 20, and then lived until she was 110. The story is the shred of an anecdote caricaturing a half-remembered local character. Surely exaggerated in the manner of *Märchen*, its point is muddled, but the sub-text

45 Poul Holm (Maritime Museum, Esbjerg), letter of February 8, 1999.

46 Gerd Mordt, *Kvinner og næringsrett* (Oslo: Tingbokprosjektet, 1993). Cf. Inger Dübeck, *Købekoner og konkurrence: Studier over myndigheds- og erhvervrettens Udvikling med stadigt henblik paa kvinders historiske retsstilling* (Copenhagen, 1978); Gunnar Qvist, *Kvinnofraagan I Sverige 1809–1846; Studier rörande kvinnans näringsfrihet inom de borgerliga yrkena* (Gothenburg: Akademiförlaget-Gumperts, 1960). We need similar studies for Germany and more research into the impact of legal reform on women’s participation in business.

47 Ruth Dawson, “Selbstzählung und weibliche Misogynie: Frauen schreiben Verserzählungen im 18. Jahrhundert” in Monika Jones and Sylvia Wallinger, eds., *Der Widerspenstigen Zähmung. Studien zur bezwungenen Weiblichkeit in der Literatur vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart* (Innsbruck: Institut für Germanistik/Universität Innsbruck, 1986); Barbara Duden, “Das schöne Eigentum: Zur Herausbildung des bürgerlichen Frauenbildes an der Wende vom 18. zum 19. Jahrhundert”, *Kursbuch*, vol. 47 (1977); Karin Hausen, “Die Polarisierung der ‘Geschlechtscharaktere’ — Eine Spiegelung der Dissoziation von Erwerbs- und Familienleben” in W. Conze, ed., *Sozialgeschichte der Familie in der Neuzeit Europas* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1976); Ulrike Prokop, “Die Einsamkeit der Imagination. Geschlechterkonflikt und literarische Produktion um 1770” in Gisela Brinker-Gabler, ed., *Deutsche Literatur von Frauen*, vol. 1 (Munich: Beck, 1988).

48 Conradine Dunker, *Gamle Dage: Erindringer og Tidsbilleder* (Christiania [Oslo]: Gyldendal, 1909), pp. 401–402.

is clear: once upon a time, our grandmothers did the strangest things.... Such is the evidence for memory of women as merchants in early modern northern Europe: blurred folk-legends and porcelain figurines. Perhaps the “Merchant’s Wife”, her porcelain arm poised above the accounting journal, would smile at the caricature of herself and ask us to look to the archives to set the story straight.