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Chapter 4

Johanna Ilmakunnas

From mother to daughter

Noblewomen in service at the Swedish royal court, c. 1740–1840

From early modern to modern Europe, a number of noblewomen were occupied with various tasks at royal courts.¹ Both male and female courtiers added splendour to the power of a sovereign, especially in ceremonies that cemented royal authority and made it visible for elites and the common people alike. Courtiers served as an audience or even performed different roles during ceremonies and rituals such as coronations, weddings of heirs apparent, christenings of royal offspring, funerals and royal banquets. They may also have been called upon to be present for openings of the *Riksdag* and parliamentary sessions, theatre and opera performances, as well as royal hunts. In addition, the image of sovereignty was disseminated and distributed to subjects and across borders to the courts of other countries through visual and material objects such as coins and engravings portraying the sovereign and his or her deeds. Processions through capitals or other cities were an important part of the use of royal power through ceremonies and brought the sovereignty closer to its subjects.² Paintings and engravings of ceremonies and festivities at court depicted not only the sovereign, but also his or her courtiers, who were both actors and spectators of ritualized royal power. Among them noblewomen held a distinguished role. Throughout Europe, courts formed an important political and social sphere, and women were an essential part of this sociability and the power structures of royal courts. The royal court was also a professional arena for nobles, both men and women, who served in a number of offices and had a variety of tasks in royal households.

In the societies of *ancien régime*, the world of the court, ‘ce pays-ci’,³ was a fundamental part of the culture, ideology and worldview of the nobility. The relationship between the sovereign and the courtiers was interdependent: for the sovereign, courtiers were vital for the outer appearance and functioning of the royal court.⁴ Perhaps even more importantly, through keeping influential aristocrats at court, the monarch controlled the nobility and its aspirations for power. This is especially visible in countries with absolutist regimes, such as France or Spain, whereas in Britain the nobility exercised considerable power at the parliament and was thus less dependent on the royal court and sovereignty. For the nobility, royal, imperial and princely courts formed a place and space of obligations, power structures and influence.

From the point of view of courtiers, it is necessary to understand the importance of the ideas of duty and service for the nobilities in early modern and modern Europe. Serving the sovereign was an obligation, a responsibility which was not to be avoided.⁵ For a noblewoman, the most obvious way to gain dutiful aristocratic agency was to act as a lady-in-waiting at the royal court. For some women a career at court was a serious obligation, while others sought service at court as it opened opportunities for acting in a meaningful position. Many noblewomen did not even consider occupations other than a career at court, unless they married and concentrated on the role of wife and mother or became influential social and political hostesses.⁶ Rapid social changes during the late eighteenth century and nineteenth century, including the evolving separation of home, work and leisure and opening new occupational opportunities for elite women, were not an issue for high-ranking noblewomen appointed as maids of honour or ladies-in-waiting in the same way as for women at other levels of society.⁷

Women’s work in early modern Europe has been widely studied,⁸ as well as elite women’s growing opportunities on labour markets from the late nineteenth century.⁹ The important role of aristocratic women and their actual cultural and political agency at early modern and modern royal courts is widely acknowledged.¹⁰ Female courtiers’ service and tasks at royal, imperial and princely courts have also interested scholars, even though female courtiers’ activities have often been studied as part of royal households or as a purely decorative element of royal ceremonies rather than examined as individual careers and elite women’s work.¹¹

In this chapter, I discuss noblewomen in the service of the Swedish royal court from the 1740s to the 1840s. Until the late nineteenth century, noblewomen had limited possibilities to act in public and work for their living and for a long time a career at court was the only respectable occupational

opening for noblewomen, especially for those from the highest aristocracy. For them, serving the monarch and working at royal court was a meaningful occupation, a representative activity which could be turned into a career with working time, salary and opportunities for advancing to a higher position. Noblewomen's approach towards their work at court could be characterised as professional, even though professions and professionals were perhaps more often linked to high offices in administration or to the activities within liberal professions, medicine, law or trade and the training at the universities they required.¹² Noblewomen's work at court was a profession that was restricted within their social circles and required certain qualifications and skills. These were required through careful education, which was a typical way to gain access to a profession for many centuries. Noblewomen learned the court profession from previous generations at home, at court and in society. The skills and knowledge required in the profession were transmitted from mother to daughter within aristocratic families, much in the way that professions were passed from fathers to sons as artisans, merchants or officers. Particularly families with powerful political, economic and cultural connections sought to enter their sons and daughters to the profession of a courtier; thus, they would have an influential office at royal or princely court. However, not all noblewomen who aspired to a position at royal court were selected, even though they could have had the required connections, skills and qualifications.

In her study on fifteenth- and sixteenth-century English aristocratic women Barbara J. Harris argues that aristocratic women's careers should be seen from the world view of the contemporaries, as 'a person's course or progress through life, especially a vocation that is publicly conspicuous and significant. ... Understanding aristocratic women's activities as careers underscores the full extent and political significance of their contribution to their families, class, and society'.¹³ This is equally important for our understanding of elite and aristocratic women's career prospects and work in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, be it at royal, imperial and princely courts or other domains such as women's activities as political hostesses or patrons of artists and scientists.

My chapter takes a case study approach and follows the careers of individual women, in order to better understand their occupations at the eighteenth-century Swedish royal court as work and a career, whether short or long. It has to be stressed that, even small in numbers, the selected women offer us a representative sample of the highly exclusive world of female courtiers. Examples of noblewomen and their careers are drawn from the 1740s to the 1840s. This period has been chosen more because of the life cycles of the women studied than because of political or historic periodisation, even though the explored period covers an era of political, economic and societal

changes from the election of Adolf Fredrik of Holstein-Gottorp (ruled 1751–1771) as the crown prince of Sweden in 1743 to the end of the Napoleonic Wars, as well as the wake of industrialism and parliamentary changes in the mid-nineteenth century.

First, the structures of the Swedish royal court, as well as the opportunities for noblewomen to become courtiers will be discussed. Next, I will focus on the qualifications required from a potential maid of honour, a position that preceded appointment to the prestigious office of a lady-in-waiting. After discussing the admission to a court career and the length of it, I will review female courtiers' work and duties, as well as their salary and remuneration in order to better understand the significance of the service at court for elite women's career, work and profession.

Noblewomen in the structure of the Swedish royal court

Before the early eighteenth century, the structure of the Swedish royal court, its organization to different households for the members of the royal family, as well as the officeholders, including noblewomen, are mapped relatively thoroughly.¹⁴ We also know the importance of the service at court for late nineteenth-century aristocratic women.¹⁵ Whilst the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Swedish court has evoked extensive scholarship, it has been concentrated more on the royals and the importance of court life for sovereignty and monarchy¹⁶ rather than on the experiences and tasks of aristocratic courtiers.¹⁷

Before the early eighteenth century the Swedish court was organised after the German pattern, which meant that the court was relatively small in size and less hierarchical than the seventeenth-century French or Spanish courts. In the seventeenth century, Sweden was an absolutist state and the monarchy was strong. The role of the nobility was crucial for Swedish state building during the seventeenth century, when the modern state was created with the support of newly ennobled office holders. Furthermore, the ennoblements juxtaposed old and new nobility, creating conflicts that were also reflected in the royal court.¹⁸ Within the nobility, frictions diminished its political power and aided the monarch to consolidate absolutism. However, absolutism was abolished by law in 1719, which had an impact on court life especially in the early eighteenth century. Then the court life was relatively quiet, because King Carl XII (ruled 1697–1718) was unmarried and on military expeditions most of the time. Thus, the organisational structure of the court and royal households altered little between the late sixteenth century and the mid-eighteenth century.

From the 1740s onwards, the Swedish court followed French court ideals, especially with regard to cultural activities, but the economy, size and structure of court offices continued to follow the German system. The new Crown Prince of Sweden, Adolph Fredrick of Holstein-Gottorp, who was elected as the heir apparent in 1743 and his spouse from 1744, Crown Princess Louisa Ulrika of Prussia, chose as the marshal of the court Count Carl Gustaf Tessin (1695–1770), former Swedish ambassador in Paris who was acquainted with French royalties, aristocracy and court life.¹⁹ Tessin's personality, connections to the French court and culture had an enormous impact on the Swedish court life, which he dominated together with Lovisa Ulrika in the 1740s.

However, the political power of the Swedish monarchy was relatively weak during the period called by contemporaries the Age of Liberty (1719–1772).²⁰ This had its impact on the mid-eighteenth century court, which often has been studied as a scene for pleasure and play without exploring the power structures behind the apparent lack of political power. On the other hand, the absolutist reigns (1772–1809) of King Gustav III (ruled 1771–1792) and King Gustav IV Adolf (ruled 1792–1809) were characterised by the growing importance of the ceremonial and political role of the court.²¹ Hence, political intrigues were permanent among the royals, the court and the ruling classes when sovereigns with loyal courtiers tried to aggrandise the political power of the ruler. Lovisa Ulrika's ambitions to augment the power of the sovereign were also reflected at her court as crown princess, queen and dowager queen.²² Gustav III appointed as ladies-in-waiting the wives and daughters of his political adversaries; thus, he diminished the influence of the noblemen in opposition.²³ The splendour of royal manifestations of power as well as the privileges of the nobility decreased throughout the nineteenth century alongside the growth of the bourgeoisie. It has been argued that the Swedish royal family became more bourgeois during the nineteenth century because of the increasing societal valuing of domesticity and family life over ceremonious public life.²⁴

A career at the royal court, though much sought after, was an option only for a small group of noblewomen. Compared to other European courts in Versailles and Vienna, Berlin and Madrid, the Swedish court was relatively small; thus, it could offer careers only to a small number of noblewomen. For instance, in the late-eighteenth century, at the court of Queen Sofia Magdalena, a chief court mistress (*överhovmästarinna*), court mistress (*hovmästarinna*) and nine ladies-in-waiting (*statsfru*) were appointed, but no maids of honour (*hovfröken*).²⁵ Compared to France, from where the ideals of court society came to the eighteenth-century Swedish court, this was a small

number. From the mid-seventeenth century to the French revolution, French queens had an average of thirty female attendants in their households and most of them were either from the aristocracy or lower nobility.²⁶ However, from 1775 to 1790 the number of all officeholders, aristocrats and commoners, at the court of the Swedish queen varied from fifty-three to sixty-six persons.²⁷

In Sweden, as elsewhere, most of the noblewomen who made a career at court came from the highest aristocracy and titled nobility with long-time connections to the court. Aristocratic women considered high court offices as their privilege, especially those of lady-in-waiting (*hovdam, statsfru*) or court mistress and chief court mistress (*hovmästarinna, överhovmästarinna*),²⁸ which only married women could hold. The highest-ranking offices were the monopoly of aristocratic women but short-term offices, such as the prolific role of maid of honour, could be held by those from less grand families, thereby opening the palace door to less privileged young women.²⁹ Thus, the royal court in Stockholm also offered opportunities to daughters of the provincial nobility.

At early modern and modern European courts, the offices were mostly occupied for life, which emphasises the exclusive nature of a court career. The ladies-in-waiting did not change when the new ruler was crowned. If the dowager queen lived, she kept her own court and her courtiers. After the death of the dowager queen, the ladies-in-waiting either retired or continued in the service of the new queen or empress. They transmitted knowledge of the royal family, ceremonies and traditions to new consorts who often came from abroad and had to leave their personal courtiers behind when marrying into a foreign royal, imperial or princely family.

Qualities and connections of a maid of honour and a lady-in-waiting

In order to achieve the inner and outer appearance of a maid of honour or lady-in-waiting – indeed, the appearance of a lady of rank – members of the nobility educated their daughters with great care. Until the early nineteenth century, most of the aristocratic families in Sweden educated their daughters at home.³⁰ During the nineteenth century it became customary for the nobility to send their daughters to fine boarding schools.³¹ In aristocratic culture, the role of the mother was vital in passing the knowledge of the world of the court from generation to generation. The transmittal of social knowledge and skills in high society was the responsibility of mothers and other female relatives, whereas fathers were responsible for the formal education of both boys and girls. Young girls learned at an early age how to behave, please and act at various social events, such as visits,

balls, assemblies, masquerades or in spa resorts and at country houses. In aristocratic circles, girls' education in conversation (mostly in French), in dancing, drawing or fine embroidery, as well as their moral and ethical education, aimed for the gracious, modest, tasteful behaviour and aristocratic sociability essential at court.³²

Occasionally, girls of the Swedish nobility had an opportunity to hone their manners and skills in society in France, at court in Versailles and in the salons of aristocracy in Paris. France was not only the model for court life, but also an important political ally for Sweden.³³ The Swedish envoy in Paris acted as an intermediary between the Swedish and French courts. The envoy played a key role in presenting Swedish aristocrats at court in Versailles and in the salons of Paris because he was a family member or friend of a number of Swedish aristocrats. Swedish noblemen travelled relatively often to France and for years many of them acted as officers there. Swedish noblewomen travelled more rarely to France and abroad. However, in eighteenth-century Sweden, there were a few elite women, who spent time in France in their youth and who were appointed at court and made a career as courtiers upon their return to Sweden or later. Three of them were Baroness Charlotta Fredrika Sparre (1719–1795, married von Fersen), Countess Hedvig Catharina De la Gardie (1732–1800, married von Fersen) and Countess Carolina Juliana Anna Ulrika Lewenhaupt (1754–1826, married Lewenhaupt). Their careers will be discussed in more detail here.

Charlotta Sparre and her brother Carl travelled to Paris together with their relatives, Countess Ulla Sparre and her husband, Count Carl Gustaf Tessin, the Swedish ambassador extraordinary in Paris 1739–1742. Ulla and Charlotta Sparre were presented at court in Versailles by the Queen Marie Leszczyńska's lady-in-waiting Princess Montauban. Connections to the French court and Swedish envoy also opened to Charlotta Sparre the doors to the salons of Parisian societies, where she was much admired for her esprit and grace. Together with the Tessins she went to the opera and theatre, masquerades, balls, suppers and other events. Tessin frequented literary and intellectual circles in Paris and was himself an important patron of artists.³⁴ This all gave Charlotta Sparre opportunities to familiarize herself with French court life and the world of Paris salons before she and Ulla Sparre travelled back to Sweden in 1741 because of Tessin's financial straits.³⁵ The time in Paris and her connections there distinguished Charlotta Sparre from most of the elite women aspiring for an appointment at court in mid-eighteenth century Sweden.

Hedvig De la Gardie also lived for some time in Paris in the 1740s. She and her elder sister Brita had moved from Stockholm to Paris with their mother Countess Hedvig Catharina Lillie after the

death of their father in 1741. In Paris the family lived quietly, especially compared to Hedvig Lillie's previous role as political hostess and important facilitator for her husband's political career in Sweden.³⁶ Since Hedvig De la Gardie did not participate in social life in Paris or in court life in Versailles, her time in France was notable mainly for her acquisition of better skills in French, which was an essential aristocratic *lingua franca* and *de facto* the language of Swedish court of the eighteenth century.

Another noblewoman, Carolina Lewenhaupt was born in Alsace/Elsass, where her father Count Adam Lewenhaupt served as an officer as did many Swedish noblemen in the eighteenth century. She was educated in France, which facilitated her admission to a career at court, first as a maid of honour, later as a lady of the bedchamber and lady-in-waiting at the courts of the Queen Sofia Magdalena and Duchess Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotte.³⁷

Nevertheless, we know more about the education of Charlotta Sparre's and Hedvig De la Gardie's daughters than their own upbringing, even though it is clear that Baroness Sparre's connections to the Tessins shaped her manners, appearance and politeness and facilitated her admission to the court career. Charlotta Sparre's five daughters and Hedvig De la Gardie's two daughters were educated at home in Stockholm, where they had French or French-speaking governesses. Later they presumably followed the lectures of their brothers' and male cousins' tutors, because they all lived nearby each other, were close relatives and their fathers seem to have shared some of the costs of educating their offspring.³⁸ Even so, in the 1770s, Duchess Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotte, Gustav III's sister-in-law and later Queen Charlotte, wrote in her political journal that the education of Charlotta Sparre's daughters was not what one would have required from a lady of their status and rank.³⁹ Her sharp words were presumably derived from her antipathy towards one of the daughters, Augusta von Fersen, a lady-in-waiting and a long-time lover of the duchess's spouse. In his diary Chamberlain (*kammarherre*) Baron Gustaf Johan Ehrensvärd gives another view of Charlotta Sparre's daughters, praising their beauty, liveliness, elegance, politeness and generosity.⁴⁰ Hedvig De la Gardie's daughter Sophie von Fersen (1757–1816, married Piper), who was then 17, followed her mother, who led the Swedish delegation that travelled to Eutin in northern Germany in the summer of 1774 to escort to Sweden Princess Charlotte, future spouse of Gustav III's brother Duke Carl. Countess De la Gardie was then chief court mistress at the court of the Swedish queen and after the royal marriage Sophie von Fersen became maid of honour and later, in 1786, court mistress at Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotte's (as she was called in Sweden) court.⁴¹

A careful education in addition to personal qualities and family connections was essential for a noblewomen of a family aspiring for a court office for a daughter. It was not unusual that the daughters of aristocratic families became familiar with the royal court from their childhood. An appointment, especially an appointment that continued for several years, was most often available for young girls whose parents or relatives had close connections to the royal court. Young noble girls were appointed as maids of honour more often in honour of their parents or other relatives than because of their own qualities. However, personal qualities of the maids of honour should not be underestimated. In a world where birth, politeness, sensibility, wit, grace and beauty were highly valued, the personal qualities of these young girls also helped them in one of two possible paths for aristocratic women in this period: finding a suitable match in marriage or combining such a match with a career at court. While some of the noblewomen who made a career at court never married, most of them did, for the right marriage also aided them in ascending the court hierarchy.

In the lives of young noblewomen, presentation at court became a ritual transition from the world of home to the world of court. After presentation at court, young ladies had entered high society and left childhood and adolescence behind them. Some of them soon married and moved to the estates of their spouses, while some of them were appointed as maids of honour for a longer period. Connections and social status as well as personal qualities were required before a young lady could be appointed at court. However, in some cases young ladies from families with lower status and position were appointed as a supreme favour to the girl's family.

Admission to a court career and the length of the career

Charlotta Sparre entered her career at court in 1744. She was in the Swedish delegation that travelled to Berlin in order to accompany Princess Louise, the future crown princess of Sweden, to her new homeland. Count Carl Gustaf Tessin led the delegation and had presumably personally chosen Sparre as one of the unmarried noblewomen in the delegation. As was customary when a foreign princess married into the royal family of another country, Princess Louise had to give up her Prussian maids of honour after her arrival in Sweden because of their connections to the Prussian court. She chose new ones from amongst the Swedish aristocracy. Charlotta Sparre's nomination as a maid of honour showed respect for Carl Gustaf Tessin, whom Lovisa Ulrika (as was her name in Swedish) held in high regard. Moreover, Charlotta Sparre's personal qualities played a key role in the nomination, which was the beginning of a long career at court.⁴²

Maids of honour were generally between seventeen and twenty years of age and were typically appointed until they married. Marriage and career at court also intersected in the lives of Charlotta Sparre, Hedvig De la Gardie, Carolina Lewenhaupt and their daughters. In February 1748, Charlotta Sparre married chamberlain (*kammarherre*) and master of the hunt (*hovjagmästare*) Count Carl von Fersen (1717–1786). Maids of honour were not allowed to marry without permission and in February 1747 Baroness Sparre asked Crown Princess Lovisa Ulrika for permission to marry Fersen.⁴³ Since life at the court of King Frederic I was relatively stagnant, a marriage of a maid of honour was anticipated with enthusiasm. In addition, the court paid for a generous part of the wedding arrangements.⁴⁴ In the 1770s, three of Charlotta Sparre and Carl von Fersen's five daughters were presented at court, appointed as maids of honour and married to men from the aristocracy and held offices at court. Ulla von Fersen (1749–1810, married first von Höpken and then von Wright) and Augusta von Fersen (1754–1846, married Löwenhielm) both made in their turn a career at court as courtiers and as ladies-in-waiting. Their sister Sofia Charlotta (1751–1774, married Lewenhaupt) was a maid of honour before her marriage in 1773 and death the following year.⁴⁵

In 1752 Hedvig De la Gardie married Count Axel von Fersen (1719–1794), brother to Carl von Fersen. She was appointed as a lady-in-waiting in 1778, presumably because her spouse was one of the most important political leaders of the aristocratic opposition against King Gustav III. Thus, the king wished to engage at court a lady-in-waiting with powerful connections, personal qualifications and family ties to influential families of nobility. Her two daughters were also presented at court and began their own careers in the 1770s; Hedvig von Fersen became a lady-in-waiting in the household of the Queen Sofia Magdalena and Sophie von Fersen was first a maid of honour and then a court mistress at the court of Duchess Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotte. Furthermore, both married into aristocratic families and their husbands held court appointments.⁴⁶

Because of the marriages, the turnover of the maids of honour was noticeable, while the ladies-in-waiting were generally appointed for their lifetime. This led to a situation in which new appointments for ladies-in-waiting opened rarely. In Sweden, during the 1740s and 1750s at the royal household of the Swedish Crown Princess Lovisa Ulrika and from the 1770s to the 1790s at the royal households of Princess Sofia Albertina and Duchess Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotte, several maids of honour as well as ladies-in-waiting were employed. From the 1770s to the 1790s, Queen Sofia Magdalena had at her household only married ladies-in-waiting and one lady of the

bedchamber.⁴⁷ Female royals had in their households both female and male courtiers, whereas male royals had only male courtiers.

The sense of duty, service and obligation were explicit for the courtiers and had an impact on the choices noblewomen made concerning their appointments or careers at court. The chief court mistress (*överhovmästarinna*) and court mistress (*hovmästarinna*) were as a rule on duty at all times, whereas the ladies-in-waiting served in a three-month rota. Noblewomen who made a career at court in the second half of the eighteenth century and first half of the nineteenth century were all married. There were, however, a few maids of honour who never married but because of their personal relations to royals remained in their court careers throughout their lives. As married women, most of the ladies at court had children. In many cases, the husbands of ladies-in-waiting also held an office at court, as did Charlotta Sparre's husband and the husbands of their daughters. When on duty, ladies-in-waiting inhabited royal palaces where they had their own apartments, whereas their children and husband, if not courtiers on duty at court, resided elsewhere.⁴⁸

At royal and imperial courts, an ambitious lady could work for issues and activities in which she was interested or found important. She might have political, social or cultural ambitions or a sense of duty to the sovereign and royals. On the other hand, a well-placed woman could help family members obtain good positions at court, in the civil administration or the army. However, most important of all, she would desire to make good marriage matches for her sons and daughters. In addition, in Sweden in the second half of the eighteenth century, ladies-in-waiting such as Carolina Lewenhaupt and sisters Ulla and Augusta von Fersen, performed at court in opera, theatre and concert performances and were, according to contemporaries, skilled actors and singers.⁴⁹

The appointment of courtiers was personal and not hereditary at the Swedish court. However, as the examples of Charlotta Sparre, Hedvig De la Gardie and their daughters illustrate, most of the female courtiers had relatives at court at some point in time and presumably powerful courtiers expected their children and relatives to be named to influential positions at court.⁵⁰ In 1800 Baroness Hedvig Amalia Charlotta Klinckowström (1777–1810, married first Möllersvärd, then Trolle-Wachtmeister) was appointed as a lady-in-waiting at the court of Queen Fredrika. Her parents were the marshal of the court, Baron Ture Leonard Klinkowtsröm and the lady-in-waiting, Countess Hedvig von Fersen. Baroness Klinkowström's maternal grandmother Hedvig De la Gardie had been a lady-in-waiting and her aunt Sophie von Fersen had been the chief court mistress at the court of the Duchess Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotta. In addition, her other relatives, Charlotta Sparre and Carl

von Fersen and their daughters Ulla and Augusta von Fersen all held or had held offices at court and were very influential at court and in society more widely.⁵¹ When keeping in mind that at the Swedish court there were nine ladies-in-waiting, of which only three were on duty at the same time, the careers at court were held in an exclusive small circle which only occasionally admitted new members in the form of maids of honour, from among which the future ladies-in-waiting were selected.

Royal treatment continued for these women even after their terms of service. In the late-eighteenth-century Swedish court, deceased ladies-in-waiting were buried either with pompous ceremonials dictated by the rigid court etiquette or quietly in the presence of only the nearest family of the deceased lady, depending on the wishes of her family.⁵² Chief court mistress at Queen Sofia Magdalena's household, Countess Ulrika Eleonora Strömfelt (married Sparre), died in April 1780. Born in 1724, she had spent her whole life in court society. Her mother had also been chief court mistress. She was herself twelve years old when she was appointed in 1739 as a maid of honour in the household of Queen Ulrika Eleonora. Later on, at the court of Queen Lovisa Ulrika, she and her sister Agneta Margareta were appointed as maids of honour in 1744, at the same time as Charlotta Sparre. In 1748 Countess Strömfelt became a lady of the bedchamber (*kammarfröken*).

No transition from one role to another was guaranteed; a possible career at court could be occasionally destroyed if royal favourites turned from grace to disgrace. In the autumn of 1752, Ulrika Strömfelt left her position because she was not content with the treatment she received from Queen Lovisa Ulrika and maid of honour Countess Ulrika Eleonora von Düben (1722–1758, married Bielke).⁵³ Presumably she resigned for political reasons since the queen's and Countess von Düben's political ambitions differed from hers. Countess Strömfelt, unlike Countess von Düben, did not support the politically ambitious queen in her desire to increase the power of the sovereign.⁵⁴ Countess Ulla Sparre resigned her post as chief court mistress of the queen in December 1752. She left the court because her husband Carl Gustaf Tessin, the grand marshal (*övermarskalk*), governor of the crown prince and previous favourite of the queen Lovisa Ulrika was disgraced.⁵⁵

Despite her previous resignation from Queen Lovisa Ulrika's court, Ulrika Eleonora Strömfelt was appointed in 1777, at the age of 53, to the position of chief court mistress in the household of Queen Sofia Magdalena. Thus, the countess had served three queens over a period of 44 years.⁵⁶ Stately and sumptuous, her funeral was designed by Gustav III, who had great talent in making ceremonies

and theatre for all kinds of occasions, felicitous or lugubrious as Count Axel von Fersen noted dryly in his memoirs. Despite the magnificent funeral ceremony, the countess was already forgotten by the next day when the king appointed a new chief court mistress (*överhovmästarinna*), Charlotta Sparre, and a new court mistress (*hovmästarinna*), Countess Hedvig Catharina Ekeblad (1746–1812, married Piper and niece to Hedvig De la Gardie).⁵⁷ When Charlotta Sparre died in 1795, Hedvig Ekeblad's career at court continued when she was appointed at the queen's household as chief court mistress.⁵⁸ Charlotta Sparre's daughters Ulla and Augusta resigned from their posts as ladies-in-waiting at the court of the queen in 1795, shortly before the death of their mother.⁵⁹ However, the reasons behind Ulla and Augusta von Fersen's resignation remain obscure, because there are no sources that provide further details.

Work and duty

It can be argued that in the history of royal courts the most important task of the courtiers was to consolidate and manifest the power of the sovereign through sumptuous ceremonies and lavish everyday court life. However, women's tasks and duties at court can and should be characterised as work because they were very much seen as such by their contemporaries.⁶⁰ Ladies-in-waiting had generally more tasks than maids of honour and their duties had more the character of work than maids of honours' duties. Genteel women's occupations at royal courts varied according to which household (king's, queen's, emperor's, empress's or other members of royal, imperial and princely families) they belonged; to the season; to which of the royal palaces the court was sojourning; to the number of ceremonies and to the personality of the sovereign as well as to the personal qualities or skills of female courtiers.

Although ladies-in-waiting dealt with everyday practical issues and served as companions to the female royals, they were also important figures in the daily life at court, managing and organizing many of the practical issues for the queen and other female members of the royal family. The life at court offered courtiers ceremonies and festivities, sociability and culture, intrigues and quiet days and there was also frequent travel between different royal residences. Court was a stage on which both married and unmarried noble ladies could act for various purposes. The intrigues around the sovereign and the succession played an important part in the lives of the aristocratic families. Ladies-in-waiting competed with each other for status, favours, political power and offices for their

husbands, brothers and other male relatives, as the examples of Charlotta Sparre and Hedvig De la Gardie above show.

Accumulating and manifesting the splendour of the court and sovereign was perhaps the most visible of the duties of ladies-in-waiting. In addition, the everyday chores of the ladies-in-waiting varied from helping with royal correspondence, organising queens' or princesses' philanthropic work, engaging in conversation, reading to the royals, playing cards with them or accompanying them on promenades. They also had to care for and choose jewellery for various occasions and they took care of the train or mantle in ceremonies, although one of the queen's chamberlains carried it.⁶¹ Ladies-in-waiting arranged balls or suppers for the queen and organised illuminations, music and dances. In eighteenth-century Sweden, the court was the nexus of cultural life and especially theatre and opera flourished under Queen Lovisa Ulrika and her son King Gustav III. Courtiers performed at the theatre and opera performances and other entertainments took place. Many ladies-in-waiting were accomplished actors and singers, having practised music, dance and bodily control since early childhood. Ladies-in-waiting Ulla and Augusta von Fersen, Hedvig Ulrika De la Gardie (1761–1832, married Armfelt), Caroline Lewenhaupt and Maria Aurora Uggla (1747–1826, married Ehrengranat) acted in several theatre pieces performed at court and were all regarded as skilled actors.⁶²

Ladies-in-waiting were considered as the highest-ranking women in Sweden. They had admission to the queen's apartment at all times and all of them were present at public audiences and at ambassadors' audiences, which can be seen as a visible sign of their rank. The chief court mistress and the court mistress, the highest-ranking women at court, had the power to introduce anyone to the queen who wished to meet her. The ladies-in-waiting on duty followed the queen wherever she went, saw to her needs and her accessories and informed male courtiers such as the lord chamberlain (*överkammarherre*) when the queen needed them. Compared to male courtiers, ladies-in-waiting and maids of honour were fewer at the Swedish court. They numbered only eleven, of which the chief court mistress and the court mistress and three ladies-in-waiting were on duty at the same time. The queen also had between ten and twelve male courtiers at her court, whereas the court of the king was distinctly larger.⁶³

<FIGURE 4.1 HERE>

Connections grew from subordination to bonds of friendship; there were frequently ties between royals and court mistresses or ladies-in-waiting. Most likely these female friendships offered support and solace in the court's hierarchical world where both courtiers and royals were rarely alone and most of the time were controlled by strict etiquette. The friendship between Sophie von Fersen and Duchess Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotte, from the 1770s until Sophie von Fersen's death in 1816, is an example of this kind of mutual intellectual bond.⁶⁴ Countess von Fersen already knew the duchess in 1774, when she participated in the entourage, led by her mother Hedvig De la Gardie, that escorted the young princess to Sweden to be married to Prince Carl (later King Karl XIII). Sophie von Fersen was appointed as maid of honour at the duchess's court before her marriage in 1777. Later, she acted as chief court mistress at the duchess's court.⁶⁵

The hierarchy at court gave women substantial power. As mentioned above, at the Swedish court the chief court mistress, and in her absence the court mistress, could choose who was presented to the queen and when. The chief court mistress and court mistress were on duty at all times, whereas nine ladies-in-waiting served three at a time on a three-month rota. The ladies-in-waiting were allowed to organise their time of service themselves.⁶⁶ This gave them possibilities to better arrange family life or duties towards their families and husband's estate outside the court.

However, combining family life and service at court was demanding. After two or three years as maids of honour and profitable marriage some of the women withdrew to the country houses for their childbearing years and returned to the court later. Most of the maids of honour who married into aristocratic families also participated at court life as part of aristocratic sociability after their marriage, without holding an office or other official position. Some of these noblewomen continued their court careers while having young children, whereas some of them re-entered the court career only after raising their children. Despite aristocratic women's duties in educating children and a growing interest in motherhood, child care and breastfeeding in the second half of the eighteenth century, not all ladies-in-waiting at Swedish court retreated from court life during early childhood of their offspring.

Charlotta Sparre was nominated as court mistress in 1760, when her five daughters, born between 1749 and 1759, were young. Unlike Countess Sparre, her sister-in-law Hedvig De la Gardie was appointed as a lady-in-waiting in 1778, when her youngest child was sixteen. Countess De la Gardie's daughter Sophie von Fersen had small children, born between 1778 and 1785, when she was nominated the chief court mistress in 1786.⁶⁷ Of Charlotta Sparre's daughters, the oldest ones

preferred court life to family life and motherhood, whereas the two youngest ones never wished to enter a career at court.⁶⁸ For example, in November 1779, Countess Sparre's daughters Ulla and Augusta von Fersen travelled to Stockholm to briefly visit their children whom they had not seen for three months. At court their absence of five days was regarded, according to the chamberlain Ehrensvärd, as long and courtiers welcomed the ladies-in-waiting with open arms when they returned from their domestic duties.⁶⁹

However, there were also female courtiers, who withdrew from their offices presumably for family reasons. For instance, Carolina Lewenhaupt's daughter Carolina (1782–1851, married Sparre), mentioned earlier, was appointed as a lady-in-waiting in 1811 at the court of Queen Charlotte. She served until 1818, when her second daughter was born. After her reassignment she gave birth to three more daughters.⁷⁰ In the mid-nineteenth century Countess Vilhelmina 'Mina' Lewenhaupt (1817–1899, married Bonde) was asked to accept the appointment as a chief court mistress in Queen Lovisa's household. She was at the time running the family estate and wanted to personally dedicate herself to family life and business. However, her sense of duty was even stronger and she accepted the queen's request. As a chief court mistress Countess Bonde had exceptional freedom to decide herself when to work at court and when to dedicate herself to her family. When absent from court, she delegated her duties to the ladies-in-waiting.⁷¹

Duties towards family, husband and children, loyalty and service to the sovereign, as well as personal ambitions and preferences were arguably all issues for married noblewomen aspiring for an office and a career at court. The examples above show a growing tendency towards domesticity by the mid-nineteenth century: in the mid-eighteenth century aristocratic women seem to have generally given the career at court more emphasis than daily family life (of which social life was an essential part), whereas by the mid-nineteenth century aristocratic women could even have an opportunity to discuss on their working conditions and working hours when appointed at court. This did not, however, mean that the role of a mother in educating her daughters to ladies of rank and courtiers, and thus transmitting the profession of a female courtier to the next generation was less important in the eighteenth century. Connections and education through the example of a mother were maintained through correspondence and with the help of father, governesses and female relatives during the periods when mothers were on duty at court. Within the aristocratic culture the importance of kinship and family relations helped in the education of the children if mothers were absent because of their work. Clearly, however, noblewomen had to navigate between the demands of a family and career. There was not a uniform strategy or a standard court career. The women

made different decisions and choices, as, for instance, in the family of Charlotta Sparre and Carl von Fersen, where both parents made a career at court despite a growing family and small children. In their case, three of five daughters also entered a court career, whilst two daughters chose another path as mistresses of their homes and estates.⁷²

Salary and remuneration

The courtiers in most European courts received lodging, a salary, generous presents and other benefits in compensation for their services. Through emblems and luxurious presents, the maids of honour and ladies-in-waiting made their status at court visible to all. At the same time, these objects could be seen as part of the monarch's use of symbolic power.

In Sweden, maids of honour were entitled to a salary, a clothing allowance, an apartment or other lodging in the royal palace, candles, firewood and food. All of this gave them independence from parents and family. Furthermore, the prestige and economic independence, even if relative, gave young noblewomen genuine prospects to consider a career at court for a lifetime. In the mid-eighteenth-century, maids of honour had a yearly salary of 400 silver *dalers*, while ladies of the bedchamber received 600. The salary was relatively high and can be compared to the salaries of noblemen serving at court: masters of the hunt had 1,000 silver dalers a year and pages were paid 140. Comparison with the pages – young noblemen often from families with limited social and economic resources – reveals the high position of the maids of honour in the hierarchy of the courts and royal households. The court mistresses and ladies-in-waiting had a high salary, equivalent to the highest male courtiers: 900 silver dalers for a court mistress.⁷³ The ladies-in-waiting also had an apartment or rooms in the royal palace, meals, carriages and servants.⁷⁴

An appointment at court gave noblewomen their own income and own space, even though sometimes they had to wait for their salaries for years and the apartments in royal residences were cramped. However, the salary was significant more symbolically than practically, because the high costs of court dresses, accessories and entertaining at court fell to the courtiers themselves. Therefore, other ways of rewarding noblewomen's service at court were possibly even more significant. Expensive jewels, elegant boxes, fans or a larger apartment were remunerations that made the status and royal grace of a lady-in-waiting visible to everyone at court. Furthermore, personal friendships with rulers and members of royal and imperial households could also be

considered a reward in the world of courtiers, even though the friendship probably seldom blossomed through deliberate calculation.

Despite a salary and the monetary and symbolic value of gifts courtiers received, the female courtier and her family also had to provide a significant financial investment in order to maintain a career at court. The outer appearance, clothes, accessories and material surroundings were expensive and the courtiers were supposed to add the splendour of the court with their own means. Moreover, advancement from a lady-in-waiting to court mistress and chief court mistress was neither rapid nor gratuitous. Charlotta Sparre served twenty years as court mistress before advancing in 1780 to chief court mistress at the household of the queen. Carl von Fersen paid for his wife's career advancement 90 *riksdalers*.⁷⁵

Significance of the service at court for elite women's career, work and profession

The royal court was central to the lives of European nobles and aristocrats in many ways. The court career of an elite woman could begin in adolescence and continue until old age if death did not intervene. Some of the maids of honour were appointed as ladies-in-waiting directly after wedding ceremonies organised and paid for by the court, while some ladies interrupted their career at court for a few years after getting married and having children, only to continue it when family duties could be put aside. Generally, for female courtiers a career at court came before obligations to family life until the nineteenth century, when the growing importance of the private sphere and family had an impact on such careers and elite women's professional aspirations. This led to the growing importance of maids of honour for aristocratic families. The daughters of aristocratic families could serve a relatively short period – sometimes no more than six months – as maids of honour at court, then achieve enormous social and cultural capital in the form of a suitable marriage, connections and personal status.

Especially for women belonging to the highest aristocracy, as were all the women discussed above, the court offered a public or half-public sphere where they had an official position and prospects to use their social capital however they chose in various ways. Some of the ladies-in-waiting were engaged in political and social life, while some had intellectual or artistic interests. From maid of honour, to the chief court mistress, a noblewoman's career at court could continue for decades and terminate in the last manifestation of both royal and noble status and female agency at court: a

grand funeral. Whilst many of the ladies-in-waiting who made a long career at court resigned before they were too old to maintain their duties, many of them were ageing at court together with the royals to whose households they had been appointed as young girls.

At court, an ambitious noblewoman could engage in political or cultural activities and act in her own right on an institutional level despite her gender. Moreover, an office at court could also offer noblewomen a career with their own income and prospects for advancement. Several ladies-in-waiting kept their occupation for decades, and their careers survived changes of rulers and successions. They also often transmitted their profession to their daughters, who also held offices at court. Furthermore, ladies-in-waiting increased the power and magnificence of the sovereign; they represented the royal lineage through their service and their social connections within and outside the royal court. Whilst the eighteenth century saw the birth of new public and semi-public sociability at opera houses, pleasure gardens and art exhibitions, royal courts remained important arenas for noblewomen, who arguably had more opportunities for agency at courts than within the emerging bourgeoisie public sphere, where women were restricted to roles as spectators and their sphere of agency was domestic.

1 On noblewomen as officeholders at European courts, see the chapters in *The Politics of Female Households: Ladies-in-Waiting Across Early Modern Europe*, eds Nadine Akkerman & Birgit Houben (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2014); Barbara J. Harris, *English Aristocratic Women, 1450–1550: Marriage and Family, Property and Careers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Katrin Keller, *Hofdamen: Amtsträgerinnen im Wiener Hofstaat de 17. Jahrhunderts* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2005); Sharon Kettering, 'The Household Service of Early Modern French Noblewomen', *French Historical Studies* 20:1 (1997), 55–85; Britta Kägler, *Frauen am Münchener Hof (1661–1756)* (Kallmünz: Michael Laßleben, 2011); K.D. Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women and Political Society in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998). See also *Servants of the Dynasty: Palace Women in World History*, ed. Anne Walthall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

2 For the use of royal power through visual media, see *A Kingdom of Images: French Prints in the Age of Louis XIV, 1660–1715*, eds Rémi Mathis, Vanessa Selbach, Louis Marchesano & Peter Fuhring, (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2015).

3 William R. Newton, *La petite cour: Services et serviteurs à la Cour de Versailles au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, Fayard, 2006), 12. Newton correctly criticises the concept of the 'court society' as being too inflexible to describe an institution that was more a world than a society. See also Norbert Elias, *The Court Society* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1983).

4 See, for example, *The Princely Courts of Europe: Ritual, Politics and Culture under the Ancien Régime 1500–1750*, ed. John Adams, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999); Bernard Hours, *Louis XV et sa cour: Le roi, l'étiquette et le courtisan* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2002).

5 On the Swedish nobility's ideology of serving the sovereign, see Johanna Ilmakunnas, *Ett ståndsmässigt liv: Familjen von Fersens livsstil på 1700-talet* (Helsingfors & Stockholm: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland & Atlantis, 2012); Charlotta Wolff, *Noble Conceptions of Politics in Eighteenth-Century Sweden (ca 1740–1790)* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2008).

6 Johanna Ilmakunnas, 'Career at Court: Noblewomen in Service of Swedish and Russian Royals, c. 1750–1850', *Women's History Magazine* 72:2 (2013), 4–11; Johanna Ilmakunnas, 'Hovdamer och hovfröknar i 1700-talets Sverige', *Historiska och litteraturhistoriska studier* No. 82 (2007): 17–47.

- 7 Angela Rundquist, *Blått blod och liljevita händer: En etnologisk studie av aristokratiska kvinnor 1850–1900* (Stockholm, Carlssons, 1989), 151–195.
- 8 For a useful summary, see, for example, Deborah Simonton, *Women in European culture and society: Gender, skill and identity from 1700* (New York: Routledge, 2011).
- 9 See, for example, Linda L. Clark, *The Rise of Professional Women in France: Gender and Public Administration since 1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Anne Ollila, *Jalo velvollisuus: Virkanaisena 1800-luvun lopun Suomessa* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 1998); Anne Ollila, ‘Die Zeit der weiblichen Angestellten’, in *Arbeitsam und gefügig: Zur Geschichte der Frauenarbeit in Finnland*, eds Marjatta Rahikainen & Kirsi Vainio-Korhonen (Berlin: BWV-Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2007), 153–169.
- 10 Elaine Chalus & Fiona Montgomery, ‘Women and politics’ in *Women’s History: Britain, 1700–1850: An introduction*, ed. Hannah Barker & Elaine Chalus, (London & New York: Routledge, 2005), 217–259; My Hellsing, *Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotte: Hertiginna vid det gustavianska hovet* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2015); Paul Keenan, ‘The Function of Fashion: Women and Clothing at the Russian Court (1700–1762)’, in *Women in Russian Culture and Society, 1700–1825*, eds Wendy Rosslyn & Alessandra Tosi (Hampshire and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Keller, *Hofdamen*; Kettering, ‘The Household Service’; Britta Kägler, *Frauen am Münchener Hof*; Jacques Levron, *Les inconnus de Versailles: Les coulisses de la Cour* (Paris: Perrin, 2009); Anne Martin-Fugier, *La vie élégante ou la formation du Tout-Paris 1815–1848* (Paris: Perrin, 2011); William R. Newton, *La petite cour*; Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*; Angela Rundquist, *Blått blod och liljevita händer*; Ulla Tillander-Godenhielm, ‘De ryska kejsarinnornas finländska hovfröknar, hovdamer och statsdamer’ in *Gentes Finlandiae* No. IX (2001), 57–95.
- 11 Excellent accounts on women’s activities at courts are Keller, *Hofdamen*; Kettering, ‘The Household Service’; Britta Kägler, *Frauen am Münchener Hof*; Newton, *La petite cour*, Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*, 188–219 and Rundquist, *Blått blod och liljevita händer*; see also, Jeroen Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles: The Courts of Europe’s Dynastic Rivals, 1550–1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Even though Duindam examines who attended court, offices they held and courtiers’ daily activities, he sees the courtiers more as an entity of the royal or imperial household rather than as individuals who made careers at court as office holders. Kathryn Norberg is notably critical towards scholarship on Versailles, which too often ignores gender and women’s agency. See Kathryn Norberg, ‘Women of Versailles, 1682–1789’, in *Servants of the Dynasty: Palace Women in World History*, ed. Anne Walthall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 191–192.
- 12 See Chapter 1, Ilmakunnas, Rahikainen & Vainio-Korhonen, ‘Women and professional ambitions in Northern Europe, c. 1650–1850’ and Chapter 7, Simonton, ‘“Sister to the tailor”’, in this volume.
- 13 Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, 5–6; cf. Kettering, ‘The Household Service’, 56.
- 14 Fabian Persson, ‘Living in the House of Power: Women at the Early Modern Swedish Court’, in *The Politics of Female Households*, 345–363; Persson, *Servants of Fortune: The Swedish Court between 1598 and 1721* (Lund: Wallin & Dalholm, 1999).
- 15 Rundquist, *Blått blod och liljevita händer*.
- 16 *Scripts of Kingship: Essays on Bernadotte and Dynastic Formation in an Age of Revolution*, eds Mikael Alm and Britt-Inger Johansson (Uppsala: Uppsala universitet, 2008); Beth Hennings, *Fyra gustavianska studier* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1967); Lena Rangström, *En brud för kung och fosterland: Kungliga svenska bröllop från Gustav Vasa till Carl XVI Gustav* (Stockholm, Livrustkammaren and Atlantis, 2010); Henrika Tandefelt, *Konsten att härska: Gustaf III inför sina undersåtar* (Helsingfors & Stockholm: Svenska litteratursällskapet & Atlantis, 2008).
- 17 On noblewomen at the eighteenth-century Swedish court, see Ilmakunnas, ‘Career at Court’; Ilmakunnas, ‘Hovets damer’. See also Hellsing, *Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotte*.
- 18 Persson, *Servants of Fortune*. See also Svante Norrhem, *Kvinnor vid maktens sida: 1632–1772* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2007); Svante Norrhem, *Uppkomlingarna: Kanslitjänstemännen i 1600-talets Sverige och Europa* (Umeå: Umeå University, 1993).
- 19 Olof Jägeskiöld, *Lovisa Ulrika* (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1945), 75–84.
- 20 Jonas Nordin, *Frihetstidens monarki: Konungamakt och offentlighet i 1700-talets Sverige* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2009); Charlotta Wolff, ‘Aristocratic Republicanism and the Hate of Sovereignty in 18th Century Sweden’, *Scandinavian Journal of History* 89:2 (2004): 358–375; Wolff, *Noble Conceptions of Politics*.
- 21 Mikael Alm, *Kungssord i elfte timmen: Språk och självbild i det gustavianska enväldets legitimitetskamp 1772–1809* (Stockholm, Atlantis, 2002); Tandefelt, *Konsten att härska*.
- 22 Elise Dermineur, *Queen Louisa Ulrika. Gender and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Sweden* (forthcoming).
- 23 Ilmakunnas, *Ett ståndsmässigt liv*, 118, 128.
- 24 Rangström, *En brud för kung och fosterland*, 299–397; Per Sandin, *Ett kungahus i tiden: Den bernadotteska dynastins möte med medborgarsamhället ca 1810–1860* (Uppsala, Uppsala universitet, 2011).
- 25 *Överkammarherrens journal 1778–1826: Ett gustavianskt tidsdokument*, eds Mikael Alm & Bo Vahlne (Stockholm: Kungl. Samfundet, 2010), 426–429.
- 26 Norberg, ‘Women of Versailles’, 194.
- 27 Hellsing, *Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotte*, 25.

- 28 The translations of *hovmästarinna* and *överhovmästarinna* follow the translations presented by Fabian Persson, see Fabian Persson, 'The Courts of the Vasas and Palatines, c. 1523–1751' in *The Princely Courts of Europe: Ritual, Politics and Culture under the Ancien Régime 1500–1750*, ed. John Adams (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999), 276–278, Persson, 'Living in the House of Power'; Persson, *Servants of Fortune*, iii–v. *Hovmästarinna* and *överhovmästarinna* have also been translated as mistress of the robes, see Ilmakunnas, 'Career at Court'.
- 29 Cf. Jessica Parland-von Essen, 'Adelsdöttrarnas adolescens 1780–1799: Från flicka till fröken och fru', *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland* 86:2 (2001), 221–237.
- 30 Ilmakunnas, *Ett ståndsmässigt liv*, 65–69; Jessica Parland-von Essen, *Behagets betydelser. Döttrarnas utbildning i det sena 1700-talets adelskultur* (Hedemora & Möklinta: Gidlunds förlag, 2005).
- 31 Rundquist, *Blått blod och liljevita händer*, 71–75; Henrika Tandefelt, 'Kvinnoliv under trehundra år sedda genom Sarvlax arkiv' in *Sarvlax: Herrgårdshistoria under 600 år*, ed. Henrika Tandefelt (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 2010), 75–76; Göran Ulväng, *Herrgårdarnas historia: Arbete, liv och bebyggelse på uppländska herrgårdar* (Uppsala: Hallgren & Björklund, 2008), 144; Kirsi Vainio-Korhonen, *Sofie Munsterhjelmns aika: Aatelinaisia ja upseereita 1800-luvun Suomessa* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2012), passim; Anna-Maria Åström, 'Sockenboarne': *Herrgårdskultur i Savolax 1790–1850* (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 1993), 261–267.
- 32 Parland-von Essen, *Behagets betydelser*. See also Soile Ylivuori, *Women's Bodies and the Culture of Politeness: Creating and Contesting Gendered Identities in Eighteenth-Century England* (unpublished PhD diss., University of Helsinki, 2015).
- 33 On relations between France and Sweden in the eighteenth century, see for example Charlotta Wolff, 'L'aristocratie suédoise et la France dans la seconde moitié du XVIII^e siècle', *Histoire, économie & société* 29 (2010), 56–67; Charlotta Wolff, 'The Swedish Aristocracy and the French Enlightenment circa 1740–1780,' in *Scandinavian Journal of History* 30:3–4 (2005), 259–270, doi:10.1080/03468750500279632.
- 34 See, for example, *Carl Gustaf Tessin: Kulturpersonen och privatmannen, 1695–1770* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 1995).
- 35 Ilmakunnas, *Ett ståndsmässigt liv*, 204; Sigrid Leijonhufvud, *Omkring Carl Gustaf Tessin I* (Stockholm: Norstedt & Söners Förlag, 1917), 91–97; Gustaf Lundberg, 'La Charmante Rose: Carl Gustaf Tessins niece', in *Vision och gestalt: Studier tillägnade Ragnar Josephson* (Stockholm: Natur och kultur, 1958); Wolff, *Vänskap och makt*, 191–193.
- 36 Wolff, *Vänskap och makt*, 42, 57–58.
- 37 Adelsvapens genealogi Wiki, 'Lewenhaupt', accessed 11 August 2016, https://www.adelsvapen.com/genealogi/Lewenhaupt_nr_2; Gerd Ribbing, *Gustav III:s hustru: Sofia Magdalena* (Helsingfors: Söderström, 1958), 247, 261, 298–299; Gerd Ribbing, *Ensam Drottning: Sofia Magdalena 1783–1813* (Helsingfors: Söderström, 1959), 269.
- 38 Ilmakunnas, *Ett ståndsmässigt liv*, 66–69.
- 39 Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotte, *Dagbok, I, 1775–1782*, ed. and transl. Carl Carlson Bonde (Stockholm: Nordstedt, 1902).
- 40 Gustaf Johan Ehrensvärd, *Dagboksanteckningar förda vid Gustaf III:s hof, I*, ed. E.V. Montan (Stockholm, P.A. Norstedt & Söners Förlag, 1878), 107–108, 231; Gustaf Johan Ehrensvärd, *Dagboksanteckningar förda vid Gustaf III:s hof, 2*, ed. E.V. Montan (Stockholm, P.A. Norstedt & Söners Förlag, 1878), 13, 139–140.
- 41 Ilmakunnas, *Ett ståndsmässigt liv*, 125–126; Hellsing, *Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotte*, 29–52; Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotte wrote her political journal in the form of a monthly letter addressed to Sophie von Fersen.
- 42 Lovisa Ulrika to Fredrik II, 31 August 1744, in *Luise Ulrike, die schwedische Schwester Friedrichs des Großen. Ungedruckte Briefe an Mitglieder des preußischen Königshauses I. 1729–1746*, ed. Fritz Arnheim (Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1909), 65; Ilmakunnas, 'Hovets damer', 20.
- 43 Lovisa Ulrika to Sofia Dorotea, 24 February 1747, 6 February 1748, in *Luise Ulrike, die schwedische Schwester Friedrichs des Großen. Ungedruckte Briefe an Mitglieder des preußischen Königshauses II. 1747–1758*, ed. Fritz Arnheim (Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1909), 18, 97.
- 44 Ilmakunnas, 'Hovets damer', 36–40; Ilmakunnas, *Ett ståndsmässigt liv*, 225–226.
- 45 Ilmakunnas, *Ett ståndsmässigt liv*, 77, 118; Adelsvapens genealogi Wiki, 'von Fersen', accessed 11 August 2016, https://www.adelsvapen.com/genealogi/Von_Fersen_nr_56.
- 46 Ibid., 117–118. On Sophie von Fersen's agency at court, see also Hellsing, *Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotte*.
- 47 Ilmakunnas, 'Hovets damer', 20–23, 30; *Överkammarherrens journal 1778–1826*, 426–429.
- 48 Ilmakunnas, 'Hovets damer', 40.
- 49 Carl Forsstrand, *De tre Gracerna: Minnen och anteckningar från Gustaf III:s Stockholm* (Stockholm, Hugo Gebers Förlag, 1912); Ribbing, *Gustav III:s hustru*, passim; Ribbing, *Ensam Drottning*, passim.
- 50 Cf. the French court, where an 'unwritten law of inheritance' directed the nominations of ladies-in-waiting, governesses and ladies of bedchamber, all reserved for noblewomen. See Norberg, 'Women of Versailles', 198–199.
- 51 Adelsvapens genealogi Wiki, 'Klinckowström', accessed 10 August 2016, https://www.adelsvapen.com/genealogi/Klinckowstrom_nr_262; Ilmakunnas, 'Hovets damer', 20–21.

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- 52 Ilmakunnas, 'Hovets damer', 40–43.
- 53 Axel von Fersen, *Riksrådet och fältmarskalken m. m. Grefwe Axel von Fersens Historiska Skrifter*, 2 (Stockholm: Nordstedt, 1868), 48.
- 54 See Brita Plank, *Kärlekens språk: Adel, kärlek och äktenskap 1750–1900*. <http://hdl.handle.net/2077/35436> (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 2014), 75–76.
- 55 Jägerskiöld, *Lovisa Ulrika*, 164, 177–178; Marie-Christine Skuncke, *Gustaf III – Det offentliga barnet: En prins retoriska och politiska fostran* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 1993), 46–51, 172–177.
- 56 Ehrensvärd, *Dagboksanteckningar*, 2, 173–174; Ilmakunnas, 'Hovets damer'.
- 57 Axel von Fersen, *Riksrådet och fältmarskalken m.m. Grefwe Axel von Fersens Historiska Skrifter*, 4 (Stockholm: Nordstedt, 1869), 220; Adelsvapens genealogi Wiki, 'Ekeblad', accessed 11 August 2016, https://www.adelsvapen.com/genealogi/Ekeblad_nr_71.
- 58 Adelsvapens genealogi Wiki, 'Piper', accessed 10 August 2016, https://www.adelsvapen.com/genealogi/Piper_nr_46.
- 59 Adelsvapens genealogi Wiki, 'von Fersen', accessed 11 August 2016, https://www.adelsvapen.com/genealogi/Von_Fersen_nr_56.
- 60 On noble concepts of work, see e.g. Johanna Ilmakunnas, 'Adelns arbete och vardag på 1700-talets svenska herrgårdar: Johan Gabriel Oxenstiernas och Jacobina Charlotta Munsterhjelm's dagböcker', *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland* 98:2 (2013), 156–184.
- 61 Ilmakunnas, 'Career at Court', 6; Ilmakunnas, 'Hovets damer'; see also Helsing, *Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotte*, passim.
- 62 Ilmakunnas, *Ett ståndsmässigt liv*, 174–175; Marie-Christine Skuncke & Anna Ivarsdotter, *Svenska operans födelse: Studier i gustaviansk musikdramatik* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 1998), 55.
- 63 *Överkammarherrens journal 1778–1826*, 424–429.
- 64 On friendship between Sophie von Fersen and the duchess, see Helsing, *Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotte*; see also, My Helsing, *Hovpolitik: Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotte, hovliv och politik i det sena 1700-talets Stockholm* (Örebro, Örebro universitet, 2013).
- 65 Helsing, *Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotte*, passim; Bengt Hildebrandt, 'Sophie Piper', *Svenskt Biografiskt Lexikon* (1956), accessed 10 August 2016, <http://www.nad.riksarkivet.se/sbl/Presentation.aspx?id=15287>; Ilmakunnas, *Ett ståndsmässigt liv*, 125.
- 66 *Överkammarherrens journal 1778–1826*, 428.
- 67 Adelsvapens genealogi Wiki, 'von Fersen', accessed 11 August 2016, https://www.adelsvapen.com/genealogi/Von_Fersen_nr_56; Adelsvapens genealogi Wiki, 'Piper', accessed 10 August 2016, https://www.adelsvapen.com/genealogi/Piper_nr_46.
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- 70 Adelsvapens genealogi Wiki, 'Sparre', accessed 24 August 2016, https://www.adelsvapen.com/genealogi/Sparre_nr_11.
- 71 Ilmakunnas, 'Career at court', 8; Rundquist, *Blått blod och liljevita händer*, 154–158.
- 72 Cf. Ilmakunnas, *Ett ståndsmässigt liv*, 118.
- 73 Ilmakunnas, 'Hovets damer', 32–34; Ilmakunnas, *Ett ståndsmässigt liv*, 120–125.
- 74 Persson, *Servants of Fortune*, 160; Rundquist, *Blått blod*, 159, 165–168.
- 75 Ilmakunnas, *Ett ståndsmässigt liv*, 124.